

Heritage Citation



Key details

Also known as	Valetta
Addresses	At 23 Edmondstone Street, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Flat building, House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander

Lot plan L1_BUP104660; L2_BUP104660; L3_BUP104660; L4_BUP104660;
L5_BUP104660; L6_BUP104660; L7_BUP104660; L8_BUP104660;
L9_BUP104660; L10_BUP104660; L11_BUP104660; L12_BUP104660;
L13_BUP104660; L14_BUP104660; L15_BUP104660; L16_BUP104660;
L17_BUP104660; L18_BUP104660; L19_BUP104660; L20_BUP104660;
L21_BUP104660; L22_BUP104660; L23_BUP104660; L24_BUP104660;
L25_BUP104660; L26_BUP104660; L27_BUP104660; L28_BUP104660;
L29_BUP104660; L30_BUP104660; L31_BUP104660; L32_BUP104660;
L33_BUP104660; L34_BUP104660; L35_BUP104660

Key dates Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002
Date of Citation — November 2010

Construction Roof: Corrugated iron;
Walls: Timber

People/associations Karl Staiger (Occupant)

Criterion for listing (A) Historical; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

'Staigersleigh' is one of a number of fine homes that were constructed in the 1880s in the South Brisbane area. The house was originally built for Karl and Henrietta Staiger and was retained by the Staiger family for 86 years. Karl Staiger was the first custodian of the Queensland Museum (1873-1879) and a government and commercial assayer. In the 1920s, the house was converted into flats, which was a popular trend during the economic downturn and the subsequent industrialisation of the inner city during the interwar years. In 1935 the property was renamed 'Valetta Flats.' The house has since been converted back into a single, private dwelling.

History

Henrietta Staiger, the wife of Karl Theodore Staiger, acquired this crown land in June 1880, under the *Provisions of the Victoria Bridge Lands Sales Act 1879*. The Staigers paid £150 for their 36 perch block, which had been designated Allotment 5 of Section 57. A mortgage of £400, taken out in June 1881, possibly provided the funds for the building of the home they were to call 'Staigersleigh' – literally Staigers' shelter. The 1883 Post Office Directory indicates that the Staiger family began receiving mail at their 'Staigersleigh' address in that year.

Born in Kunzelsaw, Germany in 1833, Karl Staiger was the son of a university teacher, Professor John James Staiger. Karl studied chemistry at the Stuttgart Pyrotechnical School before migrating to Australia. He worked as an assayer at the Stanthorpe mining fields in 1872 and was appointed as the analytical chemist and custodian of the Queensland Museum in January 1873. In 1874, Karl married Henrietta, with whom he had two sons. He became the first secretary to the new board of trustees of the Queensland Museum Board in 1876, just prior to building 'Staigersleigh'. Staiger was effectively the first curator of the Queensland Museum, although this title was only bestowed later to his successor. He was highly regarded by the Brisbane community for his work in developing the Queensland Museum, which was housed during the 1870s in the Old Post Office building in

Queen Street. He collected mineral specimens for the museum, worked on a monograph on Queensland grasses with F.M Bailey and was a Queensland Government commissioner responsible for organising displays for the Vienna, London and Sydney Exhibitions.

Staiger left the museum in November 1879 and then worked as the state government assayer where he rendered valuable service to Queensland's fledgling mining industry. In May 1880, Staiger assisted in the development of new preserving fluids used in the cranial research being undertaken by noted Russian anthropologist and zoologist, Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay during the latter's visit to Brisbane. After June 1880, Staiger worked from home as a commercial assayer and would later combine this with a job as public analyst for the Brisbane Municipal Council. Karl Staiger died at "Staigersleigh" on 5 October 1888 after a lengthy battle with tuberculosis.

Henrietta Staiger continued to live at 'Staigersleigh' after her husband's death. Henrietta Staiger lived at 'Staigersleigh' at least until 1923, sharing the property with her son, Augustus Staiger, and his wife, Valetta. The Staiger family moved from 23 Edmondstone Street address around 1923-24 and placed the property on the rental market. Mrs May Barber and Michi J Fogarty began leasing it from 1925.

In 1935, the Staigers renamed 'Staigersleigh' 'Valetta Flats', presumably in honour of Henrietta's daughter-in-law. Henrietta died on 10 August 1941 and the property was passed to her son Augustus William Miskin England, who had probably changed his surname due to anti-German feeling aroused by World War One.

Ownership of 23 Edmondstone Street remained in the hands of the Staiger family until March 1968 when it was transferred to Alexander Kenneth Herschell and William Campbell. Nicholas and Allen Pappas bought the property in October 1969 with Nicholas Pappas gaining sole ownership in May 1984. Joseph Alexander Mackay and Catherine Cynthia Heather Mackay acquired 'Valetta' in July 1985 and they began the painstaking task of restoring the house back to its original state.

Description

A late nineteenth century house, this residence has a short ridge hipped, corrugated iron roof with a separate verandah roof. Pairs of timber brackets decorate the gap between the two rooflines. The verandah wraps around the front and part way along the left side of the residence. The verandah is decorated with corniced verandah posts, geometric timber brackets and double top rail, cross-braced balustrades.

The entry to the verandah is framed by paired verandah post with lattice above balustrade height and enclosed with a pair of lattice doors. A timber stair provides access to the verandah, with balustrades that match the verandah. Arched, timber battened skirts, between the timber stumps of the house, decorate the subfloor level of the verandah. The verandah entry is off axis with the house's front door and entry gate. The external walls of the house fronting onto the verandah have exposed timber frames with vertical cladding. The wall framing is expressed as diamond patterning that complements the balustrades of the verandah.

A rendered brick pier and simple metal fence runs along the front alignment of the property with an arched metal gate in front of several concrete steps. A number of healthy shrubs complement the streetscape and provide a soft edge to the property amongst its larger two-storey neighbours.

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 an example of the types of fine homes constructed in South Brisbane during the late nineteenth century by upper middle class residents.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as a good example of an 1880s upper middle class residence.

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 the home built for Karl Staiger - assayer, scientist, and the first professional custodian of the Queensland Museum - and his family who maintained an unbroken association with the property for 66 years.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Water Supply & Sewerage Detail Plans
2. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
3. JOL Estate Map Collection and photographic collection
4. Lawson, Ronald. *Brisbane in the 1890s: a study of an Australian urban society* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1973)
5. Mather, P. (ed) *A Time for a Museum: The History of the Queensland Museum 1862-1976*, (Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1986)
6. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895

Copyright Brisbane City Council

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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane