

HERITAGE STATEMENT

236 CASHEL STREET – ST PAUL’S TRINITY PACIFIC



PHOTOGRAPH C2004

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

St Paul's-Trinity-Pacific Presbyterian Church is listed in the Christchurch City Plan as a Group 1 protected heritage item. It is also registered by the Historic Places Trust as a Category I Historic Place.

Situated on the corner of Madras and Cashel Streets St Paul's was built in 1877 and is of high heritage significance. This is reflected in the heritage values discussed below.

St Paul's-Trinity-Pacific Presbyterian Church is of historical and social significance. The first St Paul's Church was built on a site fronting Madras and Lichfield Streets and architect Samuel Farr was responsible for this first timber dwelling.

In 1871 the Trustees purchased the neighbouring section fronting Cashel Street, and in 1873 the present site of the church on Madras and Cashel Streets. A competition for the new church was launched in 1873 when the old church was too small for the Presbyterian congregation. The building was required to be in permanent materials, and again Farr was involved when his Gothic design was announced the winning entry. However, financial constraints meant Farr's Gothic vision was never carried out, and it was not until three years later that he was asked to start with a fresh design.

Farr then produced plans for a large classical inspired timber church, yet the timber materials could not be procured for some time so they decided to pay slightly more and have the building constructed in brick.

The new St Paul's was opened on 28 October 1877 and accommodated up to 1200 people. The church was so well attended that people even had to sit on the pulpits during the morning and evening services.

St Paul's functioned as a congregational Presbyterian Church for 92 years until it merged with the Trinity-Pacific Church in 1969. This merger was not uncommon for its time and many Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches were uniting throughout New Zealand.

St Paul's has cultural and spiritual heritage value with a long history – 109 years- as a place of Presbyterian worship in Christchurch. It therefore has strong connections to the community consciousness and way of life of many Presbyterians in the City, and remains so to this day.

Architectural and aesthetic significance relate to the architect Samuel Charles Farr (1827-1918) who migrated to Canterbury in 1850. Interestingly he landed in New Canterbury quite accidentally when his ship the 'Monarch' was blown off course. He stayed and settled in Canterbury, at Akaroa, four months before the arrival of the First Four Ships. While Farr's architectural qualifications have never been proven as such, his clients, commissions and many competition successes are testament to his ability in design and architecture.

Farr was obviously a favoured architect for the Presbyterian Church, having been commissioned to design all the churches for them in Akaroa, Lyttelton, Kaiapoi, Leeston as well as three in Christchurch. Farr also designed many commercial buildings and hotels within central Christchurch, as well as George Moore's homestead at Glenmark, North Canterbury.

Although Farr's initial plans for St Paul's had been a Gothic design, his final classical design had mainly been due to a few changes in the pitch of the roof, fenestration, and dimensions. The classical design was influenced by the Reverend Elmslie who saw the classical style as being more suitable style for the acoustics of the church, as well as the cheaper option. The features such as the domes and classical motifs are quite a blend of several styles including Tuscan, Roman Doric, Doric.

St Paul's has contextual significance in relation to other heritage listed places along Cashel Street and also the proximity to Latimer Square. St Paul's is also within the proximity of Christchurch's most famous classical-designed church – the Catholic Cathedral on Barbadoes Street.

Archaeological significance is possible on this site as pre-1900 human activity is known to have been present and active. Therefore the site has potential to hold archaeological evidence

REFERENCES:

CCC heritage files and plans

May, J – St Paul's-Trinity-Pacific Presbyterian Church: A brief history – draft for St Paul's Conservation Plan.

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