

Heritage Citation



Sweatman Residence

Key details

Addresses	At 56 Rogers Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Gothic
Lot plan	L1_GTP1524
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — September 2012
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	James Graham (Builder)

This house was built as a 'workers cottage' in about 1875 by carpenter and cabinetmaker James Graham. He built two houses on his land. One was to be the home for him and his wife Mary, while the house at next door at 56 Rogers Street was to be utilised as a rental property. The first leaseholder was bricklayer Henry Sweatman. While the Graham's home at 48 Rogers Street has been demolished, this house remained. As a rental property, its tenants reflect the changing demographics of Spring Hill.

History (previous revision)

Spring Hill, and nearby Petrie Terrace, are Brisbane's earliest suburbs. The first town land sales in Brisbane were held by auction there in November 1856. The allotments put up for sale comprised one acre or more of hilly bushland. By 1859 when the first municipal elections were held, Spring Hill had largely been cleared, though town water was still being drawn by cart from the adjacent Spring Hollow. This ceased in 1863 with the water supply coming from Enoggera Reservoir at the head of Enoggera Creek. Development remained sporadic across Spring Hill during 1860s and 1870s. But by the early 1880s, Spring Hill became a fashionable suburb with its churches and many schools plus a concentration of medical professionals consulting from their Wickham Terrace homes.

This property was originally part of a larger block of 2 acres and 3 perches that was first sold to James Donovan on 27 December 1858. Donovan, of Brisbane, paid £23.6.11 for a triangular block designated Suburban Portion 237 that was surrounded on all sides by three government roads that would later be named Rogers, Water and Victoria Streets. This land had a narrow, restricted frontage suitable for small homes or cottages so Donovan subdivided the block for sale.

On 11 February 1864, James Howden, of Brisbane, bought subdivision 4, being 23 perches. He used the land for investment purposes, obtaining three mortgages over three years. He was lent £250 in 1864 and £200 followed by a further £200 in 1866. Howden may have overextended his finances, as a caveat was placed on the property in November 1867 and the property subsequently sold. Margaret Mary Fogarty, the wife of Matthew Buscall Fogarty became the new owner on 29 January 1868. Before the end of the year, the land had changed hands again.

On 11 November 1868, carpenter and cabinetmaker James Graham, of Brisbane, took title to the property. What he had was a 23 perch block that was triangular in shape and fronting two roads, Rogers and Victoria Street. Graham decided to build two homes on his land, with one being a home for he and his wife Mary, while the other house would be a rental property. The two houses had been completed, most probably by James Graham, by 1875. They were the last houses to be built in this small street block that could only contain five houses.

Graham chose to live in the (initially) smaller house that was built at the corner of Rogers and Victoria Streets. This became 1/56 Rogers Street. The second, larger house was built beside it and was designated 2/56 Rogers Street. A narrow easement strip separated the two houses.

The rental house was built in the "workers cottage" style with a front verandah facing a narrow street frontage. The property had two attractions for potential lessees. It was built across the road from the Leichhardt Street State School (now Brisbane Central School) that opened in 1875, plus it was a short walk uphill to the Leichhardt Street tram line. The attic first person to rent this house was bricklayer Henry Sweatman. Sweatman is representative of the semi-skilled workers and labourers who took up residence in the workers cottage that filled the narrow streets in the hollows of Spring Hill. In 1885, the lease was taken up by grocer Richard Kirkwood and

the next year by carpenter John Bond. He was followed by Joseph Phillips in 1888. By this time James Graham's adjoining properties were identified by separate street numbers. This house was No.17 Rogers Street, while the Graham home was Number 15. James Graham transferred ownership to his wife Mary on 21 March 1890.

Mary Graham died on 5 January 1902. The property was transmitted to Margaret Denbigh, the wife of Robert M. Denbigh and Catherine Hird, the wife of Joseph T. Hird. The Hirds lived in Providence, Rhode Island in the United States. They disposed of the property within a month. Spinster Catherine King Hamilton gained ownership on 29 December 1902. By World War I, Spring Hill had declined into an inner-city working class area, criss-crossed by narrow streets and cheap, small rental houses. The house at 56 Rogers Street remained a rental property. When Hamilton died on 16 March 1937, her estate went to Catherine Mary Birnie of Spring Hill. Catherine died on 11 February 1961, and 56 Rogers Street was passed to her widower Charles McWilliam Birnie. He died on 5 February 1980. Both Hamilton and the Birnies owned this rental property at a time when Spring Hill was seen as run-down, neglected and crime-ridden, inner-city suburb.

During the 1980s, Spring Hill began to revive, as new residents moved in and restored and modified the old, nineteenth century houses. While the 115 year old house was still in good condition in 1990, the owner sought to follow the existing trend and renovate the house. By 1993, two dormer windows had been added to the roof to create a new room in the attic and a reproduction brick chimney was added to the southside wall of the house.

In 1993, the house at 56 Rogers Street was a featured stop in the *Spring Hill Heritage Tour – St. Paul's to Gregory Terrace* that was produced by the Brisbane History Group. The University of Queensland-based, Brisbane History Group noted that No.56 Rogers Street "is another good example of the wide gabled and finialed type of attic house built prior to the 1880s."¹ The B.H.G. also detailed the demolition of the Graham Home (now 48 Rogers Street) in 1988 and its replacement with a smaller cottage. Thus 56 Rogers Street is the only surviving house built by James Graham in c1875.

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 an early rental cottage built prior to Spring Hill's development boom of the 1880s-90s.

Scientific

CRITERION C

The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the city's or local area's history

having been designed and constructed as a rental by an 1860s owner/builder and accommodating a constant turnover of tenants for over 135 years.

References

1. Brisbane History Group, *Spring Hill Heritage Tour: St Pauls to Gregory Terrace*, Brisbane: BHG, 1993
 2. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website
 3. Brisbane City Council, 1946 & 2009 aerial photographs
 4. Brisbane City Council, 1990 Spring Hill Character Survey, Item No.59 - colour photograph of 56 Rogers Street, October 1990
 5. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, post-1946 building approval cards
 6. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Plan, 31 October 1914
 7. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
 8. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949
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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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