

Heritage Citation



Holy Cross Catholic Church (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 28 Chalk Street, Woollowin, Queensland 4030
Type of place	Church, Residence (group), Residence (singular)
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Gothic
Lot plan	L155_RP19118; L156_RP19118; L149_RP19118; L150_RP19118; L151_RP19118; L152_RP19118; L153_RP19118; L154_RP19118; L1_RP19127
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — December 2011
Construction	Roof: Ribbed metal; Walls: Face brick

People/associations Andrea Giovanni Stombuco (Architect);
Hall and Dods - 1911 extensions (Architect);
J M O'Keefe (Builder);
John Murtagh Macrossan (Association);
Sisters of Mercy (Association)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (D) Representative; (G) Social; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association

History

This Gothic style brick church was designed by Andrea Stombuco, the renowned Florentine architect. Stombuco's earliest work in Brisbane was for the Catholic Church, including St Patrick's Church in Fortitude Valley (1880-82), All Hallow's Catholic School, Petrie Bight (1880-82) and the first Sacred Heart Church at Sandgate (1881). Stombuco also designed St Andrew's Church of England, South Brisbane, 1878-83.

The first Church of the Holy Cross at Wooloowin was opened by Bishop Dunne on 22 August 1886. On the day after the opening of Holy Cross the *Brisbane Courier* noted:

The building will compare favourably with any church in the suburban districts, and to visitors yesterday it was a matter of surprise that the small village of Lutwyche had sufficient enterprise to erect so substantial a structure. To anyone alighting from the train at the Lutwyche platform the Holy Cross Church is a conspicuous object. It is about 100 yards distant, and surrounded by forest, which lends to the building itself a very picturesque appearance.

In the 1880s, Wooloowin, in the Windsor Shire, was on the fringes of urban Brisbane, but was developing quickly as the population spread outwards from the inner city suburbs during the building boom. The opening of the railway line to Sandgate in 1882 encouraged residential development in the area. Several estates, containing mostly 16 perch allotments, were offered for sale at Wooloowin during the 1880s, including Thorrold Town, Bradshaw Estate and Dalmeny Estate. An advertisement for Thorrold Town in the early 1880s described the estate as "near to three national schools ... surrounded by the churches of several denominations" and with "railway and buses running every few minutes each day in the week". Wooloowin Station was known as Lutwyche until 1890. The electric tramline along Lutwyche Road opened in 1914, terminating at the junction with Kedron Park Road.

Moves to establish a Catholic Church in the Wooloowin area date from 1885 when a group of about twenty people gathered in the Temperance Hall in Stoneleigh Street to discuss the need for a local church. The nearest Catholic church was St Patrick's in Fortitude Valley, some four miles away. A survey had shown that around 200 families would benefit if a church were to be built at Wooloowin. There were large numbers of Irish Catholics in the local area, including the Hon John Murtagh Macrossan who became Colonial Secretary in 1890 and was instrumental in galvanising efforts to establish a church in his local community.

The site of Holy Cross was purchased by Bishop Quinn who presented it to the Sisters of Mercy for the purposes of establishing a Magdalen Asylum. These institutions, a feature of Irish society until relatively recently, provided shelter for unmarried mothers and other "wayward and uncontrollable" women, who often worked in an

associated laundry. The Magdalen Asylum, and the adjoining Holy Cross Steam Laundry, were built in 1888-9. In keeping with Archbishop Dunne's concept of the Magdalen asylum as a "monastic sanctuary for fallen" women the church included a wing where these women could attend mass without being seen by or mingling with the rest of the congregation. The Asylum was demolished in 1977. The laundry is now listed on the Queensland Heritage Register.

One acre of the 12 acre property was donated by the Sisters of Mercy for the purposes of building a church. A building committee was formed and Andrea Stombuco was engaged to draw up plans for the church. Unfortunately the original plans were mistakenly thrown out and burnt. New plans had to be drawn, causing a delay in calling tenders. The contract for £1,202 was let to J.M. O'Keefe, an Irish Catholic builder who frequently worked with Stombuco. The foundation stone of the church was laid by Bishop Dunne on 14 March 1885.

