

Heritage



Elliss' Residences

Key details

Addresses	At 558 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Cottage, House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Gothic
Lot plan	L11_RP10397
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Information — November 2003
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

This row of three small cottages was constructed circa 1864 for seaman William Ellis as an investment property. He owned the cottages for almost 20 years before selling them in 1882. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, Spring Hill deteriorated to become an unpopular, derelict part of Brisbane. In the early 1980s this

property was refurbished and restored by architect Blair Wilson. It was one of the first of many nineteenth century Spring Hill buildings to be restored as part of the regeneration of the suburb that took place in the 1980s and 1990s.

History

With the closure of the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement in 1842 and the subsequent arrival of free settlers, Brisbane began to expand away from the river. The boundaries of the penal settlement had been marked by government roads, of which Boundary Street, Spring Hill was one. No Aboriginals were allowed to cross these boundary streets into the settlement after dusk.

It was not until 1856 that Wickham Terrace was surveyed and land along Leichhardt Street was pegged out for land sales. On 15 June 1857, Richard Pritchard, a resident of Brisbane Town, purchased Suburban Portion 214 in Spring Hill. He paid £40.10.6 for 1 acre, 1 rood and 14 perches of land. Pritchard subdivided Portion 214 into suburban allotments and conducted a land sale.

On 10 September 1863, William Ellis bought subdivision 11, comprising 13.25 perches of cleared land along Boundary Street. Boundary Street was “all hills and dales, and resembled a switchback railway, with one stone and three wooden culverts in the hollows”¹. As a result, it was an unattractive area that attracted simple workers cottages with shingle roofs and lean-tos at the back. Ellis mortgaged the land on 18 June the following year. The mortgage was for £60 with the lender being Thomas Frances, who lent a further £63 to Ellis on 14 July 1864. The title deeds indicated that Ellis was already a Brisbane resident when he bought subdivision 11 but there is no William Ellis listed in the *Queensland Post Office Directories* until 1874. In that year, Ellis, a seaman, is recorded as living in Ann Street, Brisbane. By 1878, Ellis had moved to Grey Street, South Brisbane. It is possible that Ellis used his two mortgages to help pay for the construction of a duplex comprising three small cottages. This row of attached cottages would have been built as rental properties as this was a common practice throughout Spring Hill. Ellis would have had a ready market of tenants to draw from both the workers at the nearby Brisbane wharves and the new migrants who were arriving in the colony of Queensland. Thus it is thought that the cottages at 558-562 Boundary Street were built circa 1864.

Ellis held onto the property until 1882, when, on 3 October, he sold it to Moses Ward. Ward, a chemist who lived in Gregory Terrace, only held the property for three years. On 17 July 1885, Ellen Lilla Ryder Blackman and her husband Frederick Archibald Blackman became the new owners of 558-562 Boundary Street. The Blackmans were graziers who lived at “Waterview”, Hamilton. Their tenure of ownership was short-lived for they transferred the property to James Byrne on New Years Eve 1885. Byrne paid for the site through a mortgage of £700 that he obtained through Thomas Bradshaw on the day of purchase. The 1885-86 edition of the *Queensland Post Office Directories* indicated that James Byrne was either a compositor who lived in Vulture Street, or a cabman living at Bulimba Road, East Brisbane.

The Brisbane Town Council had gazetted Milne Street by 1885, with the *Queensland Post Office Directories* showing five residences situated between Milne and Bradley Streets. The three cottages built for William Ellis may have been numbered 26-30 Boundary Street and were occupied by labourer William Rossborough, railway porter Samuel Milford and shipping clerk Charles McGowan. On 5 November 1888, Edward George Madley purchased the property. Madley, a resident of Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, mortgaged the Boundary Street site on the date of purchase. He borrowed £300 through the Brisbane Savings, Loan and Banking Company.

The next owner was Garrett Shanahan who gained the title deeds on 6 December 1895. Two weeks later, he transferred the property to his relatives Rebecca and Alice Shanahan. When Rebecca died on 25 May 1898,

Alice became the sole owner of Ellis's Cottages.

On 1 February 1908, Mary Tyrell, the wife of Edward James Tyrell obtained the property from Alice Shanahan. Mary Tyrell mortgaged the site for ?135 on 18 November 1908, with the lenders being Frank Buckle and Fanny Jane Bays. Mary Tyrell quickly disposed of her investment property with Isabella Maria Bradford gaining the title deeds on 17 May 1909. By 1915, when a sewerage map for Spring Hill was prepared, the block between Milne and Bradley Streets contained eight residences. Ellis's cottages were numbered as 558, 560 and 562 Boundary Street. They had verandahs at the front and back and the water closets (toilets) were located at the far end of their back yards. On 24 July 1918, Isabella Bradford took out a mortgage on the cottages with the loan provided by her husband Joseph Blakely Bradford and by Samuel Alexander Pessey. The Union Trustee Company of Australia took over Joseph Bradford's share of the mortgage on 3 October 1921.

Isabella Bradford disposed of the cottages to John Gray Tritton on 26 May 1926. Tritton utilised his rental property for nine years before disposing on 4 December 1935. On that day, Eliza Hillmann took out a loan through the National Bank of Australia, in order to pay for the purchase of 558-562 Boundary Street. Eliza died on 13 May 1950 and it two years to settle her estate, so that the Ellis cottages were not inherited by Clare Francis Brown and Juanita Daphne Thomason until 2 May 1952. On 20 January of the following year, they sold the property to Harold Thomas Andrews. Prior to the purchase, Andrews had applied to the Brisbane City Council, on 2 December 1952, to undertake some building work on the cottages. Using the property for rental and investment purposes, Andrews obtained a mortgage from the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) on 6 March 1953. Andrews held onto the property for the next 19 years during a period when Spring Hill deteriorated into a run-down, seedy part of Brisbane.

On 1 November 1972, architect Blair Mansfield Wilson purchased the cottages. He retained it as rental property until the death, in 1981, of the last long-term tenant William Mateer. On 6 August 1981, Blair Wilson applied to the Council to gain approval for alterations and repairs to the cottages. He wanted to rehabilitate the townhouses, which were in a derelict condition. His work on the cottages was one of the first such projects undertaken in Spring Hill, where the renovation and restoration of its nineteenth century cottages would develop into a major facelift for the suburb during the 1980s and 1990s. By 1994, few nineteenth century cottages remained along Boundary Street, though *The Courier Mail* noted that Ellis's Cottages, as restored by Blair Wilson, were among the more prominent examples remaining within the streetscape.

References

1. H.A.P., "Bygone Brisbane – Early 'Seventies – Spring Hill Memories", *The Courier Mail*, 28 November 1925
2. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
3. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
4. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Maps for Spring Hill, (1914-1915)
5. *The Courier Mail*, 28 December 1994
6. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
7. John Oxley Library, newspaper clippings file – Spring Hill
8. Queensland Government, *Queensland Pioneers Index 1829-1889*, (Brisbane: Department of Justice and Attorney General, 2000)
9. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949

Copyright Brisbane City Council

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.

prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised March 2023)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane