

Heritage Citation



Toowong Baptist Church

Key details

Addresses	At 5 Jephson Street, Toowong, Queensland 4066
Type of place	Church
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Carpenter Gothic
Lot plan	L3_RP142583; L2_RP142583
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — October 2006
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

This Victorian Carpenter Gothic style church was built in 1881 following a decision by local Baptist families to erect a church closer to their homes. The church was extended a number of times in the early twentieth century to accommodate the growing Baptist congregation in the area and has continued to provide a place of worship for the local Baptist community for more than 115 years.

History

The Toowong Baptist Church was built in 1881 following a decision by local Baptist families to erect a suitable church in their midst. It was extended a number of times early in this century to accommodate the growing Baptist Congregation in the area.

At first, merely a thoroughfare along the route connecting Brisbane and the Darling Downs, parcels of land in Toowong were sold in the 1860s and early occupation of the district began. In 1874, the opening of the railway from Roma Street to Ipswich expedited rapid residential development such that by 1880, when the region became a separate shire, there was a population of about 1200 people.

The Baptist faith in Queensland, while coming with the early immigrants, was one of the last churches to formally establish themselves. After initially worshipping with Congregationalists and Presbyterians as the 'United Evangelical Church', the Baptists constituted a church in Wharf Street in the late 1850s. The ferment of the debates surrounding the separation of the colony from New South Wales were reflected in separations within this principled, individualistic faith. In 1861 a group split from the Wharf Street church and began a Jireh Baptist Church in Fortitude Valley. From here outreaches spread to the developing suburbs and William Richer started

the Toowong work.

From the mid-1870s churches began to be built in Toowong with Church of England, Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist churches constructed in 1875, 1876 and 1879 respectively. These buildings were all erected in one street, appropriately named Church Street, until the name changed to Jephson Street in 1939.

These churches were soon joined by the Toowong Baptist church following a meeting in May 1881 of Toowong Baptist families who wished to have a church close to their homes. A Queensland Association of Baptist Churches was formed in 1877 and assisted the Toowong work of Mr William Richer with a donation. A block of land was purchased and a small building was erected on it, capable of seating 100 people. "The formation of a church and Sunday School was also proceeded with, the foundation members of which were eleven in number - Mr and Thos Strong, Mr and Mrs T. White, Mr and Mrs W. Richer, Mr and Mrs W. Hicks, Mr, Mrs and Miss Rosser".

Services were held regularly by Mr W. Richer in the mornings for the first six months, and after that evening services also were held. Not long after the commencement of evening services, a baptistery with a small retiring room was erected to accommodate applicants for Baptism. In June 1884 the congregation acquired the adjoining allotment and enlarged the existing church at a total cost of ,250. The additions meant that seating accommodation was doubled and better facilities were available for the work of preaching the gospel. Mr Richer continued to conduct services and discharge the duties of the pastorate, as well as carrying on his own private business, from the beginning of the parish into the early decades of the twentieth century, apart from a period of severe illness between 1893 and 1896.

Membership of the church reached its highest number in 1903 when 75 names were on the Roll. Improvements to the church were made in 1903 and the church was described in 1905 as a "well appointed church with accommodation for 150 persons".

The church has continued to serve the Toowong Baptist community and is a valued part of the local community.

Description

This modest timber framed church, which has received several additions since its original construction, is located on a prominent corner site.

The original plan form was T-shaped, consisting of nave and north and south transepts. Subsequent additions have resulted in an extension to the nave at the western end, erection of a hall across the western end and construction of toilet and wash room facilities attached to the western side of the north transept.

The single storeyed timber framed church is clad with timber chamferboards and seated on timber piers. The external row of timber piers has been replaced with a face brick base wall enclosing the underneath area. Sub-floor ventilation has been provided by the installation of terracotta air vents in the brick wall.

The pitched roof is sheeted with corrugated iron and terminates as a gable to the transepts and at the eastern end of the nave. The western end of the nave roof terminates with a hipped roof.

