

## Heritage Citation



### BAFS and Mackay Jewellers (former)

#### Key details

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Addresses</b>     | At 146 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006; At 152 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006 |
| <b>Type of place</b> | Shop/s   |
| <b>Period</b>        | Victorian 1860-1890  |
| <b>Style</b>         | Italianate   |
| <b>Lot plan</b>      | L1_RP9479; L2_RP9479   |
| <b>Key dates</b>     | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000<br>Date of Citation — July 2010                                       |
| <b>Construction</b>  | Walls: Masonry - Render  |

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>People/associations</b>   | Cannon and Cripps (Association);<br>Chambers and Powell - 1919 alterations (Architect);<br>the Brisbane Associated Friendly Societies (Association) |
| <b>Criterion for listing</b> | (E) Aesthetic; (D) Representative; (A) Historical; (A) Historical; (A) Historical; (H) Historical association                                       |

The building at 146 and 152 Brunswick Street, B.A.F.S. Dispensary and Mackay Jewellers, was built circa 1887. The shop at 146 was occupied by an early Chinese merchant, On War Tai and the premises were targeted in the 1888 anti-Chinese riot. It became the Brisbane Associated Friendly Societies Dispensary in 1920, an important source of medical services to working-class residents of the Valley. The shop at 152 was leased to small short-term businesses, including Chinese merchants, until it was purchased by prominent undertaking business Cannon and Cripps in 1919. Cannon and Cripps ran a branch in the shop until 1949.

## History

This two storey masonry building was constructed circa 1887. Half of the building (now no. 146), was occupied by On War Tai, Chinese merchant from 1887 until 1918. It became the Brisbane Associated Friendly Societies Dispensary in 1920. Number 152 was leased by a succession of businesses – Chinese trader, Sun Hop War (1887-1889); cabinet makers, Sun Sam Lee (1892-1893) and Ton Wau (1893-1894); tailors, Twomay & Co (1897-1909) and furniture manufacturer, Jason Hegerty (1909-1915). It was purchased by undertakers in 1919 and transferred to Mackays Jewellers in 1949.

John Shannon, a messenger for the Commercial Bank of Sydney, purchased subdivision 19 of allotment 68 in Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley in 1876. It comprised 24 perches, although he also seems to have also owned subdivision 20, totalling 48 perches of land on the corner of Wickham and Gipps Streets. The property passed to his wife Margaret following his death in 1881. The date of construction of the brick building is unknown, but possibly as early as 1886. Post Office Directories from 1883-4 list the location as a vacant allotment. Then, in September 1887 Margaret Shannon took out a £3,000 mortgage, which may have been used to finance the construction of this building. It is possible that the shop was constructed earlier, as the Ipswich Woollen Company, which appears to have been a tenant of the building, advertised the lease of a 'capital cellar' in Wickham Street, in March 1886. It was certainly constructed by 1888, when Mrs Shannon advertised for let a two-storey brick shop with a good cellar, on Wickham Street.

Wickham and Gipps Streets, in the late 1880s, would not have been the most appealing business sites. Aside from the 'indescribable' smells emanating from drains on the intersection, as complained of in a letter to the Brisbane Courier, the progress of the Fortitude Valley railway caused major disruptions to the area. Properties in the area were wholly or partially resumed and Gipps Street was re-levelled, creating a steep incline on Little street, which backs the property. These and other works left the streets in an 'unsatisfactory' condition, which the Railways Commission seemed unwilling to fix. However, these inconveniences were balanced by the economic boom of the 1880s, which saw the population of the Valley grow from 5,148 in 1881 to 7,485 in 1886. Substantial new buildings were constructed, including a new school, post office, churches and hotels, and many

old wooden properties in the Valley were replaced with more permanent buildings. Well-known architects such as Richard Gailey and F.D.G Stanley were receiving tenders to erect brick and stone shops in Wickham Street throughout the 1880s. Mrs Shannon would have been well aware of some of the shortcomings of wooden buildings, as one such building owned by her husband and occupied by William Thornhill burned down in 1877.

On War Tai and Co announced the opening of its business at Wickham Street in January 1885, then numbered 109. From 1901 the shop's address was listed as 146 Wickham Street. It appears to have been the first Chinese merchant shop in the Valley, although other Chinese storekeepers were located in the city. Advertised goods included teas, family groceries, Japan boxes and fancy goods; Chinese silk matting, China oil, rice, Chinaware, lacquered-ware, oil paintings made from photographs, as well as fireworks and Chinese crackers for Christmas.

