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# PETER AH SEN SAWMILL

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## Location

SPLITTERS RANGE TRACK TONGIO, EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Municipality

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8423-0014

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO363

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 6, 2005

### What is significant?

Peter Ah Sen's Sawmill was among the first mills to be established in the Omeo district, and the only known sawmill in Victoria to have been licensed to a Chinese-born person. The site is also the only example known in Victoria of a sawmill powered by an overshot water wheel which has significant remains. Peter Ah Sen operated the mill between 1881 and 1886. The site includes a dam on Gap Creek and a simple earthen channel to deliver water to the mill. The pit for the water wheel is nine metres long and three metres deep, with a tail race connecting the wheel pit with the creek. Stone chimney mounds represent the remains of three dwellings on the site.

### How is it significant

Peter Ah Sen's Sawmill is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Peter Ah Sen's Sawmill is historically significant as the first and only sawmill site licensed to a Chinese-born

person in Victoria. Peter Ah Sen was born in China around 1827. He emigrated to Australia at an unknown date and was among the first Chinese to arrive in Omeo. Ah Sen achieved success as a gold miner, hotel-keeper, sawmiller and storekeeper, and was headman in his local community. The site has the potential to provide significant information about the Chinese in the Omeo district in particular and in Victoria more generally.

Peter Ah Sen's Sawmill is archaeologically important for its potential to yield evidence about the technological history of sawmilling, and the cultural history of Chinese workers at a forest settlement.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

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| Interpretation of Site | THE DAM SUPPLIED WATER FOR THE MILL'S WATER WHEEL, DELIVERED VIA A RACE APPROX 110M LONG. THE SITE OF THE SAWBENCH HAS BEEN DESTROYED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPLITTER RANGE TRACK. THE WATER WHEEL, GIVEN THE DEPTH AND LACK OF LINING, WAS PROBABLY OVER-SHOT. A TAIL RACE, 33M LONG CONNECTS THE WHEEL PIT WITH GAP CREEK. STONE CHIMNEY MOUNDS REPRESENT THE REMAINS OF THREE DWELLINGS ON THE SITE. |
| Hermes Number          | 12671   |
| Property Number        |   |

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## History

THE SAWMILL WAS ESTABLISHED BY ELIZABETH MCQUEEN IN 1880, POSSIBLY THE FIRST SAWMILL IN THE OMEO DISTRICT. PETER AH SEN ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE MILL IN 1881. BORN IN CHINA C.1827, AH SEN WAS HEADMAN OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY AROUND OMEO, ENJOYING SUCCESS IN GOLD MINING AND HOTEL-KEEPING. HE SOLD THE MILL IN 1886 BY WHICH TIME THE AREA WAS CUT OUT AND THE MILL MOVED FURTHER UP GAP CREEK.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*