



Heritage Citation



Pan Australia House facade

Key details

Also known as	Cowan House
Addresses	At 128 Charlotte Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Office building
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Mannerist

Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2007 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Walls: Masonry
People/associations	John Jacob Cohen (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

The original building on this site was constructed in 1889 for Behr Raphael Lewin and leased upon completion to merchants and importers Adolphus Marcus Hertzberg, Charles Samuel Van Millingen, Abraham Hertzberg and Benjamin Cohen. It was designed by notable Brisbane architect John Jacob Cohen and the surviving facade remains as a fine example of the Victorian Mannerist style of architecture. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the building continued to be tenanted by a variety of commercial businesses but in 1988 the building was removed, leaving only the facade intact. A new building has since been built adjoining the original facade.

History

The building for Behr Lewin was erected on land originally purchased by James Gibbon in 1855. It was sold four times during Brisbane's 1880s land boom. The land remained vacant until purchase by Behr Raphael Lewin in 1888 who built the building that became known as Pan Australian House. It was leased for a seven-year period from February 1889 to Adolphus Marcus Hertzberg, Charles Samuel Van Millingen, Abraham Hertzberg and Benjamin Cohen who were merchants and importers.

Such construction in Charlotte Street reflects the predominant use of land in this area originally known as 'Frogs Hollow', which was roughly bounded by Alice, George, Elizabeth and Edward Streets. Until the late nineteenth century, the area was prone to flooding and possessed a dubious reputation due to the presence of brothels and opium dens. The area was also characterised by residences, boarding houses, hotels, the Chinese Quarter and light industry. From the 1880s onward, however, the area came to be increasingly dominated by warehouses and light industry. This was encouraged by the area's proximity to the city's busy wharves located on the Town Reach of the river. The construction of the building in Charlotte Street reflects this broader trend, which is an important aspect of the development of Brisbane's Central Business District (CBD).

John Jacob Cohen was an architect and engineer who practised as an architect in Brisbane from 1885 until 1892. While in partnership with F. F. Holmes he is credited with designing the Bellevue Hotel and the residences Maryview, Albion and Roseville, Teneriffe. While practising on his own from 1886 he also designed S. Hoffnung and Co's warehouse in Charlotte Street, Brisbane, the Theatre Royal hotel in Elizabeth Street, and Cameron Brother's tobacco factory on the corner of Brunswick and Martin Streets, New Farm. He also undertook large residential and swamp reclamation works in Booroodabin Division.¹

Hertzberg, Millingen and Co. operated from this building until circa 1932. The building is listed as vacant in the Queensland Post Office Directories of 1933 and 1934. In 1935 ownership of the building was transferred to the

Commercial Investments (Queensland) Ltd which retained ownership until 1988. During this period the building was leased to several businesses including Commercial Investments (Qld) Ltd which occupied part of the building and accountant Owen Kenny took offices on the second floor from this time onwards. From 1936 Cowan and Sons Ltd (manufacturing stationers and paper merchants) operated from the building. The 1951 Brisbane Fire Map identifies the building as Cowan House, and from 1956 the whole of 120 Charlotte Street was leased to Alex Cowan (Australia) Pty Ltd for six years. In 1964 J. Leutenegger Pty Ltd leased the first floor of Cowan House for five years. Part of the ground floor was leased to Pan Australian Credits (Qld) Ltd from 1963 for five years. In 1988 Kern Corporation purchased the property and the building was removed, leaving only the façade.

Description

Pan Australian House was a four-storey masonry building with a rusticated sandstone half basement. The ornate façade that remains comprises four pilasters with highly decorative capitals forming three bays. The window decoration and form of the windows on each storey are different. Additionally the windows of the central bay are Venetian while those of the side bays on the second and fourth floor facades have pediments. The parapet has pediment and skyline decoration.

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 an example of commercial development in Charlotte Street in the 1880s.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as this ornate façade presents a fine example of the Victorian Mannerist style of architecture and make an aesthetically significant contribution to the streetscape of Charlotte 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 prominent architect John Jacob Cohen who is notable for a number of commercial and domestic designs in Brisbane.

References

1. Watson and McKay, *Nineteenth Century Queensland Architects*, pp. 38-9, 99-100
2. 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
3. Brisbane City Council WebBASX Maps – Cadastre, 2001 Aerial, 1946 Aerial, 2005 Aerial
4. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
5. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, Sewerage Map, 22 October 1913
6. Nairn, Bede and Geoffrey Serle, (gen. eds.). *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Vol.8 1891-1939. Melbourne: MUP, 1981
7. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1933-1949
8. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South 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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



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