

Rainbow and Hobbs Building (Former), 124-126 Queen Street East

Inventory Number 22; Property ID 21250; TRIM Reference 21250#002#0004

NZHPT Registration Number: 2788

Draft: 14 August 2007, last amended 4 July 2008, Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran; Final Report November 2012, Updated 2015
by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



RAINBOW AND HOBBS BUILDING (FORMER)



Photo: K Pascall, August 2012

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 124-126 Queen Street East

City / Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lots 1 & 2 DP 3755 and Lots 1 & 2 DP 4721. This includes the service lane at the rear.

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Certificates of Title (including Registry): A4/832 and 93/223, Hawke's Bay Registry

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The building is a good example of the Edwardian Baroque style, a lively design that proclaims its purpose and gives it a presence in the street that its size belies. It is an intriguing example of how to add to a building in like style; the asymmetry that this brings about adds an element of interest to the facade.

The building has aesthetic value for its contribution to an impressive row of buildings, extending over the length of the block, on the north side of Queen Street East. Although there are some stark contrasts in the street, and varying sizes and heights, the continuous row of facades on the street boundary have a great deal of visual interest in their details, shapes and textures.

Historic Value:

The former Rainbow and Hobbs Building has considerable local historical value, partly for its association with Algernon Rainbow, who was a successful accountant, businessman, community leader and, for six years, mayor of Hastings. His firm Rainbow and Hobbs was synonymous with the building and kept premises in the building for a number of decades. The building was also occupied by a number of long-standing and worthy tenants – insurance companies or agents and land agents among them. The building stands as a rare example of an extant commercial building that pre-dates the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931.

Technological Value:

There is technical value in the structure of this building, since the main part of it survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake with no reported damage, while other buildings in the immediate vicinity were badly damaged.

HISTORY:

The details surrounding the construction of the Rainbow and Hobbs Building are not entirely clear, due to the absence of key information.¹ Plans for the building were dated 8 January 1914,² but the architect is not known. There is some suggestion it may have been the work of Albert Garnett, one of Hastings' best known and most successful architects. He had recently finished the Municipal Building and the second Wesley Methodist Church. Shaw and Hallett go as far as to say it is 'almost certainly'³ the work of Garnett, although they do not provide evidence for this assertion. The building was constructed – probably later in 1914 – by contractors Hay and Sons.⁴

¹ Parts of the Hastings District Council's file on this building are missing. Also land records relating to the early history of the land in question are unavailable, likely due to the fire at the Hawke's Bay Registry after the 1931 Hawke's Bay earthquake. NB: Huge numbers of land records were lost in the fire and although some records were able to be reconstituted, in cases where private owners brought in their records, most were not. Confusion over Hawke's Bay land records was compounded by the Registry's reuse of the numbering system. Prior references on surviving titles still exist but have been reassigned, leading researchers to other unrelated pieces of land.

² Hastings District Council file information.

³ Peter Shaw and Peter Hallett, *Hastings: Spanish Mission Styles of Five Decades*, Napier: Cosmos, 1991, p.25.

⁴ Hastings District Council file information.

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The identity of the first owner of the building is not known either. One name given on a Hastings District Council CBD form as the original owner is merchant Charles Tripping, who owned adjacent properties. It may have been built for accountant Algernon Rainbow, who owned the property in November 1920, when a new certificate of title was issued for Lots 1 and 2 DP 3755.⁵ However, Rainbow did not go into business on his own account until 1915 (see below) and street directories show that he was not an occupant of the building until 1921 or shortly before.⁶ The present numbering was not in use at this time, but early occupants appear to have included The New Zealand Insurance Co., Natusch and Sons, architects, Cyril Croker, solicitor and William McCollough, accountant.⁷

Algernon Rainbow (1885-1969), known as Algie, was born and educated in Hastings. At 15 years of age he joined the Port Ahuriri office of the successful stock and station agency of Williams and Kettle as a clerk. After he moved to their Hastings office, he qualified as an accountant. He married Mary Beatson in 1909; they had two children. From 1915 to 1923 he practised on his own, he then joined W B Hobbs in partnership. He became the director of several private companies and trust boards, office holder in numerous sporting clubs and organisations, and president of the Hastings sub-centre of the St John Ambulance Association. He served as a borough councillor from 1927 and, after a stint as deputy mayor, from 1933 to 1941 he convincingly won the Mayoral election. He served for six years. Upon his retirement he joined the board of J. Wattie Canneries and also served on the Hawke's Bay Catchment Board (1950-53) and was chairman of the local Boy Scouts' Association until 1954. He retired from Rainbow and Hobbs in 1959.⁸

The building was originally two bays wide, conforming to the width of the land parcel (Lot 1 and 2, DP 3755, 124 Queen Street East).⁹ The Hawke's Bay earthquake in 1931 spared the Rainbow and Hobbs Building, although other buildings in the immediate vicinity were not. In August 1935, the adjoining, narrower parcel of land (Lots 1 and 2, DP 4721, no.126) was acquired by Rainbow from descendants of Charles Tripping¹⁰ and it may be that the building was extended at this time. If Rainbow did extend the building, he only had a narrow window in which to do so. He sold the properties in April 1936 to Queen Street Buildings (Hastings) Ltd.,¹¹ which was established that very year.¹² It is also possible that this business extended the building after it acquired the properties. No record of this addition has been located, so this must all remain speculation.

Queen Street Buildings kept the properties for the next 49 years. Who was behind this firm is not known, but it may have been a separate company established by Rainbow and Hobbs, as the latter continued to occupy the building for many years.¹³ They were not the building's only occupants. For many years the building had relatively static occupants. Tenants included branches of the National Insurance Co. and the New Zealand Insurance Co., although never at the same time.¹⁴ Wilson and Son, office suppliers were long-standing occupants, as were Budd and Sons, insurance agents and the Hawke's Bay Land and Estate Agency. Later, from the 1950s, Braithwaite and Son, insurance agents were also lengthy occupants. In 1960, Rainbow and Hobbs made changes to the

⁵ CT HB 5/294, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

⁶ *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1921

⁷ *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1916

⁸ Mary Boyd, 'Rainbow, Algernon Instone 1885 - 1969'. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 7 April 2006
www.dnz.govt.nz/

⁹ The building, with its original, symmetrical two bays can be seen in a photograph taken soon after the 1931 earthquake. (Collection of Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust – Hawke's Bay Museum, Napier, New Zealand, Reference No. 10,175)

¹⁰ CT HB 90/177, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

¹¹ CT HB 5/294, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

¹² www.companies.govt.nz/pls/web/DBSCONT.Control_Tabs?an=789B6890E28D73918A41AB2E945FF1_28&cn=158923&tab=AL

¹³ *Wise's New Zealand post office directory*, 1925 to 1959-60.

¹⁴ It is an interesting fact that two insurance companies dovetailed tenancies – twice – yet were apparently quite separate entities.

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ground floor offices. This is the only recorded change on file. The architects of these alterations were Davies, Phillips and Chaplin.¹⁵

In May 1985, ownership of the property was transferred to company director Stephen Walker and his wife Susan. From 1992, when carpenter Edward Beach and his wife Elaine bought the property, it passed through a series of hands until it was bought by Simon Scannell and Timothy Wrigley in 1998. Today, Scannell still owns the property, in partnership with Malcolm Taylor.¹⁶ In the 1990s the building was occupied by the Bay Collection Agency. Today the occupant is Credit House Finance.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Not known, possibly Albert Garnett

Date of construction: 1914

Construction details: In the absence of the original drawings, construction details are uncertain; brick masonry would not be uncommon in a building of this type built in 1914, but its survival of the Hawke's Bay earthquake without significant damage suggests it was built in reinforced concrete.

Description: Former Rainbow and Hobbs Building is a two-storey building of an unusual, somewhat asymmetric composition. This comes about because of its construction in two distinct stages. The first stage, 1914, was a symmetrical façade of two wide semi-circular arched windows on either side of a narrow door; this pattern was matched above, with a circular window above the door and a stepped parapet. Some 20 years later (c.1935), another door and window was added to the south, but spacings vary from the original and the parapet is flat, so that the facade is not quite as symmetrical as a first glance would suggest. The join in the two parts of the building is seamless, perhaps because a textured stucco covers the wall surfaces, with plain smooth plaster banding around the windows and along cornices and parapets.

The style is described in local publications as Edwardian Commercial, more generally known as Edwardian Baroque; this was widely employed in Government and commercial buildings of the pre-World War I years, even in Parliament Buildings itself. It is characterised by bold and free use of Classical elements, seen in Rainbow and Hobbs Building (in modest scale) in the circular windows, semi-circular and curved window and door openings, keystones and exaggerated cornice and parapet. There is a touch of Art Nouveau in the parapet graphics that give the date of construction of 1914. It is a small building with a strong character and presence in the street, adding visual interest to the row of buildings on the north side of Queen Street East.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Front facade	Aesthetic, architectural
Structure	Technical

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

¹⁵ See plan of building New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12009-778.

¹⁶ CT HB 5/294, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

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Boyd, Mary, 'Rainbow, Algernon Instone 1885 - 1969'. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 7 April 2006, www.dnzb.govt.nz/

CTs HB 5/294, A4/832, 90/177, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Land District.

