

Heritage Citation



Gaujard and Elson Building (former)

Key details

Addresses

At 125 Queen Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

Type of place	Shop/s
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Academic Classical
Lot plan	L5_RP516
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Walls: Masonry
People/associations	James Cowlshaw (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity

Built circa 1876, this building is the oldest surviving two-storey shop in Brisbane's commercial heart, Queen Street. It is the third known building erected on this site during a thirty-year period from 1846 to 1876, representing the continuing development and increasing significance of Queen Street in this period. The building was first tenanted by tobacconists Gaujard and Elson from at least 1877 until around 1898, and has since been occupied by a variety of retail and commercial businesses.

History

After the closure of the Moreton Bay penal colony in 1842, the part of Brisbane that became the Central Business District (CBD) was offered for sale to free settlers. The block that became 125 Queen Street was designated as part of Town Lot 8 of Section 1 and it sold to Archibald Michie on 22 September 1843. Michie, a Sydney resident, acquired the 36-perch block that covered one corner of the Albert and Queen Streets intersection. On 1 December 1846, Michie sold Lot 8 to Bulimba farmer and property investor William Cairncross. Cairncross purchased the adjoining Albert Street lot (No. 9) from Charles Mallard on 31 December 1850. For a few years after this, Cairncross ran a bakery from a building on the Albert Street side of his large block. By about 1862 a somewhat disparate collection of shops and buildings had accreted to the corner of Queen and Albert Streets.

A series of disastrous fires in 1863 and 1864 destroyed many of the early buildings along Queen Street.¹ In particular, the fire of 1 December 1864 affected most of the block bounded by Albert, Queen, George and Elizabeth Streets. The fire made the redevelopment of the area imperative. Many original low-set wooden shops were replaced with larger "shops of brick and stone, with their plate glass windows" that were "to transform the appearance of the city".² It was in this context that William Cairncross provided for the construction of several new shops on his Queen and Albert Street frontages. A group of five single-storey shops, designed by the significant Brisbane architect, James Cowlshaw, were constructed on the Queen Street side of Cairncross'

property in 1864-5.³

Photographic and historical evidence, however, suggests the current building was constructed some time between 1873 and 1879. Two photographs of the corner of Albert and Queen Streets, dated 1873 and 1879 respectively, show no evidence of the building in the earlier picture, and the existing building completed in the latter.⁴ A lease was signed for the property in late 1876, with the first payment of rent to be made on 8 January 1877, suggesting the building was completed circa 1876.

The addition of a new two-storey building with a completely different façade, in the midst of an already established strip of single-storey shops, indicates that an event had occurred there that warranted the shop being rebuilt. One possible event is a fire, which was not uncommon in Queen Street at this time. For example, separate fires in a tobacconist shop in Queen Street and in another Queen Street shop were recorded in the *Brisbane Courier* in 1875.⁵

Cairncross chose to construct a more substantial two-storey building on the site. This accords with the development of Queen Street in this and the following decade, which was becoming increasingly sophisticated as the town grew in importance. The Brisbane building boom of the 1880s would see the construction of the row of two-storey shops that line the side of Queen Street opposite to the Gaujard & Elson Building. These later 1880s buildings have been found to be of state heritage significance.

The architect of the building at 125 Queen Street cannot be determined. Numerous tender notices appeared in the *Brisbane Courier* for this period, placed by architects seeking contractors to erect two-storey shops or warehouses in Queen Street. However, most of the notices do not mention the property's address or the name of the owner.

The first tenant of the new building was the firm of Gaujard & Elson, tobacconists. The firm enjoyed early success, as it soon opened a branch shop in the Exhibition Arcade, located at 134 Queen Street. Their location in Brisbane's premiere shopping precinct would have contributed to their business success. By 1877, this Queen Street precinct, bounded by George and Edward Streets, contained five tobacconists, including Gaujard & Elson. But Gaujard and Elson must have proved popular with its clients, for it was one of only three tobacconists left in this shopping precinct by 1897.

By 1885, Gaujard & Elson had branched out into the importation of fancy goods, which they sold through their tobacconist shop. After more than thirty years at 125 Queen Street, Gaujard & Elson ceased trading around 1898 and their shop was taken over by tobacconist John Youngerbuhler. James Elson returned to the shop in 1899 but he closed his tobacconist business in 1901. From this time on the premises housed a variety of different businesses that changed at regular intervals, including tobacconists, jewellers, ladies hairdressers, commercial agents and dentists. Umbrella maker Archibald Lind (later Lind & Sons) began trading from the shop in 1928. Lind had previously conducted his business from another Queen Street site. He continued to trade from the building until at least 1949.

Title to the property changed hands on a number of occasions. William Cairncross died on 22 June 1896 and his estate, including 125 Queen Street, passed to a group of trustees comprising his spinster daughter Jane Georgiana Cairncross, his spinster sister Millicent Ann Cairncross, his relative Rachel Elizabeth Dalby (widow) and businessman Andrew Joseph Thynne. The property finally passed from the hands of the Cairncross family on 12 December 1922, when it sold to Alice Louise Lind, the wife of Archibald Lind. After Alice's death on 1 February 1958, her estate passed to Archibald and their son Stanley Henry Lind. 125 Queen Street was transferred from the Lind family to the current owners, Yampi Pty Ltd, in 1980.

The former Gaujard & Elson building, like most retail premises within the CBD, has undergone many internal changes over the years to accommodate the requirements of its different owners and commercial tenants. External changes were also common, particularly the removal of original timber window frames or alterations to a building's façade to give it a more modern appearance. The building at 125 Queen Street is unusual in that it has retained its original façade above the ground floor level.

The parcel of land on which this building is situated has been used for retail purposes since the earliest days of free settlement of Brisbane. Built circa 1876, the former Gaujard & Elson building is also one of the oldest remaining buildings in the CBD's premier shopping precinct.

Description

This early small two-storey masonry shop building, with its symmetrical ordered facade with pilasters, twin decorative round arches spanning the width of the building, over sash windows and a parapet with urns, has some strong elements of the Victorian Academic Classical style.

The building has retained its original facade above the ground floor level while a suspended awning has replaced the original tin-roofed timber awning over the street.

The building has undergone internal changes over the years to accommodate the requirements of its different owners and commercial tenants, particularly the ground floor where large glass display windows have been introduced.

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 nineteenth century retail building constructed just prior to the 1880s Queen Street building boom and modernisation program.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as the earliest surviving two-storey shop in Queen Street and one of the earliest surviving retail buildings in the CBD.

References

1. K.D. Calthorpe & K. Capell, *Brisbane On Fire: A History of Firefighting 1860-1925*, Moorooka, Merino Lithographics Pty. Ltd., 1997, pp. 12-13
2. Greenwood, Gordon, *Brisbane 1859-1959 – A History of Local Government*, (Parramatta: The Cumberland Pres, 1959), p.140
3. Donald Watson & Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the 19th century: A Biographical Dictionary*, Brisbane, Queensland Museum, 1994, p. 47
4. 1873 Photograph: John Oxley Library, Brisbane, Accession no. 6168; 1879 Photograph: *An Australia Post History: Brisbane General Post Office, Erected 1872-1879*, p. 13
5. *The Brisbane Courier*, 15 July 1875 and *The Brisbane Courier*, 31 December 1875 respectively
6. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
7. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
8. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map 1913
9. Brisbane City Council, Survey Map, c1900
10. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
11. Greenwood, Gordon, *Brisbane 1859-1959 – A History of Local Government*, Parramatta, The Cumberland Press, 1959
12. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
13. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 11,1951
14. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
15. Steer, G.R., *Brisbane 50 to 60 Years Ago*, Address to the Rotary Club of Brisbane by Rotarian G.R. Steer M.V.O., 23 February 1948
16. <http://www.queenslandhistory.com/reminiscences.htm>, Some Old Reminiscences, Shipwrecks, Sandgate, Old Courier, Spring Hill, accessed January 2006

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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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