

Heritage Citation



St James' College

Key details

Also known as

St. James' Christian Brothers Boys School

Addresses	At 201 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	College
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Gothick Picturesque
Lot plan	L2_RP45291; L10_SP120689
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — July 2010
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Richard George Suter (Architect); Thomas Ramsay Hall - 1914 additions (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(G) Social; (H) Historical association

This Gothic-revival style institutional building demonstrated many of the design features for which its architect, Richard George Suter was renowned when it was constructed for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brisbane in 1870. The first Catholic boys school in Queensland, it became the largest Christian Brothers school in Australia. A new wing designed by architect Thomas Ramsay Hall in 1914 followed Suter's original design which has not been compromised by more recent additions and interior modifications.

History

In June 1852, Reverend James Hanly paid thirty pounds five shillings and eight pence for three acres and thirty perches on Boundary St. in the Spring Hill/ Fortitude Valley area. The land was described as northeastern suburban allotment 66B. The Roman Catholic Church retained ownership of one acre, one rood and twenty-one 5/10th perches until October 1956 when it was transferred to the Trustees of the Christian Brothers. The first St. James' School building was erected on the Boundary and School Sts. corner of this allotment.

In May 1852, William Anthony Brown had purchased the adjoining four acres, two roods fifteen perches, described as northeastern suburban allotment 66C. Brown's allotment and part of the original allotment 66B were subdivided and resubdivided over the following years. In 1874 Bishop James O'Quinn (Quinn) of the Brisbane Roman Catholic Diocese purchased one of these resubdivisions of eleven and four/fifth perches but it was not until the 1950s that the Church and the Christian Brothers completed the land purchases to secure the entire site of the present college.

From 1901, 3 4/10th perches, subdivision 2 of allotment 66B, was transferred to the Commissioner of Railways

for the purposes of constructing and maintaining a tunnel.

Bishop O'Quinn encouraged Irish families through the Queensland Immigration Society based in Dublin to migrate and settle in Spring Hill, New Farm and adjacent areas. With the support of the administrator of St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Cathedral and prominent Brisbane citizens, his plan for a Catholic boys' school was realised with the opening of the first St. James' school in 1869. The first classes were conducted by lay teachers in makeshift accommodation on adjoining land behind the 1844 stone cottage used for visiting priests and widely known as 'Castle Racket'. The new school was completed in 1870. The single storey building was designed by noted architect Richard George Suter and built by his preferred contractor John D'Evlin at a cost of 500 pounds.

Suter had designed numerous buildings in Queensland, principally for the Anglican Church and the Board of Education but he was also responsible for several substantial homesteads on the Darling Downs. By 1870, he had lost his contract with the Education Board and was no longer the Anglican Church's architect. Between 1870 and 1874, he designed and supervised the completion of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane, retiring from practice the following year.

The school, as described in *The Brisbane Courier* of 12 October 1870, was "of brick, on a stone foundation, and is a very commodious though rather plain-looking structure. The walls are nearly fourteen feet high and the apex of the roof is twenty-seven feet from the floor. ... Great attention has been paid to the ventilation which is very complete. Besides numerous windows and casements there is a good space between the walls and the roof, which admits a fine current of air."

According to Watson and McKay, Suter was already noted for the brick schools he designed on a restrictive budget, making use of the actual materials to enhance their plain appearance without adding to the cost, and for his attention to ventilation, a much-appreciated feature in Queensland's sub-tropical climate.

St James was registered with the Board of Education in 1871 as Roman Catholic Non-Vested Boys School No. 9. As such, the government paid the teachers' salaries and inspected the school, while the Church was responsible for building construction and maintenance and all costs. In effect, parents and supporters raised the funds to pay off all debts on the school. Lay teachers were employed until Archbishop Dunne invited the Christian Brothers to take over the school in 1892, at which time a second storey was added to the original building.

St. James soon gained a solid reputation in education, its pupils winning scholarships to grammar school and going on to become teachers, priests, and leading professional, business, and sports men. However, it was a difficult time for denominational schools. The debate over state aid to these schools intensified during the 1880s and culminated in the government no longer paying teachers' salaries. The added cost to parents in these years, the effects of the 1890s floods on inner Brisbane and the severe financial crisis led to fluctuating pupil numbers and an uncertain future. However, by the early 1900s, St. James registered 400 pupils, making it the largest Christian Brothers School in Australia. At that time, there were just four classrooms, making for very crowded conditions.

In 1914, it was planned to acquire adjoining land then occupied by ironmongers Perry Brothers as a playground and a new two-storey wing was opened. Costing around 5000 pounds, including the classroom fittings, it was designed by Brisbane architect Thomas Ramsay Hall to be in keeping with Suter's design and was located at the rear of the original building.

The building complex, now the school administration centre, has been well-maintained over the years and additions and alterations progressively carried out have remained in sympathy with the original style.

St. James' College building program has utilised all the land area at its disposal. Major changes to redefine the

school's role in Catholic and community education have been introduced over time, one of the most important being the change to a co-educational secondary college.

Description

A gothic-revival style institutional building, it comprises a two-storey central core with a two-storey wing incorporated to the rear. It is constructed of rendered brick on stone foundations, with an iron roof. The street elevation has stained glass, clerestory windows on the upper storey and contemporary aluminium windows and entrance door at the lower level. Open verandahs under separate roof overhangs on side elevations of both storeys are enclosed at both ends. Dormer windows have been inserted in roof on School St. elevation, while on the same elevation a staircase leads to excavated basement area.

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:

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 the first Roman Catholic boys school in Queensland and, at one time, the largest Christian Brothers school in Australia.

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 Gothic-revival institutional building from Brisbane's early colonial era, associated with important colonial

References

1. Cadastral Map Property Holdings. Lot 10, SP 120689, 28.11.2001
2. Cadastral Map 31.08.2006
3. Aerial Photograph of Site 19.5.2009
4. Property Details. Lot 10, SP 120689 29.03.2004 Site History
5. Extract from Survey Plan (n.d.) showing St. James College layout
6. Map: 31.10.1914
7. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
8. Titles, including Certificates, Transfers and Bills of Mortgages
9. Amateur Photo. St James School, Oct. 1990
10. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Exterior of Original Building
11. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Side perspective of entrance
12. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Stairs to upper level
13. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Door/window treatment (new style)
14. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Exterior of verandah
15. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Chapel windows – stained glass detail and exterior detail
16. Heritage Unit Photographs: taken February 2006 - Front view of original building
17. Advert: Baker Bros Painters Photograph of St. James School
18. "ST JAMES' NEW (ROMAN CATHOLIC) SCHOOL-HOUSE, SPRING HILL", *Brisbane Courier*, October 12, 1870
19. "St James's School: Some Reminiscences of Old Boundary St.", *The Age, Brisbane*, July 26, 1913, pp. 9-12
20. "ST JAMES'S NEW CHRISTIAN BROTHERS SCHOOL", *The Catholic Advocate*, February 7 1914.pp.18-20
21. "Blessing and Opening of Additions to St. James's School" Supplement to *The Age, Brisbane*, February 7, 1914, pp. 10-11
22. D. Watson & Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century*. Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994, p.187
23. *National Trust Journal of Queensland* August 1985, p.16
24. Paul Ferrier, "*The Golden Period of Catholic Progress – Archdioceses of Brisbane 1912-1927*", B.Arch

Thesis, Sept 1986

25. Boland, T.P. *James Duhig*. St Lucia: U of Q Press, 1986

26. B.W. Steele, *ST JAMES'S: A History of a City School 1868 – 1993*, Brisbane: St. James's School, 1993

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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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