CLAREMONT

1A Milford Street, Ipswich

History

A survey map produced in 1852 by surveyor James Warner shows that the area between Thorn Street and the as yet unnamed Milford Street had been divided into building blocks and sold, mainly to Joseph Fleming and Kyra Walsh. This land had originally been part of the former convict outstation for lime quarrying. John Panton soon purchased most of these blocks, some three acres, upon which he had 'Claremont' built in 1858.

Panton, the son of the Post Master of New South Wales, was a merchant and member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. Apparently, Panton decided to move his business to Ipswich following a fact finding tour of what is now south eastern Queensland. Convinced of the areas' business potential, he established the firm 'Panton and Co' with premises in Brisbane Street in 1851. His family lived in the other end of the same building. In 1855 Panton had a large two storey, sandstone warehouse constructed on his land at Limestone Hill, and then sometime between 1855 and August 1858 'Claremont' was erected. The architect and builder of the home are unknown. It is believed that the sandstone blocks were obtained from the old Woogaroo quarries on the riverbank at Goodna. The house had a U-shaped plan with french doors arranged symmetrically each side of the entrance door. The roof was of slate and the verandah roof originally had a convex curve. Claremont was designed by William Wakeling.

During his time in Ipswich, Panton became a prominent citizen, serving as honorary magistrate, a pioneer of the cotton industry and a strong advocate for the separation of Queensland. He was appointed a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1866.

In 1863, financial problems forced Panton to dispose of many of his assets. 'Claremont' was sold to longtime Ipswich resident George Thorn. In 1839 Thorn had been appointed overseer of the Government herds and farm at Limestone. When he bought 'Claremont', Thorn had become a wealthy merchant and landowner, with a number of properties in Ipswich and Toowoomba, large areas of land at Cleveland and the stations 'Normanby', 'Nukinenda' and 'Warra Warra'. The Thorns were also a family of politicians and George and his four sons were all elected to Parliament at various times. The eldest son, George Jnr., was premier of Queensland between 1876 and 1877 and lived at 'Claremont' during his term of office. In 1874 a tract of land was transferred to the Commissioner of Railways for the construction of the Brisbane to Ipswich rail line thus leaving 2 acres 23 perches.

During 1906 a third merchant family, the Wilsons, bought 'Claremont' and in 1922 a further parcel of land was sold off leaving just over 1 acre 21 perches. From 1924 until 1939 'Claremont' became a boarding house providing either single or double accommodation. The Preddy family bought the estate in August 1939 and after living there for only a short time turned the house into a block of three flats.

In 1964 the house was sold to the Queensland Sub-Normal Childrens Welfare Association who used it as a school until 1975 when it was purchased by the National Trust of Queensland. At this time the house was run down and badly altered. The National Trust of Queensland sold 'Claremont' and it has returned to its original use as a home.

Description

Claremont was built c1858 and after much alteration, including additions and demolitions, its restoration was commenced in 1980 by the National Trust of Queensland.

It is a generously scaled single storey sandstone-walled house of a symmetrical U-shaped plan addressing the river on the north. Its detail and decoration are Georgian. French doors are symmetrically disposed around the entrance and open to the verandah. There are about fifteen rooms.

The interior details such as Greek motifs in the dining and drawing room cornices are also Georgian. The main roof, now corrugated iron, was formerly sheeted with welsh slates and the verandah roof was originally concave corrugated iron. There are nine chimneys. Some fireplaces are no longer in function and some have non-original surrounds.