

## Heritage Citation



**Franklin Villa**

### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 35 Brighton Road, Highgate Hill, Queensland 4101
<b>Type of place</b>	Flat building, Villa
<b>Period</b>	Federation 1890-1914
<b>Style</b>	Queen Anne
<b>Lot plan</b>	L2_RP11762
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — June 2001
<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

**People/associations** Archibald Meston (Occupant);  
Grenier family (Occupant)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

This property was constructed circa 1891 by the Grenier family, who were significant South Brisbane landholders and business operators. Ellen Grenier built the house in 1891 as upmarket rental accommodation and named it 'Franklin Villa' in honour of her deceased husband. Retaining its original purpose as an investment property, the history of 'Franklin Villa' has mirrored the ebb and flow of Highgate Hill's economic circumstances. Prior to World War One, well paid government officials such as Archibald Meston, the official Protector of the Aborigines, leased the house and from 1914 to 1924 it was rented and later owned by local storekeeper Henry Neylan. After World War Two, the house was converted into three modest flats and is still registered as a multiple dwelling. This unique house makes a fine contribution to the Brighton Road streetscape.

## History

This property was part of two purchases of crown land made by Thomas Grenier of Brisbane in 1856. In June of that year, Grenier bought Allotment 158 in South Brisbane, which totalled 7 acres, 1 rood and 32 perches of land, for £18, 12 shillings and 5 pence. At the same time he paid £38 and 14 shillings for 9 acres of land described as Allotment 160. Grenier bought the land from the colonial government of New South Wales, which at this time controlled the land sales around Brisbane. Thomas Grenier was an important figure in South Brisbane's early history, having represented the local residents as alderman for the South Ward in the Brisbane Municipal Council from 1867-68. He was also a prominent hotelier. In January 1875, Grenier, who was, at this time, living in Russell Street, South Brisbane, was issued with title deeds Lots 158 and 160 by the Queensland colonial government. Grenier then had his 'L' shaped block of land subdivided into 15 suburban allotments.

In November 1878, after Thomas Grenier's death, this land, comprising subdivisions 50 to 57, 60 and 91 to 97, passed to Franklin Grenier. He began selling off these subdivisions in October 1883, so that he was left with just subdivisions 60, 96 and 97. Franklin transferred the title deed to Lot 60, which comprised 1 rood, to his wife, Ellen Henrietta Grenier, in January 1885. He then placed the other two blocks, covering 1 rood and 33.6 perches, to his wife's name in the following month. In May 1885, financial need forced Ellen and Franklin Grenier to take out a £400 mortgage through the City and Suburban Permanent Building and Investment Society on the vacant block, subdivision 60. A second mortgage, for £40 was taken out on the same block in April 1887. Finally, in November 1888, Ellen and Franklin disposed of subdivision 96 to Jane Thaw and this reduced their land holdings to 1 rood and 36.8 perches.

Franklin Grenier died on 5 January 1889 but Ellen did not remain a widow for long. On 20 June 1890, she married another member of the Grenier family - Thomas Leichardt Grenier. Six days later, Ellen took out a third mortgage on subdivision 60, for £200, possibly to cover her wedding expenses. But a fourth mortgage, this time for £1,500, that was taken out on subdivision 60 in July 1890, was to be used to pay for the building of a house on subdivisions 60 and 97 along Brighton Road. Ellen Grenier took a first mortgage, of £100 on subdivision 97, and a fifth mortgage of £100 on subdivision 60 on the same day in December 1890. This money was possibly

used to ensure the completion of the Brighton Road residence, with the building work beginning in 1891.

Completed by 1892, the two-storey house was named 'Franklin Villa' by Ellen Grenier, presumably after her first husband Franklin. 'Franklin Villa' was built as a rental property to be leased to people of means. This was a common practice in the 1890s, as similar substantial investment properties, such as 'Hillside' in Gray Road, were built throughout South Brisbane. Thus 'Franklin Villa's' first tenant was Archibald Meston, a journalist, Justice of the Peace and the official Protector of the Aborigines. During 1893, 'Franklin Villa' remained vacant but from 1893 to 1902, the house was leased by postal inspector Samuel Marshall. In 1902, 'Franklin Villa' was vacant again. Then in 1903, Robert S. Nevill, a tobacco exporter working for the Department of Agriculture moved in and remained a tenant until 1911. John G. Wildharbour rented 'Franklin Villa' during 1911-1913 then storekeeper Henry John Neylan became the leasee.

In September 1911, Ellen Grenier sold 29.5 perches, that was part of subdivision 60, to John Joseph Barry. This reduced her property to subdivision 97 and resubdivision 2 of subdivision 60, a total of 1 rood and 9.25 perches, thus giving 35 Brighton Road its existing size. Ellen Grenier passed 'Franklin Villa' onto Mary Jane Neylan in December 1924. As Mary Neylan was deceased, the property passed into the hands of the trustees, Henry Neylan and John Francis Neylan. When John Neylan died on 12 July 1939, Maurice Burke was appointed as a new joint trustee of the property. Having rented 'Franklin Villa' since 1911, the other trustee, Henry Neylan, continued to reside in the house until 1942, thus making him its longest resident.

