

BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.

Ref: 88A

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

NAME: "Davidson Signs Bacchus Marsh".**PREVIOUS NAME:** "Osage orange Avenue", "Simon's Avenue".**ADDRESS:** 22 Taverner Street, Maddingley.**TITLE DETAILS:****USE:** Private driveway**SIGNIFICANT DATE:** c1883 **CONSTRUCTION DATE:** 1950s (house) **SOURCE:****CRITERIA:** H6; Ael; Arl; So2 **HISTORIC THEME:** Agriculture**CONDITION:** Apparently good. **INTACTNESS:** Good. **THREATS:** -**SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:**

PLANTING FORMATION.

SIGNIFICANCE:**TYPE:** HISTORIC. ARCHITECTURAL. SOCIAL. AESTHETIC.**LEVEL:** REGIONAL.**DESIGNATION EXISTING:** Nil**RECOMMENDED CONTROL/NOMINATION:** PLANNING SCHEME. RNE.**SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER****MAP NO:** U4.08 & U4.09 **SURVEY:** RP, JS **DATE:** 6.4.94 **NEGS:** 29.4-6

HISTORY: The Osage orange¹ arrived in Australia in the 1850s and was promoted initially by the seedsman William Law in his nursery catalogues and a booklet *The Osage Orange for Hedge Fences* in 1862.

The railways and farms in the States now present thousands of miles of this formidable fence and the time is not far distant when every other must give place to it.²

The booklet gives a detailed explanation of how to propagate, plant out and maintain the hedge.

A.C. Simon planted this avenue of Osage orange trees in about 1883, creating an imposing entrance to his property from Taverner Street. A pioneer orchardist of the district, Simon had sent to America for seed, for which he paid 25 shillings per pound (\$5.55 per kilo).³ Initially delayed because of the American Civil War, the seeds arrived in Australia at the conclusion of hostilities⁴ and in the first year of planting, registered growth of six to ten feet (1.8-3m):

the fruit is of orange colour and shape but of larger size and considerable weight, as it is filled with a creamy pith of viscid character, which probably has some commercial value but what it is not known.⁵

The avenue was nevertheless commended for its ornamental qualities, if not for its commercial uses, and for several decades was valued by the community as a symbol of the Shire's importance as a fruit-growing area. It was sufficiently famous as "Simon's Avenue, Bacchus Marsh" to be depicted on a postcard.⁶

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: Both sides of the driveway and the eastern boundary of the property are lined with at least fifty(?) mature trees, the arch over the driveway forming an avenue. The house itself is "Cape Cod" style, built in the 1950s.

¹ Osage oranges (*Maclura aurantiaca*) are a North American tree 6 - 18 m height, often used as hedges here. The fruit has an orange milky juice of unpleasant odour so is seldom eaten. *The Illustrated Chambers Encyclopaedia*, Sydney 1926, vol. vii, p.650.

Margaret Brookes, "Colonial Plants. Osage Orange. *Maclura Pomifera*", *Australian Garden History*. Vol. 6, No.5, March/April 1995, pp.5&6.

Note: Osage orange was referred to as *Maclura aurantiaca* before 1906 and *Maclura Pomifera* after that date. It is named for the Osage Indians who use the wood for making bows and the fruit as war paint.

² W. Law & Co., *The Osage Orange for Hedge Fences*, Melbourne 1862, p.4.

³ Williams, *A History of Bacchus Marsh and Its Pioneers*, p.3. Moore and Oomes, *Bacchus Marsh: A Pictorial Chronicle*, p.83.

⁴ This could not quite be so. The American War of Independence lasted from 1861 until 1865. It may mean the avenue is eighteen years earlier than stated.

⁵ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 22 June 1895.

⁶ W.T.P. postcard. Held, RP.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: There are 210 Trees along the Ovens Highway outside Everton, near Wangaratta, clearly planted as a hedge, before 1895. These still provide an effective stock shelter and windbreak. There are hedge remnants outside St Arnaud, around vineyards at Rutherglen, a row of 14 trees at Moma at Heide, Bulleen and a tree in the Systems Garden at University of Melbourne.

SIGNIFICANCE: A long private driveway avenue and boundary windbreak, of at least fifty(?) Osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*) trees planted from seeds imported from the United States in 1883(?) probably originally intended as hedges.

The avenue has regional historical significance as a landscaping practice, pioneering of its type, and now a relatively intact survival, in good condition. It has local aesthetic significance for its scenic beauty and "architectural" significance as an extraordinary example of planting configuration. Finally it has local social significance as a well known landmark, particularly earlier, represented on representative views and postcards of Bacchus Marsh.

INTACTNESS: Good.

CONDITIONS & THREATS: Apparently good.



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DRIVEWAY
ENTRANCE

