

## Heritage Citation



**William Cairncross Building**

### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Waltham Chambers
<b>Addresses</b>	At 188 Albert Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
<b>Type of place</b>	Shop/s
<b>Period</b>	Victorian 1860-1890
<b>Style</b>	Regency
<b>Lot plan</b>	L10_RP516; L2_SP140690; L3_SP140690; L4_SP140690
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Masonry - Render

<b>People/associations</b>	James Cowlshaw (Architect)
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<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association
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This building, constructed circa 1865 for William Cairncross, is the oldest surviving building in Albert Street and the oldest block of shops in Brisbane. It was designed by prominent architect James Cowlshaw, who planned numerous commercial and residential buildings in Brisbane between 1861 and 1884. The building was tenanted by a large variety of retailers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but has most consistently been used as a venue for cafes, restaurants and other eateries.

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## History

After the closure of the Moreton Bay penal colony in 1842, that part of Brisbane that became the Central Business District (CBD) was offered for sale to free settlers. The block of land that became 196 Albert Street was designated as part of Town Lot 8 of Section 1 and it sold to Archibald Michie on 22 September 1843. Michie, a Sydney resident, acquired a 36-perch block that covered one corner of where Albert and Queen Streets meet. On 1 December 1846, Michie sold Lot 8 to William Cairncross. Cairncross had arrived in Brisbane circa 1845 and he had built a bakery with residence on the site by 1847. Cairncross purchased the adjoining Queen Street lot (No. 9) from Charles Mallard on 31 December 1850. Cairncross retired from the bakery business during the 1850s and he moved his family to farmland at Bulimba where he built a large family residence "Colmslie". He continued to draw his fortune from leasing his shops in Albert and Queen Streets as well as from farming and other business investments.

A series of disastrous fires in 1863 and 1864 destroyed many of the early buildings along Queen Street. In particular, the fire of 1 December 1864 burnt out most of the block bounded by Albert, Queen, George and Elizabeth Streets. This cleared the way for a redevelopment of the area. Many original low-set wooden shops were replaced with large "new shops of brick and stone, with their plate glass windows" that were "to transform the appearance of the city".<sup>1</sup> In July 1863, William Cairncross mortgaged both Lots 8 and 9 through Antoine Arthur Coutin of Sydney. The mortgage provided £3,500 to Cairncross and it is thought that he used the money to fund the construction of some new shops on his Albert and Queen Street allotments.

According to Don Watson and Judith McKay, in their book *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century*, prominent Brisbane architect James Cowlshaw planned four shops in Albert Street, for a William Cairncross, in 1865. They also state that Cowlshaw planned five shops in Queen Street for Jane Cairncross (William's daughter) around the same time. Thus the two-storey masonry building, containing four shops, that is located at 188-196 Albert Street, is a James Cowlshaw commercial building design.

William Cairncross arranged a lease agreement for both this building and his new Queen Street shops on 15 August 1866. One of the new tenants who signed on that day was gas fitter Peter Fleming, who rented a shop and premises in Albert Street for £2 per week. The first edition of the Queensland Post Office Directories was published in 1868 and it also lists Peter Fleming as operating his gas fitting business from Albert Street. In the same edition, the plumber W. Silcock is listed as operating from an Albert Street address. The first edition of the *Queensland Post Office Directories*

to have a street by street listing for Brisbane was issued in 1876 and Silcock is still listed as running his plumbing and gas fitting business from premises at 188-196 Albert Street. He was joined by pawnbrokers H. Morwitch & Co who are known to have been at the Albert Street site since 1873. Other early tenants (1868-1883) were also tradesmen, such as R. Hoerchner - an umbrella maker and J. Leach - a painter, glazier and paperhanger.

A check of the *Queensland Post Office Directories* through to their final edition in 1949 has revealed that the site at 196 Albert Street was never listed as vacant land. The continuous listing of a building on this site from the 1868 edition through to the 1949 edition is also matched by a consistency of tenancy during this period. Both factors support the view that the building was erected circa 1865.

Due to the early construction date of the building, photographic evidence has been difficult to discover. The earliest photograph of the building that has been found is circa 1893 and shows the building advertising the Globe Restaurant.<sup>2</sup> A print entitled "Brisbane" published in a supplement to *The Illustrated Sydney News* of 30 August 1888, shows the outline of the William Cairncross Building in a street map of the CBD. The building can clearly be identified in a 1901 survey map of the CBD and in the Brisbane Municipal Council's 1913 sewerage map of the CBD and in the 1951 Fire Maps of the CBD. From 1933 to 1949 and perhaps even later, the part of the building designated as 194 Albert Street was known as Waltham Chambers but the business associated with this name remains unknown.

After his death on 22 June 1896, William Cairncross's estate passed to a group of trustees comprising his spinster daughter Jane Georgiana Cairncross, his spinster sister Millicent Ann Cairncross, his relative Rachel Elizabeth Dalby (a widow) and his son-in-law and businessman Andrew Joseph Thynne.

The building's most common usage was to provide the venue for restaurants, oyster bars, dining rooms and other eating establishments. The 1883-84 edition of the *Queensland Post Office Directories* shows the first listing of an eating establishment, Charles Wonlard's Victoria Restaurant in one of the four shops. By the 1885-86 edition, Henry Burke had taken over ownership of the Victoria Restaurant and he was joined next door by Henry Roger's oyster saloon. The leasing of 196 Albert Street for eateries continues almost interrupted until the conclusion of the post office directories in 1949. Thus the Victoria Restaurant, that was later taken over by Charles Jenkinson, followed by Phillip Crittenden and then Robert Green, operated on the site from 1885 through to 1914. Henry Roger's oyster saloon ran from 1888 through to 1899. These establishments were followed by the Globe Restaurant 1888-1921, Mary Elfverson's confectionery shop 1911-33, the Regal Café 1924-32, Old Lucky Casket Shop and Café 1933-45, The Ritz refreshment rooms 1943-?, Griffon's refreshments 1944-48 and the Big Apple Café 1947-?.

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## Description

Designed by James Cowlshaw and built circa 1865, this two-storey brick and masonry set of shops is in the Victorian Regency style. It has a symmetrical façade with decorative cornice and a small parapet above the first floor. The brick has been rendered and painted. The first floor features eight four-pane sash windows.

The original street awning has been removed and another substituted. The ground floor now features large pane glass shop windows.

The building's most common usage was as the venue for restaurants, oyster bars, dining rooms and other eating

establishments and consequently has undergone many internal fit-outs.

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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 block of masonry shops built as part of the redevelopment of Queen Street after a series of disastrous fires in the early 1860s.

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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 the oldest surviving block of shops in Brisbane.

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#### Representative

##### CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a good example of an 1860s block of inner-city shops.

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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 prominent architect James Cowlshaw.

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## References

1. Greenwood, Gordon, *Brisbane 1859-1959 – A History of Local Government*, (Parramatta: The Cumberland Pres, 1959), p.140
  2. John Oxley Library, Photographic Collection, Image Number: 91675
  3. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
  4. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
  5. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map 1913
  6. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
  7. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
  8. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings files
  9. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 11,1951
  10. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
  11. Kemp, Dotti, "The Cairncross Family in Brisbane in the 1840s", *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol. XV, no. 9, November 1994
  12. 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.

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