

## Heritage Citation



### Baden Powell House

#### Key details

Addresses	At 132 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Office building, Shop/s
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Georgian Revival
Lot plan	L2_RP9469; L1_RP9469

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000  
Date of Citation — September 2006

**Construction** Walls: Brick - Painted

**People/associations** Chambers and Ford (Architect)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

Ballarat-based Frank Presnell West acquired this land in 1922. He commissioned architects Chambers and Ford to design a new building, which was constructed by H. Lanham, in 1927-28. It was leased to furniture retailers until 1951. The Boy Scouts Association bought the property in 1956, renaming it 'Baden Powell House' for the founder of Scouting movement.

## History

Baden Powell House, constructed in 1928, replaced earlier timber and iron shops following subdivision of a larger allotment at 130-134 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley (the Valley).

The 1920s was a decade of economic growth throughout Brisbane. The Valley in particular, with its success as a commercial and industrial hub, expanded even further. Electric trams, which passed the busy corner of Brunswick and Wickham Streets, brought thousands of shoppers to the Valley. The first stage of the McWhirters building that had been completed in 1912 was extended in 1923. The buildings at 126-144 Wickham Street were situated away from the main retail hub centred on Brunswick Street. However, Rhoades and Co furniture warehouse, which was sited on the southern end of this block of shops at 116-124 Wickham Street, drew customers to this end of the Valley from the turn of the century. The sites also had the advantage of having frontages to both Wickham and Little Streets (though the incline of the land made access to Little Street more difficult) and proximity to the train line.

During the 1920s Wickham Street was affected by road widening and remodelling at the junction of Ann, Queen and Wickham Streets. Properties along Wickham Street were resumed by the Brisbane Municipal Council in 1923, in order to create a wider road, as well as a park reserve. The cutting on Duncan's Hill for Ann Street was widened, opening the Valley even more to the rest of Brisbane. In 1927, Barry Parade was constructed to link up with St Paul's Terrace on which the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration had recently erected their new convent.

The undertaking of road widening in the CBD to improve traffic flow, and park creation was part of a broader international town planning movement that was prominent between 1912 and 1920.<sup>1</sup> This movement had a significant impact on the Brisbane Municipal Council, leading to the implementation of The City of Brisbane Improvement Act of 1916. Extensive plans were then detailed for the widening of the CBD's 'principal streets, the resumption of extensive areas of land, and the extension of the city's parks and recreational facilities'.<sup>2</sup> The Municipal Council borrowed £1,000,000 and work on the scheme began in 1923. The junction of Ann, Queen and Wickham Streets was completely remodelled in the next few years, creating Centenary Park.

The site, two subdivisions of just over eleven perches, was sold to Ballarat-based Frank Presnell West in 1922.

It had been part of an allotment of just over seventeen perches owned by Louisa Finch from 1915. The remaining six perches were sold two years later to the Melrose family (now number 130). The existing building on West's site was tenanted by Botten Bros, house furnishers, and West continued the lease. Architects Chambers and Ford designed a new building, which was constructed by H. Lanham, in 1927-28 for a cost of £6,000. A sketch of West's new building was featured in the *Brisbane Courier* in October 1927. The brick building was to be two storeys on the Wickham Street frontage.

The noted architectural firm, Chambers and Ford, was the partnership of Claude William Chambers (1861-1947) with E. M. Ford. The firm lasted from 1920 to 1951, although Chambers had relocated to Sydney in 1915 and left the business in 1935. Chambers' architectural work in Brisbane dates from 1887. Chambers, who worked in Brisbane from 1887, contributed greatly to the architectural design of the city. His work includes the former RS Exton and Co Building (1907) [601142], Perry House (1910) [600103], Smellie's Building (1896) [600097] and the former Telecommunications House (1907) [600110], as well as 'Ross Roy', now St Peter's Lutheran College, Indooroopilly (1896-97), 'Wybenia', Mark Street, New Farm (1898), additions to the Municipal Markets, Roma and Turbot Streets, Brisbane (1900). Chambers and Ford were responsible for Holy Trinity Church (1930) and a number of elite houses in Hamilton and Clayfield during the inter-war period, one of note being 'Gainsborough' in Crescent Road, Hamilton (1938).

West's building was one of the last to join the newly-designed and constructed block of buildings along Wickham Street, between Gotha and Little Streets. The block had developed significantly after land sales in the 1920s allowed retailers to purchase their own shops, or investors like West to buy portions of the Valley for commercial development. Progress had been supplemented by the Brisbane Municipal Council's road-works, although the initially detrimental effect of the works had been to block off the shops. The retailers between Boundary and Gipps Streets renamed their stretch of the Valley 'Broadway' and initiated a large co-operative advertising and decorating campaign in the mid-1920s. All the buildings between West's (132) and Ashby's (144) were erected in this decade, by Chambers and Ford or Addison and Sons. The latter firm also designed Rhoades' building and additions in the same period.

In 1928, West signed a ten-year lease with Edward Crafti, home furnisher, formerly of Stanley Street. In May that year, Crafti's opened in the new building. The building was reported to have four storeys (although this is only to Little Street), all filled with crockery, furniture of varying prices and model rooms. The showroom was 'on very modern lines' and the firm had spared no expense in its new display. Crafti's also leased the building at number 130 and later added a factory on nearby land owned by the firm (no longer extant).

By 1942 the building was occupied by West's Furniture Emporium, furniture dealers, which remained its usage until the City Electric Light Company bought the property in 1951. In 1956 the property was sold to the Boy Scouts Association, and the building renamed 'Baden Powell House' for the founder of Scouts Australia. The Scouts Association made internal alterations in 1957 and 1959 and added a radio mast to the building in 1964. The Scouts Association held the property until the 1990s. It was purchased by its current owners in 2003.

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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:

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## Historical

### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history  
as this shop illustrates the growth and renewal that Fortitude Valley experienced as a retail centre in the 1920s.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance  
for its contribution to the streetscape of Wickham Street as one of a group of similarly-scaled buildings dating from the 1920s, and as an architect-designed commercial building built in the Interwar Georgian Revival style.

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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  
as a building designed by prominent architectural firm Chambers and Ford.

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## References

1. Gordon Greenwood and John Laverty, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*, Brisbane, 1959, p. 410
2. *Ibid*
3. Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*. North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1989
4. *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, 1922
5. Brisbane City Council Building Registers, 1920s
6. Fortitude Valley Character and Heritage Study. Vol.2. (Heritage Unit, Brisbane City Council. 1995)

7. Brisbane City Council Property Details, BIDS, Building Cards
  8. Brisbane City Council WebBASX maps – cadastre, 1946 aerial, 2001 aerial, 2005 aerial
  9. Brisbane City Council Minutes, 1923
  10. *Brisbane Courier* 1922
  11. Brisbites Suburban Sites, Fortitude Valley @ [www.brisbites.com/suburbview.asp](http://www.brisbites.com/suburbview.asp) accessed 7 Sep 2006
  12. Department of Mines and Natural Resources, Certificates of Title
  13. Greenwood, Gordon and John Laverty, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*, The Council of the City of Brisbane, Brisbane, 1959
  14. John Oxley Library Photographic Collection, Image No. 49332
  15. Kennedy, Michael Owen. 'Domestic Architecture in Queensland Between the Wars', Master of the Built Environment (Building Conservation) thesis, University of New South Wales, 1989
  16. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 30, 1951
  17. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board Survey Maps, Detail Plan No. 151, 1914
  18. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1894-1949
  19. State Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, *Buildings of Queensland*, Jacaranda, Brisbane, 1959
  20. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
  21. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century: A Biographical Dictionary*. 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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