

Heritage Citation



King Edward Chambers (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 155 Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Shop/s
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Style	Arts and Crafts
Lot plan	L4_RP9524; L6_RP9526; L5_RP9525; L1_SP173018; L2_SP173018; L3_SP173018; L4_SP173018; L5_SP173018; L6_SP173018; L7_SP173018; L8_SP173018; L9_SP173018; L10_SP173018; L11_SP173018; L12_SP173018; L13_SP173018; L14_SP173018
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — July 2010

Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Hall and Dods (Architect); Peter Murphy (Occupant)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association

King Edward Chambers was designed in 1905 by eminent architectural firm Hall and Dods, for owner Peter Murphy, M.L.A. The building was constructed during the development of the Valley as a desirable commercial location in the early twentieth century, and reflected the growing trend of the erection of valuable investment properties in prime Valley areas to be leased to small businesses.

History

Originally known as King Edward's Chambers, this building was designed by renowned architects Hall and Dods in 1905. 'The person who has decided upon this enterprising step,' announced the Brisbane Courier in July 1905, 'is the Hon. Peter Murphy, M.L.C., who by it is staking some thousands on his faith in the progress of the city.'¹

Irish-born Peter Murphy had arrived in Australia in 1871. He established the Transcontinental Hotel [600122] on Roma Street in 1884, which he ran for the ensuing 28 years. He was the director of Perkins & Company from 1893, and held shares in the Queensland Brewery, Castlemaine Brewery and Quinlan Grey & Company. In 1904 Murphy was appointed to the Legislative Council and in that role was primarily known as the spokesman of the liquor trade, believing that drinking and gambling were part of human nature. In accordance with the latter trait he was the owner of a racehorse, a committee member of the Queensland Turf and Tattersall's Clubs, a trustee of the Toombul Racecourse and an advocate of State lotteries. Murphy was also an honorary life member of the Philanthropic Institute, and well-liked by the staff of his former hotel. Murphy had also had a long, though indirect, association with the Valley. His wife Ellen, nee Bulcock, was the daughter of one of the Fortitude passengers Ben Bulcock who became a prominent figure in Fortitude Valley and who ran a butcher shop on the corner of Ann and Brunswick Street.

Murphy's purchase of the sites on Wickham and Duncan Streets came after the slow development of Wickham Street from a small track to a street of some importance. 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.

Duncan Street, running between Wickham and Ann, contained a small number of residential properties. The Valley developed as small town and Wickham Street, accordingly, grew slowly. In the 1870 and 1880s, with the settlement now a certainty, solid brick and stone buildings began to replace the timber shops, churches and residences. Wickham Street benefited greatly from this, particularly spurred on by an economic boom of the 1880s.

The block on the corner of Wickham and Duncan Streets was something of an anomaly, however. It sat empty through most of the 1870s and 1880s, with applications for its development (including a provisional license for a hotel to be built on the corner) rejected. The block passed through nine owners between 1870 and 1901. It was not until 1890 that the corner was finally tenanted, as the Valley headquarters of undertakers Cannon and Cripps, directly across Duncan Street from Kenny and Dietz, also undertakers.

The Valley's growth continued through the last decade of the nineteenth century and by 1905 it was a flourishing retail area, with department stores gradually taking over large areas of land. Trams and trains on recently extended lines brought customers to the area, particularly to the major businesses which fanned out from the newly-prominent Valley Corner. Visitors came for the bargains and the atmosphere: the Valley, particularly on Friday nights, was filled with well-dressed men and women admiring the brightly-lit large plate-glass windows displaying the trader's wares or, at Christmas, families enjoying the window displays. The early 1900s saw a large amount of construction work in Brisbane, not least of all in Wickham Street. Retailers Foy and Gibson opened their new shop in Wickham Street opposite the Cannon and Cripps site in June 1903, and trams and buses had conveyed full loads of passengers to the Valley to investigate the new building. 'Everybody seemed to be there,' reported *The Brisbane Courier*, 'and more than once as friend met friend the mutual greeting was, "Isn't this like opening day at the Exhibition"'.² With Foy and Gibson directly across the road to attract shoppers, the site was ideal for a commercial enterprise other than an undertaker's business. Murphy purchased 19.7 perches fronting Wickham and Duncan Streets in October 1901, adding the adjacent 19.4 perches fronting Duncan Street in July 1903. Cripps and Cannon's two-storey brick and wooden building, cottage, and coachhouse and stables, as well as two semi-detached cottages and a portion of a wooden building in Duncan Street, were advertised for removal in May 1905.

Unusually, leases of the building had been offered to tenants before it had been designed, in order that prospective lessees could have the premises planned to meet their requirements. Architectural firm Hall and Dods advertised the opportunity for input into the design, called for tenders and designed the building. Francis Hall and Robin Dods were among the most eminent architects in Brisbane in the early twentieth century. Having established their firm in 1896, they were in great demand during the 1900s, which was a particularly busy time in the building industry and culminated in a boom in 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; the AMP and Bank of NSW buildings; the Wool Store at Bulimba; St Brigid's at Red Hill; the Maryborough Town Hall; and St John's Cathedral. In Fortitude Valley, Hall and Dods also designed most of T.C. Beirne's complex, the 1898 shop front and awning for Overell and Sons' drapery, Ruddle's 1901 additions and additions to All Hallows convent and a confectionary factory for Bouchard, Plumridge and Rankin in 1900.

Out of 24 building tenders, F.H. Groth was selected to construct the building in seven and a half months, at a cost of £6,295. Murphy's building was designed as a mixed use building with shops at ground level and offices above. The building used the corner block to its advantage, designed with a frontage to Wickham Street as well as Duncan Street to make the chambers easily accessible and highly visible. It consisted of six distinct shops or chambers which could be inhabited independently of one another. Hall and Dods also designed its neighbour, originally known as Woodley's Buildings, in 1909. Despite having two different clients, the architects managed to design complimentary buildings, ensuring a consistent streetscape along Wickham Street between Duncan and Gipps Streets.

Murphy's building was immediately known as King Edward's Building, a sign of the era of its construction. Edward VII ruled from 1901-1910, one of the most popular monarchs since the seventeenth century and who,

like Murphy, had an interest in gambling and horse racing.

Among the early businesses to occupy the building were: King Edward's Dining Rooms, a chemist, a dentist, the Federal Furnishing Co, and several dressmakers and hairdressers, including Walter Paxton, Junior, who could offer, in addition to a 'first class' haircut, 'leading brands and tobacco and fishing tackle and rod repairs'. The building also hosted the BAFS Dispensary before it moved to a building across the road. Throughout its first decade, the Chambers were used for a range of activities and tenants, including a dance for the Misses Healion, dressmakers working in the building, the Brisbane Canary Improvement Society's inaugural championship show, Mrs Young's employment agency and Miss Ogilvie's talent agency.

Changes to the building occurred in 1919 when a fire in Judge's tobacco shop damaged the interior and windows of his tenanted shop, although the fire was prevented from spreading to other shops. Judge later purchased part of Woodley's Building on the corner of Wickham and Gipps and conducted his business there. The premises formerly leased to BAFS Dispensary were remodelled by architect Edward Myers for the new tenants, the 'well-known and old-established' optometrist firm of A.P. Greenfield and Company. Greenfield remained in the building through the 1920s-1940s. In 1922 the building became the Brisbane branch of the Chinese Nationalist Party of Australasia (or the Kuomintang), an example of the Chinese presence which had been in the Valley from the 1880s. Improvements were also undertaken on the building, with approval granted for a new frontage to the building by the Valley Woodwork Company in 1923.

Peter Murphy died in Hamilton in February 1925, leaving his £210,256 estate to his sons Peter James Benjamin Murphy and Kevin William Murphy. A dispute over Murphy's estate meant that the King Edward building and its land were held in trust, though it remained tenanted, until 1950, when they were sold to Sanders Chemicals.

Sanders leased the ground floor properties throughout its period of ownership, to tenants whose names (Pappalardo, Pulvirenti, Demura, Kutja and the company Samrai and Co) reflected the increasingly multicultural population of the Valley.

Sanders Chemicals sold the land in 1979 to Gum Hoy Yuen and Lai Ming Yuen. The building has undergone several internal alterations for its lessees and uses which included a supermarket centre, laundrette, spray painting booth, hairdressing salon, electrical goods store, amusement arcade, second hand shop and restaurant/bar. The building was a central part of the Chinatown redevelopment of the 1980s and the Chinese Fraternity Association of Queensland currently leases premises in the building. The properties were transferred to the Gum Hoy Yuen and Lai Ming Yuen family trust in 2007.

Description

Photographs show King Edward's Chambers was originally face brick with rendered bands above the first storey awning. The face brick has since been painted over. The building originally featured three triangular pediments along the pediment, all of which have subsequently been removed. Its ground floor awning, which was once supported on twin posts, 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

reflects the development of the Valley as a commercial district and the construction of investment properties in the Valley leased to small businesses in the early twentieth century.

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as its usage since the 1970s reflects the development of the Valley as a multicultural commercial space.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as one of two complimentary buildings designed by the same architects for different clients, which form a consistent streetscape along the east side of Wickham Street between Duncan and Gipps Streets.

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

for its association with the architectural firm of Hall and Dods which was one of Brisbane's leading architectural firms at the turn of the century.

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

for its association with owner the Honorable Peter Murphy, a prominent Irish-Australian publican and politician, for whom the building was constructed.

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, 10 July 1905 p5
2. *The Brisbane Courier*, 30 June 1903 p4
3. Betty Crouchley, 'Murphy, Peter (1853-1925)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp 639-640
4. John Egan, *The Work of Robin Dods*, B Architecture Thesis, University of Sydney, New South Wales: 1931, appendix
5. Post Office Directories.
6. *J Hall and Son Tender Book*, 1895-1912 John Oxley Library Manuscript
7. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
8. Brisbane Municipal Council Register of New Buildings, 1905, 1923
9. National Library of Australia, Community Heritage Grants, <http://www.nla.gov.au/pressrel/CommunityHeritageGrantsNationallySignificant.html>, accessed 5 July 2010
10. *The Brisbane Courier* 1903-6, 1910, 1918-9, 1922, 1926
11. *The Courier Mail* 1933-4
12. *The Brisbane Telegraph*, 1949

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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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