

## Heritage Citation



### Duncalfe & Co. Building

#### Key details

**Addresses** At 338 George Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

**Type of place** Shop/s

**Period** Victorian 1860-1890

**Style** Free Style

**Lot plan** L1\_RP778; L5\_RP778

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009  
Date of Citation — April 2009

**Construction** Walls: Face brick

The former Duncalfe & Co building was constructed circa 1887 for solicitor and property developer William Edward Murphy. Duncalfe & Co, owned by Edward and Thomas Duncalfe, began operating its men's outfitters from the building in 1890, sharing the premises with the Grand Tailoring Establishment that Edward Duncalfe also managed. Duncalfe and Co operated from the building until 1969, forming part of the flourishing retail precinct of George Street for more than 80 years. Although the building's facade was remodelled in 1926, the building still retains some of its original nineteenth century features.

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## History

In the 1880s, the western end of George Street began to flourish as a retail precinct in a process facilitated by the economic and building boom during this period. According to Ronald Lawson:

The 1880s were a time of tremendous expansion for Brisbane. In one decade the population of the city almost trebled.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst Queen Street remained the pre-eminent retail precinct containing the most fashionable shops and department stores other, smaller, retail precincts emerged in Fortitude Valley, Stanley Street in South Brisbane, Woolloongabba Fiveways and along the western end of George Street. This trend reflected the burgeoning population of Brisbane in this period.

Factors specific to George Street and the immediate area were also important in the development of the precinct. The building of Brisbane's Supreme Court in 1879 effectively divided George Street in two sections. Subsequent government building programs turned the eastern end of George Street into a government precinct. Pedestrian and road traffic to and from Roma Street Station, which opened in 1875, contributed to the retail nature of this end of the street, so much so that "George Street west of Ann Street became a legitimate shopping strip in its own right".<sup>2</sup> This was further reinforced by the erection of the Grosvenor Hotel at the Ann Street corner during 1881-82 and the Transcontinental Hotel in 1883-84 near the intersection of George and Roma Streets. The relocation of the Brisbane Municipal Markets to Roma Street in 1884 brought further trade to the precinct.

In 1888, the shop that would become 338 George Street was known as the Grand Tailoring Establishment. In 1890, Edward Duncalfe took over as manager of the Establishment. Edward had previously been operating a male outfitters shop in Queen Street, while other Duncalfe family members appear to have had hat shops in West End and Kangaroo Point. By 1897 Duncalfe & Co, comprising Edward and Thomas Duncalfe, was formed. The company operated from the same building as the Grand Tailoring Establishment.

George Street continued to grow as a retail precinct during the 1890s. Despite the opening of Central Station in 1889, and the likely diminution of passengers to and from Roma Street Station, retail business continued to flourish. This was no doubt encouraged by the commencement in 1897 of an electric tram service along George Street. Indeed, George Street had progressively become a major arterial road both in and out of the city to the western suburbs and so attracted considerable commuter and pedestrian traffic. The attractiveness of this precinct in this period is further reinforced by the establishment of McDonnell & East, which became one of Brisbane's best known retailers, at the corner of George and Tank Streets in 1901.

By 1900 Duncalfe & Co were the sole operators from the building. In 1908, Edward and Thomas Duncalfe purchased their half of the building from the trustees of Murphy's estate. At the same time Alexander and Andrew Lind bought the other half of the building. The Linds demolished their half of the building to allow them to construct the Lyceum Hall, a live theatre venue that later became the Lyceum (now Dendy) Theatre. An easement was created between the two sites by 1911, which allowed delivery vehicles to gain access to the rear of both the Duncalfe & Co building and the Lyceum Hall.

Duncalfe & Co proved to be successful. This was especially the case as the firm specialised in working men's clothing, ensuring they were not in direct competition with the Queen Street stores, such as Pike Brothers, which primarily focused on more up-market clothing. Duncalfe & Co drew business both from the Roma Street Markets and the Roma Street Station. The firm also carried out a mail-order business for country clients, strengthening the firm's links with the Roma Street Station. By 1925, Duncalfe & Co had opened another store in Ipswich's retail precinct operating as 'The Men's Store of Ipswich'.

Reflecting this success, in 1924 the company purchased the neighbouring building at 332 George Street. This building had been built as an extension to the Grosvenor Hotel in 1886. A connecting doorway was knocked through the adjoining walls of the top floor of both buildings to provide access. In 1926, the company contracted the building firm of Leutchford Ltd to alter the shop front of both buildings. The nineteenth century building first occupied by Duncalfe & Co received a new façade, which remains today. Once more the success of Duncalfe & Co was bound up with that of the street itself. According to The Architecture & Building Journal in 1926, improvements made to McDonnell & East and other buildings in the street meant "that George Street is being looked upon as a growing trade centre. In reality it is, and for purely domestic supplies it is already next to the Valley in the amount of business transacted".<sup>3</sup>

The former Grosvenor extension was renamed 'Duncalfe Chambers' and part of the premises was leased to Miss P. Hooper, dressmaker. This was presumably the ground floor, as within a couple of years a restaurant was operating from the premises and over time a succession of businesses have operated from this location. By 1940 both buildings were being referred to as 'Duncalfe Chambers'.

The Duncalfe & Co building has undergone various other internal changes since this time due to the needs of its various tenants. In 1958 the ground floor shop front was altered and in the same year alterations were carried out on some of the shop space to accommodate a barber's shop.

In 1949 Duncalfe & Co was renamed Duncalfe & Co (Queensland) Pty Ltd, suggesting that the company had expanded into other Australian states. Duncalfe & Co retained ownership of the building until 1969, when it was sold to Gold Coast Textiles Pty Ltd, thus maintaining a continuous link with clothing industry over a considerable period of time.

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## Description

This is a small but well-proportioned two-storey brick building. Its precisely laid face bricks facade incorporates contrasting small areas/ narrow bands of darker bricks as part of its elegant design. It comprises a row of four arched multi-paned sash windows and a high curvilinear decorative parapet with nameplate and simple decorative motif.

The footpath awning, supported by slender cast iron columns and with a pressed metal ceiling, is fairly unique in the CBD.

The building has undergone a number of internal changes due to the needs of its various tenants.

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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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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

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

as a nineteenth century commercial building that formed part of George Street's flourishing retail precinct from the 1880s.

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#### 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 the main shop of Duncalfe & Co, a major Brisbane tailoring firm that operated out of this building from 1890 until 1969.

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## References

1. Ronald Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1973), p. 53
2. Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle, McDonald & East, George Street, *Brisbane – an appraisal of significance for the Walker Corporation* (Brisbane: Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd, 1995), p. 16
3. *The Architecture & Building Journal*, August 10, 1926, p. 37
4. Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle, *McDonald & East, George Street, Brisbane – an appraisal of significance for the Walker Corporation*, Brisbane, Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle Pty Ltd, 1995
5. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
6. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
7. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map 1913
8. Coutts, J.V.D. (editor), *The Architectural & Building Journal of Queensland Ltd*, 1926
9. "Publican's Paradise in old Ipswich" in *The Courier Mail*, 19 January 2009
10. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records

11. Evan Welsh, interview with the author, 22 February 2006
  12. Geenwood, Gordon, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*, Parramatta, The Cumberland Press, 1959
  13. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
  14. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings files
  15. Lawson, Ronald 1973, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
  16. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 4, 1951
  17. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
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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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