

## **Former Hamilton Chambers**

199-201 Lambton Quay



*Image: Charles Collins, 2015*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The Hamilton Chambers façade is a remnant of a fine inter-war Chicago-style building that was influenced both by Art Deco and the Georgian-revival. The aesthetic value of the facades has been somewhat diminished by its integration into the much larger c.2002 HSBC Tower.
- The façade contributes to the character of the central section of Lambton Quay, and thus has some townscape value.
- Hamilton Chambers is associated with Fletcher Construction, which managed the design and construction of the building.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 184
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 10808
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Category II Reference No. 4962
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	1928: Construction 2002: partial demolition/ façade retention
Architect / Builder:	Francis Drummond Stewart
Former uses:	Retail and commercial
Current uses:	Façade only – now part of retail/commercial development
Earthquake Prone Status:	Outside Earthquake Policy (SR 266665)

Extent:



## **1.0 Outline History**

### **1.1 History**

The land occupied by Hamilton Chambers was reclaimed from Wellington Harbour in 1866-67 by the Wellington Provincial Council and became the property of the Wellington City Council, as it still is. The first lessee of the land was builder James Lockie.<sup>1</sup> He is the only listed lessee of the section<sup>2</sup> until the Hamilton Chambers development, although two buildings were erected on the section (40 and 42 Lambton Quay) after 1873.

By the 1920s, occupancy of these buildings had dwindled. In 1927 the Wellington City Council negotiated a lease for section 63a with Thomson and East Ltd., auctioneers and land and real estate agents.<sup>3</sup> The terms of the lease required the removal of all existing buildings on the site and their replacement with a building at least three storeys high and of £24,000 value.

Thomson and East joined forces with Andrew Fletcher, a director of Fletcher Construction, which had become very active in the Wellington construction industry, to form a small property development company - Mercer Buildings Ltd.

Hamilton Chambers was designed for Mercer Buildings Ltd by F.D. Stewart, Fletcher Construction's house architect.<sup>4</sup> Construction work was officially completed on 4 April 1930.<sup>5</sup> The building was built with eight storeys comprising two shops on the ground floor, six floors of offices, and an 8th floor with lift machinery and toilets. A light well was situated on the south side. The structure was reinforced concrete frame - probably on pad foundations. Architect Stewart took great care with the placement of the reinforcing in the Hamilton Chambers design, altering the original plans at least once.<sup>6</sup> One floor received unusual treatment. The partitions and interior walls of the 7th (top) floor were almost completely lined with brick, a showroom for the Amalgamated Brick and Tile Co; a part Fletcher subsidiary. In the 1930s their offices were used for the meetings of the Association of Brick and Concrete Manufacturers.

Mercer Buildings Ltd was voluntarily wound up in 1967, and in 1969 the lease of Hamilton Chambers and section 63a, (now Lot 2 of DP 10808), was transferred to next-door neighbours, the Australasian Temperance and General Mutual Life Assurance Society. The building was subsequently let to a number of different tenants - most notably the Department of Industry and Commerce from 1931-1954 and the Wellington Women's Club, founded in 1924.

In 2002 Hamilton Chambers was substantially demolished<sup>7</sup>, and now only the façade remains. The façade has since been incorporated into the podium of the much larger HSBC tower complex. The redevelopment and façade retention scheme have somewhat diminished the building's heritage value.

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<sup>1</sup> Wellington Almanack 1872-1894

<sup>2</sup> Deed book 6 p.279, Land Titles Office, Wellington

<sup>3</sup> Deed Vol. 6 Folio 740, Land Titles Office, Wellington

<sup>4</sup> Plans of Hamilton Chambers, held at Wellington City Archives; dated 6 February 1929.

<sup>5</sup> Permit card, 201 Lambton Quay, Wellington; Wellington City Archives

<sup>6</sup> Plans of Hamilton Chambers, held at Wellington City Archives; dated 6 February 1929.

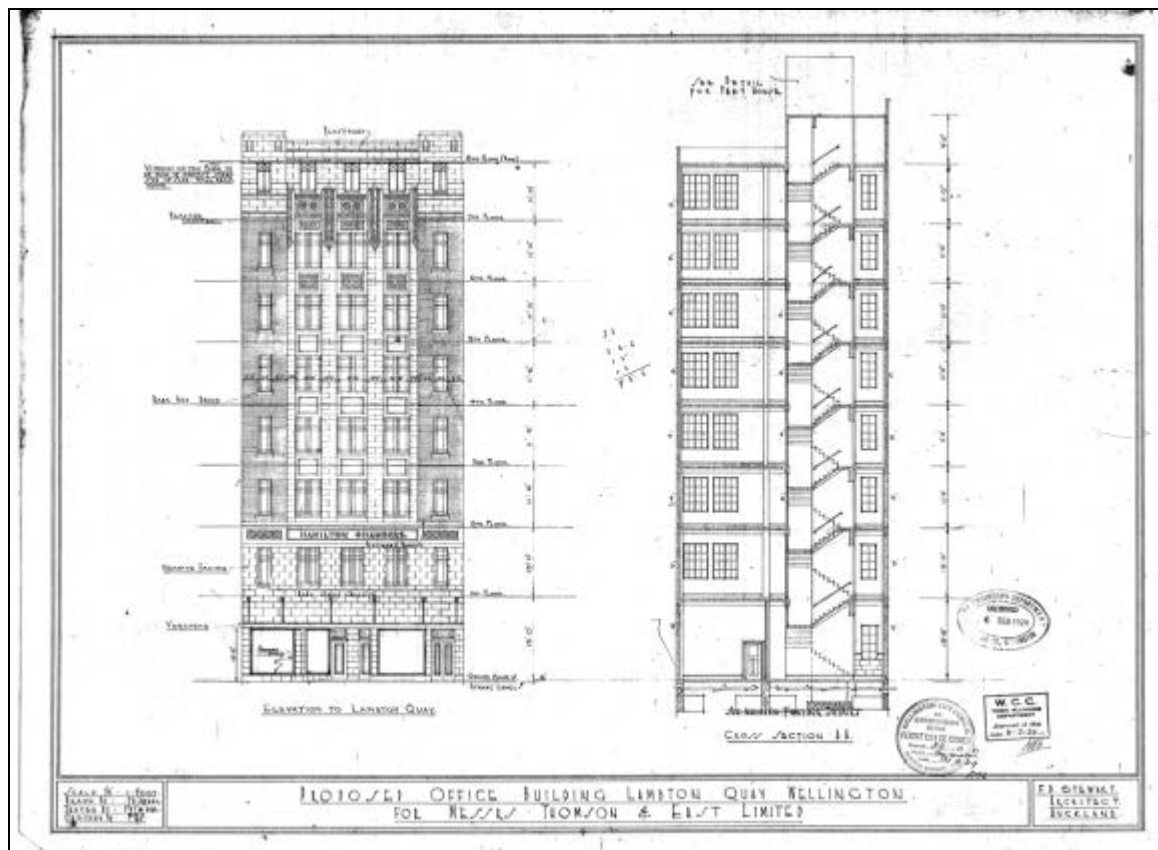
<sup>7</sup> Wellington City Council, Service Request 66806

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

1928: Construction

2002: Demolition

Plans over page from WCC Archive File 00056:73:B6996



Plans over page from WCC Archive File 00056:73:B6996

## 1.3 Occupation history

Not fully assessed

1931-1954 Department of Industry and Commerce

Current NA

## **1.4 Architect**

### **Francis Drummond Stewart**

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust's entry for Francis Drummond Stewart reads<sup>8</sup>:

Stewart was born at Southland and educated at Otago Boys' High School, the University of Otago and Auckland University College. He worked initially for H McDowell Smith in Dunedin and from 1926 to 1936 he was staff architect to Fletcher Construction Company. During this time he was responsible for the Station Hotel, Auckland, Brandon House, Wellington (1931), Nimmo's Building, Wellington (1929), and in conjunction with Herbert Hall of Timaru he designed the Chateau Tongariro (1928). He joined the Housing Department (later incorporated into the Ministry of Works) in 1937 and held various senior positions over the years. He was appointed Assistant Government Architect in 1952 and represented the Ministry and the Architectural Division at meetings of the Cabinet Works Committee. He held this position until his retirement in 1968. Stewart was admitted as an Associate of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1936, and was elected a Fellow in 1958.

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

Hamilton Chambers façade has been incorporated into a large retail/commercial development known as the HSBC Tower. It is a remnant of a 1928 eight-storey office building commercial building.

The building façade is a transitional interwar design that is typical of a 'Chicago' style building - in that there is a distinct 'base', 'tower' and 'capital'. The overall design is a pleasant fusion of Georgian Revival proportions with Art Deco stylised decorative elements. The ground and first floor is clad in granite, the shop-fronts are a mish-mash of modern commercial plate glass windows and advertising signage, but the modern verandah is a pleasant new insertion that serves to integrate the old façade into the podium of the new tower building. The façade between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors is faced in a combination of cement plaster and brick. Interest is provided by the decorative contrast between the piers, brick spandrels and the brick bays on either side. Decorative plaster ornamentation on the spandrels and piers divided the façade between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> floors.

The new opaque glass makes the windows curiously blank and lifeless and this contributes to the sense that this façade is only a thin 'applied-layer' to the new commercial development behind.

### **2.2 Materials**

Not assessed

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<sup>8</sup> 'Stewart, Francis Drummond – Architect', New Zealand Historic Places Trust, accessed June 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Stewart,+Francis+Drummond>

### **2.3 Setting**

The Hamilton Chambers façade is located on the eastern side of Lambton Quay, roughly one-third of the street's total length from the southern end. Heritage items close by include the adjacent T&G/Harcourts Building, the Harbour City Centre, and across Lambton Quay, the Cable Car. The façade partially fronts the HSBC Tower. The tower's 25 floor/94m height dwarfs the Chambers' eight floor façade.

### **3.0 Sources**

Deed book 6, Land Titles Office, Wellington

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. 'Stewart, Francis Drummond – Architect'. NZHPT. Accessed June 2013, at <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Stewart,+Francis+Drummond>

Wellington Almanack. 1872-1894

Wellington City Council Files:

- Archive File 00056:73:B6996
- District Plan: Heritage Building – 199 Lambton Quay – Hamilton Chambers Building Old T & G Building 28 Grey Street. File No. 1041-06-LAM199 Vol. 1.
- Heritage Team Inventory File. Hamilton Chambers. 1041-06-LAM199
- Permit card, 201 Lambton Quay, Wellington

## 4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### **Cultural heritage values**

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

**Architectural:** *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Hamilton Chambers façade is a remnant of a fine inter-war Chicago-style building that was influenced both by Art Deco and the Georgian-revival. The aesthetic value of the facades has been somewhat diminished by its integration into the much larger c.2002 HSBC Tower.

**Townscape:** *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The façade contributes to the character of the central section of Lambton Quay, and thus has some townscape value.

**Group:** *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

#### **Historic Value:**

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

Hamilton Chambers is associated with Fletcher Construction, which managed the design and construction of the building.

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

#### **Scientific Value:**

**Archaeological:** *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA R27/270. Site was disturbed in c.2002 for HSBC Tower construction.

**Educational:** *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

#### **Social Value:**

**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

**Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:** *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

#### **Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:**



*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?  
Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

The Hamilton Chambers façade makes a minor contribution to a sense of place, as a reminder of Lambton Quay's long-standing commercial importance to Wellington.

***Sentiment/Connection:*** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

***Rare:*** *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

***Representative:*** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

***Authentic:*** *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

**Local/Regional/National/International**

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

## 5.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	N	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	N	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files	N	
Conservation Plan	N	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	