City of
STONNINGTON

Former Baptist Church

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra

Name:	Former Baptist Church	**Review Date:**	April 2024
Place Type:	Church (former)	**Architect/Designer:**	Thomas Watts
Grading:	Significant (HO17)	**Builder:**	Mr Brown
Extent of the Overlay:	To property boundaries	**Construction Date(s):**	1866, 1875-82



Former Baptist Church, 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, April 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Former Baptist Church at 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra, constructed in 1866 with rear wing and side porch constructed from 1875-1882.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- Rendered brick former church building constructed in a Classical Revival style
- Bluestone base to building
- Slate-clad gabled roof with shallow eaves and large front pediment
- Rectangular plan with later side entry porch and rear two-storey wing
- Symmetrical principal elevation with dominant front pediment
- Shallow projecting front porch with infill arch, masked keystone, side pilasters, central pier and stairs
- Rows of modillions to front pediment and cornice

- Panelled pilasters with reeded capitals
- Tall arch-headed windows to front and side elevations with multi-paned glazing featuring stained glass roundels and borders.

The glazed boundary fencing, landscaping within the front setback and the small infill between the side porch and rear wing do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The Former Baptist Church at 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra is of local historical, representative (architectural) and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra has strong associations with the initial phase of European settlement of South Yarra in the 1850s and 1860s and was amongst the first churches built to service the spiritual needs of the early local community. The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra remains substantially intact to clearly demonstrate this initial phase of development in the City of Stonnington and the importance of religious institutions to the population at this time (Criterion A).

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra is a fine and substantially intact representative example of a Classical Revival style church building. The former church building displays typical characteristics of the Classical Revival style, including a simple rectangular plan form with slate-clad gabled roof and shallow eaves, symmetrical principal elevation with large front pediment and projecting front porch, tall arch-headed windows and panelled pilasters with reeded capitals (Criterion D).

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra is an assured and well-executed example of a Classical Revival style church built to a design by architect Thomas Watts. The refined detailing, including the dominant front pediment with rows of modillions, decorated pilasters and masked keystone to the projecting front porch and multi-paned arch-headed windows with stained glass roundels and borders, presents a highly resolved expression of this architectural style, creating an imposing form within the commercial streetscape (Criterion E).

Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (2009):

10 Community and Culture

-10.2 Worshipping.

Place History

The Former Baptist Church at the corner of Chapel Street and Wilson Street, South Yarra was built in 1866, replacing a timber chapel which had been constructed in 1857 on an adjacent site in Chapel Street (S&M 1860; *The Age*, 10 Sept 1938:24; *The Centenary of the South Yarra Baptist Church*:2). A building committee for the Church formed in 1865 and instructed architect Thomas Watts to prepare plans for a larger brick church. They accepted the tender of Mr Brown, builder, to construct the building (*Australian News for Home Readers*, 23 June 1866:13). The foundation stone of the Classical Revival Style rectangular gabled-roof church was laid on 22 May 1866 (*Australian News for Home Readers*, 23 June 1866:13) and the church was opened in November that year (*Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran & South Yarra Guardian*, 24 November 1866:3).

A perspective drawing of the proposed church, and a photograph which shows the church soon after construction, show that the church was originally constructed of face brickwork (Figures 1, 2 and 3). It is recorded in M Lewis (ed), *Victorian Churches* (1991) that the chapel was ‘enlarged and improved

between 1875 and 1882' and this may indicate that the two-storey section at the rear of the building and a porch on the south side – both evident in a Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Plan (MMBW) of 1896 – were constructed in this period (Figure 4). It is likely the face brickwork was rendered and other detailing changes were made at this time.

A cast iron picket fence with bluestone base which lined the Chapel Street frontage, evident in a photograph of c1910 (Figure 5), was removed prior to c1949 (Figure 6 and 7).

The church continued to house the Baptist congregation for just over a century, reaching a peak membership of 255 people in 1905 (https://southyarrabaptist.church/members-guide/history/). In the late 1960s the church moved to a new location in Surrey Road, South Yarra and the Chapel Street church was sold and used for commercial purposes (S&M). The building is presently in use as a hospitality venue, Bridie O'Reilly's Chapel Street.

