

Heritage Citation



Marist College tower block & memorial gates

Key details

Also known as	St. Jude's Seminary Mission House
Addresses	At 182 Frasers Road, Ashgrove, Queensland 4060
Type of place	School, Residence (group), Institutional / group housing, Monument / memorial
Period	Interwar 1919-1939, Postwar 1945-1960
Style	Spanish Mission
Lot plan	L364_SP272699; L811_RP18735; L810_RP18735; L809_RP18735; L365_SP272699
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — November 2012

People/associations Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. (Architect)

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

Constructed in 1931 by prominent architects Hennessy, Hennessy and Co, this picturesque Spanish Mission building was first used as a mission house and seminary by the Society of the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist, associated with the Catholic Church. Construction of the building provided employment during the Depression as part of a government sponsored programme. After the mission closed in the late 1930s, the building was converted into a student boarding house for the Marist Brothers College at Rosalie who erected memorial gates in front of the building in 1950 to honour the old boys who served in World War II. Since 1940, this building has been in continuous use as a student boarding house and has played an important role in the lives of many students at the College.

History

This imposing tower building was constructed in 1930-31 as the mission house and seminary for the Society of the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist, a Catholic society devoted to mission work in the Philippines. The seminary was named St. Jude's.

In October 1928 the Rev. Walter S. Cain, the founder of the Most Holy Eucharist Society purchased for \$4 400 a deceased estate of almost 44 acres above Enoggera Creek at Ashgrove. The property, formerly the country retreat of Dr. Frederick Taylor, had been closed since his death some ten years earlier. The land had been in the Taylor family since 1889, and was originally part of the holdings of early Ashgrove settler, Alexander Fraser. The Society was formerly based at two residences on Gregory Terrace purchased during the 1920s. The convent of the Sisters associated with the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist was officially opened on these premises by Archbishop James Duhig in July 1928.

Soon after purchase of the property, the society moved to their new residence. The existing house on the site was extended and modified to provide a chapel as well as classrooms and accommodation for the students of the seminary. Students cleared and improved the grounds. Cain engaged the architectural firm of Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. to design a spacious mission house with a high white tower.

The firm of Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. was established in Brisbane in 1916 as Hennessy, Hennessy and F.R. Hall. Jack Hennessy, the senior partner, was a personal friend of Archbishop Duhig. The firm received many commissions from the Catholic Church in the 1920s including churches at Clayfield (1925), Nundah (1926) and Toowong (1930). Other catholic buildings designed by the firm, which developed its own Romanesque style of ecclesiastical architecture, were Villa Maria (1927), Stuartholme Convent (1920), St. Columban's Christian Brother College, Nundah (1928) additions to St. Stephen's Cathedral (1925) and the proposed Holy Name Cathedral. Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. were also responsible for Newspaper House (1930) and the Forgan Smith building of the University of Queensland (1939).

The mission house was constructed in painted cement on brick by Concrete Constructions at a cost of \$20 000. This included the erection of a retaining wall, a pair of bronze entrance gates manufactured in Brisbane and a

concrete bridge across Enoggera Creek allowing access for which permission was granted by the Brisbane City Council. A water tank was included in the tower. Sculptures in the main courtyard were commissioned from the marble studios of Carrara, Italy. The final cost for the new seminary was ?25 000. The mission house was to be the first stage of an ambitious complex including several buildings connected by arcades, an orchard and model farm, and recreation grounds.

Through the government sponsored programme to provide "socially redeeming" employment during the Depression, unemployed workers were used to build the road leading to the seminary. Hostility among some of the workers towards Walter Cain resulted in buckets of cement being thrown into the new toilets. This was possibly caused by resentment at the amount of money being spent on the building during a period of severe economic hardship and exacerbated by sectarian divisions.

The foundation stone for the mission house was laid by Duhig on 14 October 1930. A year later, the Apostolic Delegate, Dr. Cattaneo, travelled from Sydney to open the new seminary on 18 October 1931. Dr. Cattaneo was assisted by Duhig who praised the achievements of Father Cain in extending the missionary work of the Catholic Church and erecting such a "beautiful building" on the property. Duhig added that the Catholic Church at Ashgrove had been enlarged three times to accommodate its growing population and that Ashgrove was probably the most progressive place in the city of Brisbane.

At the time of the construction of the mission house, Ashgrove was developing at a rapid rate. The sale of the St. John's Wood and Glenlyon residential estates and the extension of the tramline to the suburb in the mid 1920s stimulated growth in the area. The residential boom at Ashgrove was further encouraged by the provision of electricity and reticulated water during the 1920s. When the 44 acre site was purchased by Cain in the late 1920s, Ashgrove was considered to be prime real estate due to its picturesque natural surroundings and proximity to the city.

Soon after the opening of St. Jude's Seminary, the Sisters associated with the Society moved from their convent at Gregory Terrace to their new accommodation in the tower of the mission house. Both men and women, including some from the Philippines, were trained at the seminary during the 1930s, including two priests who were ordained by Duhig. However, in January 1938, an order from the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney, Monsignor John Panico, suppressed the male branch of the society and banned publication of its magazine, Filipinas. Several months later the nuns were also suppressed. The seminary was closed, the property transferred to the Roman Catholic Queensland Regional Seminary and the assets of the society dispersed by Panico. The reasons for the closure of St. Jude's were not fully disclosed. It has been suggested that the fundraising and training methods of the society were seen as irregular and that there was some resentment within the Catholic Church regarding the wealth of the society.

In 1939, Panico offered the site at St. Jude's to the teaching order of the Marist Brothers, who were experiencing overcrowding of students at their Rosalie school. On 16 June 1939, negotiations between Duhig and the Marist Brothers were completed and on 7 August ownership of the site transferred to the Brothers for ?12 000. Mr Drinan, the Brisbane partner of Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. was engaged to oversee alterations to the tower building. The small cells of the nuns were removed to allow dormitories for boarders. Thiess Brothers were awarded the contract for the levelling of the sites of the oval, old tennis courts and swimming pool. The new school of the Marist Brothers was opened on 30 January 1940.

On 17 September 1950, the World War II Memorial Gates, situated at the Dorrington end of the College's playing fields, were officially opened and blessed. The steel gates, which are mounted on pillars of Scandinavian and Queensland granite, are in memory of Marist College Old Boys who fought in World War II. 32 names appear on the gates, which have special significance to those associated with the College.

The tower building continues to be used to house boarders at the Marist College. It is a well-known local landmark that signifies more than 60 years of association with the Catholic Church in Brisbane.

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 the Tower Block provides of the development of Ashgrove during the interwar years.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance as a fine example of an Interwar Spanish Mission style building.

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 a memorial site for Marist College old boys who fought in World War II, for the important role the Tower Block has played in the lives of generations of students of Marist College, and as an example of a building designed by prominent architectural firm Hennessy, Hennessy and Co.

References

1. *Ashgrovian*
2. Boland, T.P. *James Duhig*. St Lucia: U of Q Press, 1986
3. *Brisbane Courier*, 19 Oct 1931
4. *Catholic Advocate*, 16 Oct 1930, 23 Oct 1930, 22 Oct 1931
5. Farelly, Mark., *Canvas of Dreams: Marist College Ashgrove 1940-1990*. Ashgrove: Marist Bros., 1990
6. Paul Ferrier, “*The Golden Period of Catholic Progress – Archdioceses of Brisbane 1912-1927*”, B.Arch Thesis, Sept 1986
7. Gardiner, Fiona, *Register of significant twentieth century architecture* (Australian Heritage Commission, 1988)
8. Titles Office Records
9. Watson, Donald & Judith McKay, *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*, UQ Library, 1984

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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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