



Heritage Citation



Holy Spirit Church

Key details

Addresses

At 16 Villiers Street, New Farm, Queensland 4005

Type of place	Church
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Academic Classical
Lot plan	L1_RP49751
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — November 2013
Construction	Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Daphne Mayo (Sculptor); John Patrick (Jack) Donoghue (Architect); William Bustard (Association)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

The Holy Spirit Church, completed in 1930, is one of most important Catholic churches designed in Queensland by prominent Brisbane architect J.P. Donoghue. The Renaissance style church, built in Benedict stone, features a 127-foot tower, and is an imposing local landmark and is the centrepiece of a Catholic Church precinct in New Farm. The church features a ceiling mural painted by renowned local artist William Bustard, who used local schoolchildren to model for his angels and cherubs figures. The church has a unique collection of Daphne Mayo sculptures emplaced along the interior wall for the Stations of the Cross.

History

Industrial development in New Farm commenced in the 1870s and this was followed during the economic boom of the 1880s by the development of numerous housing estates. By the early 1920s, New Farm was a fashionable, inner-city suburb that was well serviced by trams and a cross-river ferry (the Hawthorne Ferry established 1914) with the attractive New Farm Park (opened 1914) as its centrepiece. The completion of the New Farm Powerhouse, adjacent to the park, in 1928 not only brought electricity to the area but boosted local employment.

The local Catholic community had been worshipping at Fortitude Valley's St. Patrick's Church until 1923. That year, a private residence at 36 Villiers Street was purchased by Archbishop James Duhig off Mr. Burton, a solicitor, for use as a temporary church for the increasing New Farm congregation. Duhig has been appointed the Archbishop of Brisbane in 1917 and he had a plan to expand his congregation by constructing new churches and schools throughout Brisbane. Duhig had an *"absorbing interest in the acquisition of properties and in building. The physical structure of Brisbane, with its multitude of steep hills, allowed him to create a highly visible Church and offer the city an architectural gift of, and stimulus to, style."*¹

The back room of the Villiers Street house was used for the holding of Mass. It soon became overcrowded and uncomfortable during Mass services. This prompted a push to have a purpose-built church constructed in New Farm. In 1925, Duhig purchased the home 'Wynberg' at 790 Brunswick Street. Formerly the grand home of mining entrepreneur G.C. Willcocks, 'Wynberg' has remained the residence of Brisbane's Catholic archbishop. 'Wynberg' had large surrounding grounds and a portion of the grounds was set aside for the purposes of constructing a new church on a block that fronted Villiers Street. The next two years were spent raising funds for the church construction. The building commencement date was deliberately delayed until a sufficient amount was raised so as to ensure that the parish did not accrue a large debt due to interest repayments. The foundation stone of the Church of the Holy Spirit Church was laid on 5 June 1927.

Architect J.P. (Jack) Donoghue was awarded the tender to design the New Farm church. Donoghue was popular with the Catholic Church, as he had recently completed a new Catholic church at Chinchilla in 1925 and St. Ita's Presbytery at Dutton Park in 1926. Later, in 1940, he would be commissioned to build St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Kangaroo Point. His Renaissance-style design for the brick church, including a landmark 127-foot bell tower was revealed in *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland* on 16 June 1927. On 11 July 1927, *The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland* published the technical details of Donoghue's design, which gave the church "some new features", including the front entrance 'Mosaic panel symbolic of the Holy Spirit', with the tower and its copper spire and cross described as its "outstanding feature".² The original 1927 design roof of the tower had it to be built in a conical shape but it was completed three years later in a dome-shape.

Construction work commenced in June 1929. The interior Baptismal Font was made from Waterford limestone that was imported from Ireland. It featured columns of red and green marble that had been imported from Connemara and Cork. It was overlaid with a Celtic Gaelic pattern and the Font was fabricated in Ireland by Early & Co. The domical's ceiling mural was painted by William Bustard. He chose local children as the models for the 12 angels and 6 cherubs above the altar. Several of the children came from a nearby school's Grade One class and the children were individually picked by Bustard for their "beautiful, cherub innocence".³ Prominent Brisbane sculptor Daphne Mayo created the 14 'Stations of the Cross' placed on the walls. The stained glass windows were produced by the Ann Street firm of R.S. Exton & Co. The marble altar was constructed in Ipswich by Mr. Williams. The Brisbane firm of Concrete Constructions laid the Benedict Stone in the front façade. The initial cost of building work was estimated to total £16,241/8/5.

The Church of the Holy Spirit was blessed and opened on 1 June 1930. A large congregation, drawn from the local community, as well as builders' representatives, such as Mr. Lancaster from Exton & Co, attended the opening ceremony. A formal procession, including young people from the Children of Mary Sodality society and the St. Patrick's Branch of the Hiberian Society walked from 'Wynberg' along Brunswick and Villiers Streets and into the church grounds at 16 Villiers Street. The new church was consecrated via the blessing delivered by the Apostolic Delegate (the Papal Legate for Pius XI), the Most Reverend Dr B. Cattaneo. Archbishop Duhig addressed the large crowd that overflowed from the church and out into the church grounds. He praised the parish priest Father O'Keefe and the fund-raising efforts of his congregation, who had accumulated £9,300 in donations. Duhig commented that "such generosity as the people of the Valley and New Farm had shown was rarely seen".⁴ A further £2,500 in donations was raised during the opening ceremony.

The landmark bell tower was still unfinished by the opening ceremony. It was completed and the surrounding scaffolding removed in September 1930. Reinforcing New Farm's position as one of the central points of Brisbane's developing electricity grid, the decision was made to connect the light-up the tower's cross. The illuminated Sign of the Cross could be seen, at night, from various parts of Brisbane. After the tower was finished, it was found that the building had only cost a total of £14,862, with a further £3,179 spent on church

furnishings, such as varnished, wooden pews.

Prior to the tower's completion, The Architecture & Building Journal of Queensland appraised the new church. The journal stated:

“Suburban church construction in Brisbane marks a new era in style in parts size, and majesty and it is questionable whether anywhere in the Commonwealth there is quite that general tone in suburban edifices that is characteristic of either the new Toowong or New Farm churches.... Apart from the nature of the architecture there has been displayed that finish in the internal setting that provides an art tone and the furnishings and fittings are worthy examples of the best designs that make for striking effect and usefulness...The ceiling of the sanctuary ...has been decorated with a beautiful mural...The stations of the cross...can only be described as outstanding works of art.”⁵

Archbishop Duhig also praised the local workmanship that had gone into the church's design and construction. He was particularly proud of the contributions made by the Queenslanders Jack Donoghue, William Bustard and Daphne Mayo. Duhig was very pleased that the new church was a showpiece of Australian craftsmanship and that this had been displayed to the Papal visitor, Dr Cattaneo. In his address at the church opening, Duhig proclaimed:

“Whether you look at those exterior walls or go inside and inspect the building – particularly the fine ceiling put in by Mr. Martin and his artisans – you will, I think, be inclined to agree with an assertion repeatedly made by me that it in the matter of building Queensland tradesmen can hold their own against any men in the world.”⁶

The Church of the Holy Spirit became the lynchpin of Duhig's building plan for the New Farm parish. In 1937, the new, brick Holy Spirit School was completed on the grounds near the church. A presbytery adjacent to the church was added in 1957. Extensions to the school were carried out in 1959. The Holy Spirit Hall at the rear of the property was opened in 1966. A new convent for the Holy Spirit Sisters was constructed on the other side of the church in 1970. These buildings, placed around the Church of the Holy Spirit, together with the Archbishop's residence of 'Wynberg', form a unique Catholic Church precinct within New Farm.