Hastings District Council file information.

New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12009-778

Shaw, Peter and Hallett, Peter, *Hastings: Spanish Mission Styles of Five Decades*, Napier: Cosmos, 1991.

Wise's New Zealand post office directory, H Wises & Co, Dunedin, Eastbourne Street, Eastbourne Street East, Russell Street, vols 1916 to 1959-60.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

NZHPT Register: Rainbow and Hobbs Building (Former) is a Category II historic place (Register No. 2788).

District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II historic place in the Operative Hastings District Plan (Plan declared operative 10th June 2003). Under the Proposed District Plan 2015 the building is listed as a Category II Heritage Item (HB53) and is located within the Queen Street Historic Area.

New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993: This site has been identified as a potential archaeological site under Section 2 of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993.

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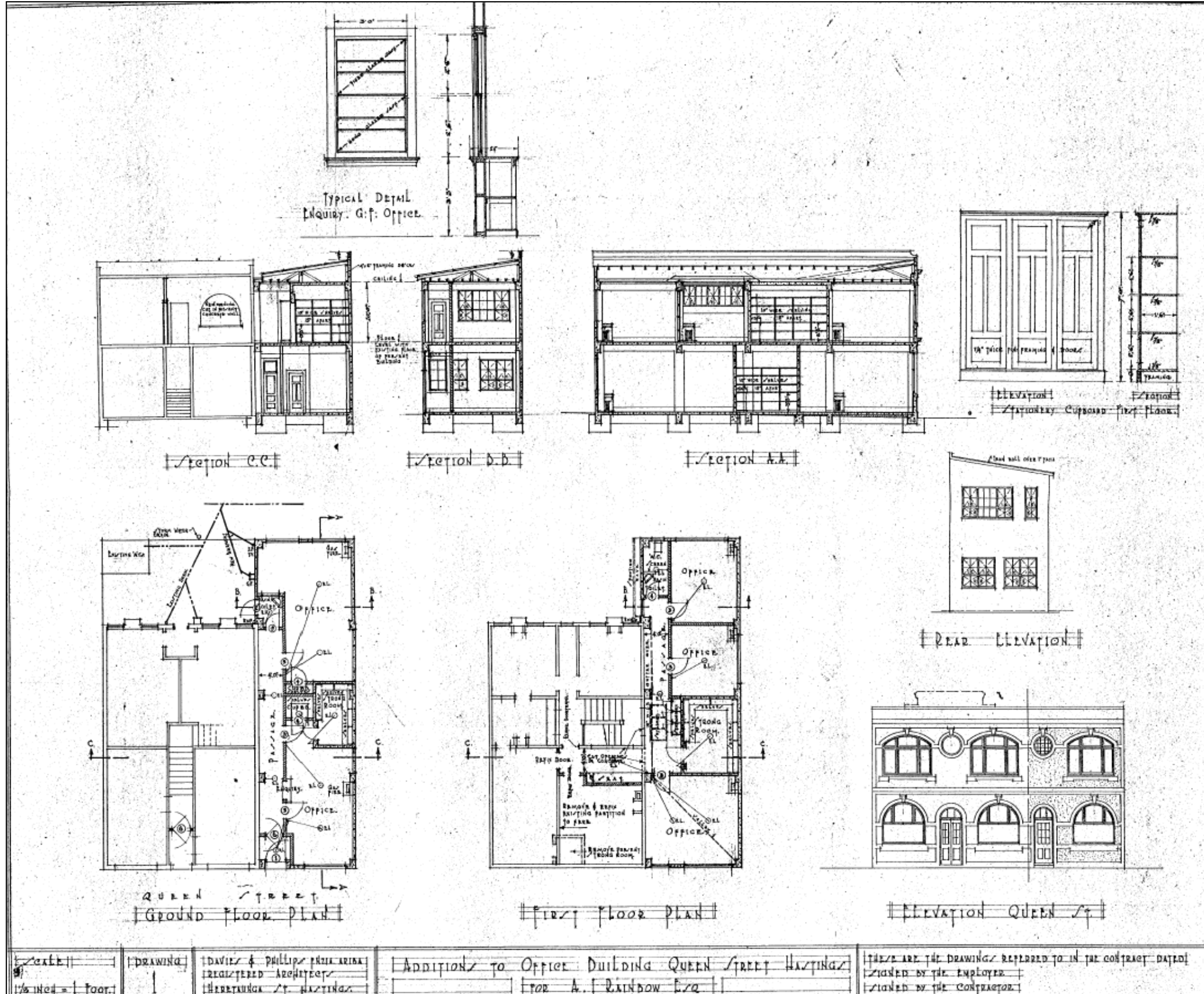
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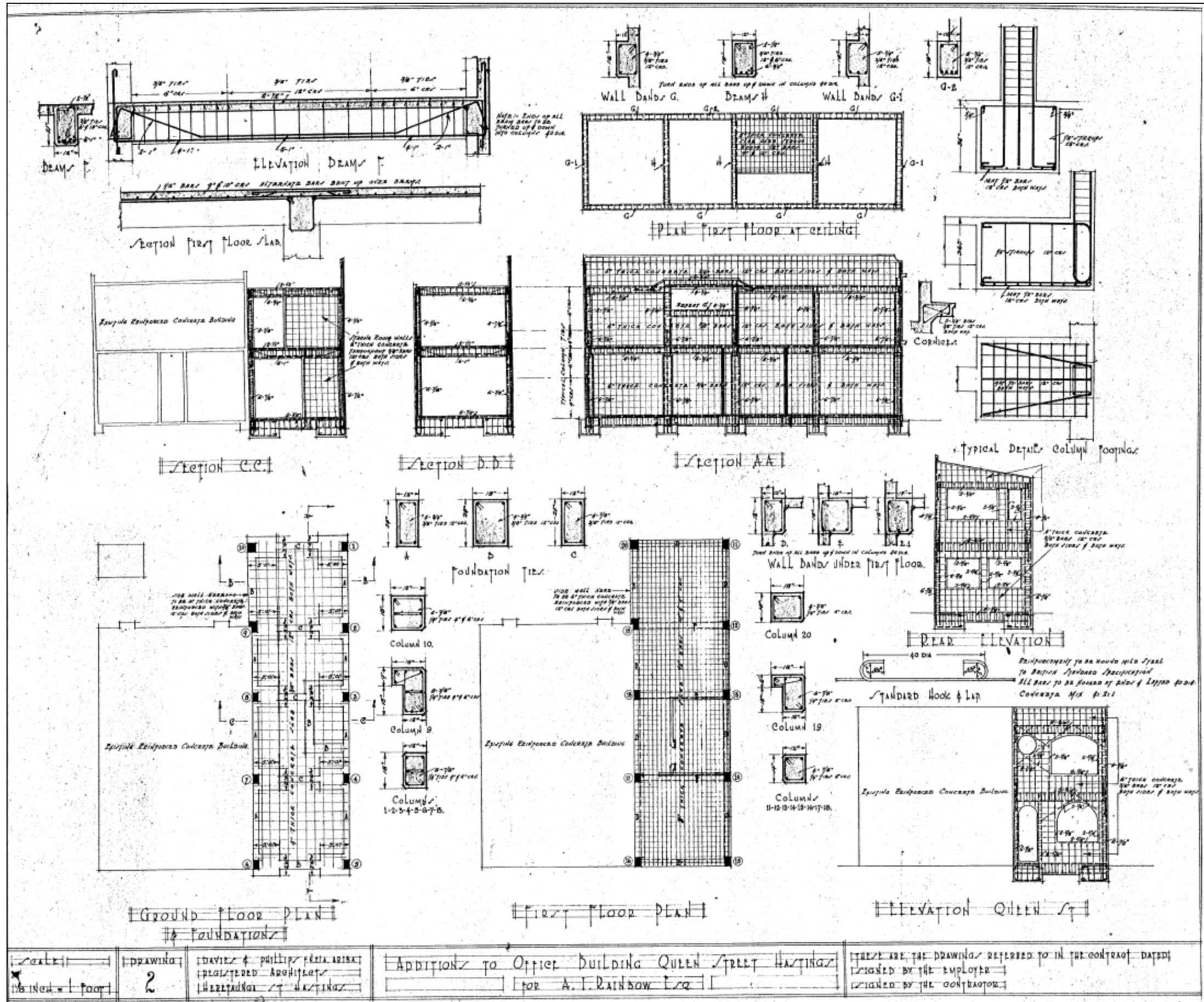
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ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Additions to Office Building Queen St for A. Rainbow Esq., Hastings by Davies & Phillips Architects (1933) (TRIM Ref: 21251#006)





SCALE 1/8" INCH = 1 FOOT	DRAWING 2	DAVID & PHILLIPS PARTNERS REGISTERED ARCHITECTS HASTINGS ST HASTINGS	ADDITIONS TO OFFICE BUILDING QUEEN STREET HASTINGS FOR A.I. RAINBOW LTD	THESE ARE THE DRAWINGS REFERRED TO IN THE CONTRACT DATED SIGNED BY THE EMPLOYER SIGNED BY THE CONTRACTOR
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