
FORMER MCRAE'S BAKERY, CORN AND HAY STORE

Location

146 COLLES ROAD, MOONLIGHT FLAT CASTLEMAINE, MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

Municipality

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7723-1252

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 24, 2019

What is significant?

The former McCrae's bakery, corn and hay store is archaeological and historical significance. The elements of significance include the stone remnants of buildings associated with the bakery/hay store occupation.

How is it significant?

The former McCrae's bakery, corn and hay store is of historical significance as a site associated with the Mount Alexander gold rush.

Why is it significant?

The site is for not only its association with the Mount Alexander Gold Rush, but also the potential to shed light on the McCrae occupation of the site who like many others of the timesought a living as a store and hotel keeper in the Castlemaine area.

There are many archaeological examples of this type of site in the Castlemaine area, and in comparison, this site has low intactness or integrity.

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| Archaeological Significance | Documentary evidence shows that the Robert Burns Hotel was established on site in 1858. By 1860, the site comprised a substantial weatherboard store, bakehouse and a hay and corn store. The current site is a vacant area with fragmentary stone structural remains and no identified historical artefacts. This site demonstrates that there is significant potential for historical archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. |
| Historical Significance | The site is associated with the mid-nineteenth century growth of Castlemaine. Evidence suggest the former structures were likely a hotel, bakehouse and outbuildings. The site presents an opportunity to reveal further information of the early settlement stories of Castlemaine on a local historic level. |
| Hermes Number | 202758 |
| Property Number | |

History

The Castlemaine (Mount Alexander) gold rush commenced in 1851. By October 1852, the population of the Mt Alexander goldfield reached about 30,000. Moonlight and Pennyweight Flats were rushed in early 1852 and a settlement quickly developed there. Money was made on the goldfields not only from finding gold, but by establishing businesses to sell food, merchandise and equipment. Initially the sale of alcohol was prohibited, and the goldfield was rife with sly-grog sellers. In September 1853, the first publicans' licence was granted to an American named Jennings Colliver, who opened the Victoria Hotel on the west side of Urquhart Street, Castlemaine. Hotels were soon established everywhere in the district in great numbers.

Robert McRae's hotel began as a store, possibly as early as 1852. A notice in the Mount Alexander Mail in December 1854 promised a reward for the return of a lost bag when the item was handed in at McRae's store, Moonlight Flat, Forest Creek. The hotel is first mentioned in the report of the Annual (publican) Licencing Meeting held in June 1858; and again the following year - 'R. McCrae, Robert Burns Hotel, Moonlight Flat, Licence Granted'. Robert McCrae in March 1860 advertised for a baker. In the same year the body of Polly Smith was found in the hay store of McRae's. The deceased lived in a tent nearby, in Dirty Dick's Gully, with the man eventually found guilty of her murder.

In August 1860, McRae put his Moonlight Flat properties on the market. The Robert Burns Hotel was described as centrally located at the junction of Pennyweight and Moonlight Flats, had been established for five years, the only hotel in the district, and surrounded by a thriving population of puddlers, miners, quartz reefers. The reason given for sale was that the owner was retiring from the trade. Robert McRae and his family moved to Malmesbury to take up farming. Another sale notice for the hotel, mentioned a store alongside (a substantial weatherboard building, with galvanised iron roof, established 8 years by McRae); as well as a bake-house and hay and corn store established for 5 years.

Early in 1861 there appeared an Insolvent Estate Notice for the estate of Robert McRae, Moonlight Flat. The Robert Burns Hotel was described as a house containing 8 rooms, built of weatherboard and zinc roof; the store 'weatherboard with zinc roof'; and the bake-house and bakery 'strongly built and roofed in iron'. The Annual Licensing Court in 1861 stated that the Robert Burns Hotel was 'unfit and dirty' and in June the license application was refused. A sale notice from June 1863 stated that the property known the Robert Burns Hotel was situated on Allotment 4, of section G2, and the Bakehouse and other improvements on Allotment 5, of Section G2. The Insolvent Court in Melbourne, was still trying to dispose of the properties in 1865, and in 1870 a notice stated that allotments 5 & 6, of section G2, Moonlight Flat were purchased by G.G. Power.

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/>