

Clifton Buildings, 117-119 Queen Street East

Inventory Number: 62; Property ID: 21311 (blue building), 100207 (yellow building); TRIM Reference: 21311#002#0006

Report by Chris Cochran

Final Report: 18 April 2012

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



CLIFTON BUILDINGS



LOCATION:

Street and Number: 117 Queen Street East (yellow building), 119 Queen Street East (blue building)

City / Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 2 DP 325578 (yellow building), Lots 1, 2 DP 11130 Pt Lots 1, 2 DP 7075 (blue building)

Certificate of Title: H.B 34/164

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The Clifton Buildings have modest architectural value, due largely to the unusual nature of the façade of 119; this is plain surface but marked out in a grid of large blocks. A generous recess in the central bay with inward curving walls frames the door and flanking windows. It is otherwise a building typical of its time, one fitting its context well and serving a useful purpose over a long time.

Historic Value:

The historic value of the buildings derives from the wide range of commercial tenants that have occupied them, with a number of firms and organisations that have been important in the development and life of the city and region.

Aesthetic Value:

The Clifton Buildings are located in a key part of the Hastings CBD, a main entry point to the central city. They are part of an impressive row of buildings on the south side of Queen Street East that has very high townscape value because of their compatible scale, their design and their individual visual interest.

HISTORY:

Ernest Cliff purchased a printing business from George Venables (who had established the Karamu Road business in 1906) in 1909.¹ By 1915 Cliff had constructed impressive premises in Queen Street East.² These premises included a two storey building containing a stationary room and typesetting, printing and bookbinding departments. A writing room was also made available to the public in the building.³ There was also a large single storey building at the rear of the property that housed the printing machinery.⁴ However, these buildings were destroyed in the earthquake of 1931, due to poor construction.⁵ The business did not have earthquake insurance, but they managed to reestablish their Queen Street premises (possibly still present in the form of the yellow building), following the use of a temporary building on the site as well as other buildings on Karamu Road.⁶ The property was sold to printer Ron Wattie in 1944.⁷ Wattie also purchased the adjacent property from the Holdsworths at this time,⁸ which had previously been occupied by The Tourist Motor Co Showrooms.⁹ The Clifton Buildings must have been constructed between 1944 and 1946, as by 1946 they were listed in the Wisers Street Directory for Hastings.

In the 1946 directory, the Clifton Buildings were listed as occupying numbers 119-121 Queen Street East, with eleven tenants: The Automobile Association, NIMU Insurance, Bayliss (accountant), HB Acceptance, NZ Farmers' Union, Commercial Union Assurance, Farmers' Union Fire Insurance Association, National Service Department, Power Officer, Rehabilitation Department and Hastings Primary (unreadable) Council.¹⁰ By 1950 the building had only seven tenants, which were The Automobile Association, Western

¹ Fowler, M 2007 From disaster to recovery: the Hastings CBD 1931-35, Michael Fowler Publishing Limited, Havelock North p. 46.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Fowler, M 2007 From disaster to recovery: the Hastings CBD 1931-35, Michael Fowler Publishing Limited, Havelock North p. 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ H.B 34/163

⁸ H.B 34/164

⁹ Block map created by the Council of Fire and Accident Underwriters Association of New Zealand, April 1925

¹⁰ *Wises Street Directories*, 1946.

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Building Society, NIMU Insurance, Bayliss (accountant), H B Acceptance, Commercial Union Assurance, Rehabilitation Department.¹¹ In 1955 the building had only five tenants, which were Western Building Society, NIMU Insurance, Bayliss and Hewell (accountants), Commercial Union Assurance and Ballantyne (a medical practitioner).¹² In 1959 the same tenants were still present, with the addition of Velvin, another medical practitioner.¹³

The properties have had a variety of owners over the years including Michael Charles Bayley, Heretaunga Agencies Limited and Bank Chambers Limited. It is presently owned by Alison Ruth Forsyth & Donaly Trustee Limited as trustees of Donnelly Family Trust. The buildings are presently occupied by Carr and Stanton, who have occupied the building since at least 1994.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Not known.

Builder: Not known.

Date of construction: Not known. Two additions at the rear of the site were built, the second one in 1943.

Construction details: Understood to be concrete frame with brick infill, plastered finish; steel window joinery and timber entrance doors.

Description: The building at 119 Queen Street East is an unusual building stylistically, with elements of Art Deco (the curved walls to the entrance doors) and the Stripped Classical style (the absence of decoration and the strict symmetry). The very rigid marking out of most of the façade in large square blocks is treatment not seen anywhere else in the city. This is reflected in the fenestration too, with the steel-framed windows divided into squares and rectangles. The main entrance doors are set centrally in a recess in the street wall, the curved walls on either side making a welcoming entrance.

The building at 117 Queen Street East is a modest structure, just one bay wide, subtly decorated with geometric friezes. It sits comfortably alongside its bigger neighbour, and contributes to the townscape qualities of the street.

In 2001 the Clifton Buildings were given a grant under the Façade Enhancement Scheme, and it was noted that the new colour scheme would enhance the stylized, oversized blocks that were a distinct feature of the walls.¹⁴

Note: the drawings that exist for these buildings show modest structures sited towards the rear of the site, one 'at the rear of the Clifton Buildings' and the other the 'erection and reconditioning of a factory' (1943). The drawings for the main Clifton Buildings have not been located, so the architect and date of construction are not presently known.

¹¹ *Wises Street Directories*, 1950-51.

¹² *Wises Street Directories*, 1955.

¹³ *Wises Street Directories*, 1959-60.

¹⁴ Façade enhancement scheme – Clifton Buildings report, 2001.

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ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

| Element | Significance |
|--|---------------------------|
| The whole of the main façade of both buildings, 119 and 117. | Architectural, aesthetic. |
| Entrance doors. | Technical. |

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Façade enhancement scheme – Clifton Buildings report, 2001.

Fowler, M 2007, *From disaster to recovery: the Hastings CBD 1931-35*, Michael Fowler Publishing Limited, Havelock North.

Wises Street Directories, 1916-1959-60.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

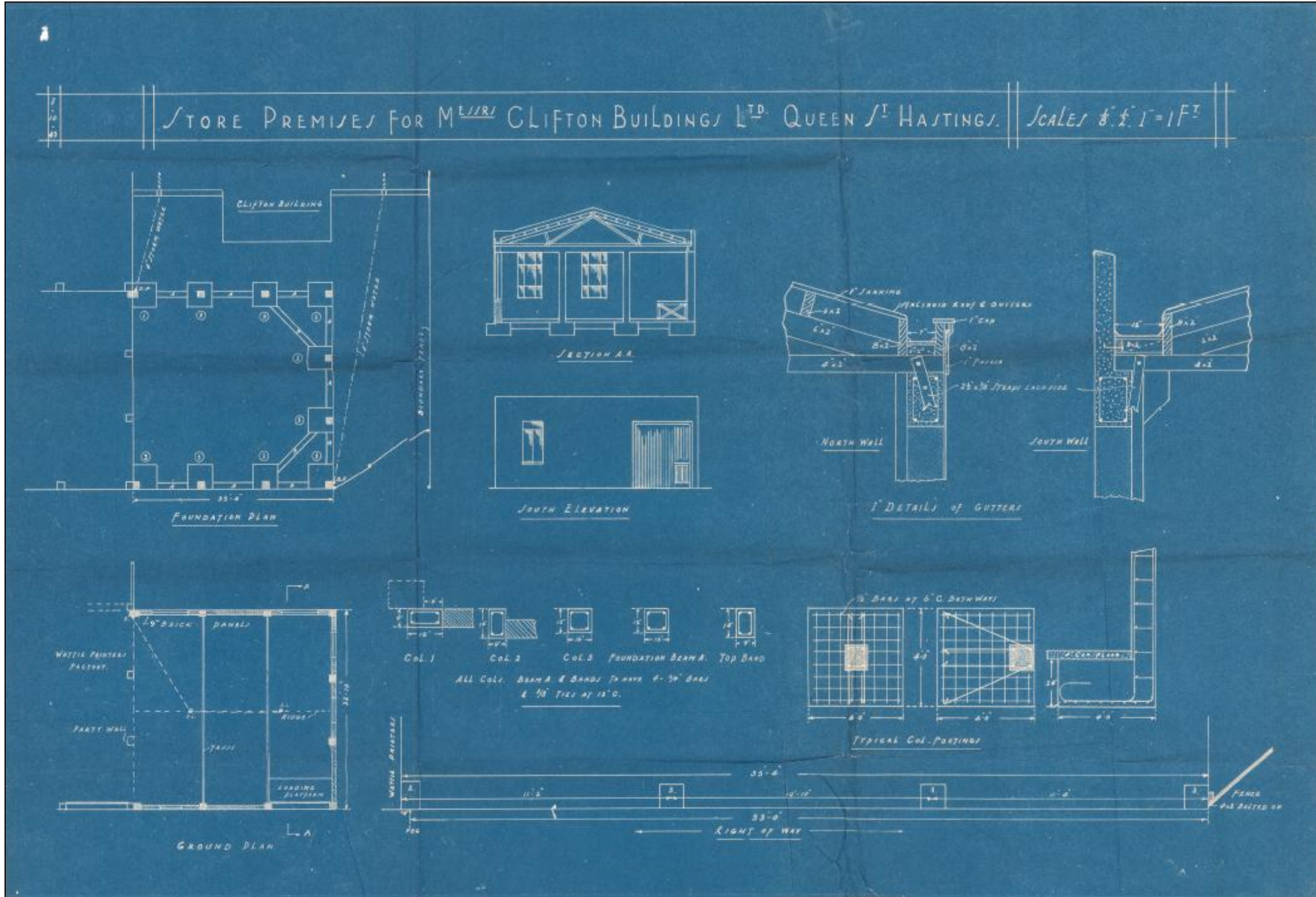
NZHPT Register: Not registered.

District Plan: The Clifton Buildings are not specifically listed as a Heritage item in the Hastings District Plan, but are located within the Central Character Precinct.

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.

ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Store Premises for Messrs Clifton Buildings Ltd Queen St Hastings, rear of Clifton Buildings (no date) (TRIM Ref:21311#0005)



Additions to factory, Queen St Hastings, for Wattie Ltd Printers (1943) (TRIM Ref: 21311#0006)

