



Architectural Feature

HOLY ROSARY CHURCH

From the first mass held in the dining rooms of the Adams' Hotel (now the Metropolitan), to the grand structure reminiscent of Athenian and Roman architecture we see today, the Catholic Church in Bundaberg has undergone many architectural reinventions and changes.

The original Catholic Church, St Mary's Church of the Holy Rosary, was a wooden building measuring 48 feet (14.6m) by 24 feet (7.3m). It was the first church to be built in Bundaberg and was proposed by Father Thomas O'Brien of Maryborough in 1873. Fr. O'Brien was responsible for serving Bundaberg Catholics until 1871 when Father Rossolini arrived in Gayndah. In his book *The History of Bundaberg*, originally published in 1890, J. Y. Walker describes St Mary's as being "...without any pretence of architectural adornment".

As would be expected with the growth in Bundaberg's population, the congregation soon outgrew St Mary's. In the early to mid 1880s Bishop Dunne of Brisbane proposed to the Catholic Laymen of Bundaberg that a new larger church be built to accommodate the expanding congregation. The Laymen responded immediately with a collection of £700.

In order for the new church building to be realised, a committee was formed, and a request was made for architects to submit plans and specifications. The plans of Brisbane architect Mr F. D. G. (Francis Drummond Greville) Stanley were chosen and approved by

Bishop Dunne on 1 February 1886. These plans allowed for extensions to be made to the church at any time.

Holy Rosary's architect F. D. G. Stanley (1839-1897) was, according to the authors of *Queensland Architects of the 19th Century* "...the best known of all Queensland's early architects because of the quality, diversity and extent of his work". Among his myriad work throughout Queensland he was also responsible for designing local buildings such as the Lady Elliot Island lighthouse in 1872-1873, and the Grand Hotel in 1884-1885.

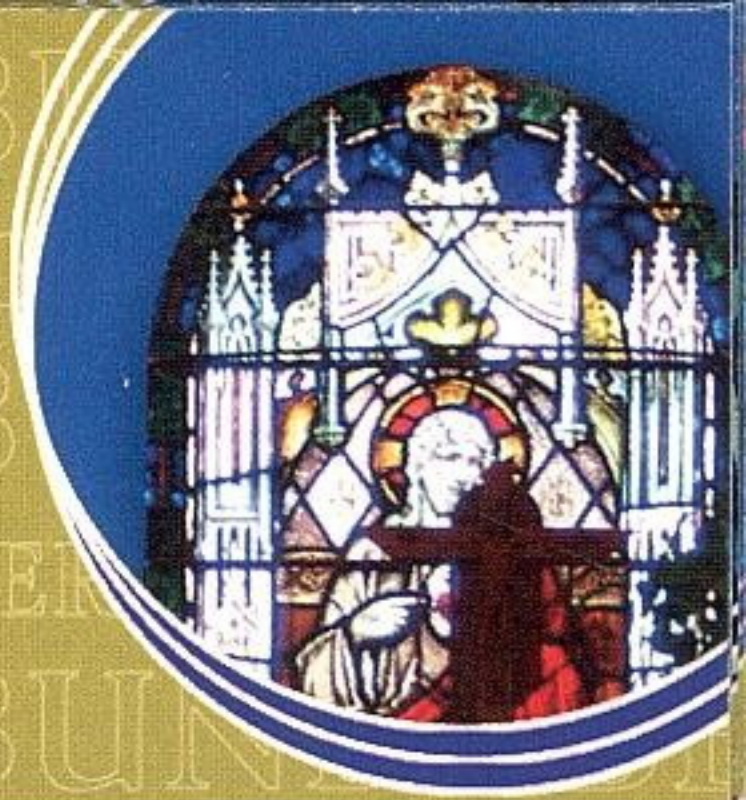
Stanley was Queensland's longest serving Colonial Architect and foundation president of the Queensland Institute of Architects. He died on 26 May 1897 and is buried in Toowong Cemetery.

The estimated cost of the new building was £3500. By 1886 Father Rossolini had already managed to collect half of this amount. The foundation stone for the new Holy Rosary Church was laid with great fanfare on 10 October 1886 and a local contractor, Mr E. Boyle, constructed the church in brick. The building was completed by early 1888 and consecrated on 13 May 1888.

Holy Rosary Church would then remain unchanged until Father Baldwin was appointed in 1918. Between about 1920 and 1926 a number of extensions and additions were made to the Church and Bundaberg architect Mr F. H. (Frederic Herbert) Faircloth drew up the plans for these additions.

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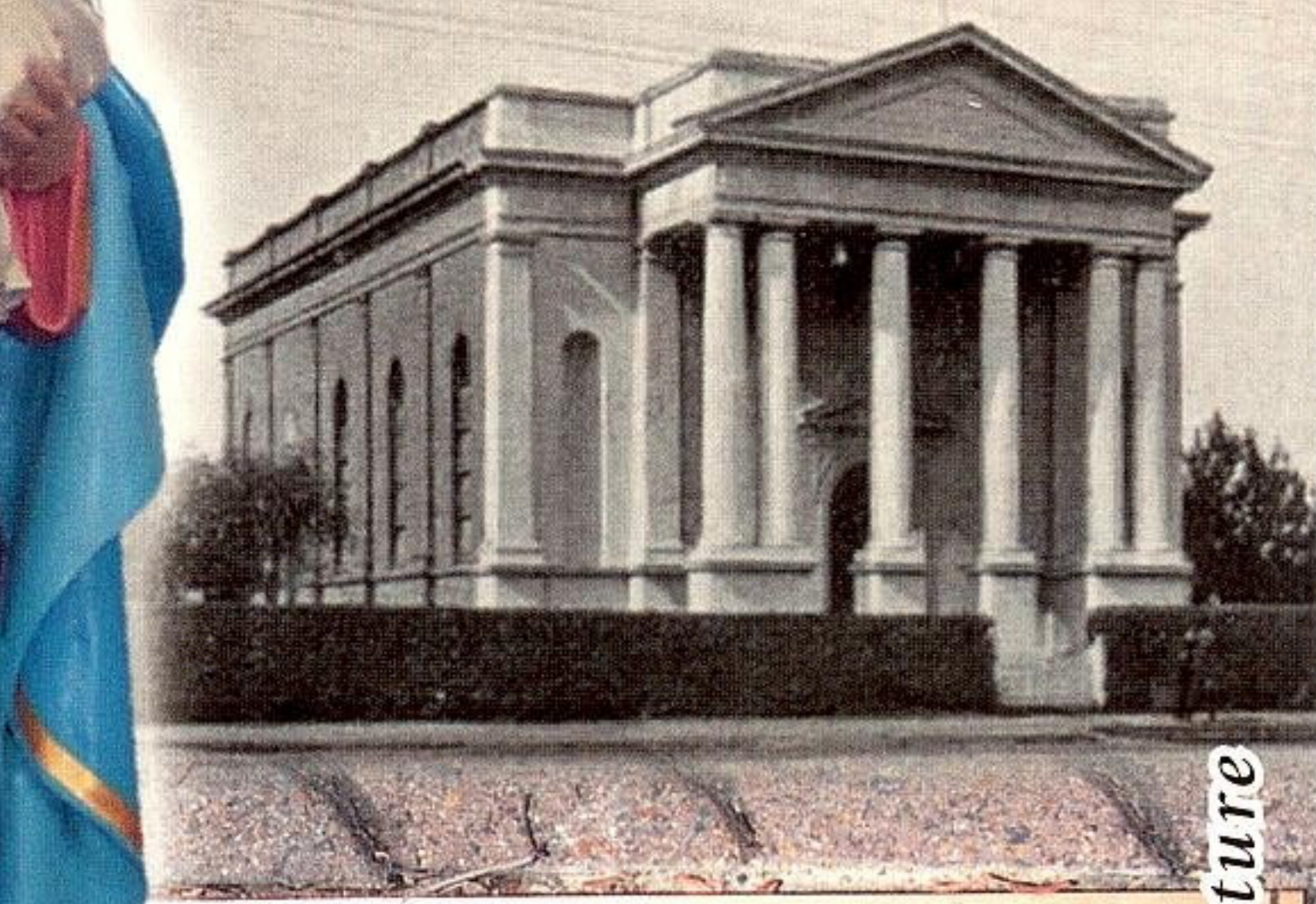
Contractor Mr N. C. Steffensen carried out and oversaw the works, owing to the death of Mr Faircloth. Mr Steffensen was referred to as 'The Builder of Bundaberg', and was responsible for building the Queensland National Bank, the Post Office, Queen's Theatre, the Police Station and Watchhouse, the East Bundaberg Water Tower, and most of the business premises along Bourbong Street.

During the renovation of Holy Rosary, both the eastern end of the church and the internal concrete columns supporting the roof were demolished, and north and south transepts and a sanctuary were added. Each of the transepts measures 100 feet (30.5m) by 30 feet (9.1m).

The sanctuary, complete with a large altar made of Queensland marble, lies in a semi-circular apse fitted with brightly-coloured and unique stained glass windows which were also designed and made in Queensland. Another twenty-five stained glass windows may be found around the church and were donated by Church members in memory of their loved ones.

Marble was the medium of choice for many of the internal fittings and the Church also boasts a marble Altar to the Blessed Virgin, baptismal font and holy water fonts. The floor is made of concrete, coated with crimson oxide and the aisles are inlaid with marble. Leading up to the altar and apse are wide marble steps.

A marble slab marking the resting



HISTORIC SITE
"ST MARY'S OF THE HOLY ROSARY"
BUILT 1888

WEST BUNDABERG ROTARY

THE FIRST CATHOLIC MASS WAS CELEBRATED IN THE DINING ROOM OF ADAM'S METROPOLITAN HOTEL IN APRIL 1875.

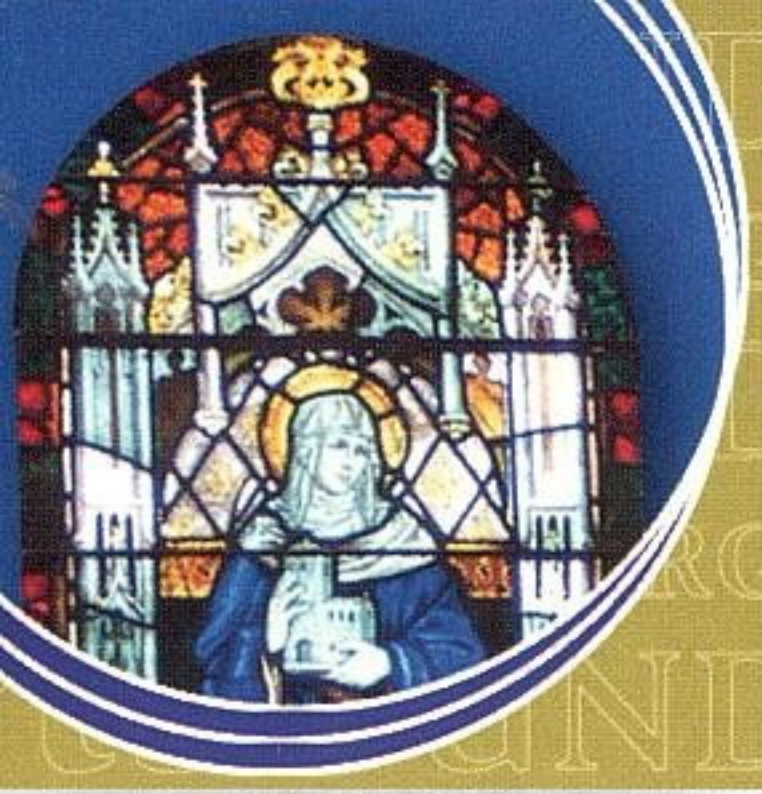
THE FIRST CHURCH BUILT IN BUNDABERG, A SMALL WOODEN BUILDING ERRECTED AT THE REAR OF THIS SITE, WAS OPENED ON 31 OCTOBER 1875 BY REV FR O'BRIEN OF MARYBOROUGH. COST OF £300.

THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE MAIN NAVE OF THE HOLY ROSARY CHURCH WAS LAID ON 10TH OCTOBER 1886 BY BISHOP DUNNE OF BRISBANE. CONSECRATED ON SUNDAY 13TH MAY 1886. GRECO-ROMANESQUE DESIGN BY MR FDG STANLEY. BUILDER MR E BOYLE. COST OF CONSTRUCTION £3600. FIRST PARISH PRIEST, REV FR CONSTANTINE ROSSOLINI DECEMBER 1876.

IN 1925, THE EASTERN END OF THE BUILDING WAS DEMOLISHED AND TWO NEW TRANSEPTS AND A SANCTUARY WERE ADDED. ARCHITECT MR FH FAIRCLOTH. THE FOUNDATION STONE WAS LAID BY BISHOP DUNNE ON 21ST JUNE 1925. THE CHURCH WAS DEDICATED ON MAY 16TH 1926 AND OPENED BY FR M BALDWIN ON OCTOBER 24 1926.

