

Heritage Citation



St Francis Presbytery

Key details

Also known as	St. Francis of Assisi Church Presbytery
Addresses	At 59 Dornoch Terrace, West End, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Residence (singular)
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Bungalow
Lot plan	L1_RP11285; L3_RP46006
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — July 2013

Construction Roof: Terracotta tile;
Walls: Timber

People/associations Father E.J. Keating (Occupant);
Hall and Prentice (Architect)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

This 1928 timber presbytery was designed by Hall and Prentice and is reminiscent of the domestic architecture of the Federation period. It is part of a religious precinct that came from the plan of the prominent Brisbane Archbishop James Duhig to expand the influence of the Catholic Church throughout Queensland after World War One. This religious precinct was the focal point for the Catholic Church's religious, social and educational activities in West End/Highgate Hill from the early 1920s onwards. The presbytery is situated on Dornoch Terrace and includes the adjacent St. Francis Church (1923), St. Francis School (1928) and the Sisters of Mercy's St. Francis Convent (1928). The entire precinct is fronted by a brick fence that acts as a unifying marker for the four separate buildings within the precinct.

History

In 1919, James Duhig was appointed the Archbishop of the Diocese of Brisbane by the Catholic Church. Known as 'James the Builder', he oversaw a massive expansion program for the Catholic Church in Queensland during the 1920s. By 1930, Duhig had established 21 new parishes, 28 new schools and 100 new churches, just within Brisbane.

As part of this building program, a new Catholic Church building and school were proposed for West End. The church was completed in 1923, but was built across the road from its present site at 47 Dornoch Terrace. It was soon discovered that the original site was not large enough for both the new church and the proposed school.

In 1926, the Catholic Church took the opportunity to acquire a large block (8 acres) of land, located just across the road from the new St. Francis Church that belonged to the O'Reilly family who were Scottish Presbyterians. Duhig liked to select sites that were at the centre of a suburb, preferably on high ground. O' Reilly's Paddock along ridgeline of Dornoch Terrace fitted Duhig's strategy perfectly. So St Francis Church was moved across the road to its current location.

In February 1927, Duhig separated West End and Highgate Hill from St. Mary's Parish of South Brisbane to create the new West End Parish. The first parish priest was Father E.J. Keating who, aged 29, arrived in West End in February 1927. Keating had begun his training for the priesthood in New South Wales in 1914 and he was ordained a priest by Queensland's Catholic Archbishop Duhig on 8 December 1920. Before his appointment to the West End Parish, Keating had served at Warwick, Kedron, Red Hill and Fortitude Valley.

Upon his arrival, Keating found that his new parish had poor facilities. Keating recalled that in 1927, he had found "...a small church, a ramshackle building where the convent now stood, a 40 year old fence along the front, a cow hall and a large number of gum trees".²

The building of the proposed school was finally commenced in 1927. It was designed by the Brisbane architectural firm of Hall and Prentice. St Francis of Assisi School was blessed and opened by Archbishop Duhig on 22 January 1928. On that same day, the Foundation Stone for a new presbytery building was laid by Archbishop Duhig.

In May 1928, the building of the new presbytery and the extensions to five-year old St Francis Church were completed. The local parishioners had saved for 12 months for the presbytery and school extension works, raising £2200 towards the building fund. The total cost was £1979/2/- for the construction of the presbytery and £668/2/- for the additions to the church. Due to the financial contributions made by the local residents, the parish was in the unusual position of being free of debt when the buildings were completed. Father Keating described this achievement as "a wonderful reflection on the generosity and courage of the people".³ A brick fence that fronted the Presbytery and the adjoining Catholic Church buildings was completed by 1934.

The first occupant of the St Francis Presbytery was Father Keating. He remained the West End parish priest for the next 50 years and as a result was the only priest ever appointed to that parish. In 1955, he was elevated to the priestly rank of Domestic Prelate (now Prelate of Honor) and acquired the title 'Monsignor'. By 1977, he had become the longest-serving parish priest in the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

The St Francis of Assisi School closed in 1974. Due to the shortage of priests caused by a decline in seminarian enrolments, the West End Parish began sharing a priest with the Dutton Park Parish in 1986. The West End Parish was subsumed by the Dutton Park Parish in 1988. The Convent closed in 2002.

Description

The building is a timber bungalow with a tiled roof and is reminiscent of the domestic architecture of the Federation period. It has a prominent presence in the local streetscape, and is complemented by the face brick and rendered coping fence with wrought iron gates, which extend along the frontages of the adjoining Convent, Church and School. The interior is mostly intact and comprises some original architectural details such as a folding timber bi-fold door and decorative screen to the hallway and built-in joinery.

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 evidence of the vibrant 1920s Catholic Church's construction period initiated by Brisbane Archbishop James Duhig.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its elegant proportions, harmonious use of materials and original internal detailing.

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 the Catholic Presbytery for the parish of St Francis at West End occupied for over 50 years by Brisbane's longest serving parish priest, Father E.J. Keating.

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 an example of the work of prominent Brisbane architectural firm, Hall and Prentice.

References

1. "A Progressive Parish – Tenth Anniversary of St. Francis's West End" *The Catholic Leader Brisbane*, 18

November 1937, p.15.

2. *The Age*, 26 May 1928
3. *Architecture and Building Journal of QLD*, 7 April 1923
4. Brisbane City Council Water, Sewerage Plan No.623, 1934
5. Brisbane City Archives. Register of New Buildings, 1928
6. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
7. 'Golden Jubilee at West End', *The Leader*, 13 March 1977
8. JOL Estate Map Collection and photographic collection
9. Lawson, Ronald 1973, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
10. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
11. 'Progress and Development of the Church in the Archdiocese', *Catholic Leader*, Jubilee Supplement, 10 November 1955
12. *The Age*, 28 January 1928
13. Tremble, Carmel, *Catholic Brisbane – a profile of the Archdiocese of Brisbane 1859-1989*, (Brisbane: Catholic Education Office, 1989)

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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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