

## Heritage Citation



### Montessori Children's House

#### Key details

Also known as	Auchenflower Presbyterian Church
Addresses	At 19 Wienholt Street, Auchenflower, Queensland 4066
Type of place	Church, House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Classical
Lot plan	L1_RP189935
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — November 2000
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry - Stucco
People/associations	Presbyterian Church (Association)

This former church and church hall has been owned by the Montessori Children's House Limited since 2004. The brick building at the rear was constructed in the nineteenth century as the stables of 'Rathdonnell House', the home of Irish immigrant and educationalist Randall MacDonnell. In 1913, the stables were converted for use as a Presbyterian Church and from 1957, the building was used as a church hall. Since 1983, the building has been used as a Montessori school of education and survives as an unusual marker of the early settlement of Auchenflower during the nineteenth century.

The 1957 church at the front of the site, although having social significance as a place of worship, is not included in the heritage listing.

---

## History

The Montessori Children's House was built in the nineteenth century as the stables for 'Rathdonnell House'. It also served as the Auchenflower Presbyterian Church and church hall for seventy years.

'Rathdonnell House' was one of the early grand residences established on large estates at Auchenflower in the nineteenth century. It was constructed in brick on nine acres of elevated land for Randall MacDonnell, an Irish immigrant and senior public servant in the education system of Queensland. The design of the house has been attributed to Benjamin Backhouse, a prominent Brisbane architect.

A 1931 article published in the *Queenslander*, describes 'Rathdonnell House' in some detail and mentions the estate's outbuildings: "The V-shaped portion of the property facing Birdwood Terrace contained the orchard, and on it were situated the stables and coachhouse also". While the stables have been difficult to date precisely, it is likely that they were built in the nineteenth century, an assessment supported by an architectural inspection of the building.

In 1911, many years after the death of MacDonnell, the property was subdivided for sale as the Rathdonnell Estate. The population of the Auchenflower area included many Scottish immigrants and their families. After being lobbied by the local Presbyterian community, the Queensland Presbyterian Church purchased around 60 perches behind 'Rathdonnell House'. This land included the former stable building. Title records indicate that the land was not officially transferred to the Church until 1914.

The former stables were extended and modified by the Presbyterian Church to prepare the building for its new use. Church records report that partitions and a loft were removed, a vestry and porch added, pews installed and new coloured windows fitted. The renovations which cost £170 were supervised by Charles Patterson of Toowong, a prominent sawmill owner and the first Mayor of Toowong.

The Auchenflower Presbyterian Church was opened and dedicated by the State Moderator, the Right Rev. J. Scott McDonald on 13 March 1913. The Rev. John Robb, then a Home Missionary (senior theological student) of the central Brisbane St Andrew's parish was the first minister of the new church and the congregation until 1919. A Sunday school was also established at the time of the church's opening. A number of Home Missionaries and retired ministers were among those who ministered to the Auchenflower congregation in the decades which

followed.

Dr John Pearn, a published historian of Auchenflower and one-time member of the Presbyterian congregation described the church as “a meeting place of a hard-working community of Presbyterian families”, mentioning the following names: Allen, Ballinger, Bardon, Bell, Birch, Cobbin, Crosser, Dent, Dick, Dickson, Fraser, Jacobsen, Keefer, Martin, Montgomery, Patterson, Pearn, Siemon and Strachan. The first church building has retained the World War I and II honour boards of the church as well as the Torwood Methodist Church’s World War I honour board. These memorials pay tribute to those members of the congregation who served, died of wounds or illness or were killed in action. Some of the above names are included there. A member of the WAAF (Women’s Auxiliary Air Force) by the name of Scobie who served in World War II is also remembered.

In 1957, enough funds had been accumulated to allow the congregation to build a new church of modest design and proportions on the property, facing Wienholt Street. This building is not included in the present heritage curtilage. The old church in the former stables took on the new role of church hall. In 1977, as part of the larger amalgamation forming the Uniting Church, the Auchenflower Presbyterian Church merged with the Torwood Methodist Church to form the Auchenflower – Torwood Uniting Church within the Fernberg Parish. The Auchenflower Uniting Church closed in February 1999.

In 1983, the old stables of ‘Rathdonnell House’ assumed yet another function, that of housing a pre-school and kindergarten of the Montessori school of education. Founded by Dr Maria Montessori, a paediatrician, in Rome in 1907, the Montessori philosophy advocates a child-centred rather than curriculum-based education that encourages respect for others, self-motivation and self-learning. The first Montessori school was created in a home in Cadell Street, Toowong, in 1982. The Montessori Children’s House in Wienholt Street was established by Miss Cathy Hazzard and is a non-profit community managed by a parent committee.

Since 2004, the site has been owned by the Montessori Children’s House Limited. The former church building is currently used as a kindergarten.

---

## 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 the former stables of ‘Rathdonnell House’, it provides evidence of both the way of life of the wealthy classes of Brisbane and the settlement of Auchenflower in the nineteenth century.

---

## Representative

### CRITERION D

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

as an example of an early brick outbuilding

---

## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its simple form, attractive brickwork and rustic appearance.

---

## 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

for its strong association of some 70 years with the Presbyterian Church and with several generations of members of the congregation who have worshipped there.

---

## References

1. BCC building cards
2. Brisbane City Council Water Supply & Sewerage Detail Plans
3. Bede, Nairn, Geoffrey Searle & Russel Ward (section eds.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Vol. 5, 1851-1890. Carlton: MUP, 1974
4. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 Jan 1926
5. *Moreton Bay Courier* [?]. 13 July 1861, 23 June 1877
6. Department of Natural Resources. Queensland Certificates of Title and application no. 8903
7. Environmental Protection Agency, Entries on the Queensland Heritage Register, *Milton House*, 600253; *Old Bishopsbourne*, 600254

8. Helen Gregory (ed). Fewings, J.B. *Arcadian Simplicity* (Brisbane: Library Board of Qld. 1990)
  9. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
  10. Pearn, John. *Auchenflower: The Suburb and the Name*. Brisbane: Amphion Press, 1997
  11. Queensland Post Office Directories
  12. Presbyterian Archives, Fortitude Valley. Letters and reports by the Governor of the Auchenflower Church, Thos. D. Fraser dated 1/12/1911 and 25/3/1913
  13. *Queenslander*. 8 October 1931
  14. Registrar-General's Office. Consolidated Deaths Index. 1915-1919. Microfiche held at John Oxley Library
  15. *Sunday Sun*, 26 April 1992
  16. Margaret Thomason, letter dated 8 Nov 1986
  17. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
- 

## 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 June 2022)



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*