

Huddart Parker Building

2 - 6 Jervois Quay (1 Post Office Square)



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The building is a very bold and competent example of Chicago-style architecture and was designed by Crighton, McKay and Haughton a prominent and longstanding Wellington architectural practice.
- The building is situated on a prominent corner site at a corner of Post Office Square and Jervois Quay and has a strong street presence particularly when view from the north.
- The building is part of a group of significant heritage buildings that form the Post Office Square Heritage Area, and of a group of heritage buildings that owed their existence to the nearby wharf trade.
- The building retains the name of Huddart Parker, a large trans-Tasman shipping company and is historically significant for being the last of the shipping industry buildings still standing alongside the waterfront.

District Plan:	Map 17, Symbol 155
Legal Description:	LOT 11 DP 11204 on CT WN33D/660.
Heritage Area:	Post Office Square Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Not registered 2012
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	1 Post Office Square 1 - 9 Post Office Square 2 Jervois Quay 10 – 26 Jervois Quay (in error?) 2 – 8 Hunter Street (in error?)
Key physical dates:	1924 (building opened 1925)
Architect / Builder:	Owner: Huddart Parker and Co. Builder: Mitchell and King. Architect: Crichton, McKay and Haughton.
Former uses:	Shipping office
Current uses:	Commercial offices
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 160289 Bdg StrengthInv AKA 1 Post Office Square. Notice Issued 1/10/2009 Notice Exp 18/3/2023

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

Huddart Parker was a Melbourne based shipping company which ran services between Australia and New Zealand. They had offices on Post Office Square, in Queen's Chambers (so named for its proximity to Queens Wharf) from 1893.² Prior to this the site was occupied by the Pier Hotel, built on land reclaimed by the Provincial Government between 1857 and 1863. Queen's Chambers were damaged by fire in 1923³ the building was later demolished ("wrecked to ground level"⁴), along with T. & W. Young's warehouse next door in Jervois Quay and, in their place, a new building was constructed for Huddart Parker in 1924.⁵ It was designed by Crichton, McKay and Haughton and built by Mitchell and King and opened in February 1925.⁶

Huddart Parker became one of the key players in the trans-Tasman shipping trade, a major rival of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand. Huddart, Parker & Co. Ltd was founded in 1876 in Geelong by James Huddart, T.J. Parker, John Traill, and Captain T. Webb. James Huddart's uncle, Captain Peter Huddart made his fortune as a coal merchant for use in the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s and T.J. Parker had been a merchant, shipping agent and (later) ships owner⁷ in Geelong from circa 1853.⁸

The company was successful and by 1882 had established a service between Melbourne and Sydney and by 1886 ran another between Melbourne and Adelaide. In the 1890s the shipping company covered the principal ports in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, with a route to New Zealand established in 1893.⁹ Wellington was selected as the location for a New Zealand Headquarters,¹⁰ and the company operated from No.3 Queen's Chambers.¹¹ The company ran the steam ship *Tasmania* on a route from Auckland to Napier, Wellington, Lyttleton and Sydney every three weeks from December 1893,¹² and other routes followed thereafter. Huddart Parker also operated the Australia, New Zealand and Canada mail route for many years from 1893, and it seems likely that the New Zealand to Australia shipping route was established so as to secure government subsidies for the Canada mail run.¹³

¹ WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Jerv1

² *Evening Post*, 15 December 1893, Page 3

³ FIRE IN THE CITY *Evening Post*, 23 April 1923, Page 8

⁴ Permit A2390, .Offices, Jervois Quay for Huddart & Parker and Co., WCC Archives

⁵ A GREAT SHIPPING BUILDING *Evening Post*, 20 February 1924, Page 8

⁶ *Evening Post*, 9 February 1925, Page 5

⁷ Flotilla Australia Website accessed July 2012 <http://www.flotilla-australia.com/huddart.htm>

⁸ The Ship's List website accessed July 2012 <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/huddart.htm>

⁹ The Ship's List website accessed July 2012 <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/huddart.htm>

¹⁰ OUR STEAM SERVICES. HUDDART, PARKER & CO.'S NEW ARRANGEMENTS. WELLINGTON TO BE THE HEAD. QUARTERS. [B... [truncated] *Evening Post*, 25 November 1893, Page 2

¹¹ *Evening Post*, 15 December 1893, Page 3

¹² EVENING POST. MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1893. MINISTERIAL ABUSE OF POWER. *Evening Post*, 4 December 1893, Page 2

