

Description

The Devonport Flats consist of three separate four storey buildings built in in-situ reinforced concrete and plastered. They contain residential flats, and although there are some differences in layout, the main block of 1924 is typical: each unit has a front door opening off an open walkway on the back elevation, and into the living room; a small hall off the living room gives access to kitchen and bathroom, and two bedrooms look out onto the front verandah and the view to the north. The front verandah was communal but the space appears now to have been taken into the flats and the openings glazed in. The finish of the buildings was very utilitarian, but the main elevations did not lack interest: the ground and first floors were visually tied with high arched openings, a cornice ran through at third floor level, and sundry circles, keystones and frames around openings carried out in plaster enhance the composition. Seven garages were built in the courtyard behind in 1927 but have now been demolished.

History

Originally known as "Waldies Flats", the Devonport Flats were built for Mr A B Waldie, an electroplater by trade. They were built in three sections: the middle block on St Aubyn Street, 1923; the corner block that stretches up Dawson Street followed closely, and the largest block at the eastern end of the site, 1924. Residential buildings on such a scale are rare in New Zealand at this time, and it is interesting that were apparently so successful. (Similar inner-city residential units were built nearby later in the decade - see item Q2). Various alterations have been made to the buildings, mainly in the closing in of open verandah spaces on the north elevation.

Architects

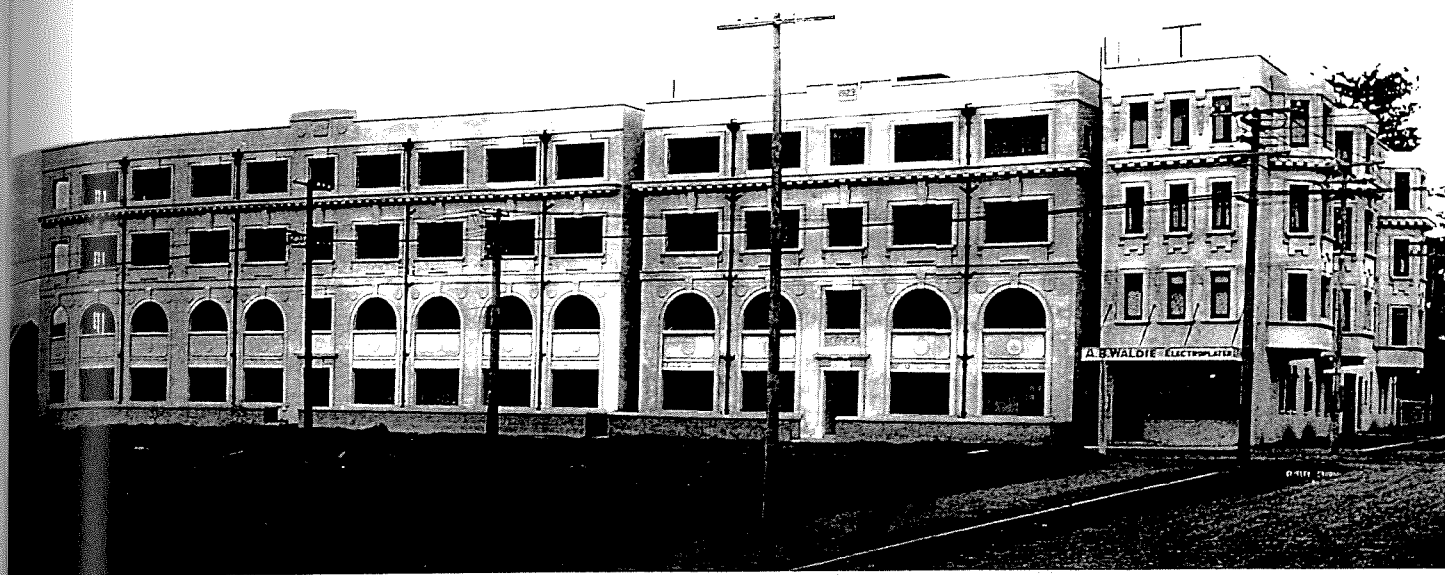
The architects were Messenger Griffiths and Taylor; some nine drawings (blueprints) and a complete specification are held by the Taranaki Museum.

Statement of Significance

Devonport Flats are an historically interesting phenomenon, a large inner-city complex of residential units from the 1920s, very rare anywhere in New Zealand until the Government built inner city state housing blocks of similar scale in Auckland and Wellington in the late 1930s. The buildings have technological interest for their use of concrete, and townscape quality for their long patterned facades to two streets. They are the work of an important local architectural firm.

Sources

New Plymouth District Council building file 511/123.
Taranaki Museum, heritage trail file C7020048.



Devonport Flats, 123-127 St Aubyn Street

The original Devonport Flats, photograph taken 22 June 1925.

This photograph was kindly supplied by the Devonport Apartments Body Corporate, it presently hangs within the apartments.