

To: The South Australian Heritage Committee

From: Senior Historical Architect

Subject: REGISTER NOMINATION REPORT
UNITING CHURCH, (FORMER METHODIST CHURCH),
MAIN NORTH ROAD, AUBURN

Date: 19 May, 1982

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared following a request from the Uniting Church in Australia for financial assistance for restoration work to the church.

Historically, the Auburn Uniting Church is significant because of its association with the early history of Auburn in the 1850's and 1860's. The Bible Christians Chapel became Auburn's Methodist Church after Methodist Union in 1899 and later the Uniting Church in the mid-1970's.

Architecturally, the Auburn Uniting Church is significant for its simple Romanesque influenced facade, which is constructed of local slate, as well as for its attractive cedar gallery which contrasts with an otherwise austere interior.

Environmentally, the Auburn Uniting Church is a significant element in establishing the historic character of the streetscape of the town, which is noted for its mid 19th stone buildings.

The Integrity of the church is high with the exception of the unfortunate relationship between the gallery and the front and side windows of the church, and also the blocked up windows behind the altar.

The Auburn Uniting Church is on the National Estate Register and also on the Classified List of the National Trust.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Uniting Church, Main North Road, Auburn, be placed on the Register of State Heritage Items and that it be categorised A2, A3, H3.



(Barry G. Rowney)
SENIOR HISTORICAL ARCHITECT

19.5.1982

CAW:SK

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures Item UNITING CHURCH (FORMER METHODIST CHURCH), MAIN NORTH ROAD, AUBURN																																																																																																		
Age 1861	Theme	Office 6629-10999																																																																																																	
Period 1852-1883	Subject Events of Significance - Religious	Region Mid North																																																																																																	
Building Type Church	Style Mid Victorian/Romanesque	Status N.Tr. (C.L.) NER (21/10/80)																																																																																																	
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Component	Comment	Grading				
		E	VG	AG	FP	NA
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u>						
9. Continuity:	Contributes to the scale and character of the streetscape of the town and defines the southern boundary of the historic centre of Auburn.	*				
10. Local Character:	An important element in the town which is noted for the quantity and quality of its mid C19th stone buildings.	*				
11. Landmark:	Of some significance because of its location on the approach to the town.		*			
<u>INTEGRITY</u>						
12. Alterations:	Two rear arched windows blocked up. Unfortunate concrete block toilet block attached to rear wall.			*		
13. Condition:	Severe cracking has been only partly alleviated by addition of ties and struts. Salt damp.				*	
14. Compatibility:	Present use is original.	*				

Supplementary Information

15. Adaptation Potential: The building interior and exterior should be maintained and restored. The blocked up windows should be reopened.

16. Interpretation Potential: The building's interpretive role is probably limited to a passive streetscape function as part of the historic centre of the town.

17. Current Situation: Details of the restoration work to be carried out are not yet known, however it was obvious during inspection that extensive structural repairs will be required. The Church has applied for funds to do this work.

Evaluated By	Carolyn Wigg Reg. Architect	Annely Aeuckens Reg. Historian	Date
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Reviewed By	Ivar Nelsen	Date
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South Australian Heritage Committee Categorization	Date
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1.4.3.7/D3/Z1.001

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: UNITING CHURCH, MAIN NORTH ROAD, AUBURN

The township of Auburn was surveyed in 1849 and settled in 1850, coming into being around the same time as the "villages" of Mintaro, Watervale and Leasingham were established.¹ Apparently the future settlement of Auburn was located on land owned by Thomas Henry Williams in 1849, Williams being the General Manager of the Burra Smelters which had opened in the mid 1840's. "The township (of Auburn) itself was surveyed for him probably by Mr. Gavin Young ...",² in order to provide a stopping place for the numerous teamsters carting copper ore along the Gulf Road from Burra to Port Wakefield.³

In 1854, the Bible Christians, who were "By far the most virile Methodist group in the township ...",⁴ built the first church in Auburn. However, services were held as early as 1850, the founding year of the town, and thus the history of the Bible Christians in Auburn is intimately connected with the very beginnings of the town's history. By October 1859, the Bible Christians had a membership of 117 which must have comprised a sizable proportion of the town's (and district's) population, which only numbered 200 some 8 years later according to the South Australian Gazetteer and Road Guide of 1867. The small 1854 chapel proved to be adequate until, "On 1st July, 1860, a great revival broke out at Watervale and spread the next day to Auburn. It is recorded that at least 200 (in Auburn) were converted."⁵ "At the September quarterly meeting (of the Bible Christians) of 1860 the following resolution was recorded:- 'That this meeting expresses hearty and devout thanks to the Almighty God for the gracious outpouring of His Holy Spirit on the church during the past quarter whereby upwards of 200 souls have been added to our membership.' The church membership then stood at 281."⁶ A new, larger church, costing 1,028 pounds and seating 300 was built in front of the existing chapel, being opened on 21 and 22 October, 1861. The builders were Joseph Miller and William Threadgold, a carpenter who had come from Burra to live in Auburn. Five years later, in 1866, seating capacity was increased by 200 with the erection of galleries on three sides of the church. There is no indication of when construction of the new chapel began but it seems likely that it was commenced under the impetus of the "great revival" of 1860.

Auburn also had churches built by the other two Methodist groups; the Primitive Methodists constructed a chapel (date unknown) which was used as a Sunday-school hall after Methodist Union in 1899 until 1922. In 1926 it was sold to the Lutheran Church and was rededicated to St. John. The Wesleyans laid the foundation stone for their chapel on 30 December, 1866 and the official opening of the completed church was on 16 July, 1867. Although the Wesleyans built a church and parsonage (1868-69), "It would appear that the Wesleyan cause never really took root in Auburn: the Bible Christians had the stronger cause."⁷ After Union the church's cedar pulpit and railing together with the curved communion kneeler were transferred to the Bible Christian Chapel and the church itself was used as a Sunday school. In 1915 it was sold to the Roman Catholic Church who dedicated it to "Our Lady of Peace".

Thus, while both the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyans had churches and congregations in Auburn from the early years of settlement, only the Bible Christians' Chapel has had a continuous association, some 120 years, with Methodism - acting first as the Bible Christians' place of worship, then as the town's Methodist church until the late 1970's, and currently as the Auburn Uniting Church. The chapel was therefore associated with what appears to have been the strongest religious domination in Auburn for most of the nineteenth century and continued on as a major church in the town well into the present century.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Where the Gulf Road crossed the hills south of Clare new villages came to life, Mintaro and Watervale in 1849, Auburn and Leasingham in 1850." Clare, A District History, J. Noye, 1975, Pg. 20.
2. "At the time when there was much heavy cartage between the Burra-Mine and Port Wakefield by bullock-drays, Auburn was a favourite camping-place for teamsters, ..." Cyclopedia of South Australia, Vol. II, pg. 454.
3. Methodism in Auburn and District, from A Lecture given by the Rev. Ian Paull to the South Australian Methodist Historical Society in the Lade Memorial Hall, Wesley College, Adelaide, on Friday, 12 May, 1961. Pg. 4.
4. ibid Pg. 5
5. ibid Pg. 6
6. Australian Christian Commonwealth, 8 April, 1904, Pg. 13
Auburn Methodist Church Jubilee
7. I. Paull, Pg. 5

A. Aeuckens
REGISTER HISTORIAN
AA:SK

12 May, 1982



Auburn Uniting Church 10999