

Heritage Citation



Waterworks Cottage No. 129

Key details

Addresses	At 663 Mt Crosby Road, Mount Crosby, Queensland 4306
Type of place	Cottage, House, Work residence
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L9_RP904286
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 20 February 2004 Date of Citation — September 2015
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber

This house was constructed circa 1930 as accommodation for workers employed on expansion works at the Mount Crosby Waterworks. The works were undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s to meet increased demands for supply from Brisbane and Ipswich, as well as to upgrade equipment installed in the early 1890s. The house is part of the second village which developed in the 1920s, near the intersection of Mount Crosby and Stumers Roads and close to the general store and school. The house and others in the second village were sold into private ownership in the late 1990s, following the increased urbanisation of Mount Crosby and the decreased need to house waterworks employees in the area.

History

The Mount Crosby Waterworks was built in stages from the 1890s to supply water to Brisbane. The first stage, a pumping station and reservoir, opened in 1893. Thirteen cottages were provided for the permanent staff of firemen, engineers, a caretaker and a drayman. The waterworks were significantly expanded in the 1910s in an effort to improve the quality and quantity of Brisbane's water supply. The new work, undertaken by the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, included a second reservoir, upgraded equipment in the pumping station and filtration beds at nearby Holt's Hill.

Additional housing for employees formed a small part of the expansion works. The site was isolated and difficult to reach, even with the addition of a railway line in 1913. Some workers needed to be on site at all times, such as the engineers and firemen who supervised the pumping station machinery, and the caretakers at the remote Holt's Hill filters and low level reservoirs. Soon after expansion works began, houses were built for the supervising engineers, which also served as site offices. With costs mounting, however, the Board attempted to limit its spending. Tenders received for houses for the night engineer and two firemen in 1912 were rejected as too expensive, and the work was postponed.

The paucity of accommodation was recognised by some members of the Board in 1914, who recommended that 'something should be done to increase the housing accommodation for employees at Mt. Crosby'¹. The Board had a policy to provide accommodation for its permanent employees, but the Board's president, EJ Manchester, proposed waiting to see how many employees would be required after the new, more efficient pumping equipment was installed. The provision of accommodation also met with resistance from Board members unwilling to establish a precedent for all waterworks sites. No built housing was provided for construction workers, who lived on or near the site in tents.

As the progress of works fell severely behind schedule, the isolation of the area and lack of facilities took its toll on the workers. In 1918 an employee challenged the Board on the grounds that it needed to provide an additional travel or accommodation allowance for 'country work' at Mount Crosby. The claim was rejected, sparking threats of strikes. Permanent employees began negotiations with the Board for new award agreements, emphasising hours and wages.

The expansion works were completed in 1919, but the Board almost immediately began work on further extensions and improvements. By this time, it was clear that more workers were needed for Mount Crosby, and

with tensions over working conditions still simmering, the Board decided to build additional accommodation. Between 1919 and 1927 the Board called for tenders for the supply of timber for and construction of nineteen workers' cottages for Mount Crosby. Contracts were awarded to Brisbane timber merchants Hancock and Gore for eight cottages in 1919; Arthur Foote for one in 1923; Ipswich contractors William Tunbridge and Sons for four in 1925; and Loney or Lonie and Beduhn for five in 1927, with another cottage built shortly after.

Costs of the new cottages varied. Hancock and Gore's eight cottages, constructed between September 1919 and March 1920, were erected at a cost of £3,766, or around £470 each, but the Board spent an additional £1,878 for stumps, water pipes, fittings, connections and stoves. Tunbridge's cottages were built for nearly £500 each, and Foote's for £418, while Loney and Beduhn's cost £488 each, but the additional cottage £693.

The designs of the cottages also varied slightly, though all appear to have been designed by the Board's water supply engineer, John Peart. The array built in the village precinct included two and three bedroom cottages. This house is of the two-bedroom type. Originally the house was four roomed, with each bedroom, kitchen and sitting room or study accessed from a small hallway. The bathroom and storage room were on the rear verandah. Decorative features included battened valances on the front verandah.

Unlike previous employees' cottages at Mount Crosby, the new workers' dwellings were not built near the waterworks plant. The early workers' cottages were built on 'Workers' Hill', the remnants of a steep hill overlooking the pumping station. This situation was ideal for the firemen and engineers to monitor and quickly access the pumping station. The 1920s houses were instead built on land owned by the Board near the Mount Crosby School. The reason for this is unclear, although the lack of space and challenging terrain near the pumping station, reservoirs and filtration beds may have contributed. A store and post office was added to the area, giving it a village atmosphere.

Of the houses built in the 1920s it is not known which were built by which particular contractor. As late as the 1990s, streets around Mount Crosby were unnamed or not in existence, and maps do not clearly indicate what houses were built where or when. The name 'Mount Crosby' was used as a general descriptor in tender notices, including cottages built at the pumping station and village as well as Holt's Hill, nearly two kilometres away. Further, a number of the houses were moved on the site or to other waterworks sites, and some were demolished. A 1920 map suggests that the cottages along Mount Crosby Road were the first built; however, studies of the Mount Crosby precinct have identified those as late 1920s or even 1930s houses.

Mt Crosby's population boomed in the 1920s as waterworks employees moved into the village. Fitters, greasers and labourers joined the engineers and firemen already resident. From the early 1920s to 1930 the population nearly doubled, and by 1949 74 members of staff were employed at the Mt Crosby waterworks. However, as the steam boilers and pumps were replaced by electrical plant, workers were transferred to other tasks and electricians and treatment plant attendants replaced their colleagues in the cottages.

This house and others in the second village were sold into private ownership in the late 1990s, following the increased urbanisation of Mount Crosby and the decreased need to house waterworks employees in the area.

Description

Late 1920s/1930 detached timber house clad in weatherboards with a corrugated galvanised iron roof. The front of the house has remained generally in original condition other than the replaced front stairs. The house has

interesting paired timber verandah posts and vertical slat balustrading and valences.

This house type generally comprises four major rooms, two bedrooms diagonally opposite, a sitting room at the front and a large kitchen at the rear reached by a short hallway. The rear verandah of this house type has undergone most changes. The verandah may have been enclosed and bathroom and store at either end altered.

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 this dwelling, associated with the site of the Mount Crosby Water Treatment Works, is evidence of the continuing pattern of residential development at Mt Crosby during the 1920s and 1930s.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as a purpose-built workers' dwelling.

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 one of 47 houses built between 1892 and 1945, specifically for Mount Crosby Water Treatment Works

employees.

References

1. *Brisbane Courier*, 27 May 1914 p9
 2. Brisbane City Council Department of Water Supply and Sewerage, 'A brief outline of the Brisbane water supply system' (1970)
 3. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit, Mount Crosby Waterworks Heritage Study (Appendix B: Employees' Accommodation), nd
 4. Nissen, Judith, 'Creating the landscape: A history of settlement and land use in Mount Crosby' School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland (1999)
 5. Extended Ipswich Heritage Study
-

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