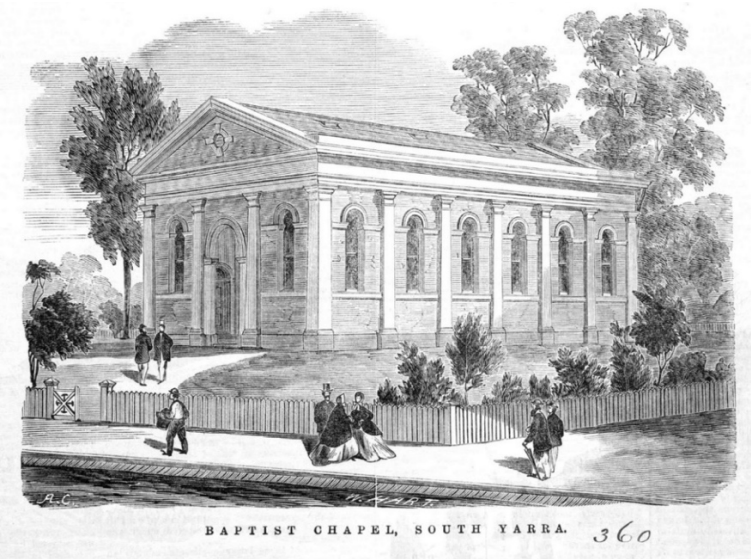


Figure 1. Baptist Chapel, South Yarra, Walter Hart, engraver, 1866 (Source: State Library of Victoria)

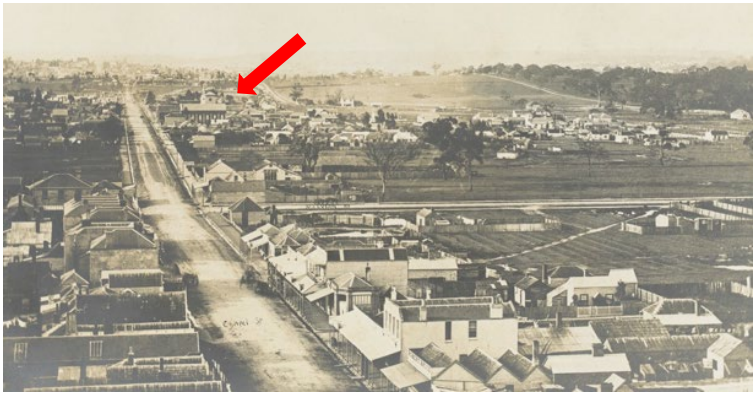


Figure 2. Chapel Street Prahran, looking north from the Town Hall, dated c1864, however likely c1866, after construction of the Baptist Church (indicated) (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 3. Detail of Figure 2, showing the Baptist Church soon after construction (Source: State Library of Victoria)

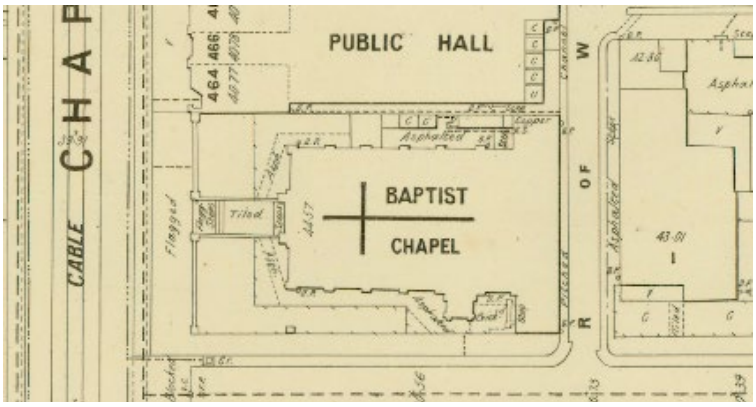


Figure 4. MMBW Detail Plan No 952, City of Prahran, 1896 (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 5. Baptist Church South Yarra, c1910, N J Caire (Source: Stonnington History Centre).



Figure 6. Baptist Church South Yarra, Caldwell, c1949 (Source: State Library of Victoria).

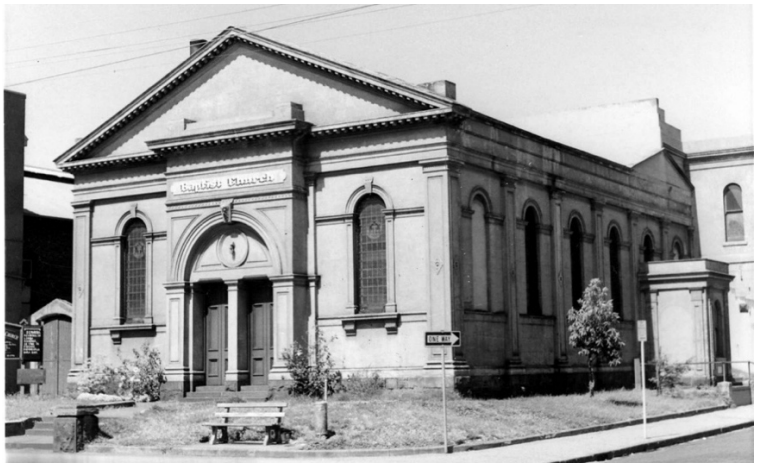


Figure 7. Baptist Church South Yarra, John Collins, c1963-1967 (Source: State Library of Victoria).

Description

The Former Baptist Church is located on the north-east corner of the junction at Chapel Street and Wilson Street, south of the main intersection of Chapel Street and Toorak Road and the railway line between South Yarra and Hawksburn stations. Situated in a commercial precinct, the building faces Chapel Street and is set back from the established building line behind a forecourt.

Set on a bluestone base, the rendered Classical Revival style building is of rectangular plan, with slate-clad gabled roof, large front pediment and a shallow central porch which projects beyond the symmetrical principal elevation towards Chapel Street. Accessed by a central flight of stairs, the porch incorporates a large infilled arch with masked keystone, supporting side pilasters and a central rectangular supporting pier. Tall arch-headed windows flank the central entry porch and alternate with pilasters along the side elevations. Rows of modillions line the front pediment and cornice while side entablatures, below shallow eaves, are undecorated. Windows have multi-paned glazing and feature stained glass roundels and borders. Pilasters are panelled with reeded capitals. At the rear, a parapeted two-storey red brick wing, with corrugated metal roof, bluestone base and render to the south side only, adjoins the main gabled-roof building. A parapeted porch, with infilled openings, projects from the rear of the south side of the building and a small infill section has been added between this and the rear two-storey building.

Key Features:

- Rendered brick former church building constructed in a Classical Revival style
- Bluestone base to building
- Slate-clad gabled roof with shallow eaves and large front pediment
- Rectangular plan with later side entry porch and rear two-storey wing
- Symmetrical principal elevation with dominant front pediment
- Shallow projecting front porch with infill arch, masked keystone, side pilasters, central pier and stairs
- Rows of modillions to front pediment and cornice
- Panelled pilasters with reeded capitals
- Tall arch-headed windows to front and side elevations with multi-paned glazing featuring stained glass roundels and borders.



Figure 8. Principal elevation to Chapel Street (Source: GJM Heritage, April 2024).



Figure 9. Side elevation to Wilson Street with later side porch and rear addition (to right of image) (Source: GJM Heritage, April 2024).



Figure 10. Rear elevation with later side porch and two-storey rear addition – note more recent infill between porch and rear wing (Source: GJM Heritage, April 2024).

Intactness and Integrity

The Former Baptist Church at 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra remains highly intact to its early two phases of construction (1866 and 1875-82) in its form and detailing. Despite change to commercial use – including its current use as a hospitality venue – the place retains a high degree of integrity as a nineteenth century Classical Revival style church.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Planning Practice Note No. 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018), modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra has strong associations with the initial phase of European settlement of South Yarra in the 1850s and 1860s and was amongst the first churches built to service the spiritual needs of the early local community. The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra remains substantially intact to clearly demonstrate this initial phase of development in the City of Stonnington and the importance of religious institutions to the population at this time.

City of
STONNINGTON

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

N/A

CRITERION C: *Possession to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

N/A

CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra is a fine and substantially intact representative example of a Classical Revival style church building. The former church building displays typical characteristics of the Classical Revival style, including a simple rectangular plan form with slate-clad gabled roof and shallow eaves, symmetrical principal elevation with large front pediment and projecting front porch, tall arch-headed windows and panelled pilasters with reeded capitals.

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

The Former Baptist Church, South Yarra is an assured and well-executed example of a Classical Revival style church built to a design by architect Thomas Watts. The refined detailing, including the dominant front pediment with rows of modillions, decorated pilasters and masked keystone to the projecting front porch and multi-paned arch-headed windows with stained glass roundels and borders, presents a highly resolved expression of this architectural style, creating an imposing form within the commercial streetscape.

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

N/A

CRITERION G: *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing cultural traditions (social significance).*

N/A

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a period, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Stonnington's history (associative significance).*

N/A

City of
STONNINGTON

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the property remain in the Heritage Overlay as an individual Heritage Place known as *Former Baptist Church* (HO17).

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) to the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External paint controls *Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?*	No
Internal alteration controls *Is a permit required for internal alterations?*	No
Tree controls *Is a permit required to remove a tree?*	No
Solar energy system controls *Solar energy system controls apply?*	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions *Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?*	No
Victorian Heritage Register *Is this place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?*	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted *Can a permit be granted to use for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?*	No
Aboriginal heritage place *Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the* Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?	No
Incorporated Plan *Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?*	No

Extent of Overlay

No change. Heritage Overlay extent to remain to the property boundaries.

Previous Assessment

Prahran Conservation Study, Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983

City of
STONNINGTON

References

Australian News for Home Readers.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006.

Lewis, Miles (ed), *Victorian Churches, their origins, their story and their architecture*, 1991.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No 952, City of Prahran,1896.

Nigel Lewis and Associates, *Prahran Conservation Study*, 1983.

Sands and McDougall Directories (S&M), various dates.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.

State Library of Victoria, picture collection.

Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran & South Yarra Guardian.

The Age.

The Centenary of the South Yarra Baptist Church, 1854-1954, 1954, National Library of Australia, accessed via https://southyarrabaptist.church/members-guide/history/.