



Baptist Historical Society of Queensland Newsletter

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Free to members

Membership: \$5 per annum
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IN THIS ISSUE

This issue is mostly taken up with edited versions of the presentations made at the last public meeting of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland held on Monday June 1 at the Salisbury Baptist Church. The topic was "Baptist buildings for service and worship." A small but interested audience received the informative remarks of our visiting speakers with great appreciation.

We have also had some enquiries about the meeting from people who were not present. We did not take audio recordings of the presentations, but both speakers have consented to having their material published in this form. We express our sincere thanks to them for their original presentation and for the added kindness in making their work available to our members and to a wider audience in this way.

Both of the papers deserve careful reading. Mr Smith's burden is for a more informed awareness of the importance of good architectural and theological practice in the erection of church buildings, given that these buildings represent such an important part of our Christian life and have such an influential bearing upon us. Coming from one who has been so closely involved in both architecture and the church, this appeal is backed by considerable authority.

Mr Hobbs' paper provides a substantial start for the kind of approach sought by Mr Smith. In it, we have outlined for the first time a way of categorising Baptist architecture in Queensland. Since it is well informed both from the point of view of architecture and theology, it should provide an excellent basis for understanding where we have come from, and hence, it should be a useful guide for future development whether for an individual project or on a broader scale.

Overall, this is a good example of how historical research can be harnessed with other disciplines to serve the church at large at a most practical level as well as in more abstract terms. It is to be hoped that others will take up these issues and develop them further.

BAPTIST CHURCHES - THEN AND WHEN

Mr Ray S. Smith, ARAIA, Dip.Arch.(Q)
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Good architecture has always been one of my great delights - not so much for the sake of the building structure, but for the effect buildings can have for the enjoyment and the betterment of the people who occupy and use them. People are always the important concern.

Although I had little understanding or interest in history at school, it is clear that we do need to learn from the past. We need to stop and consider what has been achieved and what errors need to be avoided so that we can proceed with confidence in our own programmes, knowing that we have made the right decisions.

Every church that is thinking of a building programme should once again read what God had to say through the prophet Haggai:

The Lord almighty said to Haggai, These people say that this is not the right time to rebuild the temple. My people, why should you be living in your well-built houses while my temple lies in ruins? Don't you see what is happening to you? . . . Now go up to the hills and get timber and rebuild the temple and I will be pleased and will be worshipped as I should be. I will be with you - that is my promise." (ch 1)

Consider our earlier church buildings - those narrow timber-framed and sheeted structures with steel bolts across to stop the wall from falling out, narrow casement windows, tiny front porches, and timber boards behind the pulpit! These were typical of churches of many denominations. They were built to a style familiar in England but constructed here, not in stone, in the only available materials.

It was hardly the style most suitable for the driest continent on earth with its vast expanses and scattered population. Also many earlier church buildings were poorly suited to meet the needs of their district, and this often resulted in restricted growth and inability to cater for those outside the church.

However, what some of our early congregations achieved was truly amazing. Take the Brisbane City Tabernacle built in 1890 at a cost of 13,700 pounds. The cost of a good home then was about 300 pounds! It is instructive to make comparisons with today's prices. How many of today's churches are forty times the cost of a dwelling?

My personal concern is that a great deal of the effort of building committees has skirted around the basic issues. It is necessary to ask the fundamental question, "What is the purpose and function of our church in this district?" It is not enough to make the assumption that the fixed unchanging and sole purpose of the church building is to put the faithful on seats on the inside and keep the weather on the outside! If we are going to engage in a meaningful mission to the community, we need to look again at our buildings and their functions.

Simply stated, the function of the church building is to provide the best possible environment where people will find it easy to achieve

meaningful worship in meditation and study and where there can be christian fellowship and re-creation. That is, we must recover the concept that the church building is firstly a place of worship and secondly a house for fellowship and the use of the community.

Admittedly, it is a difficult thing to design for the complexity of people with so many differing needs, moods, cultures and activities. We must also take account of other factors such as location, climate, costs and legal requirements. To some extent, good design is subjective, and so there are many different ways in which the needs of a particular building programme could be met. Amongst the variety of styles and shapes of buildings that have been erected over the years, some have been successful and others have been failures.

From my experience, I find that church people are often shocked to be asked, "What is the purpose of your building programme?" In the absence of a clearly defined answer, it is not surprising that there are many poorly designed buildings. Do we realise that a badly designed building can be a hindrance to the church's ministry in the community? Conversely, a well-designed church can be a valuable aid to our Christian witness and service. Buildings give a very permanent illustration of the desires and values of the people who have erected them. Robert MacGuire in his advice to planners of church buildings says,

If you are going to build a church, you are going to create a thing which speaks. It will speak of meanings and of values and it will go on speaking. And if it speaks of wrong values, it will go on destroying.

Therefore we should strive to make our buildings of lasting quality and that they make a worthwhile contribution to the community. However, we must remember that the building exists for the use of people rather than being a monument to some abstract concept of religion. It is an instrument whereby the pastoral and spiritual development of people can be performed in the most effective manner.

More than any other building programme, the fundamentals of church architecture should be based on truth and honesty in expressing its character, purpose and function. Church buildings should provide some inspiration to help our spirits rise above our ordinary lives. A well-designed place of worship expresses the values of the christian community with truth, faithfulness, love and with clarity and vigour. Therefore, it is able to communicate to God, to the church and to the world. So architects, theologians, pastors and sociologists need to tackle the design of church buildings within the context of the church's understanding of itself, its needs, its worship and its mission to society. In other words, the design of a church (like that of any other building) must start from an analysis of its theology as well as its relevance to human needs and activities. It is impossible to separate the architecture of a church from its social context, or from current developments in theology, worship and sociology.

There have been some lamentable examples of extravagant expenditure in church buildings. But if some better way of worship can be achieved by costly features (such as spires, sculpture or stained glass) then such expenditure is certainly not wasted. On the other hand, churches which go to the other extreme of spartan simplicity offer no appeal or

inspiration. They also fail to achieve the primary purpose of a church building. The sensual delight which is provided by decorative features is important to the extent that it makes the building more effective in its communication. It is important to note, however, that we should not try to accommodate too many elements and functions into our buildings for fear they become too cluttered and lose their unity.

We should also pay close attention to particular details in our design, such as the interior environment. For example, a long narrow nave or alternatively, a square or circular auditorium may reflect powerfully our concept of church life and experience. Either form may be quite satisfactory if it authentically expresses the church's self-identity. We ought to know our country, our people and their needs; we ought to know something of the spiritual calling of the community and build accordingly. What is important is not the majestic grandeur, gilt and opulence, or contrived simplicity, but the evidence of good church architecture that can be seen in the care and attention given to achieve an atmosphere of worship.

I have been involved with building programmes for forty or more churches, and I have inspected thousands of church buildings in many different countries. But it is still a pleasure on those rare occasions when my spirit thrills to be in a place which I know to be truly a house of worship.

BAPTIST CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN QUEENSLAND

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Thomson Adsett & Partners, Architects, South Brisbane

There have been over three hundred Baptist church buildings in Queensland in the one hundred and twenty eight years since the first one was erected in 1859. They have been built to meet the practical needs of Baptists meeting for worship but they have also been required to be buildings which were appropriate for the faith and worship of Baptists. The architecture of Baptist church buildings is found in the way that these buildings have been related to the faith and practice of Baptists.

The Wharf Street Baptist Church which was built in 1859 and the Jireh Particular Baptist Church (1862) were the first two Baptist church buildings in Brisbane. These two Churches which were separated by their theology and practice chose two contrasting architectural styles for their buildings. Wharf Street which was General Baptist built in a Classical Style whereas Jireh which was Particular Baptist in a Gothic Style.

The choice between Gothic and Classical was the main decision to be made in mid-nineteenth century church architecture. C. H. Spurgeon preferred Classical for his churches and defended this choice by referring to the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek and

that Classical was a Greek style. He opposed Gothic which had become the dominant church architecture in Britain and its colonies during the nineteenth century. Gothic was advocated by A. W. N. Pugin and the Ecclesiological Society in Britain as the only true Christian architecture. This movement was known as the Gothic Revival. It was believed that Gothic architecture was shaped in a Christian Age (Middle Ages) and expressed Christian doctrine in built form and that its presence could have a beneficial moral effect on the community. Classical was opposed because it took shape under pagan hands. However, these ideas were promoted mainly by Anglicans and Roman Catholics who looked back to the Middle Ages as the highlight of their tradition. As a non-conformist, Spurgeon would not have felt any such allegiance, and when he rejected Gothic, he rejected the ideas and beliefs that were associated with it. When Wharf Street and Jireh were built in two contrasting styles, architecture was used to represent the differences in their beliefs.

The illustrations of Wharf Street and Jireh show some of the differences between these two styles. Gothic was recognisable because of its steeply pitched roof and pointed gable end. It had buttresses and the tops of the windows and doors were pointed, whereas the Classical style had rounded tops to the doors and windows. The Classical facade consisted of a low flat triangle, called a pediment, sitting on pillasters, which were imitation columns attached to the walls. They are seen on both sides of the door and at the corners. The pitch of the roof is much lower than the Gothic roof.

The style and construction of these two buildings was a direct import from Britain with little adaptation to the local climatic conditions. The ventilators on top of Wharf Street were possibly a later addition. The steeply pitched roof of the Gothic building would have been more effective in heavy rain but would also have made the structure more susceptible to damage by high winds.

The 1880's was a boom period for the Queensland economy - its first. From 1880 to 1891, at least twenty-one Baptist Church buildings were constructed, compared with only seventeen from 1855 to 1879 and only five more to 1900. During this period, a definite architectural style for Baptist churches emerged. An adaptation of the Gothic style in a timber building had become the common style for church buildings amongst various denominations and Baptists also used this style.

Sandgate Baptist Church which was built in 1887 was a large timber Gothic church building, complete with a transept and spire. The congregation was criticised in the Queensland Baptist Jubilee of 1905 for the expense which they incurred. Inside it had an impressive exposed hammer-beam system of roof framing which was reminiscent of the tracery of Gothic ceilings. The transept was rarely, if ever, used again in a Baptist Church building in Queensland and a spire was rare in this vernacular Gothic style amongst any denomination. In Britain there had been a high-church component amongst Baptists who would have been at home in this setting and it may have been conceived under their influence.

Windsor Road Baptist Church (Red Hill) was built in the following year (1888) without a transept or spire, and was representative of the style which was commonly used by Baptists in Queensland during the nineteenth century. The illustration shows many of the characteristic features of this architecture. The windows, doors, roof and even the

ventilators were steeply pitched and pointed. The openings were arched by timber mouldings which imitated Gothic stone decorations and which also helped shed rainwater from the openings. Timber mouldings under the eaves also imitated Gothic stone details. The barge boards on the front facade were elaborated with fretwork. Detailed patterns and elaborate curves were repeated and symmetrically arranged. The lattice work on the gable has since been removed and a plain, straight edge to the barge board remains with the fretwork restricted to the lower sections. The rose window is patterned with coloured glass, but in many of the smaller churches a smaller circular ventilator was used.

The City Tabernacle Baptist Church which was built in 1890 by the Wharf Street congregation was a Classical style building. A large and significant building in Brisbane, its position on the hill and its tower ensured its prominence. The choice of the Classical style for their main building provides an insight into the nature of the involvement of Baptists in the community and affirmed the development of the Baptist Church into a significant institution in nineteenth century Queensland society. In scale and decorum it surpassed the Wharf Street building and it was the only major church building of any denomination in Brisbane that was built in the Classical style.

The building was designed by the architect Richard Gailey and, whilst being a work of late-Victorian eclectic neo-Classicism, it mostly reflects the style of the sixteenth century Italian Renaissance mannerism, particularly of Florence. The use of the corner pinnacles for vertical accent was a particularly Victorian element in its style.

The plan of the building was centralised and focused on a large central space. This contrasts with the linear plan which was common in Western church architecture. Baptists preferred not to be identified with the priest-laity relationship which was implicit in the linear plan; the vertical axis of the centralised plan, on the other hand, was sympathetic to the idea of a direct relationship between God and His people. In the large central space, the segmented seating focused on the pulpit and the Lord's Table - the Word and the Fellowship.

The Classical style of the building is interpreted in an excellent composition of its elements. In this composition, it is the facades and not the roof which dominate, and all the facades are composed of the same basic elements which are repeated for rhythm, balance and harmony. The fenestration pattern (windows) is repeated throughout, with some variations to emphasise the different storeys. The column-like elements (pillasters) are banded (rusticated) and give the appearance of bearing the load of the pediments and the roof at the corners. There are four fortress-like masses at the corners and the tower stands forward at one corner. Between these masses, each facade features a rose window with a pediment above it.

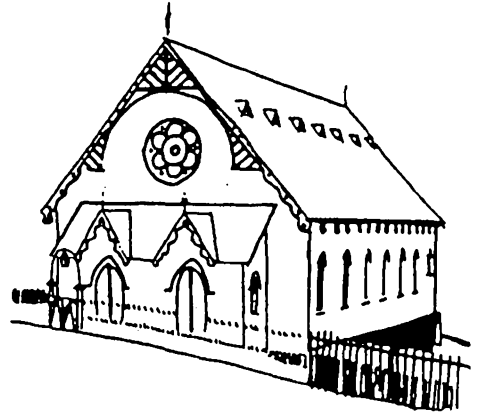
The architecture of the City Tabernacle was the exception and the pattern established at Windsor Road was the common Baptist church architecture up to the Second World War. There were a few exceptions to this pattern between the wars, but these were notable as exceptions. Two such exceptions were Silkstone Baptist Tabernacle (1928) which was Gothic in brick, and Greenslopes (1933) which had a facade with curves in the Art Deco style.



WHARF STREET
1859



VIREH PARTICULAR
1862

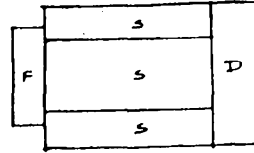


WINSOR ROAD
1888

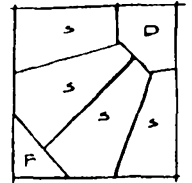


CITY TABERNACLE
1890

PLANS

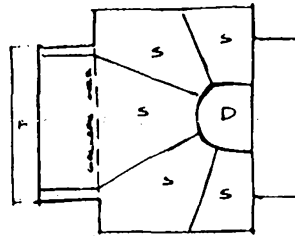


WINDSOR RD

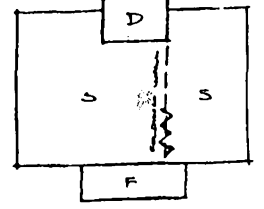


STAFFORD NTH

D - DALS
S - SEATING
F - FOYER



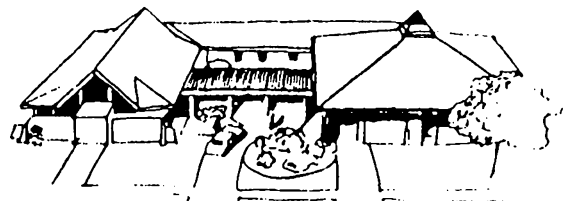
CITY TABERNACLE



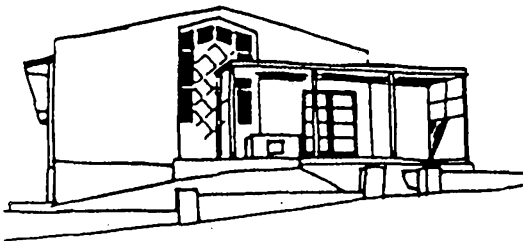
CALOUNDRA



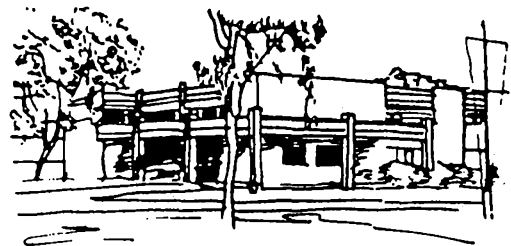
SANDGATE
1887



STAFFORD NORTH
1969-77



SALISBURY
1959



ENTRANCE

CALOUNDRA
c.1982

The architectural styles of the post-war period were a break from the pattern established in the nineteenth century. New materials and construction methods, such as portal frames, brickwork, asbestos cement and glass, were employed in the 1950s, and the appearance of the churches changed. Brighton (1958) and Salisbury (1959), which were designed by the young architect Ray Smith, were two such churches. However, the internal planning remained unchanged from the established pattern. But patterns of worship and church life were in transition and this was being signalled by the changes to the buildings. It was only as developments reached maturity in the late 1960s and 1970s that the internal planning and architecture of Baptist churches changed to reflect new patterns of worship and church life.

The Stafford North Baptist Church was a staged development with the first stage, built in 1969, used as a church but later as a hall and the second stage, built in 1977, was the final church building. It was the mature work of the architect Ray Smith. The plan of the hall is rectangular, and services were conducted from a dais at the side of the hall. Individual movable seats were arranged in a semi-circular pattern around this dais for the worship services. For the rest of the week it was used for other activities of the church. However, this use as a multi-purpose space was temporary. Soon a dedicated church building was erected which was to be used solely for worship services.

This two-staged development was a pragmatic solution to a common problem for new churches. It enabled the church's development to match the growth in resources, and it did not leave them with a better hall than the church, as has occurred in some places.

The plan of the worship centre was square. The entrance was at one corner, with the dais at the opposite corner. The seating was arranged in a fan-like pattern around the dais. The internal arrangements maintained the traditional Baptist focus on the pulpit which was integrated with the Lord's Table as one piece of furniture. The baptistery was no longer an embarrassment and was integrated into the rear of the dais, raised and clearly visible as a focus. The axis, reinforced by the corners of the square, captured the three main worship centres - pulpit, Lord's Table and baptistery - and the seating was permanently arranged around these focii. The interior space rose at the centre under the pyramid shaped roof. This gave volume to the space and a vertical axis to the building which complemented the diagonal axis.

