

Nillumbik Farm & gum

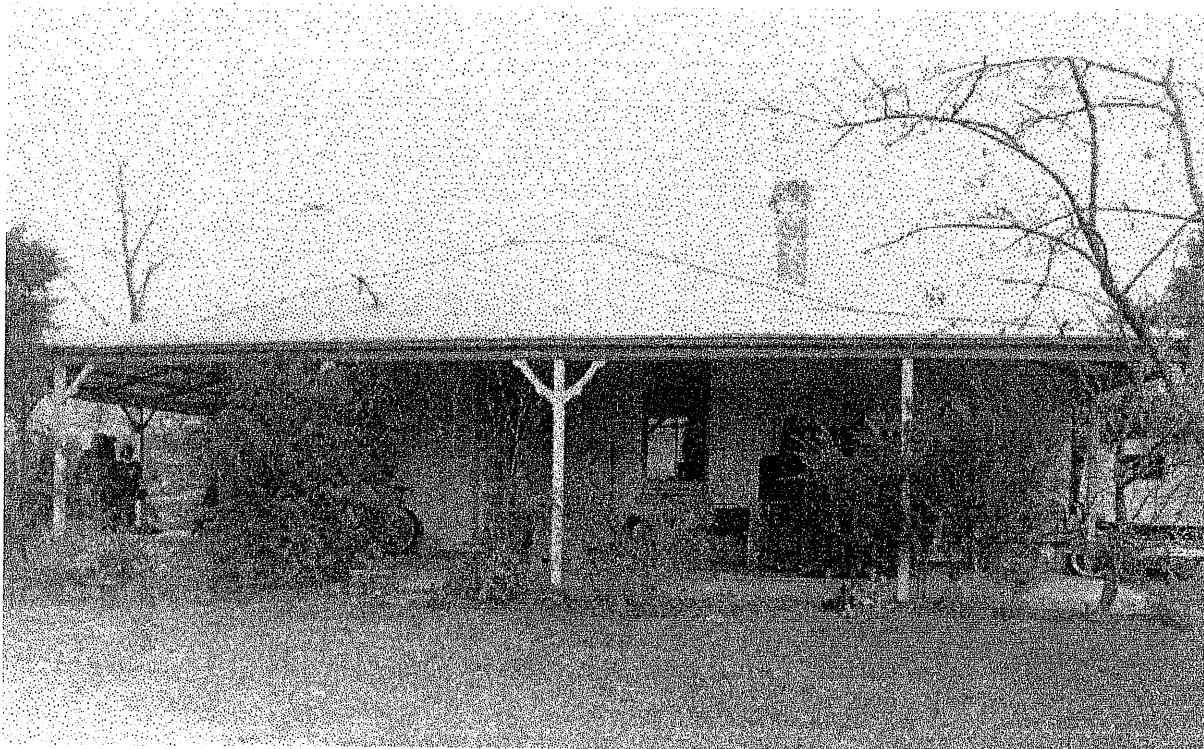
Nillumbik Farm & gum

TYPE: Farm complex; Tree

SITE NUMBE 44

ADDRESS: 50 Challenger Street Diamond Creek

MELWAY MAP: 11 J7



DATE: 1854c- **HERITAGE VALUE:** significant to the Shire

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

AHC CRITERIA: A4, B2, G1, H1

THEMES: 1 3

Farming

ASSOCIATIONS:

John & William Wilson; N. Gillies

HISTORY:

From 1838 this site formed part of the lands taken up by the Henry Arthur, a pastoralist of the Port Phillip Association, and a nephew of George Arthur, governor of Tasmania. Arthur is believed to have built a cottage on the site, but despite a local tradition that he erected part of the existing farmhouse, there is no evidence to substantiate this. Arthur named his farm 'Nillumbik', an Aboriginal word meaning, incongruously, 'bad land'. The site of Nillumbik farm was in fact a important meeting place of the local Wurrundjeri people, owing to the abundant food supplies offered by the creek bank and lagoon {Ryan (1972), pgs. 10 and 13; Edwards (1979), pgs. 13 and 14}

Hugh Larimour occupied the site from 1847, possibly in partnership with John Wilson. It has been claimed that Larimour's son, A.R. Larimour, lived at Nillumbik Farm between 1848 and 1851, and resided in 'a construction with a shingle roof with a cellar with facilities for ham-curing'. {uncited quote in Edwards (1979), p. 23} This suggestion is supported by a plan of Nillumbik Farm (1850) that shows the position of a building marked as 'Larimours', which was presumably his cottage. The siting of the existing farmhouse corresponds roughly with this position {Nillumbik Parish plan N69 (5), 1856; plan Sydney N2, 1850 (CPO)} } An 1857 plan shows a cottage on the allotment marked as 'A.R. Larrimour', although by 1852 the land had been purchased by John Wilson. {plan of Nillumbik, Roll plan 28, 1857 (CPO)} John Wilson may have also occupied the cottage on the property at this time. He had immigrated from Essex, England, and worked in Victoria as a butcher and carter. John and his eldest son William ran cattle on lands at Diamond Creek in the late 1840s, and later opened a butchery business. {Herbert (no date)}

