

Heritage Citation



31 Cairns Street, Kangaroo Point

Key details

Addresses	At 31 Cairns Street, Kangaroo Point, Queensland 4169
Type of place	Cottage, House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L2_SP228811
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — January 2016
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic

This cottage is one of three built for and likely by John Mullen as a rental property. Mullen built his own house, likely 35 Cairns Street, circa 1876-8, adding the three rental properties in 1886, at the height of a building boom in Brisbane. The building boom also saw dramatic residential growth in Kangaroo Point and confirmed its position as a popular residential area. Mullen's cottages were rented to tenants until well into the twentieth century. They were restored in the 1980s and were converted to offices in 2009. This cottage forms part of group of nineteenth century cottages still extant in Cairns street.

History

This cottage is located on land which was originally purchased by Robert Cribb and former Collector of Customs William Thornton in 1851. A small township had begun to develop in Kangaroo Point in the 1840s, its appeal largely due to nearby industry. However, this site was undeveloped by its early owners, and it was not until the 1870s that the land became available for building. Notable sugar planter and miller Louis Hope, who resided in Shafston House, purchased the land and offered it for sale in December 1874 as the 'Shafston Estate', a forty-four acre site fronting the curve of the river between Cairns Street and Wellington Road. The estate had numerous features to draw residents. Though separated from the city by the river, ferry services were provided and industrial work was available in the area. Services like hotels, churches and schools also added to its residential appeal. The size of the allotments on offer in the Shafston Estate was a further inducement: the subdivisions ranged from 40 perches to four acres, significantly larger than the allotments available in other inner-city areas like Spring Hill or Petrie Terrace.

In January 1876 quarryman John Mullen purchased one rood (40 perches, or a quarter of an acre) of land in the Shafston Estate. The block fronted Cairns Street, with a side frontage to Lambert Street. Mullen, who had arrived in Brisbane with his wife and five children in 1873, took up residence in Cairns Street by 1878. The Mullens' house is likely to be the house now situated on the corner of Lambert Street, a transverse gable cottage with brick chimney and separate kitchen quarters.

In 1882 Mullen moved to Bowen Bridge with his family to operate the Bowen Bridge Hotel, leasing his Kangaroo Point house to tenants. Three years later, however, his application for a renewal of the licence was refused, and he returned to Kangaroo Point. In June 1886, Mullen took out a mortgage over the property for £240, and promptly advertised the lease of a four-roomed cottage next to his house on Cairns Street. The cottage appears to be one of three identical cottages built around the same time, as by 1887 three tenants were listed on Mullen's land in Cairns Street, in addition to Mullen.

Mullen likely built the rental properties himself; he had worked as a labourer as well as publican and quarryman. The cottages were (and are) small, based on a central core of four rooms with front and rear verandas, and built of timber. Originally the cottages also featured brick chimneys and fireplaces, though these were later removed.

The cottages were constructed at the height of a population and building boom in Brisbane. This boom saw dramatic growth in the demand for housing, especially on the south side of Brisbane. Demand was particularly high in Kangaroo Point, where the population had increased from 1,903 people in 1881 to 3,204 in 1886. At the

same time industry moved into Cairns Street, with Moar's shipyard opened at the river end of the street, providing further employment opportunities in the area. Landowners like Mullen constructed rental houses, taking advantage of the increasing population. Mullen's forty perch site was not large enough to provide each house with a sixteen-perch land holding, the minimum subdivision size required under the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act 1885. Mullen circumvented the legislation by keeping the houses on a single holding.

Mullen's first tenants – a painter, an engineer and a messenger for the Queensland National Bank – reflected the diverse range of residents seeking accommodation in Kangaroo Point. Shipbuilders, likely working at nearby Moar's slip, took up occupation in later years, as did the lessee of the Kangaroo Point ferry.

After Mullen's death in 1898 the property passed to his unmarried daughter Margaret. She retained ownership of the property until 1945, leasing all four cottages. The area remained popular with tenants, particularly following the opening of the Story Bridge and the re-opening of the Cairns Street shipyard in the 1940s. The cottages passed through a number of owners in the latter half of the twentieth century and were restored in the 1980s. They were held on a single block of land until 2007. In 2009 the houses were converted to commercial use and in 2016 operate as offices.

Description

This is one of three tiny, identical cottages, which is lowset and clad in weatherboards. It has a steeply pitched pyramidal iron roof and front convex verandah. The front wall of the cottage is comprised of vertical joint boards and external wall framing. The verandah has simple timber posts which divide the verandah into three bays. Cast iron brackets crown each post with cast iron balustrade between. Access to the verandah is gained at each end. The cottage and its neighbours each feature a dominating red pyramidal roof. The cottages have a strong presence in the street, with uniform setbacks, width of frontage, and floor, roof and balustrade heights. These dominating horizontal lines created by the various building elements, contrast with the rhythm of equally spaced verandah posts along each frontage. These features are continued in the neighbouring dwellings. The cottages occupy a prominent position on Cairns Street.

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 one of a group of purpose-built nineteenth century rental cottages in Kangaroo Point reflecting the residential land boom of the 1880s in the area.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as the cottages form a group of remnant nineteenth century workers' cottages which are representative of the type of housing which was originally located in Cairns Street and the surrounding area.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an existing example of the diverse socio-economic housing types found within the Kangaroo Point area.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as part of a group of identical cottages and two similar corner houses with strong unifying features.

Supporting images



Evans Deakin Shipyards at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, 1963 (JOL, SLQ, image number 9907). Mullen's Cairns Street cottages are in the foreground.

References

1. Brisbane City Council, aerial photographs, 1946, 1995-2013
2. Brisbane City Council, City Architecture & Heritage Team, heritage citations
3. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website
4. Brisbane City Council Department of Works, Detail Sewerage Plan
5. Centre for the Government of Queensland, *Queensland Places: Kangaroo Point*, 2015
6. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
7. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
8. National Library of Australia, Trove newspapers, *Telegraph*, *The Week*, *Brisbane Courier*
9. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Picture Queensland
10. Queensland Post Office Directories
11. Queensland State Archives, Immigration index
12. Queensland Women's Historical Association, *Walk into History: A history of Kangaroo Point* (1983?)
13. RPData, photos

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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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