

## Heritage Citation



### Northgate East Progress Association Hall (former)

#### Key details

**Addresses** At 24 Paterson Parade, Northgate, Queensland 4013

**Type of place** Monument / memorial, Hall

**Period** Postwar 1945-1960

**Style** Queenslander

**Lot plan** L102\_RP34599; L101\_RP34599

**Key dates** Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2005  
Date of Citation — October 2008

**Construction** Roof: Corrugated iron;  
Walls: Timber

**People/associations** Northgate East Progress Association (Association)

**Criterion for listing** (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

This hall was built in 1957 for the Northgate East Progress Association. NEPA was a new type of progress association in that it was suburban rather than rural based. NEPA was instrumental in obtaining community infrastructure, such as a state school, for the new residents who moved to Northgate during the post-war population and housing boom.

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## History

Northgate was originally part of the Toombul district. The colony of Queensland held the initial sale of crown land at Toombul in 1863. The first rail track to pass through this part of Brisbane was the Sandgate line. The colonial governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy officially opened on 10 May 1882 it. In 1884, a railway platform and adjoining passenger shed, known as Toombul Station, was erected north of where the current Northgate Station is now located. Toombul Station was placed just to the south of where Toombul Road crossed the Sandgate line. On the hill overlooking the new railway, a new housing estate 'Toombul Ridge Junction Estate' offered 37 house allotments (16-perch blocks) for sale in 1885.

After the completion of the North Coast railway to Caboolture in 1888, rail traffic made heavy use of the single track that ran to Toombul station. A junction of the North Coast and Sandgate rail lines had been built just south of Toombul station and so the area around the station became known as Toombul Junction. To handle the increasing rail traffic, a second rail line was laid from the City to Nundah. By 1890, the double line of track had reached Toombul Junction. A signal cabin was erected at the point where the lines changed from double back to single track and the site was called Northgate Junction (derived from North Coast and Sandgate). A signalman Mr. Best was appointed to operate this signal box. A separate platform, to service the North Coast line, was built south of the new signal box. Passengers using the Sandgate line still had to use the earlier Toombul Station platform.

The new platform serviced the workers of the McKenzie & Holland factory that was erected next to the railway in 1890. This factory made brakes and signal equipment. It was located on what is now the Auscast factory site in Holland Street. A rail siding leading to the McKenzie & Holland factory was also built. Toombul Station was officially renamed Northgate Station on 4 December 1893. It had been suggested that the station be renamed Oodroo, an Aboriginal word for the ti-tree but McKenzie & Holland did not support this name change. The old Toombul (later Northgate) Station closed in 1900. A replacement station and platform were then built on Northgate Station's present site.

In 1912, due to further track being laid for the duplication of the North Coast line, a new platform and concrete station were erected; replacing the structures built only twelve years before. To allow passengers to access Ryans Road, Holland and Gympie Streets, wooden pedestrian staircases were erected at both ends of the platform. A stationmaster's house was built in Ridge Street around this time. This new Northgate Station opened on 12 October 1912.

Railway maintenance workshops were constructed at the corner of Toombul and Northgate (west) Roads, in 1914, on land now occupied by an Australia Post Mail Delivery Centre. The Northgate Railway Workshops produced metal station fittings, bridge girders, buffer stops, plumbing components, small parts and concrete for the Railways Department. So by World War I, Northgate had developed into two distinct parts. Northgate west of the railway was hilly and well developed with suburban streets and large houses that dotted the ridgeline. Northgate east of the railway was largely undeveloped with only a few scattered houses. The Holland & Mackenzie factory was the dominant structure in this area that was also prone to annual flooding from the large tidal, freshwater lagoon that flowed through the area and crossed both Northgate (east) Road (later Earnshaw Rd) and Nudgee Road. Both factors had probably discouraged the expansion of housing in Northgate East.

