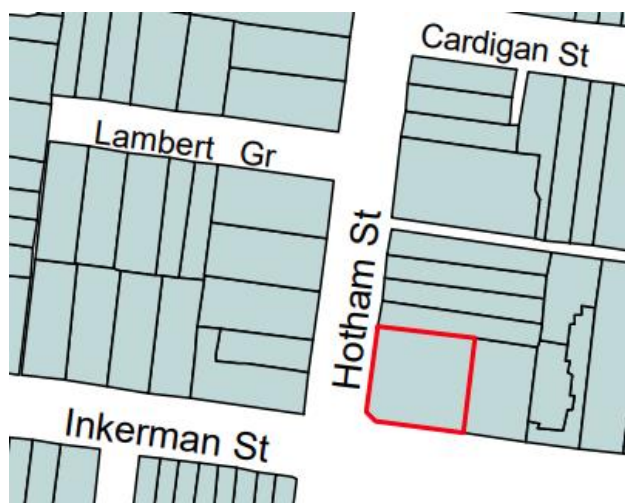
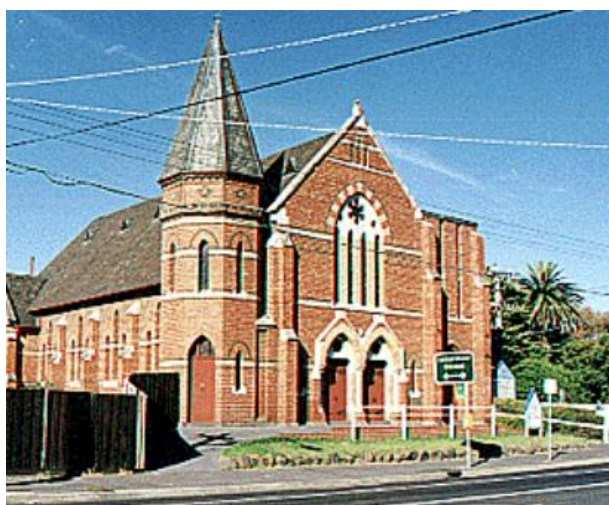


# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** Congregational Church  
(Former)  
**Other names:** Holy Trinity St Nicholas Church

**Citation No:**  
33



**Address:** 72 Hotham Street, St Kilda East

**Heritage Precinct:** Not applicable

**Category:** Religion: Church

**Heritage Overlay:** HO152

**Style:** Victorian: Gothic (Church)

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1887-88

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** Beasley & Little

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

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## Significance

### *What is significant?*

The former Congregational Church at 72 Hotham Street, St Kilda East built in 1887-88 to the design of architects, Beasley and Little and the c.1954 Kindergarten addition is significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The former Congregational Church at 72 Hotham Street, St Kilda East is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### *Why is it significant?*

The former Congregational Church is historically significant as an example of an early independent church, which demonstrates the wide range of religious groups established in St Kilda during the nineteenth century. (Criterion A)

The former Congregational Church is aesthetically important as a fine and intact Gothic Revival in full polychrome brick with Oamaru stone dressings, which is notable for the complex brick and stone patterning. Other distinctive features are the octagonal turret with spire and the lancet arched west window enclosing a smaller rose window in the spandrels surmounting two entry doors, also with lancet arches. Situated on a prominent corner, it is a landmark building within St Kilda East. (Criterion E)

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The former Congregational Church is of social significance for its role as a place of worship in the community since 1888. (Criterion G)

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## Thematic context

### Victoria's framework of historical themes

8. Building community life: 8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

### Port Phillip thematic environmental history

8. Community life: 8.1 Spiritual life

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## History

### Congregational Church

Among the early independent churches in Victoria was the Congregational Church. Its parishioners and interests spread to St Kilda East in the 1860s accompanied by the desire for a purpose-built meeting place.

A timber church was erected in 1868 in Westbury Street on the western side between Inkerman and Carlisle streets on land that had been donated by the Hon. George Rolfe, a State parliamentarian. The building was relocated in 1885 to the present site at the north east corner of Hotham and Inkerman streets, which had been purchased for the purpose of erecting a new church. The new site had frontages of 100 feet to Hotham Street and about 166 feet to Inkerman Street. It was part of portion 161A, which had been purchased from the Crown by J. Sutherland and had in part, been subsequently acquired by E. Watson.

A Church Land and Building Committee requested submissions for the design of a new church in 1886. The design of architect Hillson Beasley (prepared jointly with John Little), and who later became Chief Architect of the Western Australian Public Works Department, was chosen as the 'most suitable'.

Tenders for the new church were called on the 1 June 1887 and James Potter was duly appointed. The building was described as:

*...English style...brick with Oamaru stone dressings...a turret in front, and single transepts on either side. Ultimately a spire of 100 ft in height will be erected...accommodation...for 380 persons...complete cost, about 2,500 pounds...*

The church opened in May 1888. An organ, built by Fincham in about 1870, and had been hired by the congregation in April 1886 for the original timber chapel, was purchased in 1890 was re-installed in the new church. It was a single-manual chamber organ of six stops (Bomford).

The church played an important role in ministering and supporting the local community. During the 1890s economic depression church members tried to help the poor and unemployed at a time when the church itself was in financial difficulty and the members less able to donate money. The women collected money for the unemployed, held a concert to buy fabric for the poor to make clothes and in mid-1894 started a soup kitchen, which opened three times a week. The following year, they extended their efforts by providing lectures, concerts and social evenings for the unemployed. In addition, they organised fairs to raise money for the church. One of these was held in the grounds of Ripponlea. A scheme of district visitation was also embarked upon whereby six women and one man visited poor areas, offering advice and financial assistance when possible (Bomford).

Changes to the property occurred from time to time, the most significant being the subdivision of the land and sale of the block on which the Sunday School stood to provide funds for alterations to the Church. The rear of the Church was converted to a hall with a kitchen and toilets and in the body of the Church, the furniture and organ were relocated. Accommodation was reduced to 150 people.

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In 1954, an addition to the rear of the Church designed by Hudson, Stevenson and Howden and built by H.G. Jacobs and Son, made provision for a Sunday school kindergarten. It was named the Stephenson Sunday School Kindergarten in honour of the longest serving minister.

Like many other churches the congregation began to decline in the post-World War II period. In 1977 most Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations joined the newly created Uniting Church. After voting twice against Church Union, this was the last Victorian Congregational church to vote in favour of Union. When the Union came into effect, the church had eighteen members. The Reverend John Woodruff concluded his ministry at St Kilda East Congregational Church at the end of 1977 and the Reverend J. Villiers Mills, the minister at St George's Presbyterian Church, became the minister of the new East St Kilda Uniting Church parish, which consisted of Windsor and East St Kilda Congregational Churches and St George's (Bomford).

The appointment of the Reverend John Bottomley to the parish in the 1990s resulted in a new initiative, the Centre for Creative Ministries, which was based at the former Congregational church. An agency of the East St Kilda Uniting Church parish, it created worship, faith development and community programs that relate to theology and the arts (Bomford). The last service was held at the church in 1996. After this the Fincham organ was sold and removed from the church by 2002.

## Holy Trinity St Nicholas Church

Towards the end of the Second World War, many Russians Catholics displaced by the war refused to return to Russia fearing reprisals by the communist regime. This resulted in a considerable number of Russian refugees in Europe. Thousands of these refugees were assembled in refugee camps, especially in Germany and Italy and towards the end of 1950 many refugees settled in other countries, such as the United States, Canada, Argentina, Chile, and Australia (Holy Trinity website).

Fr. George Branch (Brianchaninoff), M.I.C., was ordained in July 1944, and soon began working with the Russian refugees in Italy. Fr. George was then sent to London where he lived until 1956, before coming to Australia in 1957 (ibid).

Fr. George first settled in Sydney, where he assisted Russian migrants (many coming from China) to settle in their new home country who during certain periods came in the hundreds, often meeting them at the ports of entry. Most of them did not speak English and found it difficult to find jobs or lodging (ibid).

While Fr. George worked in Sydney, Fr. Andrew Katkoff worked in Melbourne performing the same role. When Fr. Andrew was called to Rome to be consecrated Bishop for the Russian Catholics, Fr. George moved to Melbourne in 1960. Fr. Andrew helped Fr. George to establish the Russian Catholic Centre with the support of then Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Carboni, and financial help from the Chinese Congregation (ibid).

With the help of Russian friends, Frs. Andrew and George established the Chapel of Saint Nicholas in a large house in Kew and began to celebrate Divine services there in October 1960. Some icons were brought from China, some were later acquired by Fr. George in Australia and in Europe. In 1992 a hall with a capacity of fifty people was built on part of the property (ibid).

In 2011 the Russian Catholic congregation moved to the former Congregational Church where they established Holy Trinity St Nicholas. In 2015 the Fincham organ was re-acquired, restored and reinstalled in the church (ibid).

## References

Barnes, Jack, 'A History of the East St. Kilda Congregational Church', East St. Kilda Uniting Church Parish Council, 1995.

Bomford, Janette, 'The spirit of St Kilda: Places of worship in St Kilda'.

<http://skhs.org.au/SKHSchurches/churches.htm>, viewed 19 July 2021

Cooper, John Butler, *The History of St. Kilda from its first settlement to a City and after 1840-1930*, City of St. Kilda, Melbourne, 1931, vol. I, pp. 353-54



Holy Trinity – St Nicholas Church website: <https://www.stnich.org/history-and-links> (viewed 19 May 2022)  
Parish Plan of Prahran, Borough of St. Kilda. SLV 820 bje.

Lewis, Miles (ed.), *Victorian Churches. Their origins, their story and their architecture*, National Trust, 1991, p.85  
National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Fincham & Hobday Organ classification (B6113)

*Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) Version 1, July 2020*

Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), VPRS 7882/PI Unit 406

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## Description

A prominently situated incomplete late polychrome brick church in the Gothic Revival mode with Oamaru stone dressings consisting of a nave, transepts placed beneath transverse gables and an octagonal turret. The façade has a lancet arched west window enclosing a smaller rose window in the spandrels surmounting two entry doors, also with lancet arches, the visual effect of the complex polychrome brick and stone patterns being the most arresting feature of the design.

The Fincham organ has been re-installed in the church. It has one manual, six speaking stops, one coupler, and mechanical action.

The building is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

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## Comparative analysis

The former Congregational Church compares with St Georges Presbyterian Church (Citation xx) and the St Kilda Uniting Church (Citation xx). At the State level, it compares with many earlier polychrome churches but particularly with the former Wesley Church (Brunswick), the former Congregational Church (Hawthorn) and the former Wesley Church (Ballarat).

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## Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

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## Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with external paint controls.

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## Primary source

City of Port Phillip, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2022

## Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

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## Other images

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