

Hope Gibbons Building

7-11 Dixon Street



Image: Charles Collins, 2015

Summary of heritage significance

- The Hope Gibbons Building was built in two parts, the first in 1916 and the second in 1925-26; both are good representative examples of Stripped Classical commercial architecture. The 1916 building is notable for the simplicity of its decorative scheme and the elegance of its proportions. The 1925-26 building is notable for its Chicago-style design with rusticated 'base', simple five-storey 'shaft' and elaborate two-storey entablature.
- The building has historic value due to its association with the family run company Hope Gibbons Limited and was the site of a 1952 fire which destroyed many government documents, resulting in the Archival Act of 1957.
- The building has townscape value for its prominent location at the corner of Dixon and Taranaki Street.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| District Plan: | Map 16 Reference 100 |
| Legal Description: | Lots 1-4 DP 65219 Pt Secs 184,186 Town of Wellington |
| Heritage Area: | No |
| HPT Listed: | Not registered |
| Archaeological Site: | Maori site of significance Central City NZAA R27/270 |
| Other Names: | Inglewood Place |
| Key physical dates: | 1916 1925-26 |
| Architect / Builder: | Architect: J.M Dawson Builder: J.W. McKeon (1925-26) |
| Former uses: | Offices |
| Current uses: | Bar, offices & gymnasium |
| Earthquake Prone Status: | (124 Served) – expires 18/01/2025 SR 167334 |

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

Hope Gibbons was the name given to members of the second and third generations of the Gibbons family, a most successful merchant family. Hopeful Gibbons (senior) was one of 12 offspring of Robert and Sarah Gibbons who arrived in New Zealand in 1861. He was educated in Nelson but left at the age of 16. He first reached prominence when he established the Patea Brewery. He later bought the Wanganui Brewery and went on to become a prosperous businessman, politician and local identity but, with the exception of some overseas trips, remained based in Wanganui.

His eldest son Hopeful Barnes Gibbons (1882-1955) was in charge of the firm's expansion to Wellington in 1910. The firm had bought a stake in the business of J.B. Clarkson. In 1916, under this moniker, the first building was erected in Inglewood Place. Designed by architect Joseph Dawson, who had a close professional relationship with the family, the building was intended to be one part of a larger complex. It replaced what the company later described as a 'slum Area.'¹ The building was immediately requisitioned for the war effort but later handed back. In 1918 the Colonial Motor Company was acquired, leading to an involvement with the motor industry that continues to this day.

In 1920 the firm was renamed Hope Gibbons Ltd. and planning began for the next stage of building. The architect was again Joseph Dawson and he designed a much grander and taller addition with a facade on Dixon Street. The permit was granted in May 1925² and the builder was J.W. McKeon. Work was completed in 1926.³ The building was Wellington's tallest for several decades. It has housed many of the firm's enterprises since it was built as well as a number of tenants. It has had some modifications, both internal and external, most significantly the removal of ornamentation around the cornice after the 1942 earthquake.

Prior to the development of the National Archives many government records were housed in the Hope Gibbons building.⁴ In 1952 a fire in the building destroyed records belonging to the Lands and Survey Department, the Marine Department, the Ministry of Works, and the Labour Department.⁵ The result of this fire led to the passing of the Archives Act in 1957.

The Hope Gibbons firm continued to grow and acquire agencies in the automotive and other industries, although the breweries were sold. Large houses were built in Lyall Bay and in Khandallah but neither are in the hands of the family any longer. The sixth generation of the family is now involved in the firm.⁶ The building is about to undergo seismic strengthening that should increase its strength from 30% to 100% of NBS (new building standard).⁷

¹ Hope Gibbons Trust, 'History of Hope Gibbons Ltd.', p.3.

² '7-11 Dixon Street, Building,' 04 May 1925, 00055:46:A4345, Wellington City Archives.

³ New Zealand Architectural and Building Review, (August 1926), p.12.

⁴ Kristine Walsh, 'Heroinies help save NZ history,' *Gisborne Herald*, (5 January, 2008), accessed 7 August 2012, <http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/article/?id=1141>.

⁵ 'Functions and Scope of National Archives,' from An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, edited by A. H. McLintock, originally published in 1966. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 22-Apr-09, accessed 7 August 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/archives/3>.

⁶ History taken from: Wellington City Council, '7-11 Dixon Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), DIXO1.

⁷ Hank Schouten, 'Valued landmark to get \$6m upgrade' *DomPost* 01/12/2012



Overlooking Taranaki Street, Wellington c.1929., Smith, Sydney Charles, 1888-1972: Photographs of New Zealand. Ref: 1/2-045208-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand



Parapet detail (2012) WCC ref 14 Nov 2012 092

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1928 Reinstatement of roof damaged by fire (00056:59:B5683)
Caretakers quarters on roof (00056:62:B5945)
- 1940 Reinstatement of building (00056:244:B20354)
- 1950 Lift motor room (00056:380:B29222)
Loading deck (00056:388:B29880)
- 1953 Reinstatement of fire damage (00056:457:B34703)
- 1956 Extend lift to pent house (00056:533:B39475)
- 1960 Building alterations (00058:148:C7018)
- 1970 Entrance renovation (00058:699:C31917)
- 1972 Upgrade lift (00058:773:C34849)
Mezzanine floor (00058:818:C36661)
Building alterations – entrance (00058:822:C36823)
- 1977 Fire reinstatement, level 4 (00058:1100:C47572)
Fire reinstatement, 4th floor (00058:1104:C47743)
- 1982 Additions and alterations 7th floor (00058:0:C59688)
- 1984 Canopy (00058:0:C65465)
- 1997 Gymnasium (00078:713:37701)
- 2004 Restaurant additions and alterations (00078:2253:114631)
- 2007 Refurbishment of bars, basement and ground floor (00078:2637:168629)
- 2013 Consent for seismic upgrade SR280942

Occupation history

- 1916 J.B Clarkson Ltd (Company renamed Hope Gibbons Ltd. In 1920)

1.3 Architect

J. M. Dawson (1877-1956) was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in this district and Dawson's education included a background in construction work. In 1900 he left New Zealand and travelled to South Africa, England and Australia, returning in 1906 to establish his own architectural practice in Wellington. His buildings include the T.G. McCarthy Building, Willis Street (1913), Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913), and the Hope Gibbons Building, Dixon Street (1925). Dawson was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, formed in 1905, and became a Fellow of the Institute in 1913. He was its president from 1938-1940. Having appointed Jack Ian King (1900-1972) as his first partner in 1929, Dawson entered semi-retirement in 1946, retiring in 1948. The firm he founded continues as King and Dawson.⁸

⁸ New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Professional Biographies, 'Joseph McClatchie Dawson,' accessed 7 August 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=62>.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

1916 building

The early part of the Hope Gibbons building is the five storey portion facing onto Inglewood Place. It has tall rusticated columns rising through the three middle floors with the windows recessed, and a plain cornice separating off the top storey. While the walls are masonry, the floors are timber supported on cast iron columns and beams. New steel bracing now strengthens the original structure.

1925 – 26 building

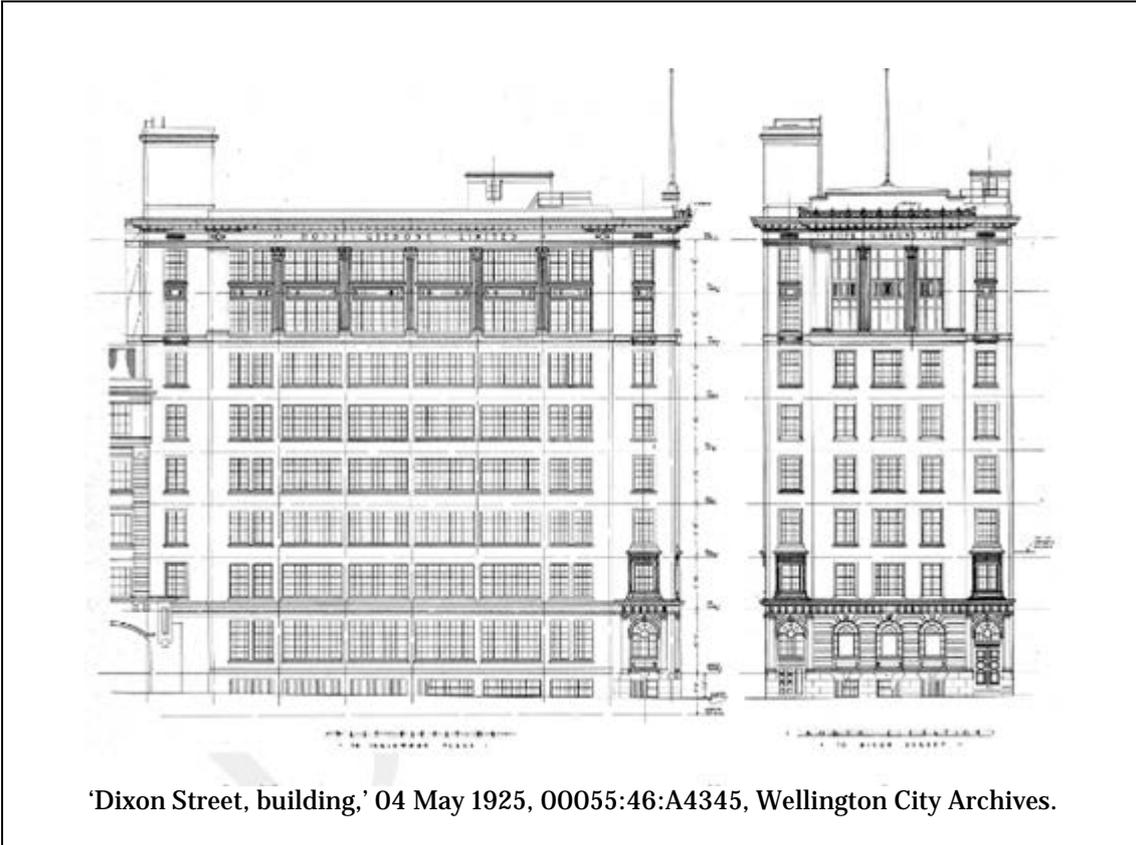
The main part of the building, forming the corner of Inglewood Place and Dixon Street, follows Louis Sullivan's prescription for the Chicago skyscraper: it has a marked base, shaft, and crowning element. It is very much a transitional building, Stripped Classical in style, a well-proportioned eight-storey structure which has been successfully adapted to new uses over the years. The construction is reinforced concrete, with metal window joinery.

The base of the building is rusticated, with arched piers framing windows and doors. The 'shaft' of the building is very plain in style, rising another five storeys, with regular square-headed windows.

A simple cornice separates the shaft from the two-storey 'crown.' The crown features a giant order of Corinthian columns framing a shallow window bay in the centre of the Dixon Street facade. This is very much a stripped version of the classical temple front but it works effectively in visual terms. The building is capped by a pronounced cornice, with a small attic storey above embellished with egg-and-dart moulding.⁹

The buildings have had few intrusive modern alterations and additions. The building was originally designed without a verandah and the modern glazed canopy is a modern element that provides some amenity value to pedestrians but has no heritage value. The replacement aluminium windows on the 1925-26 building are an unsympathetic alteration to an otherwise fine heritage building.

⁹ Wellington City Council, '7-11 Dixon Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), DIXO1.



2.2 Materials

1916 building

- Masonry
- Timber floors supported on cast iron columns and beams
- Strengthened by steel bracing

1925-26 addition

- Reinforced concrete
- Metal window joinery

2.3 Setting

The Hope Gibbons Building is located on the corner of Dixon Street and Taranaki Street. It overlooks the intersection with Manners Street, Dixon Street, Taranaki Street and Courtenay Place. This wide and open intersection offers uninterrupted views of both the eastern and northern elevations of the building. To the west the building is separated from a multi-storey building of equal height by a four storey intermediary building. The height of the building means that it can be seen in a clear line of sight from as far as the far end of Courtenay Place and the Manners Street and Victoria Street intersection.

3.0 Sources

'Functions and Scope of National Archives.' From An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, edited by A. H. McLintock, originally published in 1966. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Updated 22-Apr-09. Accessed 7 August 2012.

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/archives/3>.

Hope Gibbons Trust. 'History of Hope Gibbons Ltd.'

New Zealand Architectural and Building Review. August 1926.

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<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=62>.

Walsh, Kristine. 'Heroines help save NZ history.' *Gisborne Herald*. 5 January, 2008. Accessed 7 August 2012. <http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/article/?id=1141>.

Wellington City Council, '7-11 Dixon Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), DIXO1.

Wellington City Archives

'Dixon Street, building,' 04 May 1925, 00055:46:A4345

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 Hope Gibbons Building was built in two parts, the first in 1916 and the second in 1925-26; both are good representative examples of Stripped Classical commercial architecture. The 1916 building is notable for the simplicity of its decorative scheme and the elegance of its proportions. The 1925-26 building is notable for its Chicago-style design with rusticated 'base', simple five-storey 'shaft' and elaborate two-storey entablature.

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 townscape value for its prominent location at the corner of Dixon and Taranaki Street.

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's heritage value benefits from its association of other industry-related structures in the Te Aro area, including the CMC Building, the Ford Workshops in Ebor Street and Manthel Motors.

Historic Value:

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

The building is associated with the Gibbons family, who founded Hope Gibbons Limited, a company which acquired businesses in the motor and brewing industries. The building has been occupied by the Gibbons family for over six generations.

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

The building has a historic association with the New Zealand Government. It was the site of the historic 1952 Hope Gibbons building fire which destroyed many government documents and resulted in the passing of the Archives Act in 1957. The building was also initially used by the government for office space during the First World War.

Scientific Value:

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

There was pre-1900 human activity on this site. Although some of the sites have been altered by rebuilding or landscaping or sub-divisional change, there is archaeological value in the immediate surrounds. The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA 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?

The building has symbolic value to the Gibbons family as it represents the success of their company.

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 buildings have had few intrusive modern alterations or additions over the past 80+ years and contribute to the sense of place and continuity of Dixon and Taranaki Streets.

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

The building will have sentimental value for members of the Gibbons family.

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 has retained a significant amount of its exterior fabric therefore it has authenticity.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

Because it acts as a landmark on the corner of Dixon and Taranaki Streets, as well as for historic association with the Gibbons family and the Wellington automotive industry, the building is important on a regional level.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

| Source | Y/N | Comments |
|--|-----|----------|
| 1995 Heritage Inventory | Y | |
| 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory | Y | |
| 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 | | |
| Heritage Area Spreadsheet | | |
| Heritage items folder (electronic) | | |
| HPT website | Y | |
| HPT files | | |
| Conservation Plan | | |
| Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2) | Y | |