

Heritage Citation



La Quercia

Key details

Addresses	At 42 Villiers Street, New Farm, Queensland 4005
Type of place	House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L2_RP48722
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — March 2017
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic

'La Quercia' is a substantial, timber house constructed circa 1886 for Patrick Walsh Crowe, a commission agent and mine owner. Situated in exclusive Villiers Street, the house was built on land purchased by William Villiers Brown in 1850. This area, like much of New Farm, was further subdivided into generous housing allotments which appealed to Brisbane's wealthier classes during the rapid population growth and economic boom of the 1880s.

History

La Quercia ('The Oak' in Italian) is a large, elite timber residence built in New Farm in about 1886 for mining agent, Patrick Walsh Crowe.

New Farm was surveyed into large allotments for European free settlement in 1843. These were purchased by Brisbane's emerging wealthy class as investments or to establish fine villas in the best locations, usually on high ground or near the river. One example was 'Merthyr', the grand home of Queensland's Premier, Sir Samuel Griffiths, built on 16 acres in Llewellyn Street. Middle and working class houses occupied the less desirable positions, giving the area a closely-grained, mixed status character.

William Anthony Brown, Brisbane's first Sheriff of the High Court, arrived in Moreton Bay in the 1840s. He purchased over 14 acres on the river at New Farm where he established a family residence, 'Kingsholme'. Brown purchased the nearby Portion 51 (measuring 15 acres) in 1850 in the name of his son, William Villiers Brown, who became a banker and Member of the Queensland Parliament.

The 1880s were a period of economic boom for Brisbane and other major Australian cities. Foreign investment, the successes of the sugar, wool and mining industries and rapidly escalating immigration which brought an increasing market for housing all contributed to a frenzy of land speculation and development. The grounds of large homes in the suburbs were carved up for new housing estates, including in New Farm. From 1883, William Villiers Brown's holding at New Farm was subdivided into generous housing lots which appealed to Brisbane's wealthy, professional classes. During the 1880s and into the 1890s, New Farm remained one of the city's elite suburbs.

In 1886, Patrick Walsh Crowe purchased four allotments in Villiers Street where he built his home, La Quercia. Crowe previously owned property and lived in nearby Racecourse Road (now Sydney Street). By 1887, he was residing in Villiers Street and in March 1888, his wife gave birth to twins "at her residence, La Quercia, New Farm". In 1889, Crowe bought three adjoining allotments at the rear of the house, creating spacious grounds of almost three roods (over 3,000 square metres). Crowe's immediate neighbours included an architect, marine superintendent and solicitor. 'Wynberg', the home of wealthy engineer, GC Willcocks, was located in the same block, facing Brunswick Street.

In 1899, the house was described in a short term lease advertisement in the Brisbane Courier as a 'well-furnished house of eight rooms, kitchen, and offices; spacious verandas, garden, stables, gas and water, buggy, horses, and cow'². Like many Brisbane businessmen, Crowe suffered financial difficulties and faced insolvency during the economic depression of the 1890s. In 1900 "on account of Mr. Crowe's departure for Europe", La Quercia "fully furnished, twelve rooms, all conveniences, vehicles and horses was advertised for "rent moderate' by Isles, Love & Co. La Quercia was tenanted several times during the early years of the 1900s.

Titles to the property passed to Crowe's wife, Margaret Mary Josephine Crowe, in 1903. At this time, Crowe's mining interests included a claim at Rosewood in Central Queensland under the name of the Great Northern Copper and Gold Mining Company.

In 1912 a detailed survey plan³ was made of La Quercia by the Brisbane Municipal Council, showing the large house with its service wing to the rear and a modest octagonal 'summer house' standing in the yard between the house and Forth Street. The rear yard was fenced separately and accommodated a generous building containing two 'rooms', stables, and an open shed. Two separate 'closets' and another open shed stood behind the building. A substantial fence is shown along the Villiers Street boundary. This fence still extends along Villiers Street in front of the neighbouring house at 44 Villiers Street, which was once part of the grounds of La Quercia.

Patrick Crowe died in 1915. His widow, Margaret, sold La Quercia to Margaret Crease, the wife of Fortitude Valley pharmacist, Herbert Edward Crease, in 1920. Crease sold the majority of land at the rear of the house in 1923, retaining the house on 54 perches fronting Villiers Street. By 1925 the outbuildings behind the house were demolished and replaced by a garage of 'wood and iron' facing Forth Street (no longer on the site).

La Quercia changed hands again in 1931 when it was purchased on a further reduced site of 34 perches by Margarite Delahunty, the wife of Richard Delahunty, a printer. La Quercia was owned by the Delahunty family until 2006.

The property remains a private residence. Although there have been changes to the house and grounds (including a pool added at the rear of the house), many of the internal features of La Quercia have been retained including timber joinery and elaborate leadlight windows.

Description

La Quercia is a highly intact one-storey, timber-framed and clad residence fronting Villiers Street, New Farm. The house stands on 860m² of land, which falls gently to the rear so that the front of the house is low-set and the rear is high-set. It comprises a central core of principal rooms encircled by a verandah with a projecting service wing at the rear. The main roof is hipped and the verandah has a separate gently coved roof. A brick front fence has decorative corbelling and iron work.

The front, north eastern side, and rear verandahs are approximately 8 feet (2.43m) wide and are enclosed with later material and windows; which is not of cultural heritage significance. However, the south western side verandah is approximately 11 feet wide (3.35m) and is enclosed with early if not original large timber sliding sash windows and timber French doors with a fanlight, all having impressive leadlight glazing.

The central core of the house comprises a traditional layout of rooms with a central hall. The house retains

impressive timber joinery from different eras and a decorative fireplace. The core of the house opens onto the encircling verandah. There has been some alteration to the layout, although this is mostly very minor and some alterations are significant in demonstrating the evolution of domestic life and decorating tastes in Queensland and have been sympathetic to the original form. The early or possibly original opening between the two principal rooms on the north eastern side features decorative timber joinery and demonstrates the early adoption of and move towards an open plan, which is retained despite being infilled later. The rooms of the core retain Interwar timber wall panelling and joinery, which demonstrates the evolution of domestic style and use of timber in Brisbane's houses prior to World War II, a defining feature of this type.

The rear service wing is one-room wide with a verandah along its north eastern side. The verandah has an early or original enclosure at its southern end and retains early timber lattice as a separation between the main core and this area of lesser status. The verandah has been enclosed with other later fabric, which is not of cultural heritage significance. Under this wing is a laundry retaining early related fixtures and fittings. The understorey has brick stumps and is enclosed on its perimeter with timber battening.

The house has an airy, lofty, gracious character imparted by its comprehensive stylish and simple passive architectural considerations for climate.

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 representative example of the suburban villa settlement of New Farm's premier sites by Brisbane's elite during the 1880s building boom prior to closer settlement. The place also illustrates social hierarchies in domestic life in 1880s Brisbane through its main core and service wing as well as the evolution of living arrangements in the early 1900s through its alterations to interconnect its principal rooms.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a highly intact, substantial residence of a superior quality architectural design and construction. The house evokes a gracious and commodious domestic character.

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, 20 December 1899, p8
 2. Surveyor's notebook, 22 May 1912
 3. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
 4. Brisbane City Archives. *Brisbane Parish Map Showing Owners* c 1900
 5. Brisbane City Council, Surveyor's Field Book. (1912, updated 1925)
 6. Brisbane City Council Detail Plan no. 188, dated 1924
 7. Bennet, Helen. "New Farm: from quality street to new assortment" in BHG Historical Papers
 8. Bennett, H, 'New Farm from quality street to mixed assortment', *Brisbane Houses, Gardens, Suburbs and Congregations*, Papers No 22 Brisbane History Group, 2010.
 9. Queensland Certificates of Title
 10. Queensland Post Office Directories
 11. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
 12. R. Lawson *Brisbane in the 1890s* Brisbane:University of Queensland Press, 1987
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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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