



The Old Phoenix Drug Store, 2 Reid Street



The Phoenix Drug Store in 1905. Courtesy of Horst Augustinovic.

BUILT HERITAGE | JUNE 2024

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This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.

The former Phoenix Drug Store has dominated the southeast corner of Reid and Queen streets since 1902. The building was designed by Bermudian architect Edward Peniston for druggist Frederick William Grantham. It was constructed to take full advantage of its position with the main store entrance approached from two directions. Grantham's new premises opened on the evening of 29th November so that the electric and acetylene gas lights lit up the corner and attracted large crowds.



1930s advertisement for The Phoenix.
The Bermudian Magazine.



Peniston designed an impressive building with three storeys and a tower. The wrap-around verandahs on the middle floor and the tower were the prominent features. The lower verandah was originally used as seating for customers of the soda fountain located on street level. The cantilevered verandah or balcony appears to have been the first of its type. By definition a cantilever is a rigid structure that typically extends horizontally from a flat vertical surface such as a wall to which it must be firmly attached. This method allows overhanging structures without the additional support of pillars or posts at ground level.



The Phoenix building as it appeared in the 1947 edition of Beautiful Bermuda. By this time the clock, just visible in the right of the picture, brought to Bermuda by Edwin Childs in the early 1890s and moved around the city by subsequent owners, had settled into this location where it remained until 1990 when it was moved to Reid Street.

In 2013 seven buildings belonging to the Corporation of Hamilton and Bermuda Government were given listed status because of their special architectural and historic interest. This was long overdue as until then it was only the Anglican Church's Cathedral that had this protection, having been listed in 1993. There are many other buildings within the City that merit preservation. It is our feeling that the Old Phoenix Drug Store is one such building especially since it is located within Hamilton's Historic Protection Area.



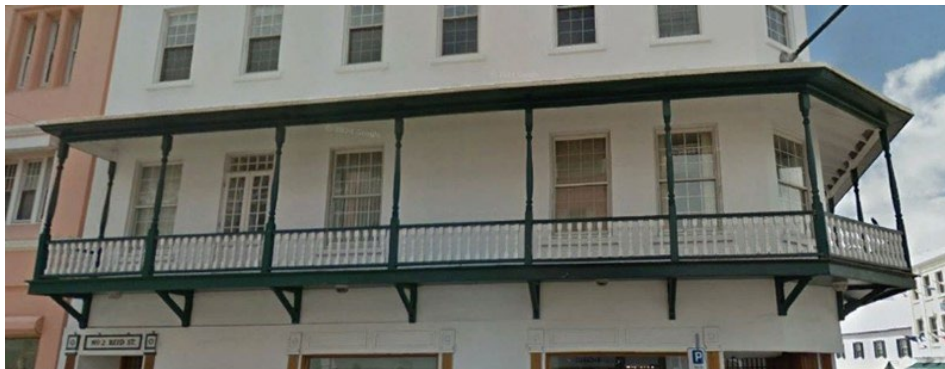
By 2013, when this photo was taken, top-hung blinds had replaced the side-hung ones. Although the tower verandah had been removed, the building's overall attractiveness was only minimally diminished.

We were therefore saddened to see that the current owners, Mayfair Limited, have submitted a planning application to remove the original wooden balcony. After 122 years of existence it is understandable that today it is in an unsafe condition and requires urgent action. This building has been somewhat of a landmark in Hamilton and we hope that the owners will have a change of heart and replace or restore the balcony in order to preserve the character of the Queen and Reid Street corner. It should be noted that this request was also made by the Corporation of Hamilton to the Department of Planning

Sources: *Hamilton Town and City, Bermuda's Architectural Series; The Royal Gazette 2 Dec 1902; Department of Planning website.*



The building is already enveloped in scaffolding in anticipation of the removal of the balcony so this photo is courtesy of Google Earth.



Although seemingly in good condition, we appreciate that the balcony is now unsafe. If it is replicated would it be possible to make use of the spindles and posts?