

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Symons Street Residential Precinct



KEY HO 427 - Symons Street Residential Precinct

■ Significant
 ■ Contributory
 ■ Non Contributory
— Precinct boundary



Location:
HEALESVILLE, YARRA RANGES SHIRE

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Number:
Listing Authority: Yarra Ranges Shire

Precinct:
Symons Street Residential Precinct

Statement of Significance:
What is Significant?

Symons Street Residential Precinct is based on Symons Street, Healesville, an east-west running street which is parallel to, and elevated above the main street (Nicholson Street) to the south. The precinct also incorporates some properties in Church, Green and Manse streets and Crowley Road. There are three non-contiguous sections in the precinct: the west section with properties in Symons and Church streets; middle section near the intersection of Symons Street and Crowley Road; and east section near the intersection with Manse Street. West of Green Street, the slope of Symons Street is such that there is a 'high' side (south) and a 'low' side (north), and a divided roadway flanking a treed grassy verge and oaks of long-standing. Graded houses within the precinct generally fall within the date range of the late 1880s through to the 1940s. Houses have late-Victorian/Federation styling and character, as well as some interwar dwellings representing variants on the California bungalow form. Overwhelmingly, buildings in the precinct are constructed of timber, with a limited number of brick dwellings. On the south side of Symons Street, dwellings have varying setbacks with those on the most dramatically sloping blocks often set well back from the property boundary to take advantage of views to the north. On the north side, dwellings are generally closer to the street with some having lower storeys set below street level, accommodated by the sloping allotments and appearing from Symons Street as single-storey buildings. This is particularly so in the west end of the precinct near Church Street, as well as at the east end near Manse Street. Some of the buildings on the high south side of the street are also visible in views from a considerable distance, including to the north across the Watts River. The precinct also includes a number of former guest houses, such as Grandview at 28 Symons Street, York Lodge at 4 Symons Street, and Ingle Nook at 2 Green Street. In addition to mature street trees, many of properties in the precinct also have long standing and complementary garden settings. The gardens, some of which are terraced, combine with the often sloping allotments to enhance the presentation and appearance of many precinct properties.

How is it Significant?

Symons Street Residential Precinct is of historical and aesthetic/architectural significance to Yarra Ranges.

Why is it Significant?

Symons Street Residential Precinct is of local historical significance, as a long-standing residential area in an elevated part of Healesville, where allotments were purchased in the first 1865 land sales, after the initial Healesville township survey. Symons Street was established to the south of the main street (Nicholson Street), running parallel with it but on higher ground. A number of dwellings had been constructed by the late nineteenth century, including Claremont at 1 Symons Street, an 1880s dwelling which is the oldest house in the precinct; St John's Anglican Church of 1889 is also an older property. The street itself remained unmade into the early twentieth century, albeit trees were planted in these years to beautify the street. The hilly eastern area of the precinct attracted more prominent and affluent members of the Healesville community. Guesthouses were also constructed in elevated parts of the precinct, taking advantage of views, and drawing attention today to the important role of tourism in the history of the town. Symons Street Residential Precinct is also of local aesthetic/architectural significance. The precinct has a comparatively high level of intactness, with graded properties dating from the late 1880s through to the 1940s, of late-Victorian/Federation and interwar origin. Significant aesthetic attributes include the topography of Symons Street with its high and low sides; houses adapted to the often steep allotments, including concealment of lower building levels from the street; views out from the prominently sited properties, including to the north; and public views of buildings on the high south side of Symons Street, from outside the precinct (such as from the north across the Watts River). Street trees, and mature garden plantings and trees on often sloping and picturesque allotments, also contribute to the

aesthetic significance.

Integrity: Within the proposed Symons Street Residential Precinct the majority of properties are of 'contributory' heritage value with a small number of 'significant' heritage value, as well as a few 'non-contributory' buildings.

'Significant' buildings in the precinct are individually important in the precinct context, because they exhibit particular architectural merit or other notable and distinguishing characteristics; they may be large and/or more prominent dwellings; they are also typically highly intact, although some visible external changes may be evident (as seen from the principal streetscape). A property of particular historical importance may also be 'significant'.

'Contributory' buildings are also generally externally intact, but minor changes to the principal facades of these dwellings may be evident. They are typically less architecturally distinguished or prominent than the 'significant' buildings. For 'contributory' buildings, some additions may also be visible including potentially additions to the rears of dwellings.

'Non-contributory' buildings include more recent development of little or no architectural merit or heritage character; and earlier buildings which have been significantly modified and where the alterations have diminished the heritage value and character. These properties are included in the proposed precinct due to their particular location, which may be sensitive in terms of future precinct management and conservation. For example, they may be 'sandwiched' between graded buildings, and future development of these properties may have the potential to negatively impact on the heritage character and appearance of the precinct or the adjacent 'significant' or 'contributory' heritage places. The precinct incorporates relatively few buildings graded as being 'non-contributory'.

The following description should be read in conjunction with the attached schedule of properties, which includes brief descriptions of all properties in the precinct area. References to 'significant', 'contributory' and 'non-contributory' are made throughout the description, and reflect the gradings identified in the schedule of properties.

The Symons Street Residential Precinct is based on Symons Street, Healesville, which runs on an east-west axis, parallel to Nicholson Street. In addition, it incorporates some properties in Church Street, Green Street, Manse Street and Crowley Road. The three non-contiguous sections include the west section with properties in Symons and Church streets; the middle section properties near the intersection of Symons Street and Crowley Road; and the east section properties near the intersection with Manse Street.

Symons Street is located on the western slope of an area of Healesville known as 'School Hill'. To the section of Symons Street west of Green Street the slope is such that, as with Nicholson Street below, there is a 'high' side (south) and a 'low' side (north), although the slope is more pronounced here. This block of Symons Street has a divided roadway flanking a treed grassy verge, planted with oaks of long-standing. It is assumed these oaks are associated with the 1914 Arbor Day beautification scheme which resulted in 30 trees being planted along Symons Street (as noted in the 'History' above).

The section of Symons Street east of Green Street maintains a single roadway, with the street sloping upwards at a comparatively steep grade towards the intersection with Manse Street. Picturesque views are available from this intersection, and there are wide grassed verges to either side of this section of roadway, planted with deciduous trees including planes and oaks. The houses to the south side of Symons Street are often set high above the roadway atop a grassed verge. The highest point is occupied by 9 Manse Street, a large brick and roughcast attic-storeyed bungalow to the corner of Symons Street, graded as 'significant'.

Symons Street Residential Precinct includes St John's Anglican Church, built in 1889. This property also incorporates the interwar weatherboard manse to the west of the church, as well as the modern brick hall, which directly adjoins the church on its east side. The historic church building and manse are 'significant'. Apart

from this property, another church hall building immediately east of the intersection of Symons and Church streets at 11 Symons Street ('non-contributory'), and a house subsequently converted to consulting rooms at 26 Symons Street (also 'non-contributory'), the precinct is wholly residential in form and character.

Graded houses within the precinct generally fall within the date range of the late 1880s through to the 1940s. Houses have late-Victorian/Federation styling and character, as well as some of interwar dwellings representing variants on the California bungalow form. A prominently sited 'Moderne' villa at 32 Symons Street, of the late 1940s, is the most recent building graded as 'contributory'. Overwhelmingly, buildings in the precinct are constructed of timber, with a limited number of brick dwellings.

To the south side of Symons Street, properties have varying setbacks with those on the most dramatically sloping blocks often set well back from the property boundary to take advantage of views to the north over town. Properties on the north side are generally set closer to the street with some having lower storeys set below street level, accommodated by the sloping allotments and appearing from Symons Street as single-storeyed properties. This characteristic is particularly evident in the west end of the precinct, near Church Street, as well as at the east end near Manse Street. Some of the buildings on the high south side of the street are also visible in views from a considerable distance, including to the north across the Watts River.

The precinct also includes a number of former guest houses, as referred to in the 'History' above. These include 28 Symons Street, formerly Grandview, graded as 'significant', 4 Symons Street, formerly York Lodge graded as 'contributory' and 2 Green Street, formerly Ingle Nook, still providing guest accommodation as the Healesville Garden House, also graded as 'contributory'.

In addition to the mature street trees noted above, many of the graded properties in the precinct also have long standing and complementary garden settings. The gardens, some of which are terraced, combine with the often sloping allotments to enhance the presentation and appearance of many precinct properties.

1.1 Contributory properties

Within Symons Street, 'contributory' houses of the earlier phase of construction - the late-Victorian/Federation period mostly located in the western section of the precinct - comprise Victorian cottages, generally located to the north side of the street and set close to the footpath. Examples include 9 Symons Street (although this has been extended at a later date), 13 Symons Street, and 17 Symons Street with its unusual twin-gable roof-formed hinting at a phased construction. All are considerably larger than they appear from the street with lower floors set below road level. No 31 Symons Street is comparatively unusual in its elongated form and dual entrances. While the building appears to have been recently renovated, it is clearly visible in the historic photograph at Figure 4, and retains the same rhythm of openings and roof form.

No 1 Church Street is a well executed double-fronted Victorian villa with a canted bay window contained within the return verandah and a further canted bay that encloses the west end of the verandah. The several Federation residences typically have hipped and gabled roofs, and incorporate verandahs with timber fretwork. Again, these are concentrated at the western end of the precinct and include 2 Symons Street, a large and elevated villa with verandahs and gabled bays positioned to take advantage of the views afforded to the west and north from its triangular allotment.

No 4 Symons Street is a double-fronted timber Federation villa with verandah and projecting gabled bay, set back and at height above the street. No 29 Symons Street, partly obscured by vegetation, is a transitional Federation/bungalow style residence, with an elongated gable roof running east-west and a verandah facing the street, and also to the east, interrupted by a projecting gabled bay.

Towards the eastern end of the precinct, near the intersection with Manse Street, there are other late Victorian/Federation properties, some of which are only partly visible. These include 2 Manse Street, a double-fronted timber house with a high hipped roof and return verandah.

'Contributory' buildings dating from the interwar period in the precinct include the 'Craftsman' bungalow houses, picturesquely sited to the eastern end of the precinct at 6 and 8 Manse Street; although one is brick and the

other timber, they both share a similar elongated floor plan with transverse gable roofs.

No 42 Symons Street is also a bungalow, but has an unusually low-pitched and staggered gabled roofline and prominent corner porch. Opposite, 41 Symons Street is a more common Californian bungalow type, which may be a State Savings Bank of Victoria house design; the design is echoed and rendered in timber and cement sheet at 7 Manse Street, some years later. No 44 Symons Street, a variant on the bungalow is unusual in that it incorporates two porches, one adopting a Saltire cross motif which may be an original decorative device, albeit renewed, and in brick and render rather than the more common timber construction.

No 32 Symons Street (1940s) is prominently sited at the south-east corner of Symons and Green streets. It is a late interwar 'Moderne' triple-fronted rendered brick villa, set on a plinth clad in fieldstone. It has a curved corner porch and prominent curve-capped cement block chimney, elements which relate to late interwar period.

1.2 'Significant' properties

The following are the significant properties in the precinct.

Claremont, 1 Symons Street (c. 1886)

Claremont, as a 1880s dwelling, is significant as the oldest house identified in the precinct (Figure 25). Its dominant canted bay and stuccoed, corniced chimney are unusual in Healesville, albeit have many suburban counterparts in Melbourne. There also appear to be few similar block-fronted timber facades remaining in Healesville, another factor which adds to its significance.

The dwelling is set on a sloping allotment which falls away to the north and west, and is effectively the western-most property in the precinct. It presents as substantially externally intact to the street, and is a single-storey double fronted timber Italianate-style residence with a projecting canted bay to the west side of the facade. The facade has a block-fronted timber finish, with the side elevations finished in painted weatherboards. It has a simple skillion-roofed verandah with timber posts, and timber double-hung sash windows with wide timber architraves. The four panelled front door is set into a Victorian doorcase with glazed sidelights and toplights infilled with etched glazing (probably not original). The eaves are narrow and below them is a frieze of faceted timber panels, interrupted by paired timber brackets, painted in a contrasting cream paint finish.

St Johns Anglican Church, 3-7 Symons Street

St Johns Anglican Church (1889) is significant as an historic timber Carpenter Gothic styled church, with a picturesque steeply pitched gable roof and later entrance porch. The building features gothic detailing including pointed arched windows and wave shaped fretwork, finials on the main gable and entrance porch and a belfry on top of the main gable. The pointed arch windows on the portico have been relocated from the main part of the building to the enclosed entrance porch when this was altered at an unknown date in the twentieth century (see Figure 7). Timber buttresses support the west exterior wall of the church and stairs leading to the altar. The vicarage to the west is a timber bungalow residence. To the east of the church is a modern single-storey brown brick hall. It is noted that there are a number of mature trees on the site. St Johns Anglican Church has been an important community building since its construction more than a century ago.[i]

Neangar, 27-29 Crowley Road (1924)

Neangar, of c.1924, is of significance as a large, prominent and finely executed bungalow dwelling. Details of note include the timber fretwork and multi-paned glazed doors and toplights, opening onto the unusual return verandah (Figure 26). It is primarily a bungalow in style, with a simple hollowed cube massing under a single roof ridge, stepping into a lower storey as the site contours drop. It is distinctive in the area for its striking verandah frame, with a combination of lightly scaled arches and art nouveau detailing. Its more general bungalow side is best seen from the south side, facing View Street.

The building is a weatherboard and roughcast triple-fronted double-storeyed residence, set on a steeply sloping double allotment facing Crowley Road. The allotment slopes down from west to east, and the residence is sited to the rear south-west corner. The property is screened variously by a high timber paling fence as well

as a mature well-maintained cypress hedge which extends along both street frontages from the corner. The residence presents as single-storeyed from View Street and the fall of the land permits the addition of a lower level to the north side of the residence, visible at distance from Crowley Road. It has a transverse gable roof, clad in corrugated metal, with two roughcast rendered brick double chimneys with a capping of soldier course brickwork to each. The gable end to View Street is infilled with stucco, divided by narrow bands of vertical timber strapping. A diamond shaped vent, infilled with painted timber lattice, is sited at the gable apex, venting the roofspace. There is an inset return verandah to the east and north elevations, at first floor level. The verandah has a balustrade of vertical painted timber uprights and timber railing; and the roof is carried on painted paired timber posts enframed by a fretwork and curved painted timber bracketed frieze, referencing Art Nouveau. Minor changes, including the replacement of the roof and timber stumps, were made to the verandah in 2003. A timber shed which faces into the garden and runs parallel to the Crowley Road boundary may be a former stable. To the rear of the house, and sited hard to the property boundary to View Street is a small brick outbuilding with a tall brick chimney stack, to the corner of the property, believed to be a former laundry. The brick walling extends partway along the rear (west property boundary and the building has a skillion roof of corrugated metal. Other outbuildings, added from the 1940s, are not of heritage value.

Powlett, 9 Manse Street (c.1919)

Powlett, of c.1919, is significant for being a prominently sited and generously-proportioned attic storey bungalow, unusually constructed of roughcast rendered brick with vermiculated quoining (Figure 27). The roughcast stucco wall, gable and chimney finish, the broad and generous gable proportions, the long ground floor verandah and the large gable hip, all make this house distinctive in Healesville. The roughcast finish, a characteristic external wall treatment in Healesville, along with the tapering chimneys and simple diagonal geometry give Powlett strong links to the Arts and Crafts Free Style of c. 1890-1914, as in English houses by Charles Voysey or Australian houses by Waterhouse and Lake or Walter Butler from the 1900s through into the early 1920s.[ii]