John Wilson purchased the 86 acres comprising Nillumbik Farm on 31 May 1852 and managed the farm with his son William. {Nillumbik Parish plan, c.1900 (CPO)} He reputedly built a log causeway across the swamp and creek, as well as a three-roomed wattle-and-daub cottage. This may have been an addition to, or rebuilding of, Larimour's cottage. Local tradition maintains that the present kitchen and cellar date back to the 1850s. {Ryan, comments, 30 August 1996} A parish plan of 1856 shows the layout of farm buildings and a cultivated field on Wilson's property, indicating considerable development since the previous plan of c.1852. Wilson had mortgaged the property for over four times its purchase value in 1854, suggesting that substantial improvements had been made by that time. John Wilson died in 1875 aged 79, and William ran the property until his death in 1897. {Herbert (no date); Ryan (1972), p. 45} John Wilson's wife Martha, who died in 1864, was buried on the property. {Jock Ryan, pers. com., June 1997}

In 1915 the ownership of Nillumbik Farm transferred from Mrs M. Buchanan to L. Moore. The land was by this stage subdivided and re-designated as 'lot H1. The flood-prone creek frontage now formed a separate title, making Nillumbik Farm marginally smaller in area at approximately 71 acres. In 1920 it was owned by D. Groves and in 1925 the owner was George Fleming. From at least 1925 Fleming rented the property to Frank Johnstone, who ran a dairy farm here. The subsequent lessee, N. Gillies, continued dairy-farming from at least 1935. Gillies purchased the property (70 acres 1 rood and 24 perches) on 13 March 1947. {RB, 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935; Nillumbik Parish plan} Allotment H1 was subdivided in 1963, creating residential lots along the south side of Challenger Street. [LP 57641 (1963)]. At this time it was owned by J.I. Collins. {see surveyed plan of 1962, file 6538, Section 99, Land Titles Office} Nillumbik Farm was subdivided further in 1965. {LP 69796 (1965)} The McLennans purchased the property in 1966 and continue to run it as a dairy farm. {Alice Brown, pers. com., June 1997; valuation records, Shire of Nillumbik} The property was later purchased by the Shire of Diamond Valley

and is leased for farming. It is currently owned by the Shire of Nillumbik.

DESCRIPTION:

This is an altered hipped-roof and verandahed face brick (over-painted, slop moulded) farm house set in exotic pasture above the creek flats (or lagoon) well south of Challenger Street. New subdivisions have been made nearby. Aboriginal artifacts have been found in the vicinity and old track formations shown on early plans can still be seen in paddocks. Two big depressions (one with a gum growing out of it) just above one of these old tracks reputedly denote the clay pits used for the bricks. The bricks are laid in English bond, well-burnt.

The interior has some early joinery (fine panel moulds to passage doors) but much of it is late 19th century (architraves) or recent. The verandah has been filled-in on the west and rebuilt in a different roof profile but similar bracket forms, and the timber floor replaced in concrete; thresholds are basalt. The former detached kitchen site can be seen as a flat area in the rear lawn and only some (if any) planting may have derived from earlier times. At least one well is thought to have been near the house, now filled in.

There is also a large gum to the north of the house, relating visually to the sugar gum planted at the gate.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Although altered, Nillumbik Farm is of regional significance

- for the site's connection with the early settlement of Port Phillip in the 1830s and with Henry Arthur of the Port Phillip Association and its potential for archaeological examination
- for the site's association with early pioneers, Hugh and A.R. Larimour, and the house with John and William Wilson.
- as one of the earliest surviving farm house buildings in the district
- for its surviving fine joinery details in the house, evocative of early construction
- for the still rural setting, nearby traces of former structures, the line of former roadways and mature trees, all related to the early history of the district

REFERENCES:

Edwards(1979) pp 13 (end of Challenger), 23, 30

Nillumbik Historical Society notes, copy received from J Ryan 7.96 cites Mrs Sue Collins as occupier whose father also cites Gillies (dairyman) family as early occupier this century and source- last known was married to a chemist of East Ivanhoe in the late 1960s

Nillumbik Parish plans N69 (5), c.1852; 1856; N69, 1901; N69 (10) (CPO).

J.L. Ryan, 'Before You Came: Mines, Myths and Memories of Diamond Creek' (Surrey Hills, 1972).

Valuation records, Shire of Nillumbik.

Jock Ryan, pers. com., May 1997, June 1997.

Dianne H. Edwards, 'The Diamond Valley Story' (Shire of Diamond Valley, Greensborough, 1979).

Rate books, Shire of Heidelberg: 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935 (VPRS 2870).

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

'Sands & McDougall Victorian Directory': 1947.

Nillumbik Farm, undated t.s. (NHS).

Ewen Herbert, Wilson family history, undated (copy held by NHS).

Alexander Sutherland, 'Victoria and its Metropolis' (1888), vol. II, p. 415.