CORINDA QLD

Name: Corinda School of Arts

Address: 641 Oxley Road Corinda Qld 4075

The Place:

Corinda is a suburb of Brisbane, the state capital city of Queensland, and is located approximately 8.8 kilometres (5.5 miles) southwest of the Brisbane central business district. At the 2011 Australian Census the suburb recorded a population of 4,695.

It is believed that the name *Corinda* originated from a local property owned by Sir Arthur Palmer, named after his Corinda pastoral station near Aramac in central western Queensland.

The first white people to visit the Corinda area were three lost cedar cutters who travelled up the Brisbane River in 1823. During the convict period (1824-1842) building stone was quarried in Corinda and timber was logged. There was a pit mill at the mouth of the Oxley Creek. In 1851, Thomas Boyland took out a lease on a large pocket of land between Oxley Creek and the Brisbane River. This may have extended as far as Corinda and the area was certainly known as "Boyland's Pocket" and used for grazing cattle and sheep. Boyland did not take up an option to buy the property when Queensland separated from New South Wales in 1859, and the following year the area was divided into small farms which sold for between

one and two pounds per acre. The major crops were maize, potatoes and bananas, and cotton was grown for a short period during the American Civil War. A.J. Boyd established a cotton gin at Corinda. For a short time sugar was grown and there were three mills in the area, until a series of severe winters destroyed this industry around Brisbane.

Among the original settlers was the Francis family who in 1862 purchased 21 acres, which extended from the Brisbane River to Francis Lookout, a local heritage listed landmark on Dewar Terrace. Francis Lookout, or Rest-for-the-Weary as it is also called, survives to this day, and includes a small burial ground of ten graves of local pioneers, established in 1862.

Originally, all produce had to be transported by boat to either Ipswich or Brisbane. In the 1870s the road to Ipswich was being built and in 1874 the railway line from Ipswich extended to Sherwood. In 1884 when the line to South Brisbane was built, Corinda was called "South Brisbane Junction". The road and rail links to Brisbane encouraged development and subdivision in the Corinda area.

Establishment:

During the 1890s Corinda's social infrastructure took shape with cricket and tennis clubs (1892, 1893) and a school of arts established in 1895. The residents of the Corinda area decided they wanted a hall where they could gather to hold lectures, meetings, concerts, social functions and even divine services. Jack Dunlop, son of one of the area's first settlers, met the need by building a hall on his own land. This hall also housed the School of Arts. It was established at a cost of £313 (pounds) from private subscriptions, a government grant, and "other sources". The ownership then passed to his wife, Mrs Sarah Dunlop, who decided in 1917, perhaps acting on advice, to hand over the building to trustees. The local Sherwood Council assumed control soon after.
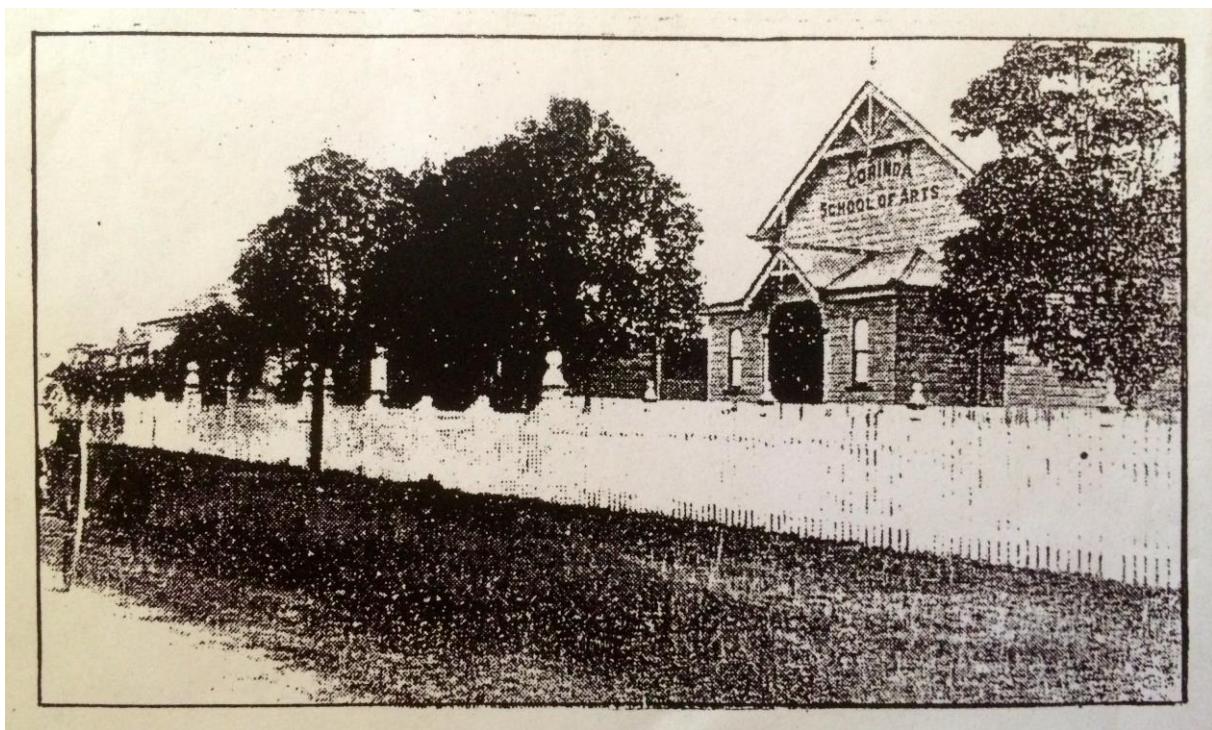
Corinda School of Arts 1906   **Photo: John Oxley Library State Library of Queensland**

