

Brooklyn Post Office (Former)
22 Cleveland Street, Brooklyn



Image: Charles Collins, 2015

Summary of heritage significance

- The former Brooklyn Post Office is a good representative example of an early 20th century public building constructed in the early years of the development of the Wellington suburb of Brooklyn. The building is notable for its rough cast rendered finish, wide overhanging eaves, and for the composition of its Cleveland Street façade with the prominent central bay set over a carefully proportioned arched timber window.
- The former Brooklyn Post Office has historic significance as the suburb's postal outlet for 75 years, being well known and well used by generations of Brooklyn residents.
- The building is thought to be the only surviving example of an Edwardian era post office building in greater Wellington.

District Plan:	Map 6, reference 428 DPC 53 <i>Brooklyn Post Office (former) (Including garage and sheds)</i>
Legal Description:	PT LOT 113 DP 392
Heritage Area:	None 2013
HPT Listed:	None 2013
Archaeological Site:	Risk unknown
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	1914
Architect / Builder:	Government Architect
Former uses:	Post Office, B&B
Current uses:	residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 268504 Bdg StrengthInv status 'Yet to be Assessed' Feb 2013

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

There was a marked increase in the construction of Government buildings in the early 1900s, fuelled by a rise in the country's population, better economic times and improved transport systems. The building of post offices was a key part of this. New post offices were built, or older temporary timber structures were replaced by more substantial masonry buildings. By 1915 the number of offices reached a peak of 2,510, compared to 1,043 in 1895.²

In the case of Brooklyn, it did not have a purpose-built post office until the completion of this building. Prior to this the post office service was run from a shop on the corner of Cleveland Street and Ohiro Road.³

The area that became Brooklyn contained Maori clearings, gardens and paths prior to 1840, and was encompassed in three Country Sections after settlement.⁴ The land was farmed and a village called Ohiro arose to service this community. The post office/general store, run by a Mrs Ferkins, was at its centre. The farmland was subdivided in the 1880s, and the resulting township was named 'Brooklyn'. It did not become a part of Wellington City until 1905. It was previously part of the Melrose Borough Council and described as a "postal district" in 1897.⁵

Plans for a separate post office were drawn up in July 1913 by the Government Architect's office and, although they were drawn by Stuart R Tennent,⁶ they were almost certainly approved by Government Architect, John Campbell.⁷ The, soon to be constructed, Post Office was mentioned in a December 1912 newspaper article that reported that a "coin in the slot telephone" would be allocated to the new building.⁸ Tenders were called to demolish an existing building on site in September 1912⁹ and further tenders were called to construct the new Post Office in October 1913.¹⁰ The successful contractor was Parkin Brothers (Wellington) in the sum of £1120 8s 3d.¹¹ Drainage plans were lodged with the city council in January 1914¹² and it seems likely that the building was constructed and opened at some time before May 1914 when there it was noted in a local newspaper that, although the post office had opened recently, the promised payphone had not been installed.¹³

The building was designed as a two storey post office and postmaster's residence. There were two entrance doors to Cleveland Street, and one led to the private boxes, the other into the public area and service counter.

¹ Note: this history is an updated version of the Michael Kelly & Russell Murray, "The Former Brooklyn Post Office, 22 Cleveland Street" unpublished research report for the WCC DPC 53, 2005

² R. M Startup, *New Zealand Post Offices* (Postal History Society of New Zealand, Whenuapai, 1993), p.6.

³ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand Vol. 1, Wellington Provincial District* (Cyclopedia Co. Ltd., Wellington 1897), p.799; Joy Vickers, *Early Brooklyn* (Millwood Press, Wellington, 1983), p.38.

⁴ Vickers, p.7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See signature on the July 1913 plans, Archives New Zealand reference ABKK__ W4358_289 / __ PWD 33819

⁷ Pers. comm. P. Richardson (author of thesis on John Campbell) to M. Kelly.

⁸ TRADE JOTTINGS *Evening Post*, Issue 142, 12 December 1912, Page 8

⁹ Page 2 Advertisements Column 1, *Evening Post*, Issue 66, 14 September 1912, Page 2

¹⁰ Page 2 Advertisements Column 5, *Dominion*, 18 October 1913, Page 2

¹¹ Page 6 Advertisements Column 5, *Evening Post*, 16 December 1913, Page 6

¹² Drainage Plans 22 Cleveland Street, 21/1/1914. Wellington City Archives (WCA).; Page 6 Advertisements Column 5, *Evening Post*, 16 December 1913, Page 6

¹³ LOCAL AND GENERAL. *Dominion*, Volume 7, Issue 2150, 16 May 1914, Page 4

The ground floor working area of the post office included a mail room and a telephone exchange, and the outbuildings included a fuel room, WC and urinal for the post office, and a separate wash house, fuel room and WC for the postmaster's residence. The first floor of the post office was built as a two bedroom apartment.¹⁴ The first post-mistress was Miss E.K. Stewart.

Between 1945 and 1951 the post office handled well over 100,000 separate items each year.¹⁵ The volume dropped off during the 1950s and 1960s to the high tens of thousands. By 1969 numbers picked up again, and returned to the volumes seen during the 1940s. The last record, 1986-1987, describes a volume of 110,476 items.¹⁶

The building was managed by the Ministry of Works and their records note that it survived the 1942 Wellington/Wairarapa earthquake without damage, but a further inspection in 1964 noted that although the building was not a "severe earthquake risk" it should be replaced within the next ten years.¹⁷ A photograph of the building shows that, by 1976, the missing payphone had been installed.

The Brooklyn Post Office operated until 1989 when the New Zealand Post Office became a state owned enterprise and the Brooklyn office became one of many victims of the rationalisation of services and outlets.

The building was bought by husband and wife Martin and Jennifer Thomas in 1989¹⁸ and work started in 1992 to turn it into a family home. Interior spaces were been modified and the back of the house was extended, but it largely retains its original external form.¹⁹

It was later run as a boutique hotel, but is presently a private home. Francis Lepper, Sandra Lepper and Sybil Ramsden now own it.²⁰ Postal services, in a neatly symmetrical twist of fate, are provided from a nearby shop as they were in the early days of Brooklyn.

¹⁴ Original plans: Archives NZ reference ABKK__ W4358_289 / __ PWD 33819

¹⁵ AAME w4458 BRL Box 11. Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

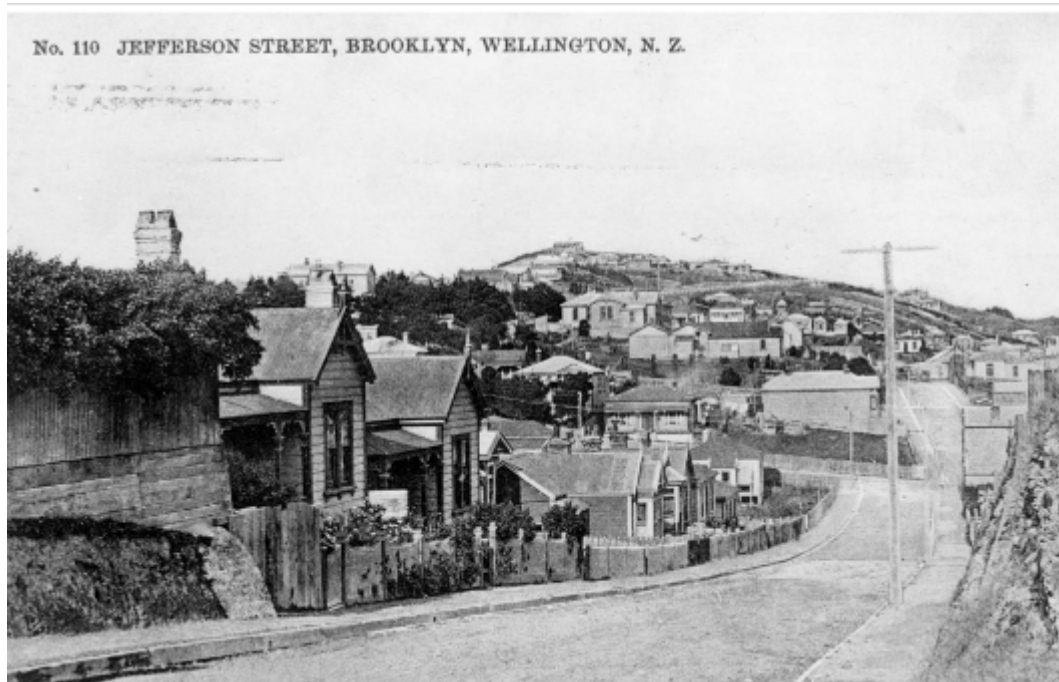
¹⁶ Records of postal traffic at the Brooklyn Post Office between 1945 and 1987 have been located. Counting methods and ways of describing different postal items appear to have changed over this period, and ideally, other factors such as population growth in Brooklyn need to be taken into account as well. However, basic trends can be determined without this information.

¹⁷ Correspondence file: Archives NZ reference ABWN_889_ W5021_16 / __20/136_1

¹⁸ CT WN28D/975.

¹⁹ Building Permits 00060:6:225 and 00060:73:2871, 1993 (WCA).

²⁰ Ibid



C.1912 – 1913 image of Jefferson Street with a view south towards Cleveland Street. (Note the photograph is labelled ca.1914, but this is in variance with other sources as the earlier building on the post office site was demolished or removed at some time after September 1912)²¹



Enlarged part of previous photo to show the existing cottage on the Post Office site.

²¹ Ca.1914 Waldie's Brooklyn Series. Jefferson Street, Brooklyn, Wellington. Walker, A (Mr), fl 1968 :Postcards of New Zealand towns. Ref: PAColl-6639-002. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23128153>

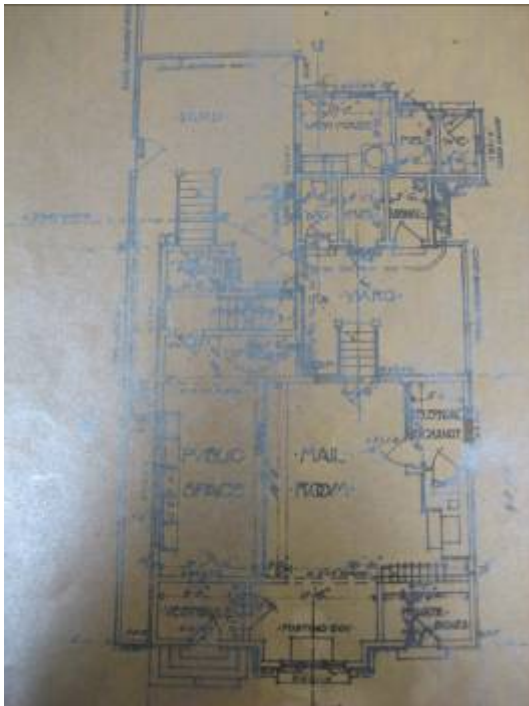


c.1914 photograph from Todman Street with a view towards Cleveland Street (note, this photograph is labelled as having been taken in 1912, but this is at variance with other sources)²²

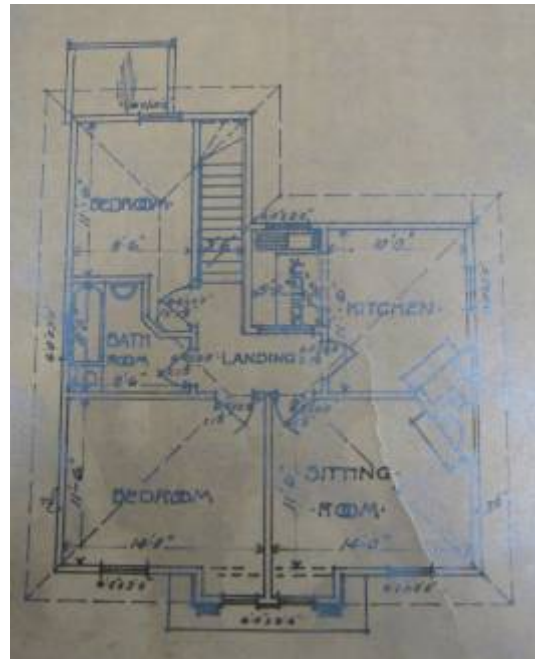


Enlarged part of previous photograph to show the Post Office building at the intersection of Cleveland and Jefferson Streets.

²² Part 2 of a 4 part panorama looking over the suburb of Brooklyn, Wellington. Smith, Sydney Charles, 1888-1972 :Photographs of New Zealand. Ref: 1/1-019982-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22839086>

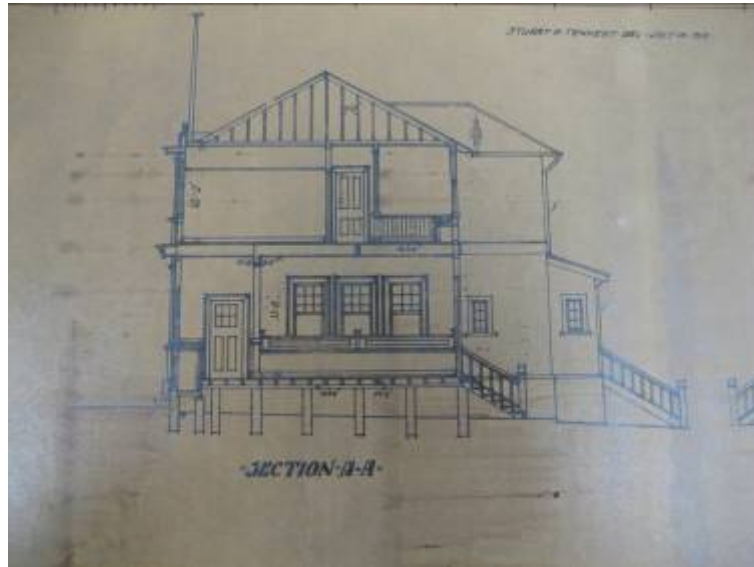


1913 – Ground floor plan as proposed. The drawing shows that the main entrance of the building was located at the west of the Cleveland Street façade. There was a Vestibule that led to a Public Space. The Mail Room was located behind the public counter and had access to the posting boxes that were located under the arched window on the Cleveland Street façade. The secondary (eastern) door to the Cleveland Street façade led to the Private Boxes. ²³

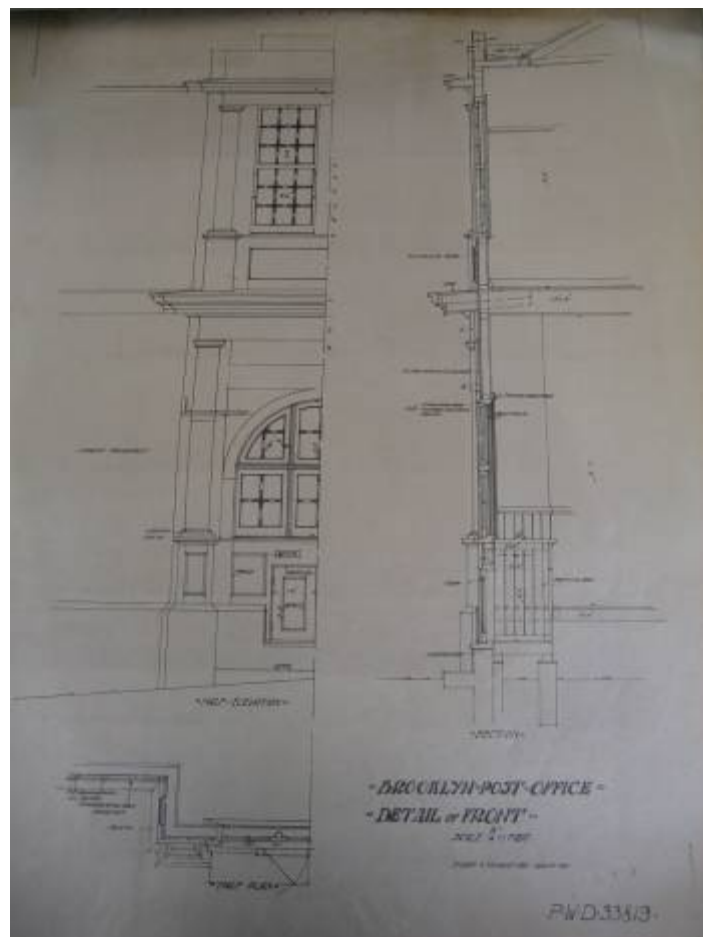


1913 – First floor plan as proposed. This drawing shows the first floor of the Post Office was occupied by a two bedroom flat.

