

Former Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged



City of Darebin Heritage
Review 2000



Map Ref: **30 D6**

NOT within Heritage Overlay Area.

City of Darebin Heritage Review 2000

Location

104 - 112 St Georges Road NORTHCOTE, Darebin City

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1950

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO175

Heritage Listing

Darebin City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The former Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged is of local architectural and historical importance.

The architectural significance of the building is confined to the exterior and is determined by its scale and style. The complex gains considerable distinction by its immense scale, elevated siting and the Elizabethan-style character of the main building. Externally the building is largely intact despite the later additions and the diverse architectural firms commissioned for later work. It is evident that Flannagan's original plan was carried out faithfully, despite evident changes in detail.

The building possesses local landmark qualities. The steeply pitched roofline of the three-storey building dominates the immediate area, particularly as approached St Georges Road where the building rises above the formerly landscaped grounds on the flat land fronting the ridge upon which it is built. The complex contrasts with the small scale buildings surrounding it in Park Street.

The building is the first permanent house to be established by the Sisters of the Poor in Australia, and the first institution to be formed specifically to care for the aged poor in Australia. The home acquired world notoriety when Lady Meach visited there in 1891 and returned to England to urge the Anglican Church to establish a similar institution.

Heritage Study/Consultant Darebin - Darebin Heritage Review, Andrew Ward, 2000;

Hermes Number 24217

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Flannagan's design was for a verandahed, rendered brick building, of two-storeys and a lower-ground level, in the Elizabethan style. The southern-most part of a typical E-plan was to be constructed first: the total estimated cost being £21,386 and the first part being £14,000. Flannagan was also responsible for early work at the Hotham

(North Melbourne) Town Hall, the Catholic Convent and School at Yarrawonga and the Presbytery at Wangaratta.

The floor plan comprised a central corridor and eight feet wide open cast-iron verandahs on both sides of the building, providing for ample circulation and recuperation space. Dormitories and recreation rooms opened off both the verandahs and the corridors on two levels, giving maximum access to the health-giving sea breezes.

A chapel was designed at the centre of the building, coinciding with the loggia and vestibule entrance but was left incomplete in the first stage and served as an oratory.

Prior to the completion of the southern wing, the home was opened one Sunday afternoon in June 1890 by Archbishop Carr. It boasted fireproof verandahs, hose cocks for the fire brigade at each level and adherence to all of the requirements of the Central Board of Health. Malmsbury bluestone was used in the stairways throughout and decorative cast-iron columns supported the loggias of the central wing at each level, (now removed).

From the existing central wing, the dormitories extended northward, this time with an outdoor corridor, larger dormitories and dividing service blocks with lavatories, a scullery and a clothes room. The external openings had flat-lintels and were not segmentally-arched as before, and the single cast-iron verandah columns replaced the more expensive pairs of the 1889 section: the whole was built more cheaply. This was to become the female section on completion in December, 1896.

It is possible that one of the original timber buildings may be Brown's farmhouse which is said to date from 1865. A building owned by Brown is shown on Brache's survey of c1864, but is located further to the west, which concurs with description of the existing conditions, as related in the Sister's 'Foundation Book'. However, a preliminary inspection of the building indicates that, if it was Brown's house, substantial renovation has taken place and little remains from the 1860s.

Alterations which have occurred over the years include the early conversion of the paired doubleflight entrance stairway to a single; straight flight, and the building-in of the loggias in the central wing with arched windows. More recently, the open verandahs have been walled-up (retaining most of the cast-iron); the lower ground level loggias have been glazed and the iron palisades removed; the interiors have been generally altered and details such as polished slate mantles have been painted over. The chapel interior has been redecorated, a timber dado added and the fittings generally simplified.

Subdivision of the western and southern part of the grounds has occurred recently. One of the original timber structures, perhaps a dormitory of 1885, has been relocated further to the north and renovated, both in 1885 and more recently. The nearby timber chapel constructed in 1885 has also been relocated, and it appears to have a verandah added in c1910.

Many minor additions and alterations have taken place, including the removal of the timber lodge which formerly stood at the St Georges Road entrance; the addition of brick cottages along the driveway and the recent addition of a priests' home at the southern end of the main building.

The brick fence replaces the iron fence which blew down in 1912.

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.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>