

St Joseph's Orphanage (Former)



St Joseph's Orphanage



East and north elevations of Blythwood Garage (Building 1)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, Stables & Machinery Shed (Building 2)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, St Joseph's Orphanage (Building 3)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, Chapel (Building 4)

St Joseph's Orphanage



West elevation, Orphanage Additions (Building 5)

St Joseph's Orphanage



North elevation, Seniors' Wing (Building 6)

St Joseph's Orphanage



South & east elevations, former Laundry (Building 7)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, Galined Shed (Building 8)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, former Caribaker's Dwelling (Building 9)

St Joseph's Orphanage



North elevation, Fatima House (Building 10)

St Joseph's Orphanage



East elevation, Boiler House & Chimney Stack (Building 11)

St Joseph's Orphanage

Location

208-240 GRANT STREET, SEBASTOPOL - PROPERTY NUMBER 2046268, BALLARAT CITY

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO142

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 29, 2024

What is significant?

The former St. Joseph's Orphanage, 208-240 Grant Street, Sebastopol, has significance as one of the largest, intact and most outstanding former Roman Catholic Orphanages in rural Victoria. Possibly originally conceived by the Bishop of Ballarat, James Moore in 1904, it was not until 1911 when the idea of an orphanage farm operated by the Sisters of Nazareth came to fruition under the leadership of Bishop Moore's successor, Bishop Joseph Higgins. Known as Blythwood Grange the property at Sebastopol included a two storey basalt mansion and rear stables outbuilding built for the former mining manager, machinery dealer and Mayor of Sebastopol, James Leckie, in 1878, together with substantial landscaped grounds and rear grazing areas and a large lake. The need for the orphanage at Sebastopol was due to overcrowding at the parent house of the Sisters of Mercy, Nazareth House, Wendouree. St. Joseph's Orphanage was officially blessed and opened in 1913 and it soon became a model orphanage farm. Today, while the property no longer functions as an orphanage, its evolution and development, firstly by James Leckie as a private property and then by the Sisters of Nazareth and the Roman Catholic Church as St. Joseph's Orphanage, is manifested in the surviving and largely intact Victorian, Federation and postwar buildings. These include the former Blythwood Grange basalt mansion house and rear detached stables and machinery shed (built 1878); St. Joseph's Orphanage (built 1911); St. Joseph's Chapel (built 1911), orphanage additions, former senior boys building, former caretaker's dwelling, former laundry and gabled timber shed (built 1915); Fatima House (infants' nursery, built 1953); boiler house and chimney stack (built c.1953) and the former kindergarten (built 1961). Also contributing to the significance of the place are the expansive and early landscaped grounds on the Grant Street frontage dominated by fir trees and open grassed areas. At the rear of the complex are mature cypress and pine trees flanking the banks of a picturesque lake.

How is it significant?

The former St. Joseph's Orphanage, 208-240 Grant Street, Sebastopol, is historically, architecturally, aesthetically and socially significant at a STATE level.

Why is it significant?

The former St. Joseph's Orphanage, 208-240 Grant Street, Sebastopol, has historical significance (Criteria A & H) for its associations with the institutionalised care of boys and infant girls between 1913 and 1980, and as an early 20 thcentury model orphanage farm that was recognised throughout Australia. The former St. Joseph's Orphanage (later known as Nazareth Boys' Home) played host to 2,538 children and the substantially intact complex of buildings are associated with the welfare traditions, regimes and values of Roman Catholic orphanage life throughout the 20 thcentury. The former orphanage has particular associations with the Most Rev. Joseph Higgins, Bishop of Ballarat (who brought the concept of an orphanage farm to fruition) and the Sisters of Nazareth (who were responsible for the care, upbringing and education of the children). At Sebastopol, the Sisters were first led by Mother Thomas and later by Sister Aiden, Rev. Moth Elizabeth of the Visitation and the Rev. Mother Reginald. Earliest known as Blythwood Grange, the surviving mansion house and stables had been built for the former mining manager, machinery dealer and Mayor of Sebastopol, James Leckie in 1878 as the Leckie family home. In 1911, construction commenced on the development of the orphanage to accommodate

