



## Heritage Citation



**See War & Co. Building (former)**

## Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 225 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
<b>Type of place</b>	Shop/s
<b>Period</b>	Federation 1890-1914
<b>Style</b>	Free Classical
<b>Lot plan</b>	L1_RP9773
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2010
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Masonry
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association

This was the first store to be operated by Chinese merchants in Fortitude Valley and marks the origins of Chinese commercial enterprise in the Valley. It was built in 1902 for Chinese owners Show Pan and then leased for the next 21 years by merchants See War & Co. It is an example of the changes that occurred in Brunswick Street around the turn of the century that saw this street become the commercial centre for the important Fortitude Valley shopping precinct. It is also an example of the work of Richard Gailey, whose sixty-year career made a significant impact on the architectural design of Brisbane.

## History

This building was constructed in 1902 for Chinese owner Show Pan, who managed and ran See War and Co from the premises for the next 21 years. It is an example of the changes that occurred in Brunswick Street around the turn of the century that saw this street become the commercial centre for the important Fortitude Valley shopping precinct. It is also a rare example of an early Chinese merchant shop in the Valley, and an example of the work of Richard Gailey.

Brunswick Street had been surveyed by 1851, though it was Ann Street that became the first commercial heart of Fortitude Valley as this road led directly into Brisbane Town. In 1864, the Brisbane Municipal Council designated Brunswick Street as one of three first class building areas within Fortitude Valley. This required a better class of fireproof buildings to be constructed in Brunswick Street.

Chinese-born traders were present in the Valley as early as 1874, working as cabinetmakers. The first Chinese merchant shops were established in the Valley around the 1880s. On War Tai and Company was the first to open a shop in Wickham Street in about 1885, although other Chinese merchants were already present in the

city. The Fortitude Valley Chinese traders and merchants had received some acceptance in the community. However, anti-Chinese feeling in the 1880s had resulted in the creation of Leagues aiming to prevent Chinese immigration, a riot with participants attacking Chinese shops, and legislation to restrict Chinese immigration.

See War was first listed in the Brisbane Post Office Directory in 1896-7 as a cabinet maker in Wickham Street. However, an advertisement in the Brisbane Courier for a lost watch demonstrates that See War and Company had existed in Wickham street from at least 1894. By 1898, See War and Company was a wholesale import business, run by See War, who had been a resident of the Valley for several years. The company imported Chinese merchandise and medicines, including opium, and sold them wholesale. Opium, at that time, could be sold legally by qualified medical practitioners, pharmaceutical chemists and wholesale dealers in drugs. See War, who had been importing opium since approximately 1894, and paying import tax on it, fell foul of the regulations in 1898. Police raids were carried out on the premises of See War and other Chinese merchants on 22 January, with large quantities of opium seized. While See War operated wholesale and had sold the opium wholesale to Chinese storemen in Warwick, Isisford, Surat, Amby and Charleville, the company had technically breached the law, as See War, being an 'Asiatic', was not eligible to hold a wholesale dealers' certificate. The £10 fine was remitted in April.

See War and Company remained in Wickham Street until the commissioning of a building to be constructed in 1902 in Brunswick Street, for Chinese owner Show Pan of Fortitude Valley. At this point, See War & Co was one of only eight Chinese merchants operating in Brisbane, reflecting the effect of Australia's immigration policy at the time. See War was the first company to move into Brunswick Street. Other Chinese merchants were located either in Wickham Street or Albert Street in the city, with a Chinese market garden in Water Street.

Brunswick Street was a promising business location in 1902. The Fortitude Valley railway line had been surveyed in the 1880s and the station on Brunswick Street opened in 1890. Trams also travelled the length of Brunswick Street to the Valley Corner at the intersection with Wickham Street. During the 1890s, drapers' businesses which had moved into Brunswick St expanded to become major retailers, and the combination of accessibility and cheap wares was making the Valley an attractive destination.

