

Edwards' Building

131 Manners Street



Images: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The Edwards' building is a now rare example of a purpose built Edwardian manufacturing/retail premises.
- Designed by well-known architects Crichton and McKay, the largely undisturbed façade and original balustraded parapet give a high level of authenticity of the exterior, playing a role in maintaining the character of Manners Street, and contributing to the townscape values of the area.

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The Edwards' building was designed by architects Crichton and McKay for Henry Dodsworth Edwards (c.1851-1917) in 1907.¹ The building derives its name from the original owner H.D. Edwards for whom the building was constructed. An inscription; "Edwards Building 1874", on the top floor facing the lane has led to some confusion over the actual construction date. Council permit records confirm that the building was erected between 1907 and 1908. It may refer to the date that Edwards' business was established. Edwards was a boot manufacturer who had leased with the right to purchase, then demolished an earlier building on the site to make way for this new structure.²

The permit for the building was issued to H.W. Edwards and was built by R.A. Wakelin at an estimated cost of £2300.³ The specifications on the plans stipulate that the building would house a shop and machine room on the ground floor, a store and girls' workroom on the first floor, while the second and third floors were described as 'stores'. These may have been set aside for other tenants as Edwards did sub-lease space to other leather-goods manufacturers.

Edwards' business did not occupy the building for long due to his death in 1917. By this stage, however, William Usher, a bag and trunk manufacturer was the sole occupant of the building other than the retail area on the ground floor.⁴ After the mid 1920s the building ceased to be used for manufacturing and has had a variety of different tenants over the years, including clothing manufacturers, pawnbrokers, finance companies and printers.⁵

The building is described as a warehouse and building in the original building specification and it represents one of the few remaining buildings from the early 1900's. It is associated with early light industrial manufacturing in Wellington, from a time where buildings of this scale housed small machining rooms for the manufacture of garments.

Some alterations have been made to the building over time with the most obvious changes being those to the shop front and veranda which have been remodelled. Changes to the building have mainly been sympathetic to the form, scale, style, and character of the building, the adjacent shopfronts, and the overall aesthetic of the Manners Streetscape.

¹ Crichton & McKay, "Shop and stores, Manners Street, for H D Edwards Esq.", 1907. Architectural plans collected by Bulleymont Fortune architects 1890-1900s, Ref: Plans-93-0266. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/23252961>

² *Maoriland Worker*, Volume 5, Issue 159, 18 February 1914, Page 8

³ "Warehouse (sic) cnr. Lukes Lane and Courtenay Place for H.W. Edwards, June 25, 1907, 00053:137:7675, Wellington City Archives.

⁴ *Stones Wellington Directory 1905-1945*.

⁵ Eric Hall McCormick (Ed), *The Spike or Victoria College Review*, (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association, June 1930)

1.2 Timeline of modifications



Plans for shop and dwelling (WC Archive 00053-135-7675)

- 1907 Building constructed (00053:137:7675)
- 1918 Alterations to dwelling. (00053:194:10656)
- 1940 Alteration-erection of neon signage. (00056:244:B20336)
- 1954 Additions. (00056:494:B37114).
- 1978 Additions and alterations to building- partitions, recreation room for gymnasium. (00058:1136:C49074)
- 1992 Refurbishment. (00059:535:E25002)
- 1994 New signage. (00060:7:287)
- 1995 Unidentified alteration. (00061:303:14701).
- 1996 Unidentified alteration. (00061:313:16217)
- 2003 Grille Roller Door inserted, bay window and door opening removed. Alterations to shop front, glazed frontage and frameless glass doors installed. (00078:1102:102827).
- 2004 Fit-out of new business 'Cosmic Corner'. (00078:1365:119596).

1.3 Occupation history

The building was occupied by Edwards until his death in 1917, when ownership was transferred to his widow Ellen, and his son Henry. The building then went through a series of owners and leaseholders (see 1.3 Ownership History). Since 2004 the ground floor retail space has been used as the premises for 'Cosmic Corner'. Various residential tenants in apartments on upper levels.

1.4 Architects

Crichton and McKay

William Crichton (1862 – 1928) was born in Cornwall and was trained as an architect in the office of James Hicks of Redruth. He arrived in New Zealand in 1879 and joined the Colonial Architects Office where he “designed several of the largest public buildings in the Colony.” In 1891 he won the competition for the design of the Wellington Municipal Library and in 1901 he won second prize for the Wellington Town Hall. Crichton established a private practice in 1891 when he was “retrenched” due to a reduction in size of the public service. He went into partnership with James Hector McKay in 1901 to form Crichton and McKay.⁶

James Hector McKay (d. 1944) was originally from Scotland and arrived in New Zealand from Australia in 1890.⁷ He established an architectural partnership with Robert Roy MacGregor which lasted from 1898-1901, before he formed Crichton and McKay with William Crichton. McKay was sponsored to join the Royal Institute of British architects by well known members Frederick de Jersey Clere, Alfred Atkins, and John Campbell.⁸

Many successful buildings were designed and erected under the supervision of this firm, among them being the Bank of New South Wales, Bank of Australasia in Hunter Street and Customhouse Quay (that became the ANZ Bank), and the bulk of the later buildings at Wellington hospital, the Dominion Building, Dalgety and Co, the Union Steam Ship Co. Building and many others. They set a high standard in good design and planning and the use of good materials.

⁶ Cyclopedia Co. Ltd. “Crichton, William.” In *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*. Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897. Accessed September 27 2012 [http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33-d3.html?_utma=1.1848487997.1348705218.1348705218.1348705218.1&_utmb=1.2.10.1348705218&_utmc=1&_utmx=-&_utmz=1.1348705218.1.1.utmcsr=google|utmccn=\(organic\)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=cyclopedia%20of%20new%20zealand&_utmv=-&_utmk=83836054](http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33-d3.html?_utma=1.1848487997.1348705218.1348705218.1348705218.1&_utmb=1.2.10.1348705218&_utmc=1&_utmx=-&_utmz=1.1348705218.1.1.utmcsr=google|utmccn=(organic)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=cyclopedia%20of%20new%20zealand&_utmv=-&_utmk=83836054)

⁷ Dictionary of Scottish Architects “James Hector McKay”. http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=205246

⁸ Antonia Brodie (Ed). “McKay, James Hector”. In *Directory of British Architects, 1834-1914 (L-Z)*, 2001. 103.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

131 Manners Street was originally constructed as a retail and manufacturing premises on a busy inner city site. The building runs alongside Lukes Lane and the main elevation of the building faces towards Manners Street. This reveals a three storey Edwardian commercial building with a well proportioned façade that features some spare classical detailing. The plain styling of the façade has remained largely unaltered. The building features three square-headed sash windows on each floor giving this narrow building a pronounced vertical emphasis, which is only slightly modified by the cornice between the second and third floors. This cornice, supported by brackets, serves as a shallow plinth for the Ionic pilasters on the floor above, which are paired at the corners. The building is capped by a simple entablature with dentils and a balustraded parapet.⁹

The shop-front and veranda have been remodelled, the latest being the installation of a glazed frontage and frameless glass doors set in an aluminium frame.

The Edwards' Building is a rare example of a purpose built Edwardian manufacturing/retail premises particularly due to the retention of it's original parapet.

2.2 Materials

The construction of this building is load bearing brick masonry on concrete foundations and piles. Three steel girders on each floor carry timber floor members, and a central steel girder supports timber roof trusses which are arranged in a 'butterfly' system with a central gutter.

⁹ Wellington City Council, "131 Manners Street, Edward Building". Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-residential Buildings, (Wellington City Council, 2001), MANN3.

2.3 Setting

The building at 131 Manners Street is set on the principal pedestrian zone of Manners Street, in the vicinity of a number of interesting and important heritage features that extend from Manners street through Te Aro Park (formerly Pigeon Park). The Edwardian building contributes to the diverse character of the area primarily through its role in defining the built northern edge of Te Aro Park, a role which complements the similarly defining role of the State Opera House. The townscape value that the Edwards' building contributes can be best viewed from Te Aro Park.

The park is significant in its own right, with water flowing through several ponds symbolising the flow of the Waimapihi stream, names of significant ancestors, settlements, sites, and landscapes printed on the tiles. There are also painted figures on the pond tiles suggestive of women while the upright prow at the apex of the park stands for male life force. Viewed from the park, the Edwards' building can be seen as complementing the State Opera House (109-117 Manners Street). Built in 1914 the State Opera House has significant value as a representation of a more grandiose example of Edwardian architecture with Classical and Baroque elements. The unique asymmetrical design and high level of authenticity of the Opera House make this building highly significant.

The Edwards' Building is located near to the Courtenay Place precinct as well as the Cuba Street Heritage Area where several commercial Edwardian buildings are also seen.

Sources

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Wellington City Council. "131 Manners Street, Edward Building". Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: MANN3. Wellington City Council, 2001, MANN3,

Wellington City Archives

00053-133-7483 Wellington City Archive

00053-135-7675 Wellington City Archive

Wellington City Council Records

Permit OC 7675. Wellington City Council Archives.

Wellington City Council Records

"Heritage Building- 131 Manners Street". 1995. 1014-06-MAN131, Wellington City Records.

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?*

131 Manners Street has architectural value as it is a now rare example of a purpose built Edwardian manufacturing/retail premises. The façade has been largely unaltered and the retention of the original balustraded parapet contributes to the high level of authenticity of the exterior of the building.

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 building has some townscape value for the role that it plays in defining the built edge of Te Aro Park and in relation to the State Opera House. It also contributes to the diverse character of the area.

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?*

This building has historic value for its association with architects Crichton and McKay.

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

This building is associated with the development of Wellington during the Edwardian period and is a good example of a purpose built manufacturing/retail business of the time. It was designed for the manufacture and selling of shoes and remained a leather-goods manufacturing business for several years after the death of the original owner.

Scientific Value:

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

Possible archaeological value due to there having been a previous building on the site (prior to 1907) as well as the association with the Te Aro Pa area and pre 1900 Maori activity.

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?*

There is some technical value in the relatively undisturbed masonry and timber structures of the building.

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?

This building contributes to a sense of continuity throughout the Wellington townscape, particularly its connection to the Cuba Street Edwardian buildings and the Cuba Street Heritage area.

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?*

The retention of the original balustraded parapet contributes to the significance of this building as it is a rare feature in an Edwardian building in Wellington.

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

This building is a representative example of an Edwardian building with some classical aspects. It is also representative of Edwardian architecture that can be found throughout the city.

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?*

This building maintains a high level of authenticity and integrity as the façade has remained largely unaltered since its construction.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

This building is of local importance due to the contribution that it makes to the historic nature of the Manners Street area, its connection with Edwardian architecture elsewhere in the city, and the high level of authenticity of the exterior façade.

3.0 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)	-	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
Plan change?	-	
Heritage Area Report	-	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	-	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	N	
HPT files	N	
Conservation Plan	N	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research



Crichton and McKay's 1907 plans for the building at 131 Manners Street (Ref: Plans-93-0266, Alexander Turnbull Library)