



Heritage Citation



Gordon & Gotch Building (former)

Key details

Addresses

At 262 Adelaide Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

Type of place	Office building
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Stripped Classical
Lot plan	L3_RP41038
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Walls: Face brick
People/associations	Atkinson and Conrad (Architect); Walter Taylor (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

This six-storey building was erected in 1927 as the new office for major book and magazine distributor and bookseller, Gordon & Gotch, who had been operating in Brisbane since 1862 and remained in this building until 1957. It was one of a small number of CBD buildings designed by the architectural firm of Atkinson & Conrad (1918-27) and survives as a reminder of the important 1920s CBD building boom.

History

The London-based publisher and bookseller, Gordon & Gotch, established a branch office in Brisbane in 1862, after buying out the existing book-selling business of George Slater. Their business initially operated from Slater's Queen Street premises. In 1887, a new five-storey premise was built for the company in Queen Street, in the block between Edward and Albert Streets.

In 1912, the Gordon & Gotch branch office in Brisbane became a limited liability company named Gordon & Gotch (Queensland) Limited. In 1919, a separate company, Gordon & Gotch Australasia was formed when the Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane branch offices were amalgamated into a single entity. The company expanded into publishing, including textbooks and magazine distribution, and became a major player in both the Australian and Queensland publishing industry. Indeed, as of 2006, Gordon & Gotch is Australia's largest independent magazine distributor.

This building was erected in 1927 during this period of expansion. Despite additions to its Queen Street building in 1909, the company's premises was not able to meet its needs. Consequently, a new building was planned. The architectural firm of Atkinson and Conrad was given the task of designing the building and builder Walter Taylor was awarded the contract for the construction. The company purchased the site for their new building on 7 October 1926.

Atkinson and Conrad (1918-27) was one of the more prominent architectural firms operating in Brisbane in this period. The firm was responsible for a number of significant buildings in Brisbane, including the Courier Mail Building (Queen Street), the Masonic Temple (Ann Street), the Queensland Deposit Bank & Building Society building (Albert Street), Pioneer House and Invicta House (both in Edward Street). Walter Taylor is best known for the construction of the Indooroopilly Bridge, which bears his name. Indeed, the local ward that includes Indooroopilly is named 'Walter Taylor' after the builder.

The building was designed to support eight storeys but only six were actually constructed. The building was described at the time as featuring "glazed bricks of imposing design" and was considered to be "practically fire-proof".¹ A rear sprinkler tank assisted with the building's fire protection. Other notable features were the ornamental panels below the windowsills together with the entrance doors; both made from Queensland copper. For Gordon & Gotch, their new building was to "be a fitting memorial of fifty years of progress".² The building was completed in 1927, at a cost of approximately £30,000.

The new Gordon & Gotch Building was part of an interwar building boom within Brisbane's CBD. The improved economic conditions and buoyed business confidence contributed to one of Brisbane's most significant building booms. As a result of the building boom, and subsequent concentration of commercial premises in the inner city, the CBD achieved a greater density. Following the opening of Brisbane to free settlement in 1842, what would become known as the CBD contained a mix of residential and commercial buildings. Businesses were clustered in particular street precincts, with the primary retail strip located in Queen Street between George and Edward Streets. As the city's population grew, so did the concentration of commercial buildings. The emergence of public transport infrastructure in the 1880s and 1890s – in particular trains and electric trams – encouraged suburban expansion, and the amount of housing contained within the original town limits steadily decreased.

This process reached its apogee during the 1920s, especially with the advent of the motorcar, sales of which increased dramatically in this period. Indeed, the CBD landscape fixed in this period did not substantially change until the late 1960s. Brisbane's newspapers touted the 1920s building boom as a sign of Brisbane's coming of age as a modern city. In 1927, The Daily Mail estimated that £2,280,000 was being spent on building construction within the CBD and that this was a large amount of investment capital when viewed in proportion to the size of the CBD.³ During the interwar period, there are known to have been at least 89 new buildings constructed in the CBD while many other older buildings were extended or refurbished. More than half of the interwar buildings have since been demolished. Gordon & Gotch sold the building in 1957 to Wills Gilchrist & Sanderson Pty Ltd.

As with most commercial premises within the CBD, the Gordon & Gotch Building has undergone a number of internal changes over the years to accommodate the requirements of its different tenants. Brisbane City Council approved alterations to the building in 1958, 1961, 1968 and 1981. The exterior and interior of the ground floor, in particular, has been altered from its original appearance due to its conversion in 1980 into a restaurant and nightclub.

The Brisbane History Group identified the Gordon & Gotch 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

This glazed brick, six-storey commercial building, with its vertical bays, vestigial classical base and subdued

spandrels between storeys to emphasise verticality, is an elegant interpretation of the Interwar Stripped Classical style.

The façade is symmetrical with an ornamental cornice defining the ground floor. It has contrasting panels below the windowsills and its entrance doors are made with Queensland copper.

The Gordon & Gotch Building has undergone some changes over the years to accommodate the requirements of its different tenants. Particularly, the ground floor has been altered from its original appearance due to its conversion in 1980 into a restaurant and nightclub.

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 multi-storey brick office building constructed in 1927 during the interwar CBD building boom that transformed Brisbane into a modern metropolis.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an elegant interpretation of the Interwar Stripped Classical style with vertical bays, vestigial classical base, subdued spandrels between storeys to emphasise verticality, and a landmark presence in this section of the 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 the former Queensland headquarters of Gordon & Gotch, a major book selling and printing firm that had been associated with Brisbane since 1862; and, as a building designed by prominent Brisbane architectural firm Atkinson and Conrad and built by notable local contractor Walter Taylor.

References

1. J.V.D. Coutts (ed.), *The Architectural & Building Journal of Queensland*, 10 January 1927, p.73
2. "Then and Now", *The Queensland Magazine*, October 1925, pp.15 & 36
3. *The Daily Mail*, 17 June 1927
4. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building 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. Coutts, J.V.D. (ed.), *The Architectural & Building Journal of Queensland*, 1927
9. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
10. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
11. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings files
12. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 22,1951
13. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
14. "Then and Now", *The Queensland Magazine*, October 1925
15. Watson, Donald & McKay, Judith, *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*, Brisbane, Fryer Memorial Library, 1984

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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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