

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MOUNT NAPIER HOMESTEAD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Harmans Road GAZETTE

STUDY NUMBER: 055

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: MT. NAPIER HOMESTEAD

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 4 **SECTION:** a **PARISH:** PARISH OF NAPIER

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 474 C-14; VicRoads 73 C8; off Harman's Road approximately 1200m to the south of the intersection of Harmans Road and the Mt Napier Road

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Mount Napier Homestead, Gazette front elevation

Image Date: 08/12/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the house but excluding the interiors, all the associated outbuildings, the garden and the land to the extent of 10,000sqm around the main house.

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MOUNT NAPIER HOMESTEAD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Harmans Road GAZETTE

STUDY NUMBER: 055

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Mount Napier Homestead complex comprises several very old outbuildings, a turn of the century homestead which replaced the original and an extensive garden with many mature exotic trees and a gazebo. The outbuildings are single storey stone with corrugated iron roofs over timber shingles. One at the rear of the present house, formerly used as stables and coach house, has trellis windows, ledge and brace doors and retains the stalls and paving within. Another some distance from the present house, with small glazed windows and a low ledge and brace door appears to have been used as a kitchen with the fireplaces and oven remaining. These outbuildings almost certainly date from the 1840s. The present homestead appears to date from the early twentieth century from its materials, detailing and plan. It is conservative and might be best described as a bungalow in a style transitional between late Victorian and Arts and Crafts. Certainly the plain red brick walls and corbelled chimneys are an honest use of materials. The façade is asymmetrical with a projecting room with a boxed bay window on the left side and a simple timber verandah on the right. The plan is of interest because it incorporates a large living room, effectively a 'hall', which opens onto the garden from a large porch creating an alternative garden façade. The interiors of the house, comprising a complete range of rooms, are simple but well finished and survive with a very high degree of integrity and in excellent condition. There is a timber gazebo in the garden. The garden is typical of the Edwardian period with an extensive lawn in front of the house, a shrubbery, hedges enclosing the space and a row of mature *Quercus robur* (English Oak) associated with the outbuildings behind the house.

HISTORY:

The Mount Napier Station run taken up in July 1841 by John and Thomas Brown who arrived in the Port Phillip District from Hobart Town in 1838. They occupied Mount Napier from 1840-1849. It was described at that time as comprising 30,000 acres and running 1000 head of cattle and 5000 sheep (Billis & Kenyon, 252). It was located on the Eumerella River about twenty kilometres south-east of Hamilton and six kilometres from Mount Napier. This extinct volcano from which it took its name is a dramatic feature in the landscape and had been important for the explorer, Major Thomas Mitchell. The run is marked as No. 68 and being owned by John Hastie in the 1847 Map of Australia Felix by Thomas Ham but this seems to be a mistake with A. Brown listed at No. 65 which is Eumerella West. Billis and Kenyon (80), only give John Hastie as the owner of Purnpundhal, on the west shore of Lake Corangamite and now called Leslie Manor, from 1841 to 1844. The brothers, in turn, seem to have given their name to Brown Street in Hamilton (Garden, 38).

The Brown brothers had other interests in the Mount Elephant and Muston's Creek licences (Billis & Kenyon, 33-4). In January 1853, Henry Phillips took over the licence for two years when it passed to John Hyde de la Hunt. It returned to Phillips briefly in November 1856 when he obtained the pre-emptive right (Department of Lands and Survey, 1885) but it soon passed to John Mooney who purchased much of the land immediately to the south and east from the Crown in 1857. A parish plan prepared in 1857 notes his name on the pre-emptive section. In 1859, presumably as a result of his default on a mortgage, the property passed to the Colonial Bank. Richard Broome notes that Mount Napier was one of the runs to suffer most from subdivision under the 1862 land Selection Act, the so-called 'Duffy Act' (Garden, 101). The mount was permanently reserved for public purposes in 1873.

In 1864, the owner was John Matheson who, in turn, purchased more land to the west, north and north-east between 1863 and 1876. John Matheson (1821-1882) had arrived in Port Phillip from Van Diemen's Land in 1840. The son of a Scottish crofter, he became the first general manager of the Bank of Victoria, a position he held until retirement in 1881. He had extensive property interests across the colony. His principle country residence was Moranghurk (HRV 266), a relatively simple slab house at Lethbridge but his town house was the grand Italianate villa, St Leonard's in fashionable St Kilda, now demolished (B&K 112;

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MOUNT NAPIER HOMESTEAD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Harmans Road GAZETTE

STUDY NUMBER: 055

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

de Serville, 318, ADB, Vol. 5, 224-5).

