

NATHALIA CHURCH PRECINCT

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

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NATHALIA CHURCH PRECINCT

LOCATION

Precinct Boundaries And Map The precinct extends along both sides of Veldt Street from the intersection with Pearce Street up to and including number 43 Veldt Street. The boundaries parallel with Veldt Street extend along the rear of the allotments. The aim is to conserve and enhance the cluster of early Victorian era buildings which are architecturally noteworthy.

Refer to the map in Fig 1 for the boundary details.

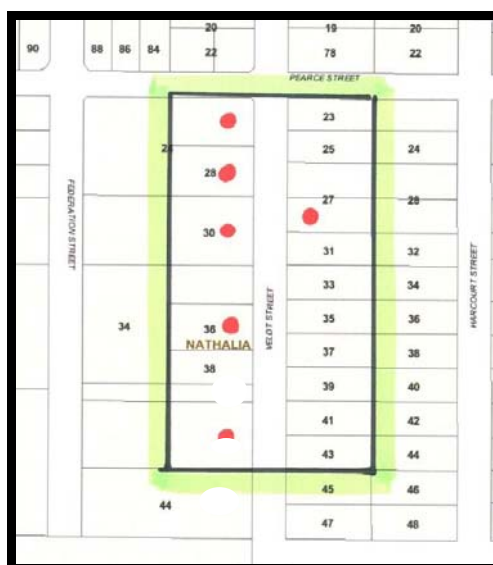


Fig. 1 Map of Nathalia Church Precinct with location of 6 significant places marked with red dots. Refer to the photo list of these places in the appendix.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Table One: List of Culturally Significant Places, their location, database number and historical context. Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd 2006.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Associated Historical Themes</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Extant Places within the Nathalia Church Precinct</i>	<i>Location</i>
Victorian 1880s to 1900	Early agricultural development; Expansion of Primary production Development of local institutions. Infrastructure: Railways open 1888.	1889	Presbyterian Church	24 Veldt Street
		1893	Presbyterian Manse	Veldt Street
		1890s	Victorian houses	Veldt Street

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Historical Context¹

The railway to Nathalia opened in 1888. In April 1888 the *Nathalia Herald* announced that 'Anyone visiting our little township will be surprised at the number of buildings that are being erected and the character of these buildings proves at a glance that the days of the bark and log hut are passed.'² Nathalia began to feel the Depression in the following year however, with a fall in land sales and trouble for the banks as overseas capital and land speculation collapsed. Small, steady development continued however - by 1891 the population was 689 and by 1901 it was 828. The largest growth in population accompanied the post World War Soldier Settlement schemes in the area, from 954 in 1947 to 1,859 in 1961.³ The Presbyterian congregation meanwhile had grown from 34 communicants in 1890 to 55 in 1895.⁴

As an agricultural town, the fortunes of Nathalia were inextricable from those of its farming communities, and the history of the town was particularly affected by droughts such as those of 1908 and floods such as that of 1887. During and after the Great War of 1914-18 no less than 39 families left the area because of draughts, explaining the relatively staid population growth in the early twentieth century.⁵

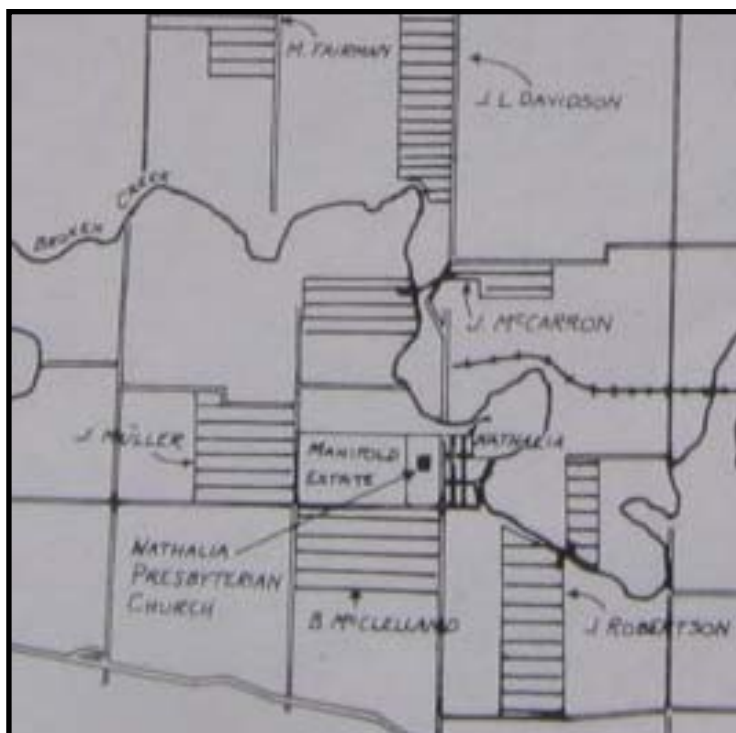
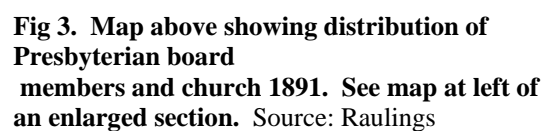
Nathalia was a major centre for wheat and barley growing but had also developed in dairying and orchards. The climate enabled the growers of peaches, apricots and grapes to get their produce to market as early as November. The Nathalia Dairy Company opened a butter factory in 1892 however a large percentage of the shares were unpaid and the company went into liquidation. A second refrigerated factory was established near the flour mill in 1895 with more success. The butter factory later became a milk receiving depot for the Cobram based Murray Goulburn Co-operative Company.

The Nathalia Irrigation League established in 1914 was unsuccessful in having existing and planned irrigation schemes extend to Nathalia and wheat continued to be the main produce from the area. The Nathalia region was forced to wait until 1951 for the construction of irrigation channels from the Murray-Goulburn scheme and the effect on the district was a 70% increase in population between the censuses of 1946 and 1961.⁶ Those significant extant structures within the Church Precinct are thus significant through their association with the development of the town in the late nineteenth century from 1889 to the turn of the twentieth century.

The historically significant sites within the Nathalia Church Precinct date to the late Victorian period from 1889 to the 1890s. The town of Nathalia itself was surveyed in 1879 and the original town allotments were gazetted within the area east of Blake Street.

The Church Precinct is located within the area selected by prominent pastoralist John Manifold, who took up the area west of Blake Street in 1877. (See Fig 2) The site was part of Manifold Estate which was not sold and subdivided until 1888, when the railway was opening in Nathalia and the township spilled across the west side of Blake Street.⁷ The church building in Nathalia at this time was thus 'part of the general building boom'. The Precinct is particularly associated with the Presbyterian religious community, as the site of its church, manse and associated residences from the same period along Veldt Street. The precinct and its religious buildings were also significant in bringing together the wider area's Presbyterians, as illustrated by the map showing the geographic spread of the Presbyterian Board members in 1891.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

URBAN DESIGN, VIEWS AND FOCI

The precinct is located in an area of flat land with a typical urban grid subdivision, and thus the church building, located on the intersection of Veldt and Pearce Streets, is the most dominant structure, being tall and of an imposing architectural design. Within about ten years after subdivision and sale of the land in 1888, the small number of communicants (just 55 in 1895) had created the picturesque view as can be seen in Fig 4. The beautiful view had been created by the careful siting of the manse with a return verandah, painted the traditional stripes at that time, within a painted low picket fence to create a sense of belonging and security. Street beautification and shade had also been prepared as can be seen by the well protected street tree on the right hand corner.

The extant structures within the Church Precinct are significant through their association with the development of the town in the late nineteenth century from 1889 to the turn of the twentieth century and particularly with the members of the Presbyterian Church and the development of their place of worship.



Fig 4 Left. The 1889 Presbyterian Church and Manse, c. early 1900s. Source: State Library of Victoria.
Fig 5 Right. The Presbyterian Church and Manse, 2004. Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd.

Culturally Significant Places

Former 1889 Presbyterian Church DB 164

The foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church in Veldt Street was laid on 24th May 1889 by Mr E Richardson, "a worthy townsman and elder of the church":

*The day was beautifully fine -Queen's weather; but owing to the many counter attractions - football, pigeon shooting, Wesleyan picnic etc, the attendance was select but not unselfish as was manifested by the cheques, notes, gold and silver, laid on the stone, with the promise of more to follow...*⁸

Rev John Urquart was the first minister in the Numurkah parish, of which Nathalia at this time formed a part. Rev. Alexander Walker was inducted as the first resident Nathalia and Picola minister in 1890.

Improvements were made to church between 1912 and 1917.⁹

It was deconsecrated and sold in 1977 and since then has been a private residence.¹⁰

Former Presbyterian Manse (1893) DB 1066

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The arrival of a resident priest in Rev. Alexander Waler in 1890 precipitated the construction of a brick manse near the church. In 1892 the bricks were purchased and Edward Richardson donated red gum timber for the frame. Local resident A. B. Binger drew the plans, and thus saving architect fees. The successful tender cost £137. Improvements to interior and garden were made in the late 1890s, with a wash house built in 1897 by Mssrs Scott, Richardson and Muir.¹¹ Rev. Walker declared that:



Fig 6. Former 1893 Presbyterian Manse in 2004

Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

*The manse will not only, therefore, be a standing monument of Presbyterian enterprise in this district but will also be a comfortable home for ministers during the next two or three generations. As its first occupant I honestly and gratefully testify that the comforts which it affords for doing ministerial work are practically perfect.*¹²

Victorian houses (1890s) DB 1068 & 1091

The two extant Victorian houses in Veldt Street are surviving examples of the late nineteenth century residential development in Nathalia. Number 36, 'Donegal' also testifies to the strong Scottish Presbyterian influence in the history of the Precinct. The paired brick chimneys are a strong and distinctive architectural feature in the Victorian design. The concrete pier and cyclone wire fence appears to date from c1920.



Fig 7. c 1890s, Victorian weatherboard cottage Veldt Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004.

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STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE¹³

Nathalia Church Precinct

The history and description, which precedes this Statement of Cultural Significance, is the source of evidence for the statement below.

The **Nathalia Church Precinct** is **aesthetically significant** at the **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original and early design qualities associated with the development of fine late Victorian religious and residential buildings between the 1880s and 1900, primarily for the Nathalia Presbyterian community. These include the 1889 iron roofed red brick gothic church and the 1893 manse as well as two other particularly important houses from the same era. They have substantial setbacks which create a sense of spaciousness and the low fences are particularly important and traditional way of viewing the houses from the public realm. The area is enhanced by several views to and from the features above, particularly from the intersection with Veldt and Pearce Streets.

The **Nathalia Church Precinct** is **historically and socially significant** on a **LOCAL** level through its association with the religious and cultural development of Nathalia, in particular its strong association with the Presbyterian population of the broader Nathalia area and its Presbyterian farming community. (AHC **H.1**) It is historically significant on a local level through its extant buildings reflection of the late Victorian buildings in the area following the subdivision of the Manifold Estate in 1887. (AHC **A.4, G1**)

Overall, the Nathalia Church Precinct is culturally significant at the LOCAL level.

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- 1 Incorporating material from *Moir Shire Thematic Environmental History*. Sources: *VMD*, 1994, p. 649; Watson, *Forgotten Towns*, p. 347; *Vision and Realisation*, Vol. 3. pp. 799, 866-7; *VMD*, various years - see Appendix A; Gazetteer of Australian Cities; Wise's Victoria Post Office Directory 1884-1885, 1888-1889; Bossence, *Numurkah*, pp. 97, 105, 119-21, 146, 155, 334-5, 341-3; Plan of Township of Numurkah, 1918. Source: State Library of Victoria, Maps collection; Baragwanath, Pam, *If The Walls Could Speak : A Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria*, Mechanics Institute Inc., Windsor, 2000, p. 221; Challinger, *Historic Court Houses of Victoria*, p. 147; Clark, Ian & Heydon, Toby, *Aboriginal Placenames of Victoria*, Database on CD-Rom, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Melbourne, 2002.
- 2 Hibbins, p.13.
- 3 See also Thematic Environmental History (2004).
- 4 Raulings, p.22.
- 5 Hibbins, p.171.
- 6 Thematic Environmental History (2004).
- 7 K. A Raulings, *Presbyterians in Action: a history of the presbyterian parish of nathalia, picola and baulkamaugh north 1878-1977* (1977), p, 13.
- 8 *Nathalia Herald*, 30 May 1889.
- 9 Raulings, p.35.
- 10 *Times Have Changed*, p.44.
- 11 Raulings, p.16.
- 12 Hibbins, p.109.
- 13 Definitions used are from the Burra Charter 1999; historical themes relate to the Principal Australian Themes – Australian Heritage Commission; criteria for Locally Significant places are from the Australian Heritage Commission and in the case of State Significant places, from Heritage Victoria; levels of significance used are State and Local, which directly relate to the two legislative authorities who administer the protection of heritage places, the State Government and Local Government respectively