

## Prahran Primary School No. 2855, 45-69 High Street, Prahran



### History and Description

On 16 March 1886 George P. Miles purchased the site of this school. After its purchase, the Education Department sold the existing house on the block. A brick school house was erected by the Public Works Department in 1886 costing over 5,499 pounds. It was opened on 13 February 1888 as Prahran West School. Its name was not changed to Prahran until 1925.<sup>136</sup>

Enrolments increased so rapidly that an extension had to be made to the school in 1889. At the same time, a Head Teacher's Office (25 feet by 20 feet) was constructed. At this time the school building was used at night as the temporary premises of the Prahran Working Men's College.<sup>137</sup>

Victoria's transport system has a link with the site of this school. The first locomotive constructed in Victoria was built at Prahran by Enoch Chambers. His foundry occupied the site now used as a playground area.<sup>138</sup>

Many school designs of this period were derived from the Eaglehawk No. 210 design, by H. R. Bastow which is believed to have been inspired by Butterfield's design for St. Paul's Melbourne. Buninyong was another very influential design.<sup>139</sup> Bastow was no longer directly in charge of schools by the time this school was

136. J. B. Cooper, *The History of Prahran*, p. 249; *Vision and Realisation*, L. J. Blake (ed). Vol. 3, p. 389; HBC File No. 6020410.

137. *Vision and Realisation*, Vol. 3, p. 389.

138. *Vision and Realisation*, p. 389.

139. R. Peterson, *et al.*, chapter 3, pp.7-13.

designed. J. T. Kelleher, another important government architect was in charge of schools in the Eastern Division at this time and was probably influential in the eclectic mix of Queen Anne and Flemish styles used by Charles Manson, architect of this school.

The symmetrical facade features Flemish decorative treatment around the doors and heavy stucco rendered gable ends, which represents an unusual stylistic variation on later Gothic Schools.<sup>140</sup> Queen Anne features include tall red brick chimneys, spiled roof turret, the large volume of the hipped roof, and rectangular paired windows.<sup>141</sup> The 1889 addition and later additions are sympathetic to the original design. The building dominates the school site with plantings on the High Street side obscuring the view of the facade from the street.

Comparable examples include Rathdowne Street No. 2605, Carlton (1884) by J. H. Kelleher, Newtown No. 1887, (1876) by H. R. Bastow and also Eaglehawk No. 210, (1883) also by Bastow.<sup>142</sup>

The school was closed in 1990. Subsequently, the building has been used by the Gould League of Victoria, an organisation concerned with environmental education.<sup>143</sup>



140. R. Peterson, *et al.*, chapter 4, p.13.

141. L. Burchell, *Victorian Schools. A Study in Colonial Government Architecture, 1837-1900*, p. 155.

142. R. Peterson, *et al.*, chapter 4, p.1.

143. Sally Wilde, *The History of Prahran 1925-1990*, p. 206. Contains a view of the school in 1922.

## Significance

The former Prahran Primary School opened in 1888 is possibly of state significance for architectural, aesthetic and historical reasons. The school has historical importance as an important public building, representing the scale of educational services demanded in the region at the end of the nineteenth century. Architecturally, it is a fine and intact example of a nineteenth century State Primary Schools in the City of Prahran and is of state importance as a unique example of a Late Gothic Urban design, incorporating an unusual combination of Queen Anne and Flemish idioms.

The school has regional significance as a likely focus of cultural sentiment associated with the site and buildings by generations of former pupils. The building has local aesthetic value, prominently sited on High Street, and providing an important local landmark, remaining detached from other buildings on the site, in keeping with historical precedent.



## Sources

Burchell, L., *Victorian Schools. A study in Colonial Government Architecture 1837-1900*, 1980.

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## Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this building be retained at A1 level.