The entrance porch is roofed with corrugated iron laid to a very shallow pitch. A timber framed, chamferboard

clad, false parapet is mounted on this roof. The eaves overhangs to the eastern end nave and the transepts are lined with tongue and groove boarding. The overhang to the western end nave extension is unlined.

Mounted on the roof ridge at the junction of the transepts and the nave is a small belfry/spire. Originally housing fixed timber louvres on all four faces; the belfry has now been enclosed with flat metal sheeting. The spire roof to the belfry is sheeted with overlapping layers of scalloped flat metal sheets.

The east end gable projection is supported on a series of shaped timber brackets and finished at the apex with modestly decorated fretwork. Further decoration is provided by timber moulding fixed to the eastern face of the nave wall at the springing point of the gable.

Differently shaped timber brackets are provided to support the transept gable projections. These brackets are only provided at the gable springing point.

Windows to the nave are pairs of timber framed pivoted windows mounted vertically. Glazing to these windows is a combination of coloured glass, opaque glass or clear glass to which a coat of paint has been applied. The two windows either side of the entrance porch incorporate lead lighting and one window in the nave contains a stained glass panel. Narrow timber ledges supported on moulded timber brackets provide a form of weather protection to the windows. The windows to the nave gable and transept gable ends are twin lancet type timber framed windows similar to windows used elsewhere in the building but incorporating triangulated heads. Windows are protected from dripping water by a basic timber label mould fixed above the window head.

Three small lead-lighted lancet windows provide lighting to the entrance porch. Security to the entrance porch is provided by roller shutters positioned behind round arched head door openings. Access to the porch is by way of brick steps containing a mild steel balustrade and handrail both side of steps.

Timber framed vertical joint doors provide side access to the transepts. These doorways are protected by corrugation iron awnings lined with a scalloped edge vertical timber boarded valance. Due to the site terrain brick steps provide access to the northern transept doorway.

Completely barrier free access to the building has not been provided since at least one step up is required to gain access to the building by way of the south east doorway. The building is in fair condition although there is evidence of settlement at the southeast corner of the building. At the southwest end of the nave where the church joins with the church hall, water problems have resulted in the deterioration of timberwork and this section of the building is in need of repair.

The church hall is timber framed, seated on concrete piers, clad with fibro cement and vertical joint boarding under window panels. The roof is sheeted with corrugated asbestos cement sheeting and the eaves are lined with fibro cement. The underneath area is secured with horizontal battens fixed between concrete piers. The windows are large timber framed casements generally fixed in groups of three. The window panel in the northern wall consists of four casements and the adjacent window on the western wall consisting of two casements.

The fenestration to the southern wall consists of five banks of six adjustable glass louvres and an outward opening flush door. The toilet and wash room extension is constructed externally of face brickwork laid in stretcher bond with the panels below the aluminium framed hopper windows coated with a cement render.

The return wall is sheeted with fibro cement and contains aluminium framed sliding glass window.

The roof is sheeted with metal roof decking. The timber framed deck between the toilet block and the hall is roofed with corrugated fibreglass sheeting.

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 for the evidence it provides about the development of the Toowong area in the late nineteenth century.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance as a intact example of an 1880s Victorian Carpenter Gothic style church.

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 an important part of the lives of the successive generations who have worshipped at the church since 1881, and as it reflects the dedication of members of the local Baptist community to establish and maintain a chapel to cater for the spiritual needs of families in this rapidly developing area in the nineteenth century.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans
 2. Lawson, Ronald 1973, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
 3. McKellar's Map of Brisbane and Suburbs. Brisbane: Surveyor-General's Office, 1895
 4. Parker, D. (ed). *The Gregory History of Queensland Baptists: Documents in Queensland Baptist History No. 1*. Brisbane: Baptist Historical Society of Queensland, 1995
 5. *Queensland Baptist Jubilee: Record volume 1855-1905*, W.R. Smith & Co., Brisbane
 6. Watson, Donald & Judith McKay 1994, *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia
 7. White, Rev. J. E 1992, *A Fellowship of Service: A History of the Baptist Union of Queensland 1877-1977*
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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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