The external form of the church and hall complex was well planned. The hall had a dignified but simple form when it was the only church building, but the worship centre was clearly distinguished from it as "the church" in the final arrangement. Effective use was made of reinforced concrete buttresses at the corners to visually resolve the forces imposed by the large pyramid-shaped roof. Large entry doors were recessed from the buttress to allow a driveway to pass under the roof, forming a porte-cochere. The two buildings were linked at the rear by a series of small class rooms and offices, and a courtyard was formed between them at the front.

Stafford North represents the result of one line of development during the post-war period which we can call "ordered renewal." The issue concerning the construction of the hall and the church was resolved and a staged-development was adopted. The changing external appearance of Baptist church buildings since the introduction of new

building materials has resulted in an integrated expression which incorporates a new interior arrangement with a church-like outward appearance. The worship service, though traditional, has changed and continues to develop. The role of the congregation has found clear expression in the seating arrangement. It is seated as a community gathered around the Word, the Table and the waters of Baptism.

Caloundra Baptist Church was built in 1982. It represents the result of a second line of development in the post-war period which we can call "radical renewal." In this development, the theological focus has been on the Church and the Holy Spirit. The issue of the nature of the church and its architectural expression in a building was opened up by this development. At Stafford North, traditional elements were re-arranged and some scope for external expression was opened up (e.g. roof form). But the response to a radicalization of the theology has been a move to a large multi-purpose space, as at Caloundra, where any indicators of a singular ecclesiastical function for the building have been removed.

The plan of the building was rectangular with a dais in the centre of one long side, and an operable wall beside it. Closing the operable wall placed the dais in the centre of a square auditorium. The whole space was multi-purpose, with stackable seating and there were no fixed worship elements in the auditorium. The pulpit was small and movable, and doubled as a lectern for the principal and teachers of the school which the church runs. The table for the Lord's supper is seldom on the dais, and there is no baptistery in the building as baptisms are conducted in public. The seating arrangement is flexible, but the dais location dictates a circular seating pattern.

The building was set in several acres of grounds which it shared with the church's primary school. The site planning was unfortunate, as the entrance road approached from the rear of the church building. In external appearance it differed little from a school assembly hall or the small commercial buildings in the area, though this was an architectural response that was compatible with the theology of the church. In external appearance, castle-like crenellations provided vertical relief from the horizontal bands of pressed metal tiles, facias and windows.

The building was seen by Baptists at Caloundra not so much as a "church" building, but as a building which the church uses. This embodied a belief of the nature of the church which Baptists have long held, but here it has found architectural expression. The one auditorium was utilised for a whole range of activities of the church, including its use as a school assembly hall. The underlying "un-churching" of the theology has been followed by the "un-churching" of the church building as well.

Baptists in Queensland have had contrasting architectural patterns from which to choose. In the 1880s, it was a choice between Gothic or Classical; in the 1980s, the choice is between a multi-functional or a dedicated building. Baptist Churches are guided in this choice by their theology and practice. In making these choices, they give architectural expression to their beliefs.

NOTE

Further copies of this issue are available from the BHSQ at \$2 posted.

ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, 7th November 1987 2-4pm

The annual meeting of the Baptist Historical Society for 1987 will take place at the Baptist Union Archives, Brunswick House, 225 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley on Saturday afternoon, November 7th at 2pm.

The annual report and financial statement will be presented. There will also be discussion concerning the future of the Society. In particular, there will be time to consider the way in which the purposes for which the Society was formed can be best of achieved, given the present level of interest and support.

If time permits, there will also be opportunity to do some practical work on the one of the current projects of the Society and to undertake some care of the archives.

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO ALL MEMBERS AND THOSE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THIS WORK.

Afternoon tea will be served at the conclusion.

Please enter by the rear door off Alfred & Esther Sts.

Looking for advice on how to care for your church's records? Send for the complete manual, THE SMALL ARCHIVE'S COMPANION, published by the Church Archivists' Society, PO Box 756 Toowoomba 4350 (Cost \$15)

MEMBERSHIP

Individuals, churches and other groups are invited to support the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland by becoming members. Membership subscriptions are the only regular source of finances. Members receive the BHSQ Newsletter, and are able to join in the Society's activities and have a good opportunity to contribute to its historical work.

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