Northgate East's first housing estate was offered for sale in the final year of World War I. David Gibbons saw an opportunity to redevelop the (approx) 12 acres of grazing land that he had purchased from Nudgee fruit farmer Herman Blinzinger into a post-war housing estate. Surveyor T.H. Jensen had already drawn up a 16-perch block subdivision plan for Gibbins on 12 March 1918. Gibbins sold off the first block of his 'Station Estate' on the very day (24 June 1918) that he finalised the purchase of Blinzinger's land. 'Station Estate' laid-out the first streets in Northgate East – Noble Avenue, Bellare Avenue, Frederick Street, Station Avenue and an unnamed (later Kismet) street.

The largely undeveloped land in Northgate East, with its few scattered dwellings plus the McKenzie & Holland factory (the building seen in the photograph's center) and Northgate Station can be seen in the foreground of the photograph below, taken in 1916.

"The majority of people who have travelled by rail to Sandgate have acquired an erroneous impression of Northgate by allowing that portion which is visible from the railway line to be accepted as typical of the suburb generally. Viewed from the railway, there is certainly little to inspire admiration. The expanse of iron works and foundry yards immediately adjoining the junction give an impression of a purely industrial centre, while the majority of the homes with one or two exceptions, which are close to the station, are relics of the past with no architectural beauties to give pleasure to the passing traveller."<sup>1</sup>

Housing development was sporadic and slowed considerably during the Great Depression (1929-39). The Northgate East lagoon continued to flood during heavy rains. The flooding was only alleviated when the United States Army dug a drainage system for its Banyo Stores Depot that it built along both sides of Earnshaw Road in 1943. The United States Navy built 13 warehouses along Toombul, Melton and Fraser Roads that same year. In 1946, there were about 70 houses in the main part of Northgate East (east of Toombul Rd) serviced by two corner shops. Most of the roads were undeveloped tracks, with only (Blinzinger Road (later Crockford St), Acacia, Station, Larwill, Parker and Mann Avenues plus Westhoff Street, Tyler, Coulter, Elson and Toombul Roads formed. Most of the houses were close to Toombul Road and as far from the lagoon's flood plain as possible.

After World War II, with the housing boom, the vacant blocks in Northgate began to fill with new homes and new residents. As well, employment opportunities improved. In 1946, a Queensland fruit growers co-operative began construction of the Golden Circle cannery on ex-US Army land on Earnshaw Road, Northgate. Golden Circle soon became the largest single employer in the area. The Australian Army occupied most of the Banyo Stores Depot site while the former US Navy warehouses were leased to a variety of business including GMH Holden and Athol Hedges car body maker. In 1952, the US company Kraft converted one of these warehouses into a processed cheese factory, while Wunderlich opened a tile factory in the suburb.

The increasing post-war population saw the formation of a Northgate East Progress Association (NEPA) in 1948. The undeveloped land running down to the lagoon from Paterson Parade that was a flood plain was designated by the Brisbane City Council as a community site and named Northgate East Progress Association Reserve. Later it became a park. During the 1950s, this community area held eight concrete basketball courts, for the use of the North's Basketball Club and for Brisbane clubs' competition games. There are now only two basketball courts at Progress Park.

Progress associations were a regular feature of community life in the outer, mainly rural suburbs/districts of Brisbane, particularly in the interwar period (1919-39). The progress associations lobbied and fund-raised to obtain better facilities for their communities, particularly better local roads, electricity connections and travelling entertainment. The rural progress associations promoted their areas by being regular exhibitors of their district's produce at Brisbane's annual Royal Exhibition (The Ekka). Only one rural progress association hall remains in Brisbane, at Runcorn. After World War II, a new type of progress association developed. Formed by local residents, many of who had recently moved into the area, these were urban rather than rural progress associations. Their aim was not so much to promote the district but rather to lobby for those facilities that would encourage other young families to build their homes in the Brisbane's developing immediate-post-war suburbs. Northgate, Aspley, Banyo, Lower Nudgee, North Virginia, Wavell Heights and Mt. Gravatt are examples. Some older suburbs, such as Nundah, Stones Corner and Kangaroo Point also established post-war urban progress associations. These progress associations produced a regular newsletter "*Progress News*" that contained local community information and therefore was the forerunner of the Quest Community newspapers.

A particular focus of these urban progress associations was children's facilities such as schools, kindergartens and parks. In Northgate, Catholic Archbishop James Duhig laid the foundation stone for the area's first school – St John's (at the corner of Nudgee and Fraser Roads) on 8 April 1951. But NEPA's longest running campaign and major achievement was to have a state school established at Northgate. This engaged NEPA in a frustrating ten-year campaign (1949-59). In 1949, Northgate state schoolchildren would either attend Nundah, Nudgee or Virginia schools. But the growing population in Northgate was causing overcrowding in these three schools. On 26 April 1949, NEPA, local state member Frank Roberts, the local ALP branch and some local parents wrote to the Director-General of Education (Qld) to apply to have a school established for Northgate East.

NEPA had suggested a school site along Nudgee Road, north of the Toombul Road intersection but the state government rejected it as the area was subject to flooding from the lagoon. A visit to the area by Mr. G. Chadwick, the Inspector of Schools, in September 1949, saw a recommendation that the project be put on hold. In 1951, NEPA surveyed residents about another school site and the existing site then a Council-run horse and cattle pound built on top of an old council dump was selected. NEPA president, Mr. Amalric, wrote to the state government in August:

"If you do decide against this site, we should like to know what provisions you intend making for the children of this district, when lack of planning has deprived of convenient facilities – an oversight for

which, we feel, your Department must bear some of the blame.”<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, the state government rejected NEPA's suggested school site. NEPA was offended by the Education Department's reply and were dissatisfied “with the brusque treatment their correspondence was receiving and the seeming neglect for the increasing number of school age children in the area.”<sup>3</sup> In March 1952, NEPA organised a public meeting of residents at St Peter's Church Hall on Toombul Road. This meeting elected a school building committee and proposed a five-acre site near the NEPA Reserve for a school to be named the Northgate East State School. The Education Department again rejected the site and for the next five years NEPA and the Education Department engaged in a paper war over the issue.

In 1957, NEPA built its small community hall on the NEPA Reserve off Paterson Parade. Prior to the construction of the NEPA Hall, meetings were held at St. Peter's Church Hall (demolished c2001 for a motel expansion). Two memorial seats that are located outside of the Hall, but are for public usage, continue as reminders of NEPA's presence. Mildred Nottingham and Vera Langan donated one seat in honour of their mother Honor Huges who died on 6 September 1956. Vera Langan was a NEPA committee member in 1956-57. The other seat honours the memory of Stanley James Richardson who also died on 6 December 1956. Richardson's wife Ada and his daughter Nancy Richardson donated it to the park. Ada Richardson was the head of the NEPA Ladies Committee in 1956-57. Both seats were possibly placed in the park in 1957 soon after the new NEPA Hall was built.

1957 was described as “the most outstanding year in the history of the Northgate East Progress Association.”<sup>4</sup> In that year, NEPA established a Community Children's Centre and Children's Library, held numerous successful fundraisers, opened its hall and finally had some success in getting a school for the suburb. In May 1957, the Education Department finally agreed that the overcrowding at Nundah School warranted a school for Northgate and it accepted NEPA's 1951 suggestion of the Council horse and cattle pound site in Amelia Street. In 1958, Council transferred ownership of this site to the state government, with the education department proposing that the school be named Northgate School. Northgate School opened on 27 January 1959 with 292 pupils and seven teachers for grades 1 to 8.

After the 1974 Australia Day flood, Brisbane City Council's on-going flood mitigation work resulted in the tidal lagoon that ran beside the park being overrun by saltwater mangroves. The saltwater destroyed the trees that had once lined the edge of the lagoon when it had been full of fresh water. In 1991, NEPA ceased though the NEPA Hall continued to be used by community groups, particularly the Northgate East Neighbourhood Watch. The local Neighbourhood Watch is based at the building that they advertised as the 'Community Hall'. On 14 December 1993, Community Services Minister Anne Warner opened a sculpture garden, funded as a state government Access Arts Community Project, in NEPA Park. Unfortunately the sculpture garden was attacked by vandals soon after opening and suffered severe damage. On 1 March 1999, NEPA Park was renamed Progress Park.

