

Heritage Citation



Walter Reid Building facade

Key details

Also known as	Brabant & Co Building
Addresses	At 163 Charlotte Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Warehouse
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Academic Classical
Lot plan	L2_RP182759; L1_RP182759; L3_RP182759
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2007 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Walls: Masonry

People/associations	George Cowlshaw (Architect)
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Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association
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The Walter Reid Building was designed by Brisbane architect George Cowlshaw and constructed in 1883 as a warehouse for merchants Brabant and Co. In 1907, Walter Reid and Co. purchased the building and occupied it from at least 1915 until 1982 when the building was sold. Although the building was demolished in the 1980s due to structural instability, the facade still survives and serves as an example of the development of Charlotte Street as a warehouse and light industry precinct in Brisbane from the 1880s.

History

This two-storey brick façade is the remnant of the former Walter Reid Building, which was built between 1881 and 1883 by architect George Cowlshaw for Brabant & Co, importing merchants. George Cowlshaw was responsible for a number of significant buildings in Brisbane, including 'Merthyr' in New Farm (1879-80) and the Telegraph Chambers in Queen Street (1890-1). He was the younger brother of James Cowlshaw, who is considered "Brisbane's first successful private architect". George Cowlshaw was in partnership with James from 1876-1892 and the former Walter Reid Building was designed whilst George was in partnership with James.

Brabant & Co had been formed by German migrant Julius Brabant, who came to Brisbane in 1863. Brabant had come to Australia from Hanover and had first gone to the Victorian goldfields to establish a general store. Brabant later served as the Consul in Brisbane for the independent German State of Bremen between 1865 and 1868. Brabant's importing firm grew and he formed a partnership with two Victorian associates Augustus Heusmann and George Robert Fife. In 1881 Heusmann and Fife purchased the two allotments on which the former Brabant & Co Building was constructed over the next two years.

Such construction in Charlotte Street reflects the predominant use of land in this area originally known as 'Frogs Hollow', which was roughly bounded by Alice, George, Elizabeth and Edward Streets. Until the late nineteenth century, the area was prone to flooding and possessed a dubious reputation due to the presence of brothels and opium dens. The area was also characterised by residences, boarding houses, hotels, the Chinese Quarter and light industry. From the 1880s onward, however, the area came to be increasingly dominated by warehouses and light industry. This was encouraged by the area's proximity to the city's busy wharves located on the Town Reach of the river. Thus, the construction of the building in Charlotte Street reflects this broader trend, which is an important aspect of the development of Brisbane's Central Business District (CBD).

Brabant & Co remained in the building into the twentieth century. By 1915 Walter Reid and Co Ltd, Rockhampton merchants established in 1862, had moved into the warehouse after having purchased the building in 1907. Scotsman Walter Reid founded the company with a retail store in East Street, Rockhampton in that year. He

imported general merchandise, hardware, wine and spirits. Walter Reid sold the business in 1881 to McIlwraith McEachern who retained its name. The company expanded in Rockhampton leading to their building a warehouse in 1894 and a second one in 1900-02. Architect Montague Talbot Stanley added extensions to the building in 1908 for Walter Reid & Co.

During World War Two, the Walter Reid & Co Building was requisitioned for use by the United States Army. In 1944, the building was severely damaged by fire. The top half of the building was later demolished as the structure was considered to be a public safety hazard.

Walter Reid & Co continued as owners of the building until its sale in 1982 to the State Government Insurance Office (SGIO). In 1984, the SGIO began a \$19 million redevelopment of the site but planned to retain the three-storey façade as it was listed with the National Trust of Queensland. The third storey facade was subsequently demolished when it was found to be unstable, leaving only the current two-storey façade, and then a high-rise office building was erected above the façade. The SGIO spent \$100,00 restoring the façade's crumbling plasterwork and then placed a metal cap on the top of the façade so as to protect it. The building is currently leased by the Administrative Services Department and is now known as the Queensland Health Building.

The façade's heritage significance was recognised in 1987 by National Trust of Queensland. It was subsequently granted heritage protection under the Brisbane City Council's pre-2000 Town Plan. In 1986, it was included in the Brisbane City Council's *Heritage Trail Brisbane City Centre* and again in 2002 in Council's Heritage Experience Guides *Shadows of the Past*.

Description

This two-storey brick façade has an elaborately rendered street elevation in the classic revival style. The ground floor has arched openings, mostly Romanesque, in a strongly coursed wall. The upper floor features Romanesque arches with decorative keystones between paired Corinthian pilasters and deep overhanging string courses.

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 good example of the development of Charlotte Street as a warehousing precinct from the 1880s.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as the façade survives as a good example of the Victorian Academic Classical style of architecture applied to a warehouse building, providing a sense of solidity, permanency and aesthetic appeal.

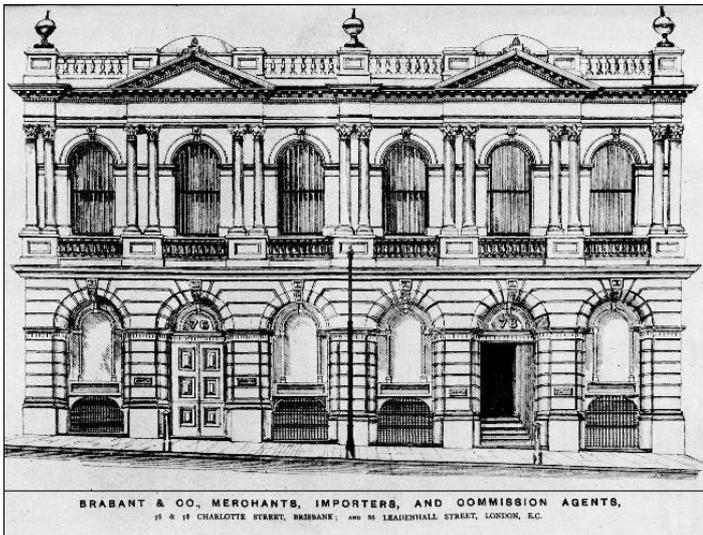
Historical association

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 one of the few buildings that can be attributed to notable architect George Cowlshaw while in partnership with his brother James.

Supporting images



Brabant & Co., Merchants, Importers, and Commission Agents, 1887 (Source: *The Week*, 17 December 1887, p. 44).

References

1. Australian Heritage Database. Register of the National Estate. Walter Reid Building (former). Accessed 13 June 2006
2. Australian Heritage Photographic Library, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2004. Walter Reid Building (former). Accessed 13 June 2006
3. Brisbane City Council, *Heritage Experience Guides: Shadows of the Past*, A Brisbane City Council Heritage Trail, Brisbane City Council
4. Brisbane City Council, *Heritage Trail Brisbane City Centre*, Series No. 1, 13th Edition
5. *The Daily Sun*, 25 February 1984, "Historic Frontage Demolished"
6. German Australia Diplomats website:
www.teachers.ash.org.au/dnutting/Germanaustralia/e/diplomat/brisbane.htm. Accessed 14 June 2006
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8. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, Sewerage Map, 22 October 1913
9. National Trust of Queensland, *Heritage Listing*, 1987
10. *Post Office Directories of Queensland*, 1914-1916
11. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
12. *The Telegraph*, 9 May 1984, "A Facelift at 101"
13. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994

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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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