

Heritage Citation



Presbytery and Sisters of Mercy Convent (former)

Key details

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| Also known as | Huron |
| Addresses | At 40 College Street, Hamilton, Queensland 4007 |
| Type of place | Residence (group), Residence (singular), House |
| Period | Federation 1890-1914 |
| Style | Free Style, Italianate |
| Lot plan | L375_RP33619; L369_RP33619; L374_RP33619; L373_RP33619; L372_RP33619; L371_RP33619; L370_RP33619; L349_RP33619; L348_RP33619; L350_RP33619; L347_RP33619; L346_RP33619; L345_RP33619 |

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|------------------------------|---|
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — August 2003 |
| People/associations | the Sisters of Mercy (Association) |
| Criterion for listing | (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social |

This building is believed to have been constructed sometime around 1890 and was originally used as a house before being purchased by Archbishop Duhig in 1913. When St Cecilia's Church opened adjacent to the house in 1914, this building was being used as a presbytery for Father J. Gowen, the area's first parish priest. In late 1916, the building was transferred to the Sisters of Mercy who retained it as a convent until 1994.

History

In January 1913 Archbishop Duhig purchased a large block of land bound by Hants and College streets, Hamilton, with a view to future construction of a Catholic church. The land already contained a sizeable house known as *Huron*. The entire property cost the church £1450. The purchase of this site was part of Duhig's response to the growing Catholic community in Brisbane. He initiated a program of establishing new parishes in areas which did not provide any places of worship for Catholics.

The land that *Huron* stands on had been owned by a Mr William Langley since 1886. There is no firm evidence to suggest Langley ever lived on the property, making it difficult to ascertain an accurate construction date; nevertheless, the house is clearly a late nineteenth century structure. Post Office Directories for the period indicate the house was occupied by tenants up to its purchase by Archbishop Duhig. Unverifiable evidence also suggests that it may have been used as a doctor's surgery. The house was constructed during one of the early periods of residential development in the Hamilton area. In the 1880s Hamilton was characterised by the coexistence of large estates bearing fine homes, and large areas of undeveloped land held by speculators. This vacant land was steadily subdivided into suburban allotments in the late 1880s and 1890s. This house was constructed during this period of subdivision.

The foundations for the new church were laid in Late in 1913, and it was opened in April 1915. Following a blessing and opening ceremony conducted by Duhig on 2 August 1914, *Huron* was put to use as a presbytery by Father J. Gowen, the area's first Parish Priest. Catholic Church publications state that it was used in this role until late 1916 when it was transferred to the Sisters of Mercy to serve as a convent. Historical title deeds indicate the property was officially transferred to the Sisters of Mercy circa 1928. It is feasible that the building had been in use by the Sisters of Mercy while still under Church ownership before they made their outright purchase.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy was established in Brisbane by Mother Vincent Whitty in 1861. Guided by their vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and apostolic service, the Sisters of Mercy have undertaken many works of community benefit in Brisbane. Notable among these is the establishment of All Hallows School and the Mater Hospital. Care of the poor and the disadvantaged has always been the order's highest of priorities.

The Sisters of Mercy retained the building until 1994 when it was purchased by the current owners, the Society

of the Divine Word. This organisation, also an affiliate of the Catholic Church, is the most recent occupants in a building with a lengthy association with Catholicism.

Throughout its association with the Catholic Church, the building has undergone changes to its physical appearance indicative of that association. Most prominent are the “ecclesiastic” alterations to the front of the building. Much remains to indicate the late nineteenth century construction date however.

While the building was not constructed as part of the initial Church development on College Street, it has been a significant part of the Catholic presence in Hamilton since the First World War. Furthermore, the area bounded by College, Hants and Windsor Streets (containing St Cecilia’s church, school, and former Sisters of Mercy Convent) has extra significance through the pleasing visual impact of attractive timber buildings set in a large expanse of lawns and large mature trees. The site, of which the house is an integral part, has considerable aesthetic appeal which should be protected from inappropriate development.

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 large nineteenth century house constructed during the early residential development of the Hamilton area; and, as evidence of the strong presence of the Catholic Church in Hamilton in the early twentieth century.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an example of a house converted for use as a convent and used in this capacity for most of the twentieth century.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its unique architectural style, which reflects its use as a residence and its association with the church, amid a setting of broad lawns and mature trees.

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 convent that was occupied by the Sisters of Mercy for almost 90 years.

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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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