

Heritage



Duddingston (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 591 Lower Bowen Terrace, New Farm, Queensland 4005
Type of place	Villa
Period	Federation 1890-1914, Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Queen Anne
Lot plan	L1_RP8804
Key dates	Date of Citation — June 2025
Criterion for listing	(E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

A visually prominent Federation era villa designed by Brisbane based architects Eaton and Bates, the house is formerly known as *Duddingston* was constructed in 1905 for John Neil Clark McCallum. McCallum contributed to Brisbane's early 20th Century theatre scene, primarily through his management (from 1911) and ownership of the Cremorne Theatre in South Brisbane from 1916 until it burnt down in 1954. *Duddingston*'s contribution to the streetscape was subsequently enhanced by expressive additions made in the Queen Anne style to a design by

noted Brisbane architect T.B.M. Wightman that included two octagonal rotundas on the front corners of the house.

History

A history of New Farm

New Farm, an inner suburb located approximately two kilometres from central Brisbane, is one of the City's oldest suburbs. New Farm traces its history back to Australia's convict era when the peninsula became the location for a convict farm.

An early settler on the peninsula was Richard Jones, who, in 1850, was elected a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council as representative for the counties of Gloucester, Macquarie and Stanley. Brisbane was located in the county of Stanley. In 1851, Jones became the member for Stanley Boroughs after his previous electorate was split into three. Jones' original electorate became the districts of Gloucester and Macquarie, Stanley and Stanley Boroughs. Jones purchased 93 acres of land by the Brisbane River, on which he built a house in 1847. This land included the former convict farm that had become known as 'New Farm,' after which the suburb is named. Sir Samuel Griffith, Premier of Queensland (1890-1893) and the first Chief Justice of Australia (1903-1919), subsequently purchased 'New Farm' and built a home there known as *Merthyr*. *Merthyr* was named after Griffith's birthplace of Merthyr Tydfil, in Wales. The former suburb of Merthyr on the southern end of the New Farm peninsula was named after Griffith's home. Merthyr now forms part of New Farm.

By the 1880s, with the passage of the Divisional Boards Act in 1879, the southern and eastern portion of the New Farm peninsula formed part of Booroodabin Divisional Board while the rest of the peninsula formed part of Brisbane Municipal Council. In 1903, after the passage of the City of Brisbane Enlargement Act in 1902, the New Farm peninsula entirely became part of Brisbane Municipal Council after the abolition of the Booroodabin Divisional Board. In 1903, the New Farm peninsula was split into two wards, Merthyr and Cintra.

Industrial development on the New Farm peninsula began in the 1890s with the opening of the Colonial Sugar Refinery on the peninsula's eastern side in 1893. In addition, a railway goods line was developed to service this part of New Farm. At the same time, an increase in the numbers of workers led to a growth in housing numbers. Shopping areas developed along the tram line that opened on Brunswick Street in the 1880s. By 1900, New Farm was being described as a 'fashionable suburb' in the local newspapers. By 1911, the local population was 5,394. Later developments included the opening picture theatres in 1914 and 1921, and the establishment of New Farm Park in 1914. Between the First and Second World Wars, New Farm became known for the expansion in the building of flats as a form of affordable accommodation, a pattern of urban development that has continued through to the 21st Century. By 2011, New Farm's population, including the former suburb of Merthyr, stood at 11,330.

The design, construction, and evolution of *Duddingston*

In early 1906, John Neil Clark McCallum, a financial and theatre agent, purchased subdivision 14 of resubdivision 4 of subdivision 7 of eastern suburban allotments 26 and 27 on Lower Bower Terrace in New Farm. Born in 1871 to Scottish emigrant parents, McCallum was most well-known for his contribution to Brisbane's cultural scene in the first half of the 20th Century through his management (from 1911) and ownership (from 1916) of the Cremorne Theatre in South Brisbane, which he owned until the theatre burnt down in 1954. In 1916, McCallum married Lillian Dyson Smith, and in 1918, their first son, John Neil McCallum was born while the family lived at *Duddingston*. McCallum Jr would go on to be a noted actor and producer in his own right.

McCallum's land had previously formed part of a larger landholding owned by Leslie Turner, who, in 1901, began selling off subdivisions of land as part of the 'Turner Estate.' Before purchasing the land on Lower Bowen Terrace, McCallum had previously lived with his mother Margaret, in another house called *Duddingston*. This house was located on the right-hand side of Sydney Street from River Street at the junction with Mark Street and was sold in 1905. While McCallum purchased the land in 1906, *Duddingston* had been constructed by the end of 1905. In 1914, McCallum purchased the land adjacent to *Duddingston*.

Duddingston is recorded as being designed by the architectural practice of Eaton and Bates. Sydney-trained architects George T. Eaton and Albert E. Bates established a partnership in 1895 that had 'extensive regional and state-wide operations.' The practice operated offices in Sydney (1895-1898), Rockhampton (1895-1903), Mount Morgan (1898-1903), Longreach (1898-1903), Clermont (1900-1903), Townsville (1901-1903), Gladstone (1901-1903), and Maryborough (1901-1903). From 1902, their main office was in Brisbane. In 1903, A.B. Polin joined the practice, renamed Eaton, Bates and Polin, though some projects, such as *Duddingston*, were only recorded as being designed by Eaton and Bates. Eaton and Bates, who became Associate members of the Queensland Institute of Architects by 1905, were well-regarded for their domestic and commercial architectural designs. Notable examples of their residential work in Brisbane include *Cremorne* (built c. 1905) in Hamilton and *Bunburra* (built c. 1902) in Clayfield.

In 1920, McCallum engaged noted architect Thomas Blair Moncrieff Wightman to design additions to *Duddingston*. Born and trained as an architect in Scotland, Wightman emigrated to Brisbane in 1910. In 1912, Wightman was employed by the eminent firm of Atkinson and McLay before setting up private practice in 1913. Between 1914 and 1918, Wightman briefly went into practice with Hampden Wendell Phillips before returning to his practice after that. Wightman continued to practice until the 1930s. Wightman held prominent positions in the Queensland Institute of Architects, including serving as Secretary and Treasurer (1915 to 1918), as a Councillor (1916 to 1922), and then as President (1923 to 1924). In 1927, he was the 'first practising architect' in Queensland to be made a Fellow of the Royal British Institute of Architects. He was particularly well known for his domestic architecture, which contributed to the development of the interwar style of residential buildings. These designs were known 'to meet [the] changing social and functional requirements' of the customer. Notable buildings designed by Wightman include the former Valley Masonic Temple (built c. 1922) in Fortitude Valley and Victoria Flats (built c. 1923) in Spring Hill.

In 1906, after *Duddingston* was constructed in 1905, a photograph was published in *The Week* illustrating the house as a Federation era 'bungalow' with a wrap-around verandah. The roof had protruding or 'flying' gables at the front and on the sides. Federation era bungalows were well known for their 'homely simplicity and robust honesty.' While the original design for *Duddingston* illustrates these design ideas through the simplicity of the house's layout, as McCallum became more successful and his family expanded, he sought to make changes to the house that represented his improved position in Brisbane's social circles. For example, throughout his ownership of *Duddingston*, and while he managed and owned the Cremorne Theatre, McCallum regularly used the house to entertain friends, performers and business colleagues.

To reflect the changes required by McCallum, the additions designed by Wightman in 1920 incorporated elements of the more picturesque Queen Anne style that had also been popular during the Federation period. These changes further enhanced *Duddingston's* prominence on Lower Bowen Terrace. Prominently, Wightman's design remodelled the front of the house, including the addition of two octagonal rotundas, including octagonal pyramid roofs on the corners of *Duddingston*. The addition of these features led to the replacement of the wrap-around verandah with one fronting *Duddingston* and enclosed by the rotunda additions.

When *Duddingston* was sold in 1922, it was described as being situated 'in one of the highest parts of New Farm.' It was further described as having an:

[e]xceptionally large drawing and reception rooms, most artistically designed, large dining-room, suite of two large bedrooms, dressing-room, and bathroom. In addition there are two other good bedrooms, breakfast room, maid's room, pantry, laundry, large billiard-room and c. The house is painted throughout, and fitted with gas and electric light, and every modern convenience.

Additions to *Duddingston* by later owners included extending the rear of the dwelling and the house's temporary use as flats in the 1950s. The house is now called *Durlington*.

John Neil Clark McCallum and Brisbane's cultural scene

While most well-known for the management and ownership of the Cremorne Theatre in South Brisbane, McCallum had developed standing within Brisbane's financial sector before his significant involvement in Brisbane's cultural scene. Initially pursuing a career in the financial sector, McCullum, worked for the Brisbane Finance Agency as a representative, and then owned, operated, and traded as this business until at least 1914.

By 1899, McCallum was the Honorary Secretary of the Brisbane Musical Union. The Brisbane Musical Union was established in 1872 and was the oldest choir in Queensland. By 1930, the Brisbane Musical Union had amalgamated with the Brisbane Austral Choir to create the Queensland State and Municipal Choir, now the Queensland Choir. By the time McCallum became Honorary Secretary, the Brisbane Musical Union 'had consolidated its position as a society that regularly performed classical choral music at public concerts' and that its work 'was 'neither surpassed nor equalled by any other organization'.

By the early-1900s, McCallum had also become known for representing various performing artists and bringing their work to Brisbane. For example, in 1908, McCallum brought the Cherniavsky Trio, a popular Russian singing group to Brisbane. In announcing the performances of the Cherniavsky Trio, the *Truth* recorded that 'Brisbaneites were once more indebted to [McCallum] for enabling them to hear the world's best talent – which would never reach us, in many instances, if not brought here specially.' Edward Branscombe, a noted singer, concert manager and theatre proprietor, directed the show.

In 1911, Branscombe opened an open-air theatre in South Brisbane that became known as the Cremorne. This was one of a series of open-air theatres that Branscombe opened around Australia. Performances by Branscombe's troupe 'The Dandies' began on 5 August 1911. The Cremorne was capable of seating 1,800 people, and Branscombe's shows became a 'summertime feature' in Brisbane.' Branscombe employed McCallum to act as the General Manager of the Cremorne. By August 1916, McCallum had purchased both the Cremorne Theatre and the 'sole performing rights' for the Dandies Queensland Limited.

While Branscombe attempted to maintain the Cremorne Theatre while contending with the challenge of 'Brisbane's summer rain,' it was under McCallum's ownership that the Cremorne underwent significant changes. Most significantly, in 1934, the Cremorne was converted into a semi-open-air theatre. Noted Brisbane architect George Rae designed these changes. The work was associated with the installation of a cinema and the operation of the Cremorne by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. McCallum undertook a further renovation in 1951 that sought to allow the Cremorne to 'rank with leading theatres in Australia.'

Throughout McCallum's ownership of the Cremorne, the theatre became well known for hosting various shows ranging from vaudeville performances during the First World War to variety performances in the 1920s. While McCallum had begun to step away from the day-to-day management of shows by the 1930s, he maintained ownership of the site until it was sold in 1954. The most significant change in operations occurred in the 1930s when McCallum adapted to the challenge presented by cinema and entered into an agreement with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to show 'its pictures at Cremorne.' As a result, the Cremorne returned to showing variety performances during the Second World War. By 1953, despite his ongoing success, McCallum decided to sell the theatre, which was renamed the Film Centre, and became a storage and distribution site for film companies.

The legacy and importance of the Cremorne Theatre to Brisbane's cultural life is highlighted by the decision to name one of the theatres at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, the Cremorne. This legacy also illustrates McCallum's noted role in Brisbane's cultural scene in the first half of the 20th Century. As the *Brisbane Telegraph* recorded after the Cremorne on the burning down of the theatre, '[o]ne of Brisbane's oldest and most romantic links with traditional theatre was severed by the flames that devoured the old Cremorne.'

Description

The house, formerly known as *Duddingston*, is located at 591 Lower Bowen Terrace, New Farm. Sited on a large block atop a slight crest, *Duddingston* is particularly prominent as a large-scale domestic villa within its context. While set back from the street frontage, the house is highly visible when approaching from the south aspect of Lower Bowen Terrace. Mature vegetation partially obscures views to the place from the north aspect of the street.

General description

Duddingston is a single-storey, timber villa raised on concrete stumps. It is generally square in plan, has a partially enclosed front verandah and a broken-back sheet metal roof with a flying gable over the entrance. Two flying gables extend from the side elevations of the house. The Lower Bowen Terrace elevation is symmetrical, with a front verandah and two octagonal rotundas at either side. Entry to the house is via a centralised stair, with a timber slat balustrade. While historical photographs show the original house with a U-shaped verandah, significant additions made to the villa in c. 1920, included the partial enclosure of the verandah, the replacement of the dowel balustrade with a board balustrade with slatted cut-outs, and scalloped brackets with slat valances. The two octagonal side rotundas constructed in the Federation Queen Anne style are the most prominent of the c. 1920 additions and were once roofed with terracotta tiles and finials. The original chimney paired post-frame entrance, and lattice valances (infill) are retained.

The main house has a corrugated sheet metal roof, whilst both rotundas are roofed with flat sheet metal. Metal finials and acroteria are later additions. While the original chimney remains, pots have since been replaced with a terracotta cowl. External walls are weatherboard clad, whilst walls of the verandah are single-skin belted vertical join boards.

All window and door openings, timber joinery and leadlighting from the c.1920 additions and alterations have been retained. Verandah windows are a combination of double-hung sash and casement windows, both with leadlight detailing. The windows of the octagonal side rotundas are also casements with leadlight detailing. Rotunda window hoods are flat sheet metal, with decorative timber brackets. The front door includes viewing panels and fanlights with decorative leadlighting, and the current name *Durlington* is spelled out on the main viewing panel.

The front garden is enclosed by a timber slat fence that, while non-original, retains the approximate height of the timber fencing that appears in historical photographs of the place. Plantings are non-original.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Views to the house from Lower Bowen Terrace
- Original location and orientation of the house
- Fenced garden, including medium-height timber fencing
- Single-storey, broken-back/gabled roof form

- Symmetrical composition of Lower Bowen Terrace elevation
- Metal roof sheeting
- Side and central flying gables, including timber slat infill
- Chimney
- Centralised entry to the verandah, including timber stair and balustrade
- Verandah, including board balustrade with slatted cut-outs, brackets, and slat valances
- Two octagonal rotundas, including octagonal pyramid roofs
- Single-skin, belted vertical joint verandah walls
- Weatherboard cladding on external walls
- Original door and window openings
- Original timber-framed double-hung sash windows including leadlight detailing
- Original timber-framed casement windows including leadlight detailing
- Window hoods over casement windows on octagonal rotundas, including decorative brackets
- Original location of timber-framed entry door

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Non-original plantings
- Hardstand area/driveway
- Non-original chimney cowl
- Non-original metal finials
- Non-original metal acroteria

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:

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

Duddingston, a Federation-era villa (built in 1905) with Queen Anne style additions (c. 1920), demonstrates aesthetic importance through its expressive attributes and its contribution to the streetscape. As outlined in the citation's description, collectively, *Duddingston's* scale, form, location, garden space to the Lower Bowen Terrace frontage, and setting on a slight rise on Lower Bowen Terrace contribute to the aesthetic significance and to the streetscape. Despite being set back from the street, *Duddingston* remains highly visible, especially from the south aspect of Lower Bowen Terrace. Views to the house are aided by the medium-height timber fencing, which allows *Duddingston* to be seen from Lower Bowen Terrace. Expressive elements of *Duddingston's* built form and composition include two prominent octagonal rotundas with casement windows and leadlighting, a verandah with a centralised entry point, timber stairs and single scalloped balustrade, and a single-storey, broken back/gabled roof form with sheet metal roofing.

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

Duddingston has a special association with theatre proprietor John Neil Clark McCallum who made a noted contribution to Brisbane cultural scene in the early 20th Century. As expressed in the citation's history, while living at *Duddingston*, McCallum managed (from 1911) and then owned (from 1916) the original Cremorne Theatre, located in South Brisbane. He operated the theatre until it burned down in 1954, leasing it to various studios and performers over the life of the theatre. He was the father of noted Australian actor John Neil McCallum (1918 to 2010).

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Note: This information 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 information 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.

prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2025)



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