

Heritage Citation



Erica (former)

Key details

Also known as	Xavier Hospital
Addresses	At 398 Cavendish Road, Coorparoo, Queensland 4151
Type of place	House
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Style	Queen Anne
Lot plan	L4_SP263424
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — August 2015
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	John Jacob Cohen (Architect)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

A substantial single storey timber house, constructed in 1890 by Mr Thomas Mulhall King to a design by John Jacob Cohen, it was utilised as a hospital in World War II, then in 1946 acquired by the Catholic Church and used as the Xavier Hospital for disabled children from 1949 to 1994. In 2007 the house was adapted as community facilities as part of a retirement village development constructed in the grounds of the former hospital.

History

The house was built by Thomas Mulhall King in 1890 to a design by John Jacob Cohen, architect. From Thomas Mulhall King worked for the Collector of Customs. In 1882, he became the Collector of Customs, Chief Inspector of Distilleries and a member of the Immigration Board. It was at this time that he built his property at Coorparoo. In 1893 he became Under Secretary to the Treasury, and in 1902 the Auditor General, a position he held until 1907. In 1903 he was decorated with the Imperial Service Order. Between 1907-11 he was Deputy Commissioner for Railways. On his death in 1921 his property was lived in by Mr R M King, Minister for Public Instruction.

In 1925 the property was sold to Isiah and Edith Lahey a well-known family of timber merchants. During World War II (1943) the house and grounds were used as the 10th Camp Hospital in association with 101st Australian Convalescent Depot, which was based in the nearby Loreto Convent. In 1946 the Xavier Society purchased Erica from Mrs Isaiah Lahey for the establishment of a home for Cripple children, to mark the Sacerdotal Jubilee of Archbishop Duhig. . The property comprised the house and 4 ½ acres of land. It was opened on 15 May 1949. The home was run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The hospital expanded to fill much of the grounds of the house. The hospital use ceased in 1994.

In 2007 the property was purchased by the Village Retirement Group. The hospital buildings were demolished, and the house was restored and adapted for community facilities to serve the adjoining retirement housing.

John Jacob Cohen (1859-1939) graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts in 1879, with a first class honours in mathematics, and was articled to a consulting engineer. He subsequently studied architecture at night school. He practiced as an architect and engineer firstly in Mackay 1882, before moving back to Brisbane in 1885 where he had a brief partnership with F F Holmes. In May 1886 he practiced on his own and picked up a range of mostly commercial commissions, including a number of warehouses. He designed Erica in 1890, one of his last commissions in Brisbane. In 1892 he moved to Sydney, where he studied law, and subsequently became a member of the NSW legislative assembly, and then a District Court Judge.

Description

The house was originally set in grounds of 5 acres. It is a substantial one storey dwelling, constructed of timber and weatherboards under a corrugated iron roof. It is symmetrical set under a substantial half-hipped gable roof with gables projecting to either side. There are two projecting canted bays to the front with a centrally placed porch. There are two hipped roofed projections to the rear, between which is a modern flat roof extension. The house was substantially restored in 2011, and painted externally with historically derived paint scheme.

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 substantial residential dwelling, originally set in expansive ground, which was subsequently used as a convalescent home in WW II (1943-5) and then as the Xavier Hospital for disabled children (1949-94) and now as community facilities for a retirement village development.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as a rare surviving substantial dwelling of high architectural quality dating from 1890 in Coorparoo.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a relatively unaltered high-quality substantial timber and weatherboard house of 1890.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

due to its fine and relatively rare architectural composition comprising a symmetrical form with two projecting canted bays and verandahs to the front elevation set around a decorative projecting central porch, and symmetrical gables to the side.

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 surviving administrative building to the former Xavier Hospital for disabled children which operated on the site from 1949 to 1994, and as an example of the work of the Xavier Society and the Catholic Church providing this hospital care.

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

particularly, Thomas Mulhall King, an important Queensland Public Servant, serving as Collector of Customs, Chief Inspector of Distilleries and a member of the Immigration Board, (1882-93) Under Secretary to Treasury, (1893-1902) and Auditor General, (1902-7) and the work of John Jacob Cohen, engineer and architect, practicing in Queensland 1882-1890

References

1. *The Queenslander* 14 April 1932, p 34
2. *The Brisbane Courier* 2 December 1921 p 11
3. *The Telegraph* 5 November 1946 p 2
4. *Cairns Post* 29 April 1953 p 6
5. Harrison Construction Pty Ltd – Erica Restoration 2015
6. Queensland Architects of the 19th Century, Watson & MacKay, 1994

Copyright Brisbane City Council

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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2026)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane