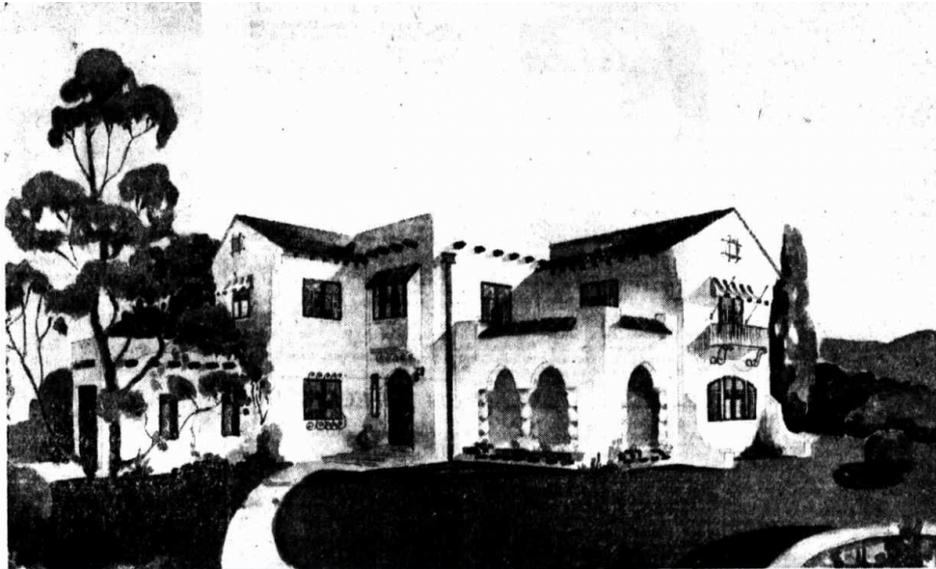


## Heritage Citation



### Mathers' House

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 20 Wilbur Street, Holland Park, Queensland 4121; At 122 Abbotsleigh Street, Holland Park, Queensland 4121
<b>Type of place</b>	House
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Spanish Mission
<b>Lot plan</b>	L107_RP42395; L108_RP42395; L109_RP42395
<b>Key dates</b>	Significant Development — 1937 Local Heritage Place Since — 26 July 2019 Date of Citation — April 2018
<b>People/associations</b>	Blackburne and Gzell (Architect); William Mathers (Occupant)

## Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

Mathers' house was built in 1937 for prominent Queensland retailer, William Mathers, who owned a successful chain of shoe shops. Designed by architectural firm, Blackburne and Gzell, the house is a good example of 'Spanish Mission' style architecture in Brisbane. Built as part of the Stonehaven Heights estate, it illustrates the suburban development of Holland Park when wealthy Brisbane residents had modern architect-designed houses built on the tops of its hills. The house's location on the rise of the hill at the corner of Abbotsleigh and Wilbur streets makes a strong contribution to the streetscape.

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## History

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the suburb we know today as Holland Park was predominately farms. It was the extension of the tramline from Greenslopes to Holland Park in 1926 which became the catalyst for suburban development. By the late 1920s there was a post office, a hotel and a primary school.

As the large farm holdings were subdivided in the 1920s and 30s, various land estates were created in the area, including the Stonehaven Heights estate. Marketed at those with financial means, the estate took advantage of the high position of what was then known as Mount Pleasant, and its high ridgeline which afforded views in all directions. The estate was extensively advertised in the mid to late 1930s in the Brisbane newspapers:

Stonehaven Heights, Mount Pleasant, 57 Ideal Home Sites, Amidst Delightful Surroundings and Modern Bungalows; the estate is one of Brisbane's beauty spots, and is conveniently situated ... with glorious panoramic views of the city and mountains ... right in the track of the cool summer breezes, and every modern convenience – water, electric light, gas, and telephone.<sup>1</sup>

Stonehaven Heights estate was promoted as being close to the tramline, public school and parks. By the late 1930s the majority of lots had been sold and suburban development had transformed the estate. A series of large, architect designed homes were built on the ridgeline amongst more modest but aesthetically pleasing houses creating one of Brisbane's most sought after residential addresses.

In May 1939 Stonehaven Heights was featured in the Telegraph's 'Better Homes' section under the heading "A Colony of Character Homes". The feature highlighted the efforts made by all the property owners to ensure the aesthetics of the estate were maintained, in relation to the fine houses, gardens and settings, "the object is to encourage each home whether small or large to give atmosphere to its neighbour and therefore build to an idea".<sup>2</sup>

The article described the wide range of architectural designs in the estate such as Spanish Mission and English Revival, "It is a pleasure to drive amongst these well-planned and maintained homes ... those people who own homes on Stonehaven Heights are to be congratulated".<sup>3</sup>

In 1934 William Mathers purchased a one rood and twenty five perch block of land situated on a prominent site at the top of a hill on the corner of Abbotsleigh and Wilbur streets with panoramic views. It was Mathers' intention to build a striking house on the site.

William Mathers was one of Brisbane's most successful shoe retailers. He established his business, Mathers Shoes, in 1923 after working for many years in TC Beirnes' shoe department in Ipswich. His first shop was in Ipswich and by the 1930s he also had more shoe stores in Queen Street and Fortitude Valley. The business was so successful that in 1951 Mathers' had four stores in Brisbane, one in Ipswich, another in Bundaberg, and another in Toowoomba. Over the years, many articles and advertisements were featured in the various local newspapers promoting Mathers' stores:

Every woman with a gift for smart dressing knows what an important part is played by footwear in the general ensemble, and the smartest women in Brisbane have learned that they cannot go wrong when they buy their shoes at Mathers' Arcade.<sup>4</sup>

It was not only women who were catered for and in 1932 Mathers greatly expanded their men's department in the basement of the Queen Street store where they had "completely modernised the basement premises, and have spared no expense in making this department particularly attractive ... the smoker's stands, placed at intervals about the luxurious and carpeted floors, add much to the comfort and appearance of this modern men's store".<sup>5</sup> Mathers' philosophy was to provide the latest fashionable shoes at a reasonable price and this was one of the reasons why the business was able to survive the hard economic times of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Illustrating this is a 1932 advertisement in the Truth which stated that a "special line of shoes at an exceedingly reduced price may now be seen at Mather's Shoe Store ... Customers are attracted to Mather's because the quality of their shoes is beyond reproach".<sup>6</sup>

Prior to 1934 the Mathers family lived in a house at the corner of Clara and Martindale Street, Corinda. One night in early January 1934 a terrible fire swept through the Corinda home. William Mathers only just saved his two small children by running to their bedroom at the back of the house and throwing them out the window. This very narrow escape for him and his family left him with severely burnt hands, but no one else was injured. It was thought that the blaze was caused by a short circuit in the electric lighting. The house could not be saved.

In early 1937, Mathers commissioned prominent Brisbane architectural firm, Blackburne and Gzell, to design a modern and striking new home for the family on the Stonehaven Heights property. The firm of Blackburne and Gzell can be attributed to building some of Brisbane's most fashionable Interwar residences; these included several 'Old English' and 'Spanish Mission' designs in suburbs such as Ascot, Clayfield, Coorparoo, Graceville, St. Lucia and Holland Park. Godfrey Blackburne and Vitaly Gzell established their practice in Brisbane in 1934, continuing their partnership until 1953. Blackburne had earlier received the student gold medal of the Queensland Institute of Architects in 1931. The firm became known for their designs in the latest Interwar styles.

The style of the subject house is indicative of the Interwar 'Spanish Mission' style, popular throughout Australia in this period. The style was adopted in Australia after first becoming popular in California, USA. With the popularity of all things 'Hollywood' in Australia in the 1920s, the Californian design was not only aesthetically pleasing for the Australian market, but also suited the climate which was similar to California.

The design of the new Mathers' house was celebrated in several contemporary newspaper articles. The first large feature article's headline stated "Home in Spanish Style for Holland Park".<sup>7</sup> It went on to describe both the exterior details and the interior:

Messrs. Blackburne and Gzell, the architects, have adopted the Spanish character for the external treatment of this commodious home ... from which it will dominate a hill-top site commanding panoramic views of the city and ranges ... The interior is to be carried out with the simplest of wall

treatments, and unnecessary mouldings will be eliminated. A feature of the lounge will be a mock fireplace linked with polished maple bookshelves on each side”.<sup>8</sup>

In October the same year, another brief feature in the Telegraph highlighted the quality of the design of the new ‘Spanish Mission’ style house and states it was one of the finest houses being built in Brisbane at that time.<sup>9</sup> On completion, the new house made a grand entry statement into Stonehaven Heights.

In 1960 the Mather family sold the property to Brisbane medical practitioner, Douglas James Hodges.

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## Description

Mather’s House is a two-storey masonry house built in the Interwar Spanish Mission style, located on a hilltop corner site in Holland Park. Elements of the style featured on the subject house are gable roofs with roman tiles, rendered walls with exaggerated texture up to the underside of roof tiles, shaped corbels and a loggia.

Holland Park is a residential suburb of Brisbane located south east of the CBD. It features undulating topography and a large variety of low to medium density housing types. The surrounding houses along Abbotsleigh and Wilbur Streets are generally single-storey and have a consistent setback from the street with wide frontages. The elevated location of the street provides prominent views toward the Brisbane CBD and lower undulating topography of the suburbs to the north.

The subject residence has a strong presence on the street due to its elevated corner position. The corner front yard contains a water feature, swimming pool, spa and gazebo. A diverse range of plants is in the north of the yard including palms, trees, shrubs and a large pine tree. The site is enclosed by a rendered wall with stone piers and aluminium fencing infill panels. There are two concrete driveways with aluminium barred gates each leading to one of two garages. At the corner of the site is a pedestrian gate covered by a trestle and gardens either side.

The subject house is approximately L-shaped in form with a tiled gable roof, each end facing one of the streets that border the site. Both gable ends feature corbels under the eaves and a circular vent with decorative bars. At the centre junction of the L-shaped form is a parapeted section with protruding roof timbers. There is a garage at the end of each wing, both have parapeted flat roofs and protruding roof timbers.

At the centre of the western elevation, brick stairs lead to the arched timber front door. All the double hung windows on the ground floor have steel security bars. South of the front door is a loggia with a balcony above which features Spanish roof tiles to the balustrade. Timber French doors open on to the balcony. There is a prominent square set bay window in the parapeted section of the upper level. All of the windows on the first floor are timber casement windows.

The southern elevation features an arched window at the ground floor. The upper level has timber French doors leading to a small balcony with wrought iron balustrades and a skillion tin hood above. Windows at the rear of the house and on the southern garage are narrow fixed aluminium framed windows.

The interior of Mather's House features timber floors throughout. Plain walls are finished with simple skirting boards and cornices. Plain ceilings are noted throughout the house with exposed timber details in the vestibule. A timber staircase with dark stained rails leads from the entry to the first floor.

Mather's House has had several alteration and additions which include extensions to the rear, a rear pergola, garages, boundary walls and a swimming pool. The house is in excellent condition.

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## 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:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as an architect-designed masonry house built in 1937 as part of the Stonehaven Heights estate, it is representative of Holland Park's suburban development, with houses planned in a layout and orientation to take advantage of the topography on large, elevated sites during the interwar period.

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#### Representative

##### CRITERION D

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

as a good representative example of an interwar 'Spanish Mission' style house in Brisbane.

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#### Aesthetic

##### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a striking, highly intact, 1930s masonry house designed by Blackburne and Gzell in the 'Spanish Mission'

style and situated high on a prominent corner in Holland Park and set in generous grounds of 1649m<sup>2</sup>.

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## 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

built as the family home in 1937, for important Queensland retailer, William Mathers.

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## Supporting images

This is an image and plans of Mathers house in 1937

Image not found or type unknown

Home in Spanish Style for Holland Park, Telegraph, 22  
June 1937

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## References

1. *Courier Mail*, 14 November 1936
2. *Telegraph*, May 30, 1939

3. *Ibid*
  4. *Truth*, 7 February 1932, p17
  5. *Brisbane Courier*, 23 February 1932, p7
  6. *Truth*, 10 April 1932, p21
  7. *Telegraph*, 22 June 1937
  8. *Ibid*
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  16. Apperley, Richard and Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guild to Identifying Australian Architecture*, Angus and Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1989
  17. Brisbane City Council Water and Sewerage Maps
  18. Fashion Archive, *Mathers' Shoes*, [http://thefashionarchives.org/?people\\_and\\_places=mathers-shoes](http://thefashionarchives.org/?people_and_places=mathers-shoes)
  19. Tender Notice, *A&B Journal of Queensland*, February 1937, p25
  20. Brisbane City Council Building Registers
  21. Realestate.com.au, 122 Abbotsleigh Street, <https://www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-house-qld-holland+park-106718153>
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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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