

# CATHEDRAL HALL



CATHEDRAL HALL SOHE  
2008



H01967 1cathedral hall  
facade



H01967 cathedral hall interior



H01967 cathedral hall  
interior2



H01967 cathedral hall south  
elevation



H01967 cathedral hall stage



H01967 cathedral hall supper  
room



H01967 cathedral hall plan

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## Location

20-22 BRUNSWICK STREET FITZROY, YARRA CITY

## Municipality

YARRA CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1967

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO347

## VHR Registration

February 14, 2002

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

Cathedral Hall consists of meeting rooms and offices at the front of the site and a large hall to the rear with a supper room opening off it. The building was used as a meeting place for the Catholic Church in Melbourne from 1903. The building fronting Brunswick Street was constructed in 1873 as the Exhibition Boot Factory and refurbished as clubrooms and classrooms in 1902-03 by the Church. The main hall behind the factory was erected in 1903-04 and the whole became the main venue for activities associated with St Patrick's Cathedral and the Church generally, commencing with the hosting of the Second Australasian Catholic Congress in 1904 and later the National Eucharistic Congress in 1934. The supper room fronting Graham Street was added in 1908 and the whole building was decorated in 1912-13 and refurbished for the National Eucharistic Congress in 1934 when the light fittings were designed and installed. In the 1960s the hall became known as Central Hall.

### How is it significant?

Cathedral Hall is architecturally and historically significant to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Cathedral Hall is architecturally significant to the State of Victoria for its skilful incorporation of the 1873 boot factory into a larger design to provide an institutional hall, clubrooms and classrooms and for the elegance of the design and decoration of the main hall. The relatively austere composition of the factory front to Brunswick Street was transformed into a more elaborate yet restrained and dignified facade for the new facilities. The large single volume of the hall and the balcony supported by a cantilevered structure which obviated the need for columns make the hall well suited to its purpose. The elaborate plasterwork of the hall ceiling, proscenium and balcony decoration completed in 1913 was seen by contemporaries as an aesthetic triumph. The hall is an important example of the work of Reed, Smart and Tappin, architects of some of the most notable Victorian church buildings.

Cathedral Hall is historically significant for its major place in the history of the Catholic Church in the State, for its role in education and social and cultural activities connected with the church and for its close links with St Patrick's Cathedral, the centre of the Church in Victoria. Its reuse of the Exhibition Boot Factory recalls the industrial history of Fitzroy, preceding the institutional development at the top of Brunswick Street, which has been continued by the recently expanded religious and educational precinct to accommodate the Australian Catholic University. Cathedral Hall, within the St Patricks Cathedral precinct, is of historic importance as part of the centre of Roman Catholic activity in Victoria.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below.

Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Construction dates	1873, 1902, 1908, 1912, 1934,
Architect/Designer	Reed, Smart & Tappin,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	CENTRAL HALL,
Hermes Number	4583
Property Number	

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## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY:

On 15 May 1839 Patrick Geoghegan arrived in Melbourne to take up the position of priest of the newly formed parish of Port Phillip. The land on which St Francis Church stands was granted in July 1839 and shortly after the land grant was confirmed, the first mass at the site was held in a temporary chapel which had been moved to the site in June that year. St Francis Church was designed by Samuel Jackson and built between 1841 and 1845. It became the first Catholic Cathedral in the district in 1848 following the installation of Bishop Goold, and remained the cathedral until the opening of St Patrick's Cathedral in 1869.

The site on which St Patrick's Cathedral now stands was part of a five-acre government grant to the Catholic Church given over the years 1848-53. The western section of the site was set aside for a church, the central portion for clergy accommodation and the eastern part was designated for educational purposes. The present St Patrick's Cathedral designed by William Wardell in 1858. By March 1859, work at the Cathedral was progressing rapidly. The nave and aisles were opened in 1869. The remainder of the church itself and the sacristy were completed in 1897. The spires and confessional were added and the west door rebuilt in 1936-40.

The bluestone tower in the south east corner of the site is all that remains of St Patrick's College. The construction of the college, the first Diocesan Grammar school in Victoria, commenced in 1854. The college closed in December 1968, and the majority of St Patrick's College was demolished in January 1971 after a lengthy but unsuccessful campaign by the National Trust.

Cathedral Hall represented a new phase in the history of the Catholic Church in Melbourne. The Catholic community's first priority was the construction of a place of worship, and the prosperity brought by gold allowed the building of St Patrick's Cathedral. Cathedral Hall allowed for the expansion of activities by the Church, linking the spiritual, social and political life of its adherents by the encouragement of church societies and associations. Large-scale church occasions such as the National Eucharistic Congress of 1934 were held in the Hall. Cathedral Hall provided space for meetings large and small, dances, and concerts. Church associations promoting spirituality such as sodalities used Cathedral Hall facilities for their meetings, bringing together church members from parishes across Melbourne. The Church also encouraged the cohesion of church members by facilitating social activities. Cathedral Hall provided a suitable venue for such activities and was seen as particularly important in a period when sectarian feeling created divisions between Protestants and Catholics in Melbourne in the early years of this century. Other venues owned or operated by Protestants were not always made available for Catholic functions.

## HISTORY OF PLACE:

The Exhibition Boot Factory was constructed in 1873 to a design by architects Reed and Barnes for Messrs. Roelens and Burdett. The site was purchased by the Catholic Church for conversion into clubrooms and classrooms. The rooms were intended for use as "club, conference, sodality and society rooms.". Land behind the factory (occupied by houses) was purchased as a site for the proposed hall in 1902. The factory was refurbished in 1902-03 to provide clubrooms and classrooms and was opened in April 1903. Part of the factory was altered to provide an entrance foyer for the new hall. The hall to a design by Reed, Smart and Tappin was constructed in 1903-04. The official opening took place on 10 April 1904.

The supper room was added in 1908. Decoration of the hall took place in 1912-13 with minor refurbishment including new light fittings undertaken in 1934 in preparation for the National Eucharistic Congress. Cinema projection facilities were installed in the hall in the 1940s.

Particularly since the Education Act of 1872, which established a free, secular and compulsory State school system, while the Catholic Church maintained a separate school system without government subsidy, Catholics felt discriminated against and divided from the rest of the community. In a society divided on sectarian lines, the Catholic Church aimed to help its adherents by encouraging Catholics to stick together. Catholics were encouraged not only to send their children to Catholic school rather than government schools, but also to patronise Catholic doctors, dentists, lawyers and accountants as well as Catholic tradesmen and Catholic-owned shops and businesses of all kinds. Special services for Catholics became necessary where discrimination on the basis of religion was a commonplace. Organisations such as the Hibernian-Australian Catholic Benefit Society, a friendly society with branches in parishes round the State formed to provide health and funeral benefits for Catholics filled a need.

Entertainment was also seen as an important part of Catholic life. Tennis clubs, theatre groups, debating societies and dances were run in Catholic parishes to encourage young people to meet under church auspices and thus to promote intermarriage.

The hall was used for many activities connected with the church including meetings, annual Communion breakfasts, reunions, lectures, educational or social gatherings. The hall was also used for meetings associated with the Irish in Victoria, whose interests were closely allied to the Church at that time. For instance, the Hall was used in November 1906 to accommodate the Indignation Meeting at which fifteen hundred sympathisers with Ireland in her struggle for independence welcomed "Delegates of the Irish Party."

Cathedral Hall was renamed Central Hall in the 1960s. The portico in Brunswick Street was demolished in the 1960s.

In 1970-72 the hall was used as a venue for the T.F. Much (and later Much More) Ballroom, including concerts by Daddy Cool, Spectrum and captain Matchbox.

In 1998 Central Hall became part of the St Patrick's Campus of the Australian Catholic University. Two new lecture theatres were constructed to the rear (east) of the hall with an entrance from Young Street.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the building marked B1 on diagram 1967 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the land shown on diagram 1967 held by the Executive Director.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*