

Heritage Citation

Losch's Timber Duplex

Key details

Addresses	At 61 Gloucester Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Duplex
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L21_RP9857
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 14 September 2018 Date of Citation — November 2014
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity

This two-storey residence was constructed as a rental property for owner George Losch, a cab driver and property investor and was originally a duplex. It was probably built in 1884 to replace an older rental property which had burned down. The house exemplifies the trend in the 1880s towards investment properties to capitalise on escalating demand for residential accommodation in Spring Hill. It is also an unusual example of a purpose-built multi-tenanted dwelling, which were rare in Brisbane but joined other examples in Gloucester Street.

History

Spring Hill is one of the earliest settled areas of Brisbane, having been occupied since the 1820s. A windmill was erected on the height of Wickham Terrace in 1829 to process grain for the Moreton Bay penal colony. When the

area was opened for free settlement in 1842 the Crown offered parcels of land within the town of Brisbane for sale. Land in Spring Hill followed, with surveys, subdivisions and sales occurring in the 1850s. The area was in walking distance of the city and Fortitude Valley, increasing its residential appeal. The topography of Spring Hill quickly separated the wealthy from working class, with grand houses built on the ridges for the more well-to-do and cottages on small allotments for the working class down the slopes towards Hanly's Valley and Spring Hollow.

Northern suburban allotment 95 was sold to Thomas Dowse in 1853, and from this John Gallagher purchased subdivisions 20 and 21, a twenty-one perch, two allotment site in 1866. The site was situated just beyond Brisbane town's limit of Boundary Street. Gallagher's allotments faced Gloucester Street, which slanted down from Leichhardt Street (now St Paul's Terrace). By 1868 Gloucester Street was home to a number of residents, though settlement was primarily in the land above Thornbury Street rather than the 'narrow back lane' in which Gallagher's property sat. Gallagher himself did not live in Gloucester Street, but resided nearby in Hartley Street until his death in 1876.

The two allotments passed to George Losch in 1879. Losch, who like Gallagher lived in nearby Hartley Street, was a cab proprietor and property investor. He was involved in local matters in Spring Hill, requesting service improvements and complaining about poor sanitation, particularly that of Gloucester Street resident and prominent architect Andrea Stombuco, who was attempting to design a water closet up the hill from Losch's allotments.

Losch appears to have constructed a dwelling on subdivision 21 shortly after purchasing the site and leased it to tenants. Although Gloucester Street was not part of Spring Hill's more desirable ridgeline, it was close to services which had developed in the area, including churches, schools and a small commercial centre along Leichhardt Street. Rental properties like Losch's were in high demand and contributed to Spring Hill's increasingly crowded streets.

Concerns over the dense occupation of Spring Hill began in the 1870s and came to the fore in the 1880s. Land in Spring Hill was sold in small allotments – Losch's parcels were only ten and a half perches each – and the advantages of its location led to intense residential development. But the construction of small tenements and tiny cottages on very small parcels of land increased the risk of disease and fire throughout the inner-city suburbs. In July 1883, a fire in an adjacent house spread to Losch's property, and both houses burned down. The houses were only a dozen feet apart and, according to the *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 'a very crowded part of Brisbane had a narrow escape from total destruction by fire'. An inquiry was held after a dispute between Losch and the neighbouring tenant, but the fire was not judged to have been deliberately lit.

It is unclear whether the fire destroyed this residence or a house on subdivision 20. Losch appears to have constructed a second single-storey residence on his Gloucester Street site, taking full advantage of the landholding, and it may be the residence on subdivision 20 which burned down. This would make this two-storey residence on subdivision 21 older, probably constructed around 1879. However, contemporary reports are not clear, and thus this house can only be dated as circa 1884. Losch's property was insured and a new set of tenants in 1885 indicates that he had quickly reconstructed his investment property.

The purpose-built double two-storey house was unusual in Brisbane. Even in the nineteenth century, detached single family residences were favoured over terrace houses. Multi-tenanted dwellings tended to be limited to inner-city suburbs like Petrie Terrace and Spring Hill, where small allotments encouraged the development of small cottages or larger investment properties like this one. In 1885, responding to situations such as the

Gloucester Street fire, the Queensland Government introduced the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act 1885. The Act made it illegal to subdivide land into lots of less than sixteen perches (405m²) and imposed minimum lengths for street frontage which effectively banned multi-tenanted dwellings. By and large, the few purpose-built multi-tenanted nineteenth century dwellings that survive are pre-1885 constructions in inner city suburbs. Gloucester Street itself is unusual, as it features a number of late nineteenth and early twentieth century matching and paired residences. These properties at numbers 16, 19, 20, 21 and 23 are also heritage listed.

The use of timber for the building is also unusual in the circumstances. Many other inner suburban multiple dwellings were built in timber during the 1880s, but most either were single-storeyed or semi-detached.

Losch's house was divided vertically into two households, maximising use of the small site, and leased separately to short-term tenants. This proved to be a wise investment. Despite the 1885 Act and its intention to limit high density residential development, the popularity of Spring Hill boomed over the course of the 1880s and by 1890 had become Brisbane's most populated suburb.

Losch died in 1887 and his estate passed to administrators, then to the Queensland Trustees in 1912. During this time it was leased to a changing succession of tenants. Losch's estate was offered for sale through the 1920s, by which time Spring Hill's desirability had waned. In 1928 the site was transferred to Thomas Edmonds, then to Margaret Kastor in the following year and continued to be used as a rental property. In 1953 the property's subdivisions were sold separately, with the single-storey house on subdivision 20 being sold. Subdivision 21 and its two-storey residence was sold to Lottie Lee in 1954, and subsequently passed through a number of owners.

Spring Hill's decline continued until the late 1960s, when some parts of Spring Hill began to attract young professionals and artists who were drawn to the character of the area. This heralded an era of gentrification in some parts of Spring Hill with many of the older dwellings lovingly restored. This property was transferred to its current owner in 2000. It was renovated and restored in the early twenty-first century.

Description

Losch's Duplex is a two-storey, timber framed duplex with a hipped roof clad with corrugated metal sheeting on Gloucester Street, Spring Hill. Separated by a brick party wall which does not rise above the roof line, the houses appear as a single entity from the street. The front verandahs are recent reconstructions. The house retains original timber framed sash windows and doors.

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 fine example of an early 1880s, two-storey timber duplex in Spring Hill which provides evidence of the suburb's development in this era.

Rarity

CRITERION B

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

as a modest, two-storey timber duplex in Spring Hill.

References

1. Brisbane City Council City Architecture and Heritage Team, *Spring Hill Contextual History*, 2014
2. Brisbane City Council, *Properties on the Web*, website, post-1946 building cards
3. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
4. Brisbane City Council City Architecture and Heritage Team, citations
5. Department of Natural Resources. Queensland Certificates of Title
6. Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Queensland Heritage Register entries
7. Centre for the Government of Queensland, 'Queensland Places: Spring Hill' website
8. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1938
9. *The Brisbane Courier*, *The Queenslander*, *Queensland Times*, *Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, *The Courier Mail*

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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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



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