The Building:

The School of Arts, located directly opposite the Corinda railway station where it still stands, was constructed of chamferboard timber, roofed in corrugated iron. A stage, dressing rooms and committee rooms were part of the original internal layout. At the front, the building was enhanced by curved timber gates set in a white painted picket fence. Soon after opening, £95 was raised for improvements and extensions including a 55 foot by 15 foot verandah which was used as a supper room. Electricity was installed in 1921.

Altered both internally and externally in many ways, the building retains much of its original character, being still a timber structure with some external detail intact, including the roof finials and the timber decoration of the gables. The small entrance porch at the front has been replaced by a larger entry more suited to the current needs of a much visited library, replacing its role as a hall used mostly for entertainment, meetings and lectures. The bigger entry also meets modern requirements, allowing for disabled access.

The original construction of the building in chamferboard with a corrugated iron roof is clearly shown, though it is likely that some sections have been replaced over the years to maintain the fabric. The original simple rectangular form is identifiable, together with external alterations and extensions where the same materials have been used. Some original features such as roof finials and timber gable decoration have also been retained. (Above: Front corner. Entrance is to the right. Below: Side and rear elevations)
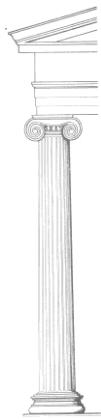
Uses:

At the Annual Meeting of the membership of the Corinda School of Arts, on 11 September 1896, reference was made to the success of the various activities including "instruction in wood carving and lectures by the Government Geologist". Educational pursuits such as these were arranged from time to time but the most regular use of the hall was always as a place of amusement and entertainment and for social gatherings. It was also used on a regular basis by civic organizations with particular interests such as The Corinda Progress Association, Boy Scouts, The Social Service League, and local clubs including the Rifle Club, Tennis Club and Bridge Club. Flower shows and fetes as fund raisers for local schools and churches were regular events in the hall. And it was often used as a venue for meetings by private individuals, groups and political parties.

In 1899 the School of Arts was used as a polling booth for the referendum held to decide if the separate States of Australia should become a Federation. The booth returned a very strong vote against federation, 86-29.

In the late 1910s, the School of Arts building was used as a picture house showing Australian and American silent films. Admission was sixpence.

In 1912 St Joseph's Catholic Church held services in the School of Arts while their church was being built across the road and a little closer to the railway line leading to Yeerongpilly. The site of St Joseph's remains; however the original church building was replaced in the latter part of the 20th century. Over the time, other denominations held revival and evangelical meetings in the hall.

School days will be remembered by those who received their awards and honours at the School Concert and Prize Night of the local schools.

The hall became a centre of comfort during and at the end of both world wars. Groups and committees supplied food parcels and bandages for returning soldiers, those in need and sorrowing relatives. After both wars the hall was the venue for many peace celebrations and welcome home parties in addition to memorial services for those who did not return.

As well as providing a meeting and entertainment venue, in the School of Arts tradition the building also served as a public library. It started with 110 books but by 1917 had 2003, many having been sent from England. Library members paid two shillings and sixpence annually. Several valuable donations were made during this time. The library was open for "free reading" every Saturday night and draughts, chess and cards were provided.

In 1917 the School of Arts was transferred to Sherwood Shire Council. The building was then renamed "Sherwood Shire Hall" and it was known as such until the Greater Brisbane Council absorbed the Sherwood Shire Council in October 1925 and the building was once again known as the Corinda School of Arts. Since it opened, the building has operated as the local hall for dances, concerts and political meetings, as well as an emergency relief site during the influenza epidemic just before the 1920s, and during the Depression in the 1930s as a distribution centre for those in need. About the middle of the 20th century, an annexe was built on the southern side of the building and used as a child welfare clinic.
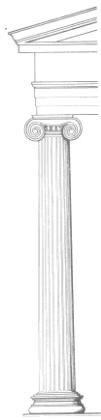
This elevation (top) shows the early verandah addition to the building, originally enclosed with timber lattice and used as a supper room. The original form of the building is clearly identifiable.

Interior: This early addition is now a workspace for library staff.

In 1966, the building was refurbished as a library. With the establishment of the umbrella organization designated the Brisbane City Council Library, of which the Corinda Library now forms part, the front steps, porch and the two cloak rooms were demolished and the present ramp and front verandah replaced them. Inside the hall the stage was taken away but the half-domed timbered ceiling remains.
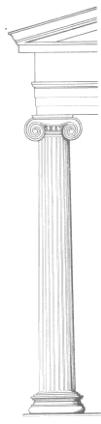
The end of the building where the stage was originally located.

Looking towards the entrance from the position of the original stage.

In the two photographs above and the one following below, the interesting half-domed timbered ceiling of the original building is clearly shown.

Interior of the library looking out towards the annexe built in the mid 20th century to be used as a child welfare clinic.

Social History:

The majority of settlers in the Corinda area in the 1860s were from the United Kingdom. The exceptions were the Holzberger family and Joseph Voll. During the 1860s and 1870s, political turmoil in Germany led to many people seeking new homes. The Queensland Government undertook a campaign to attract these settlers, including assisted passages and land grants. South Sea Islanders (known as Kanakas) may have been employed on the cane farms that existed then in the Corinda area. The Francis family sugar mill employed 15 white men and ten South Sea Islanders. There were also two women from the South Sea Islands, one of whom came daily to the Francis house as a nurse and to play with the children.

Following the opening of the rail line in 1874, a small commercial district on Oxley Road gradually grew around it. The School of Arts (now the municipal library) is one of the earliest surviving buildings in the area.

The commercial district rapidly developed after the 1920s. Many large bungalow style homes were built on the floodplain towards Oxley Creek during this time. Most of the original older-style Queenslander homes date back to the colonial period and were built high on the hills around Francis Lookout.

The Corinda School of Arts has always been a cultural centre and classes in arts and hobbies have been most popular over the years whilst the physical need of the community has not been neglected.
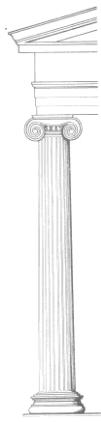
Acknowledgements:

Staff of the Corinda Library

Staff of John Oxley Library in the State Library of Queensland (SLQ)

References:

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Archival photo:

John Oxley Library (SLQ)

Photos:

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ADFAS Brisbane   **February 2015**