

Mt Zion Particular Baptist Chapel, former 10 Little Ryrie Street

History

A small fellowship of so-called 'Strict Baptists' (also known as 'Strict and Particular Baptists' because of their ultra-Calvinist beliefs) was formed in 1853, under the pastorate of John Bunyan McCure, who had arrived in Geelong in the same year. McCure ran a boot and shoe retailing business until his congregation became large enough to support him financially. The congregation first worshipped in rented premises in Chilwell before moving to an old store in Yarra Street.¹

In 1856 this group was worshipping at the old Independent Chapel in Ryrie Street and in the same year they purchased land in Little Ryrie Street and erected the present chapel. McCure claims that it 'opened' in 1856, but the *Geelong Advertiser* announced its formal opening as November, 1857.² There seems to have been another similar congregation worshipping in Chilwell for some time in the 1860s. The Mt. Zion church was a small, tightly-knit fellowship which, through its exclusive attitude to membership and strict spiritual discipline, remained small and always short of funds. Its membership of 40, reported in 1874, seems to have been the

average for the whole period. The church was apparently free of its building debt in 1861. In 1876 the vestry was renovated, and the exterior of the chapel was stuccoed and decorated.³ This was funded by donations. Although tenders were called by the Geelong architect, Joseph Watts, in 1884 for the chapel's replacement, this did not take place.

Description

A simple, gabled and stuccoed stone (?) church which takes on the classical temple form but is detailed after a Tudor manner (label moulds). Quoining at openings appears almost painted on, presumably reducing in depth with the new stucco layer. Pilasters frame each side window opening and, at the front corners, cover all but three quoining courses, suggesting their application at a later date. Given the similar date to the first Aberdeen Street Baptist Church and the gabled form, it is possible that it was originally without pilasters and of face-stonework. Watts may have designed a general renovation which included these works, in 1884.

External Integrity

(Given the above)

1 V.B. McCure, *Life in England and Australia*, (London, 1976), p.144

2 McCure, p.155

3 Minutes of the Quarterly Meetings of the Mount Zion Strict Baptist Chapel, 1865-1906, entry for 17 January, 1876

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites

Fence has been replaced, the stone base painted and the rear chimney (brick ?) stuccoed and painted.

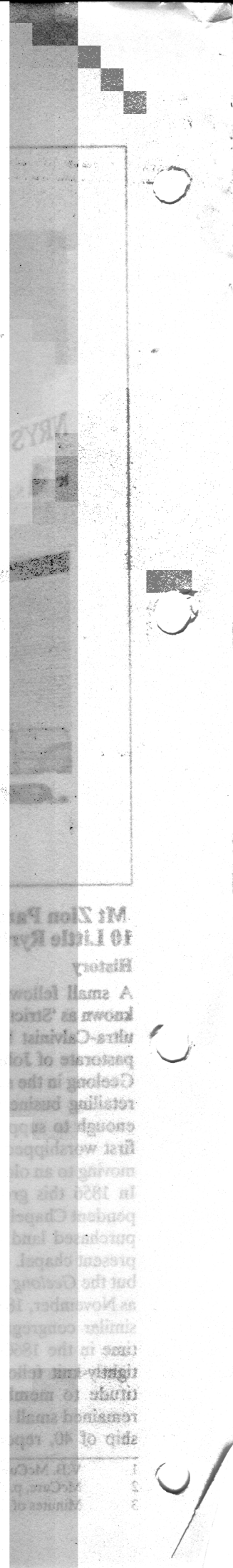
Streetscape

Isolated.

Significance

Historically, it is Geelong's fourth oldest completed church and hence has performed a 130 year public building role. It complements the Aberdeen Street Baptist Chapel as a significant reflection of the early phases of church building and congregational life in Geelong among the smaller Protestant groups.

Architecturally, a simple probably modified early church design which is typical of the small scale of old churches and the austerity of the Baptist aesthetic.



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