

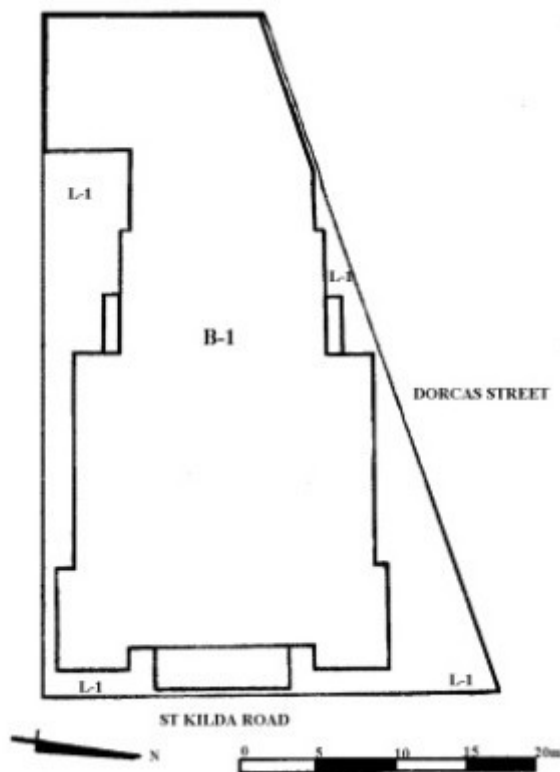
FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST, MELBOURNE



FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST, MELBOURNE SOHE 2008



1 first church of christ scientist melbourne front elevation may1998



first church of christ scientist st kilda road south melb plan

Location

336-340 ST KILDA ROAD MELBOURNE, PORT PHILLIP CITY

Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1766

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO252

VHR Registration

January 7, 1999

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 1, 1999

What is significant?

Christian Science services in Australia began in Melbourne in 1898. First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne was established in 1903 with its services being held in the Athenaeum Hall until the opening of First Church in St Kilda Road. Members of the church purchased the St Kilda Road site in 1914 and engaged the architects Bates, Peebles & Smart to prepare plans for a church and Sunday School. Harold Dumsday was responsible for the design. The plans were held over during the First World War and work did not commence by contractors Hansen & Yuncken until 1920. The foundation stone was laid on 21 December 1920 and the formal opening was on 7 May 1922. In 1928 a Willis organ was added at a cost of £7,500. In 1934 a new block containing offices was added to the rear of the building, facing Dorcas Street. This was designed by the original architects, (then known as Bates, Smart and McCutcheon) to harmonise with the church building.

Harold Dumsday designed the church in a "Neo-Grec" style. The church has a temple-like form with Greek Revival elements but also reflects Byzantine influences with its Diocletian windows and shallow copper-topped dome. The main facade to St Kilda Road has a central pedimented Ionic portico, flanked by projecting parapeted pavilions. The building is finished in roughcast render with smooth rusticated piers and cornice mouldings. The building is double-storeyed with the church auditorium located on the upper storey and the Sunday School on the lower storey. The building features a timber-lined hydraulic lift (still in use) The flooring throughout is polished hardwood and the seating and dado are in Pacific maple.

The 1934 block is a flat-roofed building with walls finished in textured cement stucco with a show window facing onto Dorcas Street. The building contains a basement and an upper storey.

How is it significant?

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne is architecturally significant as a fine and rare example of early

twentieth century classicism applied to an ecclesiastical building in Victoria. The architect Harold Dumsday of Bates, Peebles and Smart, influenced by contemporary British architects, designed this distinctive version of the "Neo-Grec" style. Classical references include the columned portico of the front facade, mosaic and terrazzo porch floor, the Greek Revival leadlight to the front doors and the wrought iron light posts that originally held torches. The dome and the Diocletian windows give a distinctively Byzantine feel to the building. The exterior and interior of the church have a high level of integrity, retaining original features such as light fittings, pews, heaters, built-in lecterns, decorative organ screen and hydraulic lift.

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne is historically significant as the first church of the Christian Science movement in Victoria. In 1879, in Boston, Massachusetts, the Christian Scientist Association on motion of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science movement, voted to organise a church. This church was re-organised in 1892 and named The First Church of Christ, Scientist. The Mother Church building in Boston was erected in 1894. First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne reflects the distinctive requirements of the Christian Science movement with its three functional units: the church, the Sunday School and the administration block. The hydraulic lift is an unusual feature in a church building. The built-in lecterns in the church auditorium and the readers' rooms off the rostrum reflect the Christian Science requirement for two elected readers. The simplicity and elegance of the Sunday School and the church with its auditorium-like plan and its rostrum reflects the Christian Science tradition for simple sincerity of form and feeling.

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:

EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMITS:

(Classes of works or activities which may be undertaken without a permit under Part 4 of the Heritage Act 1995)

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.

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.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. 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.

Exterior of main building and 1934 block:

- * Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- * Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.
- * Installation or repair of damp-proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method.

Interior of main building:

- * Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.
- * Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled joinery, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative strapping.
- * Minor repairs and maintenance work on the organ.
- * Minor repairs and maintenance work to the hydraulic lift.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted artworks.
- * Refurbishment of bathrooms, toilets and or en suites including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of kitchen benches and fixtures including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers etc and associated plumbing and wiring.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and provided that the location of the heating unit is concealed from view.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed and any original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets are retained in-situ. Note: if wiring original to the place was carried in timber conduits then the conduits should remain in-situ.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.
- * Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors.

Interior of 1934 block:

- * All interior alterations are permit exempt if they do not impact on the exterior.

Construction dates 1920,

Architect/Designer Bates Peebles & Smart,
Heritage Act Categories Registered place,
Hermes Number 2321
Property Number

History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Christian Science originated in North America. It was founded by Mary Baker Eddy who had been brought up as a New England Congregationalist. She believed in the “divine laws of Life, Truth, and Love” and held that true Christianity was not the creeds and ceremonies of traditional churches but “the demonstration of divine love casting out error and healing the sick”. Her views are set out in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* published in 1875.

The Christian Scientist Association on 12 April 1879 voted to accept a motion put by Mrs Eddy “to organise a church designed to commemorate the words and works of our Master, which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing.” Mrs Eddy drafted the tenets of the church and in 1881 was ordained as the church pastor. The church was reorganised in 1892 and named the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts. The Mother Church in Boston was completed in 1894 and encouraged the building of Christian Science churches in other places.

Although the Mother Church established the pattern for Christian Science services and the communication of Mrs Eddy’s teaching, each Christian Science church is autonomous. The service is presided over by the First Reader and Second Reader, usually a man and a woman who are elected officers of the church. Sacraments are not observed in the traditional manner. Each church has a reading room for Christian Science material, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, highly regarded for its news coverage.

History of Place:

Christian Science was introduced into Australia by a visitor to Melbourne in 1891. Services in Australia began in Melbourne in 1898 in various rented premises until 1903 when the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne was organised. Its services were held in the Athenaeum Hall until the opening of the First Church in St Kilda Road. Members of the church purchased the St Kilda site in 1914 and engaged the architects Bates, Peebles & Smart to prepare plans for a church and Sunday School. The plans were held over during the First World War and did not commence until 1920 when a contract was signed with builders Hansen & Yuncken for £32,000. Harold Dumsday of Bates, Peebles and Smart was responsible for the design. The foundation stone was laid on 21 December 1920 and the formal opening on 7 May 1922. In 1928 a Willis organ was added at a cost of £7,500.

In 1934 a new block containing a reading room and offices was added to the rear of the building, facing Dorcas Street. This was designed by the original architects for the church, by then known as Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, who achieved “complete conformity of style between the main building and the new block.”

The construction of First Church of Christ, Scientist had marked the establishment of the church in Melbourne and was followed by the building of the Second Church in Camberwell in 1936 and the Third Church in Elsternwick in 1930. By the 1970s there were 57 churches and societies in Australia.

COMPARISON:

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne is significant as the first church building of the Christian Scientists in Victoria and as a rare example of twentieth century classicism used for a religious building in Victoria. As such, it is difficult to find close comparisons. The National Trust publication *Victorian Churches* also categorises the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Camberwell as ‘Neo-Grec’ in style, but the two buildings are quite distinct. The Synagogue, Toorak Road, South Yarra is another example of twentieth century classicism but this building is

Renaissance Baroque inspired.

Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne Camberwell, 1937, H1196. An austere brick building of monumental proportions designed by Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, this is a distinctive local example of Northern European neoclassicism.

Synagogue, Toorak Road, South Yarra, 1928. Victoria's most prominent synagogue designed by Nahum Barnet in a twentieth century Baroque Classical style with a Corinthian portico and striking copper dome.

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1766 in the category described as a Heritage Place:

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne, 366 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, Port Phillip City Council.

EXTENT:

1. All of the building known as the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Melbourne marked B-1 on Diagram 601728 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L-1 on Diagram 601728 held by the Executive Director being the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 8246 Folio 603.

Dated: 3 December 1998.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 41 7 January 1999 p.36]

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/>