Show Pan had gained title to the land on which the building stands on 22 April 1902. The Queensland Post Office Directories indicate that, in 1901, the land was devoid of a building as there were no buildings listed between 223 and 239 Brunswick Street. On 24 July 1902, Show Pan borrowed £1,250 from the Brisbane Permanent Building and Banking Company. Presumably this loan was to finance the construction of the new, two storey masonry building.

The buildings were designed by Richard Gailey, who called for tenders for a brick warehouse for Messrs. See War and Co in Brunswick Street up to 3 May 1902. It was later reported in the Brisbane Courier that Gailey was constructing the building for On Wah and Company, with manager Mr. Show Pan but this appears to be incorrect: Show Pan was manager of See War and Company, while On Wah (or War) Tai had a large shop on Wickham Street from which they traded until 1918. The Brunswick Street building was to be a three-storey warehouse, which would be used by the company and other Chinese importers. Additionally, there would be a dwelling house and a school for teaching English to Chinese students. The building was constructed to accommodate two shops with separate entrances, with the postal addresses of 225 and 227 Brunswick Street. The shops' location was well served by public transport, being almost adjacent to the railway station and the tramline which ran along that section of Brunswick Street. It remained a valuable asset for Show Pan as the building was again mortgaged in 1906 for £350 and in 1908 for the amount of £1,200.

Richard Gailey was an Irish-born architect who set up his architectural business in Brisbane in 1865. One of the

longest practising and most prolific architects in Queensland, he designed numerous buildings in Brisbane and Queensland over the course of his nearly 60-year career. Many of his works are listed on the Queensland Heritage Register. Gailey was best known for his hotels and churches, examples of which can be seen in the Valley: the Jubilee, Prince Consort, Wickham and Empire Hotels; and the Fortitude Valley Primitive Methodist Church, now Potters Gallery. He also designed warehouses, one of which appears on the Queensland Heritage Register – the Walter Reid Court in Rockhampton.

The building was finished by June 1903, when See War and Company was raided, this time by revenue officers seeking liquor. Manager Show Pan was prosecuted for 'sly grog' selling. Witnesses in the case reported that Show Pan was a reputable large-scale wholesale and retail merchant whose dealings were largely honourable, and the case was dismissed on appeal. On the same charges in 1913 (on which he was found guilty), Show Pan deposed that he was a British subject who had been in Queensland for thirty years.

See War & Co operated from the building from the time of its construction until 1923. Photographs from 1911 and 1916 show the See War & Co building in the background. It also illustrates how, by that year, Brunswick Street was a substantial commercial precinct, lined with two storey masonry buildings and with few single storey buildings remaining. See War & Co occupied both shops in the building that was then given a single address of 227 Brunswick Street. But in 1919, See War & Co moved into the shop (225 Brunswick Street) on the Alfred Street side of the building and Mark Simich, a fruiterer and confectioner, set up shop in the other half of the building, at 227 Brunswick Street. The next year, Simich's tenancy was replaced by that of fruiterer Charles Hopkinson.

On 22 June 1922, title to the building was transferred from Show Pan to Edward Albert Hawkins. See War and Company was listed in the building until 1923. By now, Showpan's Queensland-born sons were attending university in Brisbane, attaining degrees in company and insolvency law, and science.

Hawkins leased both shops to the Brisbane Meat Preserving Company in 1924. The Brisbane Meat Preserving Company was registered in 1922 and therefore was probably responsible for adding the title "EST 1922" to the parapet of the See War & Co Building. This company provided meat extracts, freezers and preservers, and had its headquarters in Ann Street, Fortitude Valley. The building at 227 Brunswick Street, with a small goods shop further down Brunswick Street, was one of the first of the company's branches to be established in Brisbane's suburbs. The State butchery took over the Brunswick street premises in 1925; a State butchery shop was already operating in Brunswick Street, near Overells, but demand for butchery small goods had increased, making the Meat Preserving Company's 'Dainty Food Shop' a useful acquisition. The State butchery continued to trade from 227 Brunswick Street, during the construction of the adjoining Tranberg House in 1928, until 1929, when 36 of the 39 butchers' shops controlled by the State Trade Department were sold. 227 Brunswick Street was leased to Keeley and Dyne, of the former Roma Street State butchers' shop, for £450.

The property was also sold that year, transferring to the ownership of William Snowdon Acworth and William Joseph Phelps Harris on 29 May. They had leased the ground floor and basement of the former See War & Co Building to the state Commissioner for Trade for five years commencing on 31 December 1929, so it is presumed that Keeley & Dyne operated their butcher's shop as a State butchery. In 1930, the state government had established the Queensland Meat Industry Board to regulate the slaughter of animals for public consumption. This was meant to protect public health by ridding the state of 'backyard operators' who were operating slaughterhouses in Brisbane's suburbs. The state registration of butchers such as Keeley & Dyne was also part of this process.

In 1938, the Albert Billiard Saloon was listed as operating next to 227 Brunswick Street. It is unclear whether this saloon operated from the former See War & Co Building, but, given that it was given no street number, the

saloon may have operated from the building's basement. By 1939, H.H. Keeley was the sole butcher at the shop at the former See War & Co Building. He continued to operate his butchers' shop during the Second World War, but from 1941 he had to share the building with the People's Evangelistic Mission that operated out of the shop at 225 Brunswick Street. Keeley's butchers' shop had been replaced by the Valley Butchering Company, another butchers' business, by 1947. Other post-war businesses to occupy this building include Gillies Chemists (c1958) and The Echoes Karaoke Box (c1995).

On 25 January 1945, William Joseph Phelps Harris became the sole owner of this building. In 1950, Harris leased the building for 10 years to Jo Tong. Tong purchased the property in 1952, in partnership with Leonard Young until 1954, when Tong was again the sole owner. According to Council records, Tong ran a self-service European food market from the site. Upon his death on 4 February 1959, the building passed to his widow Sue Yee Tong. Mrs. Tong held onto the property for another 13 years until she transferred ownership to Giovanni and Giovanna Turrisi. They passed ownership of the building to Francesco and Gracey Turrisi in 1979. In 1982, the building was transferred to the ownership of the Baptist Union of Queensland, who held the property for 10 years. Bettson Properties Pty Ltd was the registered owner in 1992, to be followed by Hugh Francis Dolan that same year. The current owners, Sai Kin Law and So Lai Mak took title of the former See War & Co Building in 1994.

In 1995, this property was identified as being of heritage significance, by the Brisbane City Council when it conducted the first-ever survey of Fortitude Valley's heritage and character buildings. At that time it was identified as the Former Baptist Union Building, as the Baptist Union was then one of the former owners of the building. A comparison of the 1946 and the 2005 aerial photographs show that that this block of Brunswick Street running from the railway line up to Alfred Street has remained relatively unchanged. Thus the former See War & Co Building, like its neighbour Tranberg House (built 1928), makes an important contribution to the historical streetscape of Brunswick Street.

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## Description

The most striking features of this building are the elaborate parapet and the vertical fenestration, which compliments the adjoining building, Tranberg House. Together they provide an attractive façade along this section of Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley.

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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:

## Historical

### CRITERION A

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

As it illustrates the varied development of Brunswick Street that turned it into the retailing and commercial hub of Fortitude Valley by World War One.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As, along with the neighbouring Tranberg House, it provides an attractive contribution to this part of Brunswick Street.

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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

For its association with the celebrated Chinese community, now prominent in Fortitude Valley, particularly the first purpose-built building for Chinese merchants established in the Valley.

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## Historical association

### CRITERION H

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For its association with designer Richard Gailey.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
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  13. Raymond Evans, 'Night of Broken Glass: The Anatomy of an Anti-Chinese Riot', *Brisbane in 1888: The Historical Perspective*, Brisbane History Group Papers No. 8 (1989)
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  15. Brisbane City Council, *Brisbane: 150 Stories*, Brisbane City Council, 2009
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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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