

Heritage Citation



Delamore (former)

Key details

Also known as	Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception novitiate house, Mount Alvernia secondary girl's school
Addresses	At 115 Turner Road, Kedron, Queensland 4031
Type of place	Residence (group), House, Private school
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Classical
Lot plan	L28_SP219037
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2003 Date of Citation — October 2014

Construction Roof: Corrugated iron;
Walls: Masonry - Render

People/associations Alfred Robert Linus Wright and Thomas Holme (Architect);
Henry St. John Somerset (Occupant);
William Edward Parry-Okeden (Occupant)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

This single-storey rendered brick residence was constructed circa 1888 for Henry St John Somerset, Paymaster for the Queensland Treasury. Known as 'Delamore', it is one of only two remaining late nineteenth century grand residences in Kedron and reflects the Brisbane gentry's aspirations of the period. The house remained a private residence for 50 years until it was transferred to the Institute of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 1939 for use as a novitiate house, and from 1956, Mount Alvernia secondary girl's school. This fine building now operates as a community centre.

History

In October 1887 this property was purchased by Henry St John Somerset, Paymaster in the Queensland Treasury.

'Delamore' was built circa 1888 just before the downturn in the economy took hold. Somerset's residence was possibly designed by architect Alfred Robert Linus Wright. It is known that tenders for the building were called, in November 1887, by the architectural firm of FF Holmes where Wright was working at the time.

According to a reference in *The Queenslander*, Henry's wife Sarah gave birth to a son on 6 September 1889 at 'Delamore'. It has been suggested that Somerset was following a family tradition in building 'Delamore'. His parents, Daniel and Dora Somerset, who emigrated from Belfast, built a succession of grand homes in Brisbane, including 'Oakwal' in 1859, 'St Johns Wood' in 1864 and 'Rosemount' in 1885.

Somerset road was named after Henry St John Somerset. However, the Somerset family did not remain for long at 'Delamore', probably due to the Queensland National Bank foreclosing on their mortgage in 1892. The property was transferred to the bank in August 1892 without the mortgage being released. A contributing factor for Somerset's financial difficulties may well have been that it coincided with the State's economic depression.

W E Parry-Okeden and family subsequently rented the house, presumably from the National Bank, from about 1900-1912. The residence reflected the social prominence of William Parry-Okeden, who had an illustrious public service career in Queensland. After a varied career in law and pastoralism, including terms as a Police Magistrate at Cunnamulla, Charleville and Gayndah, Parry-Okeden was appointed Principal Under Secretary of Queensland and then in 1895, Police Commissioner.

The Parry-Okedens lived in great style at 'Delamore' with a retinue of servants to care for the family and guests. The marriages of their daughters in St Andrew's Church, Lutwyche and the well-publicised receptions at 'Delamore' in the local press highlighted the social standing of the Parry-Okedens in the Brisbane community at

the time.

The last and longest residing private resident was Howard Robbins, a herbalist who was listed in the Post Office Directories at this address from 1913 to 1936. The Robbins family rented the house from the National Bank of Queensland for a number of years before buying it in 1920. The property was transferred to Daisy Lucinda Robbins, wife of George Arthur Howard Robbins, in October 1920. Two mortgages were taken out in her name with the National Bank of Australasia. The first one was in 1920 for 2,500 pounds, with the second one in 1926. The property was transferred to the Institute of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in March 1939.

According to one source, 'Delamore' was reputedly purchased by the Franciscan Sisters for use as a novitiate house in 1935. As Robbins apparently did not want to sell 'Delamore' to the Catholic Church, he asked the exorbitant price of ?13,000 for the house and 4.45 hectares of land. Using an intermediary instead, the Sisters were able to purchase the property for only ?4,500 but did not officially become the deed holders until 1939 because of problems in transferring the title. 'Delamore' was renovated and officially opened as a novitiate house by His Grace Archbishop Duhig on 19 March 1939. An extract in *More Historic Homes of Brisbane* quotes Sister Mary Agnella saying:

...For years we had looked longingly at the beautiful house and grounds of 'Delamore' which were right beside us at Kedron ...

The Missionary Sisters have made a significant contribution to education and aged care during their long association with 'Delamore', a period spanning nearly 70 years. Mount Alvernia, the girls' secondary school, opened in 1956 in the convent house (Delamore) to provide Catholic education in the northern suburbs. The property has been refurbished in recent years as a community centre with retirement units.

Description

This large high set, rendered brick house with perforated brick base, has a front verandah with a triple-gabled entrance and bay windows extending on to the roofline. The wide verandah with cast iron balustrades wraps around the building. Broad concrete steps fan out from the front entrance. The house originally had a long circular drive running from Somerset Road.

This is a 'grand' house with striking features such as the front elevation central 'tower' (widow's walk) above the entrance hall. Access to this was once via a cast iron spiral staircase (since removed).

The house is said to retain also some of its striking internal features such as its original doors with deep red etched lights.

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 history of late nineteenth century settlement in Kedron prior to the subdivision of large estates.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as a fine rare example of a late nineteenth century grand residence.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its attractive and refined design, including a central tower section above the entrance hall and both internal and external decorative features.

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

as the former residence of two prominent public servants; Henry St. John Somerset, Paymaster in the Queensland Treasury, and William Edward Parry-Okeden, Commissioner of Police; and as the convent for the Franciscan Sisters who founded Mt Alvernia College, from the late 1930s until the early twenty-first century;

References

1. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets
2. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
3. Queensland Post Office Directories 1913-1938
4. Royle, M., *Northern Suburbs Heritage Tour*, Brisbane History Group, 1993
5. Summer, Ray, *More Historic Homes of Brisbane*, National Trust of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 1982
6. Teague, DR., *The History of Kedron*, Colonial Press, 1976
7. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994

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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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