

Blue Mountains Heritage Register Review

Heritage Inventory - 2016 Heritage Review

SHI Number

1170532

Study Number

SP019

Item Name: **Frazer Memorial Presbyterian Church and interior**

Location: **158 Macquarie Road, Springwood [Blue Mountains]**

Address: 158 Macquarie Road

DUAP Region: Sydney West

Suburb / Nearest Town: Springwood 2777

Historic region: Sydney

Local Govt Area: Blue Mountains

Parish:

State: NSW

County:

Other/Former Names:

Area/Group/Complex:

Group ID:

Aboriginal Area:

Curtilage/Boundary:

Item Type:

Group:

Category:

Owner: Religious Organisation

Admin Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Church

Former Uses: Church

Assessed Significance: **Local**

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of

Significance: Criterion (a):
The Frazer Memorial church is a striking example of Victorian philanthropy, financed entirely from the generosity of a prosperous Presbyterian businessman in Sydney and his widow, Elizabeth Frazer. It reflects significantly the rapid growth of the Scottish and Northern Irish Presbyterian community in the Lower Mountains in the last years of the nineteenth century.

The trees associated with the Frazer Memorial Church, the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and the Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) are of high significance at a local level for their historic association with the construction of the establishment of the Church.

The design of the Frazer Memorial Church is a tribute to the important architectural firm of Slayter and Cosh, later known as Spain and Cosh; Spain, Cosh and Minnet; and Spain, Cosh and Dods.

Criterion (c):

The Frazer Memorial Church features high quality stonework in its handsome Federation gothic design. The design of the church is completed by the fine sandstone tower with the tall copper spire. Its spire and its location in the centre of the commercial centre of Springwood make it an important landmark in the town.

The trees associated with the Frazer Memorial Church, the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and the Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) are of high aesthetic significance at a local level for their value as individual specimens and for

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their contribution to a complex of considerable value in the streetscape of Springwood.

The plantings associated with the 1941 manse- White Cedar (*Melia azedarach*), an Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*), a Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) and two old Camellias - are of aesthetic significance at a local level for the contribution they make to the setting of the ensemble of buildings associated with the Frazer Memorial Church.

Historical Notes or Provenance: The funds to build this strikingly beautiful church derive from the bequest of 500 pounds and the gift of 1.4 hectare (3.5 acres) in central Springwood made by John Frazer, who died in 1884. Frazer was a successful Sydney merchant. Born in co Down in 1827 to an artisan Presbyterian family, he had come from Ireland to seek his fortune in Australia along with three siblings when he was fifteen years old. After a period working in the bush, followed by a clerical position in Sydney, Frazer opened a wholesale grocery business in 1847 and never looked back, leaving an estate of 400 000 pounds on his death.

The firm of John Frazer and Co was under John Frazer's control until his early retirement due to ill-health in 1869, but his partners in the business were able men, a brother and two brothers-in-law of Elizabeth Ewan, whom John married in 1853. In the 1870s, John Frazer resumed his interest in the business and took a larger role in public life, as a member of the Legislative Council from 1874 until his death ten years later and as a philanthropist. Two fine fountains, one in Hyde Park, the other at the entrance to the Domain, are surviving memorials to his generosity to the city; the University of Sydney, where he hoped to fund the chair of History, still awards the Frazer scholarship in History; and he is remembered in the Presbyterian foundation, St Andrew's College, within the university, as a founding councillor in 1870 and the donor of funds to assist candidates for the Presbyterian ministry studying at the College. (Maddock, 5-13; ADB IV 218-9)

Frazer's connection with the Blue Mountains began in earnest when he built Silva Plana at Springwood in 1881. This country retreat on the east side of Hawkesbury Road, on a landscaped site of 14 hectares (35 acres) now partly occupied by the Buckland retirement village, was characteristic of the Mountain estates developed in the later Victorian period by a number of Sydney businessmen, politicians and lawyers, including friends of Frazer's such as Sir Henry Parkes, whose son Varney designed Silva Plana. (Searle and Morony, 6, 32; Robinson, map of Springwood c.1910)

