

HERITAGE PLACE – CITATION ASSESSMENT

NAME OF PLACE:	Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple
OTHER NAMES OF PLACE	-
ADDRESS / LOCATION:	945 Dandenong Road, Malvern East
PROPERTY INFORMATION:	Volume 4628 Folio 452 Lots 1 & 2 on Title Plan 594350R (formerly part of Portion 141 Parish of Prahran at Gardiner)
EXISTING LISTINGS:	-
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:	Local significance
ASSESSED BY:	John Statham, Conservation Consultant Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd
ASSESSMENT DATE:	28 January 2009

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Morton Ray Masonic Temple at 945 Dandenong Road is of architectural and historical significance at a local level.

It is of architectural significance as a substantial and imposing example of the Interwar Free-classical style and as a purpose-built example of an unusual building type. The building is notable for its use of Masonic iconography in its architectural decoration and in its exaggerated use of classical elements. It forms a prominent landmark along this stretch of Dandenong Road on account of its architectural grandeur and massing. It is an unusual example of the work of Malvern architect, Leslie JW Reed. The Temple is of historical significance for demonstrating the active presence of Freemasonry in Malvern and the surrounding suburbs from the late nineteenth century onwards. To a lesser extent, it is also of social significance as a focal point for social activities, including by members of the wider community outside of freemasonry.

Alterations to the exterior of the building comprise additions to the south side and rear and the construction of a caretakers house on the east side of the property. These have been undertaken with a high level of regard for the original design. The Temple is otherwise highly intact to its original construction.

LOCALITY PLAN AND SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1 Site map showing the location of Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple at 945 Dandenong Road, Malvern East.
Source: Land Victoria Interactive Maps

DESCRIPTION

The former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is located on a pentagon-shaped site at 945 Dandenong Road, with its primary elevation facing south-west onto Dandenong Road. The site has a rear frontage to Moama Road to the north, and onto a narrow rear lane-way to the north-east. On the adjacent block to the north (943 Dandenong Road), there is a contemporary commercial building and car park. The adjacent block to the south at 949 Dandenong Road contains a red brick inter-war bungalow. Dandenong Road is a busy 8-lane freeway with a median strip. There is a recreational reserve on the opposite side of the road to the west.

The Temple is a double-storey red brick building drawing its inspiration from classical sources. The rendered symmetrical facade is Interwar Free-classical in style, and includes an imposing balcony with an arched upper level opening, flanked by a pair of giant Doric columns. The entablature is inset with the freemason square and compass emblem. The front door is framed by a pedimented aedicule. Side elevations are articulated by brick pilasters. The roof is capped with red tiles, and is hipped at its eastern end and pitched at the western end. The interior contains what was originally a private ceremonial hall on the upper level. An informal hall at the lower level was sometimes rented out to the local community. This has polished timber floors, a strapped ceiling and a stage at its eastern end featuring a simple proscenium flanked by Doric columns. Masonic imagery is used throughout the building in the interior decoration.



Figure 2 *Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple.
Dandenong Road elevation*



Figure 3 *Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple.
Moama Road elevation*

There are several additions to the original building. Abutting the building on the south side along Dandenong Road is a single storey red brick extension. Its principal facade is rendered and features a pedimented Doric aedicule. It contains a rehearsal room. The red tiled roof is pitched at its western end but otherwise skillion in form. At the rear of the Temple is a single storey red brick extension, also with a red tiled roof, which was added in 1930. This contains a kitchen, which replaced a smaller one originally located behind the stage. There is also a single storey c.1950s caretakers cottage at the rear of the site with a frontage on to Moama Road, which partially abuts the kitchen extension.

The Temple and its extensions generally remain highly intact to their original construction apart from the additions listed above. There is a small front garden, enclosed by a partially intact original front fence, with rendered brick gateposts and a wrought iron gate. The garden contains four large, mature cypress trees.

