

Heritage Citation

Willara

Key details

Also known as	Willara House
Addresses	At 426 Upper Edward Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Boarding house
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Style
Lot plan	L1_RP10191
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 14 September 2018 Date of Citation — April 2014
People/associations	Hall and Prentice (Renovations) (Architect); Richard Gailey (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity

'Willara' was constructed in 1889-90 for the Baptist Church as the manse for the adjacent City Tabernacle that had been constructed at the same time. Both buildings were designed by prominent Brisbane architect, Richard Gailey. The Reverend William Whale was the first pastor to live in the two-storey timber manse with his family when it was first built and did so until his death in 1903. From 1905 the house was then converted into a boarding house. Helen Irvine purchased 'Willara' in 1920 and continued its use as a boarding house. In 1927, successful Brisbane architectural firm, Hall and Prentice, carried out additions to 'Willara'. This transformed the Upper Edward Street frontage with the construction of a decorative brick facade and a ground floor shop. The Baptist Church re-purchased the property in 1963 and the boarding house was then used exclusively to accommodate young women. 'Willara' has been used continuously as a boarding house since 1905.

History

The convict settlement was closed in 1839 and in 1842 Moreton Bay was officially opened for free settlement as part of the colony of New South Wales. At this time the area now known as Spring Hill was Crown Land and by 1856 the government had begun to subdivide the land and sell to private investors. Initially the land on top of the hills was bought by wealthy Brisbane residents who established large houses overlooking the town. Smaller and less expensive lots were bought by those of slighter means on which modest workers' cottages were erected. Spring Hill quickly became one of Brisbane's earliest dormitory suburbs, where most of its inhabitants went to jobs every day in other areas.

By the 1870s, following further subdivision of land in the Spring Hill area, the lower slopes of the hills were becoming increasingly crowded. By the 1890s, Spring Hill had become Brisbane's most crowded suburb. At this time, Spring Hill's commercial centre was along Leichhardt Street between Upper Edward and Boundary Streets. As well as many residences, there were also approximately 39 businesses including six grocers, five fruiterers, several boot-makers, two drapers, three tobacconists, a baker, four butchers and a bank. There were also three hotels, the Sir John Young Hotel, the Avoca Hotel and the Alliance Hotel. Trams ran along Leichhardt Street and several churches and schools had been established.

In 1887 the Baptist Church purchased 1 rood and 38 perches of land in Spring Hill. The majority of this land was used to construct the majestic City Tabernacle on the corner of Wickham Terrace and Upper Edward Street in 1889-90. It was to replace an earlier Baptist church in Wharf Street that could no longer accommodate the growing congregation. The new City Tabernacle was designed by respected Brisbane architect, Richard Gailey. Included in the plans for the church was the construction of a manse behind the tabernacle on Upper Edward Street. At a meeting of the members and friends of the Baptist Church in July 1889, it was reported that:

It was unanimously resolved to proceed at once with the erection of the church buildings at the intersection of Wickham Terrace and Upper Edward Street, at an outlay of £12,000, which is to include organ, sitting accommodation, &c., and the erection of a manse from the material of the building now on the site at an outlay of £1000 (*The Brisbane Courier*, 27 July 1889 p6).

It is evident, then, that prior to the manse being constructed, an older building existed on the site. In the 1889 *Post Office Directories* the extant house was recorded as being unoccupied and one year later the property was recorded as having a "House in course of erection". It is clear that the manse on Upper Edward Street was constructed at the same time as the tabernacle and also designed by Richard Gailey.

The first pastor to serve in the City Tabernacle on Wickham Terrace was Reverend William Whale who had arrived in Brisbane in 1885 with his family. In 1891 Whale was first recorded on Upper Edward Street. From photographs taken at the time, the manse was a two storey timber building with several brick chimneys. It was named 'Willara' and remained the home of Reverend Whale and his family until his passing in 1903. According to the Baptist Church's official history, *Grow the Vision*, the proceeding pastors did not find 'Willara' suitable and so the house was leased to tenants from 1905.

At the turn of the century in Spring Hill, many of the larger houses had been converted into boarding houses as the wealthier residents moved away from the inner-city and out to more wholesome suburbs. With a shortage of affordable housing in Brisbane in this era, many poorer residents found accommodation in boarding houses.

Within these houses guests were allocated a room but would share kitchens, bathrooms and toilet facilities. These boarding houses further contributed to the overcrowded living conditions that defined Spring Hill at this time. Upper Edward Street was predominately residential with 27 houses and two boarding houses recorded on both sides of the street. Its close proximity to the city lent itself to the establishment of short term accommodation and by 1905 there were four boarding houses in the street.

