

Heritage Citation

Selwyn

Key details

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| Also known as | The Manse |
| Addresses | At 40 Dorchester Street, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101 |
| Type of place | House |
| Period | Victorian 1860-1890 |
| Lot plan | L21_RP127282 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — June 2015 |
| Construction | Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Brick - Painted |
| Criterion for listing | (A) Historical; (B) Rarity |

This house was constructed by 1881 and was used as a manse for the Congregational Church in South Brisbane. The manse became the residence of the church's ministers, and was occasionally used to host social events. The manse remained in use by the church until 1964 when it served for a brief time as a community centre before being sold into private hands. The Manse remains in use as a private residence to this day.

History

The Congregational Church came to Queensland in the 1850s, with the establishment of churches at Ipswich and Brisbane. A South Brisbane parish was established relatively early, with a growing population and a popular minister ready to serve in the area. The first meeting of the South Brisbane church was held at the Mechanics Institute in Stanley Street on 9 July 1865. Its first permanent place of worship was established in Grey Street,

with the inaugural service held on 13 January 1867.

South Brisbane was quickly growing into a popular residential suburb, and the South Brisbane Congregational Church attracted some of Brisbane's prominent citizens, including banker Sir Alfred Charles Davidson and land agent Simon Fraser. The congregation reached out into the community, holding annual tea services and a series of public lectures. Ministers attended the opening of other denominational churches in the area to pledge a will to work together. The 'rapidly increasing' population in the area overfilled the church, leading to the opening of a branch parish in Brighton Road in 1879.

The need for a manse or parsonage for the Grey Street church was recognised with the arrival of South Brisbane's third minister, the Rev Thomas J Pepper. Pepper and his family arrived from Newcastle in April 1878 to take charge of the church, but lacked a residence. The cost of opening the Brighton Road Church had diminished the parish's finances, so the congregation began fundraising, holding bazaars and hosting an excursion to Stradbroke Island to pay for the construction of a new manse.

The site chosen for the manse was one owned by congregation member Thomas William Connah. Connah, an accountant, worked as a clerk in the Colonial Treasurer's Department and was active in community affairs in South Brisbane. In September 1868, two years after his arrival in Queensland, Connah had purchased a substantial block of land which overlooked the river at South Brisbane. The site was near his sister's home 'Cumboquepa', where he had resided after his arrival in the colony. The block originally measured one rood and nine perches and extended from Dorchester Street through to Vulture Street. Connah appears to have built a house facing Vulture Street on this land soon after he gained title. He purchased an adjacent block, fronting Vulture and Dorchester streets, in 1872.

In the early 1880s, when Connah was still living in Vulture Street, half the land – that facing Dorchester Street – was used by the Congregational Church. Whether the church built the manse or converted a building already on the site is unclear. No architect has been identified as having designed the building, either as a house for Connah or manse for the church. It appears to have been at least partially standing by 1880, when the 'new Congregational Manse' was used as a reference point in sales notices for Water Street West. In April 1881, Pepper thanked the parish for 'erecting so handsome, and so commodious, and convenient a parsonage', though work on the manse was evidently ongoing until July 1882. The cost of the land and building was reported as £959, but title did not pass to the church until 1890.

Though removed from the church in Grey Street, the site of the manse had several advantages. Dorchester Street, at that time called Water Street West, was home to many of South Brisbane's prominent citizens. The street's high elevation provided good drainage, cooling breezes and views overlooking the river, appealing to wealthy Brisbane residents. Occupants included Albert Pietzcker, Danish Consul for Queensland; civil engineer William Highfield; merchant and politician Richard Ash Kingsford; and John Stephens, younger brother of TB Stephens and brother-in-law of Thomas Connah. Stephens' house 'The Grange' is still standing (QHR 600224). The street was also home to members of the South Brisbane Congregational Church, including the Hiley family, whose descendants wrote a history of the church.

The Congregational Church continued to grow in the 1880s, with additional branches opened in Mount Gravatt and Woolloongabba. Some members of the South Brisbane parish transferred to the Woolloongabba church, but the appeal of South Brisbane, which was one of Brisbane's most elite suburbs by 1890, ensured that there was no shortage of church members. Pepper remained Minister to the church until he resigned in January 1888 due to ill health, and was replaced by the Rev William Day. Day's appointment was noted in local newspapers, which added that the South Brisbane Congregational church paid one of the largest stipends of any church in

Queensland to its ministers, as well as providing the 'commodious and pleasantly situated parsonage worth £100 per annum' (Telegraph, Friday 15 March 1889 p2)

In October 1890 Connah sold his Vulture and Dorchester Street properties to the Queensland Congregational Union for £2,000. Connah, who had since transferred to Coorparoo, contributed to the church's finances by reducing the sales price from £2,250. The church planned to build a substantial building of brick or stone on the Vulture Street frontage. However, financial difficulties appear to have restrained the church. In 1893 the property was mortgaged twice, for a total sum of £1,100, in order to fund the construction of a new timber church on Vulture Street in front of the manse, after the old one in Grey Street was submerged to the roof in the disastrous flood of 1893. The manse, situated on higher ground than the Grey Street church, was spared from damage.

In the twentieth century the manse became home to a number of distinguished ministers who were attached to the influential South Brisbane Congregational Church. Ministers and their wives hosted numerous weddings, baptisms and social events at the manse. The manse was reconditioned in 1957. In 1964 a new manse was built at Morningside and discussions were held regarding the best use for the Dorchester Street building. It was agreed that the building would be converted into a centre to serve the community, especially its youth. The centre included a coffee lounge, reading and study room, a counselling room and a caretaker's flat.

The community centre was short lived however, and in 1967 the residence was sold to private owners and renamed 'Selwyn'. Alterations were made in the 1980s, including the addition of a swimming pool and carport. At 2015 it is still a private residence.

Description

The residence is currently an L shape in plan form, but the return on the L is probably a recent addition. The carport in the inside of the L is a relatively sympathetic addition in approximately the original position of the kitchen.

The body of the house is orientated towards the river and is enclosed by a verandah on three sides. The main roof has hipped ends, and is penetrated by chimneys towards each end of the ridge. The addition extends from the right hand side of the original house towards the street, with a slightly lower ridge height. The verandahs have curved roofs, hipped at the corners, supported on timber posts. The timber verandah railing has a balustrade of timber dowels, and cross pieces. A most striking feature of the main roofs is the ornate timber barge boards and the articulated exposed rafter ends.

The roofing material is corrugated iron and the wall material is predominantly brick. The house is on stone foundations at the rear where the house meets the grounds, but the elevated section of verandah overlooking the river is on stumps.

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 church building built by 1881 in response to the expansion of the Congregational Church in South Brisbane at a time when the area was experiencing a residential building boom and marked population growth.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as a good example of a Victorian era brick church residence in South Brisbane.

References

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6. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
7. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Entry on the Queensland Heritage Register, Coorooman/The Grange [600224]
8. Hiley, W., *A Century of Witness, 1865-1965: The Story of the First Hundred Years of the Life of South Brisbane Congregational Church*, 1965
9. Interview with Rev. John Wheeler of the Bardon Congregational Church, 1991

10. McKellar's Map, 1895
 11. Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, City of South Brisbane, Detail Plan, 1924
 12. Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory, 1880-1889
 13. Queensland Places: South Brisbane (website)
 14. Queensland Post Office Directories, 1868-1940
 15. National Library of Australia, *Trove website*, *The Brisbane Courier*, *The Queenslander*, *The Courier Mail*, *The Telegraph*
 16. Watson, Donald & Judith McKay 1994, *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
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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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