
FORMER RAILWAY HOTEL, BOX HILL

Location

950-956 WHITEHORSE ROAD BOX HILL, WHITEHORSE CITY

Municipality

WHITEHORSE CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0518

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 22, 2022

What is significant?

The site has the potential to contain moderate archaeological significance and moderate archaeological potential due to its association with the developing character of the Box Hill city centre from the 1880s boom through to the present day. The Railway Hotel was constructed in 1882 by Silas Padgham. After various building alterations over the years, by 1911 the building featured nearly 20 rooms including large private and public bars, parlours, lounges, dining rooms, bedrooms and private living apartments. The hotel permanently closed in 1921 as a result of the Temperance Movement, and the building was converted into shops. A combination of small local business and larger franchises have operated from the space throughout the 20th and 21st centuries and there were a number of internal modifications throughout the years.

The site is of local historical significance as a representative of the developing commercial centre of Box Hill and its changing character from the 1880s land boom through to the present day. Additionally, it is significant in representing late 19th and early 20th Century working women, as the license holders of the venue were primarily women.

How is it significant?

Why is it significant?

Interpretation of Site	Mid 19th C: Land use is presumed to be agricultural 1882-1921: The Railway Hotel functioned as a recreational space for socialising and entertaining and is one of the key early buildings in the Box Hill settlement. Various community groups held meetings in the upstairs rooms, and the hotel also featured residential quarters. The hotel is also representative of working in the late 19th and early 20th century, particularly working women. The publicans or licensees of the Railway Hotel throughout its 39 years of operation were primarily women; Annie Meader, Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Stutt and Mrs. M. F. Stewart. 1921 – Present: The Railway Hotel closed as a result of the temperance movement and the space was subsequently converted into shop fronts. A combination of small local business and larger franchises have operated from the space throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.
Heritage Act Categories	Registered archaeological place,
Hermes Number	208553
Property Number	

History

Crown land auctions took place from 1851 in the parish of Nunawading, which includes the Box Hill area, particularly to the north of Whitehorse Road. Allotments to the south of Whitehorse Road were sold in 1853-1854. The primary use of the land was agricultural comprising market gardens and orchards (AJM JV, 2021). Through the 1850s and 1860s services began to be established in Box Hill including the White Horse hotel, the post office and small shops. The character of Box Hill began to change during the 1880s land boom. The railway line to Box Hill was constructed in 1882 which led to increased commercial and residential development, concentrated around the station and Whitehorse Road (AJM JV, 2021).

The site is located within Crown Allotment 29A, which was purchased by William Hill in 1853 (Figure 1) (Coleman Architects, 2012). The Railway Hotel was constructed in 1882 by Silas Padgham, an early landowner in Box Hill (Allom Lovell & Associates, 1999). Padgham leased the hotel and the land between it and the railway line to Alfred Rawlings a butcher and local landowner. Rawlings sub-let the hotel to Annie Meader (Alves, 2010). The Railway Hotel license was transferred between Annie Meader and Francis Gromann several times throughout the 1880s (*The Argus*, 15 June 1886, p:10, *The Argus*, 6 March 1888, p:11). Annie Meader was the licensee in 1884 when she was charged with not keeping the lamp above the hotel door lit (*The Age*, 22 March, 1884 p:10).

The Gromann and Meader families had close ties, Annie Meader married Albert Gromann in 1888 and her sister Louie had married John Groman in 1887 (The Australasian Sketcher, 4th October 1888, p:158, The Australasian, 24th December 1887, p:4). In 1890 Frank Groman is recorded as the publican of the Railway Hotel (Lemon, 1978).

By July 1902 the *Box Hill Reporter* was running advertisements for Mrs. Stutt's Railway Hotel (25th July 1902, p:4). Mrs. Stutt had taken over the license from Mrs. Watson (Box Hill Reporter, 29 March 1912, p:4). In the 1905 Plan of Box Hill Township the hotel is labelled Stutt's Railway Hotel and is depicted as an L shaped building in the northeastern corner of the property with a large yard to the south and west (Figure 2).

Tuesday 27th September 1910 the partial demolition of the Stutt's Railway hotel commenced to facilitate the construction of a 'modern two storied building' including a tower at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Station Street. A second storey had recently been added to the southern end of the hotel and this portion of the building was maintained (Box Hill Reporter, 30th September 1910, p:5). Rebuilding parts of the Railway Hotel was completed in January 1911, the new building featured nearly 20 rooms including large private and public bars, parlours, lounges, dining rooms, bedrooms and private living apartments.

On April 1st 1912 Mrs. M. F. Stewart took over the license from Mrs. Stutt (Box Hill Reporter, 29 March 1912, p:4). Mrs. Stewart remained the licensee until at least 1918 (Box Hill Reporter, 24 May 1918 p:3).

The Box Hill branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed by Rose Ellingsworth in 1889 (Alves, 2010). The Temperance movement gained traction in Nunawading through the late 19th and early 20th Century with a variety of groups including a Temperance Brass band, the Junior Rechabites (a Methodist organisation for young people) and the Box Hill Temperance Mission. In 1916 the efforts of the Temperance movement were acknowledged statewide with the introduction of reduced opening hours for hotels (Alves, 2010). The local options 'No License' vote was held in 1921, which required 60% majority in each district. The vote only achieved the majority in two electoral districts: Boroondara and Nunawading (Alves, 2010). As a result the Railway Hotel closed forever in Box Hill.

Once the hotel closed its doors, the ground floor was converted into shops. Despite the conversion, the building retained many original features including leadlight windows, old counters and chairs in the upstairs rooms, underground cellars and toilets along the back lane (1993, Burwood History Group Meeting No 56: Minutes, 3 Feb, p:2). James Tait relocated his drapery store to the shop in Box Hill in ca. 1919 and the location has been known locally as Tait's Corner ever since. James and his wife Jessie ran the store (1993, Burwood History Group Meeting No 56 minutes, 3 Feb, p:2).

A 1922 advertisement for the auction of allotments on Bruce Street, indicates temporary Shire Offices in the location of the former Railway Hotel (Figure 3).

In 1923 extensive alterations and additions were made to the Railway Hotel building to allow a variety of businesses to operate from the premises (Box Hill Reporter, 21 September, p:5). Following the renovation of the hotel Roach and Trebilcock's Drapery occupied the corner store, whilst Mrs Christie's Box Hill Coffee Palace occupied the residential section next door (Lemon, 1978).

The 1928 MMBW plan (Figure 4) depicts a large masonry building with two timber verandahs/outbuildings adjacent to the south side of the building and a separate narrow rectangular timber out building in the southwestern corner of the property. A later 1965 plan of the building indicates this narrow rectangular building is toilets (Figure 7). The rate books indicate the building had been connected to reticulated sewerage by at least the 1940s, however, it is likely that prior to this the narrow outbuilding housed either cesspits or pan toilets. The City of Box Hill East Ward, Rate Valuation books from the 1940s and 50s divide the building into 4 addresses and various rooms, as outlined in the table below. The estate of Edmanson & Ward are recorded as owners of the entire building at this time, followed by Whitehorse Rd. Corner Pty. Ltd.

The building occupies a consistent footprint in the 1931, 1945 and 1954 aerial photos (Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 8) and the 1965 plan. The valuation by Robt. H. Morely & Son describes the building in 1965 as "a single and two storey brick building with corrugated iron roof and internal partitions a mixture of brick and lath and plaster. A cantilever verandah runs the full length of the street frontages and services such as gas, electricity, water and sewer are connected" (Robt. H. Morely & Son, 1965). By 1975, aerial imagery demonstrates that the majority of the rear yard has been encompassed by structures (Figure 9).

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.

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