

City of Maribyrnong Cultural Heritage: Place record

City of Maribyrnong Cultural Heritage

Identification and location

Name of place **Methodist Church, former**

Place Identifier **779**

Other Names **Uniting Church**

Address **075A** **Bayview Road**

Yarraville

Potential Significance: **City**

Creation date(s): **1930-** **Map (Melway) 41K7**

Boundary description **The title land and cited buildings: church, hall, parish centre.**

Local Government Area: **City of Maribyrnong**

Ownership Type: **Private**

Description

Physical Description

This is a Modern Gothic red brick church, with a compact and unusual floor plan, set on a corner. The two street elevations have gabled parapeted walls, faced with a sand-finish render ruled into tile-like squares (in the Italian manner) and set between coupled corner brick piers. Each gable wall has a circular ornamental window (an oculus), centrally placed, and two pointed arch window openings with cement label moulds over. The main church windows have detailed coloured glass, in traditional leaded designs, but these have been covered by protective clear plastic sheet which have become opaque over time. A band of render links the sill of each main window pair. The roof is clad with a variegated Marseilles pattern terra-cotta tiles typical of the era. At the intersection of the main roof forms is a tapered bell tower and spire, with a sheet-metal roof and louvred base. Splayed entry porches are located at the three main corners of the church, each with vertical boarded doors and glazed toplights.

There is a distinctive Modernist concrete masonry clad 1950s hall at the rear (east), with an unusual combined bowed and skillion roof forms. There is also a circular red brick parish centre from the 1990s to the south, linked to the church by a glazed corridor. This design

illustrates the contextual design theories of that era with care taken to relate to the existing church by use of similar wall materials, a pitched roof and solid geometric plan form, but kept visually separated by the use of the glazed link. Some of the coloured glasswork from the 1930 church appears to be mounted in this link.

Site Type

Church

Context

The church is sited on the south-east corner of Montague St in a residential domain and thus is prominent because of its contrasting scale, form and siting.

History

Historical Background

Churches are another manifestation of the different waves of settlers arriving in an area. The earliest established churches within the City of Maribyrnong were Catholic, Church of England (Anglican) and Wesleyan (Methodist) congregations, which gained early reserves within the township of Footscray. The Wesleyans at first held services in a private home, before moving to a timber church in Napier Street and then to a church reserve in Hyde Street where they built a bluestone church in 1871 212 . The Church of England first held services in Footscray in 1855 and secured a church reserve in Cowper Street in the 1850s and also built a bluestone church here. The congregation sold this early site to Bevan and Co., makers of railway rolling stock, in 1887 and moved the bluestone church to a new site in Paisley Street, where they also built a new brick and stone church (St Johns) in 1891. St Monica's Catholic Church was also early established (reputedly first in a tent) and then in a timber church before a bluestone church and school was begun in the 1860s. The bluestone church that is still located at St Monica's dates from the 1870s.

The solid, often bluestone, church buildings that are dotted around central and old Footscray and Yarraville are very tangible reminders of the strength and growth of the Wesleyan, Church of England, Catholic and Presbyterian denominations in the study area in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Outposts of these early parishes stretched to Yarraville and Upper Footscray and then West Footscray as they began to be populated. While many congregations, such as these early ones, began with modest or temporary buildings and then moved on to more permanent churches, others did not. Wesleyan Chapels were often modest timber churches that remained as the community's church.

It has been argued that Footscray's growth between 1880 and 1914 was largely influenced by British-born migrants. Perhaps the most obvious physical evidence these migrants left on the landscape were the cultural institutions they introduced, particularly churches and chapels, such as Wesleyan (or Methodist) churches which were also popular on Victoria's goldfields { Barnard, 2000}.

Specific History

The foundation stone was laid by Thomas Leigh 18 October 1930, the architect was Alec S Eggleston, and the builder F U Pinchen. This church replaced an earlier structure on the site.

The builder, Frank Pinchen, was a successful local businessman, being one of four who sought election to Footscray Council in the Depression year of 1930. The local verse exchanged among voters went: 'Vote Hanmer, Hester, Pinchen, Drew/ These are the Four Best Men for You/ Hanmer and Honesty/ Pinchen and progress/ Hester and High Ideals/ Drew and Development'. Pinchen was a councillor 1930-3 for South Ward and was elected Mayor in 1932 and was immediately approached by sustenance labourers on a local CRB gang, wanting much needed clothing and boots to be paid for from the Mayors Trust Fund. He and Hanmer were booed by workers on Bailey Reserve, the Footscray ALP view on working for the dole being as slave labour. Worker groups called on Council not to do the Government's 'dirty work' and distribute sustenance without requiring work in return: Pinchen and Hanmer decided to comply despite threats from the government { Lack}.

