

Heritage Citation



Carrington Chambers

Key details

Also known as	Woodley's Building
Addresses	At 153 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Shop/s
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Style	Arts and Crafts
Lot plan	L15_SP324856
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2010
Construction	Walls: Masonry

Carrington Chambers was constructed for William Woodley, an artesian well-borer who settled in Queensland in the 1880s. The building was designed in 1909 by eminent architectural firm Hall and Dods, who had also designed King Edward Chambers on the adjoining lot in 1905. Woodley's Building was designed in harmony King Edward Chambers. The building was constructed during the Valley's growth as an appealing commercial destination and Carrington Chambers was leased to a variety of tenants throughout its history. The Chambers were also part of the 1980s Chinatown redevelopment.

History

Carrington Chambers, originally known as Woodley's Building, was designed by Hall and Dods in 1909 for William Woodley. William Woodley, an artesian well borer and contractor, had purchased 25.72 perches on the corner of Wickham and Gipps Streets in 1908. The site was opposite the well-known Foy and Gibson and adjacent to King Edward's Buildings, which had been constructed for the Honorable Peter Murphy in 1905, also designed by Hall and Dods.

William Woodley arrived in Queensland from Canada in the 1880s on the invitation of Queensland artesian bore pioneers. Drilling for artesian bores had been trialled in Victoria in the 1850s, with bores predicted in Queensland shortly afterwards. But it was not until the 1880s that pioneers attempted to create bores in the western plains of Queensland. The first well was completed in 1887 and on the basis of that success American experts, including William Woodley, were invited to Queensland. Woodley had trained for the occupation of artesian well-boring from his youth and on moving to Queensland commenced operations in his chosen field. By 1910 he had established a company, Woodley Limited, and completed bores in Dalby, Windorah, Roma, Mitchell, and a number of stations in the western plains of Queensland.

Despite the rural nature of his work, Woodley was based in Brisbane. He managed his company from business premises in Wickham Street and he and wife Caroline Cummins lived in Sandgate, moving to Clayfield in 1908. Their new house, 'Wyoming', later named 'Mapleleaf', referenced Woodley's American origins. The Woodleys resided in 'Mapleleaf' until Mrs Woodley died in 1928, when she was credited for the great amount of charitable work she had undertaken in her life.

Woodley's decision to invest in Wickham Street reflected the potential for commercial success in the centre of the Valley in the early twentieth century. Wickham Street had begun as a secondary road in the Valley, opened in stages in the 1860s as an alternative route to Ann Street, the main commercial district. The Valley developed as small town and Wickham Street, accordingly, grew slowly. In the 1870 and 1880s, with the settlement now well-established, solid brick and stone buildings began to replace the timber shops, churches and residences. Wickham Street was a particular focus of this growth, as new multi-tenanted shops and dwellings were erected along the street. The growth of businesses in the Valley accelerated in the 1890s, despite an economic depression and destruction caused by the 1893 floods. The area was mostly spared from flood damage and retailers who had set up shop in the Valley pressed their advantage. By 1900 drapery firms were expanding into

department stores, and within five years the Valley was an attractive shopping destination. Newer and larger retail and office buildings emerged on and around the Valley Corner.

Investors' attention turned to Valley sites on which older buildings still stood. Not least of these was the large block at the corner of Wickham and Gipps Streets. In the nineteenth century it had been too far from the main commercial district, and its tenants were mostly tradesmen, including plumbers and painters, whose businesses adjoined the funeral parlour of Cannon and Cripps. By 1908, however, with a location close to the now-popular Valley Corner, across the road from Foy and Gibson and next to the successfully tenanted King Edward Building, the site was ripe for development. Woodley acquired the title to the land in November 1908, consisting of 25.72 perches of a much larger block fronting Wickham and Gipps Streets.

Woodley wasted no time informing prospective tenants of his intentions for the Wickham Street site. Notice of shops and offices to be built on the vacant land on the corner of Wickham and Gipps St was given in September 1908, and tenders for construction went out in December. The commissioning of architects Hall and Dods to design the premises also highlighted the prestige of the new building.

Francis Hall and Robin Dods were two of the most distinguished architects in Brisbane in the early 1900s. Their popularity coincided with a construction boom in Brisbane, and in 1909 alone the firm had been commissioned to design the latest additions to T.C. Beirne's premises in Ipswich and the Valley, as well as the Church of England Cathedral, new premises for Rothwell's in Edward street, the New Zealand Insurance Company building in Ann street, the Lyceum Theatre in George street, a station for the Brisbane Electric Supply Company in William street, an office building near Custom House, the expansion of Rhoades and Company in Wickham street and Woodley's building.

