

Heritage Citation



25 Wellington Street, Petrie Terrace

Key details

Addresses	At 25 Wellington Street, Petrie Terrace, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Terrace house
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Georgian
Lot plan	L3_GTP602; L4_GTP602; L1_GTP602; L2_GTP602
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — May 2013
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Brick - Painted

People/associations Andrea Giovanni Stombuco (Architect);
John O'Keefe (Builder)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (C) Scientific; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic

This is a row of four, terrace houses constructed c1884 for and by prominent contractor John O'Keefe. He was the preferred builder of Catholic Bishop of Brisbane James Quinn, who had previously owned the site. O'Keefe built two prestige terrace house rows atop Petrie Terrace – the 'O'Keefe Buildings' in 1881 and the 'Illawarra Buildings' ('Petrie Mansions') in 1887. In the intervening period, O'Keefe squeezed his row of modest, terrace houses onto 20 perches of land in a steep, side street. Each rental house occupied just 5 perches and it was this style of small housing development that the Queensland colonial government sought to stifle through the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act of 1885.

History

This site originally was part of a purchase of crown land made by the Right Reverend James Quinn of Brisbane on 16 September 1861. Quinn had been appointed Brisbane's first Catholic Bishop in 1859. He paid £550.5s for the one-acre and 22 perches of Allotment 307 that fronted Petrie Terrace. On 27 June 1865, Quinn enlarged his property holdings to 7 acres and 9 perches by buying the adjacent Allotment 306. Quinn subdivided his land into small town allotments suitable for housing and immediately began selling the lots. The first buyer was William Stevens on 28 June 1865. This part of Petrie Terrace soon became known as Bishop's Hill. The 1866 economic depression stalled sales of Quinn's subdivisions. The steep slope of Bishop's Hill made house construction difficult as sites had to be dug-out to be made level and retaining walls often had to be built to combat the effects of heavy rain and soil slippage. The Bishop's Hill streets (Wellington Street, Mountjoy Place, St James Crescent, Belgrave & Sackville & Rutland Streets) were named after the streets in the fashionable St. James district of London.

Quinn died on 18 August 1881 and his unsold land passed to Mathew Quinn and James Murray. By 1883, Quinn's remaining scattered town allotments in Petrie Terrace were advertised as the Bishop's Hill estate with the various sites placed up for auction through Arthur Martin & Co. on Saturday 10 February 1883. At that time, Wellington Street had been formed with a number of downhill allotments already sold. Within that street, John Arthur Manis O'Keefe purchased subdivisions 12 and 13 of Section 2 of Allotment 307 in Bishop's Hill on 18 September 1883. Each block was small being just 10 perches in area.

J.A.M. O'Keefe was a prominent building contractor and mining engineer who had constructed the row of terrace houses known as the 'O'Keefe Buildings' at 226-230 Petrie Terrace in 1881. He had arrived in Queensland in 1864 and mined a 3,000-acre site at Gympie. In 1866, he married Ellen in Brisbane. O'Keefe was an Irish Catholic and was known to be Bishop Quinn's favourite builder. He built St. Patrick's Church in Fortitude Valley, St. Andrew's Church in South Brisbane and the first part of St. Joseph's Christian Brothers School in Gregory Terrace. His best-known building was Her Majesty's Opera House in Queen Street and he also entered politics gaining election to the local government Woolloongabba Divisional Board.

On 12 November 1883, O'Keefe mortgaged lots 12 and 13 for £750 and may have used this money to build a

row of terrace houses on this land. He built a row of four small, terrace houses across the two blocks on his sloping, Wellington Street land. Given that O'Keefe had employed the eccentric Italian architect Andrea Stombuco to design his 'O'Keefe Buildings' (1881) and the 'Illawarra Buildings' ('Petrie Mansions') at 242 Petrie Terrace in 1887, then Stombuco possibly helped with the design of the Wellington Street terrace houses. Despite Stombuco's reputation being "marred by a fiery temper", he is documented as having "established a working relationship with local contractor J.A.M. O'Keefe"¹.

O'Keefe built a modest row of terrace houses whose form reflected their hillside location. He maximised usage of the 20-perch area available on subdivisions 12 and 13 by constructing each terrace house as a three-storey residence - the third storey attic with a dormer window. Each had a ground floor, first floor balcony and brick fireplaces on all three floors with a small rear courtyard of each building accessible from Wellington Lane. The row of terrace houses was completed by 1884. A year later, the Queensland colonial government's *Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act* of October 1885 sought to prevent the kind of cramped urban development that O'Keefe had built in Wellington Street. The Act banned the subdivision and subsequent sale of land into house blocks smaller than 16 perches. O'Keefe had managed to place a residence on a 5-perch block. The first tenants of these terrace house row were potter George Fox (No.19), Department of Public Inspection clerk James O'Brien (No.21), labourer Ryan Owen (No.23) and building contractor Samuel Rose (No.25).

