# BOX HILL HIGH SCHOOL, 1180 WHITEHORSE RD, BOX HILL

| Building: | Box Hill High School | HO No. | 248 |
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| Address: | Whitehorse Road Box Hill | Melway Map Ref: | 47 G10 |
| Building Type: | educational | Construction Date: | 1929 |
| Architect: | Public Works Department, Chief Architect E Evan Smith | Builder: | unknown |




## History

The Box Hill High School for Boys was built in 1929 on a site at the corner of Whitehorse and Middleborough Roads and was officially opened on 2 May 1930 by the Minister of Public Instruction, Hon J Lemmon, MLA.[19] It began with an enrolment of some 350 boys[20] and J H Charles as the first headmaster.

The first common school in Box Hill, the Sagoe Common School, Box Hill-Nunawading, no 463, was built on this site in 1865 and opened with an enrolment of 125 pupils.[21] It was transferred to the Education Department when established in 1872.[22] This school vacated the site in 1889 after a new school, Box Hill SS2838, was built in Whitehorse Road in 1887.[23] The site was then vacant until 1897 when the Nunawading Shire Council rented it and the small school building was used by sporting groups. In 1907 the Council purchased the site, demolished the school building and built a pavilion. Agricultural shows were subsequently held there until 1920 and the grounds were also used for army drill and parades. When Box Hill was declared a City in 1927, 3000 school children attended a carnival at this site.[24]

By 1907 four secondary schools had been established in country areas and by the early 1920s there were 26 in the country and only 6 in the metropolitan region. The latter included University, Williamstown, Essendon, Coburg and Dandenong High Schools,[25] none of which

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[19] *The Argus*, 5 May 1930, p 11

[20] *The Argus*, 5 February 1930, p 5

[21] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 9

[22] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 59

[23] L J Blake (ed), Vision and Realisation, p 388

[24] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 11

[25] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 12

were located in the fast growing eastern suburbs. Residents of these suburbs were keen to establish a continuation or post-primary school as Mont Albert State School was the only school in the district to offer secondary education in the seventh and eighth grades.[26]

Box Hill residents presented a deputation to the Minister of Education in 1921 for a high school in the district and this gained impetus when other Councils showed a similar interest. On the 9 July 1926 it was reported in *The Argus* that 'a proposal to erect a high school for the eastern suburbs is being enthusiastically taken up at Box Hill'. Council offered the four acre (1.6 hectare) showgrounds site, with the hope that the adjoining reserve of seven acres (2.8 hectares) could be used for sports purposes.[27] Although the Education Department had stipulated that a ten acre (4 hectare) site was to be offered, the Minister for Education agreed in 1927 and plans for a new high school were commenced immediately.[28]

In 1928 the Public Works Department, under chief architect Edwin Evan Smith, submitted plans for the design of a school which included ten classrooms, two science rooms, two art rooms and offices, with a manual training block at the rear.[29] The building was designed to be of brick with a roof of slate from New South Wales, however pressure from local progress associations resulted in a change to a roof cladding of locally produced tiles.[30]

On opening in 1930 it was one of 36 high schools in Victoria[31] and the only one between Melbourne and Lilydale.[32] The headmaster, Joseph Henry Charles, continued in this role until 1947 and built a strongly academic educational facility which attracted boys from a wide area.[33] When matriculation classes were introduced in 1954, the enrolment at the school was nearly 800.[34]

Funds for a school hall were sought from the early 1950s and in 1961 the J H Charles Assembly Hall, with the capacity to hold 900, was finally opened.[35] It was designed by Bernard Evans and Associates, approved by the PWD,[36] and financed with the help of a cooperative building society, the first of its kind in Victoria.[37] A new wing was constructed in 1968, containing a gymnasium, sports store and armoury.[38]

The Box Hill Boys High School became a co-educational school in 1977.[39]

**Historical Themes**
*City of Whitehorse Themes*
5 Institutions
    5.2 Education
*Victoria's Themes*
8 Building community life
    8.2 Educating people

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[26] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 141

[27] *The Argus*, 9 July 1926, p 12

[28] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 12

[29] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 13

[30] *The Argus*, 17 April 1929, p 12

[31] *The Argus*, 5 May 1930, p 11

[32] L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, p 547

[33] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, pp 13-14

[34] L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, p 548

[35] L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, p 548

[36] S W Wiencke, *Box Hill High School Golden Jubilee*, p 46

[37] L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, p 548

[38] L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, p 548

[39] A Lemon, *Box Hill*, p 248

## Description

The Box Hill High School is a two storey red brick building with tiled hip roof and double storey verandah across its extensive front facade. The Georgian Revival style which has been adopted in the design, combines both modern and classical forms and details. The symmetrical facade has a dominant classical two storey central porch with dentiled broken pediment containing a central decorative motif. This pediment is supported on massive paired Ionic columns and the whole central element has always been painted to contrast with the brickwork of the rest of the facade. A central fleche sits on the ridge line behind the pediment. Hipped pavilions terminate the facade and these are articulated by pilasters. In contrast to the classical columns of the entry, simple rectangular red brick columns with modern detailing line the verandahs and balconies and divide the facade either side of the entrance into five bays. Internally a central entry foyer is flanked by classrooms along the front facade. Multi-paned windows are typical of those found in Georgian Revival schools and houses at the time.

The 1961 Hall is a two storey cream brick building of similar height to the main school building. It is rectangular in form with shallow pitched gable roof and the hall is located at the upper level. A split stairway, shallow butterfly pitched porch roof and glazed bay form the central feature of the symmetrical front facade.

## Comparative Examples
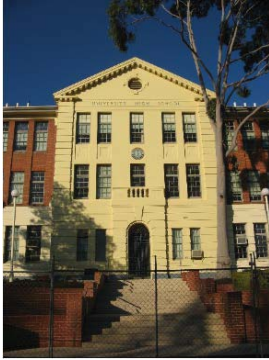
*City of Whitehorse Comparisons*

No comparison can be made with school buildings within the municipality. Both the nearby former Box Hill Girls' Technical School in Whitehorse Road, Box Hill (1936) and the former Box Hill Technical School in Dunloe Avenue, Box Hill North (1943) were designed later, in a contrasting, and highly distinctive, Moderne style by the Public Works Department. Primary schools at Mitcham and Box Hill were built at a similar time, but on a far smaller scale.

*State Comparisons*

Edwin Evan Smith in his capacity as Chief Architect of the PWD from 1922 to 1929 designed a number of public buildings in a range of historical styles. His school designs included Melbourne Boys High School (1925-28) in a Collegiate Gothic style, Emily McPherson College of Domestic Economy, Melbourne (1926) in a Greek Revival style and a collection of high schools designed in a Georgian Revival style including Box Hill (1929), University, Parkville (1929), Bendigo (1929-30), Essendon (hall 1926), Kyneton (1927), Northcote (1928-29) and Preston Girls' (1929). This revived Georgian style matched a similar revival in wealthier house design.



Bendigo High School, 1929-30

University High School, 1929



Kyneton High School, 1927



Former Essendon High School assembly hall, 1926



Northcote High School , 1928-29

Preston Girls High School 1929

## Significance

*What is significant?*

Box Hill High School, Whitehorse Road, Box Hill was designed by the Public Works Department, under chief architect Edwin Evan Smith, and completed and opened in 1930. It is a two storey red brick building, designed in a Georgian Revival style common to designs of Public Works Department schools at the time.

*How is it significant?*

Box Hill High School is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

*Why is it significant?*

The Box Hill High School is of historical significance as the first State High School built in the City of Box Hill and as the only high school located between Melbourne and Lilydale when constructed. It is a representative example of a high school established in the early twentieth century to provide government funded secondary education to boys in growing metropolitan areas. [Criterion A]

The Box Hill High School is of aesthetic significance as an example of the Georgian Revival style that was commonly adopted by the Public Works Department for school design in this period. It is a highly intact, distinctive and fine example. It clearly shows E Evan Smith's design approach as Chief Architect of the Public Works Department in the use of classical style to express contemporary ideas of civic beauty, austerity and simplicity in design, and the restrained use of ornament as a reflection of post World War One trends.  [Criteria D & E]

## Recommended Extent of Overlay

To the area encompassing the 1929 building and the 1961 hall as shown on map below. Generally to Whitehorse Road and Middleborough Road boundaries, 3 metres clear of east and south walls of the hall, and 3 metres clear of the south walls the east and west wings of the 1929 building. Tree controls to apply.

**References**

*The Argus*, 6 October 1927, p 7; 'High School at Box Hill'

*The Argus*, 3 May 1928, p 14; 'Box Hill High School'

*The Argus*, 17 April 1929, p 12; 'State School Roofs: Box Hill High School Roof'

*The Argus*, 5 February 1930, p 5; 'Box Hill High School' including photograph

*The Argus*, 5 May 1930, p 11; Box Hill High School Opened'

*The Argus*, 20 July 1954, pp 17-23, 'An Argus Souvenir of Box Hill and Nunawading', including photograph of school

Public Building Files: High Schools VPRS 3916/P0000/23, Box Hill correspondence 1921-1963, Public Records Office Victoria
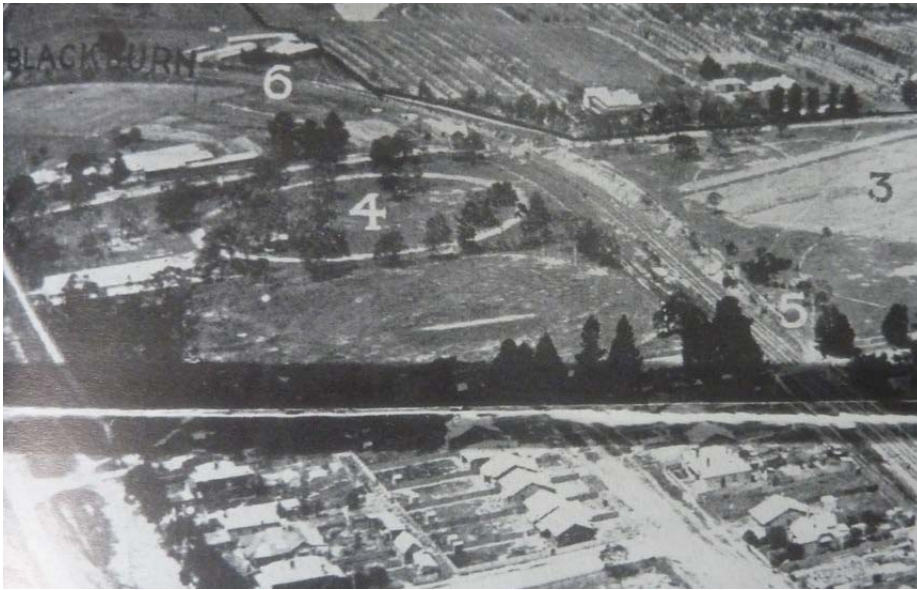
S W Wiencke. 'Box Hill High School: golden jubilee 1930-1980: a short history' 1980

L J Blake (ed). *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*. Melbourne 1973, p 388 and pp 547-48

A Lemon. *Box Hill*. Box Hill 1978

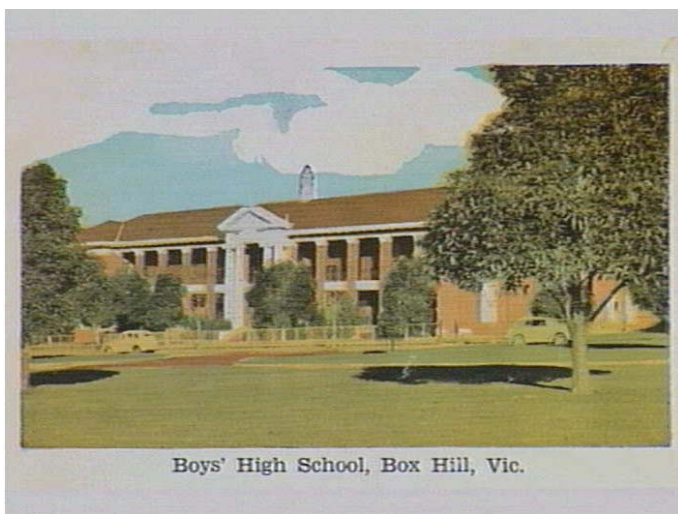Heritage Victoria Database online

## Historical Images



View to east with Whitehorse Road on left showing future site of Box Hill High School (no 4, showgrounds); photograph from estate agent brochure, undated; from E Finlay & M Morgan, *Those Were the Days, Box Hill in Pictures 1930-1960*, p 5; 1994



Box Hill High School soon after completion, Image 111, Box Hill Historical Society Collection

Rose Series postcard, undated, State Library of Victoria



Camera views, Box Hill; c1950, State Library of Victoria