

Heritage Citation



Benevenuti Residence 1

Key details

Also known as	Italia
Addresses	At 27 Agnes Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006
Type of place	House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890, Federation 1890-1914
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L3_RP9819
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2011 Date of Citation — January 2009
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

The three residences on Agnes Street were built in succession between 1879 and 1899. The houses were built by the Benvenuti family; two were resided in by family members. The Benvenuti family were an influential musical family who contributed to the early cultural life of Brisbane and Queensland. 23, 27 and 31 Agnes Street demonstrate not only the residential development of Fortitude Valley in the late nineteenth century, but also the importance of close knit family connections in many immigrant families in Brisbane in this period.

History

The First sale of land in Fortitude Valley occurred in 1844. Nine suburban allotments of two and four acres each were offered at an upset price of £3 per acre. However the land at Kangaroo Point and in the centre of the settlement at north Brisbane was more sought after and when in 1846 the town limits of Brisbane were proclaimed, Fortitude Valley fell outside the limit.

By 1854 there were about 150 dwellings in the Fortitude Valley area, stretching as far as Breakfast Creek. In 1858 Wickham Street was surveyed from the corner of Ann Street to Boundary Street. At this stage very few commercial premises had been erected, and Valley residents relied on North Brisbane traders for supplies. Despite these difficulties the population was steadily growing. A government census in 1861 showed that there was a total population of over 1300 people in Fortitude Valley by that year.

Accompanied by the widespread economic boom of the 1880s were population and building booms. Between 1881 and 1891, Brisbane's population increased from 37 000 to 100 000. More than half the increase in metropolitan population during the period 1881-1886 was concentrated in Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill, Newstead and South Brisbane.

The densely packed houses of working men and women were predominant in the Valley. To cater for the influx of working class families, new housing was built on tiny allotments in narrow streets, where speculators had divided estates into the maximum possible number of blocks of land. Tiny cottages sprang up in the streets beyond the Valley's commercial centre. It was this type of subdivision which prompted the government in 1885 to pass the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act which prohibited the subdivision of allotments smaller than 16 perches.

Within a very short time span the residential nature of the Valley began to be eroded. As the 1890s progressed those residential sections in close proximity to the rapidly growing retail and industrial areas were changing. The Valley became a heterogeneous area, and it was not uncommon for houses to have motor garages, factories, churches and even hotels as neighbours.

Antonio Benvenuti immigrated to Brisbane in 1871. In his birth place, Padua, he was an esteemed linguist in European languages and a competent violinist. He arrived in Brisbane with his wife Catherine and three sons Luigi, Victor and Italo. On moving to Brisbane Antonio became involved in the Brisbane musical scene and opened his own violin school, being listed in the Post Office Directories first as 'professor of music' in 1879 and then as 'teacher of music' in subsequent years. Benvenuti worked closely with influential Brisbane musicians

such as R. T. Jefferies to establish musical groups, hold cultural events and promote patronage of this art in Brisbane. He travelled throughout Australia playing concerts and was nicknamed the 'modern Paganini'.

In 1874 Antonio purchased approximately forty–five perches of land in Agnes Street Fortitude Valley. In 1879 he built a timber house on the lot that he called "Italia" and this was the family house for the next twenty years.

With his three sons, who were also proficient musicians, the Benvenuti family continued to travel extensively throughout Queensland and Australia providing musical entertainment. All three of Antonio's sons were fine musicians and the four of them were collectively known as the Benvenuti Quartet.

In 1890 the Benvenutis built another house beside the first on 31 Agnes Street. This was a two-storey timber house with dual front verandahs. This residence was rented out over the years to various tenants, the first being Frank Pallymen, a watchmaker. This property remained in the Benvenuti name until 1901 when it was sold to Ola Peter Troedson who was first listed at the Fortitude Valley address in the Electoral Rolls in 1901.

In 1899 the Benvenutis built another house on the other side of the original home. 23 Agnes Street followed the same design as 31 Agnes Street. This residence was to be home for Victor Benvenuti, Antonio's son. Victor was first listed at the address in 1900 as a musician. Victor was important in the Brisbane music scene in this period in his own right. As well as being an integral part of the Benvenuti Quartet, Victor was the conductor for Brisbane's Theatre Royal for many years and played an important role in Brisbane's cultural life.

The three houses on Agnes Street are important surviving residences connected to the Benvenuti family. As a set of intact timber houses built in the late nineteenth century they are rare remnants of the residential nature of this part of Fortitude Valley prior to the increase of commerce and industry in the area.

Description

This is a low set timber house with front verandah that retains its original Victorian filigree iron lace and front steps. It has a hipped roof clad with corrugated metal sheeting. The interior retains many original Victorian era features and the house has a rear service wing.

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 one of a set of nineteenth-century timber residences which are representative of the residential growth of Fortitude Valley.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as one of a set of intact nineteenth-century timber houses.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as one of set of three nineteenth-century timber houses with front verandahs and hipped roofs, which contribute greatly to the historic streetscape of Agnes Street.

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 one of a set of houses built and resided in by the Benvenuti family, one of Brisbane's oldest musical families who played a large role in Brisbane's musical development. The houses are representative of an immigrant family's experience in Brisbane in this period.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Building Registers
2. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
3. G. Greenwood and J. Laverty. *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government*. Brisbane: BCC, 1959.
4. Mahlstedt & Son, City of Brisbane Detail Fire Survey, Map No. 30, 1951
5. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board Survey Maps, Detail Plan No. 151, 1914
6. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1894-1949
7. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)
8. Watson, Donald and McKay, Judith. *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century: A Biographical Dictionary*. Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1995
9. *Il Globo*, "The Benvenutis: Family of Italian Musicians from Padova (Padua) Implanted in Brisbane in 1871", 19 February 1990

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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.

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