ESSENTIAL RENOVATIONS WERE CARRIED OUT TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF THE HOLY ROSARY CHURCH IN 1988.

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place of Bundaberg's first parish priest, Rev. Father Rossolini, is located on the inner northern wall adjacent to the internal entrance of the northern transept. Interestingly, Father Rossolini was not the only priest to be interred in the Holy Rosary. Maryborough's Father O'Brien, who passed away unexpectedly while visiting Bundaberg, was also buried here, but was later reinterred at Maryborough.

The brick and iron rail fence was also added around this time, and was designed in conformity with the church itself. The end cost for these renovations totalled approximately £15,000. Due to generous donations and zealous fundraising efforts the parish debt for the renovations was under £2000 - a very significant feat considering the magnitude of the works.

More renovations were carried out during the time of Dean Lynam and during the 1988 Bicentennial year. However, details of these renovations are scarce.

Its grand architectural exterior makes the Holy Rosary Church one of the most

recognisable buildings in Bundaberg. From all accounts the tremendous faith and commitment of Father O'Brien, Father Rossolini, Bishop Dunne, and their successors and congregations, have ensured the Catholic people of Bundaberg have a Church they can be very proud of. In the words of Archbishop Duhig in 1926, "A beautiful church in a community [has] an uplifting effect...".

Many thanks to Father Terry Loth of the Holy Rosary Church for sharing information.

PETA KINCH
Bundaberg Library

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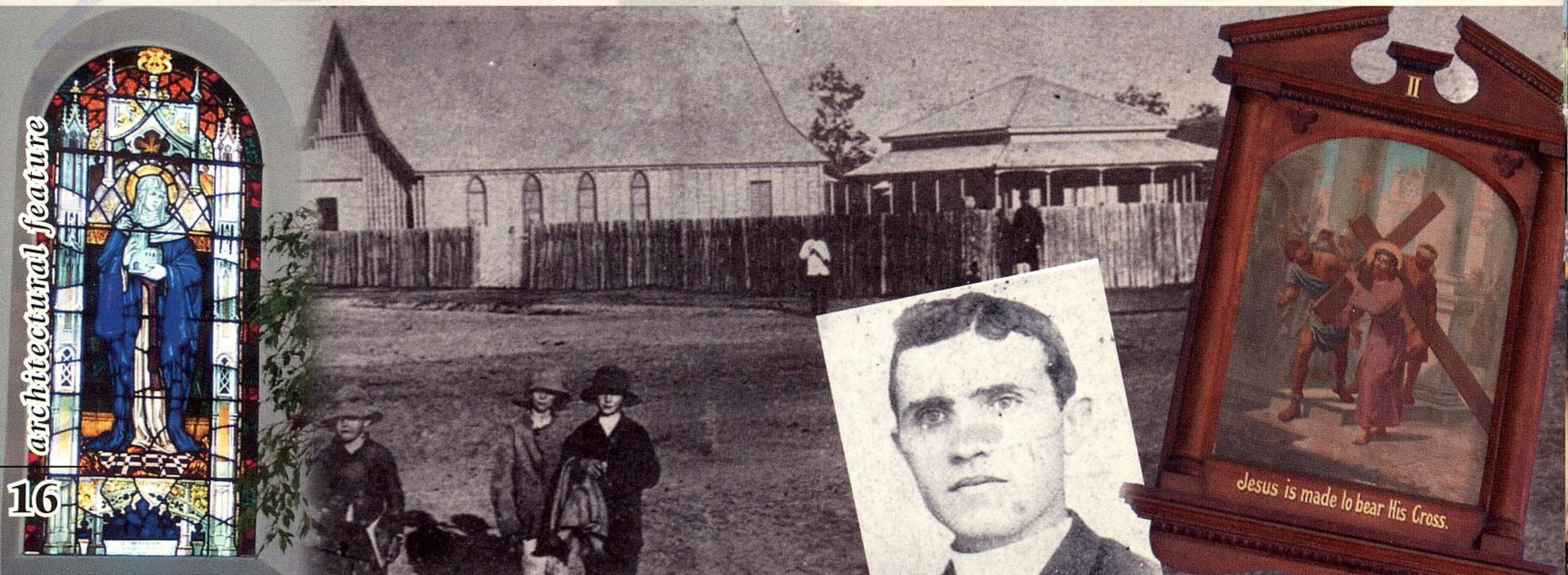
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