

WILLIAM PITT

ARCHITECT OF ST KILDA CITY HALL

William Pitt, the architect of St Kilda City Hall was born in Melbourne on 4 June 1855, the son of William Pitt and his wife Jane, who came to Victoria in 1853 from Sunderland, England. William attended Hofwyl School in St Kilda and then G. H. Neighbour's Carlton College and became an articled architect from 1875 with George Browne.

He began his own practice in 1879 and went on to win many prizes for his work. His most prolific time was during the boom period in Melbourne. He was always in demand as a theatre architect and worked on many of the popular theatres of the time, such as the Tivoli, the Royal and Her Majesty's. The redesigning of the Princess Theatre in Spring Street was considered his finest achievement. It was in the French Baroque style with a marble staircase, a handsome foyer, open balconies and the world's first sliding roof and ceiling.



William Pitt

When the boom ended Pitt designed office buildings in the west end of Collins Street, such as the Melbourne Stock Exchange (1888), the Oldfleet (1890) and the Rialto (1890) which were in Italian Gothic style with narrow arched windows, marble pillars, stone staircases and colourful mosaic work.

He was a Collingwood councillor and mayor and also a Legislative Council member for North Yarra from 1891–1904 and for East Melbourne from 1904–1910. He also held many important positions in Melbourne.

Pitt married Elizabeth Mary Liddy at St Peters Church, Melbourne on 23 October 1889. She died in 1943. His home was at 5 Trenery Crescent, Abbotsford. He died of cancer on 25 May 1918 and is buried in St Kilda Cemetery. He was survived by his wife, three daughters and a son.

D. Lobert

Municipal Heritage Residents of St Kilda 1857–2007

Main sources:

Cooper, J.B., *History of St Kilda 1841-1930*
Woo, C., *City of St Kilda*, 1993

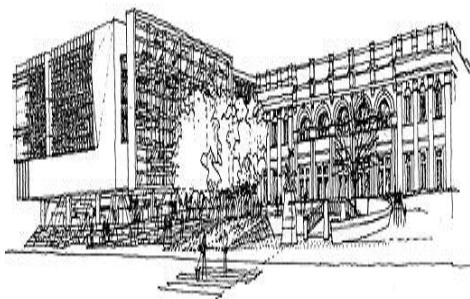


St Kilda City Hall

Village of St Kilda
Town of Melbourne
Lonsdale Ward 1842
City of Melbourne 1848

St Kilda
Municipal District 1857
Town 1860
Borough 1863
Three Wards 1868
City 1890

Port Phillip City
St Kilda Ward 1994



2007 Extension to St Kilda City Hall
image downloaded: www.portphillip.vic.gov.au

Recently, Port Phillip City demolished part of St Kilda City Hall to create more functional office space for council staff and to facilitate public access. The development was designed by architects Williams Boag and Kane Constructions are building it for an estimated cost of 20.09 million dollars.

F. Bader

GEORGE FINCHAM

ORGANBUILDER ST KILDA CITY HALL

Organbuilder, George Fincham was born in St Pancras, in London on 20 August 1828. His parents were Jonathan George and Jane Fincham. His father was also an organbuilder. George attended a private school until 1842 when he was apprenticed to the London organbuilder Henry Bevington and subsequently he was foreman for James Bishop & Son.

Fincham arrived in Victoria on 9 July 1852 and set himself up in business at 113 Queen Street, Melbourne as an organ tuner and repairer. In 1855 he built his home and a bluestone factory at Bridge Street, Richmond. He did not start organbuilding until 1862 and in the interim he worked as a builder at Spencer Street Station and for James Hardy & Co to earn money to stock and equip his factory. He won the first of his many awards in 1866 for the organ he built for the Melbourne Exhibition. In the same year the Victorian Government gave Fincham £100 to commence the organbuilding industry.



Fincham's Organ, St Kilda City Hall

The St Kilda City Hall organ officially opened on 24 August 1892 and there was a civic concert on 26 August 1892. The organ had 3 manuals, 49 speaking stops and an electro pneumatic action. It was destroyed in the fire of 7 April 1991. Fincham built other organs in Victoria. There are only 2 surviving organs which are as Fincham built them. They are St Joseph's, Warnambool and St Mary Star Of The Sea, North Melbourne.

Fincham married Margaret Tilley in 1858. They had four children, one son died in infancy, another son Frederick died in the wreck of the *Loch Ard*, a daughter was born in 1877 and his third son Leslie, became a partner of the firm in 1901. George Fincham died at Hawthorn on 21 December 1910, and the business passed to his son.

D. Lobert

St Kilda 1857–1890 by Dorothy Lobert

St Kilda was proclaimed a separate municipality from the City of Melbourne on 7 March 1857. Two days later, St Kilda residents elected seven honorary councillors to represent their interests. St Kilda Council's first meeting was held two days later in a room adjoining the Junction Hotel, which stood at the corner of Barkly and High Streets (now St Kilda Road).



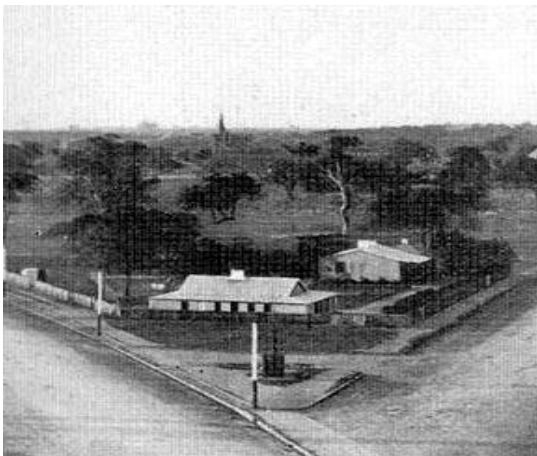
Junction Hotel, venue of first Council Meeting, March 1857

The Junction Hotel was among the earliest hotels in St Kilda. It was built in 1853 and made of stone and brick, and had stables with 20 stalls, and a harness and ostler's room.

Michael O'Shea was the first licensee from 1853 to 1862. George Sparrow became the licensee in 1862 and he renamed the hotel, the Grand Junction Hotel. In 1864 he moved to Sparrow's Hotel on the corner of Fitzroy and Barkly Streets.

The next licensee, William Johnston Sugden was at the hotel until 1869, and he was succeeded by Joseph Hyndman. In 1854 the architect Joseph R. Burns called for tenders for alterations and additions to the building. James Wood redesigned the hotel in 1888.

A few weeks after their first Council meeting, the Court House and Police Station directly opposite the Junction Hotel, became vacant. This building was an imported iron structure erected at St Kilda Junction in 1853/54, and St Kilda Council met there from April 1857.



Venue for Council Meetings, April 1857
First Courthouse and Police Station, St Kilda Junction

Meanwhile, a new Court House and Police Station was built at the corner of Barkly and Grey Streets, and council meetings were held there until the first Town Hall was built in 1860.

In early 1859, the council had surplus money from purchasing properties to enable Carlisle Street to meet Acland Street and the Esplanade. It was decided in May 1859 that Sydney W. Smith, the Town Surveyor should draw up plans for a new Town Hall and offices for the Municipality. It was to be built on land next to the new Court House and to be modest in design. The foundation stone was laid on 12 July 1859 by the Honourable Alexander Fraser M.L.C., who was the Chairman of the Council at that time. The building was almost square and measured 63 feet by 58 feet 6 inches. There was a façade of Roman Doric style with Italianate windows. It had two entrances, one in Barkly Street and the other in Grey Street. The entrances led to the Council Chamber which ran the whole length of the building and was flanked by four rooms which provided offices for the Town Clerk, the Town Surveyor, the Council Committee and the Contractors.



First St Kilda Town Hall, Cnr Barkly & Grey Streets, 1860-1890

After several years it became evident that as the St Kilda Municipality expanded the Town Hall was too small, and in 1887 a new City Hall was planned. The old Town Hall was sold to the Victorian Government on 29 September 1890 and was used as a Court House and Police Station until 1930. The building was then abandoned and allowed to become derelict until it was finally sold and demolished to build a block of flats.

In February 1883, and after much debate, St Kilda Municipal Council was able to reserve a site at the corner of Brighton Road and Carlisle Street to build a new City Hall. William Pitt's design was chosen in 1887. Messrs Clark and Smith were appointed contractors on 16 May 1888 and the building cost £23000. The original design had a tower 178 feet high and an elaborate roof structure but when it was eventually erected the boom years had passed and was followed by a land crash, so the tower and roof were not constructed. The building was made of red brick and eventually became covered in Virginia Creeper until the walls were rendered.

Since it was first built, St Kilda City Hall has had various alterations and extensions, both externally and internally. The portico was added 1923 – 1925 and the grounds enlarged in 1938. On 7 April 1991 a fire gutted the rear of the Town Hall and the Ballroom was completely lost. Much of the rest of the building had fire, water and smoke damage. The total cost of the damage was in excess of \$5 million. The greatest loss was in the art collection, the organ and many items of the social history of St Kilda.