

Tasmanian Heritage Register Datasheet



Tasmanian Heritage Council

134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
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Name: Milton Hall
Status: Permanently Registered
Tier: State

THR ID Number: 12142
Municipality: Launceston City
Council
Boundary: CPR11642

Location Addresses

11-15 FREDERICK ST, LAUNCESTON 7250 TAS

Title References

18905/3

Property Id

7321640



Milton Hall
©2025 NRET



Milton Hall, showing caretaker's cottage
©2025 NRET



Milton Hall from the west, showing additions at rear
©2025 NRET



Additions to the rear of Milton Hall
©2013 NRET



Launceston High School at Milton Hall
Tasmanian Archives, LPIC147-6-232



Milton Hall before Christ Church Baptist was built
Tasmanian Archives, LPIC147-6-337

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

As the home of Reverend John West's Congregational pastorate, Milton Hall is a symbol of early Launceston's radicalism, that is, the dissenting, independent spirit of the anti-transportation movement led by West. It is a rare example of a surviving early-19th-century Congregational chapel. Milton Hall may contain archaeological deposits which have the potential to contribute to an understanding of the operation and evolution of an 1840s Congregational chapel. It has a special association with the Reverend John West, Congregational pastor, leader of the anti-transportation movement, campaigner for Australian nationhood and co-founder of the Launceston Examiner newspaper.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

As the home of Reverend John West's Congregational pastorate, Milton Hall is a symbol of early Launceston's radicalism, that is, the dissenting, independent spirit of the anti-transportation movement led by West. It demonstrates the development of Congregationalism in northern Tasmania, where it was particularly influential.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

It is a rare surviving example of an early-19th-century Congregational chapel.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

Milton Hall may contain archaeological features and deposits which have the potential to contribute to an understanding of the operation and evolution of an 1840s Congregational chapel and later schoolroom, as well as the daily lives of those utilising the space. Archaeological deposits may be captured within the extant buildings beneath existing flooring and in roof and wall cavities. Exterior spaces may contain evidence of former structures (outbuildings) not captured on historical plans, evidence of past landscaping treatments and sealed artefact deposits.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

No Data Recorded

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

No Data Recorded

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

Milton Hall has a special association with the Reverend John West, Congregational pastor, leader of the anti-transportation movement, campaigner for Australian nationhood and co-founder of the Launceston Examiner newspaper.

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

No Data Recorded

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

Milton Hall is located just outside the Launceston central business district, opposite the parkland of Princes Square. The north-eastern and south-eastern fringes of Princes Square are dominated by churches, including the Gothic spires of Christ Church (now known as Christ Church Baptist, THR #4232), Chalmers Church (THR #4583) and St John's Anglican (THR #4612), all neighbours to Milton Hall. Two other buildings of a similar period are nearby on Frederick Street, the 1836 Infant School (THR #4239) and the 1862 Primitive Methodist Chapel (THR #4238). These are mixed with mostly 19th-century and early-20th-century residences and professional offices.

Description:

Milton Hall is 'a free-standing Regency chapel built of brick with a street façade of stone, stucco and timber in an unscholarly Greek Revival style' (Ratcliff 2003, p.486, endnote 81). The triangular pediment of timber and stucco and entablature are supported by four Doric columns. There is a segmental topped blind window opening and sill at each side of the entrance. Architectural historian Eric Ratcliff claims that the meeting of the 'elegant' red brick walls with the stone and stuccoed front façade is 'not entirely comfortable' (2015, vol.4, p.2243). There are five tall lancet windows in recessed panels on each side of the building with red brick voussoirs and a stone string course just below the window arches. The pitch of the roof is steep, perhaps with the intent of keeping the original roofing shingles waterproof (Ratcliff 2015, vol.4, p.2244). One Tobin tube rises from the apex of the modern-day corrugated iron roof. A flight of steps connects the building's front entrance with the footpath below.

The chapel's architecture reflects nonconformist belief (pertaining to the beliefs of Protestant faiths who refused to conform to the Anglican Church as specified in the *Acts of Uniformity* of 1559 and 1662, that is, Congregationalists, Baptists and Unitarians [Ratcliff 2009, p.22]). At one time when English nonconformists were persecuted they avoided detection by building chapels that looked like the houses around them (Ratcliff 2015, vol.4, p.2237). The belief was espoused that 'God can be worshipped by any group of Christians in any place' (Ratcliff 2009, p.23). Nonconformist chapels were not 'holy places' and were designed to not look like churches, reflecting the rejection of nonconformists by mainstream Protestantism (Ratcliff 2009, p.23).

This is not an outstanding example of Greek Revival architecture. Milton Hall has been likened to the 1843 Lady Franklin Museum (Ancanthe) (THR #2610) at Lenah Valley. The Lady Franklin Museum is cited by Apperly, Irving & Reynolds (1994, p.32) as the best Australian example of the Old Colonial Grecian or Greek Revival style. It is a pavilion in a pedimented temple style with four Doric columns and a gable with a much lower pitch than that of Milton Hall. Ratcliff (2015, vol.4, p.2244) calls the Lady Franklin Museum 'the height of Greek Revival' but says Milton Hall was 'only brushed by it'.

Behind Milton Hall itself is a two-storey red brick building added in 1858 as a schoolroom and a 1907 former caretaker's cottage. Originally there was a separation between the chapel and the schoolroom, but this was filled in when the galleries of the chapel were extended at the rear. The schoolroom has a gabled corrugated iron roof, stone window sills and brick lintels. The top-floor windows are double hung sashes and the ground-floor windows, like those of the chapel, have segmented small panes. This section of the building is served by two square, corbelled, red brick chimneys. The schoolroom building connects by a passageway to the smaller two-storey caretaker's cottage on the western side. This smaller building has a doorway with a sloping porch roof at ground level serviced by a gate in a tall iron fence, and includes two brick chimneys of similar form to those of the adjoining schoolroom.

QVMAG holds the original pulpit, the front portion of which was made by a founding member of the pastorate, Alexander Kidd.

REGISTERED AREA

The registered area includes the chapel, schoolroom and caretaker's cottage on Title 18905/3. Christ Church Baptist (THR #4232) does not form part of this registration, being registered separately. The boundary line bisects the pathway between Milton Hall and Christ Church Baptist.

History:

The traditional owners of the land in the Launceston region were the North Midlands nation, comprised of the Leterremairrener (or Port Dalrymple people), the Panninher (or Norfolk Plains people), the Tyerrernotepanner (or Stoney Creek people) and possibly others (Ryan 2012, p.29).

The Reverend Charles Price and Congregationalism

In the early years of Van Diemen's Land, Anglicanism was enshrined by government, with denominational teaching even prevailing in public schools during the colony's first decades. Congregationalists (Independents) who had been marginalised in England generally despised government interference in religion, while their traditional exclusion from English universities made them strong advocates of non-sectarian education. Theirs was a personal faith. They held that the congregation governed itself, without the rituals of Anglicanism and the 'tyranny of the bishops' or presbyteries. One of their tenets was voluntarism, the principle of independence. Congregational ministers were expected to be maintained not by the state, but by the charity of their flock, which in the colonies made for a precarious living (Ratcliff 2003, pp.3, 58, 87 and 91).

Congregationalism in Launceston began with the Reverend Charles Price establishing a chapel which doubled as a schoolroom in Tamar Street in 1837. He arrived at the advent of the *Church Act* (1837). This Act reduced Anglicanism's dominance in the colony by providing salaries for Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic ministers and providing financial support for the construction of churches of any Christian denomination, a local subscription of £300 towards the cost being the key to unlocking government support. Price, controversially, accepted government support to build his chapel.

Arrival of Reverend John West (1809–73)

Anglican dominance of government education also ended when Lieutenant-Governor Franklin introduced a non-denominational Board of Education in 1839 (Phillips 1985, p.17). Nevertheless, Congregational schools continued. Congregationalist pastor John West's arrival in Launceston under the auspices of the Colonial Missionary Society gave local Congregationalists an alternative to Price. Unlike that pastor, West would not accept government aid, prompting sixteen of Price's flock to defect to the new pastor. After first meeting at the Infant School (THR #4239), the new pastorate bought a wooden building, converted it into a temporary chapel and had it dragged through the streets by bullock team to a donated site (Button 1909, p.253). The Primitive Methodist Chapel (THR #4238) was later built on that site at 46 Frederick Street.

St Johns Square Congregational Chapel

The land chosen for a permanent chapel was an undeveloped section of 0-2-30 acres granted to Alexander Waddell and conveyed by him and WG Sams to the Trustees of the Congregational Church for £274 on 15 February 1842 (conveyance 2/5094). The foundation stone was laid by Baptist minister the Reverend Henry Dowling on 2 September 1841 (Button 1909, p.58). The architect is unknown, although architectural historian Eric Ratcliff suggests possibly Richard Lambeth, designer of the Launceston Synagogue (THR #4567) (Ratcliff 2009, p.27). Stonemason George Gould won the contract to erect the chapel for £1117 plus £260 for fittings (£1377 in all), of which £800 were already subscribed (Editorial 1842, p.4). A timber caretaker's residence was built behind and simultaneously with the chapel ('A munificent gift' 1907, p.6).

John West's achievements

West was a significant figure in the development of Australian federation, the idea that Australia was a nation rather than a collection of dumping grounds for British convicts. He used newspapers and lectures to prosecute this idea.

In 1842, with fellow Congregationalists James Aikenhead and JS Waddell, West established the *Launceston Examiner* newspaper, Launceston's first responsible newspaper, after much controversial editorialising by William Lushington Goodwin of the *Cornwall Chronicle*. West's 'powerful writing', according to fellow journalist Henry Button, 'gave the paper such immediate and far-reaching influence' (Button 1909, p.60). Historian Henry Reynolds described West as 'perhaps the most distinguished journalist in colonial Australia' (Reynolds 2012, p.125). West was also 'the apostle and mainspring of the anti-transportation movement', (Button 1909, p.61) leading the Australasian League which was formed in Melbourne on 1 February 1851 and designing its flag which served as a blueprint for the Australian national flag. In his efforts to demonise transportation, West appears to have exploited the 'moral panic' prompted by Colonial Secretary William Gladstone and Lieutenant-Governor William Latrobe's crusade against

homosexuality in the convict probation system (Hodder 2010, pp.31–32). At the request of Henry Hopkins, West wrote *The history of Tasmania*, published in 1852. In it West outlined what he saw as the evils of convict transportation and deplored the treatment of indigenous Tasmanians (Reynolds 1967). West also helped establish other educational and charitable institutions, the Launceston Mechanics' Institute (with Charles Price also playing a significant role), Launceston City Mission and the Hobart High School. He and his Frederick Street congregation established Launceston's first general cemetery (now Ockerby Gardens) in Charles Street (Ratcliff 2003, pp.277, 290 and 387).

In 1854, after sixteen years in charge of St Johns Square Chapel, West resigned his pastorate and at the request of his friend and fellow dissenter John Fairfax moved to Sydney to become editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He was farewelled at the chapel by staff of the *Launceston Examiner* and his congregation (Ratcliff 2003, p.438).

Reverend William Law (1827–1907)

West was succeeded by the Reverend William Law, who remained in this pastorate until 1902. Law continued West's advocacy for education and charitable work, serving as chairman of two school boards, president of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Launceston City Mission and secretary of the Launceston Benevolent Society. He preached and lectured on a wide variety of topics.

During Law's time in 1858 the pastorate expanded the chapel building, with a schoolroom and vestry being built at the rear at a cost of £1300. Galleries were added soon after at a cost of £400. In 1875 about £600 were spent replacing the original organ with one manufactured by Bevington and Sons of London ('Christ Church jubilee year' 1890, p.3). In 1868, when St Johns Square became Princes Square, the name of the chapel was changed accordingly.

Milton Hall as a classroom

Despite the enlargements the congregation continued to outgrow the chapel, until finally in 1879 the pastorate decided to erect Christ Church (now known as Christ Church Baptist, THR #4232) next door. In 1885, when Christ Church opened, the Princes Square Chapel was renamed Milton Hall after John Milton, the dissenting author of *Paradise lost*.

Launceston High School, aka Milton Hall High School, was established by former Church of England Grammar master EA (Edward Alleyne) Nathan in the schoolroom behind the chapel in 1884, when it had 59 students. In 1885 the school, with 92 students, moved into Milton Hall itself ('Launceston' 1885, p.3). In 1899 Nathan was succeeded as principal by R Ernest 'Crate' Smith and Walter Edmunds. Smith, the former Classics master, later became sole principal. Numbers declined early in the 20th century, with only nine students remaining when Milton Hall High School was incorporated with Church of England Grammar in 1913. The school had educated 811 boys over 28 years ('High school absorbed' 1946, p.4). In the years 1913–16 students of the new State High School were accommodated at Milton Hall, St Johns Hall and at the existing school premises in Charles Street while they awaited construction of a purpose-built facility ('School accommodation' 1916, p.4).

20th-century developments

Milton Hall became a social and fundraising adjunct to Christ Church, the home of various church auxiliaries and a hall and lecture theatre for hire (see for example 'Current topics' 1889, p.2).

Two of Launceston's senior Congregationalists, retired flour-miller Thomas Monds and former Launceston *Examiner* editor Henry Button, remained deacons at Christ Church into the 20th century. By 1907 Milton Hall's original caretaker's residence was dilapidated and Monds offered to have a new two-storey brick one erected on the site of the old one by Hinman & Wright at his own expense in memory of his late wife. The four-room structure was built on stone foundations and from the outset it was lit by electric light ('A munificent gift' 1907, p.6).

Electric light replaced gas lighting in the main body of Milton Hall in 1924 ('84th birthday: social at Milton Hall' 1924, p.3). In 1946 five rooms used as Sunday school rooms and a lecture theatre were converted into a flat for a returned serviceman and his wife, as a gesture to helping solve the acute housing shortage at the time of World War II resettlement ('Flat at hall' 1946, p.6).

In 1977, with attendances declining, many congregations of the Congregational, Wesleyan, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches combined as the Uniting Church in Australia, prompting an audit of clerical property. Christ Church and Milton Hall were sold to the Baptist Church in 1983. City Baptist Church sold Christ Church and Milton Hall to Sherwood River Pty Ltd in 2022 and moved into the Boathouse near Seaport on the North Esk River.

