

State Heritage Areas of South Australia



St Peter & St Paul's Roman Catholic Church 8 Porter Street, Gawler (formerly Parnell Square)

St Peter & St Paul's Roman Catholic Church (1897-1898) is a major contributor to the streetscape of Gawler's Church Hill precinct and stands on the site originally allocated to a Catholic Church in Colonel Light's 1839 plan. It replaced an earlier 1850 church, which had been the second Roman Catholic Church built in South Australia. Within Light's original design for Church Hill, St Peter & St Paul's Church was built in Parnell Square, one of three squares linked by Cowan Street and reserved for the three dominant churches. In the late twentieth century however, the road behind the Catholic Church was closed, with the result that it no longer stands on an isolated piece of land.



April 2005

A Roman Catholic Chapel existed in Gawler as early as October 1848.



Scenic view of Gawler 1905
Photo B 32012: State Library of SA

In 1850 the foundation stone was laid for the first Church of St Peter and St Paul, but the dedication of the church was delayed until

March 1855 (possibly as a result of interstate goldrushes). During the next few decades this church became a significant precinct of Roman Catholic buildings. By 1860 an early presbytery was constructed opposite the church, and about 15 years later the current presbytery on Parnell Street was constructed. In 1871 the Sisters of St Joseph established a significant convent in Porter Street. This was visited several times by the now beatified Sister Mary MacKillop, and also provided early education within Gawler. In 1882 a purpose-built school building was constructed across Porter Street for the town's Catholic students.

The growing Roman Catholic community in Gawler soon required a larger church, and in 1897 the first church was demolished and a foundation stone laid for the new church. This building was opened in October 1898. Twelve years later a new convent was built in Porter Street for the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and in 1925 a new school building was constructed near the 1882 school. These buildings completed the Roman Catholic precinct, which is a feature at the western end of Cowan Street, in the Church Hill State Heritage Area.



NW section with jagged wall

Architecturally, the Church of St Peter and St Paul is a late-Victorian design, with twin octagonal towers, wide arcaded porch, round arches and Venetian detailing. It is constructed of local stone with red-brick dressings, terra cotta detailing and a corrugated iron roof. The interior has heavy timber work and a relatively low ceiling. An added vestry at the north-west section has a jagged wall end to allow for extensions to the church.



Detailing on south wall