²³ July 1913 plans, Archives New Zealand reference ABKK__ W4358_289 / __ PWD 33819



1913 - Section as Proposed – this drawings shows an elevation of the Post Office counter when seen from the Mail Room. The section cuts through the posting boxes that were located under the arched headed window from Cleveland Street.



1913 – Brooklyn Post Office – Detail of Front. This drawing shows a section through the front of the building, including details of the mail slots below the arched window. The build up of the external walls can be seen – cement render on expanded metal lath, on timber battens over building paper, all on a timber frame structure. This drawing is annotated *Stuart R Tennent. DEL. July 14, 1913. PWD 33819.*



Brooklyn Post Office (1976)²⁴

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1913	drawings prepared
1914	building opened
1987	Conversion to residential use – SR8680696
c.1999 - 2005	Health licence for a The Simply Food Catering Company Ltd – SR 53063
1993	drainage and earthworks – SR2781

²⁴ Image: Archives New Zealand reference AAME_8106 _W5603_95 /_1/B/17.

1.3 Architect

Government Architect (1909 – 1988)

The colonial government established the office of the Superintendent of Public Works in 1840 and a Colonial Architect's office in 1869.²⁵ William Henry Clayton (1823-1877) held the position of Colonial Architect from 1869.²⁶

The position of Government Architect was established in 1909 and the first incumbent was John Campbell (1857–1942) who had earlier held the position of draughtsman in charge of the Public Buildings Division of the Public Works Department. John Campbell established Edwardian Baroque as the government style for police stations, courthouses and post offices throughout New Zealand, and his best known buildings include the Dunedin Police Station (1895-6), Public Trust Office, Wellington (1905-9) and Dunedin Law Courts (1899-1902). John Campbell was succeeded by John Mair as Government Architect in 1923. The post was disestablished in 1988 when the design of public buildings by private architectural practices became the norm.²⁷

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The former Brooklyn Post Office stands four-square on the corner of Cleveland Street and a small side street, Jefferson Street, at the beginning of the rise at the eastern end of Brooklyn's main shopping area. It has some townscape value because of its location and its forthright character and its position in a setting that remains relatively original. It has group value in the context of the predominantly low-rise old commercial buildings along Cleveland Street.

It is a two-storey building, with features typical of many post offices built in the Edwardian period in suburban and small town locations throughout New Zealand. The exterior walls are finished in rough-cast cement render laid over expanded metal laths on a timber structural frame.²⁸ A smooth band of render acts as a string course and denotes the first floor level. The exterior joinery is timber, generally consisting of double-hung timber sliding sashes, with the top sash divided into 9 lights, the bottom sash in a single light, set flush with the wall face and trimmed with large timber facings.

The architectural emphasis is on the front façade. The central section of this façade steps forward from the main wall line and terminates in a stepped parapet which breaks the line of the main roof. The central section is decorated with pairs of Doric pilasters which frame a semi-circular headed window (divided into six sections, with multi-pane glazing) on the ground floor and a pair of double-hung windows on the first floor, each with both sashes divided into 9 lights.

²⁵ Ben Schrader. 'Public buildings - State-sector buildings', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 29-May-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/public-buildings/2>

²⁶ Anna Crighton. 'Clayton, William Henry - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c20/1>

²⁷ Ben Schrader. 'Public buildings - State-sector buildings', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 29-May-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/public-buildings/2>

²⁸ Original plans, Archives New Zealand reference ABKK__ W4358_289 / __ PWD 33819

On either side of the facade there is a door to the ground floor, with a six-light glazed panel and a window to the first floor. The roof is hipped, sheathed in corrugated iron, with open eaves all around with the rafter ends and sarking exposed. A tall chimney on the east side, still with its moulded capping and chimney pots, adds an interesting asymmetry to the composition.

While the interior of the building has been substantially modified for its new accommodation (now residential) use, the exterior form and detail remains highly authentic.