Comparative analysis:

Early-19th-century Congregational chapels

Surviving early Van Diemen's Land Congregational chapels include the 1836 Hestercombe Chapel at Austins Ferry (THR #1545) and the 1840 former Congregational Chapel at Kempton (THR #5459). These were 'plain vernacular' buildings which Ratcliff suggests were the norm for 19th-century Independent chapels. Only the 'most pretentious' were built in 'austere Classical styles, without towers' (Ratcliff 2015, vol.4, p.2237), which is closer to the style of Milton Hall.

There are many later Congregational chapels and churches, including the c.1853 Congregational Church at Geeveston (THR #3532), the 1862 Don Uniting Church (formerly Congregational) (THR #1357), the 1864 Playhouse Theatre/former Union Chapel in Hobart (THR #2171) and the 1873 Congregational Church at Richmond (THR #1082). The 1855 Union Chapel at Cleveland (THR #4979) is not strictly a Congregational chapel.

References:

'A munificent gift' 1907, *Examiner* 17 April 1907, p.6.

Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert; & Reynolds, Peter 1994, *A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture: styles and terms from 1788 to present*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

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'Christ Church jubilee year' 1890, *Daily Telegraph* 12 June 1890, p.3.

'Current topics' 1889, *Launceston Examiner* 8 July 1889, p.2.

Editorial 1842, *Launceston Examiner* 20 August 1842, p.4.

'84th birthday: social at Milton Hall' 1924, *Daily Telegraph* 24 July 1924, p.3.

'Flat at hall' 1946, *Examiner* 22 June 1946, p.6.

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Hodder, Robert 2010, 'Radical Tasmania: rebellion, reaction and resistance: a thesis in creative non-fiction: volume II: the selected histories', PhD thesis, School of Behavioural & Social Sciences & Humanities, University of Ballarat.

'Launceston' 1885, *Mercury* 19 December 1885, p.3.

Phillips, Derek 1985, *Making more adequate provision: state education in Tasmania, 1839–1985*, Education Department of Tasmania, Hobart.

Ratcliff, Eric 2009, 'From chapel to church: nonconformist building in Launceston', in *Nonconformists in northern Tasmania: papers and proceedings of the Launceston Historical Society*, vol.21, pp.22–31.

Ratcliff, Eric 2015, *A far microcosm: building and architecture in Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania 1803–1914*, Fullers Bookshop, Hobart.

Ratcliff, Patricia Fitzgerald 2003, *The usefulness of John West: dissent and difference in the Australian colonies*, Albernian Press, Launceston.

Reynolds, Henry 2012, *A history of Tasmania*, Cambridge University Press.

Reynolds, John 1967, 'John West (1809–1873)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, volume 2, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/west-john-2784>, accessed 8 May 2025.

Ryan, Lyndall 2012, *Tasmanian Aborigines: a history since 1803*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

'School accommodation' 1916, *Examiner*, 29 March 1916, p.4.

Note

1. Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'Milton Hall', #12142 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 is the partial parcel of FR 18905/3, the boundary of which is marked by a heavy black line and described below.
3. All boundaries are parcel boundaries, details of individual land parcel boundaries may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST).
4. For the purpose of S15(4)(b) of the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995, this plan replaces the previous registered entry THR4233, Milton Hall.

Point & Boundary Description

- A. South west corner of 18905/3
- B. North east corner of 106114/1
- B-C. Prolongation of A-B.
- D. Intersect of line C-D with cadastral boundary
- D-C. Line 0.8m from & parallel to north east face of Milton Hall
- C. Intersect of lines B-C & D-C

Frederick Street

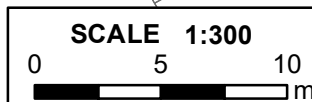
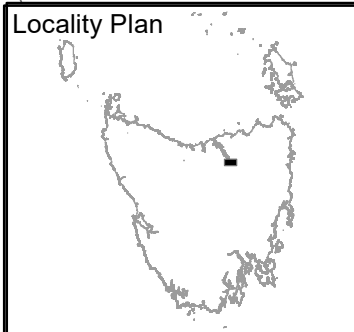
Lot 1
544 m²

FR 18905/3

FR 221736/1

FR 18905/3

FR 106114/1



TASMAP: LAUNCESTON - 5041 GRID: MGA94 / ZONE 55 DATUM: AHD CONTOUR INTERVAL: N/A

No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE
1	Production	THC	12142	AW	M. FORD	24DEC25



Milton Hall

11-15 Frederick St, Launceston

PREPARED BY
HERITAGE TASMANIA



CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER

p.p. Surveyor General: _____

Date Registered: 6 Jan 2026

CPR
11642