

Heritage Citation



Finlay and Sons Shops and Workshop (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 679 Ann Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Shop/s, Warehouse
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Free Style
Lot plan	L4_RP8825; L5_RP8825
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2011 Date of Citation — January 2008
Construction	Walls: Masonry

People/associations Eric Percival Trewern (Architect)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic

Finlay and Sons Shops and Workshop were built in 1924-25 at a time of economic prosperity for the Fortitude Valley area. Designed by prominent Brisbane architect E. P. Trewern, they are two of a number of substantial brick commercial buildings along this portion of Ann Street that share Trewern as the architect. The site consists of two large buildings, the first a set of three shops with frontage to Ann Street; the second a large warehouse at the rear of the lot. Finlay and Sons contributes to the Ann Street historic streetscape.

History

Built in 1924-25, the Finlay and Sons Shops and Warehouse are reflective examples of the commercial prosperity experienced on this part of Ann Street in the 1920s. Designed by successful Brisbane architect, E. P. Trewern, the large one-storey brick building with its imposing, decorative façade facing Ann Street, and the two-storey brick warehouse behind, are demonstrative of the pattern of development that occurred in this part of Brisbane in this period. This includes the intact commercial designs of Trewern, exemplified by this property.

From the 1860s the population of the Valley grew, having over 1000 residents by this time. The commercial nature of the Valley was also beginning to emerge. Most commercial activity in this period was centred between Ann, Brunswick and Wickham Streets. The improvement of access from the city centre to the Valley due to the levelling of Duncan's Hill between the two areas in the 1870s assisted the growth of this part of Brisbane

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the population of the Valley increased even more, and with this the commercial nature of the Valley centre grew with relatively large scale construction in the area. As this occurred those living within the centre began to move to more suburban areas such as New Farm and Bowen Hills. By the turn of the century the valley heart was commercially dominated and the buildings were of a more substantial nature.

The success of the Valley commercial area at the turn of the century saw large traders such as TC Beirne, McWhirters and Overells department stores encourage shoppers to the Valley. Efficient public transport systems such as electric trams and trains to and through the Valley contributed to the commercial success of the area.

The 1920s was a decade of further growth in Fortitude Valley, with its success as a commercial and industrial hub. In this decade the cutting on Duncan's Hill for Ann Street was widened, opening the Valley even further to the rest of Brisbane, allowing a greater volume of traffic into the area.

The land on which Finlay's now stands was vacant prior to 1924. In 1923 it was purchased by Robert Minnie Finlay. Finlay envisaged the commercial potential of Fortitude Valley and planned to build a set of three shops and an industrial workshop to the rear of the Lot. In April 1923 his plans for the new buildings were approved. The buildings were to be constructed by W. R. Juster, and designed by prominent Brisbane architect E. P. Trewern.

Victorian trained Eric Percival Trewern established his Brisbane architectural practice in 1920 at an address in

Queen Street, Brisbane. The practice continued until Trewern's death in 1959. The height of his design success occurred in the interwar period and he is renowned for his innovative designs incorporating the Spanish Mission and the Old English/Tudor revival style in residential and commercial architecture. Amongst his finest residential designs is the New Farm house "Santa Barbara" that is considered the best example of the Spanish Mission style in Brisbane. Trewern designed many commercial buildings in central Brisbane many of which no longer exist. One important extant building is the Inchcolm Professional Chambers on Wickham Terrace. Trewern was an active member of many prestigious architectural societies in the pursuit of improving professional architectural standards in Queensland.

In 1925 Robert Finlay opened his sheet metal, water and gas fitting business on Ann Street. The newly constructed brick building consisted of three shops 679, 681 and 683 Ann Street. 683 was occupied by Finlay, and by 1927 the other two shops had been leased by a hairdresser and tobacconist and a leather merchant. By 1929 Finlay's business was specialising in radiator and mudguard repairs, with the front shop on Ann and the workshop in the back, made accessible for motor cars by a side lane. The 1920s saw an increase in ownership of the motor car. Due to technological improvements in this period cars were being massed produced and this meant greater affordability. Finlay's business thrived in response to the extra numbers of cars on the roads and this is reflected in the business' longevity, it remained as Finlay's until the 1960s.

Built as a pair of substantial brick buildings, the Finlay and Son's Shops and Workshop are excellent examples of finely designed 1920s commercial buildings. The Ann Street building, with its tapered brick façade and large suspended awning was designed more elaborately than the brick workshop behind, as it was the public frontage to the Finlay business. The workshop however was designed as a far larger building, with practical features such as large timber sash windows and high ceilings.

In the 1980s the Ann Street shops were converted into an Italian restaurant, "Lucky's Trattoria" and became a very popular Brisbane eatery. The premises is now owned by the adjoining "Beat" nightclub and has been converted into a bar and nightclub. Although the interior of the building has been altered the exterior is intact and as such plays an important role in the historic streetscape of this part of Ann Street. The workshop building is still intact.

Description

This is a one-storey brick building facing Ann Street, Fortitude Valley. It has a decorative, stepped parapet and hung awning. Its hipped roof is clad in corrugated metal sheets.

Behind the Ann Street building is a two-storey brick warehouse building with a hipped corrugated metal sheet roof. Each end of the building retains its high brick gable and there is a series of windows throughout the building. The interior retains the original large timber roof beams and some of the original interwar features.

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 a fine example of a set of substantial commercial buildings, designed and built in the 1920s at a time when Fortitude Valley was increasingly becoming a successful retail centre in Brisbane.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine example of 1920s commercial buildings that contribute to the Ann Street historic streetscape.

References

1. *Historic Titles*, Department of Natural Resources and Water
2. Queensland Post Office Directories
3. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
4. *Detail Fire Survey: City of Brisbane, 1951*, Mahlstedt's: Consulting Fire Engineers and Surveyors, Melbourne
5. *Metropolitan Water and Sewage Survey Maps, 1924*
6. *North Brisbane Electoral Rolls, 1898 and 1900*

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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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



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