The dwelling has a transverse gable roof, clad in terracotta tile and with attic dormer to three sides. There are four tall painted roughcast rendered brick chimneys with terracotta pots. The gable ends are capped with terracotta finials, and infilled with roughcast-rendered brickwork, painted white. The window to the north gable end - facing Symons Street - is a timber framed double-hung tripartite sash form, part concealed by sunblinds. To the east, facing Manse Street, a former inset verandah has been infilled with timber framed openable glazing. The house has prominent rendered and painted vermiculated quoins to the corners, picked out in a contrasting painted finish. The facade faces to Manse Street (east) and there is a large painted timber doorcase, comprising a paneled timber door with leaded glazing to the upper pane, and flanked by wide sidelights and toplights infilled with leaded glass. The door is flanked by a large double-hung tripartite sash window to the north and by paired double-hung sashes to the south. Windows to the north elevation are also paired timber sashes. The property has a deep verandah to the east and north sides, incorporated into the tiled roof slope. The verandah posts are square in profile, and formed of timber with red brick bases. Non-original Victorian-style lace brackets have been added to the posts. The balustrade comprises turned timber regularly-spaced posts, framing panels of Victorian style iron lace, beneath a moulded painted timber rail also thought not to be original. The verandah and associated balustrade appear to be non-original. Steps to the verandah are of brick, and the verandah has painted timber boards. A pedestrian path of brick leads to the verandah, from a pair of low metal gates to the Manse Street footpath. The house also has a terraced garden setting, concealed by hedging to the street corner and set behind a low-height non-original rendered brick fence; the latter is not of heritage value. Outbuildings including the gazebo and garage, thought to be contemporary with the dwelling, adopt the same finishes and contribute to the presentation of the property.

Grandview, 28 Symons Street (c.1904)?

The prominently sited Grandview (c. 1904), at the corner of Crowley Road (Figure 28), is significant as a late Victorian hip-roofed double-storey, double-fronted timber former guesthouse with verandahs to three sides. While the property has undergone visible external change (shown in the historic photographs at Figure 8 and Figure 9), it has important historical associations, including with the nearby Grand Hotel on Nicholson Street, being constructed by the proprietor of the hotel in the early years of the twentieth century.

Grandview has a two-storey timber verandah to the facade which returns along the east and west elevations, with splays to the corners. The verandah has been altered in the past, and the present design has a simple balustrade of painted timber vertical slats, and carried on painted square-profile timber posts, with posts supplemented by simple timber bracketing to the ground floor level. The verandah roof has a skillion-profile, with panels of laserlite let into the east slope. The main roof is a hipped form, clad in red 'Colorbond' roofing metal, with red face brick chimneys with stepped caps to the west and south-east. There is a further rendered brick chimney to the east elevation, adjoining the service wing, which appears to be a later element and has a gable roof and a skillion roof. Originally the facade to first floor level comprised a central door flanked by tripartite timber framed sash windows with fixed sidelights. These have been replaced with a single double-hung sash window to the west side of the door and a pair of double-hung sash windows to the east side of the door. The door is part glazed panelled timber door set in painted Victorian timber doorcase with sidelights and toplights. The central entrance steps have been demolished and the verandah rail continues across the facade with access now from Crowley Road. The corner property entry has been discontinued. To Crowley Road the two levels of the residence are apparent, with several solid timber panelled doors opening onto the first floor verandah and there is a further sash window. Treatment to the ground floor is similar. A horizontal highlight window with fixed glazing has been inserted into the space between the eaves and the verandah to this elevation and a skylight has been let into the east roof slope. Vehicular access is from Crowley Road. The house is part-concealed by a later privet hedge to Symons Street and the hedge and a newly-erected timber paling fence to Crowley Road. The property has a mature dense garden setting, with deciduous trees to the front garden.

Heritage Study / Consultant	Yarra Ranges - Yarra Ranges Council Healesville Heritage Project, Lovell Chen, 2015
Construction Date Range	1880 - 1940
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	YARRA RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	197739
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