

Heritage Citation



Key details

Also known as	Avenal
Addresses	At 50 Flinders Parade, Sandgate, Queensland 4017
Type of place	House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L5_RP29188; L4_RP29188
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — April 2013
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

This fine timber home was built in the late nineteenth century when Sandgate was the favoured seaside destination for residents of Brisbane and southern Queensland. 'Torquay' is typical of the houses built as the seaside homes of successful businessmen of the time, and used as such by the owners until the Second World War. It was during this period that it was owned by Eric Paul Decker local Alderman and Member of the Queensland Parliament for the district. In the postwar period Sandgate's popularity declined and houses shortages prompted the conversion of this large house, like many others, to flats. It was restored to its original grandeur in the 1980s.

History

'Torquay' is built on two sixteen perch lots subdivided from portion 74, an area of over 8 acres, originally purchased by William Loudon in 1858. The land was subdivided in 1878 and these two lots were transferred to Lewis Drouyn in 1885. Lewis Drouyn was the proprietor of the Osborne Hotel in Eagle Terrace. In 1890 Drouyn mortgaged the land for £907 which is likely to have been used to build this house - although it may have been built earlier as he was resident in Sandgate from 1882. In August 1890 the property was transferred to David Lyons. There is no record of David Lyons living at Sandgate although he could have been a holiday visitor. Seven years later, in December 1897, the property was transferred to Miriam Alexander, wife of Michael Alexander. Miriam Alexander was evidently related to David Lyons, as she was a claimant to his will.

From the time of the opening of the rail line from Brisbane to Sandgate in 1882 the township boomed as the seaside resort of Brisbane. During this period a number of fine residences were constructed, particularly along Flinders Parade and Brighton Terrace that had views of the sea and were exposed to cooling sea breezes. As the resident population grew; as well as hotels, an imposing post office and fine churches were constructed. By the turn of the century Sandgate was 'an established municipal seaside town and watering place on the shores of Moreton Bay. It was connected by rail and located 12 miles to the north of Brisbane with a pier and bathing facilities.'

William Alexander lived on the corner of Flinders Parade and Second Avenue from 1896-7 with Mrs Miriam Alexander joining him before becoming the sole occupant from 1902 until her death in 1918. The house was then named 'Avenal'. John Alexander and Alice Baynes inherited the property in 1919 and sold it to James Brett, a timber merchant in 1921. At this time, Sandgate continued to be a popular place for seaside picnics and recreation. The pier was the place to promenade, while numerous bus and train loads of schools and organisations held their annual picnics at the seashore. Live music emanated from bandstands in foreshore parks while there were bathing boxes on the shoreline to allow nuns to bathe in private. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the seawall along the foreshores of Bramble Bay was constructed as an employment creation project.

In 1941 the property on the corner of Flinders Parade and Second Avenue was transferred to Eric Paul Decker. Eric Paul Decker was Brisbane City Council Alderman for the Sandgate Ward from 1931 to 1941 and State MLA for the Sandgate electorate from 1941 to 1953. Decker served in the 15th Battalion of the A.I.F. but from November 1918 sold real estate in Sandgate. His parents, Mr & Mrs E. H. Decker lived in Sandgate at the time,

with E.H. Decker representing Redcliffe as an alderman. Eric Paul Decker later owned the Auction Mart in Brighton Road. Decker was elected and served as the alderman for the Sandgate Ward from 1931 to 1941. He served initially on the Executive Committee before becoming a member of the Works and Finance Committees, and served on the Establishment & Co-ordination Committee from 1940. In the same year that Decker became the owner of 'Torquay', he was elected to the Queensland Parliament as the Member for Sandgate.

It is likely that during Decker's ownership that the reported bomb shelter (with 2 feet thick cement walls and 3 feet in depth) in the backyard under the fig was built.¹ In 1947 Decker undertook repairs and alterations to the dwelling. In August 1952 Decker converted the dwelling into 3 flats and from 1954 to 1955 the property was registered as flats for 8 persons. In 1971, following the death of Eric Decker, the property passed to Eden Decker, widow Margret Gibbins and Edward Decker.

In the postwar period the Sandgate's popularity as a seaside resort declined as private car ownership and personal travel options increased. The Gold Coast with its 'golden beaches' and surf drew crowds of postwar 'baby boomers' while Sandgate became a haven for retirees.

In 1982 'Torquay' was purchased by Leigh and Victoria Sampson who saw the grand home beneath almost a century of accretions and modifications. The nineteenth century home located on the Bramble bay waterfront had the wraparound verandahs "enclosed with louvres, windows and weatherboards". Beaded, tongue and groove ceilings had been removed and lowered as well as complete walls removed and the exterior lined with masonite and fibro.² The mammoth restoration task, completed with the assistance of former National Trust of Queensland architect, Ray Oliver was awarded the National Trust's John Herbert Award for excellence in residential conservation work in 1988. Since then the house has been well-maintained and Sandgate has once again become a favoured seaside destination for 'Brisbane-ites' looking for a 'not too far away' traditional seaside stroll, bike-ride, picnic or outing to one of the seafront cafes.

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 late nineteenth century seafront home built while Sandgate was booming as the favoured seaside recreation area of Brisbane.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a well-maintained nineteenth century residence with fine timber detailing.

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 of Eric Paul Decker, local businessman, Brisbane City Council alderman and State member of Parliament for the Sandgate District during World War Two.

References

1. Information from owner 30/4/2010
2. 'John Herbert Awards – 1988: A Labour of Love', *National Trust Journal*, June 1988, p.14
3. Brisbane City Council. Building Card 50 Flinders Pde, Sandgate
4. National Trust Queensland. Faxed pages from *National Trust Journal* June 1988 p.15
5. 'Labour of Love' John Herbert Awards – 1988, *National Trust Journal*, June 1988 pp. 13–16
6. Queensland Certificates of Title
7. Queensland Post Office Directories
8. Sandgate & Districts Historical Society. *Sandgate Heritage Trail*
9. *Trove*. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>

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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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