HISTORY

Through the 19th century, the area of land around what is now the intersection of Dandenong Road and Moama Road was largely undeveloped farmland. Dandenong Road had been formally surveyed by Henry Foot in 1851-2. The original road was 1 chain (20 metres wide), and connected Melbourne with the nascent township of Dandenong, an early service point for that area's livestock industry.¹ Caulfield Railway Station opened on 7 May, 1879.

The Former Masonic Lodge is located on land originally part of a larger allotment numbered 141 in the parish of Prahran in County of Bourke. Subdivision of large rural allotments on this side of Caulfield Racecourse commenced in the 1890s and proceeded through the interwar period. A 1914 MMBW plan shows what is now 945 and 949 Dandenong Road were vacant land at this time, with two commercial buildings occupying

¹ Maxwell Lay, *Melbourne's Miles: The Story of Melbourne's Roads*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2003, pp.156-59.

the site on the corner of Dandenong and Moama Roads. These are visible in Figure 5. What is now 945 Dandenong Road was first sold to K Heffernan as part of a larger allotment on 12 January 1915. This land was soon subdivided, and a portion comprising Allotments 1 and 2 in this subdivision were sold on 23 August, 1922. The new joint proprietors were a group of men largely from Melbourne's eastern suburbs, of various professions. They were George Westlake Wales of St Kilda Road, Melbourne (inspector), James Alexander Chambers of Wellington Street, St Kilda (engineer), Edgar Ashton Fortescue Croft of 311 Collins Street, Melbourne (solicitor), William Bolton of Balaclava Road, Caulfield (plumber) and Edward Gray of Koornang Road, Carnegie (merchant). What these gentlemen had in common was that they were all freemasons.²

There had been active Masonic organizations in Malvern since the late nineteenth century. Malvern had shared the prosperity of the 1880s boom, and many active local community and social organizations became well-established in this period, including freemason's societies. Local historian Di Foster writes:

A number of masonic lodges were formed, and over the years several groups met at the Dispensary Hall in Valetta Street, Malvern. Among these were the Loyal Toorak, the Loyal Stanhope, the Loyal Armadale and the Loyal Good Intent Lodges. ... the inaugural meeting of the Malvern Masonic Lodge was held on 12 September 1887; meetings were held in the supper room of the Malvern Shire Hall. ... In 1921 Malvern Masonic Lodge moved to a new building in High Street Armadale, where Armadale, Fawkner, Stonington, Heyington and Glen Iris Lodges also met.

The foundation stone for a new Masonic temple at the site on Dandenong Road was laid on 30 September, 1922. An article describing the planned new building appeared in the *Melbourne Herald* on 11 October, 1922:

The new Morton Ray Masonic temple, in course of erection at Dandenong road, Malvern, is estimated to cost £7000, including the value of the site. M W Bro F T Hickford, Pro Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Victoria, laid the foundation stone last week. Five of the local lodges - Caulfield, Carnegie, Ormond, Glenhuntly and Henty - have amalgamated to erect the temple. Mr Leslie J W Reed, Malvern, has designed the new building, which will comprise a banquet hall seating about 300 members, committee rooms and kitchen accommodation. Special lockers are to be provided for the various crafts. On a first floor will be a large assembly room, balcony, and the lodge room, which is to be specially treated in blackwood panelling and will still have an effective arched ceiling. An imposing entrance has been designed, with heavy Doric columns supporting an entablature of a Masonic type, introducing emblems of significance in the craft.

The finished temple was named the Morton Ray Masonic Temple after two of its founders, Tom Morton and Darrell Ray, the late deputy Commissioner of Federal taxation. It was formally opened on 15 August, 1923.³ The building was designed by Leslie JW Reed. The builder of the new temple was F Davies.

The architect Leslie J W Reed was locally based, with an office at 45 Thanet Street, Malvern. He registered in 1923, practising until WWII. He specialized in residential work with some small industrial commissions. Works include: flats at 356 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1933); a factory in West Melbourne (1934); 48

² Land Title Volume 4628, Folio 925452.

³ *Argus*, Thursday 26 July, 1923, p.7.

Brighton Road (1937) - a rare semi-detached pair in an early bungalow estate; flats in Toorak Road, near Park Street (1937); and the dwelling at 32 Hortense Street Burwood (1938).⁴



Figure 4 *Artists impression
Morton Ray Temple
Source: Herald, 11 October 1922*



Figure 5 *Morton Ray Masonic Temple. c.1930
Source: Stonnington History Collection*

A c.1930 photograph of the Temple shows a pair of Victorian shops on the adjacent property immediately to the west.⁵ (These were demolished in the 1950s). Development in the surrounding area continued over the next few decades, with a 1945 aerial image showing the locality as largely developed for residential use by that time. A number of additions were subsequently made to the temple, including a kitchen at the rear of the Temple in 1930, an extension on its south side in the 1950s, and a separate caretakers cottage adjacent to the eastern property boundary at around the same time. As well as being used by the masons, the lower hall was rented out to the local community for private functions and gatherings.

The joint proprietors listed on the property title changed over subsequent decades before being transferred to the Temple Custodian Company Limited of 300 Albert Street, East Melbourne on 25 March, 1981. The Freemason's ceased to occupy the Temple in 2007, relocating to the Waverley Masonic Centre at 318-322 Stephenson's Road Mt Waverley. The building was sold in the middle of 2008.

⁴ *Miles Lewis Architectural Index.*

⁵ Stonnington Local History Service, 'Fiske Bros. Motors Pty./Ltd'. .Item No. 682 (Malvern : MP) , c.1930.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Masonic Buildings in Stonnington

The nineteenth century proliferation of Masonic groups within the boundaries of the present municipality of Stonnington resulted in a legacy of buildings with strong associations with Freemasonry in Prahran and Malvern. Not all of these have survived. These include formal temples, lodges, halls and buildings associated with charitable activities, such as almshouses and hospitals. Meeting places were not always constructed by the Freemasons. They would often share venues with other community organizations if they did not have the resources to immediately erect facilities of their own.

The Masonic Centre, 36 St Edmonds Road, Prahran.

This is a substantial double-storeyed interwar rendered brick building, which is still used by the Freemasons. The external presentation is expressive of the building's Masonic associations through its use of Masonic iconography and the classical detailing more generally, but does not stand out as being monumental or inventive. The façade has been modified to allow road widening in the 1990s.



Figure 6

14 Valetta Street, Malvern.

This double-storey masonry hall was built in its current form in 1925 to a design by architects Hudson and Wardrop for the United Friendly Society. It was used by various friendly societies and Masonic lodges until being sold and converted into apartments in 1986. The style is typical of the stripped classicism of the interwar period, and does not reflect associations with any particular organization.



Figure 7

Malvern Masonic Hall, 1127-9 High Street, Malvern
DEMOLISHED

The Malvern Lodge first held meetings in the Malvern Town Hall, but later raised sufficient funds to build a meeting place of its own. The Malvern Masonic Hall was built in 1920 and opened in May 1921. It also served as a meeting place for the Armadale, Fawkner, Stonnington, Heyington and Glen Iris Lodges. The Malvern Lodge relocated to Mt Waverley in 1973 and the hall has since been demolished.



Figure 8



<p><i>Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, 168-172 Albert Street, Windsor, DEMOLISHED</i></p> <p>Various friendly societies were active in Prahran and Malvern during the late nineteenth century at the same time as the Freemasons, and they often shared meeting facilities. The Royal Windsor Lodge was established in 1861. This hall is of a relatively plain, restrained design, with some simple classical detailing.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Figure 9</i></p>
<p><i>Freemasons Charitable Institutions, Punt Road, South Yarra, DEMOLISHED</i></p> <p>The Freemasons were granted land on Punt Road on which to establish almshouses in the late 1860s. These are thought to be the first in Victoria. This image dates from c.1905, and shows the design to be in a domestic idiom.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Figure 10</i></p>

Figure 5 Masonic buildings in the City of Stonnington

Compared to the buildings identified here, the former Morton Ray Masonic Temple at Malvern East is the most monumental as a consequence of its scale, design and prominent location. A contemporary newspaper account described the Temple as 'one of the finest Masonic temples in the suburban area'.⁶ It is somewhat unusual as a surviving structure that was purpose-built by the Freemasons, the Masonic Centre in St Edmond Street being the most readily comparable other example to survive in the City.

Masonic Halls on the Victorian Heritage Register

The former Morton Ray Masonic Temple may also be compared with Masonic Halls included on the Victorian Heritage Register. These have been included on the register because they have been identified as being of State significance. These include:

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|--|---|
| Masonic Hall (VHR H0119) | 50-58 View Street, Bendigo (1873-4) |
| Masonic Hall (VHR H1414) | 248 Manifold Street, Camperdown (1867-8) |
| Bendigo Chinese Temple (VHR H1791) | 3 Finn Street, North Bendigo (1860s) |
| Freemasons Hall, Zetland House (VHR H1988) | 3 Piper Street, Kyneton (1866) |
| Former Freemasons Hall (VHR H0538) | 254-56 Ferrars Street, South Melbourne (1876) |

⁶ *Argus*, Thursday 26 July, 1923, p.7.

Typically these buildings are earlier and grander than the subject building and illustrate aspects of the development of the state or the Metropolis. These buildings tend to predate the subject site being the earliest, and in some instances the grandest, examples of the architecture of Freemasonry in Victoria.

Interwar Free Classicism in Masonic Architecture

Buildings of the 1920s and 1930s that are characterised by an unconventional, abstract or non-academic application of the classical order are often described as adopting an Interwar Free Classical style. This approach developed, in part, as a reaction against the conservative architectural establishment in the years after World War One.⁷ The academically correct classical architecture of preceding decades was increasingly seen by a younger generation of architects as irrelevant and old-fashioned in a world gravitating towards Rational and Functional architecture. As described by Apperly, Irving and Reynolds, the Interwar Free Classical style was 'ebullient and self-confident', reflecting an increased economic prosperity in the 1920s.⁸ A wide range of variations on classical themes can be found in this approach although its principle characteristics include a symmetrical façade, unconventional or stylised order of architecture, porticos with an exaggerated projection and column spacing and a considered disregard for classical proportions.⁹

Major civic buildings in the interwar Free Classical style in Victoria include the Richmond Town Hall by architect Harry R Johnson. Originally built in 1890, this town hall was remodelled in 1934-36 with stylised Art Deco and Egyptian inspired detailing.

Masonic lodges in the mode can be found at Sorrento and Mordialloc. The later is protected as individually significant place in the City of Kingston heritage overlay schedule (HO93) while it is understood that the Sorrento Masonic Lodge was identified as a significant place in the Sorrento Historic precinct (HO1) under the Mornington Peninsula planning scheme. In comparison to the subject building, both these lodges are somewhat more restrained and conventional in their application of classical detailing.



Figure 11 Former Mordialloc Masonic Lodge,
Albert Street, Mordialloc.



Figure 12 Sorrento Masonic Lodge, Point Nepean
Road.

⁷ Apperly, Irving Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, p.158.

⁸ *op. cit.*, p.161.

⁹ *ibid.*

Within the municipality of Stonnington, there are few other religious, institutional or civic buildings which could be classified as interwar Free Classical in style. The Masonic Centre, St Edmonds Road, Prahran is an interwar building with classical detailing but lacks the monumentality and architectural inventiveness of the former Morton Ray Masonic Temple. The former United Friendly Society building (and later Masonic Lodge) in Valetta Street, Malvern, is an example of the much simpler and far less exuberant interwar stripped Classical style (see figure 7 above). Domestic examples of the interwar Free Classical style can be found in Stonnington and include Katanga, Glenferrie Road, Malvern, by noted architect Harold Desbrowe Annear. This eccentric design has a stuccoed exterior overlaid with various classical motifs. Commercial buildings in the idiom include 47 Glenferrie Road, Malvern, which has a polite symmetrical façade with a central entry framed by Ionic order columns.

DISCUSSION

The former Morton Ray Masonic Temple was nominated and considered for inclusion on the *Victorian Heritage Register* in 2008. It was decided not to include the Temple on the *Register* for a number of reasons. This reflects the fact that the temple has not had any notable role in the history of freemasonry in Victoria at the state level, and the *Register* already includes a representative range of buildings associated with the Freemasons. While the Temple is acknowledged as an interesting example of the Inter-war Free-classical style, there are already good representative examples of this architectural expression on the Register.

Rather than being an extraordinary example of a Masonic Hall or Lodge, the former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is a typical example of buildings of this type constructed through the first half of twentieth century. This typology draws its detailing from a range of sources but individual halls are united through their form and massing. Each primarily comprises a simple and largely unadorned red brick, hip-roofed volume presenting a grand facade or entry element to the street. The latter element typically incorporates a portico or other formal doorway arrangement. Halls frequently adopt classical devices including columns, quoins or expressed pilasters incorporating the iconography of Freemasonry. Buildings of this broad form are ubiquitous throughout suburban and rural Australia. However the subject building is the only example of this type to survive within the Municipality. It is also the most prominent and architecturally distinguished building in the municipality associated with Freemasonry.

In addition, the former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is important at a local level as a religious or institutional building in the Interwar Free Classical style. Examples of this particular style are rarely found in the municipality except as a domestic expression or commercial mode.



Figure 13 Masonic Temple, Bondi



Figure 14 Masonic Hall, Creswick



Figure 15 Masonic Temple, Warrnambool



Figure 16 Masonic Hall, Subiaco



Figure 17 Masonic Hall, West Wyalong

SIGNIFICANCE

Previous heritage studies

In 1996 this office produced a document entitled *Sites to be considered for Additional Planning Scheme Control: Malvern and Prahran Areas*, as part of the *City of Stonnington Heritage Review*. The Temple was identified as being of possible State significance and the report recommended that further research should be undertaken with a view to a future heritage control.

As noted above, the Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple was subsequently nominated and considered for inclusion on the *Victorian Heritage Register*. It was decided not to include the Temple on the *Register*. This notwithstanding, the Temple was acknowledged as being an interesting example of the Inter-war Free-classical style, and as being of local significance. Heritage Victoria recommended the building for inclusion under a heritage overlay in the Stonnington Planning Scheme.

On the basis of research undertaken by this office and by Heritage Victoria, a more thorough consideration of the significance of the dwelling is now possible. The view that the building may be significant at a State level does not, on the basis of more detailed analysis undertaken in the preparation of this report, appear warranted.

Architectural significance

The Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is of architectural significance at a local level as a substantial and imposing example of the Interwar Free-classical style. It is of interest as an example of an unusual building type, which incorporates Masonic iconography in its architectural decoration. Its flamboyant use of classical elements in its composition typifies Masonic architecture. The temple forms a prominent landmark along this stretch of Dandenong Road on account of its architectural grandeur and massing, contrasting with the surrounding urban fabric, which consists principally of single storeyed buildings or open space. It is an unusual example of the work of Malvern architect Leslie J W Reed.

Historical significance

The Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is of historical significance at a local level for demonstrating the active presence of Freemasonry in Malvern and the surrounding suburbs from the late nineteenth century onwards. While significant at a local level, the temple does not seem to have performed wider roles in the operation of Freemasonry at the state level.

Stonnington Thematic Environmental History

In summary, the Former Morton Ray Masonic Temple can be shown to illustrate the following themes as identified in the Stonnington Thematic Environmental History:

- 4.3 Developing Institutions
- 8.5 Forming Associations
- 8.5.1 Preserving Traditions and Group Memories
- 8.6.4 Making Places for Worship
- 8.10.4 Designing and Building Fine Buildings

CONCLUSION

The former Morton Ray Masonic Temple is of architectural and historical significance at a local level. It is an imposing and very intact example of the Interwar Free-classical style. It is of historical importance for its associations with freemasonry in the district and also a focal point for community activities. The place should be protected under a heritage overlay within the City of Stonnington Planning Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the place be added to the schedule of the Heritage Overlay under the City of Stonnington Planning Scheme.

The extent of the Heritage Overlay should include an appropriate curtilage of land. This should comprise all of the land on the existing title.

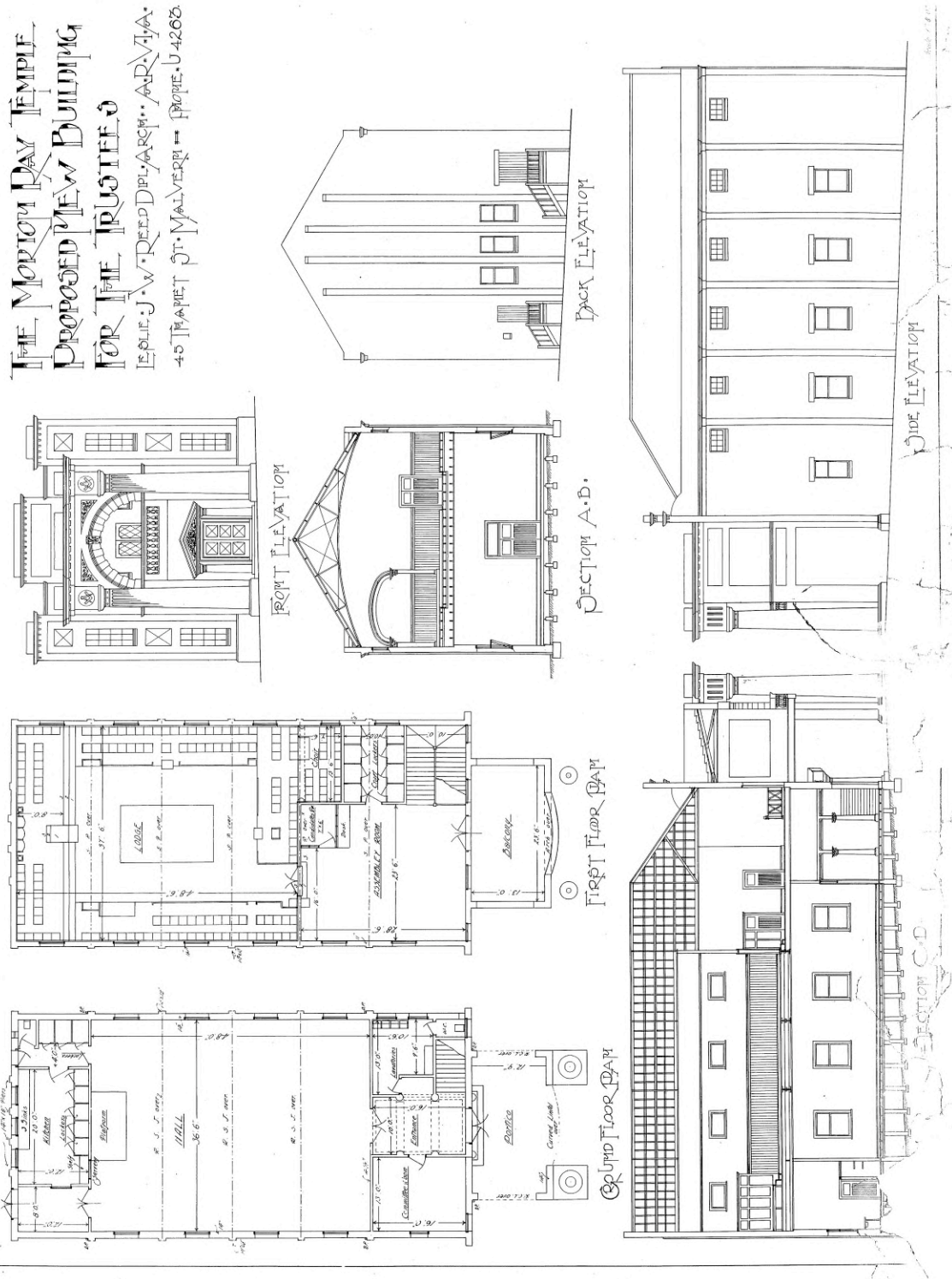


Figure 5 Original drawings for Morton Ray Masonic Temple, 1922.
Source: Stonnington Local History Collection

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