

Penola (Petticoat Lane - Woods/MacKillop School House) State Heritage Area

Penola (Petticoat Lane - Woods/MacKillop School House) was declared a State Heritage Area on 11 December 1997.

HISTORY

Penola was founded by Alexander Cameron, a pastoralist pioneer who had been in the area since the mid 1840s. His Limestone Ridge Station had grown in size, as had other stations in the district, and there was a need for tradespeople to provide services for the workers and their families.

In April 1850 'King' Cameron, as he became known, purchased 80 acres of land from the South Australian Government to develop the private town of Panoola - later named Penola. He allotted several blocks for community use, including a market square and land for churches at a later stage.

Early in 1850 Cameron invited Christopher Sharam to build a house and to establish a bootmaking business in the proposed town. The Sharam family (Christopher, Ellen and baby John Thomas) were Penola's first residents, and their cottage (in what is now Petticoat Lane) was the first residence constructed in the new township.

Although a long way from Adelaide, Penola soon had most of the facilities of any town of the time. The first shop, the 'South Australian Store', opened in the early 1850s. Further shopping facilities became available in 1856 with the opening of Balnaves store in Riddoch Street, and other shops followed.

By the 1860s Rounsevell Coaches left Penola twice a week for Naracoorte, Mount Gambier and Adelaide, and Cobb & Co Coaches departed three times a week for Melbourne. The town now had a population of over 600 people, who were served by a local court, police station, two churches, an Institute, telegraph, school and several resident magistrates. As early as 1863, Penola boasted the second largest library outside Adelaide.

In Penola's early days, religious services were held in the local courtroom. The Presbyterians were the first to use this facility, and Reverend Dixon was the first Minister to reside in Penola (1856-1864). The Catholic Community began a wooden church in 1858, when Father Julian Tenison Woods laid the foundation stone of St Joseph's Church. A new stone church was completed in 1865. St Mary's Church of England was completed in 1873.

In 1855 Michael O'Grady opened a school for 40 students – the first official school education in the South East. The best known school though, was that opened by Mary MacKillop and her sisters in 1866. A government school was completed in 1879, with a capacity for 160 students.

CHARACTER

Petticoat Lane was originally named Christies Row, after Christopher Sharam, the street's earliest inhabitant. Later it was renamed Wilson's Lane, after William Wilson, another resident. In the 1980s the street became officially known as Petticoat Lane, a local name by which it had long been recognised, apparently because of its dubious reputation as a place where 'petticoats were lifted'.

The Petticoat Lane section of the state heritage area contains an assortment of buildings reflecting the growth of Penola, from its origins in 1850 to the First World War. These buildings demonstrate some of the earliest remaining uses of timber and stone construction techniques in South Australia.

Penola's first residents, the Sharam family, constructed a slab cottage in Petticoat Lane. This initial building consisted of two rooms, and did not take long to complete. The lack of variety in building materials dictated its simplicity. Large timber cleared for the site



formed the basis of the outside walls, while the ceiling beams and wall slabs were hewn from small tree trunks. Not one nail was used in the building.

A second, larger cottage, comprising a sitting room and three bedrooms, was built nearby in the 1860s, at which time the Sharam family apparently used the first cottage as a kitchen. Members of the Sharam family lived in these cottages from 1850 until their final sale in 1941, although the original grounds were sub-divided earlier.

Other properties in Petticoat Lane include Wilson Cottage (showing early use of Mount Gambier stone in house construction), Gammon Cottage, the former Church of England Rectory and three weatherboard houses demonstrating architectural styles from the 1890s to the 1910s. A building opposite Wilson Cottage dates from the early 1950s and was purchased and erected, by the owners, as a kit home.

Petticoat Lane has a rural character, with red gum kerbing, cottage gardens, distinctive fences, hedges, grassed borders and underground power. It is a narrow thoroughfare characterised by small buildings on large allotments, with vacant allotments maintained as open space. The National Trust of South Australia has gone to considerable lengths to purchase and preserve the open spaces between buildings, which contribute to its character as a 'turn of the century' country lane.

These open spaces, once backyards and adjacent fields, were originally orchards, vegetable gardens and grazing areas. Most of the clutter and fences have gone, but a few old fruit trees and outbuildings remain as evidence of these earlier activities.

Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse

St Mary MacKillop (1842-1909) was Penola's most famous resident and is Australia's first saint. With Father Julian Tenison Woods she set up a free school system and co-founded the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a charitable teaching order that spread throughout Australia and New Zealand.

In 1866, at the invitation of Father Woods, St Mary MacKillop established in Penola the first school in Australia that catered for all children, irrespective of family income or social status. This was a new type of school – a church school where the education was free to all. St Mary MacKillop aimed to give all children a sound knowledge in the basics of reading, writing and simple arithmetic. Prayer and instruction in the catechism were a central focus. Hymns and prayer featured in the daily timetable to give students a sense of their Catholic identity and an understanding that religion was part of ordinary life not just reserved for Sundays.

The original schoolhouse was a renovated stable that catered for more than 50 students. It was replaced in 1867 by what is now known as the Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse. This was the first school specifically built for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. Although St Mary MacKillop's direct association with the Schoolhouse was brief, the building is valued by the Catholic Community as symbolic of her earliest commitment to the ideals on which the Josephite Order was founded.

The Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse is now displayed as a schoolroom of the 1860s with living quarters at the rear. The adjacent St Mary MacKillop Interpretive Centre was completed in 1998 and offers an intriguing insight into the life and times of St Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

FEATURES

The Penola (Petticoat Lane/Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse) state heritage area is realistically two separate, but adjacent historic precincts - Petticoat Lane and the Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse. The Area includes many individually important sites, including three significant places which are state heritage-listed places, Sharam's First and Second Cottages and the Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse.

Petticoat Lane

The Petticoat Lane heritage precinct is the oldest part of Penola, with timber and stone cottages dating from 1850 to the First World War. It is also an area with significant open allotments, reflecting important aspects of early life in the town.

The Penola Branch of the National Trust of South Australia has purchased many of these properties (both residences and open space) to preserve the heritage character of this street. These National Trust properties, which are now used for a variety of functions, include:

- Sharam's Cottage (First), a small two-roomed cottage built in 1850, and recognised as the first residence in Penola. This slab cottage is a state heritage-listed place.
- Sharam's Cottage (Second), a larger three-bedroomed residence built in the 1860s, and also a state heritage-listed.
- Gammon Cottage, a 1850s stone cottage with a weatherboard lean-to and single room outbuilding.
- Wilson Cottage, also a 1850s structure, with a distinctive metal roof as well as original trees remaining on the allotment.



- the Old Rectory at No 9 Petticoat Lane, which was used for six years as the Anglican Rectory and has been restored and adapted to provide bed and breakfast tourist accommodation. The orientation of this cottage, which faces west onto a private laneway, may be evidence of the time when this was the end of Petticoat Lane, before its extension prior to 1869, and
- a shed framed of Australian hardwood and roofed in recycled iron.

Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse

The Schoolhouse heritage precinct includes three historic buildings and a modern Interpretive Centre, completed in 1998. The Schoolhouse, built by the Josephite Order in 1867, and associated with St Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods, is situated on the corner of Petticoat Lane and Portland Street. It has been restored and, together with the Interpretive Centre, celebrates the lives and achievements of St Mary MacKillop and Tenison Woods. The Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse is state heritage-listed.

At the southern end of the state heritage area boundary, along Portland Street, is St Joseph's Church and the former convent 'Bawcoodalyn'. Behind these buildings, and an important contributor to the Petticoat Lane open streetscape, is the school oval, which is now used by students of the adjacent St Mary MacKillop Memorial School.

VISITING

Penola is a gateway to the renowned Coonawarra wine region, and so visitors to this area have many options for accommodation, dining and other tourist pursuits.

The state heritage area offers two different visitor experiences. The Woods MacKillop Schoolhouse and modern Interpretive Centre commemorate the lives and achievements of St Mary MacKillop and Father Julian Tenison Woods. The centre contains interpretive displays, photographs and artefacts, as well as a souvenir shop and other facilities for tourists.

The Petticoat Lane experience, on the other hand, is a wander along a country lane. Visitors can appreciate the life-style and self-sufficiency of early residents, and are invited to view a number of well-maintained stone and timber cottages restored and interpreted by the Penola National Trust. One of these dwellings, the Rectory, is available for visitor accommodation.



Further Information

For further information please contact the State Heritage Unit

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