

Heritage Citation



Colwyn

Key details

Addresses	At 14 Swinburne Street, Lutwyche, Queensland 4030
Type of place	House
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Queen Anne
Lot plan	L5_RP19325
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 November 2012 Date of Citation — January 2010
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls

'Colwyn' is an unusual example of a concrete block house built in the interwar period. Built in 1920 as a War Service Home, the house was constructed from the Ideal Concrete Block Company's concrete blocks. The house is important as a very early example of concrete block construction in Brisbane. 'Colwyn' adjoins another concrete block house at number 12 (built 1933) and together the houses are demonstrative of the use of alternative building materials in the interwar period.

History

From the 1870s, Lutwyche, along with Windsor, was Brisbane's principal brick making district. For this reason, the area has a higher percentage of brick cottages than most other suburbs. In the early 1880s, Fuller Street was known as William Street after William Williams, a brick-maker who purchased nine hectares of land in the vicinity in 1874 and owned four brickworks. The area also had a large proportion of workers associated with the brick making industry during the 1880s.

In 1912 Thomas Prentice and his wife Louisa Kate purchased three roods and fourteen and a half perches of land fronting Lutwyche Road. It was on this Lutwyche Road frontage that Thomas established his concrete block business in 1914, The Ideal Concrete Block Company, and beside the business was his residence. The business manufactured and sold the concrete building blocks on the premises.

Thomas Prentice established his concrete block manufacturing company on Lutwyche Road in 1914. As mentioned earlier, the Lutwyche area had several brick making businesses operating in this period. Thomas Prentice envisaged the potential for a concrete building block business in Brisbane. The first machine for the manufacture of concrete building blocks was invented in the United States of America by Harmon. S. Palmer in 1900. From around 1905 up until 1930 the concrete block became a popular building material in the United States. The technology used for this was quickly adopted in Australia as the concrete blocks provided an alternative to more traditional building materials such as timber, brick and stone and proved to be considerably cheaper. They were extremely durable and strong as well as being aesthetically pleasing. The Ideal Concrete Block Company was a very early concrete block manufactory in Brisbane, subsequently the few existing houses constructed from the concrete blocks are important as representatives of this form of building construction in Brisbane.

Thomas Prentice was an important member of the local community. As Alderman in the Windsor Town Council from 1919 to 1924 he contributed to the improvement of the local area. After the amalgamation of councils in 1925 and the creation of the Brisbane City Council Prentice served as an Alderman from 1925-1928, as well as being involved on several Council committees such as the Transit, Electric Light and Power Committee and the Parks, Recreation, Town Planning and Housing Committee. In an article in The Brisbane Courier dated Thursday 8 January 1925, Thomas Prentice was described as having:

Had a fairly long and varied experience of local authority work, and was always a keen advocate for the development of the Greater Brisbane area by the co-ordinations of the various authorities. He

has been keenly interested in the welfare of Windsor, and had done much for its advancement...his experience should prove a great help at the deliberations of the council in the development of the Brisbane of the future.¹

Prior to 1920 the property at 14 Swinburne Street (then known as Bruce Street) was vacant. In 1920 Prentice sold the sixteen perch and a quarter of a perch block to Frederick Royal Tate. In the same year Tate was given a War Service Homes Commission mortgage, and year later another.

At the close of the First World War in 1918, it became apparent to the Australian Government that those returning from the fighting would require subsequent housing for themselves and their families. During the war there was a shortage of housing, and according to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts, this shortage would certainly become worse as the men returned home. This belief was expressed in the War Service Homes Bill, presented to Parliament in December 1918. Its purpose was to enable "members of the Imperial Force and certain of their dependants to secure homes. There was a shortage of housing accommodation in Australia which would become accentuated by the return of the men who were still at the front".²

The War Service Homes Commission was set up under the leadership of Lieut. Colonel James Walker, and began operations in March 1919. The War Service Homes Commission was to assess the eligibility of those requesting housing advances. There were initially five options open to returned soldiers in relation to residences; one, to build a house on land already owned by the soldier requesting a loan; two, to purchase the land and then build; three, to purchase an already established house on land; four, to renovate an already existing house owned by an applicant; and five, to pay off an already existing mortgage on a property. Those veterans successful in their applications would then be given a low interest rate loan through the Government.