Beyond 1909, Hall and Dods made a significant contribution to the architectural record of Brisbane, including the Mater Misericordiae Private Hospital and the first part of its public hospital; parts of the General Hospital [601903]; the AMP and Bank of NSW buildings; the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Woolstores at Teneriffe [600327]; St Brigid's at Red Hill [600284]; the Maryborough Town Hall (1906) [600698]; and St John's Cathedral [600076].

Woodley's new building was designed to complement its neighbour, another multi-tenanted commercial building. It was originally known as King Edward's Building, and had been designed by Hall and Dods in 1905. Despite having two different clients, the architects managed to design complimentary buildings, ensuring a consistent streetscape along Wickham Street between Duncan and Gipps Streets.

Excavations on Woodley's site began in January 1909, conducted by William Bowers, of Bowen and Bowers.

The work involved the use of dynamite, and on 21 January the explosives caused a massive blast, sending rocks and debris flying across Wickham Street. Pedestrians were injured and a seventeen year old department store worker was killed. An inquiry in February and trial through April and May resulted in a charge of unlawful killing against Bowers, although the case was quietly dropped later in the year.

Walls and Juster had been contracted to construct the shop and office building in early January, with a tender of £5,239/14/0, and carried on the construction through the trial, finishing in August 1909. The newly finished 'Woodley's Buildings' provided retail and commercial space for various lessees, including (notably for the time) a photography studio. Other tenants included a dentist, dressmaker, restaurant, tobacconist, chemist and ladies' hairdresser. Like the King Edward Chambers, the multicultural nature of the Valley was reflected in some of its tenants, including Japanese merchant T. Kashiwagi, president of the Brisbane Japanese Association, who leased one of the chambers from the 1920s-1940s.

Woodley's Chambers was the beginning of William Woodley's investment in the Valley, who went on to have

plans approved for buildings on Brunswick Street, twice in 1910 and once in 1911. All of Woodley's buildings were designed by Hall and Dods and constructed by M. Doggett.

In 1910 Peter Blundell and Falkiner Hewson purchased Woodley's Chambers and continued to lease it to small business tenants. Hewson's death in 1926 led to the dissolution of their partnership, and in June 1927 Woodley's Buildings were auctioned in five subdivisions, each with a separate title. The smallest chamber was subdivision 5, consisting of 4.72 perches. Subdivision 5 abutted the corner of Gipps Street and was the first to sell in March 1928. It was soon renamed 'Judge's Chambers' for new owners William and Lillian Judge, who had run a hairdressing and tobacconist venture in the adjacent King Edward's Building. Architect C.B. De Costa designed alterations for the Judges in 1928, which were constructed by Low and Co. The Federal Deposit Bank had bought subdivisions 2-4, a much larger allotment of 14.61 perches, in December 1928. The bank's premises unsurprisingly became known as the Federal Bank Chambers. The final 6.42 perches of subdivision 1, closest to King Edward's Building, was sold to Treasury Buildings in 1936.

Each subdivision was passed through a series of owners and leases. Judge's Chambers was owned by the Brisbane Crematorium for nearly thirty years, while the National Mutual Life Association held the Federal Bank Chambers for just over sixty years. A new shopfront was added to subdivision 1 in 1956 by new proprietor Norman Simmich, while alterations to the office and the awning were undertaken for the Brisbane Crematorium in 1952 and 1953. The building also underwent renovations as part of the Chinatown redevelopment in the 1980s.

The name 'Carrington Chambers', which is on the parapet of the building, may come from the 'Carrington Reception Lounge' caterers, who leased part of the building from around 1949.

The building continues to be leased to commercial tenants, including restaurateurs, and the property passed to its current owner in 2006.

Description

The building was originally face brick with rendered bands above the first storey awning. Today only the first two bays remain in face brick – the remainder has been painted over. Its ground floor awning, which was originally post supported, is now cantilevered.

Together this and its neighbouring building form a continuity in the Wickham Street façade for the entire block, using tiled window hoods, decorated twin corbelled brackets and vertical windows.

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 evidence of the pattern of commercial growth and development in Fortitude Valley during the early twentieth century.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as one of two neighboring buildings, designed by the same architects, that form a consistent and complimentary streetscape along the east side of Wickham Street between Duncan and Gipps Streets; and, as one of a number of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that form an historic streetscape along this part of Wickham Street.

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 architectural firm, Hall and Dods, one of Brisbane's leading architectural firms from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

References

1. John Egan, *The Work of Robin Dods*, B Architecture Thesis, University of Sydney, New South Wales: 1931, appendix
2. Post Office Directories.
3. *J Hall and Son Tender Book*, 1895-1912 John Oxley Library Manuscript
4. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
5. *The Queenslander*, 1887

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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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