Frazer survived only three years after building Silva Plana, but spent a good deal of time there and was anxious to provide a church for the increasing Presbyterian community on the Lower Mountains. In 1884 Springwood had no church of any denomination and Frazer, with the encouragement of his friend, the Revd James Cameron, a fellow councillor of St Andrew's College, who had in his early years in the 1850s been responsible for the Lower Mountains as well as his main centre at Richmond, donated land he had acquired from Frank Raymond's grant in central Springwood, in a very long narrow allotment, and instructed his trustees to spend 500 pounds on the building of a Presbyterian church there. (Maddock, 7-19)

There was, however, a long interval between Frazer's death in 1884 and the opening of the church in 1895. This was caused by the reluctance of his trustees to release the money until it was plain that there were sufficient Presbyterians in the Springwood area to support a

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minister. Despite the active interest of the Presbytery of the Hawkesbury, stimulated by Dr Cameron of Richmond and Dr Clouston of Penrith, the trustees were cautious. In 1893 the first Presbyterian services in Springwood were held under the turpentine on the land donated by Frazer, just where the great cedar of Lebanon stands today, then in the Oriental Hotel and finally in 1895 on the verandah of James Lawson's Braemar. Attendance increased dramatically from 25 to 50 to 100, and the trustees were convinced, once the local people had guaranteed 60 pounds a year for the minister. (Maddock, 20-8)

On 17 August 1895 the foundation stone for the church was laid by the sister of the widowed Mrs

Frazer, who was abroad. At the same time memorial stones were laid by Mrs Frazer's sister, the widow of John Frazer's business partner, William Manson; by Mrs Rayner, wife of the Methodist storekeeper whose premises were just across the road; by Mrs Ellis, wife of John Ellis of Valley Heights, who had signed the building contract on behalf of the church; and by Mrs Flora Urquhart, the daughter of James Lawson, the Scottish cabinet-maker who had built Braemar and the Oriental Hotel, where services had been held in expectation of the building of the church. (Maddock, 26-7)

The church was designed by the well-known Sydney firm of Slatyer and Cosh, whose plans dated 26 June 1895 survive in the archives of their successor firm, Spain, Stewart and Lind. The original design provided for a porch, with six steps up from either side, but no tower or spire, although a small turret above the east end of the porch was included, but not erected. The vestry was to be at the rear, on the east side, with no chancel. (Slatyer and Cosh plan, Maddock, after 74) The contractor was Neil Livingston, who worked expeditiously, employing James Wallace Park as stonemason, so that the church was opened only three months later, on 8 December 1895. (Maddock, 36, 55, 74)

Mrs Frazer returned from her trip to Europe and the Near East in 1896, bearing the seed from which the cedar of Lebanon grew beside the church, on the site of the grove of turpentine where the first services had been held. Elizabeth Frazer was not satisfied with the church building, however. As the Lower Blue Mountains Presbyterian magazine commented in December 1945, Mrs Frazer immediately had additions made and the building beautified. The present chancel and the porch and steeple were added. Further, she sent her gardener [from Silva Plana] to lay out the grounds and plant the trees, which add to the beauty of the surroundings. (Maddock, 35)

These additions were done by the same firm of architects, but now under the name of Spain and Cosh, and by the end of 1896 the church had been transformed into its present appearance. Slatyer and Cosh, later to become Spain and Cosh, were important Federation architects. Amongst their body of work was Culwarra Chambers in Macquarie Street, Sydney; Hollowforth in Neutral Bay and Glassyn at Mosman.

The pulpit had been originally designed also by Spain and Cosh, to be carved in stone. The design was implemented but in wood, carved by William Maxwell Lawson, the craftsman son of James Lawson of Braemar.

During World War II the children who lived at the Burnside Homes, the great philanthropic

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enterprise in North Parramatta owned by the Presbyterian church, were evacuated from Sydney to the Blue Mountains. Both the Buckland Hospital and the Oriental Hotel in Springwood were requisitioned to house the children and this brought heavy responsibilities to the minister and congregation of the Frazer Memorial church. The evacuation was partly organized by the distinguished theologian, Ronald G. Macintyre, who had been professor of Systematic Theology at St Andrew's College and was now in retirement in Springwood. Macintyre had already dedicated the present manse behind the church in 1941; in the following year the hall, to the east of the church, was opened by Macintyre

on behalf of the Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes to commemorate their sojourn in the Springwood District. September 1942. (plaque; Maddock 46-9).

The large hall directly behind the church was added to the complex in 1961, while extensions containing toilets and a waiting place for church bus passengers were added to the 1942 hall in 1984. (Maddock, 57, 59)

In preparation for the centenary of the church, a Centenary Restoration Sub-Committee was formed in 1994 and commissioned Graham Edds and Associates of Richmond to prepare a report on the church fabric. On the basis of this report, and with the assistance of a grant from the Heritage Council and a public appeal by the National Trust, extensive conservation works were undertaken in 1995. (Maddock, 69-70)

The fine decorative stone walling along the Macquarie Road frontage of the church, which had added particular distinction to the environment of the church and the streetscape for over half a century was unfortunately removed in the relatively recent past and replaced with a concrete and pipe fence which is deteriorating.

Themes:	National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
7. Governing		Welfare	(none)
8. Culture		Religion	(none)

Designer: Slatyer and Cosh (1895); Spain and Cosh (1896)

Maker / Builder: Neil Livingston (contractor) and James Wallace Park (stonemason)

Year Started: 1895 **Year Completed:** 1896 **Circa:** No

Physical Description: The Frazer Memorial Church is a handsome Federation Gothic church running perpendicular to Macquarie Street. Situated near the centre of the commercial centre of Springwood its copper spire can be seen from many locations in the town. The church is a gabled building running north-south with a bell tower on the northeast corner and a porch on its central axis with intersecting gables. The church is built of rockfaced sandstone with dressed sandstone around the fenestrations and the top of the tower. The roof of the church is of slate. Small gabled vents break the roofplane. The church is five bays deep with

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buttresses dividing the bays. Unusually, the end bays have single pointed arch windows while the second and third bays from the north have paired pointed arch windows. Leadlight windows are used throughout. The southernmost bay has a catslide roof over the entry to the vestry. On the north elevation, the main gable has a pair of pointed arch windows with a bullnose window over, all within a large sandstone arch. A buttress with steeply pitched gabled cap to the east of the entry porch indicates the location of the bell tower in the original design. The parapet wall is topped with a finial carved in a cross. The entry porch has pointed arched openings with framed and sheeted doors on the east and west and a pointed arched window on the north side. The belltower is of squat proportions for a gothic structure, giving it a strong character. It has wide buttresses at each corner and pointed arched openings with the generous pair of framed and sheeted doors on the north side. The copper spire has small vents on the north, east, south and west sides. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs J. Ewan and memorial stones were laid at the same time by Mrs J.F. Urquhart and Mrs M. Manson. In the grounds of the church is a cedar of Lebanon planted by Mrs John Frazer in the 1890s.

The most prominent of the plantings within the church grounds is the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), which is marked by a plaque: 'This tree was grown from a seed brought back from Lebanon by Mrs John Frazer in the 1890s'. The tree has some dieback at its top but otherwise appears to be in reasonable condition.

Other trees of considerable age and a typical early twentieth century combination are the Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and the Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*). A large old succulent, a Jade Tree (*Crassula ovata*) is behind the front fence.

A small conifer and some Hibiscus are planted on the boundary with the adjacent shops. A garden bed at the base of the church beneath the foundation stone of Mrs Rayner is encouraging damp and obstructing the steps and the ability to read the memorial stone.

There are a number of specimens within the garden attached to the 1941 manse that are of a considerable age and aesthetic appeal. They are a White Cedar (*Melia azedarach*), an Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*), a Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) and two old Camellias.

Physical Condition: Good

Modification Dates: A brick hall to the rear of the church was completed in 1942, one year after the simple brick manse at the south end of the site. A larger hall was added on the east side of the site in 1961.

Foundation stones recarved and filled with black

The stone fencing along Macquarie Street was removed in recent times and replaced with pipe and concrete fencing.

Recommended Management:

Lapsed item under LEP 1991, now zoned LEP 2005 and included in LEP 2005 Heritage Schedule. Remove from LEP 1991 Heritage Schedule- 1991 Heritage Review. Superseded by inclusion in LEP 2015.

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Remove the scrappy plantings of Hibiscus and the conifer from the boundary with the adjacent shops. The conifer will grow up to compete with the spreading limbs of the highly significant Cedar of Lebanon and none of the plantings effectively screen the adjacent buildings. Replace with species more appropriate for screening purposes such as a line of Camellias.

Consideration by the City Council and the church should be given to replacing the present pipe and concrete fencing along Macquarie Road with, ideally, a reinstatement of the original stonework.

Management:

Further Comments:

Criteria a) The Frazer Memorial church is a striking example of Victorian philanthropy, financed entirely from the generosity of a prosperous Presbyterian businessman in Sydney and his widow, Elizabeth Frazer. It reflects significantly the rapid growth of the Scottish and Northern Irish Presbyterian community in the Lower Mountains in the last years of the nineteenth century.

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The design of the Frazer Memorial Church is a tribute to the important architectural firm of Slayter and Cosh, later known as Spain and Cosh; Spain, Cosh and Minnet; and Spain, Cosh and Dods.

Criteria b)

Criteria c) The Frazer Memorial Church features high quality stonework in its handsome Federation gothic design. The design of the church is completed by the fine sandstone tower with the tall copper spire. Its spire and its location in the centre of the commercial centre of Springwood make it an important landmark in the town.

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The plantings associated with the 1941 manse - White Cedar (*Melia azedarach*), an Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*), a Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) and two old Camellias - are of aesthetic significance at a local level for the contribution they make to the setting of the ensemble of buildings associated with the Frazer Memorial Church.

Criteria d)

Criteria e)

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Criteria f)

Criteria g) The Frazer Memorial Church is an excellent and intact example of a Federation Gothic church.

Integrity / Intactness: High

References:	Author	Title	Year
	Allan, E Searle and Richard A Morony	Springwood Notebook, 2nd edition	1990
	H Robinson	Map of Springwood, circa	1910
	John Maddock	The Frazer Memorial Presbyterian Church: A History, Centenary Edition	1995
	Martha Rutledge	"Frazer, John (1827-1884)" in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol IV,	1972

Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year
	Blue Mountains City Council	Technical Audit BM Heritage Register	SP019	2008
	Jack, Hubert, Lavelle, Morris	Springwood, Blaxland, Hazelbrook HA	SP019	2002
	Tropman and Tropman	Heritage Study Review, Blue Mountains	SP019	1992
	Croft & Associates Pty Ltd & Meredith Walker	Blue Mountains Heritage Study	SP019	1983
	Blue Mountains City Council	LEP 2015 Heritage Review		2016
	Heritage Advisor	Technical Review		2010

Parcels:

Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial Accuracy:

Map Name:

Map Scale:

AMG Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listings:	Name:	Title:	Number:	Date:
	Local Environmental Plan	LEP 2015	SP019	21/12/2015
	Local Environmental Plan	LEP2005	SP019	7/10/2005
	Local Environmental Plan - Lapsed	LEP1991	SO019	27/12/1991
	Heritage study		SP019	

Local Instrument: LEP 2015

Local Identifier: SP019

Draft Instrument: Proposed deleted item in LEP 1991 Heritage Schedule- Lapsed under LEP 1991, now in LEP 2005 Schedule. Superseded by inclusion in LEP 2015.

Technical Comment:

Update Notes: (3) Heritage Review 2016 - interior added. Aboriginal statement added. (SP/O-12046)

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Update Notes:

Aboriginal Heritage: The Blue Mountains Local Government Area is within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples and Blue Mountains City Council respects their cultural heritage and deep ongoing connection to this Country.

This inventory sheet documents the European occupation of the site only, and the heritage significance of the place in this context (assessed against the heritage criteria set by the NSW Heritage Council).

This does not therefore, represent a complete history of the place, or represent the perspectives of Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners in relation to the colonial impacts on this site. Consultation with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal stakeholders is required, before Aboriginal Cultural Heritage that may be associated with this place, can be recorded.

Data Entry:

Date First Entered: 07/05/2002

Date Updated: 01/11/2016

Status: Partial

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Image:



Caption: Frazer Memorial Presbyterian Church

Copyright:

Image by:

Image Date: 17/05/2002

Image Number: 1170532b01

Image Path:

Image File: 1170532b01.jpg

Thumb Nail Path:

Thumb Nail File:

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Caption: Frazer Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Image by:

Image Date: 17/05/2002

Image Number: 1170532b02

Image Path:

Image File: 1170532b02.jpg

Thumb Nail Path:

Thumb Nail File: