

BUILDING TITLE *CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH*  
 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA *CITY OF BALLAARAT*

NATIONAL ESTATE PROJECT No.  
 DOCUMENTATION OF LISTED HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN VICTORIA

DESIGNATION H.B.P.C. REGISTER No. NATIONAL TRUST   FILE No.

BUILDING TYPE *CHURCH*  
 BUILDING NAME *CONGREGATIONAL*  
 STATE *VICTORIA*  
 LOCAL GOVT AREA *CITY OF BALLAARAT*  
 STREET *MAIR (CURDAWSON)* No.  
 SUBURB/TOWN *BALLARAT C.B.D.*  
 CITY *BALLAARAT* POSTCODE *3350*  
 RURAL  
 NEAREST CENTRE Km.

TITLE REFERENCE Vol Fol  
 DIRECTORY  
 NEGATIVE FILE *FILM 6 / FRAME 32*

PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION  
 DATE OF SURVEY/INSPECTION *JULY 1978*



OWNERSHIP ORIGINAL *CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH*  
 PRESENT *UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA*  
 ADDRESS

ARCHITECT/PRACTICE *CASELLI AND FIGGIS*  
 BUILDER  
 ARTISANS/TRADES

TENDERS REFERENCE  
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION *1881*  
 ESTIMATE/CONTRACT VALUE *£ 3,550*  
 ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

#### BUILDING CITATION

The foundation stone was laid on the 2.5.1881 and the building was opened, incomplete, on 21.3.1882, the architects being Caselli & Figgis. The north elevation apparently finished shortly after. Brick additions to the rear were undertaken by Molloy and Chandler, architects, in 1906. The building is an unusual composition, an essay in bizarrely eclectic Gothic. It is composed around an elaborate corner tower, with perhaps the most striking decorative element being a finely detailed blind arcade between Corinthianising piers surmounted by a bracketted cornice. The tower is flanked by double gables to the north and a matching gable terminating the aisle to the east, all with a polychrome capping. There is a richly decorated wheel window above an arcaded portico at the east, with unusual columns of an art nouveau character. Internally the building is designed on the auditorium principle with radiating aisles and a balcony with sway bellied balustrades at the rear over the arcaded porch. Four free standing columns with superb Corinthianesque capitals approaching art nouveau character support reduced hammer beam trusses and a boarded ceiling. This building is almost completely intact and is unique to the State in terms of design, particularly the massing and details. The anticipation of art nouveau influence in the column capitals internally and externally is of major importance.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this building be added to the Historic Buildings Register, Register of the National Estate, and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Third Schedule). These recommendations apply jointly with the parsonage, dealt with separately, and the adjacent hall as a complex.

DOCUMENTATION SOURCES

- 01 GOVERNMENT RECORDS
- 02 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS
- 03 ARCHIVES/CATALOGUES
- 04 ARCHITECTS INDEX
- 05 ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS/ILLUSTRATIONS
- 06 PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS
- 07 NATIONAL TRUST FILE/ HISTORIC BUILDINGS PRESERVATION COUNCIL FILE
- 08 PRIVATE RECORDS

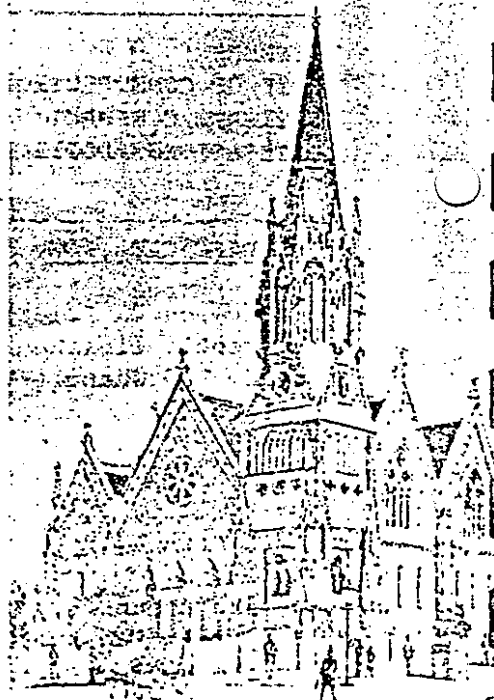
02 CITY OF BALLARAT BUILDING PERMITS BOOK 1906

06 BALLARAT ILLUSTRATED P.55

AUSTRALASIAN SKETCHER 20 MAY 1882 (SEE BELOW)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1. WITHERS, HISTORY OF BALLARAT  
1887 ED. P 272
- 2. SPIELVOGEL PAPERS, HELD BALLARAT  
LIBRARY. P 52
- 3. BALLARAT STAR 24 JUNE 1862;  
7 JANUARY 1882
- 4. AUSTRALASIAN SKETCHER  
20 MAY 1882



ASSESSMENT OF LISTING

CONDITION/INTEGRITY OF BUILDING INTACT

SIGNIFICANCE OF BUILDING

LANDSCAPE/STREETSCAPE/ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE PART OF RECOMMENDED  
AREA A1.3

DOCUMENTATION JACOBS LEWIS VINES DATE SEPTEMBER 1978  
ARCHITECT

UNITING CHURCH (FORMER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH) CNR. MAIR & DAWSON STS.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

The first reference to the Congregational Church was in the Star on 11.1.1862 "the acceptance of tenders for school house and vestry, the school house to serve as a chapel and will be built by Messrs. Baber and Creber."<sup>1</sup> Later (22.3.1862) it is recorded that the Congregational Church at the corner of Mair and Dawson Streets was opened, the cost being £3,550.<sup>2</sup> The Star again reports (24.6.1862) "the re-opening of school hall which was used as a chapel, J.A. Doane Architect ..... in the last period of pointed architecture."<sup>3</sup>

This reference would appear to relate to the adjacent hall, now in Dawson Street, not scheduled for investigation in this section of the Study, but would appear to warrant further investigation if it is Doane's building.

The Foundation Stone for the church proper was laid on 2.5.1881<sup>4</sup> and the building opened on 21.3.1882, although not completed by that date. The cost was "upwards of £4,000", and the architects were Caselli and Figgis.<sup>5</sup> The new building is described in the Australasian Sketcher as follows:

"opened for worship on May 21.....building constructed for upwards of £4,000 from designs of Messrs. Caselli & Figgis .....open roof of the nave or main body of the church is supported.....on 4 cast iron columns.....the approach consists of a central open vestibule several steps above the line of footpaths fronting to Dawson Street, flanked on either side by commodious loggias communicating directly with the church"....."height of spire top of vane to footpath is 100'. Of the 2 principal facades the front with the entrance faces Dawson Street and comprises 2 gables of unequal dimensions and the spire, the principal gable of which is pierced by a highly ornamental circular window, centrally over the 3 arches of vestibule. The facade facing Mair Street will eventually... consist of 3 uniform gables....and the spire. These gables will each be pierced by an early English pointed Gothic window,

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1. Ballarat Star 11.1.1886.
  2. Spielvogel Papers p.52.
  3. Ballarat Star 24.6.1862.
  4. Foundation Stone.
  5. Australasian Sketcher May 20 1882.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

*while in the tower portion of the wall under each gable there will be three single light Gothic headed windows divided from the upper windows by an ornamental string course which will be returned around both fronts; the back or West wall is of temporary character to enable the church to enlarge and complete the design by the addition of another bay. The walls are of brick on bluestone foundations and concrete frontings with cement dressings; the roofs of slate and copper; the interior walls are plastered, roof lined with deal, seating in Kauri pine, and windows glazed with stained margins. The prevailing style of the architecture is Gothic of the Mediaeval period being modifications of examples of Belgian church architecture."* 6

This design does not indicate that the building was considered innovative, although Withers describes the building as being *"of brick, in Gothic, with novel treatment in some details."*<sup>7</sup>

Brick additions to the rear were undertaken by Molloy and Chandler, Architects, in 1906<sup>8</sup>, these would appear to include the chancel, vestry, and attached house. This unusual composition can perhaps best be described as an Oakdenesque composition that is an essay in bizarrely eclectic Gothic, composed around an elaborate corner tower. This comprises the following elements - two light decorated windows, a Lombardic Gothic corbel table, a polychrome frieze of quatrefoils, a finely detailed blind arcade between Corinthianising piers, bracketed cornice, gables with quatrefoils set in oculi between broach roof sections and an elaborately decorated octagon with lush tassellated crockets, designed as canopies for statues, surmounted by a spire and delicate wrought iron finial. The tower is flanked by double gables to Mair Street, and a matching gable that terminates the aisle to Dawson Street. These are finished with polychrome cappings. Each gable to Mair Street has an early four light Gothic window with the spandrel pierced by three trefoil windows. The eastern (Dawson Street) gable is of particular interest. In the gable itself is a wheel window which is extremely lushly decorated with foliation on the outer ring and a crocketed

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6. Ibid.

7. Withers 1887 Revised ed. p.272.

8. B.C.C. Building Permits Book.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

ogee panel mould. Beneath the gable is an arcaded portico to Armstrong Street; the cement supporting capitals are of a very fine art nouveau character.

The side gabled sections are of the same size and height as the aisle, and at both roof crossings are placed octagonal metal Gothic ventilators with gablets on each face.

There is a further smaller gable to balance the tower to the left of the Dawson Street entrance portico. There is an intact palisade fence in Dawson Street with dome-topped gate piers and an arch designed to carry a lamp.

The interior is designed on the auditorium principle, a rectangle slightly longer than it is wide with small projections for the later chancels with its polygonal end, and at the back a balcony projecting in above the outside porch, but not running across the full width of the building. Two aisles, with intact timber pews, radiate out from the front, and there is a slight rake in the floor. Four free standing columns carry what are really very much reduced hammer beam trusses and a ceiling of straight and diagonal timber boarding which is varnished, whereas the truss work and other timber work has now been painted. The trusses are all moulded or chamfered, while the columns themselves are cast iron with superb Corinthianesque capitals approaching an art nouveau character; as are the half columns on the walls. Around the bases of the columns are cylindrical Tobin tubes, each terminating in a frieze of spikes, cut out of sheet metal and pointing upwards.

The volume defined by the roof is essentially one longitudinal vault intersected by two equally wide transverse vaults; the longitudinal are projecting at one end of the chancel, and just slightly at the back where the upstairs balcony corbels out over the front of the building. Originally there was a central light fitting with nine long spiderlike brackets.<sup>9</sup>

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9. *Ballarat Illustrated*, p.55.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

The balcony is superb with sway bellied cast iron balustrade panels with foliated decorations; the balustrade sweeps out at each side to a higher level to turned newell posts. The same balustrade iron appears in two little alcoves in the back wall on either side of the balcony above the entrance lobbies. There are six three cusped lancet windows at each side, three per bay, and above them in each bay a single four light window and a wheel window on the rear. The organ in the chancel, which must date from the extension, is slightly wider in design, but the preacher's desk is pleasing with a curtained off timber balustrade comprising metal verticals with spiral colonettes and foliated brackets.

In summary, the important points are the great timber ceiling, the columns with their art nouveau/Corinthianesque capitals, the back balcony with its sway bellied iron, and perhaps also the ventilating tubes.

This building is virtually intact, other than the later light fittings and painted trusses. It appears to be in good condition, other than the metal spire which has a distinct lean.

The building is unique to this State in form and design with many intact features of interest. The decoration on the column capitals internally and externally must be regarded as being of major importance. It anticipates the art nouveau movement yet to develop in Europe.