

Local Heritage Register: The Empire Cafe



Empire Cafe, 1938

Building Name:	Empire Cafe
Street Address:	66 Sydney Street
Property Description:	Lot 4 on RP700850
Land Area:	393m ²



Description

This small art-deco building was a local landmark for decades.

History

The Empire Cafe traded on this site for a number of decades, firstly in a small wooden structure until the new shop was completed in 1940.

The formidable sisters, mesdames Gould and Warhurst operated the cafe, who arrived with their husbands in 1912.

The husbands were carpenter/joiners, obtaining work the day after arriving and for a brief time operated a business together before separating in 1913.

Mr Lloyd Gould later worked for Marsh and Webster until 1927 when the cabinet-making enterprise of the department store closed. Arthur Warhurst passed away through a workplace accident in 1924. Their daughter Joan married the son of the federal treasurer Mr Gordon Fadden in 1951. It was the talk of the town when Sir Arthur Fadden arrived for the wedding!

The Building

The building showcases the interwar period of building boom in Mackay, as well as the art deco style seen throughout the area.

The Empire Cafe was reopened in 1940, after being constructed by

Archie McDonald of McDonalds Pty Ltd to the design of Harold Brown.

The new exterior featured “*arresting two-tone tiles and chronium stripes*”. The interior was described as a thoroughly modern milk bar with feature mirrors and four electric chandeliers. The modern concrete structure replaced the demolished wooden building and the cafe continued to be run by Mrs A Warhurst and Mrs M Gould, who ran the establishment for approximately five decades.

In recent years the building was the AFS pharmacy and more recently the Chemist Warehouse.

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Empire Cafe Building, 2004, Mackay Regional Council collection

Statement of Historical Significance

Criteria	Significance
A: Historical significance	The Empire Café was first established opposite Town Hall c1924, but was replaced with the current single storey concrete building in 1940. Designed by Harold Brown and constructed by Archie McDonald of McDonalds Pty Ltd, the establishment was run by Mrs A Warhurst and Mrs M Gould for a number of decades. The building also has historical importance in demonstrating building boom of the Interwar period in Mackay.
B: All aspects of heritage significance	Does not meet this criterion.
C: Scientific significance	Does not meet this criterion.
D: Architectural significance	Does not meet this criterion.
E: Aesthetic / architectural significance	The Empire Cafe has been subject to a degree of alteration, however the original façade of the building above the awning retains Art deco detailing and is important in contributing to the streetscape values of Sydney Street.
F: Aesthetic or other significance	Does not meet this criterion.
G: Social significance	Does not meet this criterion.
H: Historical significance	Does not meet this criterion.

References:

- Daily Mercury "Recent Arrivals" 28 December, 1912
- Daily Mercury "Chapter Closing in City Building History" 22 June, 1954, p. 2
- Daily Mercury "Empire Café Reopens" Friday 18 October 1940, p. 6
- Daily Mercury "Happy Family Occasion" 21 November, 1951,p.5

For more information phone strategic planning on 1300 MACKAY (1300 622 529)