



## Heritage Citation



### Pioneer House

#### Key details

##### Addresses

At 166 Edward Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Type of place</b>         | Office building  |
| <b>Period</b>                | Interwar 1919-1939   |
| <b>Style</b>                 | Stripped Classical   |
| <b>Lot plan</b>              | L1_RP591   |
| <b>Key dates</b>             | Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009<br>Date of Citation — January 2008 |
| <b>Construction</b>          | Walls: Face brick  |
| <b>People/associations</b>   | Atkinson and Conrad (Architect);<br>Walter Taylor (Builder)                    |
| <b>Criterion for listing</b> | (A) Historical; (H) Historical association                                     |

Pioneer House was constructed in 1924, at the beginning of the 1920s CBD building boom, for Hoey, Fry Ltd, a major Brisbane-based engineering supply company. Like its neighbour, Invicta House, Pioneer House was designed by the significant architectural firm of Atkinson & Conrad, and built by Walter Taylor. Hoey, Fry occupied the ground floor of the building until at least the 1950s, while the upper floors have been leased to a variety of different businesses since the 1920s.

## History

Improved economic conditions and business confidence during the 1920s contributed to one of the CBD's most significant building booms. Built in 1924, Pioneer House is a surviving example of the changes wrought to the CBD as a result of this building boom.

Hoey, Fry Limited began commercial life as a Brisbane-based engineering supply company situated in 150 Edward Street in 1913. The firm's establishment date is reflective of the development of the engineering profession in Brisbane. In 1874, the Queensland Post Office Directory (POD) listed only a handful of "Civil Engineers". By 1890s, the number of engineers and the categories under which they fell had quadrupled. By 1900, there were six categories of engineers listed in the POD, occupying two pages. The categories included "milling", "mining", "refrigerating" and "electrical". In the 1910-11 POD, "Engineers' Suppliers" is listed for the first time. This inclusion provides a useful context for the establishment of Hoey, Fry Ltd in 1913. The steady growth of the engineering profession reflected the broader growth and development of Brisbane in this period, especially the expansion of an electricity grid through the CBD and across into South Brisbane, the growth of secondary industry and the appearance and rise in popularity of the motorcar.

Hoey, Fry Ltd were clearly successful, for within a decade of its establishment, it was able to purchase the allotment adjacent to Invicta House, which was then under construction. The company planned to erect a multi-

storey building in Edward Street at an approximate cost of £15,000. Construction on the building began in 1923 and was completed in 1924. Hoey, Fry Ltd was the exclusive representative of 'Pioneer' Belting & Mechanical Leathers, thus providing a likely explanation for the naming of the company's building as 'Pioneer House'.

The construction of the building contributed to the further development of the CBD's principal warehouse precinct. The eastern portion of the CBD, roughly bounded by Elizabeth, Edward, Alice and George Streets, developed as a warehouse and light industry precinct in the late nineteenth century. This section of the city was once known as Frogs Hollow because it was a low-lying, marshy area prone to flooding. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century the area was largely filled with small residences, boarding houses, and small businesses. From the 1880s, warehouses and small factories that were attracted to the area (as it was close to the wharf facilities located along the Town Reach of the river) progressively replaced many of these earlier buildings. This process reached its apogee in the 1920s.

Brisbane's CBD also experienced a substantial building boom during the 1920s. According to the editor of *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland*, 1923 was the year that "The Building Boom" was manifestly apparent. Pioneer House, construction of which began in 1923, made an early contribution to this building boom.

As an important new building, Pioneer House was featured in some detail in an article that appeared in *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland* in July 1924. The article begins by describing the building's height of five storeys and a basement. The floors and stairs were made with reinforced concrete and attention was drawn to how well lit the premises was. The building had an electric lift, which by "an ingenious device...will be able to serve the basement through the roof over the ground floor area". Some attention was also paid also to the interior: "Handsome swing doors of silky oak and bevelled glass lead to each floor".<sup>1</sup> Pioneer House was the visible symbol of the company's success, with even *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland* commenting that Hoey & Fry were "to be congratulated on their enterprise".<sup>2</sup>

The architectural firm of Atkinson & Conrad designed the building. This firm (1918-37) was one of the more prominent architectural firms operating in Brisbane in this period and was responsible for a number of significant buildings in Brisbane, including the Masonic Temple in Ann Street (1930), Brisbane Boy's College (1931) and the Courier-Mail Building in Queen Street (1937). Atkinson & Conrad also designed Invicta House, the building adjacent to Pioneer House. Walter Taylor, who is best known for construction of the Walter Taylor Bridge in Indooroopilly, constructed the building. The use of reinforced concrete in the construction of Invicta House was a hallmark of Taylor's construction method in this period.

Hoey, Fry Ltd occupied the ground floor and continued to do so until at least the 1950s. The upper floors of Pioneer House were leased as offices to a variety of businesses over time. In 1986, Hoey, Fry Ltd was taken over by the major Australian company, Pacific Dunlop.<sup>3</sup>

As with most retail premises within the CBD, Pioneer House has undergone a number of internal changes over the years to accommodate the requirements of its different commercial tenants. Alterations were carried out on the shop front in 1959 and office space in 1959 and 1979. Still, Pioneer House, along with Invicta House and the neighbouring Hotel Embassy (1928), give a distinctive, modern appearance to the Elizabeth and Edward Street intersection within the CBD.

The Brisbane History Group identified Pioneer House as part of Brisbane's commercial heritage in 2002, when they included it in their publication *Walking Tours – Brisbane's Commercial Heritage 1900-1940*. Of the nearly 90 buildings erected in the CBD during the important interwar building boom, more than half have since been demolished. Pioneer House is one of the few remaining buildings that is indicative of the changing landscape of the CBD that occurred during this period.

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## Description

This narrow frontage five-storey building with basement, erected in 1923-24 is a face brick building with elements of both the Interwar Stripped Classical and the Interwar Free Classical styles. It is a symmetrical building with attenuated pilasters forming vertical bays and including a broad set of fenestration in the wider central bay.

Its façade features a parapet and a small decorative cornice above the wide central bay fenestration. The writing "Hoey Fry Limited" is in the fabric above the first floor fenestration. A suspended awning shelters the footpath.

The exterior has remained virtually unchanged except for some additional signage. Some interior alterations to accommodate commercial tenants have occurred.

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## 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:

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### 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 commercial and retail building constructed during the CBD building boom of the 1920s.

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### 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 one of Brisbane's most significant architectural firms, Atkinson and Conrad, and constructed by prominent builder, Walter Taylor.

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## References

1. *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland*, July 7 1924, p. 27
  2. *Ibid*
  3. Oliver, Charles, telephone call to the Heritage Unit, 21 December 2007
  4. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, post-1946 building approval 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, 1922-24*
  9. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
  10. Job, William, *The Building of Brisbane 1828-1940*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2002
  11. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
  12. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings files
  13. Mahlstedt & Son City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 16, 1951
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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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