

**BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.****Ref:** 321

Richard Peterson Architect &amp; Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

**NAME:** Coimadai Primary School. No.716.**PREVIOUS NAME:** Coimadai State School; Coimadai Common School; Pyrete Common School.**ADDRESS:** Bennetts Lane, Coimadai.**TITLE DETAILS:****USE:** School.**CONSTRUCTION DATE:** 1872      **SOURCE:** 4**BUILDER:** J.F. Taylor & Alexander Forsyth.**SOURCE:** Stone**CRITERIA:** H2,4/ H4, Ar3/ H2, So1,2.**HISTORIC THEME:** Townships/ Governing/ Community life.**DESCRIPTION:**      **STYLE:** Early      **STORIES:** 1      **DETACHED.****MATERIALS:**      **WALLS** Brick      **ROOF** Iron      **STRUCTURE** Lb**CONDITION:** Very good.      **INTACTNESS:** Good      **THREATS:** Closure?**SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:**

FORM. PLAN. USE.

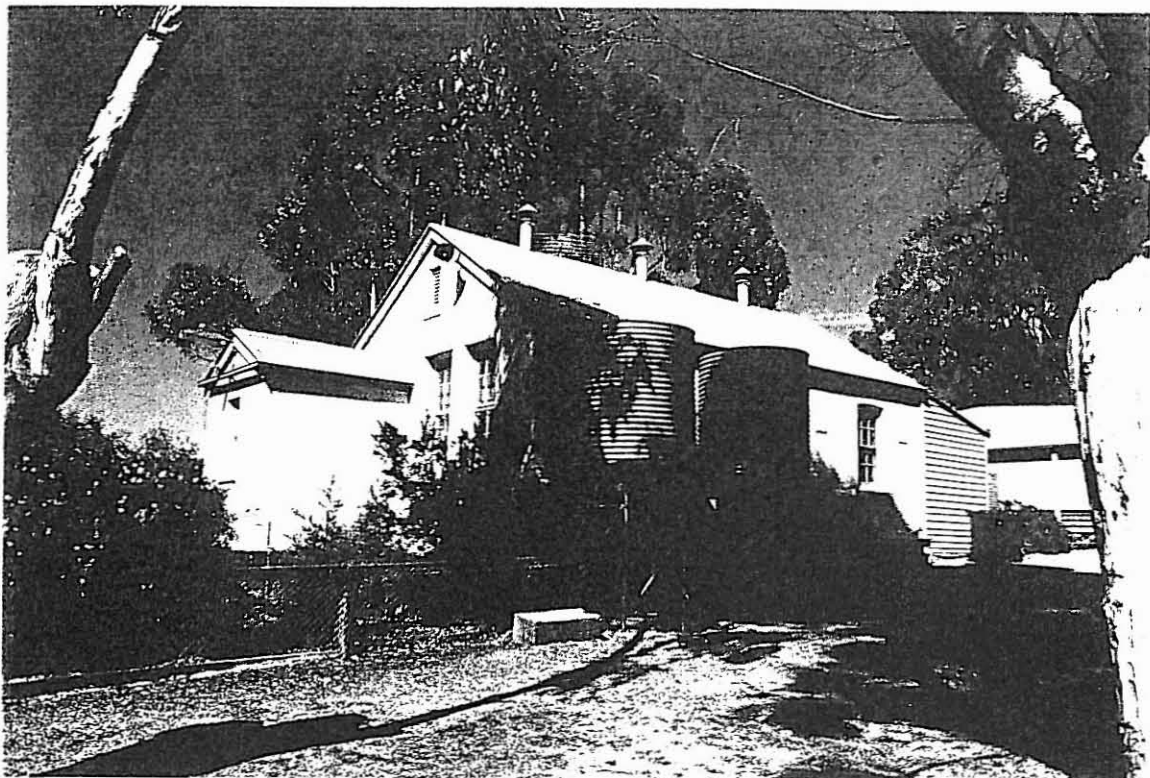
EAVES DECORATION. outbuildings

CHIMNEYS. DOORS. WINDOWS. PAINTWORK SCHEME.

OUTBUILDING.

FENCE/GATES.

VIEWS. CONTEXT. PLANTING FORMATION.

**SIGNIFICANCE:****TYPE:** HISTORICAL. ARCHITECTURAL. SOCIAL.**LEVEL:** REGIONAL.**DESIGNATION EXISTING:** Nil**RECOMMENDED CONTROL/NOMINATION:** RNE. PLANNING SCHEME.**MAP NO:** R3.04**SURVEY:** RP & JS**DATE:** 19.3.94**NEGS:** 25.19-27

**HISTORY:** The enterprising settlers at Coimadai built their first school, unaided by government grant, in 1862. School Inspector, Hale Budd, visited the Pyrete District in November 1862, finding 'a school house nearly completed of weatherboard measuring 30(9.1m) by 12(3.7m) feet, divided into a schoolroom 20(6.1m)X 12, and a room for teacher, 12 x 10(3m) feet, erected at a cost of £ 35/10/- (\$71) raised by local subscription' (now demolished).<sup>1</sup> He reported further:

there were 21 children in the school and I was informed that there were about 50 families within 2 miles (1.6km) of the school, of which 14 were employed in the neighbouring limekilns, and about 20 families on the neighbouring gold fields, the rest are engaged in farming.<sup>2</sup>

Government aid was granted in 1864, and the school was officially vested as Pyrete Common School. In 1867, the school was renamed Coimadai Common School.

Attendances were low, often below 20 pupils. The school would remain closed for months at a time, for the Committee could not always attract a qualified teacher willing to live in one small room, and exist on school fees alone.<sup>3</sup> In 1868, a new school residence was built (now demolished), and in 1872, the present schoolhouse was erected in brick by local tradesmen, J.F. Taylor and Alexander Forsyth,<sup>4</sup> in the last year of the Common Schools Board. The new building abutted the old schoolhouse, which was used as an extra classroom as attendances demanded.<sup>5</sup> It was one of the last schools built by the Common Schools Board before it was disbanded by the Education Act of 1872.

The school met the educational needs of local children, but also formed the core of a settlement, providing a venue in which the social, intellectual and spiritual needs of a dispersed population were fulfilled. As Anders Hjorth recalled:

the new school now used for entertainments in aid of public and charitable objects, as well as for picnics. It became also a polling place, and a place where candidates for parliamentary honours solicited the elector's favour.<sup>6</sup>

Coimadai State School was the venue for a series of concerts in 1908 to raise money for the erection of the present shelter shed, designed by R.J. Alkemade.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Flanagan, 'A History of Coimadai School No. 716, 1862 - 1982' p.2. Plaque on the building: 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart, *The Early History of Bacchus Marsh Schools*, p.104.

<sup>4</sup> Stone in the building appears to give the builder as "F.P. Tower", but it is indistinct.

<sup>5</sup> Flanagan, op. cit. p.5.

<sup>6</sup> BME??

<sup>7</sup> Flanagan, op. cit. p.8. It is actually a standard Departmental design.

Plan species include:

*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*  
*Eucalyptus levcoxylon*  
*Eucalyptus microcarpa*  
*Schinus molle*

Sugar Gum  
Yellow Gum  
Grey Box  
Peppercorn

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:** There are five nineteenth century school buildings surviving in Bacchus Marsh. But that most comparable to Coimadai is Myrmiong (ref: 273) which is altered from a nineteenth century Education Department plan for 60 pupils which was derived from the Common School type found at Coimadai. Bacchus Marsh Primary School (ref: 241) is the other surviving Common School in the Municipality but it has a quite different and distinctive plan.

There are seventeen Common Schools surviving with a plan similar to Coimadai. Muckleford South (1871, bluestone) is probably the finest example. The earliest is Beeac (1862, bluestone).<sup>11</sup>

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Coimadai Primary School a brick former Common School, built in 1872, the only building to survive the rising level of Lake Merrimu.

It has regional historical significance for its association with educational developments in the community life of the town and demonstrates the effect of government action in the community. It has regional architectural significance as a relatively intact surviving standard Common School built in the last year of operation of the Common Schools Board.

Finally it is of social significance as being known and valued by the community as part of the identity of this place and as a traditional community focus and meeting place.

**INTACTNESS:** Good. The classroom lack finials. Spouting has been replaced. The north gable end window has been replicated adjacent with a concrete lintel. There are two recent timber additions, the north side of the sheltershed is infilled to enable use as a room. All brickwork is painted.

**CONDITIONS & THREATS:** Very good. There is cracking in the north corners, (due to overflow tank water?)

Landscape. Some of the trees would need tree surgery to protect them from rot at a future stage.

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Peterson, "Historic Government Schools. A Comparative Study". Department of Planning & Development. Heritage Management Branch, 1993, Section 5, p.10.

In 1915 the schoolhouse was renovated by local builder, J.G. Wells. The original schoolhouse, erected in 1862, was demolished, a cloakroom and store was built, and the post-and-rail fence was replaced by a woven wire fence.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1920s "the school was rebuilt" and a cloakroom added. In 1963, the centenary of the Coimadai State School, there were extensive repairs and repainting and a plaque was unveiled by Mr Brooks, Assistant Deputy of Education, and trees were planted by the students, creating a Memorial Drive.<sup>9</sup>

**VISUAL DESCRIPTION:** A brick 60-type Common School, a standard Common Schools Board design for 60 pupils. This has a gable-roof and porch facing, with a later timber skillion extension at the rear, around the angle. There are at least six 12-pane double-hung sash windows, with rockface stone cills and a chimney with a pot. The spouting extends across the gable end of the door as if the base of a pediment. There are cast-iron wall vents (probably connected to Tobin tubes), gable-end timber vents, Kemp and Sheehan conical roof vents and later terra-cotta sub-floor vents.

The base is probably random rubble stone, rendered. There is a centenary plaque fixed to the chimney and a corner stone incised with: "F.P. Tower, Builder".<sup>10</sup> There are four tanks on stands. There is a gable-roofed Edwardian timber shelter shed, with a decorative scalloped timber barge-board, flagpole-profile finials on both gable ends, and decorative timber brackets to gables. There are two double-hung sash windows.

There is an avenue of nine Eucalypts on the front boundary with a chain-link fence with a capping and an earlier woven crimp-wire pedestrian gate. There is some hexagonal pre-cast concrete paving.

Landscape. A bush school set among stands of Grey Box and Yellow Gum, the elevated site is surrounded by stands of Sugar Gums which have been pollarded over the years. The line nine Sugar Gums to the north of the buildings have been placed to form a windbreak and to provide shelter for the buildings. Newer plantings have taken place around the school buildings as part of the development of the amphitheatre.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.9

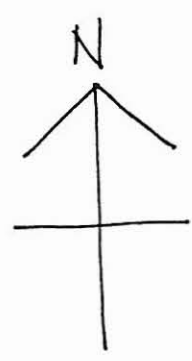
<sup>9</sup> Ibid p. 12. L.J. Blake, *Vision and Realisation. A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne 1973, Vol. 3, p.48. Recent communication with staff members by RP & JS.

<sup>10</sup> J.F. Taylor?

RUSSELLS ROAD (?)

TO RESERVOIR  
→

DRIVEWAY



EUCALYPTS

STONE

P

CLASS ROOM.

RECENT ADDITIONS  
SHADED.