The Church of the Holy Spirit was an early recipient of heritage protection, having been given heritage-listing by the Brisbane City Council under its old, 1987 Town Plan. The church was included as Stop No.13 in the first New Farm Heritage Trail that was produced by Council circa 1990. On 30 May 1995, the Holy Spirit Catholic Church was entered by the Commonwealth Government onto its Register of the National Estate (closed 2007) and it was given the National Estate I.D. No.17493. After Council's Town Plan was replaced with the City Plan 2000, the church was transferred to Council's new City Plan Heritage Register on 10 October 2010.

Description

This impressive red brick church, built in the Renaissance style, occupies a prominent position at the end of Hickey Street, terminating a vista from the main shopping centre of New Farm. Approached from Villiers Street via a flight of monumental steps, it shares a large site with school and convent buildings. The church, with its

prominent bell tower, is a local landmark. The building is very intact.

Exterior features

High parapet walls form the perimeter of the nave and hide its tiled gable roof from view. Smaller gables over the vestry, confessionals and entry porches have parapet walls to their gable ends. The open belfry of the tower is crowned by an octagonal room with windows to each wall and crowned with a bell shaped copper roof. The apse has a semi-conical roof clad in shingles.

The side walls of the nave have slightly recessed bays, each framed by a semi-circular arch. Most bays contain a large stained glass, round arched window. The confessionals and entry porches project from two bays on either side of the nave. Above them is a smaller window. The last bay to each wall has a blind arch, the vestry projects from one of these. Smaller rectangular and arched windows are located in these smaller rooms, in the tower and apse. All have metal frames, most are casements.

Brown brick ornamentation in the form of horizontal bands, arches, window heads and sills feature throughout the building. Ornamentation in Benedict stone is also employed on the front facade and tower. The impressive front wall of the nave features a tall indented entry porch framed by a large arch. To each side two engaged piers with decorative Benedict stone capitals rise to a large stone triangular pediment, which crowns the wall. Between each pier is a statue niche with coat of arms above. Extending horizontally from the base of the pediment, a wide Benedict stone band continues around each face of the tower including a large cornice and dentils. The tower, which rises to the left of the nave's front wall, is set back slightly. Several bands of stone decoration run around each wall face above and below the belfry, which has arched openings with engaged piers to each side.

Within the recessed entry porch of the building's front wall, a pair of timber panelled doors with leadlight fanlights sit below a round arched, Benedict stone pediment.

Interior features

The interior comprises of a large central nave with a confessional and entry porch to each side. To its rear, a semi-circular apse is flanked by a raised walkway accessing a vestry to one side. At the opposite end of the nave, the main central entry doors sit within an indented porch. To each side of the porch are two small rooms, one is a chapel. The square tower, located at the southern front corner of the nave, rises to an open belfry and spire. It also provides access to a choir gallery.

The rendered interior walls of the nave rise to a vaulted coffered ceiling. Engaged piers along each side wall are crowned with decorative capitals before rising beyond the walls forming coffered ceiling ribs. Arches span between each pier along the nave's side walls, framing each window. Set between columns, the confessionals have three leadlight doors each with a fanlight. The 'Stations of the Cross' are positioned along each side wall.

The domical ceiling of the apse, adorned with a mural painted by William Bustard, is framed by a large, decoratively coffered sanctuary arch. The apse is reached by several sets of steps. The interior of the building is made particularly striking due to the predominantly white and cream paintwork and contrasting dark stained timber doors and furniture. The building's timber floor is carpeted.

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 a prime example of Archbishop Duhig's plan to expand the Catholic Church's presence in Brisbane through the building of new suburban churches.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

Due to its landmark tower, its special William Bustard mural that utilises the faces of 1920s New Farm children, plus the unique Daphne Mayo 'Stations of the Cross' sculptures, as well as the imported Irish limestone and marble Baptismal Font.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As one of the best examples of architect J.P. Donoghue's church designs.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

As it was purpose-built to serve the New Farm community and then became the central point around which a precinct of Catholic buildings were subsequently constructed.

References

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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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