

## Heritage Citation



### Illawarra Buildings

#### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Petrie Mansions
<b>Addresses</b>	At 244 Petrie Terrace, Petrie Terrace, Queensland 4000
<b>Type of place</b>	Flat building, Terrace house
<b>Period</b>	Victorian 1860-1890
<b>Style</b>	Filigree
<b>Lot plan</b>	L3_SP143847; L2_SP143847; L5_SP157357; L6_SP157357
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — February 2011

**Construction** Roof: Corrugated iron;  
Walls: Masonry - Render

**People/associations** Andrea Giovanni Stombuco (Architect);  
J.A.M. O'Keefe (Builder)

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

This row of terrace houses was erected in 1886-87 and designed by prominent Brisbane architect Andrea Giovanni Stombuco. Originally named the 'Illawarra Buildings', it was built as a rental property for affluent tenants. By the 1930s, with the decline of Petrie Terrace as a fashionable suburb, the 'Illawarra Buildings' had become a low-cost boarding house and flats. The building had so deteriorated by the 1970s that its future was in doubt. But in 1980, H. and A. Garms purchased the building and converted it into one of Brisbane's most upmarket restaurants, 'Petrie Mansions'. Their restoration work, together with its significance as one of Brisbane's few remaining terrace house rows, has ensured that 'Petrie Mansions' has become a significant landmark to the people of Brisbane.

## History

This site originally was part of a purchase of crown land made by the Right Reverend James Quinn of Brisbane on 16 September 1861. Quinn had been appointed the first Catholic Bishop of Brisbane in 1859. He paid ?550.5s for the one-acre and 22 perches of allotment 307 that fronted Petrie Terrace. In June 1865, Quinn expanded his property holdings to 7 acres and 9 perches by purchasing the adjacent allotment 306. After subdividing his land, Quinn transferred ownership of subdivision 18 of portion 2 of allotment 307 to Adam Fiebig, who had become Quinn's business partner.

This part of Petrie Terrace soon became known as Bishop's Hill. The 1866 economic depression stalled sales of Quinn's subdivisions. The steep slope of Bishop's Hill made house construction difficult as sites had to be dug-out to be made level and retaining walls often had to be built to combat the effects of heavy rain and soil slippage. The Bishop's Hill streets (Wellington & Claredon Parade, Mountjoy & Belgrave & Kensington Place, St James Crescent, Elston Terrace, Earl & Sackville & Rutland Streets, Regent & Kehoe Lane) were named after the streets in the fashionable St. James district of London. Fiebig sold subdivision 18 (10 perches) to John Gilfoyle on 4 May 1869. After Gilfoyle's death on 24 January 1874, subdivision 18 went to his widow, Sarah. Quinn died on 18 August 1881 and his unsold land passed to Mathew Quinn and James Murray.

On 10 February 1883, an auction of Quinn's land, advertised as Bishop's Hill, was held at Arthur Martin and Company's City Auction Mart. Among the land for sale were Lots 19 and 20 situated at the corner of what was then called Mountjoy Place and Petrie Terrace. Sarah Gilfoyle purchased these two lots, comprising 18.5 perches, on 19 March 1883. In 1886, construction began on a row of terrace houses on Lots 18, 19 and 20 for Sarah Gilfoyle. The builder was John Arthur Manis O'Keefe, who, in 1881, had erected the row of terrace houses next-door at 226-230 Petrie Terrace. O'Keefe gained prominence as Quinn's preferred contractor. He built St. Patrick's Church in Fortitude Valley, St. Andrew's Church in South Brisbane and the first part of St. Joseph's

Christian Brothers School in Gregory Terrace. The architect was the eccentric, Italian-born Andrea Giovanni Stombuco (1820-1907). Stombuco was a prominent Brisbane architect, who would later design eight churches, including St Patrick's Catholic Church, the All Hallows School, St Joseph's Christian Brothers School at Gregory Terrace, two commercial buildings and six residences including his own grand Hamilton home 'Palma Rosa'.

To finance the construction, Sarah Gilfoyle took out a mortgage on her land through Edward O'Donnell MacDevitt on 25 November 1886. The three imposing terrace houses had been completed at a cost of ?1,800 by 1888. Gilfoyle named the terrace houses the 'Illawarra Buildings' and they provided sweeping views of Brisbane town, the river and surrounding districts. The 'Illawarra Buildings' were leased as three separate addresses – Numbers 1, 2 and 3. The buildings were offered as rental accommodation for people of means. The first tenants were Mrs Treleaven, a boarding-house keeper at Number 1, John Logan, W.J.Clark, A. Semple and J. Hemper who were Mrs Treleaven's boarders at Number 2, and Thomas J. Byrnes, a barrister at Number 3. Byrnes would later enter the Queensland Parliament, rising to become Attorney and then Chief Secretary (Premier) where he died in office on 27 September 1898.

Sarah Gilfoyle retained ownership of the 'Illawarra Buildings' until August 1908, when title was transferred to Edith Jane Johnstone, a spinster. Edith married Charles Graham on 29 March 1909 and this event may have influenced her decision to dispose of her property at 242 Petrie Terrace. For in December 1909, Edith Graham transferred the row of terrace houses to Falkner Minchin Hewson. On 31 March 1926, Hewson sold the site to Michael Gattons.

