

Harper's Corner (Former)

15-20 Cambridge Terrace



Images: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The original two storey 1928 “Harper’s Corner” is a carefully proportioned building in a restrained Art Deco style. The three storey 1938 addition has less aesthetic appeal than the original, but makes a good transition in form and style between Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place.
- The 1936 addition was designed by prominent Wellington architects John Sydney Swan and William Lavelle.
- The building occupies a prominent corner site and makes a positive contribution to the streetscape of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.
- The building has housed a large number of Wellington businesses and is part of the commercial development of Wellington.

District Plan:	Map 16, Reference 368
Legal Description:	Part Section 205 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	Courtenay Place Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	None 2012
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Cambridge Building, Calzone Café 1 Courtenay Place
Key physical dates:	1928 Harper's Corner 1936 three storey addition at the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place.
Architect / Builder:	1928: Architect: Unknown, Builder: Fletcher Construction Ltd 1936: Architect: John Sydney Swan and William Lavelle, Builder: Palmer and Askew
Former uses:	Café, Offices, Bank of New Zealand
Current uses:	Restaurant, Offices
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 179871 (124 Served)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



WCC Cityview 2012

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

In 1929 this site, at the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place, was purchased by Anthony Harper from the Public Trust.¹ Harper, a retired Wellington boot-maker, oversaw the construction by Fletcher Construction Co. of the two storey building at 16-20 Cambridge Terrace. It was designed to accommodate both shops and offices and had the words “Harper’s Corner, 1928” set in relief on the parapet.

After Harper’s death, the property was purchased by local merchant Elias James Hyams and remained in his hands for the next 44 years.² Elias had builders Palmer and Askew construct a three storey addition at the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place, to a design by prominent architects John Sydney Swan and William Lavelle. The construction was undertaken in 1936 at a cost of £4,400.³ Although the building was originally designed as a two storey addition, a pencil note on the drawing refers to a third storey, probably to be added at the time of construction.

Throughout the period that Hyams owned the property the building was occupied by a varied succession of small businesses. Tenants included a fish shop, a hair salon, beauty salon, tailoring company, a firm of British nylon spinners, chemist, tobacconist, confectionary shop and a dye chemical shop.⁴

The property then changed ownership three times, but the tenants remained relatively stable. Substantial changes have been made to the interior of the building, particularly in the 1960s, 80s and 90s. Throughout this period the dental surgery Bacon & Dentice was the tenant with the longest occupation. They occupied an office in the building from 1945 until 1990.⁵ In the early 1980s the Bank of New Zealand occupied part of the building.⁶ In 2004 the building was purchased by Omaha Properties Ltd and it remains in their hands today.⁷ The building retains its original use as commercial and office space.

¹ Land Title Service CT 339/141

² Ibid.

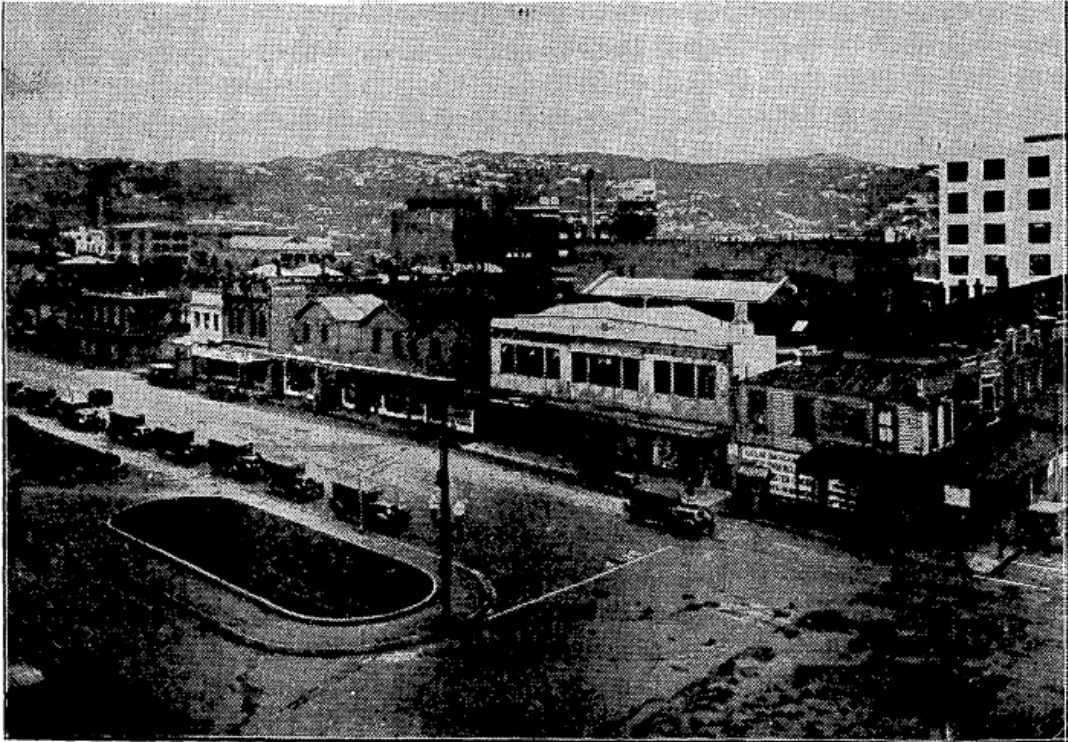
³ “1-3 Courtenay Place [15 Cambridge Terrace], building”, January 18, 1936, 00056:167:B14817, Wellington City Archives.

⁴ Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “1-3 Courtenay Place, alter retail premises”, July 28, 1983, 00058:0:C62642, Wellington City Archives.

⁷ Land Title Service CT 339/141

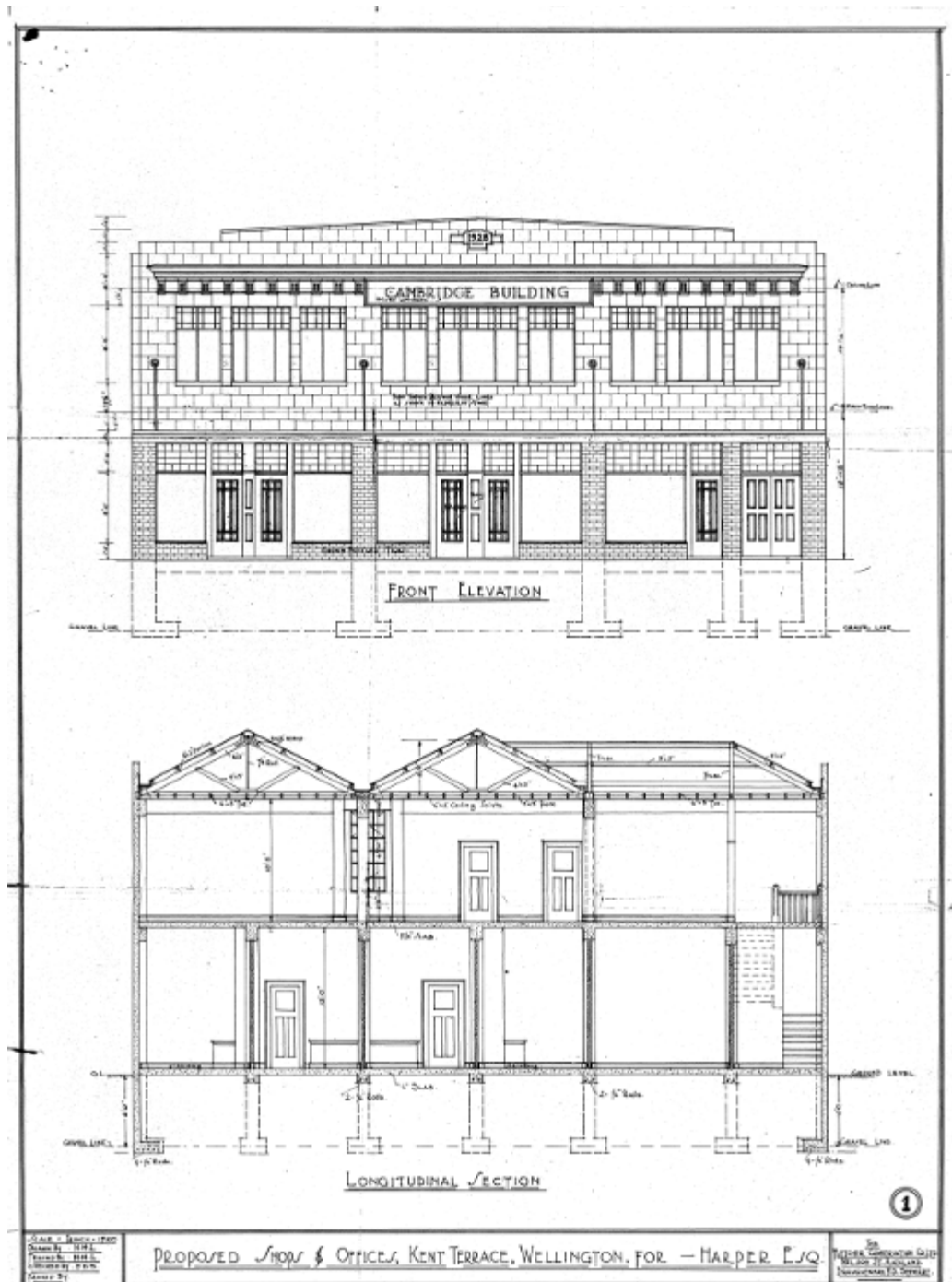


"Evening Post" Photo.