Overall, the building and setting retains a high level of authenticity and interest and makes a strong contribution to the character of the local streetscape.²⁹

2.2 Materials

Render on expanded metal lath over timber structure
Timber doors and windows
Corrugated mild steel roof

2.3 Setting

The former Brooklyn Post Office site contains, in addition to the main building, a variety of interesting outbuildings, including a very old single garage, a sleep-out, modern in appearance but possibly quite old, and a contemporary shed. There are several mature trees and a six-foot timber fence. A large, and probably original, pohutukawa overhangs the site on the Jefferson Street side.

The building sits just at the top of the “bowl” that contains the Brooklyn shops and represents a corner-stone of the original suburb. The land rises, fairly sharply, to the north and east and falls gently to the south and west. The adjoining buildings are principally two-storey residential, mostly old, along both streets; across the road and to the west the buildings are a mixture of modern and old two-storey commercial buildings. The former Post Office makes an important positive contribution to, and is enhanced by this setting, and helps confer a strong sense of historical authenticity on this part of Brooklyn.³⁰

²⁹ Adapted from Michael Kelly & Russell Murray, “The Former Brooklyn Post Office, 22 Cleveland Street” unpublished research report for the WCC DPC 53, 2005

³⁰ From Michael Kelly & Russell Murray, “The Former Brooklyn Post Office, 22 Cleveland Street” unpublished research report for the WCC DPC 53, 2005

3.0 Sources

Building Permits 00060:6:225 and 00060:73:2871, 1993 (WCA).

Correspondence file: Archives NZ reference ABWN_889_W5021_16 / __20/136_1

Crighton, Anna. 'Clayton, William Henry - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c20/1>

Ct vol 42 folio 234; CT vol 57 folio 34; CT209 folio 197; CT 28D/975; CT WN 28D/975

Cyclopedia of New Zealand Vol. 1, Wellington Provincial District (Cyclopedia Co. Ltd., Wellington 1897

Dominion, 18 October 1913

Drainage Plans 22 Cleveland Street, 21/1/1914. Wellington City Archives (WCA)

Evening Post, 14 September 1912; *Evening Post*, 16 December 1913

July 1913 plans. Archives New Zealand ref ABKK__ W4358_289 / __ PWD 33819

Image: Archives New Zealand reference AAME_8106_W5603_95 / _1/B/17.

Kelly, Michael & Russell Murray. "The Former Brooklyn Post Office, 22 Cleveland Street" unpublished research report for the WCC DPC 53, 2005

LOCAL AND GENERAL. *Dominion*, 16 May 1914

Personal communications P. Richardson (author of thesis on John Campbell) to M. Kelly.

Records of Post Office mail volumes. AAME w4458 BRL Box 11. Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

Schrader, Ben. 'Public buildings - State-sector buildings', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 29-May-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/public-buildings/2>

Startup, R. M. *New Zealand Post Offices* (Postal History Society of New Zealand, Whenuapai, 1993)

TRADE JOTTINGS *Evening Post*, 12 December 1912

Vickers, Joy. *Early Brooklyn* (Millwood Press, Wellington, 1983)

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 former Brooklyn Post Office is a good representative example of an early 20th century public building constructed in the early years of the development of the Wellington suburb of Brooklyn. The building is notable for its rough cast rendered finish, wide overhanging eaves, and for the composition of its Cleveland Street façade with the prominent central bay set over a carefully proportioned arched timber window.

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 is a local landmark for its size (two-stories in an area where single storey dwellings predominate), architecture, and location (a prominent corner site at the eastern end of the Brooklyn's centre, opposite the bus turn-around and the Brooklyn library).

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?

The building was used as a suburban Post Office for over 75 years and has an association with the early years of the development of suburban Brooklyn.

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 site is likely to have been occupied pre-1900

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 building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of suburban Brooklyn.

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 building is thought to be the only surviving example of an Edwardian era post office building in greater Wellington.

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?*

Although the internal fit out of the original post office has been removed, the exterior of the building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions and retains much of its original built fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

5.0Appendix
Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	None	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	None	
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	missing	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	
Plan change?	DPC 53	heritage report
Heritage Area Report	none	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	none	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	y	
HPT website	none	
HPT files	none	
Conservation Plan	none	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	y	

Background research