The interest charged under the scheme would be 5 per cent, plus a small amount extra to cover rates and insurance. The amount of time allowed for the repayment of a loan was twenty-five years for a timber, and thirty-seven years for brick. Although advances were given for already built houses, the Government preferred the loans be given to those building new houses in an effort to tackle the housing shortage throughout Australia in this period. This was outlined in the Brisbane Courier on Saturday 25 October 1919, "only in exceptional cases will houses already built be acquired for soldiers, the reason being that to transfer a property already built to a soldier applicant will not remedy the shortage of houses in Queensland".³

The applicant had a choice to either have the house built to a standard plan or could design his own plan and submit it to the War Service Homes Department, "The soldier has the choice of a number of standard plans of up-to-date dwellings, together with their estimated cost, but the 'Digger' may submit his own plan to the Department to be approved by its architect"⁴. Frederick Royal Tate served in the First World War in France from 1916 to 1917 with the 23rd/ 6th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force. As a returned soldier, Tate was eligible for a War Service Homes Commission Loan. Tate submitted his own design for 14 Swinburne Street. In 1921 Tate was first listed at the address. By 1925 Tate was recorded in the Electoral Rolls as residing in 'Colwyn' in Bruce Street.

The house at number 12, 'Braemar', built later in 1933 was also constructed from the Ideal Concrete Block Company's blocks. As a pair the houses make a very important contribution to the streetscape in Swinburne Street, as well as reflecting the history of this area.

Description

14 Swinburne Street is low set a concrete block residence built in the interwar period. The house has a transverse gable and an inferior street-facing gable with timber pediment over the concrete block exterior wall. The transverse gable also has a timber pediment on both ends of the house. The front verandah and stairs are timber, so too are the casement windows.

The listing applies to the house built in 1920 and does not include the postwar additions.

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:

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

the use of concrete blocks for residential buildings in Brisbane in the interwar period was unusual; the use of concrete blocks used for the construction of a War Service Home was unusual.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as an early example of concrete block construction in Brisbane using the newly developed concrete block manufacturing machines from the United States of America.

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, 'Greater Brisbane: Windsor Candidate', Thursday 8 January 1925
2. Joint Committee of Public Accounts, "Final Report", War Service Homes Commission, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1922
3. *The Brisbane Courier*, 25 October 1919
4. Simpson, Pamela. H., "Cheap, Quick and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building", *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 3 (1989), p. 108-118
5. *Historic Titles*, Department of Natural Resources and Water
6. Queensland Post Office Directories
7. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Survey Map
8. Queensland Electoral Rolls
9. Judy Gale Rechner, *Brisbane House Styles 1880 to 1940: a guide to the affordable house*, Brisbane: Brisbane History Group Studies No. 2, 1998
10. McCallum, Beres, *Walking a Changing Windsor: Explore 150 years of the Lutwyche Road Corridor*, Windsor and Districts Historical Society, 2009
11. Teague, D. R., *Windsor Town Council Chambers 1897-1997: A Brief History of the Chambers Building: Windsor Town Council (1887-1903): Windsor Town Council (1904-1925)*, Windsor and Districts Historical Society, 1997
12. *The Brisbane Courier*, 'Advertisement', Saturday 15 January 1916
13. Official War Record, "Frederick Royal Tate", National Archives Australia
14. *The Brisbane Courier*, "War Service Homes", Saturday 25 October 1919, p15
15. *The Longreach Reader*, "War Service Homes: Information for Returned Soldiers", Friday 6 February 1925, p24&25
16. Australian Division of War Service Homes. *War Service Homes Jubilee 1919-1969*
17. Joint Committee of Public Accounts, Fourth Progress Report: War Service Home Scheme, Queensland, 1920
18. War Service Homes Act: Report of the War Service Homes Commission, 1923-24, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1924

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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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