

Heritage Citation



Westella

Key details

Also known as	The Print Shop
Addresses	At 141 Boundary Street, West End, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Flat building, Shop/s
Period	World War II 1939-1945
Style	Functionalist
Lot plan	L4_RP54302; L105_SP259779
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — February 2015
Construction	Walls: Face brick

People/associations

George Rae (Architect)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (F) Technical; (H) Historical association

'Westella' comprises an apartment block with ground-floor shop that was built in 1939. An unusual design for its time, it represents the modern form of unit living. From the 1920s to 1960s, apartments or flats in Brisbane were, more often, placed in large, nineteenth century residence that had been converted for this purpose. Most flats or apartments serviced the inner-Brisbane suburbs due their proximity to major employers. While many of the former nineteenth century residences often became shabby boarding houses, purpose-built flats incorporated modern architectural styles. 'Westella' is a good example of an interwar architect-designed building that combined commercial and residential functions.

History

The shop at 141 Boundary Street on the corner of Boundary and Jane Street, and the apartment block 'Westella' on Jane Street, are in fact one building. This building was constructed as an apartment block in 1939, and it is yet another of the purpose built apartment blocks erected in this area at this time.

Boundary Street began to attract residents and small business people in the 1870s. The farming community that West End was at this time gradually evolved into a residential area, and various stores appeared to service this clientele. Horse-drawn trams ran from the Boundary Hotel to Breakfast Creek in the 1880s, providing an impetus for both residential and commercial development. The number of shops and houses constructed in this area in the late 1870s and 1880s is indicative of the rapid growth of Boundary Street and the surrounding areas at this time.

John Wilson, a local landowner and entrepreneur acquired 22.5 perches of land on the corner of Boundary and Jane Streets in 1877. Wilson owned a great deal of land in West End, and he was the proprietor of the Boundary Hotel, directly opposite this block of land. Numerous fruiterers, grocers and other storekeepers traded from premises built on Wilson's land from the 1880s into the 1920s. The premises, a mixed shop and dwelling, burned down in August 1928.

Wilson's estate was subdivided in the late 1930s and Thomas Halbert acquired 14.2 perches of this land in October 1938. He paid £350 for the corner block. Halbert was manager of the West End Lyric Theatre and resided on Boundary Street, close to the theatre and not far from this site. Shortly after purchasing the Boundary and Jane Streets block, he engaged architect George Rae to design a shop and block of flats for the site.

George Rae was one of Brisbane's most successful young architects. He had established his own architectural practice in Brisbane in 1933, after partnerships with Atkinson, Powell and Conrad (1927-31) and Lange L Powell (1931-33). These were among the most prominent architectural firms of the day. Rae designed a variety of buildings, and specialised in new forms of architectural construction to Brisbane including picture theatres and residential flats. His more substantial purpose-designed flat buildings are amongst the most important of their type and their period in Brisbane. They include: Carrington (corner of Warry Street and Gregory Terrace, Spring

Hill) erected in 1933; Highview (on Dornoch Terrace, Highgate Hill) designed in 1933-34; Casa del Mar (44 Moray Street, New Farm) erected in 1934; Greystaines (240 Hamilton Road, Hamilton) constructed in 1934; and Green Gables [601895] (corner of Julius and Moray streets, New Farm) erected in 1935. He also designed a similar shop-flat combination of buildings on Sandgate Road, Clayfield, in 1938.

Further, Rae had worked for Halbert before, as Rae designed alterations to the West End Lyric Theatre in the 1930s.

Halbert received building approval for the shop and tenements in January 1939, and a small feature article on the flats appeared in the Telegraph at the end of the month. The flats were intended as 'bachelor' flats for either women or men, to be supervised from the shop on Boundary Street. Purpose-built flats were a relatively new concept for Brisbane. Initial doubts of the propriety of flat living were overcome by increased demands for dwellings in inner-city suburbs, which rose dramatically in the interwar period.

The establishment of higher-density residential living in inner-city areas was in response to a number of diverse factors impacting upon cities at this time. The increasing value of inner-city property, suburbanisation, and changing residential patterns within cities facilitated the construction of dwellings designed for living of a higher density than that of the family home. The greater South Brisbane region contains a number of purpose-built apartment blocks, and nineteenth century residences which were divided into flats in the 1920s. Brisbane City Council ordinances in the late 1930s enforced certain specifications on these buildings. The use of materials, height levels, site coverage, and frontage were regulated. The drafting of Council ordinances sought to preclude the possible eventuality of the creation of slum conditions within inner-city Brisbane.

This building is representative of a particular social and architectural phenomenon that occurred in inner-city areas like South Brisbane and West End in the mid to late 1930s. Contemporaneous with this apartment construction was the division into flats of many of the grand nineteenth century residences in the area.

Advertisements for 'Westella' appeared in the Brisbane Courier in June 1939. Halbert and wife Sarah relocated into the new flats.

Thomas Halbert owned the property into the 1950s. It has had numerous owners in the intervening decades. The present owners acquired the property in 1978. The corner section of this building is now used as business premises, which obviously has necessitated some internal alterations.

Description

This brick building on the corner of Boundary Street and Jane Street consists of units and two shops facing Boundary Street at footpath level. The entry to the units is off Jane Street where there is a single level at a height between that of the two levels facing Boundary Street. This is due to a rise in street level up Jane Street. Most of this level has been rendered and painted but the front of the building and its base remains a combination of predominantly white brick with some red brick bands. The awning and parapet over the entry off Jane Street are Art Deco influenced. The suspended entry awning features Art Deco lettering. The regularly spaced casement windows along the remainder of this façade have simple projecting sun hoods. The front of the building turns the corner in curved brickwork. A group of casement windows are situated around a pair of columns at this corner. The band of windows is linked by a continuous sunhood. Above these appears a pair of rainwater heads, one at each side of the Boundary Street façade. The suspended awning below the windows curves around into Jane

Street. The shopfronts now have aluminium framed windows and the walls surrounding them have been painted.

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 it reflects the growing demand from the 1930s for low cost accommodation in inner-city areas.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage for its incorporation of two disparate functions within the one cohesive modern building.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places as a masonry building that employs the clean lines, plain surfaces, horizontal motifs and rounded corners of interwar functionalist apartments.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a modern functionalist flat / shop with clean lines and horizontal elements that responds to its prominent corner location on Boundary and Jane Streets.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as a modern functionalist design that incorporated commercial and residential functions.

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 George Rae, an influential architect of the interwar period in Brisbane.

References

1. Brisbane City Council City Architecture and Heritage Team, citations
2. Brisbane City Council aerial photographs, 1946, 2012
3. Brisbane City Council, Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans, 1927
4. Brisbane City Council, Properties on the Web, Building Cards
5. Brisbane City Council Building Register Index 1939
6. Department of Natural Resources, Certificates of Title
7. Brisbane City Council Minutes, 1935-36, p.1828
8. The Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, March 1936
9. National Library of Australia, Trove digitised newspapers, *Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *The Week*, *Brisbane*

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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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