



## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hamilton Botanic Gardens  
French, Kennedy, Martin & Thompson Streets

The Hamilton Botanic Gardens, planned in 1850-51, first planted by William Ferguson in 1870 and then developed from 1881 according to a design of William Guilfoyle, have state significance as one of the most intact examples in Australia of a nineteenth century provincial botanic garden. It is an early example of Guilfoyle's design, exemplifying his ideas about planting which were drawn from Edward La Trobe Bateman and were being actively implemented in his sweeping redevelopment of von Mueller's design of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens. Historically it is one of the four known pre-gold rush botanic garden sites set aside in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. The gardens are important also as part of a significant late 19th and early 20th century precinct and for the retention of zoological elements, which illustrate the past fashion for menageries. <sup>(i)</sup>

Important garden structures in the Hamilton Botanic Gardens include the caretaker's cottage, the Thomson Memorial Fountain, the band rotunda, and the French Street gates. The cottage probably dates from 1870 and apparently was moved from a nearby site within the gardens. <sup>(ii)</sup> It is a typical *cottage ornee*. The fountain commemorates John Thomson, MLA for Dundas 1892-1914, who died in 1917 when the fountain was erected. John was the son of James Thomson, the wealthy pastoralist who built the large mansion, Monivae, in 1878. <sup>(iii)</sup> The rotunda has historical importance as a reminder of a distinctive form of popular entertainment in the late 19th and early 20th century. The rotunda was moved to the gardens recently from Melville Oval. With the grandstand it has associations with W H Melville, the developer, and Frank Hammond, town clerk and engineer, who played key roles in the conversion in 1904-9 of the former Market Square into Melville Park, or Melville Oval, as it is now known. <sup>(iv)</sup>

The gardens contain many significant and notable trees as well as traditional garden works some of which survive although altered from the original design by Ferguson. The gardens are significantly intact and are in excellent condition. They are critical to the streetscape of the area.

### ASSOCIATED HISTORIC THEMES

Sport & Recreation:            Passive - botanic gardens  
Government Institutions: State and municipal  
Squatting:                    Pastoral industry

### ASSOCIATED HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Eildon, 34 Thompson Street  
Kilora, 45 Kennedy Street  
The Gables, 69 French Street  
Former Police magistrates House, 24 Thompson Street

### SOURCES

Australian Heritage Commission Files, Nos 003744 and 014523. *Trust Newsletter*, July 1977, Dec 1990.  
Dept of Planning & Housing Files, Nos 60 0972 F (general), 60 0629 B (gate) and 60 0079 B (rotunda).  
Watts, P, *Historic Gardens of Victoria*. Garden, D, Hamilton, North Melbourne, 1984.  
*Hamilton Spectator* 29/10/1881, 25-27/1/1883, 22/11/1883. *Illustrated Australian News*, 1/12/1883.

Note also that the Hamilton Botanic Gardens are presently the subject of a detailed report by Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken with Francene Gilfedder for the City of Hamilton.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Peter Watts, *Historic Gardens of Victoria*, p 54, AHC File No 003744; *Illustrated Australian News*, 1/12/1883; *Hamilton Spectator* 29/10/1881, 25-27/1/1883, 22/11/1883; Garden, D, Hamilton, pp 40-74; *Trust Newsletter*, July 1977, Dec 1990.

<sup>ii</sup> An early 1870s birdseye view of the town shows it in the western corner.

<sup>iii</sup> Garden, pp 104, 138, 139; *Trust Newsletter*, July 1977 (6).

<sup>iv</sup> AHC File No 014523, Garden, pp 180-2; *Hamilton Spectator* 30/6/1904, 19/11/1904, 23/8/1909, Oct 1909.