

Heritage Citation



Key details

Also known as	Revesby House
Addresses	At 282 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Shop/s

Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Free Classical
Lot plan	L2_RP64242
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — May 2006
Construction	Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Henry Roberts (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic

Revesby House was constructed and possibly designed by Henry Roberts in 1921 for Albert Byerley, founder and managing director of the A.C.B. Drapers. Intended to be the first stage of a large complex of buildings, it represents the optimism of the boom period of the 1920s, particularly in the Valley. The drapery operated from the building until it was declared insolvent in 1932.

History

The 1920s was a decade of significant growth in Fortitude Valley. The success it had attained as a commercial and industrial hub from the beginning of the twentieth century, expanded further in the 1920s. In this decade, the newly amalgamated Brisbane City Council undertook major civic work programs in the Valley. Large and small retailers extended their premises and many public and community buildings were erected. Not least of these extensive building plans were those of Albert Charles Byerley, director of the A.C.B. Ladies Drapers.

Byerley had commenced the A.C.B. Ladies Drapers on Wickham Street in the Valley on 13 October 1916 with £5000 worth of stock and 17 employees. Fortitude Valley was not short of drapers in 1916, with the well-known and long-established drapery stores of T.C. Beirne, Overell and Sons and McWhirter and Sons dominating the shopping precinct. The draperies were large, able to provide a wide variety of goods to eager customers, and with a combination of well-priced goods and attractive displays, were capable of attracting enthusiastic crowds of shoppers. Small businesses in the Valley profited from the customers drawn to the draperies, but entering into direct competition with the drapers' firms was risky. Byerley's gamble paid off, however, and by 1923 the A.C.B. employed 600 people, with branches in Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Toowoomba, Warwick and Pittsworth. Byerley even won bowls championships with one of the Overell managers towards the end of the 1910s. At 40 years old, Byerley declared proudly, he was the youngest drapery executive in Australia.

From the 1920s, Byerley and the A.C.B. Drapers embarked on a period of tireless expansion. The A.C.B.'s flagship Valley store was first run from Northcote Chambers on Wickham Street, close to the Wickham Street frontage of the massive Overell department store. In February 1920, Byerley and partner George Henry Birkbeck

obtained title to 32.15 perches of land adjacent to Northcote Chambers, along with a £18,500 mortgage from former land owner Colonel Charles Plant. By April, the A.C.B. Drapers had announced its plans for large extensions to its showrooms. The company spent £38,000 to renovate its branches and promoted its new plans with a building sale. It was boasted that the new building would have the largest single street plate-glass window frontage in the Commonwealth. Plans for brick alterations to the property were approved in October 1920, to be constructed by contractor Henry Roberts. No architect was listed, although Roberts may have been responsible for the design of the building. Roberts was a speculative builder who later went on to become an architect and designed several buildings, particularly as his own investments.

The new building opened in February 1921, with a sketch included in the advertisements of the Brisbane Courier.

In July 1921, the Brisbane Municipal Council approved plans for the A.C.B Ladies' Drapers to build a new brick building, again constructed by Henry Roberts. The first part of the new building was completed in twelve weeks and four days, ready to open in October. The A.C.B.'s business was so large that it continued its occupation of Northcote Chambers (which was owned, in part, by Henry Roberts) as well as moving into the new building. Birkbeck retired from business and the entire property was transferred to Byerley in December.

The second part of the new building was completed in August 1922, just as a fire broke out in the Northcote Chambers building and caused £15,000 worth of damage to stock, as well as to other tenants. All drapery stock was moved into the new building. Expansion continued, with new footwear sections opened in April 1923. At the same time, Byerley proposed to construct a ten-storey building on a newly purchased site adjoining the property in Wickham Street. The building was to have bulk stores, two floors of show rooms, a mail order department, offices, three floors for manufacturing and two storeys for lunch rooms – one for employees, the other for the public. Designed by the Queensland Construction Company, it would cost the A.C.B. £50,000. Byerley entered into a mortgage with the Australian Mutual Providential Society to the value of £24,000 and a second to Colonel Plant for £10,000 (both registered on 10 April).

Work on the foundations was announced to start in May 1923, and the A.C.B again celebrated with a 'building sale'. Progress slowed, and a concrete warehouse was finally approved on 11 March 1924. The buildings between the A.C.B building and Clark Street were cleared at the end of the year; a photograph published in the Brisbane Courier in September 1923 shows workmen from the Queensland Construction Company near the Wickham and Clark Street corner, preparing to demolish the shops.

In the interim, Byerley was expanding the A.C.B. branches to regional Queensland. New premises had been opened in Cairns, Innisfail, Charters Towers in 1924 and Atherton and South Brisbane in 1926, and each branch had been registered as a separate company.

By 1926, however, the A.C.B. had passed the peak of its commercial success. Only one floor and a basement of the ten-storey building had emerged. Two fires broke out in the Valley premises in November 1927, causing £28,115 worth of damage (including £3,298 to the building). Repairs were undertaken by the Queensland Constructional Company, which had set up its offices in the A.C.B's buildings.

Further troubles followed. While Byerley expanded, borrowing from banks and other creditors, the financial situation of his companies began to worsen. The stock market crash and ensuing depression hit in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and by 1930 Byerley was almost certainly insolvent. Officially, however, it was not until 1932 that A.C.B. Limited crashed, with £282,276/12/5 in liabilities and over 130 creditors. In the hearings over the ensuing years, Byerley's one-man A.C.B. drapery chain was described as a 'bubble organisation' which had finally burst. The company was compulsorily wound up and Byerley declared bankrupt. There were only two

secured creditors in the company, both with charges over the Wickham Street property. Of AMP's original £24,000 mortgage, £22,999/14/10 remained, while the estate of Colonel Plant had a £6,000 charge over the property. Byerley had claimed the Wickham-street building was worth £46,150, but it was judged that the property would raise insufficient money to cover the debts of the two creditors. James Malouf, a draper, took possession of the Valley property in October 1932, with the blessing of the Australian Mutual Provident Society.

With debtors to be paid, the A.C.B property was offered for sale at auction in March 1933. The entire property was composed of two allotments, totalling just over a quarter of an acre and with a frontage (138 feet 6 inches) said to be one of the largest in the city. The sites contained two buildings: a 'substantial brick building' of three floors and a basement, with 69 foot and four inch frontage (now number 282). There was also a two-storey building on the site adjacent (now number 302). The properties had an advantageous location near the Brunswick Street train station, but at auction they were passed in without any bids. (Similarly, Foy and Gibson's large premises had received only one bid at auction eight months earlier, while Stewart and Sons' large factory in McLachlan Street was offered for sale unsuccessfully for several years.)

Malouf continued his drapery store from the premises until 1937, when the Australian Mutual Provident Society became the holder of the estate. Smith's furniture store leased the building until 1949, when the Brisbane City Mission relocated there. The Mission purchased the property at number 282 (a site of just under thirty-two perches) in 1952. The building became known as 'Revesby House' after Revesby Holdings purchased it in 1985, using it for shops and offices. In 1987 it passed to Richard and Juliana Martin and was transferred to For Angels Ltd in 2003.

Description

The building is three storeys, of brick construction, and divided into three slightly unequal bays by rendered pilasters. The first and second floor fenestration is identical, consisting of pairs of semi circular arched windows linked by a moulded string course at the springing line. Recessed rendered panels beside the windows contain decorative motifs of tasselled corbs and sunflowers.

The windows are surmounted by broad rendered bands and cornices with decorative brackets to pilasters, and a low, rendered parapet.

Original cast iron columns support a flat awning, and alterations have occurred to the ground floor shopfronts, and the upper.

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

Historical

CRITERION A

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

as evidence of the optimism of the 1920s, manifested in the growth of the commercial district of Fortitude Valley in that decade.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an intact example of a decorative style of 1920s commercial architecture and for its contribution to the streetscape facing the intersection of Wickham and Warner Streets.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit Citation May 1991
2. Queensland Post Office Directories
3. Queensland Land Titles Office Records
4. *The Queenslander*, 1905
5. *The Brisbane Courier*, 1920-1933
6. Brisbane Municipal Council Register of New Buildings, 1920, 1921, 1924
7. Queensland State Archives, Companies Index 1963
8. Department of Attorney-General and Justice, Queensland Births Deaths and Marriages Historic Records
9. Brisbane City Council Library, Brisbane Images, 'Wickham Street – Fortitude Valley' BCC-B54-33716

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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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