The designer, Eggleston, was associated with the following major projects:

Surgery and house, 14-16 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, 1913

Provident Life Building Offices, 37- 41 Queen Street, Melbourne 1937, Eggleston, A S & R A (regarded as a significant proto-Modernist building);

London and Lancashire Building Offices, Eggleston, A S & R A (1940) 400-402 Collins Street, Melbourne; and

Princess Mary Club former Methodist Mission Hostel, Eggleston, Alec S. 1926- 118-122 Lonsdale Street also for the Methodist Mission.

The recent and visually related drum-shaped parish centre was designed by prize-winning architect, Phillip Harmer. Harmer (firm commenced in 1981) has won awards for his 1993 Uniting Church in Altona, the 1994 Darebin Arts Centre in Preston, and the recent Wedge House. Other works by Harmer include St Andrews Anglican Church in Geelong (Boat Church), the practice being involved with many new churches, church conversions and extensions.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme: Forming associations

PAHT Subtheme: Worshipping together

Local Theme(s): Worshipping

Condition

Externally good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

Externally, substantially intact/some intrusions.

Threats

Unrelated development.

Statement of Significance

The Methodist Church complex in Bayview Road, Yarraville is significant to the City of Maribyrnong because:

- architecturally, with its distinctive plan form, high external integrity and stripped Modern Gothic design, the 1930 church is the most successful of the inter-war church building designs in the City, in terms of its style (Criterion F1);
- the 1930 church contains well executed coloured glasswork (Criterion F1);
- the construction of the 1930 church is associated with a major figure in the Footscray scene during the Great Depression, Frank Pinchen, and its construction no doubt provided work for the numerous unemployed in the city at that time (Criterion H1, A4);
- the design of the 1930 church is associated with the well known architect Alec Eggleston (Criterion H1);
- it is a long-term public gathering place in the City which has retained its external integrity to a long period of use as well as having prominence in the surrounding residential streetscape (Criterion G1) ;
- the parish centre is an architecturally successful design, being a visually related but also visually separate addition to the church by the award winning architect, Phillip Harmer (Criterion F1) ; and
- the church hall is also a distinctive Modernist building within the City from the immediate post World War Two era (Criterion F1) .

Comparative Examples:

Other inter-war churches in the City include (A-E 1989 study grading in brackets):

- St Andrews Methodist Church Barkly Street 561 (D-C) c1925;
- St Johns Catholic Church School Essex Street 34 (D-C) c1925
- Wesleyan Church Hall Hyde Street 10A* (D) 1925c; and
- St Augustine's Catholic Church Somerville Road 73 (C-B) c1925.

The last design is more impressive in scale but is more conservative in form, design and detail.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register: No

Register of the National Estate: No

National Trust Register: Recommended

Other Heritage Listings: No

Planning Scheme Protection: Recommended

External Paint Controls Apply?: Yes

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?: Yes

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Tree Controls Apply?: No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act: No
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?: No
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?: Yes

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

church construction in 1930 provided work for the numerous unemployed in the city during the Great Depression

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

distinctive plan form, high external integrity and stripped Modern Gothic design, the 1930 church is the most successful of the war church building designs in the City, in terms of its style; the parish centre is an architecturally successful design, being a visually related but also visually separate addition to the church by the award winning architect, Phillip Harmer; the 1930 church contains well executed coloured glasswork.

G1 Importance as places highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social association.

a long-term public gathering place in the City which has retained its external integrity to a long period of use as well as having prominence in the surrounding residential streetscape

H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

the 1930 church is associated with a major figure in the Footscray scene during the Great Depression, Frank Pinchen; the design of the 1930 church is associated with the well known architect Alec Eggleston.

Documentation

References

Lack, J. 1991 'A History of Footscray'; 276, 292, 293;
Butler, G 1989 City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study;
P Harmer web site;
Sands & McDougall 'Victorian Directory': 1930-55.

Data recording

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Assessed Date: 2001