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# ROCKY MOUNTAIN TUNNEL

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## Location

12 MALAKOFF ROAD BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

## Municipality

INDIGO SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8225-0039

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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Hermes Number 10953

Property Number

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## History

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

The Rocky Mountain tunnel had its origins in a 400ft-long tailrace blasted through rock by the Rocky Mountain Co. (a party of twelve men) in 1859. In 1867, the Rocky Mountain Gold Sluicing Co. was formed and the tailrace deepened and extended, to enable the working of deep ground higher up the valley. When the tailrace was completed in 1871, it was an average 14 ft deep and 6 ft wide, cut through granite for almost half a mile. The mining surveyor at Beechworth called it 'without doubt, the greatest undertaking of the kind in the colony'. The Rocky Mountain claim paid good dividends until 1876 when, as sluicing operations proceeded higher up the creek valley, the ground became deeper and the tailrace was again no longer adequate. The company reorganised as the Rocky Mountain Extended Gold Sluicing Co., increased its capital, and purchased adjacent claims, then cut a tunnel through granite from a point about 600 ft below the Newtown Falls to the company's workings, east of the town. When the tunnel was first mooted, 'it was scoffed at by many people as being wild,

visionary, and impracticable'. It cost £13,500 and was reputed to have established world records for tunnelling in hard rock. It has been claimed that mining would not have continued at Beechworth had it not been for the construction of the Rocky Mountain tunnel.

It was utilised for sluicing and dredging purposes for 45 years and was later used by the defunct Zwar Brothers tannery. It now acts as an outfall drain for the lake and town drainage.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*