After Matheson's death, Archibald Simpson managed the Mount Napier run (Sutherland, VIIA, 67) By the late 1880s rabbits had become a major scourge and the new rabbiting canning factory at Hamilton 'in three months in 1892 had processed 100,000 pairs of rabbits from Mount Napier estate and 40,000 from Bochara' (Garden, 133). This temporary industry helped with the problem. In any case, the sons of John Matheson, William and Joseph were able to maintain the estate, only half its original size but still 16,500 acres, although much was mountain and rocks into the early twentieth century (Pastoralists Review, 15/10/1909, 818) The next great change, which some saw as a threat was to come from closer settlement. At first it was the pastoralists themselves who sold up but there was also strong support within the district and the township of Hamilton for the government, through the Closer Settlement Board, to act as the agent. A local Closer Settlement Association was formed in 1905. Joseph Matheson died and his interest in Mount Napier needed to be resolved. Closer settlement was proposed but, in the end, his interest was sold to his three sisters who were already part owners (Garden, 162, n. 15). Then, in 1911, the estate "was sold by the Matheson family to a Melbourne syndicate which began to offer it in blocks to suit purchasers" (ibid., 163, n. 20). After the First World War, "a few parts of Mount Napier were sold off privately" but not as Soldier Settlement (ibid., 217, n. 91).

It is not known exactly when the main house at Mount Napier was built but the date 1906 has been suggested (RNE). Nor is it known who designed the house. Judging from its plan, form, detailing and materials it seems likely to date at least from after Matheson's death in 1882 and probably early in the twentieth century. While a modest example of the Federation/Queen Anne style, it is not as adventurous architecturally as neaby Gazette homestead or Kongbool homestead near Balmoral, both designed by Percy S. Richards. The older outbuildings at the rear and side, including a stable and coach house, are much earlier dating from the 1840s.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

CONDITION:

The early outbuildings are in fair condition. The present homestead is in excellent condition and retains a high degree of integrity. The garden is also in excellent condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

INTEGRITY:

high degree of intactness

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Mount Napier squatting run on the Eumerella River about twenty kilometres south-east of Hamilton and six kilometres from Mount Napier was taken up in 1840. The homestead complex has significant associations, firstly with the Scottish pioneering Brown brothers, John and Thomas who built the original stone houses and stables and then with John Matheson from 1862. The latter was the son of a Scottish crofter who became the first general manager of the Bank of Victoria, a position he held until retirement in 1881. The Brown brothers and Matheson were Overstraiters from Van Diemen's Land. The estate was not subdivided after Matheson's death in 1882 nor under the Closer Settlement Scheme but was sold in 1911 to Melbourne interests who did subdivide the land. The original vernacular stone buildings of Mount Napier

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MOUNT NAPIER HOMESTEAD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Harmans Road GAZETTE

STUDY NUMBER: 055

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

Homestead survive from the first years of settlement of the property. Their primitive construction technique, their scale and disposition are particularly notable. The present house dates from about 1906 and is one of the finer homesteads from that period in the area. The garden dates from the same period. The original buildings are substantially intact and are in fair condition. The present homestead retains a high degree of integrity and is in excellent condition.

How is it significant?

Mount Napier Homestead Complex is of historical and architectural significance to the shire of southern Grampians.

Why is it significant?

Mount Napier Homestead Complex is of historical significance as one of the earliest established in the Hamilton district, for its associations with the Overstraiters, John and Thomas Brown of Hobart Town who were influential in early Hamilton, and for the period of its ownership by John Matheson, another Overstraiter who, although only the son of a Scottish crofter, became the first general manager of the Bank of Victoria. Mount Napier Homestead is of architectural significance as a modest example from the Federation period, with certain unusual planning and construction details, which is enhanced by its garden setting.

COMPARISON:

067 Gazette Homestead Complex, Gazette

056 Kongbool Homestead Complex, Balmoral

060 Mt Sturgeon Homestead, Cavendish-Dunkeld Road, Dunkeld

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

4/11/2003

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Bonwick, James	Western Victoria, its geography, geology and soil conditions	1858	162
Department of Lands and Survey	Parish of Napier, County of Dundas	1855	
Diana M Halmarick, comp.	Thos. Robertson & Sons "Mainstays of Our Earliest Days"	2000	var.
Don Garden	Hamilton, A Western District History	1984	var.
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.
Raoul F Middlemann, in Douglas Pike, ed.	Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 5	1974	224-5