

Heritage Citation



CBS Building (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 336 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Bank
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Stripped Classical
Lot plan	L2_SP198093; L4_SP198091; L6_SP198091; L7_SP198093; L15_SP198103; L1_SP198100; L11_SP198099; L2_SP198094; L14_SP198098; L10_SP198096; L12_SP198097; L40_SP238935; L101_SP233971
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2010
Construction	Walls: Stone

People/associations	Hugh Hamon Ingoldsby Massie (Architect); Stuart Brothers Ltd. (Builder); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney (Association)
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Criterion for listing	(D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association
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The building was designed for the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney in 1939. The CBS had been present in Fortitude Valley from 1887 and continued to use the premises on the corner of Ann and Brunswick Streets from 1940, when construction was complete, until 1981, when it amalgamated with the National Bank of Australia. The building was designed by Sydney architect Hugh H.I. Massie, who designed many of the CBS's premises throughout New South Wales and Queensland with eminent firm Kent and Massie, and is architecturally significant, using local materials to achieve a solid, traditionally designed bank on a prominent corner in the Valley.

History

This building was constructed for the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney (the CBS). Construction began in December 1939 after the existing buildings on the site were demolished. The site included bank premises on the corner and an adjoining shop in Brunswick Street. Both were designed by Sydney architect, Mr. Hugh H.I. Massie and built by contractors Stuart Brothers Ltd.

The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd was established in 1834. It achieved great success in Sydney and its expansion to Queensland followed in the late 1850s, when the bank opened a branch in Maryborough. In 1863 the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Incorporation Act was enacted and a Brisbane office was established on the corner of Queen and Creek Streets in the city.

The bank branched into Queensland over the next two decades, but did not reach Fortitude Valley until 1887. Fortitude Valley, for all its proximity to the central business district of Brisbane, was not a highly populated or easily accessible area. Although there had been some settlement in Fortitude Valley by 1849, progress in the area was slow. From the 1850s to the 1870s, it was a small and mostly self-contained town. Thoroughfare to the city was largely blocked by Duncan's Hill, next to All Hallows' School on Ann Street. It was not until the 1870s that more permanent buildings began to take shape in the Valley, replacing the older houses and businesses premises. The first banks in the Valley were not established until 1877, when the Queensland National Bank opened a temporary branch in Brunswick Street, quickly followed by the Bank of New South Wales in Ann Street and, later in the year, the Government Savings Bank. The economic boom of the 1880s encouraged banks to expand to the Valley, which had a population of around 7,000 residents by the mid-1880s. The CBS's first Valley branch opened in April 1887 on Brunswick Street, near the corner of Wickham Street. The CBS was at this time the smallest of the five banks in the Valley, with accessible capital of only £600,000, where others had in excess of £1,000,000.

Despite the increasing development of Fortitude Valley, the late 1880s was not an ideal time to open a bank branch. The boom of the 1880s was followed by a depression in 1891, and the CBS relocated temporarily to the

corner of Ann and Brunswick Streets. The depression culminated in a spectacular bank crash in 1893, and the banks, including the CBS, struggled to continue as a going concern. Customers remained loyal and the bank survived, re-registering as a limited company. At this point it had thirteen branches throughout Queensland.

In 1894 the bank returned to Brunswick Street, this time a few shops removed from the eminent Queensland National Bank. The QN Bank was the largest bank in Queensland, holding 40% of accounts in the colony, including the government account. It was also the largest and most important Queensland-based company. It had been heavily affected by the depression, with £1,600,000 in subscribed capital in 1891 falling to just £600,000 in 1897, but still provided serious competition for the CBS. The location of the banks, Brunswick Street, was not a well-developed street, although over the ensuing decade it was to become one of the most popular streets in the Valley.

'Had any one six years since expressed the opinion that one of our banks would be finding it imperative within the coming five years to go in for increased accommodation in the form of a new branch office in one of the Brisbane suburbs,' wrote the *Queenslander* in 1900, 'he would have been hardly taken seriously. This has come to pass, however, and it is satisfactory to note the steady improvement in trade in the Valley.' Despite this statement, the depression and bank crash had left a lasting impact on the Valley. Two banks withdrew their branches from the Valley, leaving the CBS as one of only three major metropolitan banks in the Valley by 1900.

The banks were all located within eyesight of each other: Queensland National Bank on Brunswick Street; the Bank of New South Wales, under construction on the Valley Corner; and the Commercial Bank of Sydney, in premises rented from T.C. Beirne. Beirne's large expansions in 1901 forced the bank to relocate again, this time to a 93 foot allotment in a former billiard saloon, between the Royal George Hotel and T.C. Beirne. The bank occupied this position on Brunswick Street, between Wickham and Ann, until the completion of the new building on the corner of Brunswick and Ann. During this period (1901-1939), the Valley developed as the most important shopping precinct after Queen Street in the Central Business District.

The CBS continued its expansion into Queensland in the early twentieth century, the only state other than New South Wales in which it operated. By now it was larger than its major competitors, able to draw on far more capital than the Queensland-based banks and on a level with other multi-State banks.

1915 brought a rare change in the management of the Commercial Bank of Sydney. From 1867 Thomas A. Dibbs (later Sir) had been the bank's general manager, and by the time 82 year old Dibbs retired in July 1915, he had worked for the CBS for 68 years, a record term of service for an Australian banker. Hugh Harmon Massie was elected as his replacement. Massie was a renowned figure in Australia, primarily known for his membership in the 1882 Australian cricket team which had beat England by seven runs. He was also a long-time employee of the bank, having commenced work as a ledger-keeper in 1878. Massie retained his position for nine years, leading the bank during the First World War, and retiring in 1924. However, the Massie family continued its association with the CBS through the architectural work of Massie's eldest son, Hugh H.I. Massie, who was to assist in the design of most of the CBS branches, including the Fortitude Valley bank.

Architect-to-be Hugh H.I. Massie had been apprenticed in 1911 to Harry Chambers Kent, a notable Sydney architect. Massie and Kent formed a partnership and accepted a number of commercial commissions, predominantly in Sydney, where the firm was based. However, the firm principally designed buildings for the Commercial Bank of Sydney, including the head office in George and Barrack Streets and branches in Newcastle, Scone, Cessnock and Parkes. The Cessnock branch, completed in 1920, is listed on the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' 20th Century Register of Significant Buildings. Several of Kent and Massie's buildings are also listed on the New South Wales State heritage register.

In December 1920, the CBS purchased 29.10 perches on the corner of Brunswick and Ann Streets. The bank leased the premises to small business proprietors, continuing to run its Valley branch from the opposite side of Brunswick Street. Over the next five years the bank granted easements and areas of the land to the owners of surrounding blocks, so that the size of the allotment slowly decreased. The allotment comprised 21.47 perches in 1922 and 14.55 perches in 1925.

The CBS continued its rise, expanding to Victoria in 1927. By 1930, the CBS had 34 branches in Queensland and was described in an article in the Brisbane Courier as, '[o]ne of the most important banks to launch its vessel in troubled Queensland waters'¹. It had over £4,700,000 in paid-up capital. Despite its size and status, expansion to larger premises in Brisbane and the Valley did not occur until the late 1930s, after the bank had survived another crash and depression. New premises were announced in 1937 for the city branch, on the corner of Queen and Creek Streets, also to be designed by Kent and Massie.

The bank announced its undertaking of a new building in Fortitude Valley in 1939. The CBS still held title to the land on Ann and Brunswick Street, although further land had been removed and the allotment rounded to allow the roads to be widened, leaving only 14.02 perches. Long-term tenants were evicted from the Ann and Brunswick Street site, including W.E. Downes, a boot repairer who had been operating in the Valley since 1903, and from the Ann and Brunswick Street corner from 1915. When the bank began to construct their new premises on the site, Downes relocated to the former Apothecaries Hall on Ann Street, where Downes Shoe Repairs continues today. Another tenant to be evicted was H.A. Manahan, a large grocery store chain which had begun in Annerley and successfully expanded to seventeen stores in Brisbane by 1929.

Plans for the new bank were described in the Courier Mail and the bank featured in the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland. The two-storey building was to be constructed from steel and concrete and faced with Helidon freestone and polished granite. The basement held the vaults, the ground floor provided the main banking chamber and the first floor comprised the Manager's residence. Internal fittings were built from Queensland maple. Its frontage extended 57 feet to Brunswick Street and 52 feet to Ann Street, with its shop front in Brunswick Street. The predominant feature was the five feet truncated corner to allow for trams which passed by on a loop to the Warner Street terminus. It was to cost the bank £13,000.

The bank was completed and opened in 1940, becoming a landmark building on a prominent corner of the Valley. Alterations to the interior were undertaken by G.E. Day in 1951, and some alterations were made to the front of the premises in 1962. The CBS held the property until 1981, when it was amalgamated with the National Bank of Australasia. The property was transferred to CBC Properties on 29 June 1981 and to Terray Pty Ltd on 31 October 1984. At present, the building holds offices and a restaurant.

Description

The building occupies a corner location with a curved corner truncation, and is two storeyed, of steel and concrete construction with stone facings. The plinth and entrance columns are polished marble and the remainder of the facing is Helidon freestone.

The windows are deeply recessed as vertical pairs with decorative carved motifs to the spandrel panels. The double entrance doors are recessed on the corner with a triple bank of windows above to the residential upper

floor. The parapet contains a carved motif is above alternative pilasters, and a simple carved capping course. Minor alterations include a canopy over the entrance and removal of the original bank name panels.

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:

Representative

CRITERION D

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

As representative of traditional bank architecture, intended to give an impression of security and stability to its customers.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

For its contribution to the streetscape on a prominent corner location at Brunswick and Ann Streets; and as an example of the use of local materials (granite and Helidon freestone) by a Sydney architect (H.H.I. Massie).

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 its association with the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, a major inter-state bank for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which had opened branches in Queensland from the late 1850s and from the Valley in 1887 and which continued to provide banking services to Queenslanders until its amalgamation with the National Bank of Australia in 1981.

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

As one of the only examples in Queensland of the work of Hugh H.I Massie, of Massie and Kent, who designed several buildings of significance in Australia.

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier* 7 June 1930 p.20
2. Queensland Land Titles Office Records
3. Queensland Post Office Directories
4. Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, December 1939, p. 6
5. Fortitude Valley Centenary Committee, *Fortitude Valley Centenary 1948-1949*,
6. *The Brisbane Courier* 7 June 1930 p.20
7. *The Courier Mail*, 1 December 1939, p. 8
8. Australian Institute of Architects, *RAIA 20th Century Register of Significant Buildings*, 2 August 2006, http://www.architecture.com.au/i-cms_file?page=8448/RAIA_REGISTER_SEPT42006.pdf, accessed 20 July 2010

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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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