

Heritage Citation



Apothecaries Hall (former)

Key details

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| Also known as | Downes Shoes |
| Addresses | At 690 Ann Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006 |
| Type of place | Shop/s, Shophouse, Clinic |
| Period | Victorian 1860-1890 |
| Style | Free Classical |
| Lot plan | L2_SP193210; L5_SP198092; L4_SP193209; L822_SP192737; L2_SP193207; L3_SP193210; L813_SP192741; L5_SP193201; L6_SP193211; L4_SP193212; L106_SP196993; L119_SP196969; L811_SP192742; L812_SP192742; L1_SP193199; L1_SP193204; L101_SP196984; L107_SP196982; L108_SP196982; L810_SP192742; L120_SP196969 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2010 |
| Construction | Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Face brick |
| Criterion for listing | (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic |

The former Apothecaries Hall on Ann Street, Fortitude Valley functioned continuously as a pharmacy for about 40 years. Moses Ward, an early Brisbane chemist and dentist, operated at these premises from 1863 until 1875. The property was then purchased by James Henley Fitzgibbon who continued the business, operating as a dispensing and family chemist until the early 1900s. Fitzgibbon and Ward were prominent pharmacists in early Brisbane who helped to define the profession in Queensland. They were among the founders of the Pharmacy Society, Pharmacy Board and pushed for the enactment of the Pharmacy Act 1884. The building, constructed in 1882 to a design by Alfred Hubbard, also illustrates Fortitude Valley's development as an important commercial and retail centre in the late nineteenth century, and along with Bragg's Bakery next door, makes a strong contribution to the streetscape.

History

Apothecary Halls were founded in England in the early seventeenth century. The halls were built by the British Society of Apothecaries, a guild for those preparing, prescribing and selling drugs, which was established in

1617. The first hall was constructed in London around that time, but burnt down. Its replacement, constructed in 1671/2, still stands. As well as being forerunners of modern-day pharmacies, the Apothecaries' Halls in England regulated the pharmacists of the nineteenth century, holding examinations which chemists had to pass in order to become qualified. In the newly-formed colony of Queensland, which had no Apothecary Halls, chemists and apothecaries were registered by the Medical Board. The requirements for apothecaries under the Medical Board were much less stringent than Apothecary Halls in England: applicants did not have to pass examinations, merely presenting their credentials to the board for approval. Master apothecaries could also be registered as doctors. It was a system without checks and balances and carried the potential danger that under-qualified chemists could become doctors, as nearly happened to one apothecary, Moses Ward.

Moses Ward and his family arrived in Queensland from Devonshire, England in November 1862. Ward had trained as a chemist in the North Devon Infirmary and was nearly registered as a doctor in Queensland, although he lacked the relevant master apothecary certificate. He was instead adjudged a qualified Chemist and Druggist. On 16 December, 1862, Ward announced his purchase of T.C. Drew's Ann Street chemist and druggist business in Fortitude Valley. Thomas Codner Drew, one of the first chemists in Brisbane, had opened this branch of his Queen Street druggist and chemist business in Fortitude Valley in late 1861. This business seems to have been located across the road from the present site, in premises adjoining the Foresters' Arms, which was also the site of the primary school. Fortitude Valley in the 1860s was sparsely populated and difficult to reach, with access from the city blocked by Duncan's Hill. Businesses catered only to the needs of the local community throughout the 1860s and most of the 1870s. The majority of these businesses were located in Ann Street, the first commercial district in the Valley.

Ward renamed the pharmacy and opened for business from the 'Apothecaries Hall' in 1863. Advertisements for the Apothecaries Hall featured almost daily in local newspaper The Courier from February to October 1863. In 1864, Ward purchased the property from Thomas Smith, advertised for let his former 'desirable business premises in Ann-street, Fortitude Valley' and proclaimed in the Brisbane Courier that he had relocated 'to his new and commodious premises, immediately opposite those lately occupied by him in Ann-Street, Fortitude Valley'. These premises, a house and shop, were valued by the Municipal Assessment Revision Court in 1869 at £50 per annum.

Given the isolated nature of the Valley, it is not surprising that businesses like Ward's took on the roles of other trades which were missing from the Valley. As well as medicine, Ward sold 'druggist sundries' such as perfumes and stockings and provided dental services. The Hall was also used as an emergency service for those injured in accidents nearby. Moses Ward was even a licensed vendor of postage stamps, and with no permanent Valley post office, the hall was used as a receiving office until 1883. Ward resided in the premises above the Hall and involved himself in the social and political affairs of Fortitude Valley, nominating men for election to the Valley Ward and contributing prizes for local events. He stood unsuccessfully for election in the Valley ward in 1870 and in 1875 was sworn in as a magistrate of the territory. His wife, Mary, also died in the Apothecaries Hall in 1872.

In 1874, Ward engaged architect Richard Gailey to design a new chemist business on Queen Street in the city. Named 'Ward's Building', it included his chemist shop with motto 'Let not the sick despair' displayed on it, along with a house at the rear. This handsome building reflected Moses Ward's status as a successful pharmaceutical, manufacturing chemist and dentist at that time.

From October 1874 the Queen Street building became Ward's permanent place of business. The Fortitude Valley Apothecaries Hall was taken over by another chemist, James Henley Fitzgibbon. Fitzgibbon, a dispensing and family chemist, had been in Queensland since the 1860s and was the former dispenser for the Brisbane Hospital. He advertised himself as Ward's successor, continuing to run the hall as Ward had done. Like Ward, he

became involved in local society, particularly political matters. He was sworn in as magistrate in 1879 and was a vocal participant at public meetings, calling for better drainage and the expansion of the railway to the Valley. He was also a member of the Catholic Temperance Union and the Brisbane General Hospital Management Board.

Fitzgibbon purchased the Ann Street property in 1877 and carried out renovations in 1878. This undertaking was part of the development of Fortitude Valley, which was beginning to see the construction of new buildings of a more permanent nature than their predecessors. Fitzgibbon's new establishment was 'roomy, well lighted and tastefully furnished', with separate spaces for each department, a perfume fountain and a goldfish pond visible behind the shop.

In 1882 tenders were called for a new chemist shop and dwelling to be designed by Alfred Hubbard for James Fitzgibbon, on Ann Street. It appears that this is the building which now stands as the 'Apothecaries Hall'. The date on the façade – 1862 – most likely refers to the date of Ward's commencement; Fitzgibbon treated the hall as a continuous business, rather than his own undertaking.

Fitzgibbon and Hubbard moved in similar circles: as magistrates in the Valley they had heard cases together, and both were members of the Hospital Board. Hubbard was a prominent member of 1870s Brisbane society, elected mayor of Brisbane in 1877 and again in 1878. He was one of few mayors in early Brisbane to be re-elected to the position. Hubbard was also a member of the Brisbane Hospital Committee; the Deputy Provincial Grand Master of the Scottish Freemasons; and Alderman of North Ward in 1876 and magistrate from 1876.

Although his architectural practice was short lived (lasting from 1879 until his final calls for tenders in 1883), it produced several major buildings, including Cobb and Co's Queen Street premises (1879); the Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane fire stations (both 1883); additions to his villa, Labrador, in Southport (1880); Booroodabin Divisional Board offices (1882); and Eagle Chambers for Warwick & Sapford (1882-3). None of these buildings still stand.

Fitzgibbon's new building was one of the early examples of the pattern of development which took place in the Valley in the 1880s. An economic boom and the promise of better transport accelerated the gradual development which had occurred in the 1870s, particularly from 1885. A new Post Office was constructed, as well as several public hotels and halls, churches, banks and new businesses including the Bulimba Brewery and William Overell's drapery. Towards the end of the decade the long-awaited railway line was under construction. Mrs Bragg, running the bakery next door to the Apothecaries Hall, also erected premises similar to Fitzgibbon's in 1885.

The 1880s was also the decade in which Ward, Fitzgibbon and other chemists agitated for reform of the pharmaceutical industry. A university had not yet been established and the regulation of the profession by the Medical Board was considered inadequate, particularly after a child died from incorrectly prepared medicine. Ward and Fitzgibbon were among the founders of the Pharmacy Society in 1880, holding the positions of treasurer and vice-president, respectively. Ward chaired the Pharmacy Society meeting which championed the enactment of a Pharmacy Bill. The bill aimed to establish a Pharmacy Board which would regulate the provision of drugs more effectively, by ensuring those undertaking businesses as druggists, chemists or pharmacists were properly qualified. The bill faced opposition from the medical profession, particularly the Medical Board, which considered the status of chemists and druggists to be too low for the practitioners to undertake the regulation of their profession, and furthermore that having two official boards was undesirable and would lead to antagonism.

The bill was rejected and modified several times before it finally passed into law in 1884. Fitzgibbon was appointed to the new Pharmacy Board in 1885 and became president of the Pharmaceutical Society in 1892.

Fitzgibbon experienced less success in his financial situation. Imprudent land speculation saw Fitzgibbon

declared insolvent in 1888, and the recently built two-storeyed brick and stone Apothecaries Hall was purchased by Robert Cribb. Fitzgibbon continued his business in Ann-street until circa 1903. His daughter Mary Fitzgibbon, one of the first female chemists in Queensland, ran the business in 1903.

The Apothecaries Hall, leased out to other tenants from 1904, remained in the Cribb family until 1911 when it was purchased by Mary Tressa Maloney, whose family owned the shops adjacent to the Hall. Since then the Apothecaries Hall has been leased to and owned by many different small business operators. The ground floor of the shop is currently occupied by Downes Shoe Repairs, a business which has been operating in the Valley since 1903.

The Apothecaries Hall is considered to be one of the oldest buildings in Fortitude Valley which is still intact and retains its original historic character.

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 it reflects the early patterns of subdivision of Fortitude Valley into small narrow fronted lots and service lanes, and the pattern of development in the Valley in the late nineteenth century.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as one of the oldest, intact commercial buildings in Fortitude Valley.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural

places

as one of Brisbane's earliest examples of a building with professional rooms below and private residence above.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its contribution to the streetscape, particularly in conjunction with 694 Ann Street.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit Citation May 1991
2. Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory, Brisbane, The Proprietors, 1862-1864
3. Queensland Land Titles Office Records
4. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868, 1880-1890, 1900-1905
5. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the 19th century: A Biographical Dictionary*, Queensland Museum, 1994, p 73
6. Margaret Bridson Cribb, 'Cribb, Robert (1805-1893)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp 493-495
7. *The Courier*, 1862-4, 1866
8. *The Brisbane Courier*, 1866, 1869, 1873-4, 1878-9, 1880-3, 1926, 1929
9. *The Queenslander*, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1892
10. *The Chemist and Druggist of Australasia*, 1911, 1914

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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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