

Heritage Citation



40 Dorset Street, Ashgrove

Key details

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| Addresses | At 40 Dorset Street, Ashgrove, Queensland 4060 |
| Type of place | Cottage, House |
| Period | Victorian 1860-1890 |
| Style | Queenslander |
| Lot plan | L45_RP20488; L46_RP20488 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — April 1997 |
| Construction | Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber |

This timber cottage was built circa 1888 for James and Clara Aitken and their family, at a time when Ashgrove was developing from a rural to a residential area. Extended a number of times between 1896 and 1919, converted to flats just after 1949, and later restored to a private residence, this house exemplifies the changing requirements of family housing in Brisbane over more than a century.

History

This 19th century timber house with later additions was built as a four room cottage for James Aitken, a clerk, and his wife, Clara, circa 1888. Several extensions were made to the house over the next thirty years to accommodate their growing family. Later alterations modified the house to suit the changing circumstances of the owners. As urban historian, Graham Davison, has noted, such changes to the fabric and structure of a building over time can reveal the building's significance by providing evidence of the "processes of cultural and social change which have subsequently altered, extended, truncated or refurbished them".

Until the 1880s, Ashgrove was predominantly a farming community on the outskirts of Brisbane with several large homes and country estates belonging to more affluent citizens. Several residential estates, such as the nearby Grove Estate, were auctioned during the 1880s when mass immigration saw settlement expand beyond the inner suburbs. However, Ashgrove's distance from the city centre and lack of public transport meant that these allotments sold gradually. Although Waterworks Road had been established as a thoroughfare in the mid-19th century with farmland at the Gap settled in the 1850s and the opening of Enoggera Reservoir in 1866, by 1890 there were only around a dozen residences on each side of Waterworks Road at Ashgrove. Dorset Street (originally named Brisbane Street) was a short connecting street between Ashgrove Avenue and Waterworks Road. The 1880s were a transition period in the development of Ashgrove from a rural area to a residential suburb of Brisbane.

During the 1890s, Ashgrove Avenue, initially named Serpentine Road and, later, Three Mile Scrub Road, was inhabited by farmers and middle-class residents, such as clerks and merchants. Chinese market gardens were situated at the Newmarket end of the road. It was not until the extension of the tramline to Ashgrove in 1924 which prompted the subdivision of large residential estates such as the Glenlyon Garden Estate, that Ashgrove became a well populated suburb. Prior to 1924, the closest tramline to Ashgrove Avenue was the Enoggera Road tramline which was extended to Newmarket in 1903.

The land on which the house is situated was once part of Portion 650, granted to Robert Donaldson in 1868. In 1875, the entire portion was sold to Joseph Buckle, who from 1876 subdivided the property. The first land to be sold was an area of 5 acres which was bought by Joseph Dorsett in 1876. Brisbane Street was later changed to Dorsett Street presumably because of its association with Joseph Dorsett. The spelling of the street name has since changed to Dorset.

In October 1886, James Aitken purchased an area of 1 rood of land, facing Brisbane Street. In October 1888, his wife, Clara Constance Aitken, purchased the 2 adjoining allotments to the rear, facing Ashgrove Avenue. James Aitken is first listed as residing in Brisbane Street in 1889. The land was mortgaged in July 1899 for the sum of

£75. This was possibly to finance the construction of future additions to the cottage.

James Aitken, born in Dumfermline, Scotland, was employed as a clerk in Mayfair Arcade, Adelaide Street. His wife, Clara, was born in Bromsgrove, near Birmingham, England. Their first child was born in Spring Hill. Six more children would be born in the cottage in Brisbane Street. The family also fostered John Webley, a child whose mother died in childbirth, who would later live in a house on the site of the tennis court next door.

According to a sketch drawn by James and Clara's son, Noel, in 1981, the original cottage consisted of four rooms, including a kitchen with a fireplace, and a front verandah with centrally located stairs. Circa 1896, an extension was built adding a new hall and 2 bedrooms on the southern side and a bathroom and verandah with stairs to the back of the house. The front stairs were moved towards the southern end of the house.

In 1906, James Aitken bought the remaining allotments between the house and the corner of Ashgrove Avenue and Brisbane Streets. The house was extended again circa 1907. This work was possibly financed by a second mortgage in 1906 for £200. The front verandah was extended along the northern wall of the house and a new kitchen and bathroom built at the back on the northern side. The original kitchen became a bathroom. Further extensions were carried out in around 1919 when a verandah and fifth bedroom were added on the southern side of the house.

On the death of James Aitken on 14 October 1938, the title of the Aitkens' land was transferred to his widow, Clara. She continued to live in the house until her death on 26 June 1949. Ownership of the house then passed to the Aitken's unmarried daughter, Marjorie Evelyn Aitken. The house was then converted into 2 flats by the construction of a double partition through the centre of what was the original cottage. The larger flat was then rented, while Miss Aitken lived in the smaller flat. In 1975, Miss Aitken moved to a nursing home. After her death in 1983, the house was sold after almost 100 years of ownership by the Aitken family.

The house at 40 Dorset Street has since been restored to become a family residence again, and has recently been renovated by its present owners. These renovations, carried out mainly between 1995 and 1997, included restumping, rewiring, replumbing, and the replacement of verandah balustrading and most of flooring which were damaged from borers. A new deck has also been added to the rear of the house.

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 house built in the late nineteenth century when Ashgrove was beginning to develop from a rural district to a

residential suburb.

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 example of an 1880s house in Ashgrove.

References

1. Davison, Graeme and Chris McConville, eds. *A Heritage Handbook*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991
 2. Documents supplied by Mrs Claire Watson, grand-daughter of James and Clara Aitken
 3. Post Office Directories.
 4. Titles Office Records
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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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