

Chalmers Homestead Statement of Significance

Heritage Place:	Chalmers Homestead	PS ref no:	HO252
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What is significant?

Chalmers Homestead at 15 Sims Road, Mount Rowan, is significant. It was built of basalt (‘bluestone’) between 1860 and 1861 for the Scottish immigrants Archibald and Beatrice M. Chalmers. The prominent Ballarat-based architect Henry R. Caselli was responsible for the design and construction. The Chalmers developed the property as a farm, dairy, and orchard into the early 1910s.

The significance of Chalmers Homestead is attributed to its original form and fabric, namely walls of lightly dressed coursed, squared basalt rubble and lintels.

The intactness of its east elevation (formerly, the façade) is unknown due to its concealment by the non-significant skillion timber attachment. The hipped roof (cladding is modern but sympathetic) and extant chimney are original features of the place but have been rebuilt.

The approximately three Monterey cypresses (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and pines (*Pinus radiata*) immediately north of Chalmers Homestead and the four cypresses to its southern boundary are longstanding windbreak plantings that are also significant.

The timber-framed (east) and small brick (north) attachments to Chalmers Homestead and other corrugated metal or timber outbuildings in its vicinity are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Chalmers Homestead is of historical (Criterion A) and representative (Criterion D) significance to the City of Ballarat.

Why is it significant?

The Chalmers Homestead is of historical significance as evidence of a mid-Victorian period basalt farmstead in the hinterland of Ballarat, of which relatively few survive. It is an important illustration of the emergence of Mount Rowan as an agricultural locality in the late 1850s/early 1860s. The use of local basalt/bluestone for the walls is reflective of a phase of domestic vernacular construction in the region that was chiefly restricted to the mid-19th century. Its design by the prolific mid-to-late 19th-century local architect Henry R. Casseli is demonstrative of a new phase of permanent but considerable housing in the area following the short-lived alluvial gold rushes that supercharged the broader development of Ballarat. (Criterion A)

The Chalmers Homestead is of representative significance as a fairly intact, mid-Victorian period rural residence built of basalt. While it is a more modest instance of its designer, Henry R. Casseli's work, Chalmers Homestead, proves an interesting engagement of a professional architect with a vernacular construction mode. Its permanency and robustness – relative to the era and then context (nascent rural Mount Rowan) – is conveyed through the excellent stonemasonry of the coursed, squared basalt rubble walls with a light rock face finish and its less typical elongated rectangular form. While never a mass type of construction in the municipality, only a small number of 19th-century basalt residences remain in Ballarat. The Monterey cypresses and pines in the vicinity of the building complement its rural character. (Criterion D)

Primary source

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