The 1890s Depression in Queensland badly affected O'Keefe's business operations. On 29 September 1890, O'Keefe's business went into liquidation with his Wellington Street terrace house row entrusted to his receiver Charles John Wesley South. There followed a rapid turnover of owners for the remainder of the decade. By the end of the 1890s, the Queensland National Bank Ltd took the title on 3 August 1899.

On 21 January 1911, Eleanor Jane Walker, wife of Francis (Frank) Lawrence Walker, purchased the property from the Queensland National Bank. She held the property until her death on 22 March 1938. With the development of Brisbane, Petrie Terrace, like Spring Hill, lost its status as a fashionable address. By the 1930s, it had deteriorated into a run-down, inner-city suburb, containing low-cost rental housing and attracted artists, actors, students and others seeking such accommodation. The 1927 Brisbane City Council sewerage map shows Numbers 19 to 25 Wellington Street as having their front entrances via stairs leading to the first floor level of each townhouse, with a water closet (WC) in the courtyard. These flats were located conveniently within a short walking distance of one of the main City tram lines.

Frank Walker and the Queensland Public Trustees Office took joint control of the row of terrace houses on 21 March 1939. This remained the case until 7 October 1947 when Thomas Norman Chatworthy Pike became the new owner. Pike registered the property as tenements, and rented them as separate residences. Geoffrey and Joyce Pike took-over the property on 3 August 1964. The Pike family were the owners and landlords of the terrace houses until Geoffrey's death on 9 February 1977. During this time, the condition of the nineteenth century terrace houses deteriorated, reflecting Petrie Terrace's then status as a run-down, inner-city suburb offering cheap rental accommodation. *The Sunday Mail* described their state in 1977 as "unattractive tenements" and "crowded tenements, boxed in by chamferboards, housing three families each".²

On 10 November 1977, advertising consultant Daniel Leon Breaden and his wife Lorraine Ann Breaden purchased the run-down, rental property with the purpose of restoring the terrace houses so that they could be sold separately as private townhouses. There was initial public scepticism to the proposed restoration. The restoration project aimed to return the buildings to their original 1880s exterior appearance with the (1979) project estimate cost being \$60,000. The chamferboard was removed, the interior walls stripped to reveal the original sandstones and brick and new internal staircases, kitchens, bathrooms and wrought iron balcony railings installed. The builder was D.C. Tyler.

In 1979, while under restoration, the row of terrace houses were noted by the Queensland branch of the National Trust in its publication *Petrie Terrace Conservation Area – a walk and drive tour*. In 1989, the Brisbane History Group included the Terrace Houses as Stop No.52 in its publication *The Ups and Downs of Petrie Terrace Walk/Drive Heritage Tour*.

This row of terrace houses at 19-25 Wellington Street neighbours the twin terrace houses 'Hibernia Scotia Terraces' (15-17 Wellington St) and is around the corner from the terrace houses 'O'Keefe's Buildings (226-230 Petrie Tce) that is next door to the terrace houses 'Petrie Mansions' (242-246 Petrie Tce). It is a component of a unique part of Petrie Terrace as no other continuous, concentration of genuine nineteenth terrace houses can be found anywhere else in Brisbane.

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

representing the cramped, inner-city residences that were the impetus for the drafting of the 1885 Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as a nineteenth century row of small lot terrace houses.

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

as a c1884 rental property with over a century of occupation by different tenants.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

being a modest, nineteenth century, terrace house row built onto a steep hillside.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

contributing, along with two other nearby buildings, to the nineteenth century terrace house streetscape of this unique part of Petrie Terrace.

References

1. Watson, Donald and McKay, Judith, *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century – a biographical dictionary*, (Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994), P.181
2. "Tenements transformed", *The Sunday Mail*, 22 February 1981, p.2
3. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
4. Brisbane City Council, 1946, 2001, 2005 & 2009 aerial photographs
5. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets
6. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map, 7 February 1927
7. Brisbane History Group, *The Ups and Downs of Petrie Terrace Walk/Drive Heritage Trail*, (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1989)
8. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
9. W Morrison, *Aldine History of Queensland Vol II*, Sydney: Aldine Publishing Company 1888
10. John Oxley Library, Brisbane Suburbs – Estate Maps
11. John Oxley Library, photographic collection.
12. National Trust of Queensland, *Petrie Terrace Conservation Area – A Walk and Drive Tour*, (Brisbane: National Trust of Queensland, 1979?)

13. *Queensland Post Office Directories, 1868-1949*
 14. "Tenements transformed", *The Sunday Mail*, 22 February 1981
 15. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century: A Biographical Dictionary*. Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
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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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised June 2022)



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