

## **CHAPTER TWO – Historical Archaeology and Landscapes of Fear**

*The site itself – the place – inflames passions as much as the event* (Fox, 1993: 325).

Material culture is often regarded as a type of evidence that is completely objective, one which evades ideology (Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 10). Material culture, however, does not interpret itself (Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 10). Rather, it is interpreted and given meaning by individuals and groups. This chapter explores the role of mythology and ideology in giving meaning to material culture and reviews some of the contributions historical archaeology has previously made to the study of frontier conflict and frontier architecture, both in Australia and internationally. In addition, this chapter looks at the way frontier conditions have been observed through archaeology to influence the architectural material culture produced on the frontier. In particular, the relationship between feelings of fear on the frontier and material culture is discussed. The assumption here is that an individual's or society's fear, like any other influence, can be reflected in the material culture produced by that individual or society.

### ***A Customised Past***

Kenneth Foote wrote that “stories about the past that come to be accepted as objective, historical truth are better characterized as invented narratives – tales shaped and reshaped over time to meet the demands of contemporary society” (Foote, 1997: 214). While not going so far as to claim that all history is false, of course, it is nevertheless important not to be taken in by a perception that history is objective. Similarly, an important feature of

myths to bear in mind is that they are not naturally occurring. Rather, they are created by particular groups for particular reasons (Yentsch, 1988: 7; Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 3). However, those who create and support particular myths would either have their audience believe that this is not the case, or, if they themselves are receivers of the ideology, would not necessarily be aware of any underlying reasons. When groups have something to gain from the propagation of a particular myth, they want people to believe that myths *are* naturally occurring, as such belief strengthens the validity of the myths and hence the intrinsic values and ideological purposes they are designed to spread and fulfil (Shackel, 2001). ‘Memory’, in the form of myths, can add authenticity to a group’s claims or objectives (Bodnar, 1992: 14). For example, Benedict Anderson (1983) and Homi Bhabha (1990) point out how an engineered historical consciousness is often made to seem natural as a means of instilling nationalistic values in society, such as “roots, stability, boundaries and belonging” (Bender, 2001: 5). The customisation of the frontier and indigenous people by settler societies for their own ideological use has been discussed both in the United States, by archaeologist Patricia Rubertone, and in Australia, by historian Richard Broome, among others (Rubertone, 1994: 32; Broome, 1996: 55). Rubertone also demonstrated the important fact that archaeology has the potential to redress this situation, and thereby provide different interpretations of indigenous history, and in particular, indigenous responses to colonialism that are often unrecorded in written sources (Rubertone, 1994: 32).

There are a number of different ways in which material culture can be mythologically remembered. Within such mythology, there is often a struggle between interest groups for

control and dominance of the ‘remembering’: those who dominate it being the ‘dominant’ group, and those who do not being the ‘subordinate’ group or groups (Shackel, 2001: 2). However, the issue is not always so unilinear and straightforward. Concurrent with the dominant/subordinate struggle between groups, myths often serve to bind *across* groups. How this phenomenon relates to material objects (such as the structures investigated here) is explained by Lydon and Ireland. Such sites represent physical places where different groups (Shackel’s “interest groups”) share a view of the past. These sites thereby also become the focus of conflict between groups whose views of the past clash (Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 3). Thus, one of the things that determines how material culture of mythic significance is remembered is which group comes to dominate the myth-making/remembering. Conversely, what the subordinate groups choose to do about the domination of myths in which they hold a stake can also affect how a site is remembered (Shackel, 2001: 3). For example, when the agendas of the opposing interest groups clash, the collective memory of a particular site may be in a constant state of fluctuation. Alternatively, subordinate groups can choose either to attempt to subvert the dominant memory, or compromise it, in an attempt to have their agenda become part of a “multivocal history” (Shackel, 2001: 3). Other subordinate groups can fail to have their story remembered, and others still are not interested in having their story told at all (Shackel, 2001: 3).

Yentsch (1988) investigated the way that material culture, in the form of old houses, is used to create a form of ideology that uses physical evidence as the mechanism for its conveyance. Yentsch studied five old houses in New England and Maryland in the United

States. All of the houses studied had myths attached to them based on who built and lived in the houses in the past and what role those people played in the area's history. For example, Yentsch described how houses can become icons of superior strength and intellect through the interpretation of architectural features as built for defence against American Indians (1988: 11). The myths associated with these houses were analysed, first in terms of how well they served as a source of historical evidence, and secondly, in terms of what messages these myths passed on about kinship and social structure. Yentsch found that the myths formed a patrilineal ideology which served an important role in contributing towards their use as a social ordering/cohesion mechanism. The particular values these myths passed on were continuity of family, the ability to overcome hardship, participation of ancestors in the first wave of a community's settlement, service to the community, military leadership and valour, courage, and a Christian world view (Yentsch, 1988: 6, 16). Although Yentsch found that the content of the myths was often inaccurate in terms of facts, such as construction dates, chronologies and names, this was largely irrelevant to their role as carriers of meanings about kinship and social structure. Through the meanings revealed in the myths, Yentsch demonstrated that material culture can be an active agent through which a people's mytho-history is told to succeeding generations. Furthermore, because houses are necessarily built by a particular group (for example, in a colony they are built by the colonisers), it is *their* values which are emphasized in the myths attached to them (Yentsch, 1988).

### *An Exclusionary Past*

Through the use of several case studies, Paul Shackel has demonstrated how myth-histories (that is, histories which make use of myths) not only *include* things about the past, but just as frequently also *exclude* aspects of it. For example, in the case of Manassas National Battlefield Park, the site of two Confederate victories in the American Civil War (1861-64), the park's managers have intentionally erased features of the landscape that related to African-American presence at the site (Shackel, 2001: 18). Then there is the example of a statue presented to the United States Congress in the 1920s which commemorated the Women's Movement. Although intended to be displayed in the Capitol, this statue was almost immediately removed to the basement. It took over 50 years for it to be displayed again and even then its resurrection appeared to be only temporary (Shackel, 2001: 18). Further to this point, Shackel explained how the reinforced inclusion of particular aspects is actually a means of excluding others (Shackel, 2001). Shackel's case studies focussed on examples of material culture which hold mythic significance for more than one group of people and thus illustrate the struggle for control of the myth-making process that usually exists in such cases. Thus, myths can be shaped so that the reinforced remembering of some aspects/events of the past exclude and forget others, as well as how myths can be shaped by the dominant group to forget fault.

### *Landscapes of Fear*

Within this broad field of mythology lies the factor of 'fear'. This requires some discussion, in particular in the context of landscapes, due to it being a central theme in the

myths of the sites investigated here. The term 'landscapes of fear' derives from Yi-Fu Tuan's (1979) book of the same name. Tuan's work, though an all-encompassing investigation of the phenomenon of fear amongst humanity in general, actually ties in closely with the idea of 'fear' as manifested in the actions of the builders of fortified sites, frontier conflict in general and the myths that remember this fear. These 'landscapes', therefore, are not necessarily physical, but can exist in a more psychological way (Tuan, 1979).

Landscapes are places where people understand and engage with their material environment. Like history and material culture of mythic significance, landscapes are always "in process, potentially conflicted, untidy and uneasy" (Bender, 2001: 3). The study of landscapes is more than an academic exercise, rather it is "about the complexity of people's lives, historical contingency, contestation, motion and change" (Bender, 2001: 2). This section discusses the role mythology plays in interpreting and remembering such landscapes, places of conflict and fear.

The actual sites of violent frontier conflict are perhaps one of the most apparent landscapes of fear, and are also one of the most contentious landscapes in terms of the struggle for control of the way the events of the past are interpreted (Linenthal, 1991: 1). In the area of battlefield archaeology, Richard Allan Fox, Jr. (1993) has made a significant and valuable contribution to the historical archaeology of frontier conflict with his investigation into the battle of Little Big Horn (popularly known as 'Custer's Last Stand'). This was a battle between units of the U.S. Cavalry, led by General G.A. Custer,

and Native Americans, in which the latter were victorious (Fox, 1993: 143-221). Like the structures investigated within this thesis, a frontier mythology had grown up around the site of 'Custer's Last Stand', beginning almost as soon as the battle was over (Fox, 1993: xi-xii). This battle site has been described the site of the United States' most intense battle for ownership in modern times (Linenthal, 1991: 215). These struggles have raged over such issues as the changing perceptions of Custer and his cavalry, the call for a memorial recognising the Indian perspective, the ideological message communicated by the layout of the battlefield for visitors and even the name of the battle (Linenthal, 1991: 215-216). Perhaps caused in no small part by the strong symbolic meaning of the site and event to people, Fox actually found himself battling against critics of the value of archaeology in historical studies. His investigation brought out some rather strong reactionary views during the course of the project (Fox, 1993: 325). Aside from the more intellectual views, the strongest source of reaction came from people's emotions relating to the mythic significance of the event and the sacredness of the ground (Fox, 1993: 325). Through the course of his research, Fox found that "[t]he site itself – the place – inflames passions as much as the event" (Fox, 1993: 325). Such was the emotional power of the mythology associated with this site that there was also a feeling from some people that archaeologists, in excavating the site, had violated hallowed earth (Fox, 1993: 325).

Although it is impossible to obtain complete objectivity, archaeology does, however, apply a structured, scientific framework to data interpretation. In the case of the Little Big Horn investigation, for example, this took the form of a stability/disintegration model of combat behaviour, coupled with ballistic analysis of the position and types of projectiles

and cartridge cases excavated (Fox, 1993:337). In the case of the research undertaken here, a structure of data interpretation for the material culture was provided through modelling a set of factors that each site could be expected to have in order to render it functional as defensive (for more information, see Chapter Three – Methods). This was coupled with an analysis of primary documentary evidence in order to further remove any ambiguity as to the functions of the site.

In order to investigate the myths relating to fortified civilian sites, it is necessary to gain an appreciation of the conditions that Australian frontier settlers faced. One must try to understand how these settlers may have felt in their position and how these feelings and conditions may have influenced their actions. The sites investigated within this project were built by frontier settlers who may have been influenced to build defensively by their particular feelings and experiences or expectations of the frontier. Their attitudes would have been formed by several factors, such as prevailing attitudes towards Aboriginal people, as expressed in the newspapers or by the government, and their own personal experiences.

Compared to colonial town life, or even British rural life, a feeling of isolation often affected the Australian frontier settler. Such a settler would have felt isolated to a greater or lesser extent, depending on how sparsely colonised the region he/she settled in was. To the European settler, this may have contributed to a feeling of isolation from other Europeans, and from European society in general. Considering this, one can see a reason behind the ‘culture of silence’ regarding untoward acts against Aborigines. This feeling



of isolation had the effect of strengthening the bonds between fellow white settlers, resulting in a heightened sense of solidarity and a willingness to 'stick together' (Ward, 1970: 35). Such settler solidarity can be seen on the Eyre Peninsula in the 1840s. Although the Port Lincoln Resident Magistrate's records are peppered with the usual charges of assault and drunk and disorderly conduct one would expect from a predominantly male frontier society, there was an absence of violent conflict within the white community itself (Charter, 1989: 46). Charter suggested that, "...the [Aboriginal] threat may have been important in building the type of co-operation necessary to successfully cope with the realities of life in an area as harsh and isolated as the Eyre Peninsula" (Charter, 1989: 47).

Another possible result of feeling isolated, especially if there was Aboriginal resistance in the area, was the adoption of a 'siege mentality', meaning that the settler felt that his/her position was under threat from the 'outside' and therefore that he/she had to be constantly on guard. Isolation has played a crucial part in the nature of Australian frontier conflict. For some settlers, it may have caused a feeling of vulnerability that intensified their fears of Aboriginal attack (Charter, 1989: 1-2). Isolation, and the loneliness which resulted from it, sometimes even caused frontier settlers to suffer mental collapse (Dutton, 1985: 69-71). For example, there is an early entry in the Lake Hamilton (on the Eyre Peninsula) station journal which reads, "Shepherd to Adelaide with insane wife" (Nosworthy, 1988: 30), as well as the following telling paragraph from the South Australian Commissioner of Police's report from 1847:

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October a shepherd in the employ of Mr Cameron near Mount Gambier county of Grey left his station in a state of mental derangement and has not been seen since (SRSA, GRG 24/6/1847/278 ½ ).

There was often little or no legal or government presence, such as police, in newly settled areas. In situations such as this, settlers often felt compelled to take the law into their own hands and to make their own arrangements regarding their safety, a sentiment expressed in a South Australian police report of 1848 (SRSA, GRG 24/6/1848/659).

Another weight upon the settler's mind was concern about the possible commercial and financial failure of his/her venture. Most frontier settlers had invested everything they had. Therefore, they were not prepared to let anything, especially hostile Aborigines, jeopardise their chances of success (Franklin, 1976: 31). The Europeans on the frontier were generally outnumbered by the Indigenous inhabitants. They had to struggle to protect a tenuous livelihood, were threatened by high costs, distant markets, livestock diseases and Aboriginal resistance that sometimes tipped the balance to insolvency (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 109). That this was a common and strong feeling among frontier settlers is well documented, especially when Aboriginal activity was seen to be contributing to the threat. For example, Captain Torlesse, a Tasmanian settler, had his farm attacked six times by Aborigines by 1830. He wrote that, "...the trouble and loss they cause and still will cause us is quite paralyzing" (quoted in McKernan & Browne, 1988: 96). Interestingly, there is historical evidence that Captain Torlesse's homestead, Montacute, was fortified (Ryan, 1996:104). Armstrong noted in 1980 that few historians

had properly addressed the important issue of how the Aborigines attacked the economic base of the settlers in their guerrilla war (Armstrong, 1980: 116). However, examples of obvious attacks such as this are plentiful in the primary records in the form of mass killings or removal of large numbers of livestock (e.g. SRSA, GRG 24/6/1847/585).

Settlers, obviously driven to the point of frustration, often dealt with the financial threat caused by Aboriginal resistance with violence. When, for example, John Cox of Port Fairy in Victoria, tracked down his stolen flock and found 100 ewes with their legs dislocated by the Aborigines, he opened fire:

It was the first time I had ever levelled my gun at my fellow man. I did so with no regret or hesitation in this instance...I distinctly remember knocking over three blacks, two men and a boy, with one discharge of my double barrel (Cox, quoted in McKernan & Browne, 1988:103)

In the harsh environment of the Australian frontier, humanitarian ideals usually gave way to self interest. After all, there were usually no wives, teachers or missionaries to restrain these men; they were answerable only to themselves and perhaps the speculator, back in town (Franklin, 1976: 31).

Rising fear and anger about Aboriginal disruption of business encouraged settlers to undertake that long suppressed characteristic of the Australian frontier: the punitive raid (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 102). For example, when 300 sheep were taken by

Aborigines from one of the South Australian Company's flocks near Mount Gambier in 1847, a combined police/settler party set out "in search of the offenders" (SRSA, GRG 24/6/1847/1462). What happened next leads one to question whether the intention was ever really to apprehend anyone:

Corprl [sic] McCulloch felt himself called upon to adopt measures for the purpose of apprehending some of them which unfortunately ended in the death of four of the Aborigines...the attempt to apprehend was not attended with any success (SRSA, GRG 24/6/1847/1462).

Such actions clearly illustrate the high level of concern the settlers felt about financial failure, and vividly illustrate the absolute clash of the capitalist notion of private property and hunter-gatherer ways of life. The colonial authorities were well aware that settlers often decided to take the law into their own hands, however, owing to the general remoteness of the happenings, they were usually unable to prevent such actions. In the words of the South Australian Commissioner of Police in 1847:

...the settlers...are known from experience to lose no opportunity of revenging themselves upon the Aborigines for even supposed injuries and where they are further induced to take the law into their own hands, knowing the difficulty which exists in producing evidence against them in cases of this kind (SRSA, GRG 24/6/1847/1462).

