

Heritage Citation



Lennon's Grocery Store (former)

Key details

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Also known as | Melbourne House |
| Addresses | At 21 Robertson Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006 |
| Type of place | Shop/s, Shophouse |
| Period | Victorian 1860-1890 |
| Style | Free Classical |
| Lot plan | L3_SP147852; L2_SP147852; L1_SP147852 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — April 2015 |

Construction Roof: Corrugated iron;
 Walls: Masonry - Render

People/associations Holmes & Cohen (Architect)

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

This two-storeyed masonry store and residence was built in 1885 for John Lennon. It was designed by architects Holmes and Cohen who also designed the Bellevue Hotel. The large store operated as Melbourne House when this part of Fortitude Valley was developing as a commercial and business centre with tobacco factories built opposite in the 1890s and Corbett's Store across the road in 1908.

History

Fortitude Valley was among the first settled suburbs by Europeans after the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement of Moreton Bay in the early 1840s. Commercial development centred on Ann Street, closer to the city, with Brunswick Street following later in the nineteenth century. By the late 1870s and 1880s, this part of Brunswick Street, which provided the major thoroughfare to New Farm, was becoming a mixed use area, combining small commercial and residential premises. Between Jane and Arthur Streets there were a number of commercial premises (butchers, boarding houses, watch and dressmakers, building contractors, auctioneers), residences and the office of the Supreme Court Registrar.

Landowner Henry Parsons Fox began advertising a shop and dwelling for lease on this site in 1877. Fox's block was on the corner of Brunswick Street and what was then known as Jane Street, now Robertson Street. Victorian emigrant John Lennon opened his grocery 'Melbourne Stores' on the premises around 1880. He purchased the block in December 1882, and in 1885 commissioned the construction of a new brick shop and dwelling.

Lennon's new building was indicative of the overall development of this section of the Valley, as well as Brisbane at large, during the 1880s. Mass immigration in the 1880s almost trebled Brisbane's population, which rose from 37,000 to 100,000 in the ten years to 1891. Settlement in the inner core of suburbs intensified, and by the mid-1880s Fortitude Valley housed a large proportion of Brisbane's residents. Coinciding with the population boom was an economic boom, which encouraged investment in buildings. Alongside the construction of new buildings for the growing population, 'first generation' timber shops and houses were replaced with larger, more permanent structures in brick and stone.

Architects Holmes and Cohen were engaged by Lennon to design the shop/house. John Jacob Cohen, designer of the Bellevue Hotel, formed a joint practice with Francis Frazer Holmes in February 1885. Their partnership lasted only until May 1886, making Lennon's one of the few designs the architects completed together. The firm did produce two residences still standing and included on the Brisbane City Council's heritage overlay, 'Maryview' at Albion for Patrick Durack (now part of St Margaret's School) and 'Roseville' at Teneriffe.

Lennon's new property was large enough to be described in 1900 as being 'originally built for a Hotel', though

there is no indication that Lennon applied for a publican's licence, or ran the store as a hotel. The design took advantage of the site's corner position, with shop windows on the ground floor facing Brunswick and Jane Streets.

The building had 'good and extensive cellarage', important for a grocer. 'Good dwelling accommodation' was provided with seven bedrooms. The building was constructed on a relatively small 11.25 perch site, and its two storeys allowed Lennon to maximise his landholding. It was erected 'at considerable cost' and may have contributed to the financial difficulties Lennon experienced in the following years.

Lennon named the property 'Melbourne House', a name that persisted until the mid-1920s. He ran the store as 'The Melbourne Stores', differentiating his establishment from Patrick Corbett's rival grocery business on the other side of Jane Street. Lennon mortgaged the property for £2,000 in 1887 but was declared insolvent in 1888. The family were allowed to keep their household furniture, but the 'very superior' brick shop and dwelling were offered for sale in August 1888; they were considered 'admirably adapted for a business of any description.'

Lennon's wife Caroline leased the property back from new owner Thomas Matthews, and operated the store until 1890. Another grocer, Morrice Buckley, took over the lease in 1891. By this time two substantial brick tobacco factories had been constructed on the opposite side of Brunswick Street – designed by John Jacob Cohen, one of the architects responsible for Melbourne House – making the corner Brunswick and Jane streets a prominent intersection. The addition of factory workers to the area may also have provided Buckley with more business success than the unfortunate Lennon.

By the turn of the century the Valley was established as the second major commercial district of the city supplanting South Brisbane and the Woolloongabba fiveways. The store, although on the fringe of the main Valley commercial area, would conceivably have benefited from this development as well as from the increasing residential population as the land on both sides of Brunswick Street was subdivided. After Buckley vacated the premises in 1900, Melbourne House was used as a clothing factory, fuel merchant's shop and bootmaker's premises. Tenants in the 1910s and 1920s leased the upstairs premises as a boarding house, though this practice appears to have been wound up after a small fire in 1920 and a shooting in 1922. Capron Carter, sewing machine retailers, occupied the property from 1959 to 1989.

Alterations were undertaken in 1956 and 1961, with a toilet block added in 1970. The property was converted into a restaurant and office in the 1990s. It was subdivided into three holdings in 2002.

Description

The building occupies a corner site, is two storeyed, and is of rendered brick construction. The corner is truncated and contains the ground floor entrance doors, flanked by large shop front windows either side, with square headed windows to the upper floor, probably bricked up from original French door openings.

A moulded cornice is surmounted by a parapet with simple moulded panels and triangular pediments to the street frontages and a semi-circular pediment above the truncated corner. Major alterations have occurred with the removal of the post supported awning and upper floor balcony, and alterations to windows.

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 substantial two-storey masonry store built during the 1880s; a period of commercial and economic prosperity in Brisbane and its surrounds.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a rare example of an 1880s masonry two-storey corner shop and residence.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine decorative two storey masonry store designed by architects Holmes and Cohen, it contributes to the historical streetscape in this part of Brunswick Street in conjunction with the former tobacco factory façade and Corbett's Grocery Store on the opposite sides of the intersection.

References

1. Brisbane City Council aerial photographs, 1946, 2012

2. Brisbane City Council, City Architecture & Heritage Team, heritage citations
3. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Board detail plan, 1914
4. Brisbane City Council, Properties on the Web, Building Cards
5. Brisbane City Council building register, 1914-1920
6. Department of Natural Resources, Certificates of Title
7. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
8. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
9. National Library of Australia's Trove website, *The Brisbane Courier*, *The Telegraph*, *The Queenslander*, *The Courier Mail*, *The Sunday Mail*
10. Queensland Post Office Directories

Copyright Brisbane City Council

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)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane