

**CALIFORNIA GULLY NATIONAL SCHOOL
SCHOOL
8 SCHOOL STREET**

SURVEY DATE: 1991-2

STUDY GRADING: B

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1862-

FIRST OWNER : FAWCETT, RICHARD



CITATION:

History

Richard Fawcett opened a non-vested National School near this site in 1859. It was slab built and soon became inadequate for the growing needs of the community. A brick school 9.1 metres by 6.4 metres replaced it in 1862, with a further classroom 15.2 metres by 5.5 metres being added in 1865. In 1872 it was known as California Gully State School No. 123, which name it retained until the new school on Belltopper Hill replaced it in 1883.

New rooms on either side of the 1862 facade were apparently added during the 1880s. The official opening as the California Gully Mechanics Institute took place in December, 1883. The present verandah was added in 1891 to the design of W.C. Vahland.

**BENDIGO & EAGLEHAWK HERITAGE STUDY-SIGNIFICANT SITES
GRAEME BUTLER & ASSOCIATES**

In recent years it has been used as a public hall and polling booth. This is an important building in the history of California Gully, so that its present state leaves room for concern regarding its future¹.

Description

Reflecting its various uses with its varied form, this building appears to have been once a parapeted brick verandahless structure with a simple triangular pediment to its main facade. The door was central to window pairs on either side and a cemented panel placed above it bore the building's name. Today this elevation is partly Colonial bonded red brick and partly stuccoed (under the verandah). At the rear was a steeply gabled schoolroom, also in Colonial bond brick with a rubble stone base.

With, or after the advent of the Mechanics Institute (1883), came the addition of a wing at the south-east corner and side, using part Flemish, part cavity bonding and cream and red-rubbed bricks at openings and wall corners. Black and cream bricks were also used for diamond motifs on the upper wall and a cast-iron verandah, with a hipped convex roof form, extended from the new projecting bay across the front.

Today a simple picket front fence is probably near the original fence form. Pepper trees and elms support the building's period expression. Old signs, some offering rewards (£2) and commemorative plaques survive on the front elevation.

External Integrity

Shown in an early photograph much as it is now (given the above development stages), since openings have been bricked-in and part-rendered over; signs have faded ('Free Library' sign above diamond motifs); windows have been replaced with louvres (front wings); the door replaced; glazing has gone from rear wing windows and an unrelated toilet block has been erected on the north.

Context

The building is unrelated to its immediate context, presumably having once adjoined mining activity on its west side. However, old houses nearby, at or near 285-287 Eaglehawk Road, help reinforce the understanding of the site's role as a former community centre.

Significance

The building's two development stages are both apparent today, both of them representing important phases in the locality's history, a history which is tied to important gold mining sites in a State context. As a long-term public building it holds the memories of many past and present residents in the area and, because of its high integrity to the two construction stages, is easily identifiable with these memories.

1 Butcher & Flanders, p.115