
Moonta Mines Uniting Church, Fence and Domestic Building **CC:177**
(former Methodist Church)

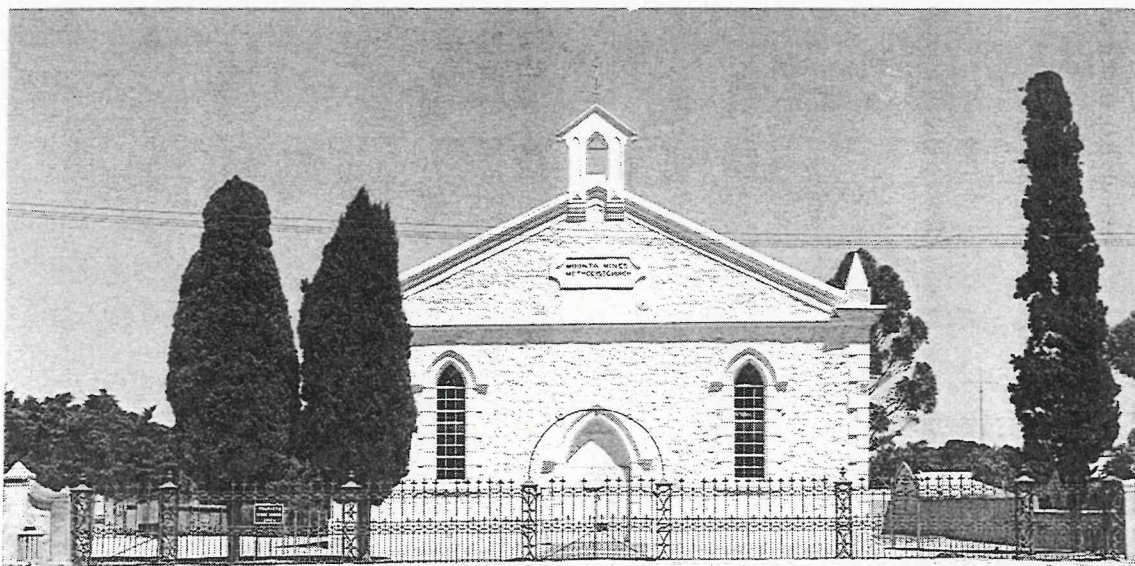
LOCATION

Address	557 Milne Street, Moonta Mines SA 5558
Land Description	Section 1721, Hundred of Wallaroo
Certificate of Title	1695/60

Owners	Uniting Church in Australia (SA) Property Trust, 33 Pirie Street, Adelaide SA 5000
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State Heritage Status	Registered, 26 November 1981	SHR File No	10114
Other Assessments	National Trust of SA, Classified (File No. 218)		

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DESCRIPTION

Large and imposing limestone rubble chapel in restrained Gothic styling, surrounded by an ornate cast iron fence. The building is only very sparsely ornamented, but is a dignified and impressively proportioned composition. The chapel is sited such that it closes the vista at the end of one of the major streets of the Moonta Mines township.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

The church is significant as the principal focus of Methodism in the Moonta Mines community, for its association with Captain H R Hancock, and as an excellent example of austere but elegant Wesleyan architecture. The church is within the Moonta Mines State Heritage Area.

HISTORY

A timber Wesleyan chapel was built at Moonta Mines in March 1863, within a year of the Moonta mine commencing work. The foundation stone of the new stone chapel was laid in August 1865 by newly appointed Captain H R Hancock. Intended to seat 750 people, the church was designed by P Kneale of Thebarton, and built of limestone rubble with brick quoins and arches, with cedar internal fittings. Completed in three months at a cost of £1,395, the church was officially opened on 26 November 1865.

In 1872 the church was expanded by the addition of an internal gallery, bringing its seating capacity to 1,250 people. When the three Methodist denominations amalgamated to become the Methodist Church in 1900, the Wesleyan chapel, as the largest chapel at Moonta Mines, became the Methodist church.

The community dwindled after the mines closed in 1923, and attendances at the church declined. After 1945 the Methodist Church no longer appointed a minister to Moonta Mines, but the building has remained in use for services on special occasions to the present.

References

- State Heritage Branch Files, File No. 10114
Drew, G. J. (ed.) 1991, *Discovering Historic Moonta, South Australia*, Department of Mines and Energy, DC of Northern Yorke Peninsula, p. 18
Hand, M. J. 1973, *Moonta's Monuments*, National Trust of South Australia, Moonta

MOONTA MINES METHODIST CHURCH

THE BEGINNINGS

On the 28th March, 1863, the Wesleyan Methodists opened a wooden chapel at Moonta Mines. It was soon found that this building was inadequate for the expanding population. Plans were made for a new building.

On the 7th August, 1865, the foundation stone of the present Moonta Mines Church was laid. This was a great occasion. Headed by the Moonta Mines Brass Band, a crowd of over 1,000 people marched to the present site. The Revs. C. Colwell and C.T. Newman conducted the ceremony. At the request of the Trustees, the stone was laid by Captain H.R. Hancock.

One of the difficulties before the Trustees was the fact that the land on which the Chapel was to be built was on mineral lease and the permission of the Government and the bosses of the Mines had first to be obtained.

At this time, there were thirteen 'class leaders' in the church and twenty nine Trustees.

The new building was to be 75 feet by 45 feet. It is of Gothic design, built of stone and brick quoins and arches. The floor had an incline of two feet and the internal fittings were of Cedar. Mr P. Kneale, of Thebarton, was the architect and the church was designed to hold 750 people.

The great day came on November 26th, 1865 when the new building was officially opened for worship. On that Sunday, the Rev. W. Taylor (visiting from California) was the guest preacher. The services on the second Sunday, 3rd December, were taken by the Rev. R.C. Flockart. On Monday, December 4th, 600 people joined in a tea meeting to celebrate the event.

The cost of the chapel was one thousand, three hundred and ninety five pounds and besides this, the debt on the old building was still one hundred and forty three pounds. Cash receipts at the opening ceremony amounted to five hundred and five pounds and money promised total four hundred pounds. The proceeds of the tea and collections were one hundred and twenty pounds.

EXTENSIONS AND ORGAN

On December 22nd, 1872, seven years later, the gallery was added. This called for special services. It was estimated that 1,400 people were present at the evening service, and as usual, this called for a Tea Meeting, presided over by Captain H.R. Hancock.

The chapel floor was lowered to form a level platform for the erection of the gallery which was designed to seat 500 people. At the same time, a recess was built behind the pulpit with a depressed arch, which was capable of holding a large number of singers, and also made room for a pipe organ which was shortly to be installed. These additions included a vestry built underneath the floor of the organ. A lobby was erected at the front interior of the chapel, and side porches were added at this time.

Cost of these alterations amounted to one thousand, one hundred and fifty pounds, the successful contractors being Messrs. Hague and Lake of Moonta.

The organ was officially used at the Special Opening Services held on the 16th December, 1889. A special Musical Service was held at 2.30 p.m. and Mr H. Stocker, of Kadina, presided at the organ at all services.

On Monday, the 17th, the usual Tea and Public Meeting took place (price of tea: one shilling adults, children sixpence).

A comment in the 'YP Advertiser' before the event reads: 'If the weather is not too hot there will no doubt be a large congregation'.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday School, and especially the Sunday School Anniversaries have always been of special interest to the members of the church. The Sunday School was formed in 1863 and at the 9th Anniversary Services there were fourteen officers, sixty teachers and four hundred and sixty four scholars.

They were great days. On the Easter Monday holiday, the schools from the three churches would combine and the 700 children, headed by the United Band, would march and then take tea in front of the chapel. Fourteen hundred people would be fed on these occasions.

By 1878 there were 649 scholars, led by 120 officers and teachers. As these are the combined figures for morning and afternoon services, the actual number of children involved is not known.

The foundation stone of the Sunday School Hall was laid on Monday, February 13th, 1882 by Mrs H.R.. Hancock. It had been decided that there would be no ornamentation in the building to add more expense. The Rev. C.T. Newman delivered an address on the importance of religious training in the home. The Yelta Brass Band played and the children sang with the usual tea following. The proceeds for the day were nearly fifty five pounds.

At the opening of the Hall on the 14th May, 1882 the Rev. G.E. Rowe preached at both morning and evening services.

During the opening services of the Hall, it was reported that three hundred and seventy six pounds had been received but one hundred and thirty eight pounds was still owing.

In 1900 the Primitive Methodist Chapel was adapted for Sunday School purposes. At the same time the Superintendent, Mr H. Lipson Hancock and staff, introduced the Departmental and Rainbow system of Sunday School teaching and for a number of years, the Moonta Mines Sunday School was the most modern and best run in the State.