100 boys. At this time, the Ballarat architects, Clegg and Morrow designed a two storey orphanage wing that was opened in 1913. Clegg and Miller were also responsible for the design of the orphanage Chapel in 1911. It was followed in 1915 by orphanage additions, caretaker's dwelling, seniors' workshop, laundry, timber shed and a recreation area that were designed and supervised by the architects and building surveyors, Lusk and Moriarty, of Melbourne. In 1953, a substantial two storey infants' nursery (known as Fatima House) was erected to a design by the Melbourne architect, Reginald Appleford. It also appears to have been at this time when a brick boiler house and a landmark chimney stack were constructed. Associated with the infants nursery from the 1960s was the building of modest skillion store that later functioned as the Sebastopol West Kindergarten until 1980. The setting of the former Orphanage property is a physical manifestation of the earliest development of the site for the Leckie family between 1878 and 1902, when a substantial front garden was laid out and planted, and a lake constructed at the rear.

The former St. Joseph's Orphanage, 208-240 Grant Street, Sebastopol, is architecturally and aesthetically significant as an outstanding and intact example of early and mid 20th century orphanage design in the existing complex of brick and timber buildings, as well as a notable local example of Victorian domestic architecture in the surviving Blythwood Grange mansion (Building 1) (Criteria D, E & F). The latter is a largely intact example of a picturesque Victorian Italianate style, the basalt having been recycled from the Prince of Wales gold mining operations in the locality. As an orphanage complex, St. Joseph's is one of the most intact and largest surviving in Victoria, most comparable with St. Aidan's Orphanage, Kennington (Bendigo) that was also established in the very early 20th century. The former orphanage building (Building 3) at Sebastopol, constructed in 1911, is a legacy of the idiosyncratic work of the architects, Clegg and Miller, as especially expressed in the red brick gabled forms and rendered dressings, arcaded verandah with a first floor balcony, and particularly in the picturesque row of small lantern ventilators and the larger ventilator at the northern end. It directly relates to other substantial examples of the architects' work, including the Queen Victorian Women's Ward at the Ballarat Hospital (1898) and the Ballarat Grammar School (1909). The orphanage additions (Building 5), seniors' wing (Building 6), laundry (Building 7) and caretaker's dwelling (Building 9) constructed in 1915 to a design by Lusk and Moriarty are also notable examples of picturesque Federation era orphanage and residential design. The former infants' nursery earlier known as Fatima House (Building 10), built in 1953, is one of the more substantial and refined examples of postwar orphanage architecture by the architect, Reginald Appleford. The scale of the design is also unusual for the time when the institutionalised care of infants and children was rapidly progressing towards a more domestic 'cottage' system. A landmark at St. Joseph's is the chimney stack that serviced the adjoining brick boiler house (Building 11) (which appears to have been built in 1953). The rear utilitarian buildings also give an understanding of the functional operations of the property in the 19th and 20th century. These buildings include the former stone stables and machinery shed built in 1878 (Building 2) and the gabled timber shed (Building 8) (built in 1915). Contributing much to the architectural and aesthetic qualities of the site is the mature landscaped garden of fir and other exotic trees and grassed areas on the Grant Street frontage, together with the mature cypress and pine trees near the banks of the lake at the rear of the orphanage complex.

The former Joseph's Orphanage, 208-240 Grant Street, Sebastopol, is socially significant to some in the Sebastopol and wider Victorian community for its past role as a Roman Catholic orphanage (Criterion G). While the site no longer serves as a home for boys and female infants, its earlier function continues to be valued for its former purpose, as borne out in documentary evidence. In addition, a legacy of the importance bestowed to the orphanage is a plaque at the front of the existing swimming pool enclosure, marking the opening of the original orphanage pool in 1946 that had been funded by sportsmen of Ballarat.

Heritage Study/Consultant	City of Ballarat Heritage Assessments. Sebastopol, David Rowe, Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd and Wendy Jacobs, 2016; Ballarat - Ballarat Heritage Review, Andrew Ward, 1998;
Construction dates	1878, 1911, 1953,
Architect/Designer	Clegg & Miller, Appleford, Reginald,
Other Names	Blythwood Grange Mansion, Nazareth Boys' Home,
Hermes Number	178036

Property Number

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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