

Heritage Overlay No.: 045
Citation No.: 069
Place: Sanger Grave, 1286-1292 Calder Highway

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: 1286-1292 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest (Reserve east of the railway line).
Critical Dates: Death: 1854; Original headstone c.1856; Reinterment of remains, reconstruction of headstone, and construction of present monument: c.1992
Existing Heritage Listings: None.
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The JA Sanger grave at 1286-1292 Calder Highway Diggers Rest is of heritage significance as a rare, possibly unique, monument to the the goldrush travellers who walked to the Mount Alexander and other central Victorian goldfields in the great rushes of the early 1850s. Sanger and his mate were killed when the tilt dray under which they were sleeping tipped onto them when its back prop was displaced, possibly by horses (or perhaps thieves) pulling at feed in the dray, or else by intoxicated revellers as a prank. In c.1992 the grave, threatened with

destruction, was relocated to a park beside the former Highway in Diggers Rest. The brick monument now contains the cremated ashes of Sanger, and a reconstruction of the badly weathered original headstone. It is a rare and important place, indicative of the many burials that were carried out with minimal formality and outside reserved cemeteries in the colony's frontier days.

The JA Sanger grave, at 1286-1292 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). It is associated with one of the most dazzling goldrushes in world history, and with Australia's largest goldrush. The throng pushing up Mount Alexander Road in the early 1850s was of historic magnitude, and faced hardships and dangers of sometimes epic proportions. The trip up to the diggings was an integral and distinctive part of the goldrush phenomenon, and memorable one to the diggers. Most diggers, like Sanger, travelled the road on foot, camping out and in poor weather sleeping under drays.

This may be the only marked grave surviving to testify to those who fell by the wayside on the Mount Alexander Road in the early 1850s. While many died on the journey as a result of mishap, sickness and murder, and were buried beside the road, few headstones appear to have been erected, and none are known to survive.

The grave also constitutes evidence of the considerable American presence on and contribution to the Victorian goldfields, as well as to the international dimension of the goldrush phenomenon. The Americans were one of the many 'foreign' (non-British) minorities on the goldfields. Reported visits to the grave by American servicemen during the Second World War demonstrates its significance as a *de facto* memorial to the Americans in the goldrushes.

The history of the grave, including its possible association with the name of the township of Diggers Rest, has been a subject of interest for Victorians over many years, as evidenced by articles and debates in major metropolitan newspapers during the 1930s and 40s. The relative proximity of the Diggers Rest Hotel (the more likely origin of the township name) to the grave is historically significant, as the bodies of the diggers were probably taken to the hotel after the accident.

The JA Sanger grave at 1286-1292 Calder Highway, Diggers Rest, is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1), as evident in the local community's maintenance of the grave, and careful relocation of it to an accessible and prominent location in the township.