

## Heritage Citation



**Cairncross House**

### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	St. Clair
<b>Addresses</b>	At 135 James Street, New Farm, Queensland 4005
<b>Type of place</b>	House
<b>Period</b>	Victorian 1860-1890
<b>Style</b>	Queenslander

<b>Lot plan</b>	L2_BUP104233; L4_BUP104233; L3_BUP104233; L1_BUP104233
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — March 2011
<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Stone
<b>People/associations</b>	Sisters of Mercy of St Vincent's Orphanage (Association); students who attended St Clair's Private School between 1905 and the 1940s (Association)
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

'Cairncross House' was possibly built by 1864 following the 1862 property transfer to Elizabeth Cairncross, wife of merchant William Cairncross, of 'Colmslie House' fame. The house may have been designed by the architect James Cowlshaw, who had built four Albert Street shops for William Cairncross in 1865. In 1867 the house served as early lodgings for St Vincent's Catholic Orphanage, known then as the Roman Catholic Orphan School. It had several owners before being purchased by Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer in 1882 (Premier of Queensland from 1870-1874) and was then known as 'St Clair'. The two-storey, stone dwelling of eight rooms with fruit and flower garden, was described as 'one of the most substantially-built private residences in Brisbane'. Though the property remained in the Hunter-Palmer family until 1924, it was occupied by various tenants over the years. In the early 1890s it operated as a private hospital and from 1905 to the early 1940s as a private school.

## 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 demonstrates the historical pattern of development along James Street when New Farm was emerging as a suburb from the 1860s.

## **Rarity**

### CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a rare example of an 1860s stone dwelling in Brisbane.

---

## **Representative**

### CRITERION D

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

as a good example of a two-storey 1860s masonry residence.

---

## **Aesthetic**

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine, double-storey, stone dwelling with a pleasing symmetry and simplicity of detailing that makes a significant contribution to a streetscape otherwise dominated by commercial buildings.

---

## **Social**

### CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

for its social significance to the students who attended St Clair's Private School between 1905 and the 1940s.

---

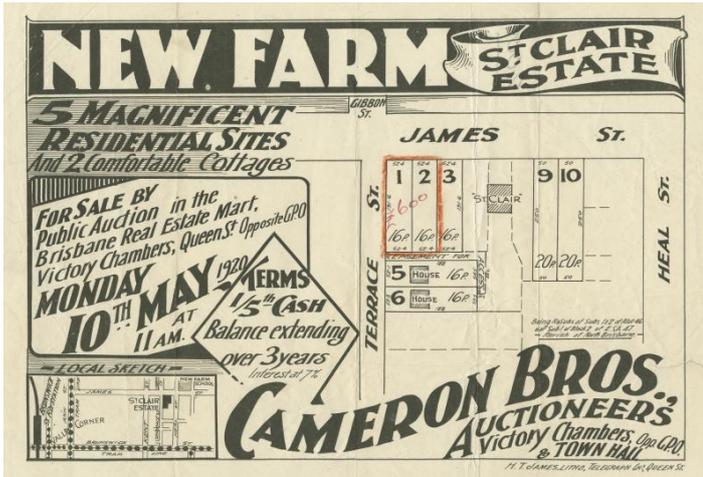
## **Historical association**

### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

for its association with the Sisters of Mercy of St Vincent's Orphanage in the 1860s.

## Supporting images



H.T. James (lithographer),  
'St. Clair Estate, New Farm', 1920,  
State Library of Queensland

## References

1. Brisbane City Council Properties on the Web
2. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
3. Brisbane City Council, Surveyor's Notebook, 27 April 1912, updated 11 Nov 1924 [in green]
4. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Maps, Detail Plan No 200, 2 Dec 1924
5. Brisbane City Council, *New Farm and Teneriffe Hill Heritage and Character Study*, Oct 1995, pg 113
6. Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland Certificates of Title.
7. *Queensland Post Office Directory*, 1868 [W Cairncross, farmer, Bowen Tce, New Farm]; 1906 [first mention of private school]
8. Bennett, H, 'New Farm from quality street to mixed assortment', *Brisbane Houses, Gardens, Suburbs and Congregations*, Papers No 22 Brisbane History Group, 2010 pg 152
9. Fisher, R. ed, 'Sites of Separation: Brisbane Heritage Trail', Brisbane History Group Tour No 26, 2009, pg 35-36
10. Jobson, J.X., 'Palmer, Sir Arthur Hunter (1819-1898)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pg 390-392
11. Schiavo, J. *New Farm: A study of land use and settlement to 1999*, pg 27
12. Benjamin, G. & Grant, G. *Reflections on New Farm*, New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc, New

Farm, 2008, pg 53-56

13. Watson, D. and McKay, K., *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century*, University of Queensland Library, St. Lucia, 1994, pg 47
14. Apperly, R. Irving, R. Reynolds R, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, 1989, pg 42-45
15. Griffiths, J., *Industry & Perseverance: A history of David Brown (1750-1836)*, Manuscript, Jan 2011, Searcher, Queanbeyan, pg 207
16. *Brisbane Courier*, 28 April 1870, pg 4
17. *Brisbane Courier*, 30 June 1882, pg 4
18. *Brisbane Courier*, 6 Nov 1886, pg 5
19. *Brisbane Courier*, 16 Nov 1886, pg 5
20. *Brisbane Courier*, 18 Aug 1899, pg 7
21. *Brisbane Courier*, 21 Dec 1917, pg 8
22. *Brisbane Courier*, 21 Oct 1929, pg 3
23. *Brisbane Courier*, 15 June 1933, pg 1
24. *Brisbane Courier*, 18 Jan 1934, pg 3

---

## Copyright Brisbane City Council

**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)



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*