

## Heritage Citation



**677 Ann Street, Fortitude Valley**

### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 677 Ann Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
<b>Type of place</b>	Shop/s
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Stripped Classical
<b>Lot plan</b>	L7_RP8825; L6_RP8825
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2011 Date of Citation — January 2009
<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Brick - Painted

**People/associations** M.E. Meyers (Architect)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

675-677 Ann Street is a substantial two-storey brick building built in 1924 during a period of commercial prosperity for Fortitude Valley. Designed exclusively as commercial premises by M. E. Meyers, an eminent Brisbane architect from this period, it is a fine example of his work. As the Queensland branch of the Meat and Allied Trades Federation in the 1950s it has strong associations with the union movement in this era. Since the 1980s it has been a vibrant and successful nightclub and a popular meeting place for Brisbane's gay community. The building is significant to Fortitude Valley as it contributes greatly to the historic streetscape in Ann Street.

## History

Built in 1924, the imposing two-storey brick building was constructed at a time of economic prosperity for Fortitude Valley. Designed by successful Brisbane architect E. M. Meyers, 673 Ann Street was originally built as commercial premises with first floor offices and three ground floor shops. In the 1950s it was the Queensland branch of the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia and played an important role in the union movement in this period. In the 1980s the building was converted to a bustling nightclub and continues to be used as such today.

From the 1860s the population of the Valley grew, having over 1000 residents by this time. The commercial nature of the Valley was also beginning to emerge. Most commercial activity in this period was centred between Ann, Brunswick and Wickham Streets. The improvement of access from the city centre to the Valley due to the levelling of Duncan's Hill between the two areas in the 1870s assisted the growth of this part of Brisbane

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the population of the Valley increased even more, and with this the commercial nature of the Valley centre grew with relatively large scale construction in the area. As this occurred those living within the centre began to move to more suburban areas such as New Farm and Bowen Hills. By the turn of the century the valley heart was commercially dominated and the buildings were of a more substantial nature.

The success of the Valley commercial area at the turn of the century saw large traders such as TC Beirne, McWhirters and Overells department stores encourage shoppers to the Valley. Efficient public transport systems such as electric trams and trains to and through the Valley contributed to the commercial success of the area. In the late twentieth century the Ann Street premises housed several small shops and a residence.

The 1920s was a decade of further growth in Fortitude Valley, with its success as a commercial and industrial hub. In this decade the cutting on Duncan's Hill for Ann Street was widened, opening the Valley even further to the rest of Brisbane, allowing a greater volume of traffic into the area.

From 1918 the property was jointly owned by Robert John McNab and William James Trotter. Both were solicitors in the Brisbane legal firm Chambers, McNab and McNab. They envisaged the commercial potential of this area and desired to build a set of offices and shops on the premises. In June 1923 plans were approved for

the construction of a two-storied brick commercial building on Ann Street. The architect was respected architect E. M. Meyers.

Meyers was an accomplished Brisbane architect, initially articulated to John Hall and Son's firm in the late 1870s and then becoming a partner in 1891 after the death of John Hall. By 1895 Meyers had established his own architectural practice. Myers mostly designed residential and commercial buildings in Brisbane. He served as the honorary architect on the Brisbane Hebrew Synagogue's Board of Management, and designed and built the interior renovation of the Synagogue in 1906. Myers served as secretary of the Queensland Institute of Architects from 1900 to 1905 and vice-president from 1912 to 1923.

The newly constructed shops and offices were leased in 1925 to various businesses including a jeweller, a hairdresser and a music shop. McNab's son Dudley Alexander inherited the title in 1928 after his father's death; he too was a solicitor with his own firm, McNab and Dowling, and became sole owner in 1938 following the death of Trotter.

In 1951 the property was purchased by the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia. Established in 1942, this union was established to help ensure its members' rights at work and to maintain acceptable safety standards within the industry. At the same time the Australian Builder's Labourer's Federation, Queensland branch was established in nearby 697 Ann Street, Tyrrell House. For many Brisbane workers, this area of Ann Street was associated with trade unions and played an important role in their working lives.

The building is presently a thriving nightclub that utilises both the downstairs and upstairs areas for dance floors and bars. As a meeting centre for Brisbane's gay community, the Beat plays an important role in the lives of many Brisbane residents. Although the interior of the building has been altered the exterior is intact and as such plays an important role in the historic streetscape of this part of Ann Street.

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## Description

This is a two-storey brick building fronting Ann Street, Fortitude Valley. It has a high, decorative parapet with a series of windows situated above a hung awning.

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## Statement of significance

### Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

## Historical

### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as an intact example of a substantial brick commercial building, designed and built in the 1920s at a time when Fortitude Valley was increasingly becoming a successful retail centre in Brisbane.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a large interwar commercial building that contributes to the Ann Street historic streetscape.

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## Social

### CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a popular meeting place for Brisbane's gay community since the 1980s.

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## References

1. Queensland Post Office Directories
2. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
3. *Detail Fire Survey: City of Brisbane, 1951*, Mahlstedt's: Consulting Fire Engineers and Surveyors, Melbourne
4. *Metropolitan Water and Sewage Survey Maps, 1914*
5. *North Brisbane Electoral Rolls, 1898 and 1900*

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**Note:** This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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