

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** MOUNT ROUSE AND CRATER RESERVE

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Mount Rouse Tourist Road PENS Hurst

**STUDY NUMBER:** 272

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF PURDEET

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 475 C26; VicRoads 73 F8; located on the south side of Penshurst and reached by the Mount Rouse Tourist Road off the Penshurst-Warrnambool Road.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** SLO



Mount Rouse and Crater Reserve, Penshurst.

View from Mount Rouse Tourist Road

**Image Date:** 13/02/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. (SLO ONLY) All the land of both reserves and all the development and plantings within them.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

Mount Rouse is an extinct volcano, the summit being about 400m above sea level and about 175m above the surrounding plain. The land comprising some 63ha, is reserved as a public park and for water purposes. Much of the lower slopes remains cleared but there are extensive plantings of Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata*) on the higher slopes, particularly on the north-western and north-eastern sides. The other major plantings are dominated by native species of trees and shrubs. There is a fire tower located on the summit. Access is by sealed road and a car park.

## **HISTORY:**

Major Mitchell named Mount Rouse in 1836, presumably after the early Sydney settler, Richard Rouse who established Rouse Hill. Briefly, it became the focus for the squatting run leased by John Cox of Port Fairy, from 1839 to April 1842. It may be that the earliest structures at Cheviot Hills, which face Mount Rouse about two kilometres away, were built by Cox. He was required to leave so that the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate could be established. In Ham's 1847 'Map of Australia Felix' there is a 100 square mile 'Reserve' shown which is centred on Mount Rouse with the 'Aboriginal Establishment' indicated by the number '145' just to the north where several tracks intersect. The Protectorate failed and from about 1852 the township of Penshurst began to develop centred on the Protectorate's remaining buildings, now the Police Reserve.

A plan of the 'Suburban and Country Lands & the Township of Penshurst near Mount Rouse' dated 1855 shows the new town laid out between "Mount Rouse or Kolor" and the permanent spring. A small body of water is also indicated in the crater called 'Kolormordook'. When he passed by in 1857, the noted educationalist and amateur geologist, James Bonwick in 'Western Victoria', pp. 168-9, described the extinct volcano as "but five hundred and twenty-six feet above the plain. The line of its lava may be traced southward, and parallel to the Napier and Eeles [now Eccles] streams, down to Belfast itself, with the usual amount of swamps, forming altogether a most impracticable sort of country." He also notes that "the crater has some water at the bottom."

In the 1850s, the land immediately around the crater, comprising about 132 acres, was reserved as a "Public Park" and a water reserve of another 25 acres was added immediately to the south. By December 1857, almost all the land around Mount Rouse had been purchased by John Joseph Twomey and his son Daniel Twomey, members of one of the few Irish Catholic squatting families. In 1868, taking the Aboriginal name for the mount, the family built Kolor on the north-western slope, a Picturesque villa which took advantage of the hill behind it as a backdrop and of its elevated position to see and be seen across the plain. The grounds were landscaped by the leading designer, Edward La Trobe Bateman who almost certainly influenced the design of the house, although it is attributed to the Melbourne architects, Reed and Barnes. The landscaping borrowed from the volcanic form of Mount Rouse and incorporated a much smaller, lower cone to the south as a great circular yard with Stone pines, *Pinus pinaster*, planted at the centre and dry stone walls around its perimeter.

The Mount Rouse Reserve was gazetted in 1870 and later in the year, the Shire Council was appointed as Trustee of the Reserve (Shire of Mount Rouse, 1964). The role had its ups and downs. In 1872 Council approved a proposal to plant Mount Rouse in belts or clumps of trees carefully positioned, but, by 1878, the Shire had to procure six bags of buffalo grass for planting the face of Mount Rouse to prevent water erosion (Shire of Mount Rouse, 1964). Throughout the 1880s and 1890s tenders were called, sometimes annually, for the suppression of rabbits on the Reserve. In 1891, the Council requested the Engineer to have the basin at the back of the Mount Rouse Reserve cleaned out (Shire of Mount Rouse, 1964). And in March 1893, it let a contract to Mr. M. Horan for 29 pounds for "cleaning out the natural water basin on Mount Rouse park" (Shire of Mount Rouse, 1964).

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Later planting of conifers on the public reserve reinforced the Picturesque landscaping of Mount Rouse. This planting started in the 1930s with local schoolchildren planting small areas of *Pinus radiata*. It continued in the early 1960s as a revegetation program to halt erosion resulting from the removal of the indigenous vegetation. This coincided with a major effort by the Shire of Mount Rouse to develop the reserve as a tourist destination.

Quarrying has been undertaken on the north-east face of Mount Rouse since the nineteenth century.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.1 Organising Recreation

8.1.3 Developing public parks and gardens

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **CONDITION:**

The built structures are in good condition. The reserve is in good condition, although has been affected by erosion, invasion by weed species and vermin such as rabbits.

## **INTEGRITY:**

High degree of integrity

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is Significant?

The Mount Rouse Crater reserve is located at the Termination of the Mount Rouse Tourist Road, approximately five kilometers south of the township of Penshurst. The reserve consists of 63 hectares around the summit of Mount Rouse, an extinct volcano that has a large crater in the centre. The lower slopes of the reserve have had the indigenous vegetation denuded, and there are substantial plantings of Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata*) on the higher slopes, particularly on the northwestern and northeastern sides. There are some built structures within the reserve, a fire tower located on the summit, steps up to a lookout and a carpark. Major Mitchell named Mount Rouse in 1836, presumably after the early Sydney settler, Richard Rouse who established Rouse Hill. The Mountain was the centre of the 100 square mile 'Reserve', which was the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate from the 1840s. The Protectorate failed and from about 1852 the township of Penshurst began to develop centred on the Protectorate's remaining buildings, now the Police Reserve. The current reserve dates from the 1850s, when land immediately around the crater was reserved as a "Public Park" and a water reserve. The Mount Rouse Reserve was formally gazetted in 1870. Plantings of exotic species, such as buffalo grass, Monterey Pines and the removal of indigenous vegetation have led to serious erosion on the Mountain. A revegetation program started in the 1960s has halted this, planting a number of species of native trees and shrubs. Quarrying has been undertaken on the northeast face of Mount Rouse since the nineteenth century. The reserve is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The Mount Rouse and Crater Reserve is of historical, social and aesthetic significance as a Significant Landscape to Southern Grampians shire and to the township of Penshurst.

Why is it significant?

The Mount Rouse and Crater Reserve is of historical significance for its associations with the very early squatting run of John Cox and with the Aboriginal Protectorate. It is of continuing historical significance for its development as a cultural landmark through various planting programs. It is of social significance for its

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role as a recreation reserve. It is of aesthetic significance for its association with the homestead, Kolor and its landscaping, located on its western slope.

## COMPARISON:

125 Nigretta Falls Reserve, Nigretta Falls Road, Wannon

148 Wannon Falls Reserve, Glenelg Highway, Wannon

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

8/05/2002

## 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
Billis and Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of the Port Phillip District	1974	51, 253
Don Garden	Hamilton, a Western District History	1984	var
James Bonwick, C. E. Sayers, ed.	Western Victoria, Its Geography, Geology and Social Condition	1970	168-9
Marjorie Lenehan, Douglas Pike, ed.	'Rouse, Richard, (1774-1852)' in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 2	1979	401-2
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated	1966	
Paul de Serville	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	171, 491, 520