

Heritage



Alton

Key details

Addresses	At 21 Gloucester Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Duplex
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Style	Arts and Crafts
Lot plan	L4_RP9849
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Information — October 2003
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

This purpose-built duplex was constructed circa 1909 for John and Janet Fraser and survives as a rare and unusual example of a federation era two-storey timber duplex in Brisbane. Both dwellings had a shed in their backyard, which included a water closet (toilet), and a single water tank serviced both units. The duplex was not located on a corner site until the 1930s when Phillip Street was joined to Gloucester Street. It was owned by the Frasers until 1954 and has since had a number of different owners.

History

The site containing 21 Gloucester Street was originally part of a land purchase made by Thomas Dowse, of Brisbane, on 23 December 1853. Dowse paid £40.6s.0d for 2 acres, 2 roods and 16 perches of land at Spring Hollow (Spring Hill). The site was described as Portion 95 in the Northern Suburbs of Brisbane. Dowse subsequently sold Portion 95 to Mary Peattie, who subdivided the land into smaller housing allotments and then conducted a land sale.

On 19 November 1866, William Grigor, a Scottish migrant and timber cutter, acquired 10.97 perches of land described as re-subdivision 4 of subdivision 2 of Portion 95. The land passed into the hands of Grigor's trustee, Harry Miller, on 28 January 1867. The land remained under a trusteeship until 12 July 1899, when Grigor's wife Mary resumed ownership of the property. After Mary's death on 12 June 1900, the property passed back to widower William Grigor, as the administrator of his wife's estate. To put the issue of trusteeship behind him, William Grigor obtained a new title on his land on 13 November 1900.

William Grigor had constructed stone duplex cottages on his adjoining land at 17 and 19 Gloucester Street in 1852. But it would appear that re-subdivision 4 had remained as a vacant block of land during the entire period of the Grigor family's ownership of the site. From 1900 onwards, when house numbers began to appear in the *Queensland Post Office Directories*, the right-hand side of Gloucester Street only contained five residences located at Numbers 17, 19, 33, 49 and 53 Gloucester Street. This situation changed after Grigor sold the land to John and Janet Fraser on 11 June 1901.

On 20 August 1909, Janet Fraser who was the listed owner of the land, obtained a mortgage for £500 through the Trustees of the state of Queensland Lodge of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows Friendly Society. Fraser's loan was repayable at an interest rate of 6 per annum. Using this money the Frasers built a wooden duplex, comprising two identical residences, next to the stone duplex cottages that were still owned by the Grigor family. The first tenants and residents of the new timber duplex were James Noonan and Miss Gertrude Leslie. Their names first appear as Gloucester Street residents in the 1910-11 edition of the *Queensland Post Office Directories*. As the information for each edition of the directories was compiled in the year prior to publication, then it is assumed that "Alton" was built in 1909.

By 1914, the duplex had had two identical sheds added to the corner of their back yards. Each shed included a separate room for the outside toilet (water closet). A single water tank, located near the back steps of Number 23 Gloucester Street, serviced both flats. The 1940 edition of the *Queensland Post Office Directories* list Mrs. Cecilia Quirk and William I. Kington as the residents of Numbers 21 and 23 Gloucester Street. By that year, Phillip Street had been pushed through the adjoining property (33 Gloucester St.) so that the duplex now occupied a corner site. The name "Alton" had not been applied to this property during this period.

Janet Fraser remained the owner of the duplex until her death on 4 December 1954. Her estate passed to her family –James Stevenson Fraser, Helen Fraser (spinster) and John Richard Fraser, who was a minor at the time of Janet's death. James Fraser transferred his share of the property to Helen and John Fraser on 16 October 1956. On 28 April 1958, the duplex passed from the hands of the Fraser family. Italian migrant Vincenzo Pizzica

became the new owner, with James Fraser loaning Pizzica and his partner Guiseppe Sizio the funds to enable the sale to proceed. Control of the mortgage passed to James' widow Ellen Ann Fraser after his death in 1965. When Pizzica built an unauthorised shed on the site in 1958, the Brisbane City Council ordered its demolition. Approval was granted for the erection of a garage on the property as long as the car access was provided from Philip Street.

On 6 December 1976, ownership of the property transferred to Gioacchino Vecchio and his wife Angela Vecchio. The current owners, Salvatore Antonio Vitelli and Robert Anthony Vitelli purchased the property on 18 June 1999.

This is a rare and unusual timber, Federation era duplex surviving in what was one of Brisbane's earliest suburbs. It was featured in the book *Spring Hill Heritage Trail – St. Paul's to Gregory Terrace* that was produced by the Brisbane History Group in 1993.

References

1. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website
2. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
3. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets
4. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
5. John Oxley Library, Brisbane Suburbs – Estate Maps
6. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949

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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.

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