As stated above, the authorities were also usually powerless to punish those settlers who carried out such raids, owing to a solidarity amongst the Europeans which caused settlers to refuse to testify against, or inform on, the perpetrators. Take, for example, the 1849 case of James Brown, a settler at Avenue Range in south east South Australia. It was alleged by the local policeman that Brown, having lost a number of sheep, and supposing them to have been driven away from his station by the Aborigines, followed their tracks accompanied by his stock keeper. Coming upon the Aborigines, who had the sheep in their possession, some of the Aborigines ran away. However, a blind old man, five women and three children who could not escape were slaughtered on the spot (SRSA, GRG24/6/1849/1388). The Advocate General appeared to believe that the accused were probably guilty. However, he was compelled to write:

In a case bearing so atrocious an appearance, it is grieving that every effort has been unsuccessful in [finding] evidence sufficient for conviction (SRSA, GRG24/6/1849/1388).

This was because a European witness:

...denied all knowledge of the matter, as did also others who were supposed to have heard the affair spoken of in Brown's presence. The stock keeper absconded immediately on the case being taken up, and was reported to have got on board a

south-sea whaler off Kangaroo Island; and a material witness...has gone over to the Port Philip district (SRSA, GRG24/6/1849/1388).

Furthermore, the Aboriginal witness absconded, and was thought to have been “made away with” (SRSA, GRG24/6/1849/1388), although whether by Europeans or Aborigines is not clear.

Not surprisingly, given that Europeans were prepared to kill Aboriginal people for stealing livestock, overt racism and a feeling of superiority were also characteristics of the frontier settler. In general, the Europeans came to the frontier with a disregard for the ‘inferior’ Aborigines and a patronizing belief in the ‘benefits’ their presence would bestow upon them (Charter, 1989: 4). One of the effects this had on their actions was harsh treatment of the Aborigines. For example, one Dr David Wilson, after being continually harassed by Aboriginal raids on his run, and burdened by debts, claimed that the Aborigines were, “...one link removed from the ourang outang” and ought to be extirpated as, “...they were a race not fit to live” (Wilson, quoted in McKernan & Browne, 1988: 102). That a feeling of racial superiority on the part of the settler was a prominent factor in such cases can be seen in the following quote from the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (NT Times)* in 1882:

The Anglo-Saxon race will not quietly allow themselves to be knocked on the head and have their property destroyed, and their houses surrounded, to the fear of

their wives and children, on the Queen's highway or anywhere else (*NT Times*, June 24, 1882: 3A).

This racism was deeply seated in colonial Australia by the time the sites under investigation for this project were colonised (beginning ca 1847) and can be seen going right back to some of the earliest European observations of Australian Aboriginal people, such as those of Willem Jansz and William Dampier, who encountered them in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Grassby & Hall, 1988: 11-12)..

Even more disturbing is the way that such racism was tempered with religious self-righteousness. For example, after calling for the "law of retaliation" to be applied against Aboriginal perpetrators, allowing them to be followed up and shot, one settler wrote that:

This law is sanctioned by Holy Writ, and to my understanding the old law of Moses of an eye for an eye, &c., still stands unrepealed, and it is also carried out by the Imperial Government (*NT Times*, June 24, 1882).

Many English settlers, some of whom had never travelled outside Western Europe (or England for that matter), no doubt suffered a considerable amount of what is commonly referred to as 'culture shock' on reaching the frontier. These settlers, often short on money, could not afford to remain idle in town until they had fully adjusted to the colonial conditions before taking up land on the frontier. Instead, they needed to obtain a run, or at least work on a run, as soon as possible. These settlers found themselves thrust

immediately into a particularly isolated, inhospitable and often threatening environment. Furthermore, they found themselves in confrontation with a completely unfamiliar Aboriginal society. Take, for example, the case of one early settler in South Australia, a Sussex farmer named Elles. Mr Elles, on anchoring in Holdfast Bay, enquired of a fellow passenger, “Mr Hailes, what be they black things on the shore yonder?”. Mr Hailes answered, “They are native Aborigines.” “Well, now”, said Elles, “if I meet any of them Bodginees when I get ashore I’ll shoot ‘em that I will” (Peters, 1998: 6).

Some would no doubt have handled it better than others. The ill-effects of this existence would have been feelings of isolation, fear and loneliness. John Frederick Haigh, manager of the Sheringa run, neighbouring one of the structures investigated within this project, provides a prime example of such culture shock. Haigh came directly to the Eyre Peninsula from England and found life in the colony very difficult (Cockburn, 1927: 230-231). In his letters to W.R. Mortlock (the occupational licence holder who resided in Adelaide most of the time), Haigh expressed despair and doubts as to the success of the venture. The Aborigines were raiding the station and the shepherds had to be constantly armed (Cockburn, 1927: 230-231). Haigh concluded one of his letters by writing, “You might send a few dozen of that old port, you know, just by way of keeping a fellow from committing suicide in this infernal hole” (Haigh, quoted in Cockburn, 1927: 231).

Distrust of the Aborigines was a common feeling amongst Australian frontier settlers throughout the colonial period. This was borne out to a large extent by the very different ideas of how to carry out warfare on the part of Europeans and Aborigines. The style of



frontier warfare in Australia represented a greater break with tradition for the European than the Aborigine. The British notion of warfare at this time was one of set-piece battles involving relatively slow moving, dense, ordered formations of troops. Australian frontier warfare, on the other hand, involved fast-moving raids and ambushes. Furthermore, the Aboriginal mode of warfare was total, as it involved men, women and children (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 113). The word 'treachery' was one which seemed best to represent the way Europeans saw these tactics (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 113). Thus, Major William Paterson, writing of the Aborigines in Tasmania in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century stated, "nothing but Treachery is to be expected from these people" (Paterson, quoted in Denholm, 1979: 35). One can imagine that settlers with such a mindset would have thought the fortifying of their buildings expedient.

Another problem faced by many settlers, mainly during the period when the flintlock was the most common firearm available to them, was a lack of confidence in their arms. The flintlock smoothbore (usually in the form of a musket) was slow to load, notoriously unreliable and inaccurate at over 50 metres (see Table 2). In the case of South Australia, the period of the flintlock's use was roughly between 1836 and 1860 (Denholm, 1979: 33). Misfires (happening on average once every four shots) would have undermined the settler's confidence in their ability to defend themselves. In the flintlock period, the settlers did not yet have the technological superiority that they would later gain with the introduction of breechloading rifles and revolvers. The situation on the frontier, as a result of Aboriginal tactics, actually turned the shortcomings of the flintlock mechanism

upon the operator. If the settler lost the initiative, he or she could easily find themselves in deep trouble, unable to respond immediately (Denholm, 1979: 34).

The Aborigines were also well aware of the frustration that unreliable firearms caused. The records of the early frontier are littered with accounts of firearms misfiring, some of which provoked laughter from the Aborigines (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 98). For example, when Sir George Grey's flintlock misfired while he was trying to disperse hostile Aborigines in 1838, the latter, "...made faces [at him] and an insulting noise which was meant to imitate the snapping [misfiring] of the gun" (Grey, 1964[1841]: 17-18).

The frontier settlers also generally felt a sense of acute frustration at Aboriginal resistance tactics. The tactics used by the Aborigines were very similar to what later became known as 'guerilla' warfare. This term originates from the Napoleonic Wars in Spain and loosely translated means 'little war'. This was a form of warfare naturally suited to the relatively small, independent tribal group. Traditional Aboriginal warfare was highly localized and ritualised. Its tactics consisted of ambushes and night raids, as well as pitched battles (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 109-110). In Aboriginal culture, these tactics were an acceptable and traditional form of fighting. To the Europeans, however, these tactics were viewed as 'treacherous' (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 110). Tactics such as these would no doubt have imposed a great psychological strain upon the minds of Europeans unaccustomed to them; in a general atmosphere of distrust and misunderstanding, fear would have been heightened: one never knew when a spear might

come silently flying through a window or doorway, or from the bushes. This created a sense of baffled deflation and anger at an elusive target that would not stand still for the flintlock to do its work (Denholm, 1979: 35). Frustration at Aboriginal tactics led to the accumulation of a suppressed rage, stirring a desire to shoot Aborigines to reassert superiority and self respect by whatever means necessary (Denholm, 1979: 35).

As a result of these kinds of feelings which many frontier settlers experienced, came fear. As Denholm explained:

...much of the history of Colonial Australia was made up of demoralized Aborigines who feared that the white men would use their muskets and by demoralized white men who feared that they would have to use their muskets (Denholm, 1979: 39).

Deterred from open conflict, settlers and Aborigines substituted ambush and massacre for marksmanship (Gardner, 1993: 44). This led to a situation where life for settlers consisted of an armed, watchful, wary, nervous calm. Sometimes both sides observed each other for months, or even years, until a blow could be struck (Denholm, 1979: 40). One of the peculiar aspects of Australia's frontier conflict was that Aborigines and settlers often knew each other by sight, and even by name. One such example can be seen in the case of a white station worker in the Northern Territory who was speared by an Aboriginal "well known about the station as Long Peter" (*Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, November 4, 1882: 4A). The fact that both sides could be so close, and yet commit such

brutalities upon each other, renders the Australian situation all the more horrible. In one attack on a homestead in Tasmania in 1826, the Aborigines knew that the besieged settlers had almost no ammunition, since they tried to taunt them into firing it off by chanting, "Fire, you white buggers" (Denholm, 1979: 40).

Fear inspired and fed on previous brutalities. Wild rumours often flew at each new event, and grew more and more fearsome over the years, approaching at times the improbable. Take, for example the case of Port Lincoln in South Australia. The fear created there by a series of brutal attacks on settlers in 1842 was magnified to proportions that threatened the immediate future of the settlement. Panic gripped the settlers following the murders. Virtually all the rural settlers abandoned their runs and sought protection in Port Lincoln. The settlers seemed to be under the ludicrous impression that the whole of the Aboriginal population of the region were going to unite and launch an attack upon the town. Consequently, most of the town's buildings were boarded up and many of the inhabitants went over to nearby Boston Island for refuge (Bull, 1972[1884]: 299).

