

Heritage Citation



Walker Building

Key details

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| Addresses | At 129 George Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000 |
| Type of place | Shop/s |
| Period | Interwar 1919-1939 |
| Style | Free Classical |
| Lot plan | L2_RP619 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006 |
| Construction | Walls: Masonry - Render |

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| People/associations | Atkinson, Powell and Conrad (Architect); John Hutchinson (Builder) |
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| Criterion for listing | (B) Rarity; (H) Historical association |
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Like its neighbour, Sutton House, the Walker Building was designed by influential architects Atkinson, Powell & Conrad and constructed in 1928. It is quite unusual in that it is an example of a small-scale commercial building designed by Atkinson, Powell & Conrad and was erected as one of a complementary set of buildings in Brisbane's CBD. The building was constructed for printer Charles J. Walker who had been operating in Brisbane since the early 1880s. He ran his printing business from the Walker Building until his death in 1941. Since then, the building has been tenanted by various other businesses.

History

The Walker Building is a two-storey commercial building constructed in 1928. A building of similar, though larger, proportions – Sutton House – was constructed concurrently on the adjacent allotment (131-133 George Street). Prior to the construction of Walker Building, the site was occupied by a nineteenth century building, which was used predominantly for commercial purposes. The first specific listing for 129 George Street is in 1909/10, at which time it was briefly occupied by a piano repairer. Charles J. Walker, printer, first began trading from the premises in 1910.

Walker initially operated a printery business from Spring Street, West End, in the early 1880s. For a brief time in the mid-1890s Walker was the manager of Gordon & Gotch's Printing Department. He then returned to his Spring Street premises (which also appears to have been his private residence) and continued his printing business from there. By 1904, Walker was operating his printing business from 183 George Street. In 1907, he moved to 279 George Street and then in 1910 moved to 129 George Street, where he remained. In 1924, Walker purchased 129 George Street from his CBD neighbour, J. R. Sutton. Walker continued to trade from the original building until 1928.

The commercial outlook of Brisbane at the beginning of the 1920s was characterised by a general sense of optimism about the future. Following the depression of the 1890s and a severe drought in 1902, economic conditions in Queensland steadily improved and by 1908 economic growth was "striking".¹ The Queensland economy contracted during World War One and only slowly recovered in the immediate postwar years. By 1920, however, economic conditions had once more improved, though they did not reach the same level of growth experienced prior to World War One.² Nonetheless, business confidence in the period from 1920-26 was high. Though it appears Walker had traded profitably since first opening his printing business in the 1880s, it is clear his business had expanded sufficiently by the early 1920s to allow for the purchase of the site at 129 George Street and the subsequent construction of Walker Building in 1928.

It appears Walker and Sutton worked closely together on the planning, design and construction of both the Walker Building and Sutton House. Both businessmen received building approval from the Brisbane City Council on the same day in July 1928. The architectural firm, Atkinson, Powell & Conrad, was commissioned to design both buildings, which were also constructed by the same builder, John Hutchinson (founder of Hutchinson

Builders, currently one of the State's largest building contractors). Both buildings record 1928 as the establishment date. Given the similarity between the first two levels of the two buildings and the coincidence of building approval, it is likely that both Walker and Sutton discussed the need for new premises, arrived at an agreement to use the same architect and both approved the similar style of the two buildings. This unusual co-operation makes the two buildings an unusual set, both aesthetically and historically, of commercial interwar buildings in the CBD. The final cost of Walker Building was £2,200.

The architectural firm of Atkinson, Powell & Conrad operated from 1927 to 1931. Henry Wallace Atkinson attended the first course for technical education as an architect offered in Queensland in 1881. Both Atkinson and Lange Leopold Powell were also members of the first Queensland Board of Architects, formed following the passing of the Architects Act of 1928³ These two architects were thus part of the first generation of Queensland-trained architects in a time of critical reflection about the nature of architecture in Queensland and the establishment of a local, professional identity. Together, the firm was responsible for a number of significant buildings in Brisbane, including the Dunlop Rubber Co. Building (1927), "Craigston" (1927) and the Tristrams' Factory (1928).

Walker continued to operate his printing business from the building until his death in 1941. A number of different businesses occupied the premises after this date. The building itself remained in the Walker family until 1968. The parapet of the building still retains the date of establishment and the words, 'Walker Building'.

Patricia and Siobhan Cosgrave featured the Walker Building as an interesting historical building in their 1989 publication *The Brisbane Year Book*. The Brisbane History Group identified the Walker Building as a part of Brisbane's commercial heritage in 2002, when they included it in their publication *Walking Tours – Brisbane's Commercial Heritage 1900-1940*.

Description

The Walker Building is a small two-storey commercial building with architectural elements of the Inter-war Free Classical style. It has a simple symmetrical facade with classical columns on the upper floor framing French doors and fanlight, which lead onto a waving balcony.

The parapet bears the name of the building and its date of construction. There is a substantial basement that probably housed the printing works of its original owner.

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:

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a small scale commercial building constructed in Brisbane's CBD during the interwar era.

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

as its small scale is an unusual example of the work of influential architects, Atkinson, Powell & Conrad.

References

1. Glen Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1973, p. 134
2. *Ibid*, p. 190.
3. William Job, *The Building of Brisbane 1828-1940*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2002, pp. 23, 25-6
4. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, post-1946 building approval cards
5. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
6. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map, 1913
7. Brisbane History Group, *Walking Tours – Brisbane's Commercial Heritage 1900-1940*, Brisbane, Brisbane History Group, 2002
8. Cosgrave, Siobhan & Cosgrave, Patricia, *The Brisbane Year Book*, Sydney, Collins Publishers, 1989
9. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
10. G. Greenwood and J. Laverty. *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*. Brisbane: BCC, 1959.
11. Job, William, *The Building of Brisbane 1828-1940*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2002
12. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
13. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings files
14. Glen Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism*, Brisbane, University

of Queensland Press, 1973

15. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 12, 1951

16. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949

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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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