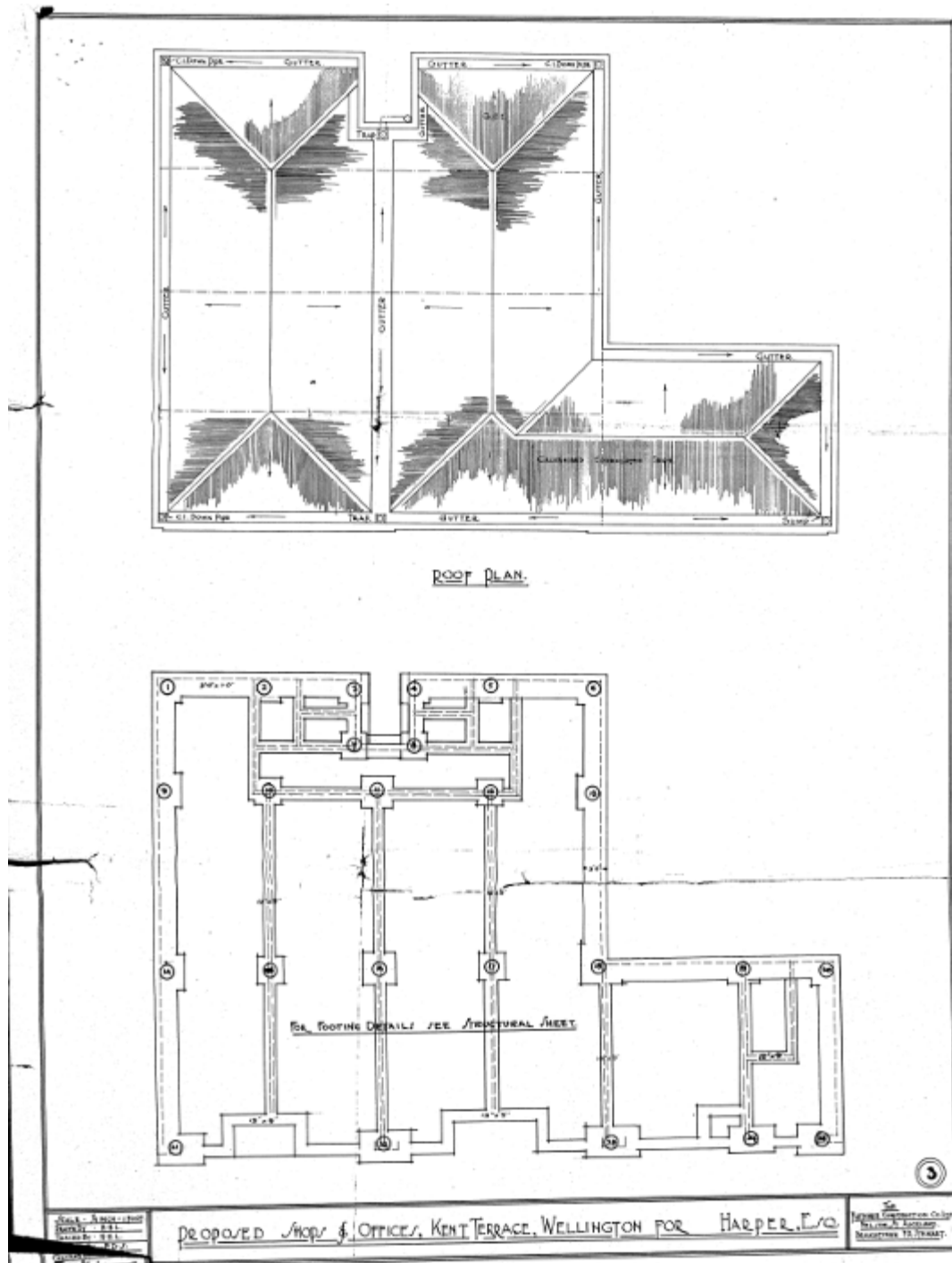
SITE OF NEW BUILDINGS ON CAMBRIDGE TERRACE.—Plans have been prepared for several new buildings on the location shown in the photograph. The new Courtenay Place Post Office is to be built to the left of the white concrete building, and a new structure is to replace the old wooden building at the corner of Courtenay Place. Tenders are also being called for the erection of a three-storied hotel to replace the old Cambridge Hotel, shown on the left.

This 1929 image shows the "Cambridge" or Harper building at 15-20 Cambridge Terrace; the building on the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place would soon replace the two storied timber buildings shown in this photo.⁸

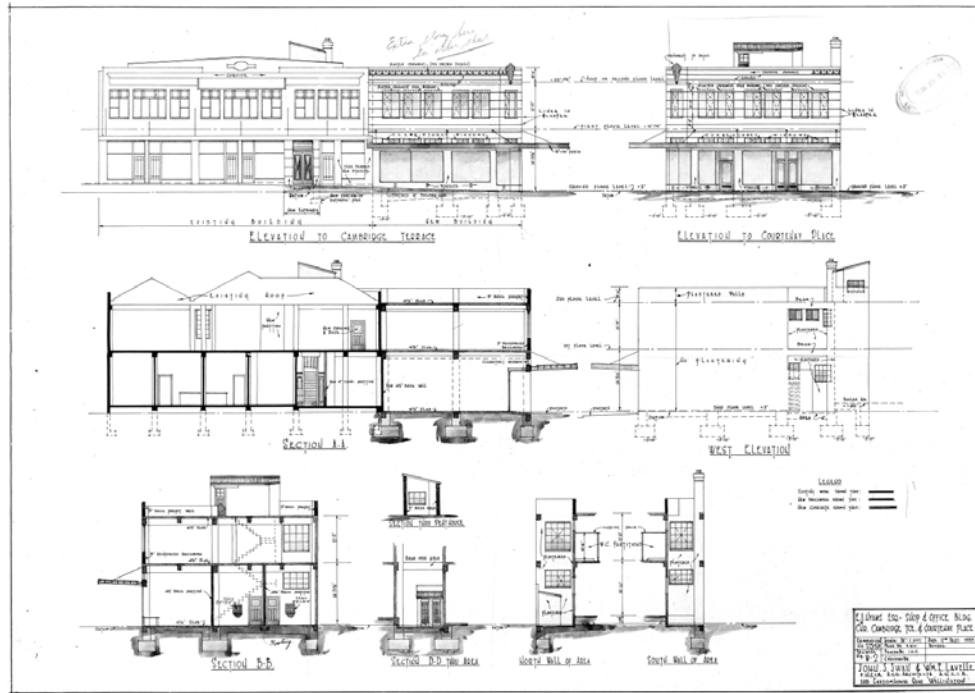
⁸ "Site of New Buildings On Cambridge Terrace", *Evening Post*, Volume CVIII, Issue 129, 27 November 1929, Page 9.



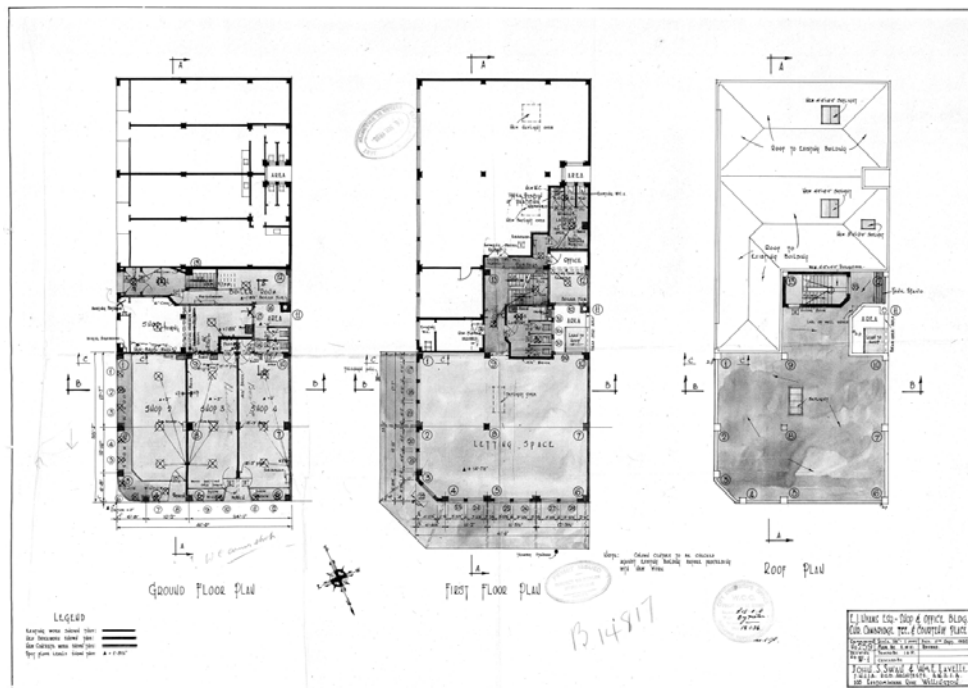
Street elevation and longitudinal section of the Harper Building, 1928
(00056:54:B5277)



Plan of the Harper Building, 1928
(00056:54:B5277)



1936 elevations and sections as proposed for the addition to the building for E.J. Hyams Esq. Note the pencil mark on the elevation that shows the addition of an extra (3rd) floor. Image: John S. Swan and Wm. E. Lavelle Architects (00056:167:B14817)



1938 – 39 plans as proposed for the addition to the building for E.J. Hyams Esq. Image: John S. Swan and Wm. E. Lavelle Architects (00056:167:B14817)



The Calzone Café, 1995.⁹



Harper's Corner, 2012¹⁰

⁹ Wellington City Council, "Building - Calzone", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. (Wellington City Council, 1995), C.

¹⁰ WCC ref 14 Nov 2012 025

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1929 Building constructed by Fletcher Construction Co. (00056:54:B5277)
- 1936 A three storey addition at a cost of £4,400 by Palmer and Askew. (00056:167:B14817)
- 1937 Sign erected. (00056:198:B17273)
- 1948 Fire escapes built by A. Lemmon. (00056:356:B27352)
- 1953 Building altered. (00056:461:B35021)
- 1964 Shop front altered. (00058:366:C15670)
- 1967 Building altered. (00058:510:C22020)
- 1983 Retail space altered by builders MacRitchie Bros Ltd. (00058:0:C62642)
- 1991 Restaurant addition and alteration. (00059:464:E22586)
- 1993 Plumbing altered. (00060:50:1928) Takeaway food outlet altered. (00060:48:1856)
- 1995 Restaurant altered. (00060:48:1856)
- 2009 Restaurant fitout and bar plumbing altered. (00078:2770:181271)

1.3 Occupation history

There were an assortment of businesses that occupied the building. They included:

No.15: Peter Christopher, fish shop; No.16: Waratah Confectionery; No.17: Boulevard Chemists; No.18: Duncan Ltd., hairdressers & tobacconists (Stones, 1930).

First reference to 'Harpers Buildings' at No.12: The Cambridge Oyster Bar; The Marcelle Salon; The Wellington Millinery Co. Ltd.; Anna Jones, dressmaker; Central Tailoring Co.; Roland Powell, dentist (Stones, 1940).

Reference to 'Hyams Buildings' at No.15-16: The Marcelle Salon; Elite Lingerie Manufacturers; Central Tailoring Co.; Bacon & Dentice, dentists (Stones, 1945; Wises, 1950-51).

'Harpers Buildings' at No.15-16: Little's Electrical Service; Elite Lingerie; International Fur Co.; B Dunning, beauty salon; Central Tailoring Co.; Bacon & Dentice, dental laboratory; No.15-16: Dyes & Chemicals Ltd., agents for British Nylon Spinners (Wises, 1955).

Similar businesses up to 1990. Bacon & Dentice long term tenants, 1945-1990.¹¹

1993 – Bank of New Zealand.¹²

1.4 Architect

The architect is unknown.

¹¹ Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹² "1-3 Courtenay Place, alter retail premises"

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Harper Building building at the corner of Courtenay Place and Cambridge Terrace was built in two stages. The earliest part of the development is the two storey art deco building at 16-20 Cambridge Terrace, with the words “Harper’s Corner, 1928” set into the parapet. The three storey addition at 1 Courtenay Place / 15 Cambridge Terrace was built in 1936.

The two storey 1929 building is in a restrained Art Deco style with a low shallow pitched pediment with the date 1928 set in the parapet. There is a prominent cornice with large dentils with the words “Harper’s Corner” set above the central windows. The first floor windows are grouped over the three shop-fronts and the original fenestration appears to have survived (2012). The wall on the Cambridge Terrace façade is shown on the original drawings as “Buff tinted plaster work lined as shown to represent stone.” And the ashlar effect survives even though the building has been painted dark green with red details. The ground floor shop fronts have been much altered over the past eighty years, and the modern alterations are cluttered and messy though some vestigial remnants of the originals remain. The first floor Cambridge Terrace façade is in near original condition although there is a recent metal fire escape that leads from the 1938 three storey addition.

The 1936 three storey addition is a relatively plain concrete structure adorned only with a small amount of decoration that is confined to Art Deco motifs around the cornice and above the rectangular window openings.¹³ The original fenestration to the first and second floor windows appears to have survived (2012). The original drawings show that the 1938 addition was intended to be a two storey building, but the third floor was probably added when the extension was constructed. The additional storey gives the Cambridge Terrace façade of the Harper Building a strange, unbalanced, appearance and the simple, unadorned 1938 addition has less visual appeal than the original.

2.2 Materials

1928 Building: Concrete structure including walls, cement render, concrete slabs to ground floor and first floor, timber roof structure, pitched corrugated iron or mild steel roof set behind the parapet.

1938 Building: Concrete structure with masonry (brick) infill to walls and brick parapet, cement render, concrete floors and (flat) roof slab.

2.3 Setting

This building is set in the south side of Courtenay Place, on a corner site of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place. It is part of a row on Courtenay Place which is characterised by its continuous line of buildings between Cambridge Terrace and Tory Street which emphasise the original survey line. The buildings are diverse in nature and age but, despite some particularly intrusive modern buildings, have a high streetscape quality which contributes significantly to the heritage value and character of Courtenay Place as a whole.

Harper's Building is adjoined on Courtenay Place by a long low modern two-storey commercial building of no particular interest and the former McDonald's building constructed in 1911, which is distinctive for its two-storey high gabled façade in exposed brick, rare in Wellington, and for its lack of ornament in a period where embellishment was requisite. It has an ungraceful apartment addition which, although within the height of the original roof, detracts from the streetscape value of the upper part of the building.¹⁴

There is a brick paved landscaped area immediately in front of the Harper Building with a notable statue by Weta Workshop which links to the Embassy Theatre across Cambridge and Kent Terraces.

3.0 References

CT WN339/141 Land Information New Zealand

Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. Wellington City Council, 1995.

Wellington City Archives

"15-19 Cambridge Terrace, shops and offices", 1923, 00056:54:B5277, Wellington City Archives.

"1-3 Courtenay Place [15 Cambridge Terrace] building", 1936, 00056:167:B14817 Wellington City Archives.

"1 Courtenay Place - erect sign", 1937, 00056:198:B17273 Wellington City Archives.

"1-3 Courtenay Place - fire escapes", 1948, 00056:356:B27352 Wellington City Archives.

"16 Cambridge Terrace - building alterations", 1953, 00056:461:B35021, Wellington City Archives.

"15-19 Cambridge Terrace - building alterations - shop front", 1964, 00058:366:C15670, Wellington City Archives.

"1 Courtenay Place - building alterations", 1967, 00058:510:C22020, Wellington City Archives.

"1-3 Courtenay Place - alter retail premises", 1983, 00058:0:C62642, Wellington City Archives.

"15 Cambridge Terrace - restaurant additions and alterations", 1991, 00059:464:E22586, Wellington City Archives.

¹⁴ Adapted from: Kelly, Michael and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

“15 Cambridge Terrace - plumbing alteration”, 1993, 00060:50:1928, Wellington City Archives.

“15, 19 Cambridge Terrace - alterations to takeaway food outlet Takeaway food outlet altered”, 1993, 00060:48:1856, Wellington City Archives.

“15 Cambridge Terrace, restaurant [18 Cambridge Terrace]”, 1995, 00060:48:1856, Wellington City Archives.

“15 Cambridge Terrace - restaurant alteration”, 1995, 00061:141:14562, Wellington City Archives.

“15 Cambridge Terrace, 1-3 Courtenay Place - restaurant fitout, bar plumbing alterations”, 2009, 00078:2770:181271, Wellington City Archives.

Newspapers

“Miscellaneous”, *Evening Post*, Volume CIX, Issue 90, 16 April 1930.

“Site of New Buildings On Cambridge Terrace”, *Evening Post*, Volume CVIII, Issue 129, 27 November 1929

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 original two storey 1929 Harper's Corner building is a carefully proportioned building in a restrained Art Deco style. The three storey 1939 addition has less aesthetic appeal than the original, but makes a good transition in form and style between Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place. A new paint/colour scheme could make more of the building's decorative features.

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 occupies a prominent corner at the Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place intersection and makes a good transition between Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place.

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?*

The building is part of an important group of heritage buildings which together form the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Although most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20th century, there are significant differences in age and style among some of the buildings in this group.

Historic Value:

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

The 1936 addition was designed by prominent Wellington architects John Sydney Swan and William Lavelle.

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

The building has some historic value for its use as a retail / office premises and as medical consulting rooms and is part of the historic commercial development of Courtenay Place.