Amy Edwina Muriel Andrews purchased 'Franklin Villa' in May 1942. At the time of purchase, she took out a mortgage on the property through Henry Neylan and Maurice Burke. In 1944 she married Ernest Duminski and the two owned the property until 1951, an indicator of some of the Eastern European influence that occurred in the area after the Second World War. In January 1948, the Duminskis converted the house into two upstairs flats and a third downstairs flat was added in April 1950. 'Franklin Villa' remained a multiple dwelling for the next 45 years. In January 1951, George Raymond Goldsmith obtained the deed to 'Franklin Villa' and he held it until August 1976, when the property passed into the hands of Marie Elysia Dennis. Thereafter the property had numerous owners, reflecting the South Brisbane area's poor property values at that time. Mavis and Robert Graham Matheson became the owners of 'Franklin Villa' in May 1980 to be followed by Milgrave Pty Ltd in January 1986. In July 1986, subdivision 97 and resubdivision 2 of subdivision 60 were converted into a single allotment Lot 2. Phil Hasid Properties Pty Ltd obtained the title to Lot 2 in August 1989 and the current owner, Frederick Nicholas Proctor, took control of 'Franklin Villa' in August 1993.

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## Description

A very large, late nineteenth century, timber residence, this house is of two-storeys at the front, with a third floor below at the rear. It is an imposing Victorian residence situated on the ridge along Brighton Road, thereby allowing it expansive views. The original timber fretwork and iron filigree have been maintained or replaced, with the exception of the second storey where the verandah is partially enclosed and the decorative features removed. It has been within the last decade that the house has been partially restored to its former appearance, as all the verandah spaces were previously enclosed with chamfer boards and the decorative battening left to deteriorate.

The residence has a pyramid roof of corrugated iron, with two street facing gables and a small dormer roof vent between. Each gable has a decoratively shaped bargeboard with a finial and pendant and a diamond of battening providing further decoration. The gutter and fascia edge of the roof wraps around to enclose the ends of the bargeboards at the sides of the front elevation and between the two gables. These are decorated with acroterias at each corner and timber bracketing under. A decorative chimneystack rises from the right side of the main roof.

The verandah roof is a separate corrugate iron roof. The verandah wraps around the front and left side of the house but, as mentioned above, is no longer as it was originally built on the upper floor. Previously, the posts were moulded and corniced with decorative brackets. A skirt of moulded dowels runs along the lower edge of the verandah roof. The verandah balustrade consisted of cast iron filigree.

The lower level verandah remains similar to the original, with a solid paneling along the upper portion, which is decorated with a square patterning across the exterior surface. Decorative timber valances line the lower edge of the panelling. The posts are corniced and moulded with an iron filigree balustrade and lattice infill within the middle portion. A gable roof with a battened gable end expresses the lattice entry doors to the verandah. Pairs of moulded posts support the sides of the gable, with iron filigree and lattice work, as per the rest of the verandah, between them.

The side windows, which are not shaded by a verandah, have corrugated iron skillion sunhoods with iron filigree brackets. A picket fence with moulded posts formerly ran along the front alignment of the property. A new, tall fence with a metal gate now takes the former fence's place.

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## 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:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

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

as an 1890s investment property that was built for the top end of the rental market, demonstrating the pattern of the City and Highgate Hill's urban development in the late nineteenth century.

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## Representative

### CRITERION D

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

as a surviving example of the elegant homes that were built specifically for the rental market in the South Brisbane area in the late nineteenth century.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as an attractive, late Victorian timber house that makes a fine contribution to the streetscape.

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## 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 a home constructed for the Grenier family who were prominent members of the South Brisbane community, and as the former residence of Archibald Meston, Protector of Aborigines.

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## Supporting images



Photographer unknown,  
'Franklin Villa, a residence with distinctive decorations  
in Highgate Hill, Brisbane, ca.1928',  
John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

The two storey timber house was built between 1888 and 1892. (Description supplied with photograph.) The residence is at 35 Brighton Road Highgate Hill. It has a strong design feature, between the upper and lower levels, of intricate wooden and lattice paneling and other decorative balastrade on the front and side verandahs. The entrance portico also has sections of lattice with contrasting strips of painted wooden beading. The roof of the house is steeply pitched showing decorated gables onto the street. French windows on the upper level open out onto the front verandah. The house is placed fairly well forward on the house block and the street edge of the property has a picket fence and double gates leading to the front door. (Description provided with image)

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Property Notices
2. Brisbane City Council Water Supply & Sewerage Detail Plans
3. Brewer, F.J., & Dunn, R., *The Municipal History of South Brisbane*, (Brisbane: H. Pole & Co, 1925)
4. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.

5. Evans, Ray, Saunders, Kay & Cronin, Kathryn, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1993
  6. JOL Estate Map Collection and photographic collection
  7. Lawson, Ronald 1973, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
  8. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
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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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