In November 1999, Council released its Nundah District Local Plan that included in its coverage Northgate East. The NEPA Hall was specifically mentioned in the Nundah District Local Plan document, as requiring “some renovation” with Council acknowledged as the owner of the site.<sup>5</sup> In 2000, Progress Park with the NEPA Hall (former) were recognised as having heritage significance in the book Banyo Nudgee Heritage Trail that was edited by the local councillor Kim Flesser and produced by the Bangee (Banyo-Nudgee) Festival Committee. Meeting Item Number 3 of the Top Ten Issues of the Nundah District Area Plan to “explore ways to celebrate the history and heritage of the area”, Council entered the NEPA Hall on its City Plan Heritage Register on 1 July 2005.<sup>6</sup>

The site of the NEPA Hall and Progress Park are still listed as the NEPA Recreation Reserve by the Brisbane

City Council, which is the owner of the property. In October 2008, it was reported in the local press that the Hall was under threat of demolition due to termite damage. It is uncertain how many post-war progress association halls were built in Brisbane in the late 1940s and 1950s but nearly all of them (such as the one known to have been built at Wavell Heights) have been demolished. The Mt. Gravatt Progress Association Hall still exists but it is a World War II Australian Army barracks building that was relocated to its current Logan Road site sometime after 1945. The NEPA Hall (former) is the only remaining purpose-built, in-situ urban progress association building in Brisbane.

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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 a community hall, built after World War II to accommodate one of Brisbane's new suburban progress associations.

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#### Rarity

##### CRITERION B

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

as the only purpose-built post-war progress association hall left in Brisbane.

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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 the only example of a 1950's Brisbane progress association hall.

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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 hall built for the Northgate East Progress Association, who were instrumental in obtaining important community infrastructure for Northgate.

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## References

1. *Architects and Builders Journal of Queensland*, 7 May 1924
2. Unknown (editor), *Northgate State School Silver Jubilee 26 May 1984*, (Northgate: Northgate state School, 1984), pp. 2-3
3. *Ibid.* p.3.
4. "Progress News" 26 July 1957 (193 Adelaide St, Brisbane: L.E. Slaughter, 1957)
5. Brisbane City Council, *Nundah District Local Plan – Background and Issues Paper*, (Brisbane: Brisbane City Council, 1999). p. 50
6. Brisbane City Council, *Nundah District Local Plan –Directions Paper*, (Brisbane: Brisbane City Council, 1999). p. 3
7. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, post-1946 building approval cards
8. Brisbane City Council, 1946, 2001 & 2005 aerial photographs
9. Brisbane City Council, *Nundah District Local Plan*, (Brisbane: Brisbane City Council, November 1999)
10. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website
11. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets
12. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
13. Bangee Festival, *Banyo Nudgee Heritage Trail*, (Brisbane: Bangee, 2000)
14. Ford, Dr. Jack, *A History of Northgate Railway Station*, (Northgate: Ford, August 2004)
15. Ford, Dr. Jack, *A History of 'Brook' - 7 Station Avenue, Northgate*, (Northgate: Ford, December 2004)
16. "Hall facing uncertain future" in *Northside Chronicle*, 15 October 2008
17. Heritage Unit (BCC), *Notes on site visit to NEPA Hall (former)*, 16 May 2002
18. John Oxley Library, Brisbane Estate Maps collection
19. John Oxley Library, Brisbane Suburbs – photographic collection
20. *Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter Vol 5, Issue 5* (Northgate: Northgate East Neighbourhood Watch, May 2007)

21. "Progress News" 26 July 1957 (193 Adelaide St, Brisbane: L.E. Slaughter, 1957)
  22. Unknown (editor), *Northgate State School Silver Jubilee 26 May 1984*, (Northgate: Northgate State School, 1984)
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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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