

## Heritage Citation



**Cusack's Building**

### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Graphics House
<b>Addresses</b>	At 887 Ann Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
<b>Type of place</b>	Flat building, Shop/s
<b>Period</b>	Victorian 1860-1890
<b>Style</b>	Filigree
<b>Lot plan</b>	L1_RP9271
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — March 2016

This two-storey brick building was constructed circa 1883 for builder and contractor John Cusack. Originally known as 'Cusack's Building,' it contained residential dwellings on the upper storey and shops below, and is now one of the few remaining nineteenth century buildings in Fortitude Valley built as both retail and residential premises. In the 1890s, Cusack suffered the effects of the depression as many shops were left vacant, but the building has since been occupied by a variety of retail business and in the 1920s, was popular among Fortitude Valley's thriving Chinese community. This building is located in a prominent position on Ann Street and makes a fine contribution to the streetscape.

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## History

Cusack's Building comprises a two storey plus basement brick structure of four ground floor shops with dwellings above and was constructed around 1883-84 for John Cusack, a builder and contractor. Cusack purchased the site from Robert Cribb in 1883. Immediately following the purchase of the property Cusack borrowed £1600, presumably to finance the construction of this building.

The 1883-84 Post Office Directories suggest Cusack himself occupied one of the shop/residences in the building, at least in that year. In 1888 Post Office Directories record the name 'Cusack's buildings' and show them as being occupied by the Queensland National Tea Emporium, a business that was managed by Irish migrant William A Carsen. The Tea Company supplied general grocery and provisions and specialised in tea. Business grew to such an extent that the company was forced to relocate to new premises at Newstead.

Cusack appears to have overcommitted himself financially. He took a series of substantial mortgages and in 1887 the property was transferred to one of the mortgagees who took out a series of mortgages before selling the property in 1889 to Theodore Lenneberg. Over the next twelve months Lenneberg borrowed an enormous amount totalling £14,000. He was clearly suffering the effects of the 1890s depression – in 1890 the majority of the building was left vacant. In 1891 Lenneberg was declared insolvent. The building was placed in the hands of trustees and in 1894 was sold to William Beit.

Throughout its turbulent phase of ownership the building was leased to various commercial tenants including chemists, milliners, dressmakers and general produce merchants.

In 1912 six 'excellent city properties', including this building were offered for sale. The building was offered on easy terms but failed to sell. From the 1920s Chinese merchants dominated the tenancy of the building. In 1926 for example, it was occupied by the Chinese Masonic Society, Sam Lee, a fruiterer, and On War Tai and Co, Chinese merchants. From its earliest years of non-indigenous occupation Fortitude Valley had a diverse population including large numbers of Chinese traders, craftsmen and labourers, as well as immigrants from several European nations.

In 2016 Cusack's Building continues to operate as retail premises.

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## Description

Cusack's Building is a two storey plus basement brick building on the corner of Ann and Wandoo street in Fortitude Valley. It stands on the front of its large allotment with a service yard behind. The building has four hipped roofs (one over each of the original four shops/residences) clad with corrugated metal sheets and brick chimneys with corbelled cornicing rising from the party walls. The Ann Street streetfront has many large show windows although these are more recent and not of cultural heritage significance. The first floor is more intact on both streetfronts, retaining early openings onto a wraparound timber-framed verandah that is bracketed off the building and has a convex roof. The Wandoo Street side retains early fenestration at the ground floor and low level windows into the basement that have been blocked up. A verandah runs along the rear of the building with some early fenestration.

Standing in the rear yard are a one-storey brick extension and steel-framed carports that are not of cultural heritage significance.

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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:

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### 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 few remaining examples in Fortitude Valley of a large nineteenth century building designed for both retail and residential use.

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### Representative

#### CRITERION D

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

as a good example of a nineteenth century building used for both retail and residential purposes.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance  
for its prominent corner location and contribution to the 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 building occupied by a number of Fortitude Valley's Chinese merchants in the early twentieth century.

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## References

1. Estate Map 1912, John Oxley Library
2. Post Office Directories.
3. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Board detail plan, 1914
4. W Morrison, Aldine History of Queensland Vol II, Sydney: Aldine Publishing Company 1888
5. Titles Office Records

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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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