Steiglitz Precinct
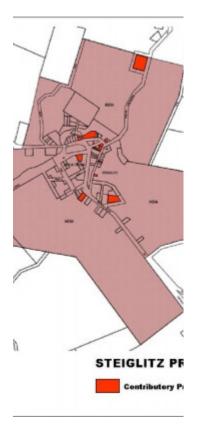

Steiglitz Heritage Precinct
Map

Location

Steiglitz Road Steiglitz, Golden Plains Shire

Municipality

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO34

Heritage Listing

Golden Plains Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The remote former gold town, Steiglitz is located in the Steiglitz National Park west of the Anakie Hills, north-west of Geelong. It comprises a small number of remnant buildings of various types, some infrastructure and the irregular street layout all within an open area of hillside. There are also many alluvial and deep shaft mining sites with associated mullock heaps. The broader landscape includes the Sutherland Creek valley and views to bush beyond. The cemetery is located a short distance to the south of the town. The precinct is adjacent to the Brisbane Ranges National Park on the north east and farming land to the south west. Its only source of water is the Sutherland Creek.

The town's name came from the von Stieglitz family, early district pioneers, who changed the spelling of their name to 'Steiglitz' in 1872. Baron Frederick von Stieglitz, eldest son of Karl von Stieglitz, was born in Ireland in 1803. His father came originally from Bavaria. Frederick and his brothers migrated to Tasmania in 1830 but, in 1836, came to Victoria. The pastoral run, Durdidwarrah, on the Moorabool River, was taken up in 1842 by Charles von Stieglitz. The property included the area which later became known as Steiglitz.

The first traces of gold were found in the Anakie Hills in September 1851 but the first substantial rush to the Steiglitz area was in c1856. Early established reefs were the New Chum, Boxing, Scotchman's, Cooper's and New Hole, while alluvial gold was found in the Sutherland's Creek. By May 1856, about 750 ozs a week were being produced and the population of the area had risen to 1,000. Many new reefs were opened up - the Portuguese, Birmingham, Satchwell's, Yankee, Victoria, Ironbark, Hanover, Gibraltar, Italian'. The mines were located towards the east side of the town. It was said that the quartz reefs were beyond comparison the richest of any in Australia so far as average yield per ton of quartz was concerned. This would have marked the beginning of the denuding of the landscape for structural timber and fuel.

A sergeant and three troopers were appointed there in February 1856 when J. M. Clow became the first Police Magistrate. At first he held court in the makeshift premises of Vale's Hotel. In January 1858, however, a first Court House, 'a rickety timber building' was constructed on land at the rear of the existing Court House, opened in June 1875. It was designed by Public Works Department architects, H.A. Williams and S. White and built by Thomas Ward of East Melbourne. This remains the most dominant building in the precinct. It retains a high degree of integrity and is in excellent condition.

A small Steiglitz township began to take shape. In 1860 it was surveyed for the Office of Lands and Survey and the proposed streets were named after legal dignitaries in Melbourne. As well as the two bridges, this plan indicates some six named buildings but also some thirty other structures. None of these are square to the proposed title boundaries. Presumably, in the typical manner, tents and huts were also scattered across the hillside and in the creek valley close to miners' claims. Little if any evidence of these survives above ground. There were soon four hotels, including Scott's Hotel, which is now a private residence. A government School (No 572) had been opened in 1857 on the southern hill at Steiglitz. The following year, 1858, School (No 588) New Chum was opened by Dr Cairns. This timber building, located off the Steiglitz Durdidwarrah Road to the north of the town, was used as a school until 1960 when it became a Youth Hostel and it is now a private residence. There were also by early 1858 four denominational schools, Wesleyan, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian, catering for 200 children. The timber St Paul's Church of England, converted from a schoolroom in 1869, survives and St Thomas's Catholic Church since relocated, survives adjacent to the first or 'Pioneer' cemetery across the eastern bridge.

The Borough of Steiglitz was formed in 1866 and began to build infrastructure such as gutters and drains, some of which survive. A second survey of Steiglitz was made in 1867, when a few business sites were planned on Boxing Reef. However, by January 1859, the yield of gold was falling. It became clear, too, that the high cost of

crushing would have to be reduced. It had become profitable only to process the richest of the quartz. Amalgamations of numbers of mines, together with the acquisition of new machinery led to the revitalization of the Steiglitz gold fields. By 1862, there were 620 miners at Steiglitz, two thirds of them being alluvial, with 40 distinct quartz reefs and 15 steam engines. As the town boomed two banks, the Australasian and National, established branches. But during 1866 the wave of prosperity began to break when it is claimed that many miners became destitute, and some large companies sold up their claims for a quarter of their value. The Native Youth Crushing Plant, the last from that period, was removed in 1876. The town declined to such an extent that court sittings were discontinued in January 1879. A drought compounded the decline. The population had fallen to about 100 miners.