The Anniversaries for which the School was noted, called for the erection in the Church of a platform from floor to ceiling extending out over the first three pews. It had to seat approximately one thousand people.

With the cessation of mining operations at Moonta Mines, the population decreased to such an extent that this modern Sunday School building was no longer required and was demolished. The working of the School was then centred in the present church hall. Kindergarten and Primary rooms were built and completed with all materials from the old classrooms.

THE GUILD

Early records show that the ladies of the Wesleyan Chapel formed a group of workers to help the Trustees liquidate the debt on the chapel. They went under the name of Lady Helpers of the Chapel.

In the year 1900 at the amalgamation of the three Churches, the combined group of women decided to call themselves the Moonta Mines Methodist Ladies Guild.

In 1914, because of the First World War they went into recess and helped in such groups as Red Cross, but during the ministry of Rev. J.A.H. Andrews, the Guild was again formed on the 20th April, 1920.

THE CHOIR

No history of the Moonta Mines Church would be complete without mention of the choir and singing for this was a major part of Church life.

The choir was first formed by Mr R. Kendal with Mr Henry Herbert playing the harmonium.

There was friendly rivalry between the choirs of the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyans. The Primitives thought 'Fiddler' Jim Richards, their choir leader, put them ahead of the Wesleyans. He had been born in Cornwall, had no formal schooling, but had a remarkable talent for music.

In 1889 the Wesleyans, largely through a generous gift from Captain H.R. Hancock, installed a two manual pipe organ. The pedal notes gave tremendous reinforcement to the bass singers who now felt ahead of their rivals. The Primitives were not dismayed, for they had in their ranks Samuel Browning, a bearded miner. They asserted that a chapel which had Sammy didn't want an organ with a box of whistles.

In the early 1900's, the choir had a competitive spirit and entered into many musical competitions with distinction.

FIGURES TELL THE STORY

Though figures do not tell the whole story, the figures below give some idea of the changing pattern of the Moonta Mines area and its effect on the life of the Church.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>S.S. Scholars</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Youth</u>
1874	305	633	106	
1879	315	649	120	
1898	112	414	44	22
1908	327	850	126	
1925	127	133	36	
1950	36	71	17	
1965	23	30	7	

Since the renovations were completed on the Sunday School, the Moonta Mines Church now has the largest Sunday School in the Copper Triangle Parish (Some 30 children attending weekly)

ODDS AND ENDS

- 1900 At the time of Methodist Union, the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists decided to worship with the Wesleyans. The Bible Christian Church was offered to the Institute Committee, but they declined the offer because the price was too high. The Primitive Church became the Sunday School. A ballot was held for choice sittings in the Church, and 425 were let.
- At this time it was decided to make an extension to the choir stalls.
- 1873 One hundred and sixty five pounds was collected from pew rents.
- 1892 The person pumping the organ received one shilling a Sunday. By 1915, the ringing of the bell was included for one pound five shillings a quarter.
- 1900 The Trustees appointed a committee to sit in the gallery to keep the boys quiet. Guilty members were to apologise to the Minister or legal action would be taken against them. In 1907, the committee was at work again. This time the guilty ones had to sign a form that they would behave, but in 1912 the Trustees decided they would have to make an example of some to try and keep order.
- 1910 A bell was to be erected in the hope of getting more people to Church.
- 1913 With declining population, it was proposed to leave this Church and transfer worship services to the Sunday School. It was thought that the Church building could be sold for one hundred pounds. The congregation voted 101 to remain and 55 to go to the Sunday School.
- 1916 Minister's Vestry built in Church. Widows were to be granted free sittings in Church if desired.
- 1920 Pew rents abolished.
- 1924 The Church erected its own power line to the town at a cost of one hundred and fifty nine pounds. People who used this line had to pay three pounds and three shillings to become a consumer.
- 1934 Sunday School and Church block to be surveyed.
- 1935 Much discussion about making Church land freehold.
- 1937 The Sunday School to be demolished.
- 1939 Parsonage sold.
- 1945 No minister appointed to Moonta Mines.
- 1961 The Church was not big enough to hold the crowd of people who returned for the Copper Centenary and the Hall had to be used to accommodate the overflow. Proceedings were amplified to the hall.

