



4 - 38 37 Fairlie Street

**Yarraville Primary School  
51-59 Francis Street**

**History**

Government aid to Yarraville's education was first sought for a new common school at Stony Creek, in 1868, but unsuccessfully. One year after a private school had been started there under a Mrs. Marguerite Mullens and another school had commenced at the United Methodist Hall. In 1871 similar approaches were made to the government, this time with some success. Stony Creek Common School 1122 was estab-

lished in the hall under J. Derrick, closing three years later in favour of a larger school.<sup>1</sup>

This 'larger' school was the modest beginning to the present building, opening in 1875 as a gabled Venetian Gothic revival brick structure which accommodated 218 students after only 8 months of operation, after an initial 60.<sup>2</sup> Thirteen years later, and after much distress from overcrowding, its internal destruction by fire meant the design of a much longer (8675 square feet) similarly styled edifice which added a storey and extra wings to the south and west<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, the Yarraville Jubilee Hall was leased as a temporary measure.<sup>4</sup>

A contract was let by June 1889 and completion reached five months later, although not completely to

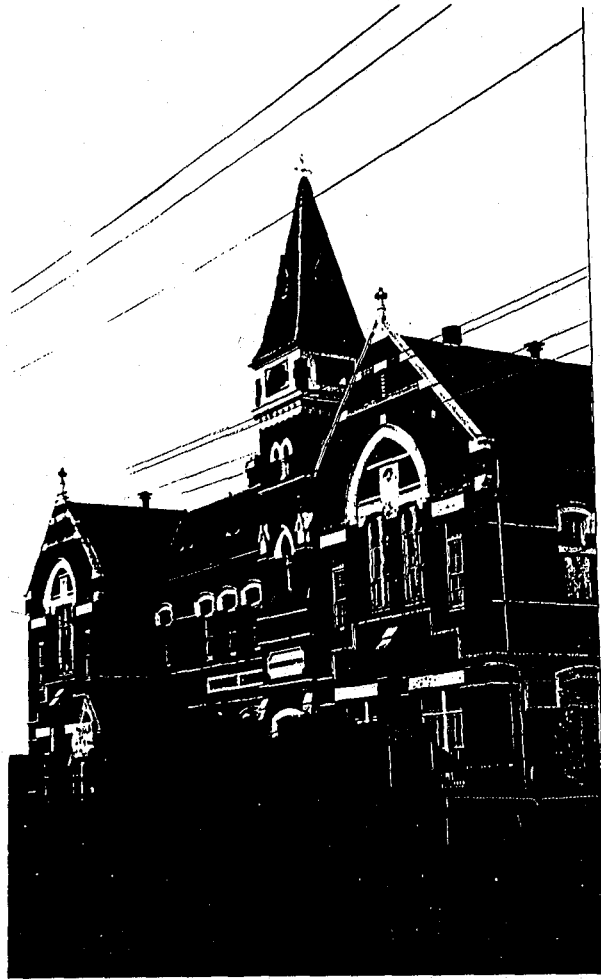
1 V&R V3,p.56  
2 *The Independent* 13/3/86  
3 PWD contract drawings 25.4.87  
4 *ibid.*: VPRS795/888 (14/6/89)

the satisfaction of head teacher, Patrick O'Hagan, who urged that a caretaker's cottage and asphaltting of the yard be commenced immediately.<sup>1</sup> Also, windows leaked and damp was effecting some walls of the new building.

Much to the dismay of parents, Yarraville West was amalgamated with this school in 1892, leaving that school (Powell Street) deserted and in need of a

caretaker.<sup>2</sup> The Powell Street school was to eventually reopen in 1926.<sup>3</sup>

At Yarraville Central school, overcrowding was typically a pressing issue in the early 1900s. A Footscray health officer's report noted that the school's capacity was 950: 900 were on the rolls but a meager 600 attended on a regular basis.<sup>4</sup> Additional accommodation was provided, to the cost of 1400 pounds, in 1912, while



