

Heritage Citation



St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Church

Key details

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| Addresses | At 29 Beauvardia Street, Cannon Hill, Queensland 4170 |
| Type of place | Church |
| Period | Interwar 1919-1939 |
| Style | Romanesque |
| Lot plan | L158_RP13339; L159_RP13339; L160_RP13339; L161_RP13339; L210_RP13339; L211_RP13339; L212_RP13339; L213_RP13339 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 30 November 2012 Date of Citation — June 2011 |
| Construction | Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Face brick |

People/associations George Henry Male Addison (Architect)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

St. Oliver Plunkett Church in Cannon Hill was the first Catholic Church in the area and was opened in 1921. The church was named after the seventeenth-century Catholic martyr, Oliver Plunkett. The large dark brick church was designed by respected Brisbane architect G.H.M Addison and the interior decorated by Allen Oxlade. The church was built in a period of unprecedented property acquisition and building for the Catholic Church under Archbishop James Duhig.

History

In the late nineteenth century the suburb of Cannon Hill was a rural outpost, with large farms and limited transportation into and out of the area. With the coming of the railway line to Cleveland in 1889, Cannon Hill became more accessible and suburban development escalated with increased land subdivision and sale. However, it was after 1913 that Cannon Hill's development intensified due to the construction of the Swift Company Meatworks beside the river. Many of the employees moved to Cannon Hill and as a result a small village community developed. By 1915 the Cannon Hill State School had been built, a reflection of the area's population increase. By the interwar period Cannon Hill had a cluster of stores and a Post Office as well as several churches.

St. Oliver Plunkett Church was named for the seventeenth-century Irish Archbishop of Armagh, who was executed for treason in London in 1681. Oliver Plunkett was beatified in Rome in 1920, the year before the church was opened by Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne. The Romanesque style church was designed by prominent Brisbane architect G.H.M. Addison who designed a series of Catholic churches including St. Benedict's at East Brisbane (1917) and the Sacred Heart Church, Rosalie (1918). St. Oliver Plunkett was one of several brick churches built under Duhig's plan to provide substantial churches for Brisbane's growing Catholic population during the 1920s.

Cannon Hill originally belonged to the parish of St. Peter and Paul's at Bulimba. Archbishop Duhig purchased a number of properties at Cannon Hill, and donated the total of some ten acres of land to the Bulimba Parish for the purposes of erecting a church. The property continued Duhig's tradition of providing prime hilltop positions for his church building sites. The need for a church at Cannon Hill was expressed by Duhig as early as 1918. In 1921, Father O'Keefe, the parish priest of Bulimba, commissioned Addison to design the new church. The Brisbane Courier later described the building as occupying a high position, commanding an extensive view of the surrounding neighbourhood. In 1925, Cannon Hill became a separate parish and Father John Hegarty was appointed as its first parish priest. The foundation stone for the new church was laid on 17 June 1921. Cannon Hill was at this time part of the Shire of Balmoral, and signs of its development as a residential suburb during the 1920s included a Progress Association and a School of Arts.

The opening of St. Oliver Plunkett Church was a notable event in the history of the Catholic Church in Brisbane. As the Brisbane Courier noted, 'the fact that the ceremony was to be performed by his Grace Archbishop

Mannix lent additional interest and lustre to the proceedings.' Brisbane was the first city of the Commonwealth to receive Archbishop Mannix after his ill-fated journey to the United Kingdom, where he was arrested and prevented from landing in Ireland. On the day before the opening of St. Oliver Plunkett,

Mannix was welcomed at an 'immense gathering' in Brisbane as a champion of democracy for preaching 'Australian first and no conscription.' For Sunday's opening ceremony, extra trains were provided, including special services from Gympie and Toowoomba. The crowd was estimated at 10,000 people, and those present included Archbishop Duhig, the Premier, Edward Theodore, who welcomed Dr. Mannix, and several prominent Catholic clergy from both Queensland and interstate. A sum of £2,000 was collected towards the cost of the new church.

The church was built at cost of £5,500 and the interior decorated by Allen Oxlade. At the time of its opening, the sanctuary and sacristy were not completed and a temporary structure was used until the church was finished.

Major renovations and extensions were made to the church in 1967, including the addition of two new side wings and the relocation of the foundation stone.

The life of Oliver Plunkett has continued to have a special significance for the church. On 12 October 1975, a special mass was held to coincide with the canonisation of Oliver Plunkett in Rome. Parishioners were blessed with a relic of the saint by Archbishop Rush after the mass. The relic has been housed in the church since its opening in 1921.

Description

This Romanesque style, dark brown brick building has a steeply pitched gable roof clad in terracotta tiles. Set slightly above Beauvardia Street, it sits quietly in a suburban street on a large site shared with school, presbytery and administration buildings.

The church originally comprised of a nave with choir gallery, a front entry porch, side confessional and a timber sanctuary to the rear. Now a Latin cross in plan, the building has been extended to include a new sanctuary, vestries and transept seating. Verandahs have also been added to the sides of the nave, each incorporating a confessional and a large porte-cochere now extends from the nave's front wall. These extensions have involved the removal of the original sanctuary and front entry porch.

The main gable roof of the nave forms into a hip at its rear end and terminates to the front with a bargeboard. Dutch gable roofs extend over the transept wings perpendicular to the main roof. A smaller Dutch gable also extends forward from the nave's front wall forming a porte-cochere.

Stepped buttresses line the side walls of the nave defining five structural bays. Rising from a rendered plinth, these walls once terminated with parapets and featured a large window to most wall bays. The parapets were demolished, allowing the extension of the nave roof over the verandas, and the windows have been replaced with doors. These timber doors and doors which are positioned in each wall of the transept provide access and ventilation to the nave. The primary access point to the building, however, is via doors in the nave's front wall. Disabled access is provided.

Dominant features of the building are bulky buttresses located to each corner of the vestry, transept and porte-

cochere and which line each veranda. They rise above eaves line and comprise decorative brickwork. The side walls of the original front entry porch has been

retained and now act as two buttresses to the nave's front wall. Originally terminating with a gable parapet this wall has been partly demolished and rebuilt in darker glazed brick. The transition from old to new has been made by introducing corbelling to both the wall and its buttresses.

Comprising three wall bays, the front facade features two tier original windows to each outer bay and three central round arched clerestory windows (the central one taller than the outer two). These central windows have been shortened and an apex vent now forms a niche containing a small statue. New doors and windows have been introduced under the port-cochere and to the first bay of the building's side walls.

The transept walls contain tall narrow windows with pivoted panes and internal bars. A similar style of window features in the front facade and first side wall bays of the nave, some incorporating louvres. Simpler pivoted windows in the confessionals and vestry, have decorative orange brick panels laid in a basket weave design below each sill.

The sloping ceilings of the verandas, porte-cochere, nave and transept are lined with T&G boards. The underside of the gallery is similarly lined, forming a ceiling to a narthex. A glass wall featuring closely spaced timber mullions, divides this space from the nave. The concrete floor of the building is lined with vinyl tiles to the narthex and other traffic areas whilst the steps and raised floor of the sanctuary are clad with terrazzo.

The original brick walls and timber truss roof structure of the nave have been augmented with darker brick bulky corbels under each truss and peers to each side of doorways. This effect is continued in the transepts where brick piers support steel portal frames encased in timber. The gablets of the transept's Dutch gable roofs contain a decorative triangular window.

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 the first Catholic church in Cannon Hill built in 1921, it is a reflection of the increased settlement in the area due to the development of industry and improved infrastructure.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an interwar Romanesque dark brick church designed by G.H.M Addison, St. Oliver Plunkett Church is important in demonstrating the Catholic Church's expansion under Archbishop Duhig's direction in this period.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a large dark brick Romanesque church designed by G.H.M Addison in 1921 and sited on the apex of a hill.

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 Catholic church in Cannon Hill, St. Oliver Plunkett Church has played a continuous role in the lives of the Catholic community since 1921.

References

1. *St. Oliver Plunkett Church: Seventy-fifth Anniversary (1921-1996)*
2. *The Catholic Leader*, 26 October 1975, p6
3. *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday 8 August 1921, p6
4. *St. Oliver Plunkett: Patron Saint of the Catholic Community of Cannon Hill*, Information Booklet
5. *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday 17 January 1921, p4
6. *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday 25 July 1921, p6
7. *The Brisbane Courier*, Saturday 6 June 1925, p20

8. Historic Titles, Department of Environment and Resource Management
 9. Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Survey Map
 10. Apperly, Richard et al. A pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989
 11. University of Queensland, 'Queensland Places: Cannon Hill'
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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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