

Heritage Citation



Commonwealth Bank

Key details

Addresses	At 310 Logan Road, Stones Corner, Queensland 4120
Type of place	Bank
Period	World War II 1939-1945
Style	Functionalist
Lot plan	L17_RP54715
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2005 Date of Citation — May 2025
Construction	Walls: Masonry
Criterion for listing	(B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

A visually prominent commercial building in the main commercial centre of Stones Corner, the former Commonwealth Bank of Australia is an uncommon example of a Stripped Classical bank incorporating Art Deco

features. The bank was designed by the Principal Architect of the Commonwealth Government, E. H. Henderson, who died the month after this branch opened in May 1939.

History

The former Commonwealth Bank at 310 Logan Road is located in the inner-city suburb of Stones Corner, three kilometres from central Brisbane. Originally known as Burnett Swamp, the suburb is named after James Stone, who purchased a corner of land at the junction of Logan Road and Old Cleveland Road in 1875, on which he erected a hut to sell refreshments to passers-by. After Stone sold his land in 1887, the Junction Hotel (now the Stones Corner Hotel) was constructed in place of his hut. A tram service from Woolloongabba opened along the Logan Road in 1902. In 1914, further tram services began along Old Cleveland Road to Coorparoo and Logan Road to Greenslopes. In 1921, the population of Stones Corner was 521. The years between the First and Second World Wars saw increased retail activity in the area. By 2021, the population of Stones Corner was 2,336.

The early development of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia

By the end of the first decade of the 20th Century, debate and discussion had occurred in Australia about the need to reform Australia's banking sector and establish a national retail bank. The impetus for this change had been the economic recession of the 1890s and the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The latter act gave 'power to the Commonwealth to make laws with respect to banking.' Both sides of the Australian political spectrum considered the issue of establishing a national bank. However, the Labor government of Prime Minister Andrew Fisher passed the Commonwealth Bank Act in 1911, establishing the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. The Act was passed despite opposition from New South Wales and Victoria state governments, who saw the new institution as an extravagance.

The Commonwealth Bank of Australia commenced operations in 1912 despite concerns at the State level about its role. The central role of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia was to conduct savings and business banking with the security of a federal government guarantee. However, the bank's operation was to be free of government control and interference. After its establishment, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia slowly merged with several state savings banks to create a single national savings bank. In 1913, it merged with the State Savings Bank of Tasmania. At around the same time, discussions about a merger were held with the State Savings Bank of Western Australia, though this did not occur until 1931. The state saving banks in New South Wales and Victoria were more determined to maintain their independence. The State Bank of Victoria finally merged with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in 1991.

In Queensland, on 6 December 1920, the Queensland Government Savings Bank merged with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in the 'biggest deal up to that time.' In the same year, a significant change to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia when it took over responsibility for note issue – the printing of new paper money – from the Federal Treasury. This saw the Commonwealth Bank of Australia increasingly take on the regulatory functions associated with a central bank. However, ongoing debates over the tension between the Commonwealth Bank of Australia's retail and regulatory functions came to a head in the 1950s. In 1959, the federal government transferred the Commonwealth Bank of Australia's regulatory powers to the newly established Reserve Bank of Australia. The Reserve Bank of Australia began its operation in January 1960. Another notable responsibility for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia during the First and Second World Wars was acting as the agent for the Commissioner of the War Service Homes Scheme. Established in 1918, the War Service Homes Scheme was set up to support veterans of the First World War to build houses at 'favourable

interest rates.’

The development and construction of the Commonwealth Bank (former) in Stones Corner

From the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, it was closely associated with the Post Offices of the Federal Postmaster-General's Department. State headquarters of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia were in General Post Offices. Many Post Office branches also served as a branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. For example, from 1923, the Post Office in Stones Corner, located in the former Thomason Brothers and Co. building at 303 Logan Road, also housed the local branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia before the construction of the subject site in the late 1930s.

In Queensland, in the 1920s, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia began to establish its own banking chambers in addition to those operating out of Post Offices. Many of those established, as with the branch in Stones Corner, replaced those operating in Post Offices. The first standalone branch in Brisbane was a Mediterranean-style building established on Sandgate Road in Albion in 1927. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia established at least another eight standalone branches in Brisbane before the outbreak of the Second World War. Then, in the mid-1930s, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia began building four suburban-based branches designed in the Interwar Stripped Classical style of architecture that incorporated prominent design features from the Art Deco Movement. These branches were in Stones Corner, Clayfield, Paddington, and Red Hill.

Up to the Second World War, bank buildings were designed to convey a ‘sense of confidence’ in their services. A sense of scale and solidity were the ideas that underpinned the design of bank buildings, as illustrated in the use of classical columns. The predominant architectural styles for banks tended towards Gothic and Beaux-Arts styles; however, during the years between the First and Second World Wars, designs such as Stripped Classical were also built. These designs helped convey a sense of confidence and permanency through their design elements. Despite the emergence of Modernism overseas, especially in Europe, Stripped Classical remained ‘prestigious’ because of its association with larger buildings that conveyed a sense of strength. Nonetheless, those architects using the style did embrace the idea of simplicity associated with Modernism by removing classical elements such as columns from their designs. Stripped Classicism also increasingly included Art Deco features in its designs.

The origins of the Art Deco movement can be found in the work of the French Society of Decorative Artists before the First World War. However, after 1918, the Art Deco movement became more prominent and influenced various design fields ranging from architecture to transportation. Significantly, Art Deco designs represented a break with the past and the coming of the modern age. Regarding architecture, the incorporation of Art Deco designs marked the first step toward the emergence of Modernism. Many Art Deco-inspired designs also responded to the new technologies and the social change of the interwar years. For example, the emergence of the Streamline Moderne style of Art Deco design was influenced by the aerodynamic principles associated with the design of various modes of transport, such as motor cars, aircraft, and ships. Furthermore, Art Deco features found their way into other architectural styles as ‘decorative embellishments.’ In the mid to late 1930s, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia became widely known for their Stripped Classical buildings ‘enlivened by Art Deco embellishments’ that helped express the ‘higher purpose’ of bank buildings.

Described as an interwar Stripped Classical design with prominent Art Deco features, plans for building a Commonwealth Bank of Australia branch in Stones Corner began in 1937. By October 1937, initial drawings for the branch had been drawn up, and requests were made to estimate how much the building would cost to construct. It was estimated that the building would cost around £3,925 to build. By 18 August 1938, the design of the building had been formalised enough that tenders were called for its construction. A tender of £4,265 from E.J. Taylor of Hamilton was accepted in September 1938. Taylor also constructed the similarly designed Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Clayfield.

Architect drawings of the bank show the minor changes that occurred in the design of the building. Notable early drawings showed curved glass windows on the ground floor, though these were later replaced. The design of the bank included critical features associated with Stripped Classical architecture, including the symmetrical façade and the division of the building into three vertical bays. Key Art Deco features include the stepped silhouette that conceals the roof form, fluted pilaster in the window bays, and the use of rounded corners. Working drawings from 1938 show the intended layout of the interior of both floors. The ground floor was split into a public space at the front with a working space to the rear. At the left rear of the building was a strongroom adjacent to staff facilities. The manager's office was located to the left of the working space of the building. The first floor was accessed by stairs located in an entryway to the left of the main entrance on Logan Road. The first floor was divided into two spaces for letting and toilets. The building was opened on 22 May 1939 and remained a branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia until 2016. Additions to the rear of the building were made in 1948 and 1962. A further extension to the rear was completed in 1968, while an awning over the front with a change to the building entry was added later.

The life and career of E.H. Henderson

The design of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Stones Corner was overseen by the Chief Architect of the Commonwealth Government, E.H. Henderson. Born in Gateshead-On-Tyne in the United Kingdom, Henderson emigrated to Australia in 1910. In 1912, he began working for the Commonwealth Department of Works, with whom he stayed until his suicide in 1939. Henderson became a Supervising Architect in New South Wales in 1920. Henderson was well-regarded for his work. For example, in 1923, when he considered leaving the Department of Works, it was noted that he possessed 'outstanding professional qualifications' and would be difficult to replace him if he left government service. He was promoted to the role of the Commonwealth Government's Principal Design Architect (renamed Chief Architect in the 1930s) on the retirement of John Murdoch in 1929.

As the Principal Architect for the Commonwealth Government in the 1930s, Henderson oversaw the design of many federal buildings ranging from banks to post offices. Henderson was responsible for setting the vision and tone of buildings constructed under his direction. Henderson often did initial designs and consulted with his customers about their requirements. These designs were then implemented at a state level to see designs through to construction.

An early example of Henderson's interest in the Art Deco movement can be found in the design of the Manuka Swimming Pool, the first swimming pool in Canberra. The Manuka Swimming Pool was described as a 'great laurel' for Henderson at its opening in 1931. Henderson undertook two overseas trips in the 1930s to investigate building designs. In 1930, he visited the UK to investigate bank buildings, while a tour of the UK, Europe, and the United States in 1936 focused on broadcasting buildings.

Henderson died in 1939, aged 54, after committing suicide. Henderson's death resulted from a Royal Commission into contracts related to the additions then being made to the General Post Office in Sydney. Henderson left a letter declaring that he had never been bribed. Six weeks after his death, he was exonerated by the Royal Commission. In various articles published at the time of his death, Henderson was described as a brilliant architect. The professional journal *Construction* wrote, 'Henderson will remain of imperishable memory, not only for his skill, but also as being the personification of honour, gentlemanliness, and cordiality, to all those whom he contacted.'

Description

The former Commonwealth Bank at 310 Logan Road in Stones Corner is an example of a Stripped Classical commercial building incorporating prominent Art Deco features. Constructed on a prominent rhomboid-shaped site at the junction of Logan Road and Old Cleveland Road that slopes northwards, the expressive design of the building stands in contrast to other commercial buildings in the vicinity.

General description

Built by 1939 and located on Logan Road at the junction with Old Cleveland Road, the former Commonwealth Bank is a two-storey Stripped Classical commercial building incorporating prominent Art Deco features. The building is generally rectangular in plan and built to the south, east and west of the lot's boundaries. The front of the building is angled to follow the southern boundary of the lot. The building's façade with an Art Deco-inspired stepped parapet conceals the hipped roof with parapet gutters of the original building. The building was extended in the 1940s and 1960s. Entry to the building is via Logan Road. The rear of the site faces Constance Street, which contains car parking for the eastern busway.

The external walls of the original building are rendered masonry. The building's façade is broadly symmetrical, creating a classical composition. The façade has an Art Deco-inspired expressed rendered masonry stepped parapet concealing the metal sheeted roof of the original building. The façade is divided into deep vertical bays using fluted pilasters. Other prominent Art Deco details on the front façade include the use of geometric curves and parallel ornamentation lines (speed lines) on the parapet. The eastern elevation of the original building also consists of six vertical bays with fluted pilasters.

Many of the window openings, door openings and timber joinery are retained. Original timber multi-framed windows are set into the vertical bays on the main façade and eastern elevation. To the west of the main elevation is an original door opening to the second floor. The original entry to the building has been replaced with recessed aluminium framed entry doors. A non-original cantilevered polycarbonate awning extends from the main entrance over the pavement. Entrance to the building is via tiled steps and a ramp.

Additions to the building, undertaken by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, include a ground-level addition with a skillion roof in 1948, a 1962 two-storey component added to the former addition, and further ground-level extension in 1968. The 1962 addition also included a two-storey wall that visually tied together the addition made to that date. This wall contains false window panels above the 1948 addition to maintain the appearance of the original building. In sympathy the extension also contains timber multi-framed windows. Due to the sloping character of the site, the 1968 ground-level extension created car parking bays underneath this addition. A second-storey addition also connects the original 1930s building with the second storey of the 1962 addition.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Views to and from the building from Logan Road
- Original location, form, and orientation of the building
- Two-storey, hipped roof form with expressed rendered masonry stepped parapet
- Symmetrical composition of the Logan Road elevations
- Prominent Art Deco details, including geometric curves and parallel ornamentation lines (speed lines) on the parapet
- Metal roof sheeting
- Original door and window openings, including vertical bays and fluted pilasters
- Original timber multi-framed windows
- 1948 and 1962 additions
- 1962 two-storey wall, including false window panels and timber multi-framed windows
- Internal room layouts and openings, where original

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- 1968 single-storey addition
- Non-original recessed aluminium framed entry doors
- Non-original cantilevered polycarbonate awning
- Non-original tiled entry steps and ramps

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

Through its design and form, the former Commonwealth Bank of Australia at 310 Logan Road is an uncommon example of a purpose-built suburban Stripped Classical designed bank from the period between the First and Second World Wars that incorporates distinctive elements associated with the Art Deco movement. Constructed by 1939, the bank stands in contrast with many other such buildings of the period that were more commonly designed to other styles, such as Beaux-Arts.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

The former Commonwealth Bank of Australia is a good example of a Stripped Classical bank built between the First and Second World Wars, incorporating design elements drawn from their Art deco movement. As identified in the citation's history and description, the building illustrates the principal design ideas and features associated with Stripped Classical buildings, including the symmetrical façade, vertical bays, and Art Deco styling.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

The former Commonwealth Bank of Australia demonstrates aesthetic significance through its expressive qualities and contribution to the streetscape. As identified in the citation's description, the former bank is highly visible due to its location at the junction of Logan Road and Old Cleveland Road and the arrangement of key features associated with Stripped Classical architecture, such as the symmetrical façade. Expressive elements of the bank's built form include the recessed vertical bays, and Art Deco-inspired details such as the stepped parapet with parallel ornamentation lines (speed lines), and geometric curves.

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 four purpose-built Commonwealth designed banks incorporating Art Deco elements in Brisbane's suburbs, the former Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Stones Corner has a special association with architect E. H. Henderson. As the Principal Architect for the Commonwealth Government, Henderson prepared the initial designs for the building, including its Art Deco elements. After emigrating to Australia in 1910, Henderson joined the Commonwealth Government's Department of Works in 1912. Highly regarded in the profession and within the government, he became Principal Architect in 1929, overseeing numerous projects for the Commonwealth Government, including designs for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. He died in 1939, just as the bank in Stones Corner opened.

References

1. Queensland Title Deeds
2. Queensland Post Office Directories
3. <http://www.commbank.com.au/about-us/our-company/history/default.aspx>

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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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