Just as 'Marvellous' Melbourne fell into its grave depression, Steiglitz enjoyed a brief mining boom. In 1894, the population of the town had risen to 2,000, and many societies and clubs were formed to meet their needs, religious, cultural and sporting. It had a news paper, *The Steiglitz Miner.* The Court House reopened between 1895 and 1899. A fierce bush fire, part of Black Thursday, swept down on Steiglitz on 8th September 1896, destroying many of the town's buildings and aboveground mining infrastructure. By 1904, the old mining town's population had again dwindled to 150. There was probably a minor revival of alluvial mining and the reworking of mullock heaps during the Great Depression. The last nugget was found in 1935, the last mine closed in 1941 and the general store closed soon after. James Sugg's blacksmith's shop in Clow Street was in use until the 1940s. His weatherboard cottage and its remnant garden survive. The former post office, which was remodelled in the 1960s, survives as a private residence. Many larger buildings were removed.

In the 1960s, Steiglitz began to be appreciated for its romantic quality as a 'ghost' town within a denuded landscape. It attracted tourists interested in history and bushwalkers interested in the surrounding landscape. In 1977, Steiglitz Court House came under the management of the National Parks Service and in 1979, Steiglitz National Park was proclaimed. Subsequently, Steiglitz was identified and protected under a Heritage Overlay in the Golden Plains Planning Scheme. Steiglitz today has just nine buildings with some associated exotic plantings, a range of ruined infrastructure and a vast number of archaeological sites. There are fewer than a dozen permanent residents. Consequently, the absence of modern development is a primary characteristic of Steiglitz.

How is it Significant?

The Steiglitz precinct is of historical, social, architectural, scientific (geological) and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant?

The Steiglitz precinct is of historical significance as one of the most important early gold rush towns in Victoria, especially representing those isolated towns which failed to prosper for other economic reasons. On a comparative basis, it is the finest remnant and most evocative ghost town of all the towns which played key roles in Victoria's 1850s and 1860s gold rushes. It survives, although most of its built and ephemeral fabric is gone, with obvious outlines of flattened house sites, exotic plantings, long lines of road reserve, formed culverts, cement domed wells and disturbed ground. In their place an intangible emptiness has been created.

The Steiglitz precinct is of social significance for representing the full range of community aspirations by the development of local government, public buildings, places of worship, schools and recreational facilities, as well as tending to the dead. It is typical of these abandoned towns for enduring the rise and fall of several booms, only finally to fail and fade.

The Steiglitz precinct is of architectural significance for the character and quality of its few surviving buildings, especially the dominant Court House, but also for vernacular buildings and the vacant spaces between which are the sites of former structures. The denuded landscape and open characteristic of the town, delineated by the unmade streets and gutters, and the prospect into the broader landscape have great aesthetic significance. It is the absence of compromising conventional structures which sets Steiglitz apart from other nineteenth century gold mining towns.

The Steiglitz precinct is of scientific (geological) significance as one of the richest in Australia for average yield per ton of quartz. This was represented in its first rush, the peak period of the later 1860s, the brief revival after 1890 and the re-workings of the Great Depression era.

The Steiglitz precinct is of archaeological significance for its potential to yield artefacts and evidence which is representative of diverse mining techniques and activities, colonial government, social organisations, commercial

arrangements, civic infrastructure and domestic conditions.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Golden Plains - Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Phase 2, Heritage Matters P/L, 2009;
Hermes Number	34742
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The township of Steiglitz is located in the Steiglitz National Park, 45 km north-west of Geelong. The township is generally aligned north-south to east-west, with the streets laid out in an irregular street pattern which emerged organically as a result of deep lead mining to the east of Regent Street and the alluvial mining in Sutherlands Creek. Molesworth Street is the primary entrance and exit route and runs the length of the township, becoming the Steiglitz-Meredith Road to the north-west and the Steiglitz-Maud Road to the south. Due to the absence of most of its original built and ephemeral fabric, the town is characterized by only a few surviving buildings and, more predominately, by the subtle outlines of tent sites, flattened house sites, long lines of road reserve, formed culverts and disturbed ground. There are no overhead power lines within the township and the road surface is of crushed limestone (?) gravel.

The township is bound to the north by a large curve of the Sutherlands Creek. The eastern crossing of Sutherlands Creek is situated adjacent to the intersection of Regent Street and Clow Street and features the remains of a post and rail fence. This crossing provides access to the former Gibraltar Mine and larger northern allotments located on the Steiglitz - Durdidwarrah Road, including the former New Chum State School. Gibraltar Hill rises above Sutherlands Creek to form a steep, semi-forested backdrop to the township below. A stone memorial cairn laid by the Gold Centenary Memorial Committee in 1951 is situated at the intersection of Regent and Clow Streets.

A small timber Blacksmith's Cottage associated with James Suggs' blackmith forge is located at the eastern end of Clow Street. The cottage is surrounded by remnant garden plantings and exotic trees. The vacant land located to the west of this cottage and on the northern side of Clow Street is the site of the former public tennis court. Minogue's former store, a two storey brick residence with associated outbuildings is located at the western end of Clow Street and is now a private residence. The western approach into Steiglitz is from the continuation of Clow Street, along the Steiglitz-Meredith Road, with the surviving St Thomas' Catholic Church (relocated to this site in 1983) and the 'Pioneer' or 'Old Steiglitz Cemetery' signaling the beginning of the township. The Meredith Road dips down a steep incline to cross the Sutherlands Creek over a modern bridge.

Molesworth Street runs north-south from the intersection of Clow Street and features formed culverts and a stone gutter running along the eastern side of the street. A domed well and brick rubble located on the western side of Molesworth Street near the intersection of Stawell Street are the only surviving remains of a former bakery. The streetscape to the west of Molesworth Street is comprised of vacant allotments, originally surveyed in 1867. The Courthouse is also accessed from the western side of Molesworth Street and is the most dominant structure within this otherwise bush land setting. The courthouse was constructed in 1874 by the Public Works Department to a standard design and features a gabled slate roof, red brick walls and a timber framed verandah with a lattice frieze, distinctive corner verandah support posts and a simple arched motif located below the front gable. Molesworth Street continues south until it is intersected by Regent Street which also runs north-south, with a slight skew to the west. The timber building located at No. 35 Regent Street is the former Scotts Hotel and was constructed in the 1890s on the earlier site of the Steiglitz Inn. This building features a timber verandah on the eastern elevation and is the only surviving structure on the western side of Regent Street. Opposite Scotts Hotel are the remains of the 'Steiglitz' mine, featuring a large mullock heap with associated archaeological deposits. A large conifer protrudes from the mullock heap. The former Steiglitz Post Office is situated at No. 24 Regent Street

and is now a private residence. The timber shop front constructed in the 1860s features a rear cottage. The timber verandah and shop facade were remodeled during a recent renovation. St Paul's Church of England, a simple timber box with a porch and belfry above, is located further south. Regent Street continues to the south until it intersects with Molesworth Street to form the Steiglitz Road. A small red brick cottage is located at No. 2704 Steiglitz Road and is surrounded by an established garden and advanced trees. This residence is located on the eastern side of Steiglitz Road. A small modern cafe, set within a simple garden, has been established at the southern end of the town. Further south beyond the Bert Boardman Recreation Reserve on the western side of Steiglitz Road is the location of the Steiglitz Cemetery. This is used for car parking, interpretation and services.

The township is now widely dispersed across rolling hills with the steep valley of Sutherlands Creek more or less encircling it. The bush of the Brisbane Ranges National Park provides an important backdrop to the cultural landscape. Any of the approaches creates a strong sense of entry because of the topography falling towards the creek. Within the town there is much open space with unmade streets and gutters, isolated exotic trees and the central Court House, now isolated from all other works. The prospects across this open space and back into the broader landscape have great aesthetic significance. It is the absence of compromising conventional structures which sets Steiglitz apart from Victoria's other nineteenth century gold mining towns.

Historical Australian Themes

Australian Historic Themes

The Australian Heritage Commission devised the Australian Historic Themes in 2001. The following themes have influenced the historical development of the Steiglitz Precinct.

2. Peopling Australia

2.2 Adapting to diverse environments

2.4 Migrating

2.4.2 Migrating to seek opportunity

2.4.5 Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration

2.5 Promoting settlement

3 Developing Local, Regional And National Economies

3.3 Surveying the continent

3.3.3 Prospecting for precious metals

3.3.5 Laying out boundaries

3.4 Utilising natural resources

3.4.3 Mining

3.6 Recruiting labour

3.7 Establishing communications

3.7.1 Establishing postal services

3.8 Moving goods and people

3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land

3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

9 Marking The Phases of Life

9.7 Dying

9.7.1 Dealing with human remains

9.7.2 Mourning the dead

9.7.3 Remembering the dead

Physical Description 2

Contributory elements located in the proposed Steiglitz Heritage Precinct:

Albion Mine Engine Foundations, Steiglitz

Suggs Blacksmith Cottage, Clow Street Steiglitz

New Chum School, School Track off Steiglitz - Durdidwarrah Road Steiglitz

Cafe and Residence (below Courthouse), 1 Molesworth Street Steiglitz

Fieldstone Gutters, Molesworth Street & Clow Street Steiglitz

Steiglitz Courthouse (former), Molesworth Street Steiglitz

Minogues Store (former), 1 Clow Street Steiglitz

Cairn and Memorial Plaque, Regent Street Steiglitz

Bridge over Sutherlands Creek, Regent Street Steiglitz

Mullock Heap (site of former 'Steiglitz' Mine), Regent Street Steiglitz

St Pauls Church of England, Regent Street Steiglitz

Former Post Office & Shop, 24 Regent Street Steiglitz

Scotts Hotel (former), 35 Regent Street Steiglitz

Stone Wall Coach Stables, 35 Regent Street Steiglitz

In Ground Well (site of former bakery), Molesworth Street Steiglitz

Red Brick House, 2704 Steiglitz-Meredith Road Steiglitz

St Thomas' Roman Catholic Church, Steiglitz-Meredith Road Steiglitz

Steiglitz Pioneers Cemetery, (or Old Steiglitz Cemetery) Steiglitz-Meredith Road Steiglitz

Quartz Burning Pits, SW of Court House Steiglitz

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/