

Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number
4671011

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **St. Joseph's School & St. Joseph's Domes**

Location: **Mount Street, North Sydney**

Address: Mount Street

Corner:

Suburb / Nearest Town: North Sydney 2060

State: NSW

Local Govt Area: Local Government Area:
North Sydney

DUAP Region:
Sydney North

Historic region:
Sydney

Property Identifier:

Boundary:

Item Type: Built

Group: Education

Category: School - Private

Owner: Private - Corporate

Owner Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Teaching and administrative facility for Nursing and Human Movement faculty, Australian Catholic University

Former Uses: Primary school, Catholic teacher education facility; Domestic science school

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: St. Joseph's School is significant because of its association with Mary Mackillop, Australia's first saint and founder of the order of the Sisters of St. Joseph, who occupied the site. It is representative of the philosophies and educational ethos of the order, being built to provide education for the children of the poor. Its role as a teacher education centre represented the development and flowering of Mary Mackillop's ideals.

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School is significant because it represents a unique attempt by catholic educators on Sydney's North Shore to provide an educational facility for girls who did not wish to pursue an academic course beyond primary level, offering a choice between vocational-oriented commercial courses and a domestic science course oriented to home-making.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, as part of the Catholic Teachers' College Sydney, then the Catholic College of Education and eventually the Australian Catholic University both schools have been associated with the provision of teacher training, and have played a major role in the Catholic education system at a state and national level.

The changing role of the Domestic Science School demonstrates the changing attitudes to women's role in society which occurred over the last century, from primarily being seen as home-makers to their acceptance as equal participants with men in the work force and professional fields.

Historical Notes or Provenance: St. Joseph's School
St Joseph's School at Mount Street, North Sydney, was built as a single-storeyed brick building in 1900. It was extended in 1924, by the addition of an upper storey, to the design of architect, Edmund Bates. Built by the Sisters of St Joseph as a 'practice' school for their trainee teachers, it also operated as a local primary school. Unlike other local catholic primary schools it was not under the jurisdiction of the local parish priest and could therefore be classed as a private school. St Joseph's School is significant as an early catholic primary

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school in the North Sydney area and more broadly - through its teacher training role - as a focal point in the evolution and development of Catholic education, both in New South Wales and nationally. Expansion of its teacher training role was a continuing process, and it became known as St Joseph's Training School in 1913. At the same time it continued as a local primary school, operating in this way until the early 1950s. Its significance in the educational sphere has been consolidated as the century progressed because of a major reappraisal of its role at that time.

Although the primary school closed at this period the building was utilized to provide for a great expansionary programme in teacher training. Subsequent developments in the second half of the century saw the school change its status from primary to tertiary at a rapid rate, representing a unique sequence of events in the field of Catholic education. Both floors of the building were utilized by St Joseph's Training School to provide a greatly expanded teacher training programme. This occurred in response to a crisis period in Catholic education which had developed in the post World War Two period. The school's influence permeated the nation, because of the network of schools, Australia wide, staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph and other teachers trained at the school. By the end of the 1950s trainee teachers from other religious congregations, as well as lay students, had been admitted to the School, triggering further rapid developments. As a result St Joseph's Training School had become the Catholic Teachers College Sydney by the early 1960s, part of the Mackillop Campus of the Catholic College of Education in 1982, and an annexe of this Campus at the newly established Australian Catholic University in 1991.

Erected by their foundress, Mary Mackillop, the school has particular cultural significance for the Sisters of St Joseph. Built as a free school, aiming to provide educational opportunities for the children of the poor, it possess a deep symbolism relative to the educational ethos which guided the foundation of their congregation. Its ongoing role as a teacher training centre represents the flowering of Mary Mackillop's original ideals of providing good training opportunities for her sisters and provides concrete evidence of the progress achieved by the sisters in the ensuing years.

A sample of former pupils of the school interviewed in the course of the report also remember it with a mixture of fondness and respect. Mary Mackillop's recent canonization, making her Australia's first officially declared saint of the Catholic Church, has deepened the attachments of all concerned (Mary Sparke for Sue Rosen & Associates, "Historic Context Report for a Heritage Assessment of St. Joseph's School, Mount Street North Sydney," for Jackson, Teece, Chesterman, Willis Consultants Pty. Ltd., 1999, pp.3, 5.).

St Joseph's Domestic Science School

In 1929 St Joseph's Domestic Science School was erected on land bordering St Joseph's School, and in close proximity with it. A two-storeyed brick building, its front facade was extended to adjoin that of the original school, although out of harmony with it in design and colour. The architect of the building is not known and it is of little architectural merit, perhaps reflecting the fact that Australia was rapidly sliding into severe economic depression at the time of its construction. St Joseph's school possesses a distinct significance because of its role as the only catholic domestic science school on Sydney's North Shore at the time of its construction and operation. In this role it catered for the needs of post primary students from a wide range of North Shore locations, who did not wish to pursue academic courses at secondary level. It represents a unique attempt among catholic educators to provide such a

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service.

Adding to its significance is the fact that it represented an entry into a new field of educational activity for the Sisters of St Joseph. It also represented a comparatively new sphere in the state education system, where the initial movement had been part of the re-organization of post-primary education beginning in 1911. By the 1930s state domestic schools were being centralized into larger regional ones. St Joseph's Domestic Science School, because of its unique position on the North Shore can be seen as providing a similar service in the catholic sphere, although on a much smaller scale. Until the early 1960s it operated as the only catholic domestic science school on Sydney's North Shore.

Although requirements of the Wyndham report brought an end to this role in 1963, the building then became part of the newly established Catholic Teachers College Sydney, providing accommodation for an expanded programme of teacher training at that College. The school's transition in 1963 from Domestic Science School to a constituent location for the Catholic Teachers College Sydney, ensured that it retained a diversified significance in the field of Catholic education. This significance has strengthened as it kept pace with its near neighbour, the former St Joseph's School, evolving with it as part of the Catholic College of Education in 1982, to its present association with the Australian Catholic University (Sparke, 1999, 4.).

National Themes:

State Themes: Education
Religion

Study Themes:

Designer: Edmund Bates (partly designed St. Joseph's School)

Maker / Builder:

Year Started: 1900 **Year Completed:** 1929 **Circa:** No

Physical Description: St. Joseph's School - two-storeyed brick building with ornate facade.

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School - built on land bordering St. Joseph's School and in close proximity with it, the domestic science school is a two-storeyed brick building of plain external appearance with front facade extended to adjoin original school.

Physical Condition: St. Joseph's School - There have been considerable changes to the external and internal fabric of the building, as its uses changed and expanded. Despite these alterations the school's ornate facade remains intact, and the basic structure of the original building can be discerned in the surviving fabric.

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School - The exterior fabric of the building has remained intact, although the outer western wall has now become an interior wall, through enclosure of the original open space between both buildings. Both floors clearly exhibit their original layout, though somewhat disguised by recent subdivision of spaces.

Modification Dates: St. Joseph's School - Upper storey added in 1924.

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Many changes have occurred to the external and internal fabric of the building as its uses changed and expanded. Most changes probably occurred between the early 1960s and 1980s, however details and timing of works are not known.

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School - Alterations most likely occurred after 1963 when school was adapted for different purpose, however details and timing of works are not known.

**Recommended
Management:**

Further Comments:

Historical Significance: (a) St. Joseph's School - The school is significant due to its role in the Catholic education system as both a primary school and 'practice school' in the establishment of a teacher training system for the Sisters of St. Joseph. Both these functions continued to survive and develop in the same building throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Built as a free school, aiming to provide educational opportunities for the children of the poor, it possesses a deep symbolism relative to the educational ethos which guided the foundation of the congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Its ongoing role as a teacher training centre represents the flowering of founder, Mary Mackillop's original ideals and provides concrete evidence of the progress achieved by the sisters in the ensuing years (Sparke, 1999, 3, 25.).

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School is historically significant as a unique attempt among catholic educators on Sydney's North Shore to provide an educational facility for girls who did not wish to pursue an academic course beyond primary level, in line with state educational policies in this field. When it became part of the Catholic Teachers College Sydney, in the 1960s it acquired a new historical significance in the development of catholic education, again participating in a path-finding role, but this time in the academic sphere (Sparke, 1999, 26.).

(b) St. Joseph's School is significant for its association with Mary Mackillop, founder of the order of the Sisters of St. Joseph and recently canonized, making her Australia's first officially declared saint of the Catholic Church (Sparke, 1999, 25.).

It is also significant for its association with the philosophies of Catholic education and teacher training, which has played a significant role in the Catholic education system of New South Wales and Australia.

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School is significant because of its association with a prevailing community attitude of the pre-World War Two period, which viewed women's role in society as homemakers, rather than wage earners. Its later function in relation to co-educational teacher training and university education gave it a new significance, through its association with the development of a more liberal attitude to women's role (Sparke, 1999, 27.).

Aesthetic Significance: St. Joseph's School - Extensive alterations to the external fabric of the building have destroyed much of its aesthetic appeal. However, some of the surviving features are aesthetically significant. Foremost among these is the ornate street facade, which has survived intact, blending harmoniously with the neighbouring Alma Terrace facade. The warm red colour of the original bricks is visible in the facade, giving it added significance, as

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the brickwork in the remaining walls has been painted. The surviving arched windows, tall and slender in design, which were a feature of the 1900 school are also significant. All survive in the facade, and there are two more on the western wall. Buttresses on the front and western walls add to the overall aesthetic appeal (Sparke, 1999, 26.).

Social Significance: St. Joseph's School - The school is socially significant in its origins as a 'free' school and in its continuing role in the provision of educational opportunities for disadvantaged children. It has additional significance because of its association with the development of catholic education, both on a local level through its operation as a primary school, and on a state and national level through its continuing association with the provision and development of catholic teacher training services (Sparke, 1999, 26.).

Technical / Research: St. Joseph's School - The building provides a useful example of a local school building at the turn of the century. Constructed at a time when Australia was emerging from the depressed decade of the 1890s, the building is, predictably, of simple design, solid and functional. Yet it possesses a number of features typical of some of the more ornate schools of the nineteenth century, including arched windows, buttressed walls and an embellished facade. In this way it could be regarded as transitional in style, with features common to both centuries (Sparke, 1999, 26.).

Representativeness: St. Joseph's School - St Joseph's School is representative of many small catholic primary schools which originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to serve a local area (Sparke, 1999, 26.).

Rare Assessment: St. Joseph's School - The school possesses rarity as an example of a local catholic primary school which was privately operated. Unlike most other catholic primary schools it was not a parochial school under the jurisdiction of the local parish priest. It had been built, funded and staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph and was wholly under their jurisdiction. In addition, this was a rare feature in relation to other primary schools staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph, which were parochial in nature (Sparke, op. cit., p.26.).

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School -The building possesses rarity because of its role as a unique catholic educational facility specializing in domestic science courses, on Sydney's North Shore.

Integrity / Intactness: St. Joseph's School - Despite some interior and exterior alterations the school's ornate facade remains intact, and the basic structure of the original building can be discerned in the surviving fabric (Sparke, 1999, 3.).

St. Joseph's Domestic Science School - The exterior fabric of the building has remained intact, although the outer western wall has now become an interior wall, through enclosure of the original open space between both buildings. Both floors clearly exhibit their original layout, though somewhat disguised by recent subdivision of spaces (Sparke, 1999, 4.).

References:	Author:	Title:	Year:
	Sparke, Mary of Sue Rosen & Associates for Jackson, Teece, Chesterman, Willis	Historic Context Report for a Heritage Assessment of St. Joseph's School, Mount Street North Sydney	1999

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Listings:

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