

Heritage Citation



Brick War Service Home

Key details

Addresses	At 27 Magee Street, Graceville, Queensland 4075
Type of place	House
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L93_RP29439; L94_RP29439
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2005 Date of Citation — October 2010
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry

This war service home was constructed in 1919-20 by the War Service Homes Commission (WSHC) for purchase by servicemen returning from the First World War. Many WSHC houses were ultimately constructed in Queensland, but only six of these were built from brick. These were all built on what had been called the Magee Estate, Graceville, and were among the earliest WSHC houses to be completed in Queensland. The first returned serviceman to occupy the house was R. Reoch who served as a private in 45th Battalion A.I.F.

History

As a result of the 1918 War Service Homes Act, in June 1919 the War Service Homes Commissioner signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Bank, whereby the bank would act as the agent of the WSHC in purchasing land, and building homes for returned World War I soldiers. It was expected that 1500 homes a year would be required in Queensland, and the bank was instructed to purchase the necessary land, with each allotment to be 32 perches. However, between August 1919 and November 1920, only 464 houses were built. The Fourth Progress Report of the WHSC (QLD), printed 5th December 1921, complained that this meant that most of the land purchased remained idle.

There were also complaints that the houses were too expensive for veterans, and some suggested they be allowed to pick their own designs and locations, or be allowed to buy existing homes. Unemployment, the need to follow seasonal work, and sickness, meant that some tenants of WSHC houses could not keep up payments and had to abandon the properties, leading to a high rate of vacancies. For example, the Fourth Progress Report of the WSHC noted that of 16 homes in Bundaberg, only 2 had been taken up by soldiers, 5 were let, and 9 were vacant.

Some of the six brick cottages in Graceville had different tenants at different times before they were sold, and some also stood vacant at certain periods between the wars. Three of the six were not purchased by veterans until after WWII. In fact, brick houses were seen as too expensive, and less suitable to the Queensland climate than wooden houses, and for this reason only six brick WSHC homes were built in Queensland, out of a total of about 1300 houses, by October 1921.

The six houses in question would appear to be the six brick houses in the WSHC's holding of Group 7, Graceville. In 1919 the War Service Homes Commission purchased a number of allotments facing Strong Ave, Magee St, and Allardyce St, for a total of 900 Pounds. In September 1919 tenders were invited for 6 cottages to be built at the Magee Estate, Graceville (Brisbane Courier).

In WSHC correspondence of the time, letters regarding a temporary water supply for Magee St refer to 6 cottages being under construction (2nd December 1919) and the need for water during construction of brick cottages (16th December 1919). A 10th February, 1920 letter also mentioned that a temporary supply had been arranged for the "first two brick cottages". A letter on 30th of November 1920 deals with extending the water mains to (the existing brick cottage at) 39 Magee St, and by December 1920 it is noted that, since local building has finished, the temporary water pipe could be disconnected.

We can thus assume that they are referring to the building of the six brick cottages. All but one of the six share

two similar designs, having a single gable with a hip-roof veranda, some facing the road and some at right angles to the road. The above information also gives us a build date for the cottages of between November 1919 and December 1920.

However, Strong Ave and Magee St do not appear in the Brisbane Street Directory until 1926. By then, three of the cottages are occupied by the people who had purchased them in 1925-26, and three (not purchased until after WWII) appear to be occupied by tenants.

The house at 27 Magee St shares a design with 43 Strong Ave. It was purchased from the War Service Homes Commissioner in 1958 by George Arthur Howard (six George Howards Returned to Australia after WWI, according to the Nominal Roll).

In 1926, according to the Street Directory, the house was occupied by J.E. Milne, and in 1940, according to WSHC records, R. Reoch (ex-Private, 45th Battalion).

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 it is one of the six brick houses built in Graceville by the War Service Homes Commission for the purpose of housing soldiers returning from the First World War and thereby contributed to the interwar development of Graceville.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as it is one of only six brick War Service Homes built in Queensland.

References

1. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
2. *Walter Taylor South Character and Heritage Study*, BCC Heritage Unit, 1997
3. Queensland Post Office Directories
4. Brisbane City Council Water Supply & Sewerage Detail Plans
5. *Brisbane Courier*, June 1919-June 1921
6. Australian War Memorial, Nominal Roll
7. "War Service Homes Scheme- Agreement Made Between War Service Homes Commissioner and the Commonwealth Bank", *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, General, Session 1917-1918-1919, Vol. IV*, p. 1133
8. "Fourth Progress Report Upon the War Service Homes Commission (QLD)", *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, General, Session 1920-1921, Vol. V*, p. 61
9. *War Service File of Papers, Group Seven, Strong Ave, Magee St and John St*, Item # 22/8339, Australian Archives, Cannon Hill

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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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