

## Heritage Citation

### RS Exton and Co. Pty. Ltd. Workshop

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 98 Bowen Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
<b>Type of place</b>	Workshop
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Free Classical
<b>Lot plan</b>	L101_SP143461; L102_SP143461; L103_SP143461; L201_SP143461; L202_SP143461; L203_SP143461; L301_SP143461; L302_SP143461; L303_SP143461; L304_SP143461; L305_SP143461; L306_SP143461; L307_SP143461; L401_SP143461; L402_SP143461; L403_SP143461; L404_SP143461; L405_SP143461; L406_SP143461; L407_SP143461; L501_SP143461; L502_SP143461; L503_SP143461; L504_SP143461; L505_SP143461; L506_SP143461; L507_SP143461; L601_SP143461; L602_SP143461; L603_SP143461; L604_SP143461; L605_SP143461; L606_SP143461; L607_SP143461; L701_SP143461; L702_SP143461; L703_SP143461; L704_SP143461; L705_SP143461; L706_SP143461; L707_SP143461; L801_SP143461; L802_SP143461; L803_SP143461; L804_SP143461; L805_SP143461; L806_SP143461; L807_SP143461; L901_SP143461; L902_SP143461; L903_SP143461; L904_SP143461; L905_SP143461; L906_SP143461; L907_SP143461; L1001_SP143461; L1002_SP143461; L1003_SP143461; L1004_SP143461; L1005_SP143461; L1006_SP143461; L1007_SP143461
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 14 September 2018 Date of Citation — June 2014
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Face brick
<b>People/associations</b>	Chambers and Powell (Architect)
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity

The two-storey brick workshop with decorative front parapet was built in 1919 for successful Brisbane business,

R.S Exton and Co. Ltd. The workshops were designed by prominent Brisbane architectural firm, Chambers and Powell and used for several purposes, including shopfitting, signwriting and a garage. The workshop demonstrates Spring Hill's industrial character in the early twentieth century due to its close proximity to the once busy wharves on Petrie Bight.

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## History

Spring Hill at the turn of the century was a mix of housing, commercial and retail, and industry. In particular, the area closest to the wharves on Petrie Bight was characterised by industrial buildings and warehouses. In 1919 Bowen Street was a mix of light industry such as furniture manufacturers and houses and by 1930 the narrow street was dominated by light industry such as a cordial factory, several motor garages and two shop-fitting factories, including RS Exton and Co..

Robert Skerrett Exton began his painting, decorating and glazier business in 1882 in partnership with George Gough. The business, Exton and Gough, was run from premises in Queen Street. It proved successful and gained a reputation for high-quality work. Commissions for work on buildings such as the Treasury Buildings, Wesleyan Methodist churches in the city and the Valley, and Customs House were awarded to the company and contributed to its reputation. As Queensland's only firm that manufactured stained glass, it made windows for St Stephen's Catholic Cathedral and St Patrick's Church in the Valley.

In 1907 the partnership dissolved and Exton established his own business, RS Exton and Co.. He had a new warehouse built on Ann Street and in 1910 the business became a limited company. The Ann Street warehouse was designed by Claude Chambers. RS Exton and Co. Ltd. proved very successful and by 1918 it was apparent that further facilities were needed.

In 1919 RS Exton and Co. Ltd purchased a twenty-eight perch site on Bowen Street. In August of that year plans were approved for the construction of a brick building on Bowen Street for RS Exton and Co. Ltd.. It was intended as the shop-fitting workshop for the company and was designed by respected Brisbane architectural firm Chambers and Powell.

The large new brick building had a Bowen Street frontage and rear access from Carroll Lane. As befitted the successful shop-fitting and interior design business, the front of the Bowen Street workshop was designed with a decorative parapet.

In December 1921, Robert Skerring Exton died and left the business to his two sons William and Robert, who continued to run it. On his passing, Exton was described as having had

“a very retiring disposition, and devoted practically the whole of his time to business matters. He took a prominent role in the formation of the Master Painters' Association and the Employers' Federation” (*The Queenslander*, 24 December 1921).

The business continued to expand and more land on Bowen Street was purchased by the company. An extra fourteen perches was acquired beside the already established workshops. In November 1922 plans were approved by the Brisbane City Council for additions to be made to the brick workshop. It is unclear whether this

was for the construction of the adjacent brick building (108 Bowen Street) or for the original workshop building. The additions were designed by Brisbane architectural firm, Powell and Hutton.

In August 1922 the *A & B Journal of Queensland* featured an article detailing the wide range of services provided by RS Exton and Co. Ltd.; the manufacture of shop fronts, lead lights and stained glass windows, painting and decorating, sign-writing and picture-framing were some of the products and services offered. It was also stated “in order to cope with increased trade a large bulk store, situated in Bowen Street, has been acquired” (*A & B Journal of Queensland*, 7 August 1922, p40). This may have been 108 Bowen Street. What is clear, however, is that the workshops on Bowen Street were being used by RS Exton and Co. Ltd. as a factory for the production of shopfittings, and for signwriting. A small article featured in the *Brisbane Courier* on 23 September 1927 it was stated:

“At the Bowen Street workshops of Messrs RS Exton and Co. Ltd., on Wednesday evening, the staff of the shopfitting and signwriting departments and garage met to bid farewell to Miss M Ross” (*The Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1927).

This provides evidence of the type of activities and uses carried out within the workshop.

Perhaps due to the harsh economic environment caused by the Great Depression, in 1933 RS Exton and Co. Ltd. fell into liquidation. In January 1933 a tender notice was placed in the *Brisbane Courier*:

“Purchase of RS Exton and Co. Pty. Ltd....(glass, oil, and colour merchants, painters and decorators, shop and office fitters, lead light artists and sign writers, glass bevellers and silverers, and suppliers of builders' requisites)...Tenders close with liquidators, Messrs AN Jeffrey and RH Exton” (*The Brisbane Courier*, 13 January 1933).

By May 1933 the business had been bought by two companies from New South Wales, FW Gissing Ltd. and Frederick Ash Ltd.. The name of the company, RS Exton and Co. Ltd. was to remain with only a small change, the insertion of (1933) – RS Exton and Co. (1933) Pty. Ltd.. Director and General Manager of the new company, Mr Gissing was interviewed for a feature in the *A&B Journal of Queensland* in May 1933 in which he stated “his action in investing money in this venture was brought about by his implicit faith in the future of Queensland” (*A & B Journal of Queensland*, 10 May 1933, p11). In the same issue, a full page advertisement for the business was run:

“Extons Reorganize...New Management...New Stock...New Ideas...Now entirely free from the handicap of liquidation, and completely reorganised...Exton's offer Builders, Architects, and the entire Trade associated with them full co-operation allied with new stocks and sound business dealings” (*A & B Journal of Queensland*, 10 May 1933, p13).

In the 1950s the company's profits had declined and the company was closed. In 1956 the Bowen Street workshop site was sold to Shipping Newspapers (Queensland) Limited.

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## Description

RS Exton and Co. Pty. Ltd. Workshop is a two-storey, face brick workshop fronting Bowen Street Spring Hill with a rear frontage to Carrol Lane. The building covers the entire allotment. The gable roof is clad with corrugated metal sheets. The Bowen Street façade has a decorative parapet and retains original timber framed windows with one large semi-circular headed window on the first floor. A former garage door has been blocked up with rendered masonry.

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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 the workshop of R.S Exton and Co. Ltd., it demonstrates the industrial nature of parts Spring Hill in the early 1900s.

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#### Rarity

##### CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a brick workshop in Spring Hill located in an area which was once dominated by industry.

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## References

1. Post Office Directories.
2. Certificates of Titles, Department of Natural Resources and Mines
3. *The Queenslander*, 24 December 1921

4. *A & B Journal of Queensland*, 7 August 1922, p40
  5. *The Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1927
  6. *The Brisbane Courier*, 13 January 1933
  7. *A & B Journal of Queensland*, 10 May 1933, p11
  8. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, *Heritage Citation* "Former RS Exton and Co Building"
  9. *Register of New Buildings*, Brisbane City Council, August 1919
  10. *Register of New Buildings*, Brisbane City Council, November 1922
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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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