

Victorian Heritage Database Report
FORMER INDEPENDENT CHURCH



Location:

246 MALVERN ROAD PRAHRAN, STONNINGTON CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1022

Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO75

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

The Former Independent Church in Malvern Road Prahran was built in 1858-9 in bluestone with cement dressings, to the design of Thomas J Crouch and Ralph Wilson. It was intended to be completed in stages but

never reached its designed final form, which was to include a masonry chancel and a tower. A wooden porch designed by CE Connop in 1886 provides entry in what was to be the tower base, and there is a timber extension at the east end, between the church and vestry, which probably dates from 1914. The church was part of the independent church complex consisting of the basalt church and vestry, the Hawthorn brick vestry passage and associated timber structures, and the Hawthorn brick Sunday school.

How is it significant?

The Former Independent Church is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Independent Church is of architectural significance as one of the earliest designs of Crouch and Wilson whose partnership was formed in 1858. Crouch and Wilson's ecclesiastical and institutional designs were extremely influential in 1860s and 1870s Victoria, and this church is particularly interesting as a progenitor of their later work. Subsequent important works by this partnership include the Mickva Yisrael Synagogue in Albert Street, Eastern Hill and the Methodist Mission Church in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne.

The Former Independent Church is of architectural significance for its sloping floor, perhaps the first use of a feature that was later widely used in non-conformist churches. The sloping floor was designed to provide good sight lines from the congregation to the preacher, emphasising the function of the church as an inclusive meeting place rather than a place in which a mystery was celebrated.

The Former Independent Church is of historical significance as a symbol of the development of organised religion in Victoria, and particularly of the Independent (or Congregationalist) Church. It occupies an important position in the history of the Independent church in Victoria because it was an early off-shoot of the original two Independent Churches in Melbourne. The Malvern Road church was built to cope with the overflowing congregation from the first place of Independent Church worship in Prahran, a chapel at the nearby corner of what is now Chapel Street, the thoroughfare whose name commemorates that first place of worship.

The Former Independent Church is of historical significance as evidence of the growth of early Melbourne. The growth in the size of church congregations that led to the construction of this church reflects the growth of Prahran, as Melbourne's suburbs rapidly expanded in the middle decades of the 19th century. The later works, comprising the organ chamber (1869) and the vestry and related rooms at the rear of the church (1878), are representative of the staged development of expanding suburban congregations. These staged developments and the fact that Crouch and Wilson's design for an imposing tower at the front of the church was never realised reflect the financial constraints within which such congregations had to function, particularly in the early years of suburban expansion.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1859 -
Architect / Designer	Crouch & Wilson
Municipality	STONNINGTON CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	2947
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online