

Certification of Property
THE HAWAII REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Submitted to the Hawaii Foundation for History and the Humanities, Historic
Places Review Board on July 10, 1972
(date)

50-80-14-9905
Merchant Street District is hereby placed on the Hawaii Register
(name)

of Historic Places and found to be in Valuable; National Register
(category)

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July 10, 1972
(date)

Transmitted by the Trustees, Hawaii Foundation for History and the
Humanities at their meeting on July 13, 1972 to the State
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Merchant Street

The buildings along Merchant Street between Nuuanu and Bishop Streets provide a unique opportunity to preserve a significant aspect of Honolulu's architectural heritage. Dating from 1854, these buildings portray tangible evidence of the growth and development of Honolulu's professional and business community. A great deal of the economic and political history of Hawaii was created and written by the previous occupants of these buildings. Ranging from banks to bars and post office to newspapers, they have paid salient witness to the creation of present day Hawaii.

Individually, the buildings along Merchant Street are of great architectural and historical value. The oldest existing commercial building in Honolulu, (Melchers Building, 1854) first use of precast concrete block construction, (Kamehameha V Post Office, 1871) the finest example of Italian Renaissance architecture in a commercial building, (Stangenwald Building, 1901) to name only a few of the outstanding structures.

As a group, they represent an incalculable asset as an historic record of Honolulu's past. The variety of architectural styles depict the changing attitudes and living patterns during the emergence of Honolulu as a major city. The loss of even the simplest of these buildings would lead to the destruction of the harmony and continuity created by their combined existence.

The variety of styles, forms and materials create an unplanned character of great value, unified by the common element of human scale. Being adjacent to the vertical growth area of Bishop Street, the need to preserve this small scale human environment becomes all the more apparent.

The recent interest and restoration of many of these buildings gives evidence to the growing concern and reappraisal being directed towards Hono-

lulu's architectural heritage. The need to establish a sense of identity and permanency in the downtown area is becoming increasingly evident as in recent years many of the finest historic buildings have been needlessly lost.

It is fortunate to have such a valuable group of buildings in sound condition that require no great effort other than recognition.

Merchant Street allows Honolulu the opportunity to create an Historic District that would provide a permanent area for future generations to participate in a living element of Hawaii's heritage.

First Federal Savings & Loan Building
843-51 Fort Street
1899

The building when originally constructed, was four stories in height. A fifth floor was added at a later date. The addition not only completely disregarded the existing building in design and detail but also had a detrimental effect on the proportions of the building.

The exterior of the original brick faced concrete structure is in the style of revived Renaissance, popular at the time.

The first floor has recently been extensively altered to portray a "modern" appearance, including the addition of plastic sheet canopy. Above the first floor, the original character of the building is in excellent condition having been sensitively painted to articulate the decorative embellishments.

The fourth floor has arched lintels with simulated keystone set in a horizontal band decorated with wreath and floral designs originally capped with a bold cornice. Lower floors are laced with rectangular window openings each capped with decorated lintels. Brick facing has been applied to simulate rusticated Renaissance stone work with corners in particular being articulated in this manner.

The building has an overall aesthetic appearance. If more sensitive and sympathetic refurbishings were carried out on the ground level, the buildings could be a major contribution to Merchant Street.

Currently, the building appears to be in sound condition and receiving above standard maintenance.

Stangenwald Building
(Dean Witter Building)
119 Merchant Street
C. W. Dickey, Architect, 1901

The Stangenwald Building is considered to be Honolulu's first "high-rise" (6 stories) and also the first completely fireproof building. Constructed of concrete and faced with brick, the Merchant Street facade was designed in the tradition of Italian Renaissance architecture.

Highlighting the facade are arches in the three center bays at the fifth floor supported by pilasters from the second floor with metal panels in relief marking each floor level. Brick is utilized at corners and above door and window openings to simulate rusticated stone work. Directly above the entry on the third floor is a projected balcony with an ornate metal railing, supported by carved brackets. The sixth floor is recessed from the columned facade to create balconies at each bay.

The interior has been extensively remolded over the years to accommodate modern offices. Consequently, virtually all of the original interior detail has either been covered or removed.

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This well proportioned structure is perhaps the finest example of revived Italian Renaissance existing in Hawaii and is a great contribution to the aesthetic character of Merchant Street.

Currently, it is receiving above standard maintenance and appears to be in excellent condition.

The T. R. Foster Building (Alfie's Pub)
902 Nuuanu Avenue
1891

The T. R. Foster Building lay dormant for many years covered with the sameness of stucco and drab paint. It was occupied by a series of businesses, none of which would distinguish it from any of the other under-maintained buildings in the area.

