

Heritage Citation



Park Presbyterian Church (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 31 Glenelg Street, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Church
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Romanesque
Lot plan	L104_RP890205
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — October 1996
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry

People/associations Francis Drummond Greville Stanley (Architect)

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

The Park Presbyterian Church was built in 1884 to the design of renowned architect F.D.G. Stanley. Its construction became increasingly necessary as the old church in Grey Street became too small for the expanding congregation. The new church had seating capacity for 550 people and a Sunday School hall in the basement with room for 300, however a very high attendance meant that even this was not big enough, as by the early twentieth century it had the largest Presbyterian membership in Brisbane. After World War II, the character of South Brisbane began to change as the area became more industrial and less residential. In 1949, it was decided to build a new church at Highgate Hill and by 1950 the congregation had moved out of the building. It has since had a number of owners but has not been in use again as a church.

History

The first Presbyterian church service held in Queensland was conducted by the Reverend John Dunmore Lang in 1845. Lang promoted the idea of Moreton Bay as a region of opportunity and organised immigration schemes to bring free settlers to the colony. In 1849 about six hundred and thirty immigrants arrived in ships chartered by Lang. Presbyterian, Baptist, and Independent immigrant settlers formed a United Church and attended services conducted by an English Baptist Minister, Reverend C. Stewart who arrived on the ship "Fortitude".

Presbyterians in Brisbane were soon dissatisfied with this arrangement and December 1849 a meeting at the residence of Reverend Thomas Mowbray in Kangaroo Point resolved to establish a Presbyterian Church in Queensland. A committee was formed to secure support for this congregation and was empowered to purchase a site for a church. An area of land in Grey Street, South Brisbane was bought in February, 1850 and a tender was accepted from John Graham, to build a church for £112. Construction of this small weatherboard building commenced in 1850 and was finished twelve months later. This first Presbyterian Church in Queensland, in Grey Street South Brisbane, was opened on 25 May 1851, by Reverend Mowbray.

In August of that year, Reverend Walter McLeod became the first Minister officially appointed to the charge. At this time, the Presbyterians on both sides of the Brisbane River were meeting at the one church in South Brisbane. McLeod also began services on the north side of the river, in the old School of Arts building on the corner of Queen and Creek Streets.

Moves were made in the 1850s to secure a site for a church on the north side and in 1854 three allotments of land in Ann Street were purchased for £194. A manse was built on this site and Reverend Charles Ogg was appointed minister of the charge in 1856. Reverend Ogg considered the north side more suitable and tried to induce members of the congregation on the south side to worship on the north. Relations between the two congregations became strained and it was decided in May 1857 to divide the charge. The north side commenced construction of the Ann Street Presbyterian Church which was opened in 1858.

Even with the divided congregation, the weatherboard church in Grey Street became too small for the activities

of the church. The building was altered and enlarged to provide more accommodation, but a larger building eventually became a necessity. In 1880 a site of 36 perches, on the corner of Cordelia and Glenelg Streets opposite Musgrave Park, was purchased for £175. Plans were undertaken to "erect a much more pretentious building than the one in existence". The foundation stone of the church was laid in October 1884, and on 11 October 1885 the Park Presbyterian Church was formally opened, with special services performed by Reverend Dr R. Steel, of Sydney. The church was built at a cost of £4000 by W. MacFarlane from plans designed by the renowned architect F.D.G. Stanley.

The old Grey Street church was sold to a private firm and used for storage. In 1885 this site was acquired for the extension of the railway line through to Melbourne Street, and the building was demolished. The South Brisbane Railway Station was built on the site of the old church, on the corner of Melbourne and Grey Streets.

The new Park Presbyterian Church had seating accommodation for 550 persons, with a Sunday School Hall for 300 in the basement. High attendances at the church meant that in the early days at least this new church was too small for worship. The Sunday School had an enrolment of some 500 children with 50 teachers in 1888.

During the flood of 1893, there was water three feet deep in the kindergarten in the basement. The church however was used to house families in the area whose homes were flooded.

The golden age of the church was during the late 1890s and the early twentieth century. A free kindergarten was conducted and branch churches were instigated in surrounding suburbs. On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Presbyterian Church in Queensland in 1909, the membership of the Park Presbyterian Church was numerically the strongest of the Presbyterian Churches in Brisbane. There were about 350 members, with the actual congregation numbers being much larger.

As Brisbane developed in the twentieth century, the character of the inner-city areas, like South Brisbane, altered quite dramatically. Middle class families moved out to the suburbs, older residences were demolished or converted into flats, and the South Brisbane region became a focal point for post war immigration. The composition of South Brisbane was changing also. The area became progressively industrial and less residential, and it was decided in 1949, the centenary year of the Presbyterian Church in Queensland, to move the congregation to a new church building in Hampstead Road, Highgate Hill.

As the Park Presbyterian Church was closely associated with the founding of Presbyterianism in Queensland, it featured largely in the centennial activities of 1949. Special services and gatherings associated with the centenary were well attended. An historical pageant, written and produced by members of the church, was held in the South Brisbane Municipal Library Hall on 7 December 1949. In the morning of 11 December a procession was held from the site of the first Presbyterian Church in Brisbane, on the corner of Melbourne and Grey Streets, to the Park Church. A service was held after this procession by Reverend N.L.D. Webster, of St Andrews. In the midst of all this celebratory activity, the sale of the Park Presbyterian Church was announced on the Saturday, 10 December 1949, at the laying of the foundations of the congregation's new church in Hampstead Road.

The terms of the sale of the church meant that the congregation had to vacate the premises by early 1950 and by April, was located in the house on the Hampstead Road site, which was altered to enable services to be performed while the new church was built. The church furniture, organ, communion table and chairs, honour roll, pulpit, and the memorial window and tablets were removed from the Park Church and stored at Hampstead Road. Construction of the new church began in 1951, and it was opened on 2 November 1952.

The Park Church was sold to Glenelg Street Property Pty Ltd., and the Assembly of Plymouth Brethren used the building as a meeting place for some twenty years. The Kadaifi company bought the property in 1982, and since

then it has operated the Cordelia Street Antique and Art Centre.

Description

This church, situated at a prominent point along Cordelia Street, opposite Musgrave Park, achieves an impressive scale largely through its large, steep pitched roof. In plan, the church is a simple rectangle with an entry porch to Glenelg Street. The apparent transepts, playing an important role in the roofscape externally, are achieved without the side walls stepping at all. In style, the church is Gothic Revival handled with economy and skill by the architect, F.D.G. Stanley. The walls are constructed of dark brown brickwork on a rendered base with rendered buttress caps and other trim. The entry porch to Glenelg Street is entered by stone steps through a gothic arch. Timber tracery openings occupy the side walls to the porch. Above the entry porch the main gable features a large rose window with elaborate tracery set between capped buttresses rising from the corners of the entry porch. Single full lancet windows flank the entry porch with rendered quoin trim. Buttresses divide the sides of the church into five bays plus the transept gables, each bay contains triple lancet windows with the central window in each taller than the flanking windows. The windows in the notional transepts extend upward into the gables surmounted by a rendered gothic arch set into the brickwork,

The barge boards on the main roof elements are ornately scalloped and provide a striking decorative edge to this dominant element on both gable elevations. On the entry elevation the entry porch has its own steeply pitched gable roof with scalloped barge boards to echo the main gable decoration over. The main gable eaves are supported on timber brackets adding to the decorative effect.

Internally the steep pitched, truncated ceiling is diagonally tongue and groove boarded with decorative timber scallop work below the rafters dividing each bay. This timber work is supported on brackets, and supported in turn on columns on corbels to the side walls.

A fairly brutal opening has been cut to the full width of the sanctuary wall to allow increased floor space within a brick addition to the end of the former church. What appears to be an original screen wall inside the front doors now supports a mezzanine floor and is used for storage. Various other accretions and deletions have occurred to the exterior of the church over time of a generally minor nature leaving the church predominantly intact. One important deletion is the loss of a timber belfry which was located on the ridge towards the gable front.

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 it provides evidence of the development of South Brisbane in the 1880s and demonstrates the growth of the Presbyterian Church in South Brisbane in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine example of a Victorian Romanesque style church with fine timber detailing located prominently on the corner of Cordelia and Glenelg Streets.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a place of worship for the local Presbyterian community for almost 70 years.

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 building designed by renowned architect F.D.G. Stanley.

References

1. Barton, R. 1949 *The Centenary History of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, 1849-1949*, W.R.

Smith and Paterson, Brisbane

2. *Brisbane Courier*, 20 November 1909
3. *Brisbane 1888 Heritage Tour*, Brisbane History Group Papers, 1988
4. Hay, A. 1900 *Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Brisbane, Alex Muir & Co
5. Johnston, W.R. *The Long Blue Line: A History of the Queensland Police Force*. Bowen Hills: Boolarong, 1992
6. *Park Presbyterian Church 1849-1899 Jubilee Services*, 1899
7. *Presbyterian Outlook*, 1 February 1950
8. *Presbyterian Outlook*, 1 March 1950
9. *Presbyterian Outlook*, April 1950
10. *Presbyterian Outlook*, 1 December 1952
11. Queensland Land Office Records

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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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