The small 18 perch portion of the larger holding was leased to Miss Ellen Winfield who was first listed in the *Post Office Directories* in 1905 at 426 Upper Edward Street in 'Willora'. *The Directories* do not state whether it had become a boarding house at this time. One year later, however, Mrs Fanny Lydia Moxley was listed at the address and on the 11 May 1905, an advertisement was featured in the *Queensland Figaro* for 'Willara', confirming the house had been converted into a boarding house that year. It is unclear why the spelling of the house's name differs in the *Post Office Directories* from the newspaper advertisements at this time. The advertisement stated:

"Willara", Next Tabernacle, Upper Edward St.
Now open. Hot and Cold Baths. Liberal Table.
Every attention paid to Visitors and Permanent Boarders.
Mrs. F.L.Moxley, Proprietress (*Queensland Figaro*, 11 May 1905, p18).

Mrs Moxley ran the boarding house for the next three years. Following this, a succession of proprietresses managed the boarding house; Mrs Mary Hogbert, Mrs Ellen Broderick, Miss Katherine Casey and Mrs Elizabeth Fury. 'Willara' continued to be the property of the Baptist Church throughout this time.

In 1920, the Church subdivided the land into two lots. The larger, 1 rood and 19 perch block contained the tabernacle and remained in the ownership of the Church. The smaller, 18 perch block, on which 'Willara' was situated, was sold to Helen Irvine.

Irvine continued to run 'Willara' as a boarding house throughout the 1920s. In 1927 plans for additions to 'Willara' were drawn up by successful Brisbane architectural firm, Hall and Prentice. In October 1927, tenders were closed for "Additions to "Willara" Boarding House, Upper Edward Street" (*The A&B Journal of Queensland*, October 10, 1927), and the accepted contractor was OG Machin. At the same time Council received an application for "Enlarging Boarding House... Upper Edward Street... Mrs H Irvine, Willara House... Hall and Prentice".

The changes included the addition of an extra storey, construction of the decorative front brick façade with 'Willara House' included in the pediment, and the addition of a ground floor shop. In 1928 the 'Willara Café' was first listed in this shop and remained there until well into the 1940s. The newly renovated building remained a boarding house until the Baptist Church re-purchased the property in 1963.

As the Baptist congregation continued to expand in the early half of the twentieth century, a greater need for facilities became apparent. By re-acquiring 'Willara', a kindergarten was introduced on the ground floor. The upstairs boarding house continued to be used for accommodation as the City Tabernacle Young Ladies' Hostel.

Although known today as 'Willara House', 426 Upper Edward Street remains to be in the ownership of the Baptist Tabernacle. As a boarding house for young women, it continues to provide safe, comfortable accommodation for young Baptist women visiting Brisbane. This constant use as a boarding house contributes to 'Willara's' historic significance.

Description

Willara is a two-storey, timber framed 1880s building with a 1920s three storey masonry front. The face-brick commercial front has a ground floor shopfront sheltered by a top-hung footpath awning and retains original timber framed sash windows. The parapet is rendered and features 'Willara House'. The two-storey timber rear building has a hipped roof clad with corrugated metal sheets and its exterior is clad with timber chamferboards.

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 large nineteenth-century house that was converted into a boarding house in 1905, 'Willara' reflects the pattern of development in Spring Hill from this time.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a boarding house established in 1905, 'Willara' is a rare example of this form of accommodation in Brisbane's inner-city that has had a continuous residential use.

Supporting images

This is an image of 'Upper Edward Street Spring Hill - Aerial View from Wickham Terrace - 1959', viewed from the rooftop

Image not found or type unknown

Unknown photographer,
'Upper Edward Street Spring Hill - Aerial View from
Wickham Terrace - 1959',
Brisbane City Council Library Services, Brisbane City
Council

An elevated view across the rooftop of 'Willara' from the
top of 'Wickham House' (QHR 601180), 155 Wickham
Terrace, Spring Hill; looking north-west toward Albert
Park (present day Roma Street Parklands).

References

1. *The Brisbane Courier*, 27 July 1889 p6
2. *Queensland Figaro*, 11 May 1905, p18
3. *The A&B Journal of Queensland*, October 10, 1927
4. Queensland Electoral Rolls
5. Post Office Directories.
6. Certificates of Titles, Department of Natural Resources and Mines
7. Ball, Les, *Grow the Vision, The Sesqui-Centennial History of the City Tabernacle Baptist Church 1855-2005*, City Tabernacle Baptist Church Brisbane, 2005
8. Helen Bennett, "Being Modern: Living in Flats in Interwar Brisbane", *Queensland Review*, Vol 13, No 2,

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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.

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



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