

Sugar gum, Nillumbik Farm

Sugar gum, Nillumbik Farm

TYPE: Tree

SITE NUMBE 15

ADDRESS: 50 Challenger Street Diamond Creek

MELWAY MAP: 11 K7



DATE: 1856-70? **HERITAGE VALUE:** significant to the Shire

PARISH: Nillumbik, County of Evelyn **ALLOTMENT:** H1/16

AHC CRITERIA: A3, A4, B2

THEMES: 1.1 3

Exploring and claiming land- early freeholds

Farming

ASSOCIATIONS:

John or William Wilson

HISTORY:

Sugar gums ('*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*') are indigenous to the Flinders Ranges, Kangaroo Island and the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. They were cultivated in Victoria from the mid-nineteenth century, following Ferdinand Mueller's identification and naming of the species in 1852, and were commonly planted on farms, both as windbreaks and as shade trees. {Blakely (1965), p. 117} As was the case with many indigenous species, their popularity grew significantly in the period from 1900 until World War I, following the nationalistic fervour that came with Federation. Shelter belt plantings became a distinctive feature of much road reserve in the Western District, owing to the enthusiasm of local landowner J.L. Currie, who vigorously promoted their virtues in the early 1900s.

The absence of adequate documentary evidence makes it difficult to determine the precise age of the large specimen situated at the entrance to Nillumbik Farm, but local residents remember it as being at about its present size in 1930. {Alice Brown, pers. com., June 1997; Jock Ryan, pers. com., June 1997} Given that Sugar gums are capable of growing to a large size within 50 to 60 years under conditions of optimal moisture - in this case made available from its close proximity to the creek and lagoon - it is likely that this specimen was planted at least by c.1870, but possibly earlier. {Identification Unit, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, pers. com., June 1997} Either John or William Wilson, both of whom occupied the property from 1852 until their deaths in 1875 and 1897 respectively, are therefore likely to have planted it. The tree was not included in an 1856 plan that showed the position of several other large trees at Nillumbik Farm. The general history of the site is discussed in more detail in the report on Nillumbik Farm (q.v.).

DESCRIPTION:

This very large and mature specimen of a sugar gum ('*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*') is located at the gateway to a Nillumbik Farm and relates to other mature gums planted in the farm paddocks. The gateway adjoins recent housing development but gains from its connection with the farm's rural setting and the backdrop of Mine Hill.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The sugar gum at the Nillumbik Farm entrance is of regional significance
- as a fine specimen of sugar gum ('*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*') probably planted in the period c.1856-70, at the earliest stages of its use for specimen planting in the Colony
- for its visual and historical link with Nillumbik Farm and with the pioneering Wilson family

REFERENCES:

- J Ryan, comments 30.8.96
- Nillumbik Parish plan, 1856 (CPO).
- Nillumbik Parish plan N69 (10) (CPO).
- Rate books, Shire of Heidelberg: 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1930 (VPRS 2870).
- J.L. Ryan, 'Before You Came: Mines, Myths and Memories of Diamond Creek' (Surrey Hills, 1972).
- 'Nillumbik Farm' undated t.s. (NHS).
- Margaret Brookes and Richard Barley, 'Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855-1889' (Ornamental Plant Collection Association, 1992).
- W.F. Blakely, 'A Key to the Eucalypts' (1965, 3rd ed.).
- Leonard Cronin, 'Key Guide to Australian Trees' (1988).
- Dianne H. Edwards, 'The Diamond Valley Story' (Shire of Diamond Valley, Greensborough, 1979).

Sugar gum, Nillumbik Farm

Identification Unit, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, pers. com., June 1997.

Alice Brown, Diamond Creek, pers. com., June 1997.

Jock Ryan, Diamond Creek, pers. com., June 1997.