Trading as a Chinese merchant company in Brisbane in the 1880s carried risk. As merchants or market gardeners, the Chinese were finding some acceptance by the wider Queensland community, although relations between the European or Australian-born citizens and the Chinese merchants were not always pacific. The Brisbane Chinese were viewed with some suspicion as the nearest Chinese commercial precinct to Fortitude Valley was the infamous area of the CBD, known as "Frog's Hollow", located around Edward, Alice and Elizabeth Streets. This area had a dubious reputation as it contained a number of Chinese gambling houses, brothels and opium dens. The Queensland Anti-Chinese League was formed in 1887, pledging not to use Chinese labour or products, and aiming to exclude Chinese from Queensland. The Chinese Commissioners, visiting Brisbane in the same year, noted that most educated citizens had no problem with the Chinese immigrants, recognising that without the market gardeners their diets would be much poorer, and that the financiers had faith in the Chinese merchants. However, they would not recommend Chinese people to move to Brisbane: the only reason to immigrate would be to gather wealth, and the Chinese citizens of Brisbane were, by and large, not wealthy. The visit of the commissioners seems to have inflamed anti-Chinese feeling; they were accused of spying on the country, attempting to assist the passage of unwanted Chinese immigrants. Editorials expressing sentiments against Chinese people and immigration appeared in newspapers like *The Queenslander*, while anti-Chinese groups met across the Valley.

Anti-Chinese feeling reached a climax on 5 May 1888, when rioters caused significant damage to Chinese-owned or leased premises across the city and Fortitude Valley. The upper windows of On War Tai's large Wickham Street premises were smashed, despite the presence of a police officer on the site. Later in the year, On War Tai hosted a meeting between Quong Tart, a Sydney merchant and the Chinese residents of Brisbane. Tart was asked to take a petition to the Chinese Viceroy to claim compensation from the Queensland government for the damage, though the petition mentioned the 'considerate way in which the Chinese residents of Brisbane have always been treated by the great mass of the people'. Shortly afterwards, the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act 1888 was passed.

On War Tai achieved enough success to open a second store in the Telegraph Buildings, in Queen Street, but the glass doors and windows in the Queen Street store were smashed in 1895 because the perpetrator 'could not stand Chinamen being in the main street'. On War Tai was also prosecuted for a breach of the law for possessing opium, a drug which could be sold legally in certain cases, though the £10 fine was later remitted. Interestingly, On War Tai was one of the 'principled' companies that urged the government to prohibit the importation of opium into Australia in 1905.

Following the death of Mrs Shannon in 1912, the property was transferred to her son Patrick William Shannon (who happened to be the administrator of lands left unadministered), and offered for sale in 1916. Known as the 'Island Block', it included subdivision 20, which was on the corner of Gipps Street and no longer exists. The block was an oddity, totalling only 48 perches which was completely surrounded by Wickham, Gipps, Little and

Short streets. A substantial two-story brick building and some wooden buildings were listed as improvements on the site. One of the attractive features of the 'block' was its prime location. By this time, Fortitude Valley had become a major commercial precinct, with customers drawn to the Valley's large department stores and surrounding attractions, increasingly including theatres, skating arenas and other similar forms of entertainment. On the corner of Gipps and Wickham Streets, the national company Foy and Gibson had erected a large retail warehouse on one corner in 1903, and Woodley's Buildings were built on another corner in 1909. In spite of these features, the block did not reach its reserve price and was eventually sold in smaller lots. Resubdivision 1, adjoining Little St, was sold to the Trustees of the Brisbane Associated Friendly Societies Dispensary in April 1919. The second part of the building and land on resubdivision 2 was purchased by undertakers Cannon and Cripps on 11 January 1919.

In December 1918 On War Tai and Co announced the removal of their business from 146-8 Wickham St, to the corner of Wandoo and Ann streets. The company continued from there, next to the Chinese Masonic Temple, until the early 1930s. Shortly afterwards, the Brisbane Associated Friendly Societies Dispensary called for tenders for extensive alterations and additions to this building and a contract for £1,861 was accepted. These additions, designed by Chambers and Powell, architects, were completed in 1919 and B.A.F.S. Dispensary commenced operations that year, hence the date 1919 on the parapet. Chambers and Powell had also designed the BAFS Building in George Street [601825] and were engaged for repairs to the Wickham Street dispensary in 1924.

Friendly societies originally functioned as individual units, providing members with a form of social security, including medical attendance. Over the course of the mid to late nineteenth century, societies united to provide better medical services to members, culminating in the creation of the Associated Friendly Societies nationwide. In Brisbane, the BAFS Dispensary was opened on 1 January 1885, in Charlotte Street, with 1,226 members. By 1907, the BAFS Dispensary included every friendly society in the Brisbane metropolitan area, providing medical requirements to around 30,000 people. It also had its own cottage hospital. The main office of the BAFS Dispensary moved to a purpose-built hall in George and Turbot Streets in 1916 (the BAFS Building [601825]). Branches in South Brisbane and the Valley had been run in rented premises since the late 1890s and early 1900s respectively. The lease for BAFS's premises in the Valley expired at the end of 1918, prompting B.A.F.S. to buy 146 Wickham Street.

The building was officially opened on 9 May 1919 by the Deputy Mayor Alderman John McMaster, who announced that the total cost of the new dispensary, including the land and building renovations, was about £6000. Tenancy upstairs and in the adjoining shop was leased to dressmakers, dentists, bootmakers, hairdressers and music shops proprietors, among others. Despite tensions with the medical profession, the 1920s was a boom period for the BAFS Dispensary. In 1928, when B.A.F.S. held a smoke concert to celebrate the building debentures having been paid off, the Dispensary was reported to be the largest of its kind in Australasia, with 20,435 members. BAFS continued to own this building until 1978. The BAFS Dispensary building was sold in 1979 and is currently owned by the Luu family trust.

The new business premises of William Cannon and Joseph Cripps, resubdivision 2 of the subdivision 19, comprised just over twelve perches. Cripps and Alfred Cannon had established themselves as undertakers in 1886, with another partner, Bell. They had set up premises in Wickham-street, although these were across the road from the property at number 152. Bell had been replaced by Dietz, who had eventually set up his own business. The business expanded, operating from multiple properties around Brisbane, including a head office in the city and a second parlour in Grenier St in the Valley. William Cannon replaced his father Alfred, who died in 1915. Joseph Cripps, the remaining original partner, died in January 1918, around the time the property was purchased, and his undivided half was transferred to the trustees of his estate. From 1920, the Cannon and

Cripps part of the building was used as a funeral parlour, with Cecil Cripps residing upstairs from 1930. Cannon and Cripps Limited was registered as a company on 7 July 1939, and the company ran prominent ads in the Post Office Directories at Wickham Street until 1946, when the building was apparently leased to new tenants. In September 1949 this building was purchased by Mackay & Co Pty Ltd, jewellers, who added an awning to the shop front in 1950. Mackay held the title until 1984. The property is also now owned by the Luu family trust.

---

## Description

This is a pair of adjoining two storey rendered masonry buildings with identical pediments, parapets and cornices, but differing fenestration.

The B.A.F.S. building has a large semi-circular headed window centred on the upper floor, surrounded by moulding and flanked by vertical square headed windows.

The Mackays building has four vertical windows with segmented arch heads matching the upper floor side windows of B.A.F.S.

A string course and heavy moulded cornice surmounts the windows, directly below a parapet with cast urn balusters. Two triangular pediments are finished with cast acroteria.

Three cast iron awning posts remain to the B.A.F.S. building, but alterations have occurred to the awnings and ground floor shopfronts.

---

## 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:

---

### Aesthetic

#### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

For their contribution to the streetscape on a prominent corner location

---

## Representative

### CRITERION D

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

As relatively intact examples of late 19th century Italianate commercial buildings.

---

## Historical

### CRITERION A

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

As they demonstrate the growing importance and popularity of the friendly societies in the late 19th century working class community

---

## Historical

### CRITERION A

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

As they demonstrate the long established influence of Chinese merchants in Fortitude Valley and the importance of the Friendly Societies in the early twentieth century.

---

## Historical

### CRITERION A

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

For their association with the anti-Chinese riots of 5 May 1888.

---

## Historical association

### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

for their association with Cannon and Cripps (a long established and continuing funeral director company) and

## Supporting images



Brisbane City Council,  
'Broadway Chambers Building - 154 - 162 Wickham  
Street - Fortitude Valley',  
Brisbane Images Collection, Brisbane City Council  
Library Services.

View of 152 Wickham Street, c.1990, looking north-west  
from the corner of Wickham and Gipps streets,  
Fortitude Valley.

---

## References

1. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit Citation May 1991
2. Queensland Land Titles Office Records
3. Queensland Post Office Directories, 1916-1949
4. Raymond Evans, *"Night of Broken Glass: The Anatomy of an Anti-Chinese Riot", Brisbane in 1888: The Historical Perspective*, Brisbane History Group, 1988 pp. 57-58
5. Queensland State Archives, Companies Index 1863-1959

6. Report of the Board of Management (B.A.F.S. Dispensary) for 12 months ending 31 January 1919
  7. University of Queensland, 'Queensland Places: Fortitude Valley' [<http://queenslandplaces.com.au/fortitude-valley>] Accessed 27 May 2010
  8. *The Brisbane Courier*, 1877, 1885-6, 1888-9, 1892, 1898, 1902, 1905, 1907, 1912, 1915-6, 1918-9, 1923-4, 1928, 1931
  9. Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland Heritage Register Entry, BAFS Building [601825]
- 

## Copyright Brisbane City Council

**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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised April 2021)



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*