Scientific Value:

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

This building is included in the NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270

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 Harper building has been part of streetscape of Cambridge Terrace and Courtenay Place for over eighty years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity for the Courtenay Place 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?

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?

The building façade has had few intrusive modern alterations and additions above verandah level and retains most of the original building fabric.

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 for its contribution to the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	Not included
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	Not listed
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	Nothing

Background research

WCC Permits

00056: 54:B52 77	15-19 Cambridge Terrace, shops and offices	Owner: A Harper. Builder: Fletcher Construction Co. Legal description: Lot 11 Town Acre 285. Application value: £4,300.	Building Permit/Consent	22 May 1928
00056: 167:B1 4817	1-3 Courtenay Place [15 Cambridge Terrace], building	Owner: E J Hyams. Builder: Palmer and Askew. Legal description: Part Section 285 Town of Wellington. Application value: £4,400. Floor area: 4,059 square feet.	Building Permit/Consent	18 Jan 1936
00056: 198:B1 7273	1 Courtenay Place, erect sign	Owner: Marcell Salon. Builder: B O C Studios	Building Permit/Consent	23 Nov 1937
00056: 356:B2 7352	1-3 Courtenay Place, fire escapes	Legal description: Lot 11 DP 285. Owner: EJ Hyams. Builder: A Lemmon. Application value: £156	Building Permit/Consent	11 Oct 1948
00056: 461:B3 5021	16 Cambridge Terrace, building alterations	Owner: Imperial Chemical Co. Builder: N G Templeton. Legal description: Part Town Acre 285. Application value: £1,078.	Building Permit/Consent	07 Sep 1953

00058: 366:C1 5670	15-19 Cambridge Terrace, building alterations - shop front	Legal description: Part Section 285 Town of Wellington. Owner: M Parbhu. Builder: P Jeffries. Application value: £300	Building Permit/Con sent	08 Oct 1964
00058: 510:C2 2020	1 Courtenay Place, building alterations	Legal description: Lot 11 DP 285. Owner: Victoria Laundry. Builder: J Murray Limited. Application value: £1500	Building Permit/Con sent	15 Jun 1967
00058: 0:C626 42	1-3 Courtenay Place, alter retail premises	Legal description: Lot 11 DP 285. Owner: Bank of New Zealand. Builder: MacRitchie Bros Limited. Application value: \$13599.	Building Permit/Con sent Microfiche	28 Jul 1983
00059: 464:E2 2586	15 Cambridge Terrace, restaurant additions and alterations		Building Permit/Con sent	1991
00060: 50:192 8	15 Cambridge Terrace, plumbing alteration	Owner: Mr Govan. Applicant: Brian Ross Contractors Limited. Legal description: part town acre 285. Application value: \$1,500. Note: permit contains application and code compliance certificate, does not contain plans or specifications.	Building Permit/Con sent	1993
00060: 48:185 6	15, 19 Cambridge Terrace, alterations to takeaway food outlet	Legal description: Part Town Acre 285. Owner: Mrs Pushpa Desai. Applicant: Mr J Desai. Application value: \$10,000.	Building Permit/Con sent	28 Jul 1993
00061: 79:124 36	15 Cambridge Terrace, restaurant [18 Cambridge Terrace]	Owner: Kim Ashton Williams. Applicant: Midos Sicevic. Legal description: part town acre 285. Application value: \$5,000.	Building Permit/Con sent	30 May 1995
00061: 141:145 62	15 Cambridge Terrace, restaurant alteration	Owner: K Williams. Applicant: E Handcock. Application value: \$10,000.	Building Permit/Con sent	27 Oct 1995
00078: 2770:1 81271	15 Cambridge Terrace, 1-3 Courtenay Place, restaurant fitout, bar plumbing alterations	Legal description: PT SEC 285 TOWN OF WELLINGTON. Owner: Omaha Properties Ltd. Applicant: Hajime Ltd. Project value: \$10,000.	Building Permit/Con sent	2009