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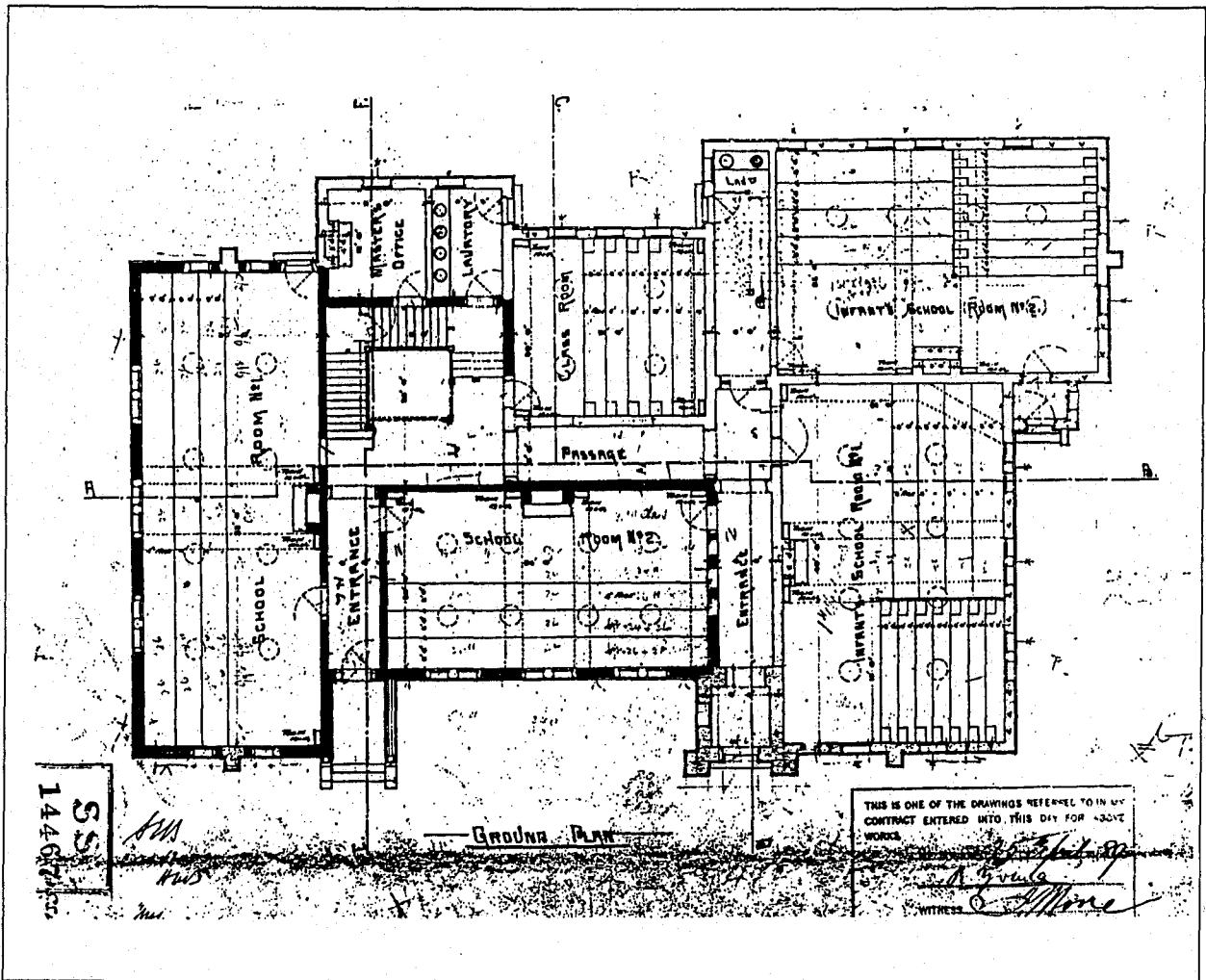
1    ibid.  
2    ibid.; MMBW RP5  
3    V&R, V3, p.71  
4    VPRS795/888, 30/6/08

pupils occupied the Anglican and Methodist Sunday School halls also Yarraville Hall. Meanwhile the Victorian Railways were proposing to reduce the school yard accommodation by deducting around one third of the site for an extensive goods siding.<sup>1</sup> Another part of the Edwardian renovation period was the provision of new lighting and ventilation to the existing school, consisting of new square-headed windows on the two gabled bays (upper and lower), front and rear, and glazed screens into passages. The galleries and 'steppings' were also to be removed from most class rooms<sup>2</sup>.

The next school renovation occurred when cloak rooms were added, further 'steppings' were removed from class rooms, rooms divided and undivided<sup>3</sup> and the caretaker's cottage was added in 1929, inspiring a 'reopening' on July 12, 1929. Further works included a shelter shed, built 1933.<sup>4</sup>

At its beginning, in 1890, *The Independent* wrote of:

*'...ten fine, large, airy rooms for the scholars ... an office on the south side, lumber room, lavatory, etc. ... furnished with the most modern improvements for ventilation' (also 'appliances' were fitted in the roof*



4 - 40 51-59 Francis Street, extract from contract drawings signed April 1889 (PWD collection)

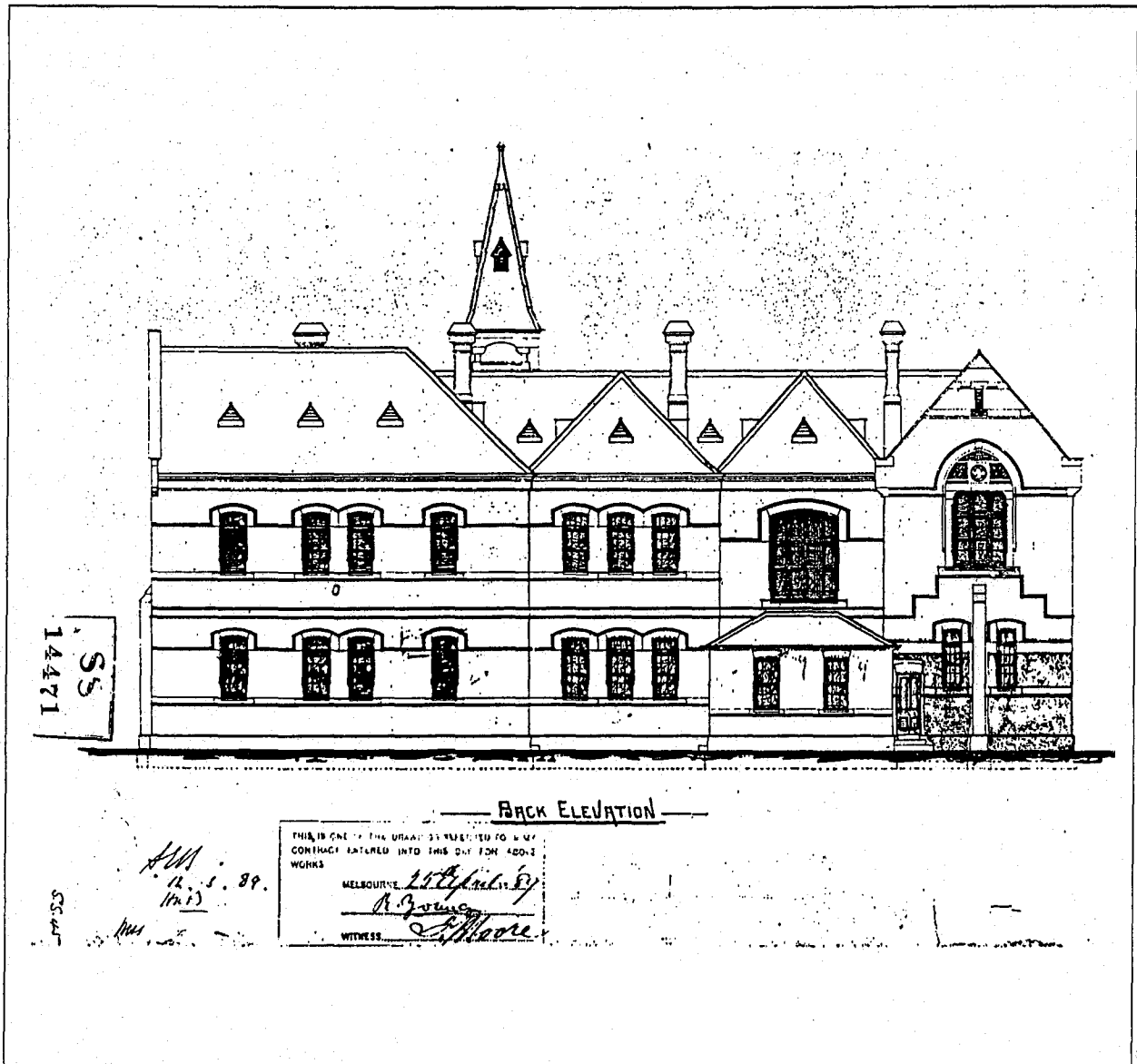
- 1 ibid.
- 2 PWD Contract 267, 1911-12
- 3 PWD contract 1927-8, 36
- 4 VPRS795/2252

and on the floor, in the corners, to carry 'bad' air from 'underneath').

Stone was used for the stairs and in upstairs corridors where the supporting floor was timber-filled with three inches of earth to provide sound insulation. The newspaper noted that the designed accommodation was 800 (there were 1000 on the roll), but that '7000' (?) could be seated there 'without any undue crushing'. The builder was a Mr. Young of Carlton, the contract sum in excess of 6000 pounds, but this did not include

the intended asphaltting of the 'unusually spacious' grounds. However 'two large shelter sheds' had been built. Footscray Council had attended to their part of the project, asphaltting footpaths and constructing stone pitcher crossings at the entrances, to provide some relief from the muddy road surface.

The popular head teacher, Patrick O'Hagan's staff, was noted as consisting of six student and six qualified teachers and among his more innovatory projects was the introduction of gymnasium classes (for 'muscular development').<sup>1</sup> Head teachers there after O'Hagan



4 - 41 51-59 Francis Street, extract from contract drawings signed April 1889 (PWD collection)

1 The Independent 25/1/90; Burchell p.150

included William Ryan, Richard Rail, Luther Williams, Sidney Hunt, Richmond Griffiths, William Guy, Percy Cowderoy, Edmund Page, David Black and Eric Shade, a man who eventually became (coincidentally) Director of Prisons in the State Social Welfare Department. Another was Douglas Brown, who had a huge influence over the teaching profession, as foundation member of the Victorian Teachers' Union (1926). He was elected president 1943-5 and represented the Union on the Teachers' Tribunal for over 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Eric Hassold, eventually a District Inspector of Schools, also taught at Yarraville.<sup>2</sup>

One aspect peculiar to government schools at Williamstown, Yarraville and Footscray, was the relative prevalence of children attending from barges or lighters located on the two rivers. In 1926 official recognition of their presence was given by allowing automatic transfer from one school to the next within these localities.<sup>3</sup>

#### Description

Lawrence Burchell has noted Yarraville among other bell-towered school structures which were set on an E-plan and draw on the Italian Gothic for their stylistic inspiration. These include English examples such as Ettington Park, Warwickshire (1859) and, in Victoria, Stawell (1879), Newtown (1877), Kyneton, Moreland (1890), Wangaratta (1877), Ballarat, Armadale (1884) and Wales Street, Northcote.<sup>4</sup> Each is a variation on the common theme, as determined by their date, the later (and often bigger) designs possessing more vertical emphasis, with taller towers and flanking gables. Yarraville is at the end of this progression and consequently is among the best developed of the type and configuration. An early photograph (c1909) shows the school, complete with timber picket fence.<sup>5</sup>

#### External Integrity

New windows have been added sympathetically to front and rear elevations and some gable finials have gone. New wings added at rear and the picket fence replaced.

#### Streetscape

A large complex set among altered Victorian period houses on the west and early 20th century buildings on the east.

#### Significance

A successful integration of two eras of building which is considered among the most developed examples of the towered Venetian Gothic revival government schools and comparatively externally unaltered (cf. general window replacement in the Edwardian period elsewhere). Historically, a major early public building in Yarraville and the vehicle for some prominent educators in the State system.

#### House

##### 2 Geelong Road

#### History

Architects, Gibbs & Finlay, designed this house for Margaret and Sydney G. Richardson, in 1916. By the early 1940s, Richardson's address was care of 21 Whitehall Street, at his engineering workshop (D. Richardson & Sons Pty. Ltd.). This house had become a Young Women's Christian Association hostel by 1942.

When Margaret died (81) in 1946, they lived at 39 Nicholson Street, later her son, Herbert's, residence. Other children included Leslie and Alan.<sup>6</sup>

D. Richardson & Sons and Richardson Gears Pty. Ltd. were side by side in Whitehall Street, both the products of David Richardson's founding enterprise of 1888.<sup>7</sup> The gears part of the works was the showpiece of Footscray factory architecture when it was redeveloped in the early 1940s, being Modern both in its architectural outlook ('a striking modern facade') and its provision of staff facilities, including a social club, library and dining room.<sup>8</sup>

1 V&R,V1,p.1266f  
 2 V&R,V1,p.1421  
 3 V&R,V1,p.221  
 4 Burchell,p.150f  
 5 FFFY  
 6 *The Age* 21/3/46  
 7 D1945; SCO,p.14  
 8 *ibid.*