A drastic change occurred a little over a year ago. Overnight the building was transformed into an outstanding aesthetic contribution to the downtown area. The building was given a new name, Alfie's Pub, and with that the true character was discovered. Lying beneath the years of stucco and paint was one of the finest examples of brick artistry and craftsmanship existing in Honolulu.

The Nuuanu Street facade of the two story structure is highlighted by brick columns on the ground level supporting second floor pilasters with segmented bases, fluted shafts and classic capitals. Each supports a small gabled projection between which runs a dented cornice. The column lines continue above a decorated parapet and terminate with a small sphere above a pedestal. The center three columns support a gabled parapet topped by a small spire. Window openings at the second floor have rusticated, arched lintels complete with keystones. The overall aesthetic appearance of the building is enhanced by selective use of paint to articulate forms and details.

The makai wall of Alfie's is crisp with clean masonry lines defining simple door and window openings.

The interior has been extensively re-worked to house a restaurant-bar on the ground floor and law offices on the second floor. The remodeling,

while not using the original materials, has been very sympathetic with the architecture and furnishings reflect turn-of-the-century style.

The building behind Alfie's is a single story warehouse of simple brick form and detail. Steel shutters are secured and fold across door openings. This structure is a fine example of the common yet aesthetically use of brick at the turn of the century. The building has been refurbished to its original appearance.

Alfie's and the small warehouse are in excellent condition and receiving above standard maintenance.

Bishop Bank
65 Merchant Street
T. J. Baker, Architect, 1878

The two story brick building was originally constructed to house the twenty year old Bank of Bishop.

The forms and details of the exceptionally fine masonry work are still visible although the brick itself has been covered with stucco. Arched window and door frames with simulated keystones, articulated brick pilasters, horizontal bands, decorative cornice, a sculptured parapet and numerous other details in brick contribute to the overall high aesthetic value of the building.

Over the years sad changes have been made hiding the true character of the building. The main corner entrance and all lower windows, have been closed in and the entire structure has been painted a solid color thereby losing a great deal of the masonry detail.

The building is in need of a sensitive and sympathetic hand in order to restore it to its original place as one of the major aesthetic contributions to Merchant Street. Most changes would be of a non-structural nature and would entail the reopening of windows, painting, and re-establishing the interior spaces.

Currently, the building is in good condition and receiving standard maintenance.

Hawaiian Gazette Building
76-84 Merchant Street
George Lucas, Builder, 1881

The two story brick building was originally constructed to accommodate the Robert Grieve and Co. printing concern on the second floor with the lower level being let to shops.

Since its construction in 1881, the building has housed many businesses and seen many alterations. Still visible under layers of paint and plaster is the building name on the parapet. Arched lintels are visible over each window on the second floor along with bolts on either side indicating steel shutters once enhanced the facade. A sidewalk canopy provides shade over the "modernized" street level which sports aluminum doors and windows.

The simple structure has tasteful ornamentation above the second floor windows and along the parapet. It is a well proportioned structure giving an excellent example of the use of brick in commercial buildings during the late 1800's.

Although altered at various times, the building appears to be in good condition and appears to be receiving standard maintenance. With thoughtful remodeling and use of paint and textures, the building could easily be transformed to its original appearance.

Royal Saloon
14 Merchant Street
1890

The one story brick building is the only remaining saloons in the area which catered to Honolulu's active port. It was built by W. C. Peacock, who later managed the Moana Hotel in Waikiki.

For years the building lay dormant, its character hidden beneath layers of drab paint. Recently taken over and re-named the Royal Spaghetti House, the building has been brought back to life. Sensitive use of paint has transformed the once drab, seemingly nondescript building into an aesthetic contribution to Merchant Street. Arched door and window openings, brick columns supporting an ornamental cornice and balustrade are among the outstanding exterior features. The interior has been refurbished including an ancient wooden bar ornately carved and decorated, furnishings of the period (random selection) and other decorations which recall the early use of the building.

Currently, the building is in excellent condition and is receiving above standard maintenance.

Melchers Building
51 Merchant Street
1854

The Melchers Building, being the oldest existing building in downtown Honolulu, is of exceptional historical and architectural value.

Built to house the retail establishment of Melchers and Reiner, the two story structure was constructed of coral stone, the texture of which has been lost under layers of stucco and paint. The plan is a simple rectangular with few embellishments or decoration. Windows on the lower floor have been filled with brick and a "modern" aluminum store front entry has been imposed on the Merchant Street facade. The upper floor double hung panel windows are still operable, above which a simple cornice and small parapet surround the building.

The interior has been extensively altered and now houses the City Prosecutor's office.

Currently the building appears to be in good structural condition and is receiving standard maintenance.

With a more sympathetic occupant, the building could once again be an aesthetic as well as historic contribution to Honolulu.

Friend Building
926 Bethel Street
George Lucas, Builder, 1887

The two story brick structure was originally built to house The Friend of Temperance and Seamen, Hawaii's first periodical started in 1843.

This simple structure is representative of small commercial buildings of the time. It is well proportioned and displays examples of the excellent brick craftsmanship being built in Honolulu in the late 1800's. The Bethel Street facade is enhanced by arched window opening on the second floor, corbeled cornice and a simulated gable parapet.

The lower floor has been "modernized" and much of the original character has been lost. A metal canopy now hangs over the first floor.

Today, the building is covered with drab stucco and paint burying beneath it the original character.

The building is currently in good condition and receiving standard maintenance. It is now housing business offices.

Bishop Estate Building
71-77 Merchant Street
1896

Originally, the two story structure was built to house the offices of the Bishop Estate, C. R. Bishop Trust and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.

The dark grey lava stone was taken from the Kamehameha quarries. The Merchant Street facade is an excellent example of imaginative, decorative, rusticated masonry with arched door and window openings on the ground level, large rectangular windows above with four projected pilasters of stone supporting an ornate parapet. A variety of textures and patterns decorate the upper portion of the wall giving the small structure a sense of solidity. Its fortress-like appearance creates an illusion of the building being larger than it really is. The small building is a major contribution to Merchant Street.

Currently, it is in excellent condition and receiving standard maintenance.

Yokohama Specie Bank
36 Merchant Street
H. L. Kerr, Architect, 1909

This elegant two story structure provides a major contribution to the character of Merchant Street. It was constructed of concrete and faced with brick and granite. The eclectic style is accented by the elaborate arched entry at the corner of the building supported on either side by Ionic columns. Two story pilasters with carved capitals support an ornate frieze with portals decorated by classic wreath and floral carvings, above which an ornate cornice is topped with a continuous balustrade*.

The interior is as richly embellished as the exterior, displaying a marbled wainscoat, coffered ceiling and classic metal balustrade with oriental motif. Much of this detail had been covered during various remodelings and is only now being rediscovered and uncovered.

Currently one of the main backers and initiators of the Merchant Square movement, The Hawaii Shopping Center Corporation, has their main office on the second floor of the building and is upgrading the building to its previous level.

The building is in excellent condition and receiving above standard maintenance.

* adorned at the corner by a carved baroque medallion.

Water House Building

The Water House Building, sandwiched between the Royal Spaghetti House and the Yokohama Specie Bank is a two story brick structure offering only a small facade to Merchant Street. The simple clean lines and unpretentious character contributes to the overall scale and texture of Merchant Street.

Peeling stucco has exposed brick structure giving the building a weathered aged appearance.

The building is in good condition and receiving standard maintenance.

COURT BUILDING
(OLD POLICE STATION)
842 Merchant Street
Architect, Louis E. Davis
1930

The old police station is unique in the Merchant Street area. It is the youngest building that contributes to the overall character and the largest, occupying the full length of the block between Bethel and Nuuanu Streets. The building consists of three stories and a basement.

A combination of stucco, red tile roof, and generous use of tasteful decoration work together to create an architecture reflecting Spanish Renaissance with a moorish influence. Special attention has been given to door and window openings. The main entrance is over eighteen feet in height, the opening being decorated with Terra Cotta in the form of side scrolls, columns and various decorative elements and four large paneled doors. The side entrance is smaller but with much the same emphasis given to the door frame.

The Ewa end of the building is unique in that stairs swirling in two directions give access to various levels of judges' chambers located on the second and third levels of the building. The stairway being the total width of the building at this point and being capped by a round tile roof.

Access to the Diamond Head service area is gained through two massive, low arches.

Cast concrete balconies, wrought iron balconies, metal window grilles, perforated concrete window grilles, all embellished generously with decoration, contribute to the overall handsome appearance of the building.

Great care had been given to the interior space and architectural detail, much of which has been covered or changed during subsequent remodeling. Still visible is the coffered wood ceiling, ceramic tile wainscoat, wrought iron handrails, brick and tile flooring, decorative cornice, peaked arches, concrete coffered ceiling with painted designs and granite faced columns. A great deal of the original interior is still visible in the main entry and stairway.

Recently, the exterior received an extensive coat of paint which indicates the building is still receiving adequate maintenance. The building appears to be in sound structural condition and is a major contribution to the overall character of Merchant Street.