With the development of Brisbane, Petrie Terrace, like Spring Hill, lost its status as a fashionable address. By the 1930s, it had deteriorated into a run-down, inner-city suburb, containing low-cost rental housing. It attracted artists, actors, students and others seeking such accommodation. The 1927 Brisbane City Council sewerage plans show the property, at the corner of Mountjoy Street and Petrie Terrace, as three separate residences – Nos. 230, 234 and 238 Petrie Terrace. By then they were no longer known as the 'Illawarra Buildings'. The buildings alternated in usage from flats to a cheap boarding house and the row of terrace houses gradually fell into disrepair. But their location on one of Brisbane's busiest roads close to the city meant that the terrace houses provided a good financial return, no matter what their state of repair was. This may explain why the site has seen so few changes of ownership.

During World War II, a significant structure was added to the 'Petrie Mansion' site. This was a private air raid shelter that was placed on the open land in Mountjoy Street as a result of a wartime directive from the Brisbane City Council. On 23 March 1942, the Protection of Persons and Property Order No. 1B was issued by the Queensland Government. It gave Council wider powers to ensure that air raid shelters were built on private premises. The Order made it a responsibility of the owners of properties housing 15 or more occupants to build an air raid shelter for their tenants. Michael Gattons would have received a letter from Council ordering him to construct an air raid shelter for the residents of his terrace houses. By 30 June 1942, a total of 625 private shelters were approved under the provisions of Orders 1 and 1B, with the shelter built by Gattons being of the standard pillbox design. After the war, their property owners demolished most of these shelters and the pillbox shelter at 'Petrie Mansions' is one of the few surviving examples in Brisbane.

After Michael Gattons died on 14 December 1944, the property only changed hands four more times. On 4 June 1945, the Queensland Public Curator's Office took control of the property. Pearl and Eric Francis Jones obtained the site from the Public Curator in 1964.

By 1969, the property was considered as a potential commercial site for mixed development. What held this form of development back was the prohibitive cost of restoring the former 'Illawarra Buildings'. A fire had damaged the buildings prior to 1972, and despite the repairs that were undertaken, a Brisbane City Council report described

their condition as being “dilapidated and unsightly”. Two years later, the Council was recommending prosecution of the owners for allowing the three unsightly buildings to remain on the site. By 1977, J. Bennett & Co was proposing to convert the site into offices.

On 8 April 1980, Harry William Garms and his wife Ann Mary Garms purchased the property and began restoration work on the building. The purpose was to convert the row of the terrace houses into a single restaurant. When the site reopened as the trendy ‘Petrie Mansions’ restaurant, the building had been revitalised such that it became a familiar landmark to the residents of Brisbane. Its location meant that it could be viewed from the busy transport routes of College Road, the Normanby Fiveways, Countess Street and Petrie Terrace. As an important Brisbane building, it has been featured in the Petrie Terrace heritage trail books that have been produced by the National Trust, the Brisbane History Group and University of Queensland History Professor Rod Fisher over the last twenty-five years.

After disposing of ‘Petrie Mansions’ to Sukkak Pty Ltd in August 1982, Ann and Harry Garms went on to do a similar restaurant conversion to ‘Roseville’ and later became the owners of the ‘Tivoli’ theatre-restaurant. ‘Petrie Mansions’ continued as a fashionable restaurant and wedding reception centre under its new owners. Ochet Pty Ltd took ownership in June 1988 and transferred title to the current owners, Graycor Pty Ltd in July 2001. The revival of Petrie Terrace that has resulted from the renovation of such buildings as ‘Petrie Mansions’ can be seen by the return to popularity of inner-city living. As a result of this desire by many people to reside close to the Central Business District, during the 1990s many old buildings in suburbs such as New Farm, Fortitude Valley and Petrie Terrace were converted into apartments. In 2002, Graycorp put forward a proposal to convert ‘Petrie Mansions’ back to their original function, as multiple residences. Thus the history of ‘Petrie Mansions’ has gone full circle and this row of terrace houses has returned to their place as one of the most fashionable addresses situated close to the city.

---

## Description

This two-storey masonry terrace house occupies a corner site and is divided into three equal divisions. Each division consists of a large bay that defines the entry and three smaller bays. The individual entries are emphasised by the entrance gates in the masonry retaining wall/fence and the large arch in the lattice valance to the ground floor verandah. Three chimneys also denote the three-part division.

The hipped roof is sheeted in corrugated steel, with a separate curved roof to the front verandah. The walls are rendered brickwork and the verandah posts are timber with cast lace balustrade, probably of recent origin, to the upper floor, and an arched lattice valance to the ground floor. Fenestration consists of six french doors to the upper level verandah and entry doors with sidelights and fanlights to the lower level.

The rear of the building, visible from Mountjoy and Terrace Streets, consists of three two-storey brick annexes with hipped roofs linked to the main building by a curved roofed rear verandah.

The building is sited above street level, behind a garden, with masonry stairs leading from gates to each entry door. The front fence consists of a rendered brick retaining wall with engaged piers. The steel fencing panels, cast lace gates and the side return fence to Mountjoy Street appear to be of more recent origin.

A private, pillbox-style air raid shelter constructed during World War II is located in the side yard facing Mountjoy Street.

---

## 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 a fashionable rental address in the 1880s that later deteriorated into a low-cost boarding house/flats in the mid-twentieth century, before being restored to prominence in the 1980s, mirroring the changing social and residential patterns of Petrie Terrace.

---

#### Rarity

##### CRITERION B

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

As one of the few surviving rows of terrace houses in Brisbane.

---

#### Aesthetic

##### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

As a fine example of Victorian Filigree terrace houses that have become a landmark feature of Petrie Terrace and make a significant aesthetic contribution to the streetscape.

---

## 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 building was designed by prominent architect Andrea Giovanni Stombuco who designed a number of prominent buildings in Brisbane including his own private residence, 'Palma Rosa'.

---

## References

1. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website
2. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
3. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets.

---

## 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 September 2020)



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*