

Heritage Citation



Baysmere

Key details

Addresses	At 126 Bowen Terrace, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	Flat building
Period	World War II 1939-1945
Style	Functionalist
Lot plan	L1_RP95882
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — January 2003

Construction	Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Face brick
People/associations	Chambers and Ford (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

This three-storey block of flats was constructed circa 1941 for Henrietta Harris, whose family still own the building today. The Interwar Functionalist building was designed by prominent Brisbane architectural firm Chambers and Ford, who had designed a number of flats in the New Farm area during the interwar era. Interestingly, these flats were built after the flat-construction boom of the 1930s and into World War II, when a lot of construction had ceased.

History

Construction of six flats and 1 caretakers residence at 126 Bowen Terrace began in November 1940. Built for a Mrs Henrietta Augusta Harris (born 1884), they were named 'Baysmere' after the owner's family home at Kangaroo Point.

Henrietta Augusta Harris and Allan Douglas Harris had purchased the property in December 1936. After the death of Allan September 1940, Henrietta applied to Council by December for a block of 3 story flats costing 4900 Pounds. A large house named 'Clonmoyle' that had occupied the site was removed or demolished around this time in preparation for the new building.

The building, an example of the Interwar-War Functionalist style with some elements of the International style, was designed by noted firm Chambers & Ford, who had begun partnership in 1920. They were also responsible for many flat buildings in New Farm along with the State Listed 'Ardrossan' in nearby Julius Street, built in 1934.

A feature on the building appeared in the Courier Mail on 12 November of 1940 entitled "Block Of Brick Flats For New Farm". The article stated:

The accompanying illustration is of a proposed block of flats to be constructed at New Farm, overlooking the river. The building will be of light cream bricks with a dark brown tile roof.

Features of the facade will be the large stair hall window, recessed, which will run the full height of two floors, and the reinforced concrete balconies, giving an excellent view of the river and city.

These balconies will have handrails of tubular metal, and each will be edged by a cantilevered brick flower box, which coupled with the steeply pitched tile roof, will give line and interest to the composition. The entrance will be approached by low brick-on-edge steps, flanked by brick grilles and flower boxes, covered by a reinforced concrete hood, whose outer edge will be pierced by a row of circular glazed openings. The side elevation, which will face a laneway, will be pierced liberally by tall casement windows shaded by a continuous reinforced concrete hood, thus assuring

abundant light to all rooms.

The land, which slopes from front to back, simplifies the provision of garages, which will be situated, together with laundries, in a very accessible basement.

Modern conveniences will include refrigerators. The architects are Messrs, Chambers and Ford.

It is possible that 'Baysmere' was the last block of flats built as designed by Chambers and Ford prior to the Pacific War. Indeed the first tenants in the building were reportedly US Army Officers in early 1942.

Purpose designed flat/apartment building emerged as a new form of residential accommodation in Brisbane during the 1920s. Brisbane, in comparison to Sydney and Melbourne, was slow to adopt this form of flat development, however the practice of converting old houses to flats was well established.

Mostly, the blocks presented handsome street facades, predominantly in the fashionable Old English, Spanish Mission or Mediterranean architectural styles. Examples in the Art Deco or Functionalist style were considerably rarer.

Few blocks of flats appear to have been constructed in Brisbane prior to the mid-1920s, with suburbs like New Farm scarcely touched by flat development until the 1930s. Those erected in Brisbane during the interwar period were mostly used as rental investments. The Great Depression fuelled the increase in flat construction, as many found the costs of land and finance too expensive. People turned to rented accommodation in new and well-appointed flats and apartment buildings. This in turn created a strong environment for further investment in flat buildings.

Investors favoured centrally located positions that were close to workplaces, shopping facilities, entertainment and schools and with easy access to public transport. Proximity to a tramline was particularly important, with lines along Brunswick Street terminating at the New Farm ferry. Subsequently, a concentration of flat buildings still exist around the former routes along Brunswick and Merthyr Roads in New Farm.

BCC ordinances, adopted in 1926, included controls over flat developments in both new construction and house conversions. Perhaps the most significant of the ordinances that controlled the flat developments was that 'tenements shall not occupy more than 50% of the allotment of land on which it stands, but when the building is not more than three stories it may occupy two-thirds of the allotment'. As a result, Brisbane's interwar flats rarely exceeded three storeys.

By 1936, the BCC had prepared regulations to control the development of flats, which included; no flats permitted on land with a road of less than 50 links in width; no multiple family building to cover a greater ground area than half the land upon which it is built; multiple-family dwellings to be restricted to two-storeys in height, unless constructed of brick, concrete, or other similar fire-resisting material where height may be increased to three stories. A decline in unit construction occurred after this time. Construction of flats in Brisbane had peaked in 1936-37, with a decline in 1938-39 partly due to the uncertain investment climate generated by threats of war in Europe, and partly due to the refusal of banking and financial institutions.

Bowen Terrace was reconstructed as relief work during the Great Depression of the 1930s but when construction began on the Story Bridge the area gained increased status in the early 1940s. Malt Street, which runs parallel to the left side of the building, was only a cart track used by draft horses for Carlton and United Breweries. The brewery used to occupy the site opposite the Primitive Methodist Church (now the Potters Gallery). In the 1950s Malt Street was widened and extended to Brunswick Street.

An additional garage to the rear of the flats was constructed in July 1946 but demolished by the 1960s. The balconies that feature in the Courier Mail sketch were constructed but were enclosed with bricks and casement

windows circa 1950. After the passing of Henrietta Harris in 1968, her Grand daughter Ann and husband George Curphy acquired title, and in 2003 still do so. The original wooden external stairs at the rear were replaced in 2000 with steel ones. The structure still serves its designed purpose as six flats, however the original caretakers office has since been converted into a flat so currently contains seven units.

Description

The building, an elegant three-storey structure, has the simple geometric shape and contrasting horizontal and vertical motifs, of the Interwar Functionalist style.

The structure, built of two colour bricks forming a subtle surface pattern, has a symmetric street frontage with a continuous vertical recessed window centrally located above its front door. This vertical window, glazed into small square sections, identifies the stairwell area. Street access to the entry level is by a flight of six wide steps.

The tiled roof shape is unusual, as it appears to have a very large flat area above a hipped section. It is also at odds with the Interwar Functionalist elements of the building.

Narrow horizontal projections, protruding above the large windows at either side of the vertical central window provide a balance to the symmetry of the frontage as well as weather protection. These windows appear to be a later enclosure of what were originally balcony areas.

The building in its final form is an interesting design with Interwar Functionalist and International architectural styles references.

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 it demonstrates the pattern of residential development in New Farm in the 1940s as an example of changing housing requirements brought on by the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a rare example of a highly intact, 1940s purpose-designed flat/apartment building built after the flat construction boom of the 1930s.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an Interwar Functionalist style building with International style references which makes an important aesthetic contribution to the Bowen Terrace streetscape and to the urban fabric of New Farm, and itself takes advantage of fine views of the Brisbane River.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as an important example of a block of flats designed by prominent Brisbane architects Chambers and Ford.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Sewerage Maps
2. Queensland Births, Deaths and Marriages
3. Certificates of Title.
4. *Courier Mail* - 12 November 1940
5. Environmental Protection Agency Cultural Heritage Branch File, *Julius Street Flats 601895*
6. Interview with George Curphey – 10 January 2003
7. Post Office Directories.

8. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Picture Queensland
 9. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
-

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