¹³ THE VANCOUVER SERVICE. CALLS TO BE MADE AT WELLINGTON BOTH WAYS. *Evening Post*, 7 June 1897, Page 6; THE VANCOUVER MAIL SERVICE. *Evening Post*, 16 February 1899, Page 5;

One of their ships, the *Wanganella*, was involved in one of most protracted and famous ship groundings in the history of the port of Wellington, after it ran on to Barrett's Reef on 19 January 1947.¹⁴ The *Wanganella* had earlier been requisitioned as an Australian Hospital Ship and served in the Middle East, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Borneo and the South Pacific and it was ironic that she ran into Barrett's Reef on her maiden voyage after the war.¹⁵ The stranded boat became a major local attraction until, three weeks later, completely stripped of its cargo and fuel, it was finally hauled off the rocks. The company's repair and salvage costs were substantial.¹⁶

Huddart Parker Ltd was taken over by Bitumen and Oil Refineries of Australia Limited in 1961, but though the company no longer exists the Huddart Parker building still bears its name. The building was substantially refurbished between 1987 and 1990.¹⁷ Until the 2000s it was well known as the headquarters of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union.

The (1963) combined clock and temperature display on top of the building was also once a familiar inner-city landmark. The display was said to be the first "weather forecast in lights" for New Zealand and was operated from the meteorological office. The display used a pattern of 1.5m high lights to create the words "fine", "cloudy", "rain", "change" or "gale" and the latter was chosen in "recognition of Wellington's peculiar needs."¹⁸ The display, which was designed to be read from the Wellington Railway Station, also showed the time in hours, minutes and seconds. It was noted that although Auckland had a sign that displayed the time, Christchurch one that displayed the weather forecast and Dunedin one that displayed the temperature and the time, Wellington's was the only one that was linked to an official source such as the Met Office.

The weather forecast in lights was reminiscent of an earlier Provincial Observatory and adjacent Time Ball.¹⁹ The Time Ball was used to recalibrate ship's chronometers which in turn were used during journeys to establish longitude, an essential requirement for navigation. The Provincial Observatory was established in 1863 and used to take astronomical, meteorological and climatological readings.²⁰ Both the Customhouse and Provincial Observatory were located at Queen's Wharf, very close to the future site of the Huddart Parker Building.

The Huddart Parker building is now owned by the Fruitgrower's Charitable Trust who plan to refurbish and strengthen the building with a proposed completion date of 2013.²¹

¹⁴ Johnson D., 'Wellington Harbour', Wellington Maritime Museum Trust, Wellington 1996 pp.347-349

¹⁵ Wikipedia accessed July 2012 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MS_Wanganella

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kernohan op.cit.

¹⁸ *Evening Post*, "Weather on the Skyline" 5/2/1963; Marklin-users website accessed July 2012 http://www.marklin-users.net/cookee_nz/gasworkstramway/IBMClock-HuddartParker.htm

¹⁹ Maggy Wassilieff, 'Astronomy – overview', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 24-Sep-11 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/astronomy-overview/1/2>

²⁰ Friends of the Botanic Gardens Website accessed July 2012 <http://www.friendswbgo.org.nz/observatories.html>

²¹ Hank Schouton, 'Wellington's Huddart Building Getting New Lease,' *DomPost* 19 May 2012

HUDDART, PARKER AND COMPANY
(LIMITED.)

 **T**HE magnificent new and
fast Passenger Steamer,
T A S M A N I A,
2252 tons, 290 h. power,
Will leave as under (circumstances per-
mitting),
FOR LYTTTELTON,
ON THURSDAY, 7th DECEMBER.
FOR SYDNEY, VIA AUCKLAND,
Calling at Napier and Gisborne, if sufficient
inducement offers,
ON SATURDAY, 9th DECEMBER.
For freight and passage apply to
LEVIN & CO.,-
Agents.

*For continuation of Shipping advertise-
ments see first page*

1893 advertisement for the new New Zealand route for Huddart Parker and Company Ltd.²²



Post Office Square. Image: WCC Archives ref 00138_0_08668

²² *Evening Post*, 28 November 1893, Page 3

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1857 to 1863	Reclamation
Circa 1865	Pier Hotel constructed ²³
Circa 1888	Queen's Chambers constructed ²⁴
1889	Pier Hotel moved to the corner of Customhouse Quay and Grey Street ²⁵
1893	Huddart Parker occupied offices in Queen's Chambers
1925	Huddart Parker Building opened
1941	Fruit-grower's Charitable Trust moved into the building
1961	Huddart Parker Ltd sold to Bitumen and Oil Refineries of Australia Limited
1963/1964	Weather-clock constructed on the roof (C15146)
By 2005	Fruitgrower's Charitable Trust accumulated 100% of ownership of the building.
2012	Proposal by the Fruitgrower's Charitable Trust to refurbish the building and strengthen it to 100% of the current Building Regulations. ²⁶

1.3 Architect

Crichton, McKay & Haughton

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.”²⁷ 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.

James Hector McKay (d. 1944) was probably originally from Scotland and arrived in New Zealand from Australia in 1890.²⁸ He established an architectural partnership with Robert Roy MacGregor which lasted from 1898-1901, before he formed Crichton and McKay with William Crichton. McKay returned to Britain on his retirement in 1926.²⁹

Vivian Haughton (1891 – 1956) joined the practice of Crichton and McKay in 1909 as a pupil, served at Gallipoli in WWI and received a “severe head wound” at the Somme.³⁰ He became a partner in 1926 and sole principal in 1928, as by then Crichton had died and McKay had retired. In 1935 Haughton went into partnership with William McKeon (1896-1973) and in 1952 Haughton established Haughton and Sons³¹ with his son R.B (Bob) Haughton, who later became president of the NZIA, as did William McKeon in 1945-1946.

²³ *Evening Post*, 19 April 1865, Page 2

²⁴ *Evening Post*, 17 April 1888, Page 3

²⁵ ‘Enlargement of the Pier Hotel.’ *Evening Post*, 5 March 1889, Page 2

²⁶ Schouton, 2012

²⁷ *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897*

²⁸ DNZB entry for McKay from www.teara.govt.nz

²⁹ Dictionary of New Zealand Biography (DNZB) database entries for individuals are available from www.bullementfortune.co.nz/BFA_history.html

³⁰ Bullement Fortune website accessed July 2012

³¹ NZHPT Professional Biographies accessed May 2012

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

After Vivian Haughton's death in 1956 the firm became Haughton and Mair. Lindsay Mair was the son of Government Architect John Mair, and in the 1980s the practice became Bulleymont Fortune Architects (BFA).

Crichton, McKay and Haughton were a prominent Wellington architectural practice and designed a number of fine buildings including the Missions to Seamen Building (1903-4), the Alexandra Road Fever Hospital (1918-1920), Braemar (1924), the Huddart Parker Building (1924), and the Dominion Building (1926-28).³²

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture³³

The Huddart Parker building is a good example of what has become known as the Chicago style. The design follows Louis Sullivan's dictum that a building should have a base, trunk and be properly capped. The two-storey base, comprising the ground and first floors, is quite traditional in design. Heavily rusticated, it has a balustraded hood over the main entrance, a plain entablature, and small balconies supported by consoles at second-floor level in the centre and at both ends of the building. A plain cornice separates this base from the four-storey shaft above.

The shaft is more transitional in appearance. Plain and unadorned, with a regular hierarchy of single, paired or triple windows, the shaft exploits the new steel-frame technology that allowed a greater ratio of window to wall area. A horizontal emphasis is present on the facade, balancing the vertical, and giving a sense of proportion and harmony to the building.

A pronounced cornice divides the shaft from the building's seventh-floor "crown". This crown is capped by a dentilled cornice and a shallow stepped parapet. Balconies repeat the design and placement of those on the third floor.

The building is sparsely ornamented, with most of its feature deriving from the composition of the key architectural elements – the rusticated base, strong pattern of windows and the small balconies and prominent cornice lines. This gives the building an elegant formal quality.

The most important façade is that to Grey Street which contains the main entrance to the building. The central three bays of the façade are brought forward of the two corner bays and the entrance is given additional prominence with an overhanging balcony at the second floor level. The exterior of the building remains largely unaltered.³⁴

³² Ibid

³³ WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Jerv1

³⁴ WCC Post Office Square Heritage Area report for DPC 48

2.2 Materials

- Reinforced concrete piles, structural frame, piers, columns, beams, floor and roof slabs.
- Timber ceiling joists with fibrous plaster ceilings
- The original drawings are faint, but the external walls appear to be constructed in reinforced concrete, and the floors to the WCs directly behind the main stair appear to be constructed with timber joists & flooring.
- Internal walls – reinforced concrete walls to stair, elevator, WCs and strong-rooms. Coke filled “patent coke breeze blocks” for all other partitions
- Entrance vestibule – marble cladding

2.3 Setting³⁵

Post Office Square heritage area is a significant and popular urban open space of over 100 years standing surrounded by a group of important former harbour board and commercial buildings. The area is named for the former General Post Office (GPO), which occupied the site of the present-day Hotel Intercontinental and IBM Tower on Customhouse Quay from 1863 to 1974.

The heritage area is not really a square in the conventional sense but it is an open, definable space at the confluence of a number of important streets, and is closely related to the establishment and use of the waterfront by the former Wellington Harbour Board (WHB). In particular, the square was, and is, the key point of access to Queens Wharf, Wellington's most historically important wharf.

The square was created partly by 19th century additions to the original 1857-63 reclamation which gave room to construct buildings on the eastern side of the square and accommodate traffic and even, for a period, a railway. A statue of Queen Victoria was placed there in 1906 (and later removed in 1911), while the island was formed in 1912 to accommodate the tram shelter that later became Clarrie Gibbons. The island has grown considerably in extent since then. With a couple of notable exceptions, the square has undergone only incremental change since the early 20th century and, as a result, it has maintained its basic configuration and essential characteristics. It is, despite the presence of modern buildings on the edges, still recognisably the same place it was 100 years ago.

Post Office Square is a place of high heritage value and importance to Wellington and contains a number of significant heritage buildings. It is a place very familiar to many Wellingtonians and is passed daily by thousands of people, in cars or on foot.

The Post Office Square heritage area is principally an open space defined by a number of significant heritage buildings. The area includes all the buildings bounding the square – on Grey Street and Customhouse and Jervois Quays, as well as Sheds 11 and 13 to the immediate north and the nearby Wharf Offices and Bond Store buildings. The boundary follows the property lines of the key buildings surrounding the square and extends across Jervois Quay to pick up the four former WHB buildings. With one exception, all the buildings within the area boundary contribute to the formation and qualities of the square.

³⁵ WCC Post Office Square Heritage Area report for DPC 48

Buildings

- Wharf Offices (Shed 7 / Wharf Office Apartments, 1896)
- Head Office and Bond Store (Museum of Wellington - City and Sea, 1891-92)
- Shed 11 (1904-05)
- Shed 13 (1904-05)
- Clarrie Gibbons Store (and traffic island, 1912)
- Huddart Parker Building, 2-6 Jervois Quay (1924)
- Tower Building, 50 – 64 Customhouse Quay (1936)
- Intercontinental Hotel, 2 Grey Street (1988)
- Todd Corporation Building, 95 Customhouse Quay, (1987)
- Chapman Tripp Building, 1-13 Grey Street (1976)

With the exception of the latter two, these are all buildings of high heritage significance.

There are a number of other features within the square and on its margins that can be considered part of the heritage area, many of which contribute to its values, including the Queens Wharf gates (1899), a heritage telephone box (c.1938) and a heritage postal box (dating from between 1879 and 1910).

3.0 References

Alexander Turnbull Library

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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 building is a very bold and competent example of Chicago-style architecture.

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 situated on a prominent corner site at a corner of Post Office Square and Jervois Quay and has a strong street presence particularly when viewed from the north. Its rooftop has long been occupied by signage, historically by an illuminated clock and weather forecast, presently by an advertisement for a local radio station and a temperature display. This signage takes advantage of the prominence of the building, particularly for passing traffic along the key transport route of Customhouse and Jervois Quays.

The configuration of open space Post Office Square and the curved junction of Jervois and Customhouse Quay add to the townscape value of this key Wellington corner site.

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 a group of significant heritage buildings that form the Post Office Square Heritage Area.

The building is one of a group of heritage buildings that owed their existence to the nearby wharf trade.

Historic Value:

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

The building retains the name of Huddart Parker, a large trans-Tasman shipping company and is historically significant for being the last of the shipping industry buildings still standing alongside the waterfront.

The building was designed by Crighton, McKay and Haughton, a prominent and longstanding Wellington architectural practice.

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

The building is associated with the nineteenth and twentieth century shipping industry.

Scientific Value:

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

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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 façade has remained (relatively) unaltered for over 80 years and makes a strong positive contribution to the sense of place and continuity of the BNZ /Head Office Heritage Area.

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

The building once held community sentiment and connection for the temperature display and clock that was a prominent feature on the roof. This has somewhat diminished since the removal of the display.

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 exterior has had few intrusive modern alterations and additions and retains much of the authentic building fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international 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	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	none
Plan change?	Y	
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files	Y	
Conservation Plan	N	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research