The opening ceremony of the church was brought forward by four weeks as the contractor was ahead of schedule. By the opening on 22 August 1886, the church was finished except for the window glass, and as the Courier noted, the "boisterous wind was severely felt by the worshippers". Approximately £600 was in hand at the opening of the church, leaving a debt of some £650, including an architect's fee of £60. The base stone of the church was supplied by Petrie's Quarry and the bricks came from Lutwyche Quarry which donated 10,000 bricks. The Lutwyche Quarry was owned by James Carroll, a co-founder of the Queensland Irish Association, and another example of the strong associations of this church with Brisbane's Irish community. The Carroll family has remained part of the congregation of Holy Cross for four generations.

The new church was initially without a resident priest. Sunday morning mass was taken by Father Corrigan of the Valley, Father Dorrigan of Red Hill and Father Brady of South Brisbane. Religious instruction was carried out by nuns, who travelled from Nudgee, and lay members of the community. The members of the first confirmation class were prepared by James Duhig, then a young man living in nearby Stoneleigh Street. School was taught in the church by the resident Sisters of Mercy from 1890 and an infants' school built on the site in 1896. The first resident priest, Father Dunham, was appointed in 1892, the year before Woolloowin formally became a parish. In 1911 the church was extended, to a design by Hall and Dods, allowing for 200 extra people to be accommodated.

A Sisters of Mercy convent was built on the site facing Morris Street in 1912. Hall and Dods were the architects responsible for the design of the building, which was constructed by Edward Duhig. Archbishop Duhig dedicated the convent on 14 February 1913. An enlargement comprised of a duplication of the building on the northern side was carried out during the 1950s. This extension was demolished in 1990. The convent has since been restored to its original 1913 configuration.

A presbytery, designed by architect T.R. Hall, was opened by Duhig in 1914. The presbytery was situated two blocks from the church on the corner of Chalk and Torrance Streets.

A modern church, designed by architects Cullen, Hargraves and Mooney, was opened by Archbishop O'Donnell on the site adjacent to the original church in 1968. The original Holy Cross Church and subsequent associated buildings on the site have provided an important centre for worship and education for the local Catholic community, particularly the Irish, for over a century.

Description

FORMER CHURCH

The former Holy Cross Catholic Church is a brown brick, Gothic style building with steep gable roofs clad in ribbed metal decking. The building is part of a large site containing the Holy Cross Laundry, Convent and numerous post-war buildings associated with the church, laundry and Sisters of Mercy. The old church sits between a modern church and hall complex, and is currently used as a hall. It has undergone extensive changes over the years which have been in keeping with Stombuco's original design.

L-shaped in plan, the main northern wing of the building comprises the original nave which was extended towards the front in 1911, including an entry porch. Two side entry vestibules and a sanctuary to the south have been added at a later date. The eastern wing, to one side of the sanctuary comprises a hall and simple porch. To the western side of the sanctuary, a small timber framed building (possibly once the vestry) now houses toilets.

Exterior

The steep gable roofs of the two main wings are finished to each gable end by a decorative bargeboard and quatrefoil vent. The lower gables over the vestibules and sanctuary sit behind parapet walls. The roof of the timber building is clad in corrugated iron with overhanging eaves.

The side walls of the two main wings are divided into bays by buttresses. Windows with crenellated rendered surrounds sit within each bay. To the main wing, three steel framed casement and top hung windows sit below a decorative panel. Timber framed twin lancets in the eastern wing consist of a clear glass pivoted window with a fixed leadlight trefoil window above. Contrasting with the brown brick walls, are rendered window surrounds, hoodmoulds, sloping sections of buttresses, plinth and horizontal bands across the front facade. The walls of the original church sit on a stone plinth.

