

Heritage Citation



Australian Boot Factory (former)

Key details

Also known as	Federal Boot Company
Addresses	At 14 Maud Street, Newstead, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Factory
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Georgian
Lot plan	L1_RP126804
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — March 2006
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Brick - Painted

The construction of this factory in 1889 marks it as part of the first wave of industrial development at Newstead, which transformed the suburb from a workers' residential area to an industrial one by the 1920s. Purpose-built as a shoe and boot manufacturing factory, it is a rare surviving example of a nineteenth century boot factory, being the earliest of the three remaining former boot factories in Brisbane. As such, it demonstrates the principal characteristics of a building of its type through its form and use of materials. The former Australian Boot Factory is also rare as evidence of an important early manufacturing industry in Queensland that was involved in the struggle during the 1890s for industrial reform of working conditions. The building maintained its connection to the leather manufacturing industry until it was sold in 1981.

History

This boot factory was constructed soon after William Perkins and John Goldsworthy acquired this site in December 1888. Two of the three allotments, which comprised the factory site (Subdivisions 55 and 56), were jointly owned by Perkins and Goldsworthy. The third subdivision 57 was owned by Perkins only. The partners took out two mortgages in 1889, totalling £1 700 and another in 1890 for £805. These were presumably to finance the construction of the factory and to purchase the necessary equipment. Prior to the construction of the boot factory, there had been little other development on this side of Maud Street. The opposite side already had several houses built on it by 1889. At the time of its construction, this was one of only a few industrial buildings within the Newstead area. Brisbane's burgeoning manufacturing base relied heavily on small-scale, labour intensive operations such as this. In 1900 the boot factory was reported in the *Queenslander* as one of the six industrial enterprises operating in the Booroodabin Divisional Board. With the exception of the Gas Company tank and the Colonial Sugar refinery buildings, the boot factory is the only other extant industrial building in the Booroodabin area celebrated in the *Queenslander* article on commercial industry.

By the mid-1800s this area was seen as a residential district. Wealthy merchants and professionals built their homes on the heights of Teneriffe Hill, taking advantage of the views and cooling breezes. Workers' cottages filled the slopes and river flats, within walking distance of employment. From the 1890s further industry began to establish in the area, and by the 1920s had changed the face of Newstead and Teneriffe. Industrial activities encouraged the development of more workers' homes but eventually led to the erosion of the area's residential nature.

The boot making industry did not appear to suffer greatly during the depression which was in full force during the early years of the 1890s. In 1888 Queensland imported £179 000 worth of boots and shoes: by 1897 only £51 097 worth were imported, a reduction in nine years of £128 000. When Goldsworthy and Perkin's factory was established, it was one of more than 140 other boot making establishments in Brisbane, although many of these were sole bootmakers working from their own house or small workshop. In 1888 there were 18 small boot factories throughout Queensland: in 1897 that number had increased to 39, employing 1 546 people.

During the 1890s clothing and textile manufacturers formed the largest group within Brisbane's manufacturing sector, employing over 40 per cent of the industrial workforce. The boot trade represented a large sub-group

within this division, employing 29 per cent of the clothing and textile workforce. Competition in the boot making industry was fierce. In 1893 the Brisbane Courier claimed: "In Brisbane there is sufficient machinery and operatives to supply the whole of Queensland's needs working four months a year".

As mechanisation proceeded, large numbers of women and boys were employed in the boot making industry, often under conditions of sweated labour. At the time of the 1891 Royal Commission into Shops, Factories, and Workshops Goldsworthy and Perkin's factory had two workrooms, each measuring 70 feet x 35 feet x 11 feet. The workroom on the ground floor was able to accommodate 20 males and 20 females and the upper floor could accommodate 35 male operatives. A small shed was used as a cloak-room for the girls and the owners were planning to put up a room in the front and extend the room at the back and provide a dressing room, a little dining room and other necessary buildings and put all the girls upstairs. The City Inspector reported however that the sanitary conditions were "grossly insufficient" and "disgustingly filthy" and that the premises were "very dirty" with stagnant pools of water and no appliances to extinguish fire. Goldsworthy at that time employed 15 girls who were paid between 5 shillings and £1 10s per week. Males earned £3 per week although trainee boys were paid 5s.

Mechanisation occurred in several Brisbane industries during the 1880s. It was most extensive in the boot trade, where its introduction was expedited by the 1895 bootmakers' strike. Unionists had complained of poor conditions in boot factories for several years. Employer refused to meet union demands, resulting in a series of unsuccessful strikes. This culminated in a 14 week strike from May to August 1895 involving 400 men and virtually bringing the industry in Brisbane to a stand still. The workers' efforts were wasted however and starvation eventually forced the men to return to work on management's conditions, which included a reduction in wages. When the mechanisation of the industry followed soon after, many men lost their jobs. Boys were employed in large numbers, and team work, involving specialisation of labour was introduced. By 1897 those still working for wages were receiving up to 35 per cent below the reduced rate agreed upon after the 1895 strike.

In 1898 Goldsworthy sold his half of the property to Perkins, who was clearly suffering severe financial difficulties as he subsequently borrowed £2 500 from the Commercial Bank of Australia. In 1902 Perkins was declared insolvent and subdivisions 55 and 56 were seized by the Bank. Goldsworthy and Perkins' boot factory was renamed the Australian Boot Factory soon after its opening. In the first decade of the 1900s the boot factory became known as the Federal Boot Company, reflecting Australia's recent federation. It continued to operate until Edward Palmer, a leather goods manufacturer purchased subdivisions 55 and 56 in 1923. In 1926 he formed a partnership and the property was transferred to Palmer and Douglass Ltd. The partners purchased subdivision 57 in 1968 and continued to manufacture leather goods on the site. In 1981 the premises were sold to PM and ME Bennett ending over 100 years continuous association with leather goods manufacture. Although now basically used as a distribution business, the massive beams and pulleys associated with the previous leather industry remain as a reminder of the significance of the industry to society through both its goods and its history of employment conditions.

Description

This purpose-built brick factory building is simple Georgian style of rectangular form. The brickwork has been painted and the original roof replaced with zincalume.

Internally, except for replacement of the timber floor with concrete throughout the ground floor and replacement of the original sash windows with aluminium in the front quarter of the building where partitioning has been used to create an office area, the interior fabric is unchanged. The building has two floors accessed by timber stairs at either end of the building. Original bearers, timbers, stairs and floorboards have been retained. The upper floor also houses the original pulley system still in situ mounted between two roof trusses.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as an example of the early wave of industrial development which eventually changed the character of the Newstead/Teneriffe area.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a remnant of Brisbane's fledgling manufacturing industry which developed in the 1880s, and was of great economic importance to both the city and the colony in the late nineteenth century.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a purpose-built, late nineteenth century boot factory.

References

1. Titles Office Records
2. Queensland Post Office Directories
3. *Queensland Parliamentary Digest*, 81 (1899); 280-6 cited by Johnston, W Ross, *A Documentary History of Queensland*, St Lucia, Brisbane: UQP, 1988, p. 335
4. *Brisbane Courier*, 10 July 1897 quoted in Lawson, Ronald, *Brisbane in 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, St Lucia, Brisbane: UQP, 1973: p. 68
5. Lawson, Ronald *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*. St Lucia U of Q Press, 1973
6. Royal Commission into Shops, Factories, and Workshops 1891, *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, 1891, Vol. II

Copyright Brisbane City Council

Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane