



Carting hay, Nebel's Farm c. 1920s. Peter Lalor Secondary College is now located in the background of this photo. (L. Flanders)

The Nebel family

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

The Nebel family arrived in Australia in 1855, five years after Westgarthtown was established, but went on to farm there for over 100 years. Today's Nebel Street in Lalor reminds us of their presence. I am grateful to Lorraine Flanders and Melinda Tam, Nebel descendants, for some of the information included below.

Georg Ernst Nebel (1818-93) and his wife Friedericke (née Borndt) arrived in Melbourne aboard the *Acmel* from Hamburg on 6 January 1855. They had been married on 16 March 1850. The Nebel family came from Hohenseeden, near Magdeburg in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. On the *Acmel* passenger list, Georg's occupation was given as shoemaker and his father's as stonemason. Other family members to emigrate with Georg and Friedericke were their young sons August and Albert; Georg's parents Georg Sr (1793-1877) and Dorothea (née Schultz) Nebel;

his brother Gottfried and wife Sophie Nebel and their son Friedrich; and his sister Anna Dorothea Bartsch with her husband Heinrich and daughters Louise and Emma. Two children — Emile, son of Gottfried and Sophie Nebel and Anna Dorothea, daughter of Heinrich and Anna Dorothea Bartsch — were born during the voyage but sadly, August Nebel and Louise Bartsch died of cholera and were buried at sea and Albert Nebel died soon after arrival in Melbourne.

It is not known when Georg and Friedericke Nebel and his parents first settled at Westgarthtown, but they

RESEARCH

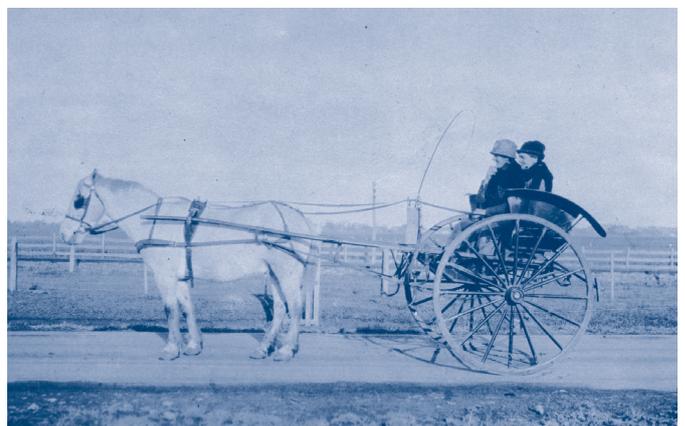
were living there by June 1856. On 6 March 1858, Georg contracted to buy Christian Kurtzmann's 70 acre farm (Section 25, Lots 11 & 12, Parish of Keelbundora), for £700. Included in the sale were 'all improvements thereon and also 2 cows 2 heifers 1 plough 1 harrow 1 roller'. Possession took place on 1 April 1858 and Georg was naturalized as a Victorian citizen on 6 May 1858, enabling him to take legal ownership of his land. The sale was duly completed on 5 July 1858.

The Nebel's dairy farm, later named Rockbank, was located between today's Dickens Street and Kingsway Drive and extended westward from Epping Road to Edgars Creek. The Peter Lalor Secondary College now occupies part of the farm. The old farmhouse and outbuildings, demolished in the early 1960s, stood on a stony rise near the intersection of Nebel and Lyndon Streets.

On 4 October 1860, Georg sold three acres of land fronting Epping Road to another German, Johann Seeber, for £116. On 20 February 1863, Georg borrowed £250 from the Westgarthtown schoolteacher Gottlieb Renner, possibly to repay an earlier loan he had taken out to buy the property. The £250 was repaid by 10 April 1874. By 1864, Georg also leased a further 50 acres from a neighbour, Friedrich Winter, who himself leased a larger farm at Epping.

A further six children were born in Australia — Friedrich Herman (1856-68); Johann Wilhelm (Bill) Franz (1857-1924 m. 1. 1887 Martha Heiner 2. 1901 Agnes Ellen (Nell) Hosie); Anna Maria (1859-67); Emma Louise (1860-1942 m. 1884 Charles Seeber); Wilhelmina Louise (1862-90 m. 1885 John Siebel); and Johann (Fred) Friedrich (1868-1931 m. 1898 Elizabeth Falk). All the children were baptized at Westgarthtown, where Georg was a Trustee, committee member and Reader at the Lutheran Church for many years. On his death on 19 June 1893, Georg was buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery with his parents, who both died in 1877, and several of his children who predeceased him. Friedericke Nebel, who died on 6 June 1915, was also buried at Westgarthtown, as are many subsequent members of the Nebel family.

