

Heritage Citation



Truth and Sportsman Building (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 351 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Flat building, Office building
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Art Deco

Lot plan	L101_SP113541; L104_SP113541; L105_SP113541; L212_SP113541; L213_SP113541; L206_SP113541; L111_SP113541; L112_SP113541; L201_SP113541; L202_SP113541; L203_SP113541; L205_SP113541; L207_SP113541; L209_SP113541; L109_SP113541; L103_SP113541; L208_SP113541; L305_SP113541; L106_SP113541; L114_SP113541; L204_SP113541; L303_SP113541; L306_SP113541; L211_SP113541; L113_SP113541; L310_SP113541; L301_SP113541; L108_SP113541; L311_SP113541; L214_SP113541; L302_SP113541; L304_SP113541; L309_SP113541; L312_SP113541; L313_SP113541; L314_SP113541; L102_SP113541; L107_SP113541; L110_SP113566; L210_SP113566; L307_SP135197; L308_SP135197; L11_SP172723; L21_SP172723; L31_SP172723; L6_SP198091; L7_SP198093; L15_SP198103; L1_SP198100; L11_SP198099; L2_SP198094; L14_SP198098; L10_SP198096; L12_SP198097; L40_SP238935; L101_SP233971; Common property_SP113540
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — December 2015
Construction	Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Hall and Prentice (Architect); O Wilson Weston (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic

The building was constructed in 1928 for the Truth Newspaper Company, publishers of the Truth and Sportsman newspaper. Eminent Brisbane architectural firm Hall and Prentice designed the building in the art deco style which was then fashionable. Additional storeys built in 1937 were designed by Sydney architect O Wilson Weston. Various newspaper publishing companies operated in the building through the twentieth century. The building was converted to residential apartments in the early 21st century.

History

The Truth newspaper began circulation in Brisbane in 1900, as a local edition of the Sydney newspaper. Initially the company operated from offices in the city. In the 1920s, due to its booming business (which the newspaper proclaimed to be 'growing more rapidly and more lustily than any other journal in the whole State, and as fast as any in other parts of the Commonwealth...'¹) the Truth Newspaper Company decided to expand to a larger site in Fortitude Valley.

Fortitude Valley, first settled by Europeans in the 1850s, was a relatively remote township for most of the nineteenth century. Floods in the 1890s which destroyed city properties left the Valley largely untouched, and drapers' stores began to move into the area. They brought with them shopping customers, and by 1900 the Valley rivalled the city centre as a commercial precinct. Entertainment venues followed in the 1910s, and the 1920s was a decade of industrial and commercial expansion for the Valley. Building construction boomed.

Attracted by the Valley's proximity to wharves, road and rail transport, as well as to the city centre, numerous new industrial and commercial businesses were established.

Truth and Sportsman Ltd bought a 30.46 perch site on the corner of Brunswick and McLachlan Streets in April 1926. This had been the corner of Brunswick and Hall Streets but in the 1920s the intersection was widened and Windmell and Hall Streets joined to create McLachlan Street. The formerly quiet corner was transformed with the construction of new buildings including the Rollinson Building (1925) and Carroll's Corner (1925), both under a year old when Truth and Sportsman Ltd purchased this site.

In December 1926 architects TR Hall and GG Prentice called for tenders for the erection of new business premises for Truth and Sportsman. The architectural firm of Hall and Prentice was established in 1919 with the partnership of Thomas Ramsay Hall and George Gray Prentice. Hall was one of Brisbane's 'most successful architects of the early twentieth century' and the firm designed many prestigious buildings in Brisbane, including Brisbane City Hall [600065], Sandgate Town Hall [601566] and the Tattersall's Club [600093].

No progress was made on the Truth and Sportsman building in 1927. Tenders were received for the work in January but none were accepted. Progress was also restricted when the Works Committee of the Brisbane City Council refused the company's request to have the corner rounded for construction of the building. The Committee refused the request on the grounds that McLachlan Street was not an arterial road and would never carry any but slow traffic due to its gradients from the Petrie Bight wharves.

In December 1927, Hall and Prentice called again for tenders for the erection and completion of the Truth and Sportsman building. AJ Dickinson, builder of the Embassy Hotel in Edward Street, was awarded the contract in January 1928. Dickinson, a master builder, had worked on quality buildings including the Regent Theatre, and with Hall and Prentice on the Grand Central Hotel, Rowes Building, Ascot Chambers, the Barry and Roberts building in Queen Street and also the Carlton Hotel.

The Truth and Sportsman's new structure was a steel and concrete building comprising three floors, including a basement. Business and printing offices were located on the ground floor, with presses in the basement and editorial, composing, block-making and photographic offices on the upper floor. A goods elevator was installed by Norman Bell and Co at a reported price of £28,000.

The Truth and Sportsman building was completed in early 1929, and the newspaper company moved into its new premises in March. The construction of the new Valley building coincided with the completion of similar Truth buildings in Sydney and Melbourne. The buildings, the Truth proclaimed, 'represent the last word in newspaper architecture. Natural lighting facilities are excellent, while there is a spaciousness which will allow the staff to give of its best under ideal conditions.'² The newspaper predicted further growth, and the Brisbane offices were 'built with an eye to the expansion which must lie ahead... the addition of another floor will be a comparatively simple matter.'

Eight years later the anticipated additions came, as in 1937 the Truth announced £30,000 worth of additions to its property. Truth and Sportsman had purchased an adjacent 16.32 perch site on the Brunswick Street side of the building, in 1935. A four-storey building was to be built on this site, while an additional two storeys were added to the original building. Sydney architect Oford Wilson Weston was engaged to design the works. Local builders Kell and Rigby, who had recently completed the Courier Mail building, were the contractors.

According to the Truth's 1938 report announcing the opening of the new building, the estimated £30,000 cost had more than doubled to £75,000. While its 1929 report had emphasised spaciousness, the 1938 extensions focused on 'internal economy of space' although 'beauty of architectural line has been maintained.'³ The steel and concrete expansion was considered 'modern to the last degree' by its contemporary viewers. The Truth,

reporting on its new premises, noted the building's simple forms, horizontal lines which emphasised the building's proportions and a vertical motif highlighting the main entrance and staircase tower. Steel-framed glass block windows in the staircase tower and a high percentage of window space maximised light and air for the Truth's workers, while the 14-foot (4.3m) height of each floor provided additional ventilation.

In 1938 the basement of part of the building was leased to the City Electric Light Company to supply power. A motor room, loading docks and storage buildings were added to the building over the next three decades.

The Truth continued its circulation until 1971 when it was taken over by the Sun newspaper. The Sun published its last paper in 1991. The building was subsequently occupied by Mirror newspapers and housed the presses which produced suburban Quest newspapers. In 1998, the property was transferred from Mirror to Scotridge Pty Ltd and redeveloped as 45 apartments. The apartments are now owned individually.

Description

The Truth and Sportsman Building is a four storey with basement building on the corner of Brunswick and McLachlan Street in Fortitude Valley. It has a concrete encased steel frame structure with rendered brick infill and reinforced concrete floors to carry the weight of printing machines. The streetfacing exterior is well-composed and expressive in a functionalist style with limited decorative detailing. It features many large windows separated by horizontal banding in a plain geometric design. The main entry to the building faces Brunswick Street and is emphasised by a slight tower element with vertical banding and top hung awning. An entry from the street in the centre of the Brunswick Street elevation is a later alteration and it and its awning are not of cultural heritage significance. Rear access is via narrow Coniston Lane from McLachlan Street. The interior conversion to apartments including a rooftop level of apartments is not of cultural heritage significance.

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 1920s building with 1930s additions constructed during that period of commercial growth of Fortitude Valley

as it was seen as an alternative to flood-prone areas close to the river.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as an interwar purpose built newspaper office which had a continuous association with print media in Brisbane for almost sixty years. The building includes features such as reinforced floors and high ceilings designed to accommodate printing equipment.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an intact landmark building, with horizontal and vertical aspects of its design demonstrating the aesthetic qualities of the design.

References

1. *Truth*, Sunday 7 October 1928 p17
2. *Truth*, Sunday 27 January 1929 p1
3. *Truth*, Sunday 6 February 1938 p27
4. Richard Apperly (et al), *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian architecture* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
5. Brisbane City Council aerial photographs, 1946, 2004, 2005
6. Brisbane City Council archives, Brisbane images and building registers
7. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit, Fortitude Valley Heritage and Character Study, 1995
8. Brisbane City Council Minutes, 1927
9. Brisbane City Council, Properties on the Web, Building Cards
10. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Entry on the Queensland Heritage Register, Musket Villa [601741]
11. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title

12. Queensland Post Office Directories
 13. Mahlstedt & Son. City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey. 1951
 14. National Library of Australia, digitised newspapers and other records, Brisbane Courier, Truth, Telegraph, Courier Mail, Sunday Sun
 15. State Library of Queensland, Picture Queensland
 16. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
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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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