

Heritage Overlay No.: 046
Citation No.: 073
Place: House, 1376-1432 Calder Highway

Other Names of Place: None
Location: 1376-1432 Calder Highway Diggers Rest (Lot 1 TP 381510)
Critical Dates: Construction: unknown (c.1910); Relocation: c.1940
Existing Heritage Listings: ‘Local Interest’ (Rural Heritage Study)¹
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The house at 1376-1432 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, is significant as a predominantly intact example of a rudimentary transitional Late Victorian and Federation style. Built in the early twentieth century and moved to the present site around the time of the Second World War, the house shows signs of substantial deterioration in the weatherboard wall cladding and front verandah in particular. The main roof has been recently reclad in corrugated sheet metal roofing.

¹ Johnston, C, ‘Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne’ (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), Site M65, pp.34, 172, 174

The house at 1376-1432 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). Although relocated, it demonstrates original design qualities of a rudimentary transitional Late Victorian and Federation style. These qualities include the simple gambrel roof form that traverses the site, together with the hipped convex verandah that projects towards the road. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, corrugated sheet metal roof cladding, face red brick chimney, narrow eaves, central timber framed doorway with four panelled timber door, twelve paned timber framed double hung windows, timber verandah posts with simple timber capitals, and the timber fretwork verandah valance.

The house at 1376-1432 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). It is associated with two of the Diggers Rest industrial proprietors, Robinson Brothers (Chaff Mill), and EA Tame (Wire Wire Fence Co.). It is by far the oldest and most intact house remaining in the town of Diggers Rest. It is prominently situated, on the Calder Highway, close to the road, and relatively isolated. The coppiced gums contribute a rural character to the place.

Overall, the house at 1376-1432 Calder Highway is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house off the Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, has a rural setting. The site is bound at the front by an introduced cyclone wire fence, approximately 1800 mm high. Some mature eucalypts are located to the side and rear of the house and there is little (if any) garden, apart from open grassed areas and some side shrubbery. Small piles of rubble are located under the front verandah.

The symmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, rudimentary transitional Late Victorian and Federation styled house is characterised by a simple gambrel roof form that traverses the site, together with a hipped convex verandah that projects towards the road. These roof forms are clad in corrugated galvanised sheet metal roofing. An early face red brick chimney adorns the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves.

The symmetry of the design is accentuated by the early central timber framed doorway with an early four panelled timber door, and the flanking early twelve paned timber framed double hung windows.

An early feature of the design is the front verandah. It is supported by timber posts with simple timber capitals and is adorned with a timber fretwork valance.

Towards the rear is a skillion wing and two round corrugated galvanised steel water tanks, while at the side is a recent ice refrigerator.

The house is sited amongst coppice gums, and adjacent to (south side of) the Diggers Rest Auto Repairs and Service.

History:

The house is situated on part of Crown Allotment 9, Parish of Holden, a square mile purchased from the Crown by ‘Murphy and Ryan’ in the 1850s.² The present allotment is approximately 20 hectares, situated detached from the rest of the allotment in the 1850s by the creation of the old Calder Highway and the Melbourne to Mount Alexander and Echuca Railway. The property never appears to have been further subdivided; the allotment contains, in close proximity, the house, an auto repair garage, and the former Tame Wire Fence factory. The house could not be identified in ratebooks.

In the mid twentieth century the property on which it is located was owned by Mr EA Tame, who established the wire factory in the early twentieth century. The motor garage was also established adjacent to it, probably just after the Second World War. Mr Charles Watson remembers that the house was originally part of Robinson Brothers’ Diggers Rest Chaff Mill business, and was situated on the Toolern Road, near what became Tame Street, on the opposite side of the railway.³ After the chaff mill burnt down in 1939, the Robinsons decided not to rebuild it, but to concentrate on their Melton South mill.⁴ The former mill managers house was shifted to 2 Exford Road Melton South (Place No.193), to which Doug Robinson and his family moved.⁵

The house appears to have been moved to its present site by Mr EA Tame, who owned the site, sometime after the closure of the Robinson Bros. Diggers Rest business. A 1916 map confirms that there was no house on the site in 1916.⁶ A building shown near the present site in 1938 may have been the Tame Wire Fence factory rather than the present house.⁷

In living memory the house has always been used in conjunction with the garage. The first mechanic remembered was Alan Jones and family, who lived in the house in the period around 1950, and the last was Eddie and May Walsh, who worked the garage and lived in the house until c.1985, when Mr Solviero, the present proprietor, took over the garage.⁸

The house has been vacant since the Walshs occupation. It was identified as a place of local interest in the 1994 Rural Heritage Study conducted by Context Pty Ltd, which suggested that it had been built c.1910 (although with some earlier features), and was externally largely intact. Its siting, adjoining coppiced gums suggested a farming history, according to this report.⁹ The house does not appear to have significantly altered externally since it was photographed in 1994. It remains adjacent to the Diggers Rest Auto Repairs and Service, with which it has been associated since its relocation to the present site.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Farming’, ‘Community’

² Parish Plan, Parish of Holden.

³ Mr Charles Watson, personal conversation, 8/2/2006

⁴ Vines, Gary, ‘Chaff-mills in Melbourne. Historical and archaeological survey of chaff-mills and related industries in Melbourne’s West, Living Museum of the West’ (Department of Conservation and Environment, 1987), p.31

⁵ Mr Ben Davis, personal conversations (J Bilszta, September 2005, D Moloney, 8/2/2006)

⁶ Shire Map Series: Parish of Holden (1916)

⁷ Shire Map Series: Parish of Holden (1938)

⁸ Watson, *op cit*; Mr Tony Solviero, personal conversation, 8/2/2006

⁹ Johnston, *loc cit*.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

Historically, this is the earliest, and by far the most intact of the early houses remaining in the township of Diggers Rest. Other old houses in Diggers Rest are Place No.76, an older style cottage moved to its present site in the early twentieth century for a Tame Factory employee, and now with aluminium cladding, extension, and a new tiled roof; Place No.83, a weatherboard and asbestos clad house; and Place No.93 (*Athenry*), a 1920s weatherboard house altered fantastically c.1930s-40s with ‘folly’ towers of different historical styles by EA Tame.

Architecturally, the most comparable dwelling in the Melton Shire with the house off the Calder Highway is *Gollers Court*, 1366 Melton Highway (Place.No.120). It shares a similar gambrel roof form that traverses the site, together with a projecting front verandah (skillion in form, as opposed to the hipped bullnosed verandah of the subject dwelling). The verandah valance at *Gollers Court* is also cast iron. Both buildings share a familiar composition at the front, with central timber framed doorway and flanking timber framed windows (*Gollers Court* has two sets of windows flanking the front doorway). The subject dwelling is of standard timber weatherboard construction, while *Gollers Court* is of in an unusual camerated or reinforced concrete construction. Both buildings are in fair-poor condition.

Condition:

Poor

Integrity:

Moderate (has been relocated)

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>