Bill Nebel farmed Rockbank after Georg's retirement and death and then bought the farm from his mother's estate when she died. His brother Fred lived nearby at Epping. On Bill's death in 1924, his two sons Herman and Ernie managed the farm for their stepmother, who lived in a newer timber house which stood in front of the old bluestone one. Like his grandfather before him, Herman also served as a Trustee of the Thomastown Lutheran



Above from top: Nebel family Christmas postcard, 1908; Nebel farm, 1956; and Nebel's pony and jinker, Epping Road, c. 1920.

Church, from 1959-83. In 1960, Herman sold the farm for subdivision and moved to a new house he built nearby in High Street, Lalor. Lorraine Flanders, a daughter of Herman Nebel's sister Hilda, was principal of Lalor West Primary School during the 1980s.

Georg's brother Gottfried (1823-79), a soapmaker, lived at Richmond after his arrival in Australia and is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Their sister Dorothea (c. 1824-1910) settled in the Beechworth area.

1898 Donnybrook-Thomastown grassfire

The fast-moving grassfire which raged from Donnybrook to Epping on 18 February 2013 was by no means the first to burn through that area. On 11 January 1898, a similar fire occurred, long before the advent of tanker trucks and water-bombing aircraft. The following report appeared in the Preston Leader of 15 January 1898.

FIRES RAGE TO THE NORTH FROM DONNYBROOK TO THOMASTOWN IMMENSE DAMAGE THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF GRASS DESTROYED HOMESTEADS AND STACKS SAVED BY GALLANT EFFORTS

An enormous bush fire broke out at Donnybrook on Tuesday and swept all the country lying between that place and Germantown [Westgarthtown]. The origin of the fire is thought by some to have been due to a spark from the Sydney express. So parched and dry was the grass that the fire travelled, when fairly ignited, as fast as a horse could gallop. Bands of willing workers quickly appeared on the edges of the conflagration and endeavoured to beat back the flames with green branches and bags. These efforts prevented the spread of the fire in an easterly and westerly

direction, till slowly but surely the flames were subdued and beaten out.

The following day stumps and logs along the track of the fire were burning fiercely. Altogether a tract of country some 15 or 20 miles in length and in places, some 3 miles wide, was burned clean of grass, which was of good quality and most valuable in this particularly dry season. Amongst the heaviest losers are Mr Baker, Summer Hill, My John S. Morgan, Lynch Park (where the house and sheds, as well as the grass were devoured by the flames), Mrs Jesse Fox, Mr T. O'Hern and Mrs M. Hern.

It was only by a great effort that Mr O'Hern's house and [hay]stack were saved. The fire was eventually stopped at Kreitling's [behind Maltzahn's Farmhouse]. Too much praise cannot be given to those who turned out to fight the flames. Some of them were on duty for a stretch of 36 hours, and their blackened and blistered hands show the nature and the danger of their exertions. The damage is estimated at thousands of pounds and those who have suffered loss are entitled to every sympathy.

On 22 January 1898, the Preston Leader noted that 7,060 acres of grass had been destroyed by the fire, as follows:

W. Baker, 1,600; Harvey 800; McCallum 800; Ryan & Fox 600; Goss 20; T. Baker 800; J. S. Morgan 2,000; J. Hern 270; T. O'Hern 320; Jolly 100; and Kreitling 250.

Graff cart mishaps

On 26 September 1904, the *Argus* reported that 'Charles Graff, a farmer, 30 years of age, residing at Thomastown, visited Melbourne on Saturday, and in the evening was driving home in his cart. While passing through Preston he fell backwards on the road, and was rendered unconscious. He was found there, and was brought by the police to the Melbourne Hospital, where he was admitted for observation, as he appeared to have received a fracture of the skull.'

Thankfully, Charles appears to have quickly recovered and lived on until 1942, when he died aged 73 and was buried at Westgarthtown. Charles may well have

fallen from his cart for the same reason his father John Graff had been fined £3 at the Preston Court almost 20 years before.

On 17 July 1885, the *Mercury and Weekly Courier* recorded under the heading *Drunk in charge of a horse and cart* that 'John Graff, a German, residing in Thomastown, was charged with this offence which resulted in his coming in contact with a waggonette that was damaged, and the driver of which is still suffering from a wound, caused by the shaft of the cart striking him in the side. There was no appearance of the defendant and a fine of £3 was inflicted.'

Umlauft family of Epping

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

Hugo and Bertha Umlauft and an infant son arrived in Epping in 1912. Unlike most German settlers in the Thomastown, Epping and Wollert areas, Hugo Umlauft was a baker, not a dairy farmer. Recent immigrants from Germany, the Umlaufts experienced considerable persecution during the First World War, yet seem not to have become embittered. Their eldest son, Wilhelm Sydney (Syd) served in the Australian Army during the Second World War and youngest son Hugo Siegfried (Col) played football and cricket for Epping during the 1930s. Col was so named as he had played for Collingwood's Reserves football team. Much of the information below was kindly provided by Syd's son Brian Umlauft.

Ernst Hugo Umlauft was born at Meissen, Saxony on 21 April 1878, the son of August Theodor and Emilie (née Gebisch) Umlauft and arrived in Sydney aboard the *Zieten* from Germany in June 1908. Hugo had previously lived in England, having arrived in London in July 1902, before moving to New York in June 1903. He is believed to have stayed about two years in the US before returning to Germany and finally emigrating to Australia. His occupation on arrival in both the UK and US was given as baker.

Bertha Umlauft (née Hudaff) was born at Königreich, Hannover on 3 March 1889, the daughter of Wilhelm Heinrich and Margarethe Hudaff (née Detze). She arrived in Australia aboard the *Gneisenau* in April 1910 and less than a year later, on 11 March 1911, married Hugo at the Trinity German Lutheran Church, East Melbourne. Hugo's address was then 72 Alfred Street, Prahran and Bertha's was 74 York Street, Richmond.

Hugo and Bertha Umlauft's first child, Wilhelm Sydney, was born on 27 August 1911. On 3 August 1912, the *Preston Leader* reported that James Patterson, who had 'conducted a bakery at Epping for the past 33 years', had sold his business to Hugo Umlauft. No doubt Hugo chose Epping because of the considerable number of residents in the district of German descent. The bakery stood on the south-west corner of High and Rufus Streets.

Their second child, Hugo Siegfried, was born on 20 June 1913. On 17 August 1914, two weeks after the outbreak of war with Germany, Hugo Umlauft applied to be naturalised and was granted Australian citizenship

on 24 August 1914. His naturalization automatically provided Bertha with Australian citizenship as well. However, as the war progressed some Epping residents, most notably the newly arrived Lexton blacksmith John James Naylor, refused to accept them as Australian. On 27 September 1916 Naylor, a member of the Victorian Anti-German League, wrote to the Minister of Defence alleging Umlauft:

...had a contempt for anything British...he said he would bet...Germany would win...civilization would go back 400 years if England won...Soldiers in France from this district inquire in their letters if 'Fritz' is still here...His premises have been frequently bombarded with stones by boys and youths...There is a feeling throughout the district that he should not be here as he knows too much and is taking the place of a Britisher..

Naylor's rambling 300 word letter was referred to Constable Woodhouse, the Epping policeman, for comment. On hearing of a complaint against him, Umlauft wrote to military authorities seeking to learn the nature and source of it. He stated 'I am sure never to have made use of these words complained of'. His request for information was refused. Woodhouse reported there was probably substance in some of the statements, but he could not get anyone to say they had heard disloyal remarks. He noted that Umlauft had served as a 'Private in the German Artillery', which was presumably compulsory military service in his youth.

This case illustrates the difficult position faced during the First World War by recent arrivals from Germany. Naylor's accusations about Umlauft were made without evidence and followed an outburst against Cr Albert Wuchatsch at a public meeting at Epping on 4 August 1916. As Cr Wuchatsch rose to speak, Naylor yelled 'Sit down Germany, John Bull is master here, not the Kaiser'. When Councillors McCormack, Andrews and Day all defended Wuchatsch, whose family had lived in the district since 1850, Naylor crassly replied '...the magpies are chirping about his disloyalty from the treetops'.

Naylor's behaviour towards German-Australians during the war suggests more about his own insecurities and shortcomings than those of his victims. One can only wonder what Hugo Umlauft, having travelled, lived and worked in four countries on three continents, must have



Above from left: Umlauft family c. 1920; Epping football team 1936. Col Umlauft is sitting in the second row, third from left and Henry Ziebell is in the same row, second from right.

thought about Naylor's petty behaviour, a man whose life experience was confined to two small country towns in Victoria.

Notwithstanding Naylor's persecution, the Umlauft family went on to become long and respected members of the Epping community. Mrs Umlauft attended the Thomastown Lutheran Church for many years and was also reported to have been one of the first people to take a joy-ride in a aeroplane when 'an enterprising pilot brought a machine to Epping'. In 1931, she revisited her family in Germany, as did Hugo in 1938. In 1936, after 24 years in business, Hugo and Bertha sold the bakery to Naunton Bros. and in February 1937 moved to a newly completed house in High Street, Epping. Hugo is also said to have been treasurer of the German Tivoli Club in Melbourne in 1940.

Syd and Col Umlauft first worked in the family bakery business, then at the Abbotsford Brewery, their father being a friend of the head chemist. From the early 1930s, Col was a valuable member of both the Epping Football and Cricket Clubs, having received the nickname Col after playing Reserve grade football for Collingwood. He first played football for Epping in 1930 and cricket from 1930/31 when aged only 17. He was a forward in several Epping premiership football teams, including 1935 and 1936, when he was vice-captain. Syd too played football for Epping. In cricket, Col topped the batting averages for

Epping in 1934/35 with 409 runs at 27.3 and also took 12 wickets, at 18.3. Both Col and Syd also played tennis for Epping.

Syd married Doreen Margaret Shortt and had two children – Brian and Jennifer. Col married Jean Maude Griffiths but there were no children. The brothers were very close and both moved to Reservoir in the early 1940s. On 5 January 1942, Syd enlisted in the Australian Army and served for over five years until 13 May 1947, when he was discharged from the 9th Battalion with the rank of Corporal.

In about 1951, Syd and Col bought a bakery at Garfield and their parents moved from Epping to be with them. Hugo died there on 5 June 1956 aged 78 and was cremated at Springvale. In 1959, the brothers purchased another bakery at Skipton, which they operated until the mid 1960s. They then moved to Ballarat where Bertha died on 29 October 1968 aged 79. She was also cremated at Springvale. Finally, the brothers and their wives moved to Nelson Bay in New South Wales, where Syd died in 1996 and Col in 1997.

Col had served as a Justice of the Peace from 1960-73, during which time he changed his name by deed poll, to include the name Colin. On 18 August 1965, he legally became Hugo Siegfried Colin Umlauft, over 30 years after he played for Collingwood Reserves.

OUT & ABOUT



Above from left: Members of the Garrolis Gardeners from Box Hill South enjoy Ziebell's Farmhouse Open Garden weekend; Local Thomastown and Lalor residents follow Tatiana Joukoff's tour of the Westgarthtown Heritage Walk.

Melbourne Cemetery Stories Project

A Cemetery Stories Project is at present being planned in relation to the Melbourne General Cemetery. Research will involve locating and recording personal information about the more than 1,600 people buried there with German and/or Wendish ancestry, in order to recreate their life stories and shed further light on the early history of Victoria.

Herbert Mees, General Editor of the 2004 book *A German Church in the Garden of God: Melbourne's Trinity Lutheran Church 1853-2003*, is project manager. Several families from Westgarthtown and surrounding areas, such as Krieger, Nebel and Ziebell, have relatives buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. If you can assist with this historically valuable task, please contact Herbert Mees at herbertmees@bigpond.com

Wendish Heritage Society Australia

Do you have Wendish ancestry? The Wends (also known as Sorbs) are a Slavic people who spoke a Slavic language—Wendish or Sorbian. The Wends live in Lusatia, an area in eastern Germany which during the mid-nineteenth century was divided between Saxony and Prussia. Five families who settled at Westgarthtown were Wendish—Graff, Grutzner, Rosel, Wuchatsch and Zimmer.

The Wendish Heritage Society Australia researches and promotes the Wendish/Sorbian and Germanic heritage and family history in Australia. Its meeting room and research centre is located at the Ivanhoe Lutheran Church's meeting room, 27 Livingstone Street, Ivanhoe, Victoria and is open on the first Sunday each month February-November, from 1.30 – 5.30 pm. The Wendish Heritage Society Australia's postal address is PO Box 307, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084. For further details see www.wendishheritage.org.au

Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on the fourth Sunday of the month at 2.30 pm at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor. For further details, contact Irma Hatty on 03 9338 9064 or see the Calvary Lutheran Church website at www.calvarychurch.org.au

Visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month, 1–4 pm. For enquiries, call 03 9464 1805 or enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au

Tours can be organised for groups of ten or more people. For information and bookings contact Tatiana Joukoff on 03 9464 5062 or joukofftatiana@gmail.com

Trinity German Lutheran Church Archives, East Melbourne

If you had German Lutheran ancestors in Victoria, the Trinity Church Archives at East Melbourne may be able to help you.

The most commonly used records held by Trinity Church Archives are the marriage, baptism and confirmation registers, church minutes and correspondence. Information on many early members of the Trinity congregation is also kept.

The Trinity Church Archives are located at 22 Parliament Place, East Melbourne Victoria 3002. Opening hours are Tuesdays from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm. For inquiries, please contact Renate Jurgens on 03 9761 1430 or at auntnati@optusnet.com.au

TV, radio, events & tours

The last six months has seen Westgarthtown receive more visitors and publicity than ever before

An unprecedented number of visitors toured Westgarthtown in the past six months. Publicity is also on the rise with notable coverage on television, radio and within local newspapers.

Open Garden Australia's program featured Ziebell's Farmhouse for the first time on 17 and 18 November last year. Supported by the City of Whittlesea's Cultural Heritage Program, the event attracted over 300 people. 35% of the gate takings from both Ziebell's Farmhouse and the simultaneous opening at the Borrack Garden in Mernda were donated to the Friends of Westgarthtown. Along with sales from the plant and book stalls, the weekend raised around \$1,800 for the Friends. The real success, however, is ongoing. Most visitors on the Open Garden weekend had never been to Westgarthtown before and their interest has fuelled greater numbers to our regular open days and organised tours.

Immediately following the Open Garden weekend Gillian Borrack was contacted by ABC TV's *Gardening Australia* program who filmed a segment for their 2013 season featuring Gillian and Sylvia Schultz at Ziebell's Farmhouse. Last month the Channel Seven program *Coxy's Big Break* filmed a story featuring former City of Whittlesea Councillor John Fry. Both segments are yet to air, however, we do expect to receive advance notice before they do. Stay tuned to our website for further details as they become available.

In radio news, *Gardening Australia* reporter Jane Edmanson has been promoting the Ziebell garden on her 3AW *Big Backyard* gardening program. This has led to a spike in visitors to our regular open day at the farmhouse.

Local newspapers have recently run articles promoting our *Walking at Westgarthtown* event being held as part of the National Trust Heritage Festival and City of Whittlesea Cultural Heritage Program.

Tour coordinator Tatiana Joukoff has been busy too. Already in 2013 we have conducted tours for the Australian Garden History Society, Montrose Proboscis Club, Somerville Senior Citizens, The Lakes South Morang Primary School, Northside Christian College and the Illoura Club. Last month we also conducted a trial *Walking at Westgarthtown* tour for local Thomastown and Lalor residents that helped refine our new heritage walk brochure to be launched on 28 April.

National Trust Heritage Festival 2013

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) will conduct its 2013 Heritage Festival *Community Milestones* during April – May 2013. This festival celebrates Victoria's unique and diverse heritage. One of the events this year will be *Walking at Westgarthtown* on Sunday 28 April 2013 from 1.00 – 4.00 pm.

The new *Westgarthtown Heritage Walk* brochure, produced by the Friends of Westgarthtown in conjunction with the City of Whittlesea, will be launched at Ziebell's Farmhouse at 2.00 pm. Visitors can enjoy a guided tour at 3.00 pm or use the brochure to self guide themselves at their leisure. The *Westgarthtown Heritage Walk* commences at Ziebell's Farmhouse, then passes Maltzahn's, Wuchatsch's, Siebel's and Graff's Farmhouses, before finishing at the Thomastown Lutheran Church and Cemetery. The length of the trail is 2.9 kilometres.

Walking at Westgarthtown

Date: 28 April 2013
Time: 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Location: Ziebell's Farmhouse

Free admission and afternoon tea

Suitable walking shoes and clothing are recommended. For this event parking and entrance to Ziebell's Farmhouse will be via Westgarthtown Lutheran Reserve, German Lane, Thomastown (Melway Map 8, H5).

Future Directions: A five-year-plan for Westgarthtown

A subcommittee of members — Robert Wuchatsch, Gillian Borrack, Léon Borrack and John Fry — have prepared a new five-year-plan for Westgarthtown. The plan identifying our aims and a strategy for achieving them was endorsed by the committee in February. Already it has been used as the basis for initial future planning discussions with the City of Whittlesea. A copy of the plan can be downloaded from www.westgarthtown.org.au/about

In Praise Of Landscape: The Art Of John Borrack

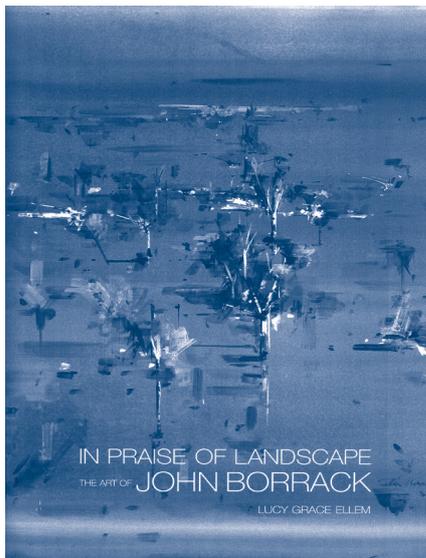
Lucy Grace Ellem's magnificent 288 page book *In Praise of Landscape: The Art of John Borrack* was launched at the Australian Galleries Collingwood on 9 November 2012 by Rosalind Hollinrake. The publisher is Macmillan Art Publishing, South Yarra.

John Borrack, born 1933 to Leo and Augusta Borrack (née Ziebell), is a renowned Australian landscape painter whose career spans more than fifty years. John has a lifelong attachment to Westgarthtown and in his 1998 book *Lamplight and Bluestones: Recollections of the Ziebell Farm at Thomastown* wrote of his 'unwavering obsession with the place' which 'still remains strong today'. Many of his paintings feature 'The Pines', the old Ziebell farm. John's family also share his love for Westgarthtown and several members hold executive positions with the Friends of Westgarthtown — wife Gillian is Secretary, son Léon is Treasurer and brother Geoffrey is our Vice-President and Heritage Architect.

John Borrack's landscapes, mainly executed in watercolour and lavishly reproduced in the book *In Praise of Landscape*, record the beauty of the Whittlesea region and also extend to many remote areas of Australia, particularly the north with its extraordinary land formations. John says 'lonely corners of Australia inspire an overwhelming sensation of space and distance. These places to which I am continually drawn provide me with both a spiritual experience and the starting points for paintings.' Many of John's paintings also serve as an invaluable visual record of landscapes now lost to inevitable, but often unsympathetic, urban development.

The author, Lucy Grace Ellem, an art historian, is Honorary Research Associate of the School of Historical and European Studies at La Trobe University, Melbourne. She is also a friend of Westgarthtown.

In Praise of Landscape: The Art of John Borrack is available from book shops stocking quality art books and can be purchased online from Readings for \$99.95, including post and packaging.



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Westgarthtown is the oldest and most intact German/Wendish settlement in Victoria. Established in March 1850, it celebrated its 160th Anniversary in 2010.

The Thomastown Lutheran Church at Westgarthtown is the second oldest surviving Lutheran Church building in Australia and the oldest still used as the principal worship centre of a Lutheran congregation.

Heritage Victoria has included the Lutheran Church, Cemetery and Reserve; and Graff's, Siebel's, Wuchatsch's and Ziebell's houses on its Heritage Register, recognising their outstanding heritage value and providing legislative protection for the future.

Ziebell's Farmhouse is Victoria's oldest German immigrant building.

Siebel's Farmhouse, erected in 1860, is the birthplace of Albert Siebel, who in 1934 established the Pura Dairy at Preston, to retail Westgarthtown's milk. Pura has now developed into a leading national Australian brandname.

Wuchatsch's Farmhouse is believed to be the oldest house in Melbourne to have been constructed, owned and continually occupied by the same family.