The entry vestibules and sanctuary are built in a much darker brick, with corner buttresses. Several different colours of brick have been employed for decoration in the form of window heads, cappings and horizontal bands. The heads to these windows are more angular in form. Two layers of parapet walls form the gable ends of the vestibules. The vestibules are accessed by brick stairs which have brick balustrades. One of the vestibules can be accessed by a ramp.

The front, northern facade of the building comprises a central entry porch reached by a flight of stairs to each side. A lancet opening sits centrally within the front wall of the porch. Behind, a large arched double timber door accesses the nave. The skillion roof over the porch, enclosed on each side by timber battens, forms a gable to the front with a decorative bargeboard matching the main gable. Within the nave's front wall is a three bay gothic window centrally located above the porch and a single lancet to each side.

Similar in design, the eastern gable end of the building features three trefoil windows above a simple open timber porch. A pair of smaller timber doors within an arched opening sit below.

Interior

Entry to the building via the front door is made under a timber gallery. This opens out into a spacious nave. Large hammer-beam trusses support diagonally laid timber boards to the underside of the roof. The timber floor is raised over the sanctuary and steps down again into the eastern wing. Here, rafters with collar ties support the roof.

Intactness

Externally, the building appears as a homogeneous whole, although the entry vestibules and sanctuary are obviously later additions. Replacement of the original nave windows with the current steel ones has occurred at some stage, whilst the stone mullioned window in the front facade has been reinforced externally by a sheet of

clear glass. The fabric of the building is very intact although major cracking is evident in the eastern wing.

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

for the evidence it provides concerning the development of the Woolloowin, Clayfield, Ascot area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; and as part of a nineteenth century precinct that included a Magdalen Asylum with a separate church wing for its inmates to attend mass.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an example of a small, brick church of Gothic style built in the 1880s, with later extensions.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as part of a large and diverse Catholic complex that includes a laundry (c.1889), Convent (1912) and Presbytery (1914).

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 service to and connection with an important part of the lives of the successive generations who either worshipped or were educated on this site.

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

to the Catholic community and Sisters of Mercy as the centre of a large Catholic precinct which originated with the construction of the church in 1886 on land donated by the Sisters of Mercy from that set aside for what came to be known as the Magdalen Asylum.

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 John Murtagh Macrossan who encouraged the establishment of a Catholic Church at Woollooin, and later became Colonial Secretary, prominent architect Andrea Stombuco who designed the church, prominent Brisbane builder J.M. O'Keefe, who built the church and as an example of the work of architects Hall and Dods who designed the 1911 extensions of the church in keeping with Stombuco's design.

References

1. Brisbane Centenary Celebrations Committee 1924, *Brisbane Centenary Official Historical Souvenir*, Brisbane
2. Clark H.R. and D.R. Keenan. *Brisbane Tramways: The Last Decade*, Sans Souci, NSW: Transit Press, 1977
3. Department of Environment Entry in the *Queensland Heritage Register* 600359
4. Fisher, R. 1991, "John Arthur Manus O'Keefe, Irishman: Stombuco's building associate in boomtime

Brisbane", Brisbane: *Mining, Building, Story Bridge, the Windmill*, BHG Papers no.101

5. *Holy Cross 1886-1986* 1986, Holy Cross Centenary Committee, Woolloowin
6. Kerr, J 1988, *Brunswick Street, Bowen Hills and Beyond: the Railways of the Northern suburbs of Brisbane*, Australian Railway Historical Society, Brisbane
7. O'Leary, Rev J. 1914, *A Catholic Miscellany: Containing Items of Interest to Queenslanders, Irishmen and Irish Australians*, J. O'Leary, St James' Presbytery, Coorparoo
8. Steer, G.R. 1944, "Brisbane tramways: their history and development", *RHSJ*, vol.3, no.3. (May 1944)
9. Thorrold Town Estate Map, Woolloowin, 1 July 1882?, JOL, no.2787
10. Watson, Donald and Judith McKay. *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*. (St. Lucia: U of Q Press, 1984)

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