

Victorian Heritage Database Report  
**VELVET SOAP ADVERTISING SIGN**



**Location:**  
38 PIPER STREET KYNETON, MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**  
Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number:** H1969  
**Listing Authority:** VHR

**Heritage Overlay Number:** HO263

**Statement of Significance:**  
What is Significant?

The Velvet Soap sign in Kyneton is a painted advertising sign on the eastern wall of 38 Piper Street. The sign comprises of the word 'VELVET' in large white letters and flanked on one side with the word 'PURE' and the word 'SOAP' on the other. Both these words are painted in yellow. The background to the sign is a deep brown

and is bordered and underlined with a yellow and an orange strip.

It appears the sign has been repainted at least once. Under the brown paint are traces of an earlier colour scheme whose background used the vibrant dark blue that was the Velvet Soap trade mark background colour. The name of the sign writer , Edgar Hook, appears twice in the bottom right hand corner sign. The later name is in yellow with an earlier signing in white.

Velvet Soap was a widely used laundry bar soap launched in 1906, produced by J. Kitchen & Sons, owned by John Ambrose Kitchen (1835 - 1922). Kitchen was born in Britain and emigrated to Victoria in 1854. After a less than successful period at the Caledonian and Blackwood diggings, Kitchen returned to Melbourne and joined his father and brothers in establishing a tallow candle making works. Through merger and expansion the company became the pre-eminent manufacturer of soap and candles in the eastern colonies in the mid to late 19th century. Kitchen also speculated in a number of enterprises but suffered financial setbacks as a result of the 1890s bank crashes. Despite this, the company continued to grow in the early twentieth century with the introduction of products such as Velvet Soap and Solvol. The company merged with the British company Lever Bros in 1914 who eventually took full control of the company in 1924, becoming Lever and Kitchen.

Advertising for Velvet Soap in Australia was extensive and pervasive. All manner of surfaces were used to advertise the product such as building walls, roofs, and most commonly, enamelled sheet metal signs which were fastened to any available surface internally and externally.

The most common form of sign that Velvet Soap used was the words 'PURE VELVET SOAP' in white lettering within a vivid dark blue, elongated Maltese cross. On the enamelled metal signs the Maltese cross sat on a red background with a yellow border. While this was the dominant form for Velvet Soap signs, there were variations from the standard, as this sign demonstrates, that took advantage of , or adapted to, the location of the sign.

Piper Street used to be part of the main route from Melbourne to Bendigo until the town was bypassed by the Calder Freeway in 1995. The sign was well placed to take advantage of traffic on this major route, broadening its message to an audience beyond the local population of Kyneton.

How is it Significant?

The Velvet Soap sign in Piper Street Kyneton is of historical and technical (scientific) significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant?

The Velvet Soap sign is of historical significance as a representative of painted signs that were once a common form of advertising during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Expanses of walls were used in a manner similar to billboards where it was common to paint advertising for a range of products. The use of large painted advertising signs was eventually superseded by printed bill boards and illuminated signs. Despite being widely used, the number of extant painted advertising signs has decreased through deterioration, demolition and removal and now few good examples remain. The Velvet Soap sign in Kyneton is believed to be one of very few known extant examples of its type and the one in the best condition. This sign is one of the last examples of a painted advertising sign for one of Australia's most widely used products.

The Velvet Soap sign in Piper Street Kyneton is of historical significance for its association with John Ambrose Kitchen and the company J. Kitchen & Sons, a Victorian company that became the pre-eminent soap and candle manufacturers throughout Australia from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

The Velvet Soap sign in Piper Street Kyneton is of historical significance for its ability demonstrate changes in social culture by documenting the use of a popular consumer product.

The Velvet Soap Sign is of technical (scientific) significance as a good and extant example of painted sign writing and the locations chosen to display them.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1920 - 1930
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	MACEDON RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	14447
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*