The fear that pervaded frontier conflict for both sides must not be underestimated. It was not unknown for settlers to run considerable distances, leaving behind supplies, simply on seeing Aborigines (Giles, 1879-1894: Entry for 13/11/1881). The Aborigines themselves were often terrified by their first encounters with the Europeans and their guns and horses. This often inclined them to launch their spears too quickly and therefore with lesser effect (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 100). McKernan and Brown claimed that fear

caused as much killing on the early frontiers as hatred or premeditated efforts to drive one another away (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 100).

Although the majority of the primary sources referred to above belong to the earlier frontier period of South Australia, fear was actually arguably greater on the (later) northern frontiers, because there Europeans were greatly outnumbered by Aborigines for decades (McKernan & Browne, 1988: 105-106). This would apply, therefore, to Springvale, the Northern Territory site investigated here.

### ***Frontier-Influenced Modifications to Vernacular Architecture***

The modification of material culture in culture contact sites is an area which has already been investigated by archaeologists to a greater or lesser extent (e.g. Rubertone, 1994; Hoagland, 1999; Bender & Winder, 2001; Carter, 2006). At the World Archeological Conference in December 1999, a workshop was held on the topic of “the archaeology of culture contact in Australia and beyond” (Harrison & Paterson, nd.). One of the sessions discussed “the use, modification and identification of material culture sites in the archaeology of culture contact” (Harrison & Paterson, nd.). Several examples were discussed of types of material culture that have been subject to modification as a result of being produced under frontier influences, mainly from the point of view of the effect of settler culture on Indigenous material culture. However, one factor influencing the material culture contact which was not considered was that of fear. This research is concerned with the influence of fear not just on material culture in general, but specifically on architecture. To put this into perspective, examples of frontier conditions

influencing architecture will first be looked at, followed by the more specific issue of the influence of fear on such architecture.

Frontiers establish different conditions to more settled areas. These conditions often affect many aspects of life and, as a result, material culture, on the frontier. One such aspect of material culture that is often influenced by frontier conditions is architecture. For example, frontier settlers have been known to be influenced by the construction methods and designs of the Indigenous people upon whose land they are settling. Both British settlers of the Eastern Cape of South Africa in 1820 and frontier settlers in Australia were influenced by Indigenous construction techniques for their earliest shelters (see Lewcock, 1963: 133 for South Africa, and Cox & Lucas, 1978: 5 for Australia).

In the United States, Carter (2006) investigated the modification of vernacular architecture in the frontier context on Ward's Ranch, in Arizona. Dating to the first period of European settlement in the region (1850s), excavations at this site found artefacts which were no different to those used back in the closely-settled areas to the east. The architectural design of the buildings, however, was found to be very different to eastern American vernacular architecture, clearly reflecting a Mexican influence. Evidence for this included the use of adobe for its construction and a flat roof, possibly of dirt, supported by horizontal rafters (Carter, 2006).

Alison Hoagland's study of the design of mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. army forts on the American western frontier is interesting, because it provides an example of the

influencing power of frontier conditions to radically alter the design of a site. The typical U.S. western frontier fort, rather than consisting of bastioned walls, deep ditches, or grassed ramparts, or even wooden stockades for that matter, looked much more like a village (Hoagland, 1999: 215). U.S. coastal forts were of the traditional bastioned form described above, but those built on the western frontier, being more like villages in plan, were totally different. Hoagland attributed this modification to an unconscious expression of the fort's commanding officers, who, in being allowed to construct their forts as they saw fit, revealed their ties to the eastern establishment from which they drew comfort in their unfamiliar and hostile environment. These forts represented outposts of eastern society and the 'civilisation' their soldiers were fighting to maintain and extend (Hoagland, 1999: 216, 215).

Since contact with different cultures and a will to retain ties to 'the known' can influence settler architecture, it follows that architecture can be influenced by other frontier conditions, in particular, fear. Examples of this can be found in investigations of civilian use of defensive architectural techniques across different frontier contexts. One example is the well-known American frontier building as popularised in Hollywood - the log cabin. Architectural historian Frank Roos Jr. described this type of building as having provided:

...the utmost in protection without too great a construction effort on the part of the settler. The log cabin answered this requirement and for more than a century it

was America's architectural wedge into the unfriendly lands beyond the frontier (Roos, 1953: 4).

Erected in response to European/American Indian conflict, Roos also noted that, “[t]hroughout much of [Ohio] were built protective block houses of the standard square type with a second storey overhang” (Roos, 1953: 4). This overhang was designed with embrasures in its floor that allowed defenders to fire downwards and thus defend the doorways on the lower level. As Roos was describing purely civilian architecture, the above mentioned block houses were built and intended to be used by civilians, thereby constituting an American example of a structure designed for a purely defensive role against Indigenous attacks. However, Roos went on to describe a far grander fortified structure called ‘Campus Martius’, described by its builder as, “...the strongest fortification in the territory of the United States” (General Rufus Putnam, quoted in Roos, 1953: 4). This particular structure consisted of a central living compound of conjoined wooden buildings surrounded by a defensive log palisade and ditch (Roos, 1953: Fig. 3.). This structure, although built by ex-soldiers from New England, displayed “...little of New England's influence except in the interiors” (Roos, 1953: 4). Instead, Roos suggests that “...it might readily be called a descendant of the medieval fortified town, appearing here in the wilderness centuries after its prototypes on the continent” (Roos, 1953: 4).

Another interesting example of the influence of fear on colonial settler architectural plans is that of the adaptation of ‘bawns’ to frontier New England in the United States, as discussed by Blair St. George (1990). A bawn is a civilian-built defensive structure



originally built in the Ulster Plantations of Ireland to protect the English settlers from a potential Irish uprising during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Blair St.George, 1990: 242). Bawns typically consist of a fortified house attached to a courtyard surrounded by defensive walls, two corners of which usually have projecting towers or bastions called ‘flankers’ (Figure 2.0).

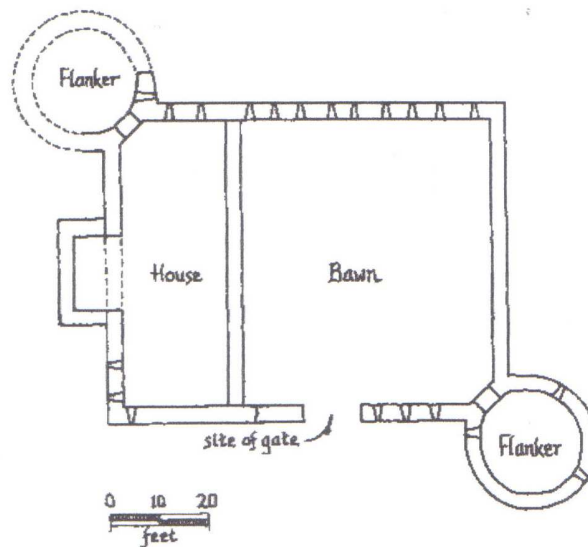
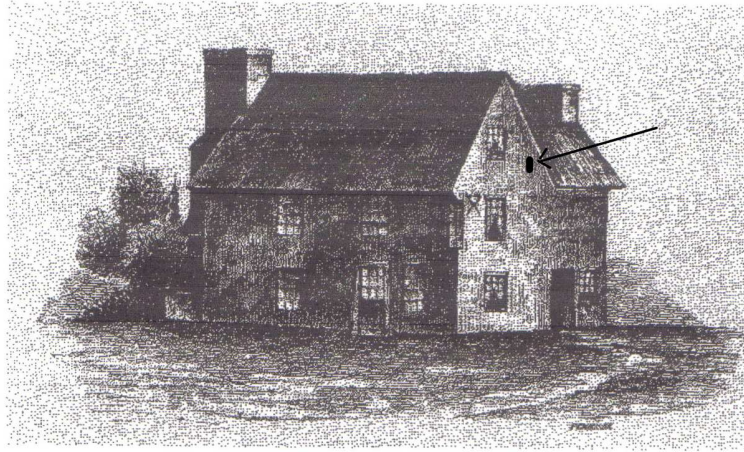


Figure 2.0. Plan of 17<sup>th</sup> century house and bawn of Salter’s Company, Salterstown, county Londonderry, Ireland. From Blair St. George, 1990: 257.

Blair St.George investigated the architectural sources upon which the English settlers of New England drew when they constructed this enclosed, courtyarded settlement form in a new environment. Two such houses are focussed on, one which still stands, known as the ‘Whitfield House’, and another which is only known from a contemporary plan. The Whitfield House, which included an embrasure for a small cannon in its upper storey (Figure 2.1), also provides an example of the use of archaeological excavation to investigate a civilian-built defensive structure on the United States frontier. In this case,

excavation suggested that the house may well have formed part of a larger enclosed complex (Langley, 1982).



**Figure 2.1. The Whitfield house, Guilford, Connecticut, 1639-40. The arrow points to the small cannon embrasure, which has been darkened for clarity. After Blair St.George, 1990: 254.**

Turning now to another region settled by Anglo-Europeans in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, South Africa, the work of Margot Winer also provides some examples of the influence of fear on civilian architecture. Winer studied changes in vernacular architecture in the small British settler village of Salem on the East Cape of South Africa (Winer, 2001: 257-271). Winer identified four phases of frontier-influenced modifications to the vernacular architecture which she termed ‘Architecture of Coping, 1820-1823’, ‘Architecture of Identity, 1823-1832’, Architecture of Affluence, 1832-1860’ and ‘Architecture of Fear, 1835+ recurring’ (Winer, 2001: Fig. 15.1). The changes in architecture that this final phase displayed were brought about by widespread and devastating attacks upon settler property and the lives by the Indigenous Xhosa people, which peaked in 1834/5. This phase was characterised by the incorporation of defensive architectural features into older forms, the construction of new dwellings with

embrasures, and other defensive techniques. For example, previously-built structures, such as farmyard walls, which were usually seen only as symbolic perimeter markers and barriers to livestock, were modified by the digging of deep ditches on the outside to convert them into fortifications. Newly-built farms were constructed so that all the buildings and livestock areas were protected by high walls with embrasures for firing through. Also, hedges of brush and other thorny plants were used as protective barriers (Winer, 2001: Fig. 15.1, 266).

The Australian frontier was characterised by often intimate cultural intermingling, both peaceful and violent (Denholm, 1979: 40). Although this kind of intermingled frontier is characteristically Australian and was one of the main determining factors of the nature of Australian frontier conflict, a comparable situation has been pointed out by Winer in relation to the Eastern Cape frontier in South Africa at a similar period (i.e. 1779-1870) (Winer, 2001: 257-9). Winer wrote that “[t]he practical, logical *modus vivendi* bred of proximity, intimacy, familiarity and mutual convenience was co-operation and conflict simultaneously” (Winer, 2001: 258-9). Therefore it is possible that, given the similar character of the different frontiers, one can expect to see similarities between them in the kinds of material culture produced, its meaning and function, and also similarities in the myths produced around these frontier sites. In this case, for example, Winer identified the incorporation of defensive architectural techniques into civilian buildings (Winer, 2001: Fig. 15.1).

Fear of the kind felt by the colonial settlers of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and its subsequent visibility in civilian architecture can even be seen in the present in the example of fortified houses in Johannesburg in South Africa. Here, European people's fear of crime has resulted in the construction of heavily fortified houses and communities, using razor wire, high walls, and sophisticated surveillance systems. As Lindsay Bremner wrote, this is an example of "[t]he middle-class...fortifying itself" (Bremner, 1999: 'B2').

The influence of fear on civilian builders in frontier environments is not just a symptom of European colonialism in the modern age, but can also be seen to have existed in diversely different temporal and cultural contexts. For example, Susan Kenzle's (1997) analysis of Anasazi enclosing walls, based upon 88 sites in the American Southwest dating to 1150-1300 C.E., showed that at least some of the walled sites investigated appear to have been built as fortifications. Their construction, she argued, indicated a change to more antagonistic social relations within the society, supporting evidence for which came from ethnohistorical literature, oral history and archaeological finds of violent deaths dating to around the same period as the wall's construction (Kenzle, 1997: 195, 203-207). They were, therefore, constructed out of fear.

The above examples demonstrate that the existence of fear can indeed be reflected in civilian architecture. This has some significant applications towards the study of frontiers in both national and global contexts. Using core-periphery theory, Carter (2006) has laid some valuable groundwork with regards to U.S. western vernacular architecture. Core-periphery theory suggests that similarities in developing cultures (which is what a frontier

society is) are often best understood through their connection to a common central, or core, culture (Carter, 2006). Carter suggested that this theory could be applied to analyses of the whole of U.S. western vernacular building traditions, and that no matter how different such traditions may appear on the surface, they can all be bound “through a shared peripheral relationship to an American core culture” (2006). Carter provided six main ‘contexts’, or ‘interpretative structures’ which he believed hold true for much of the west as a basis for evaluation. These were ‘conquest’, ‘assimilation’, ‘experimentation’, ‘adaptation’, ‘innovation’ and ‘exploitation’ (Carter, 2006). The contexts of ‘conquest’ and ‘adaptation’ are of most interest here. ‘Conquest’ describes buildings associated with the early fur trade and the initial military presence, and ‘adaptation’ describes that shaping of core ideas (such as in building construction) by specific western [read ‘frontier’] conditions (Carter, 2006). Just as this theoretical approach helps to create a more complete and deeper understanding of the history of U.S. western architecture in general, so, too, can such an approach be used to gain a more complete and deeper understanding of Australian frontier architecture, using the term ‘fear’ in place of Carter’s ‘conquest’ and ‘adaptation’.

The fact that there also appear to be internationally observable patterns with regards to the relationship between settler societies, fear, race relations and the resulting influence on architectural material culture is particularly significant, because it provides a basis for investigation and interpretation of other sites in other contexts that share similar characteristics. In tackling this issue, this research has the potential to contribute to the recently-emerged trend of analysing evidence (whether it be material or historical) with a

view to gaining a transnational perspective of processes (Paisley, 2003: 7). An example of this approach can be seen in Penny Edwards' work in white settler colonialism in Western Australia, wherein she demonstrated that colonial policies, such as those concerned with mixed-descent children, have cultural and material commonalities across such disparate colonies as Burma, Cambodia and Western Australia (Paisley, 2003: 7). As Tim Murray urged, this process seeks to understand contact and colonialism using a global approach, not just focussing on particular times and places in isolation (Murray, 2004: 14-15).

### ***Conclusion – The Role of Material Culture Myths***

We have seen above how myth-history is always an unstable and changing field and one in which different and opposing groups are constantly struggling with each other to control, shape and dominate the myth-making process. The existence of these struggles suggests that there must be some reason people find it so important to retain myths. The following will investigate some of the roles that myths (and in particular myths associated with material culture) play within societies.

### ***Identity Construction***

Before discussing the role of material culture specifically, it is necessary to understand the wider context within which myths fit. This context can be described as 'identity construction', which can be broadly defined as the way individuals or groups construct their social position within their environment. In other words, it is the way they, "...produce the systems of value and meaning by which they live and through which they

explain and interpret the world and themselves” (Slotkin, 1993: 5). Identity construction affects everyone concerned with the past. Archaeologists, historians, politicians, novelists, priests and parents all construct ideas and images of the past from materials available to them in the present (Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf, 1999: 3). Frontier myths are not just interesting or thrilling stories, they play a key role in identity construction in settler societies.

It is not difficult to imagine why frontier myths play such a significant part in a settler society’s identity construction - after all, the frontier period is usually seen as the society’s formative period. It is the period when original identities formed in the ‘old world’ are forced to undergo a change as a result of a new environment. The frontier period is, by its very nature, usually characterised by struggle. Struggle, and the overcoming of it, therefore forms an underlying theme in frontier mythology (for example, Forrest, 1985).

Frontier myths generally start to develop at the time the frontier itself becomes more distant or ‘closes’. In the case of Australia, as in the United States, this time period was around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Slotkin, 1993: 4; Foster, et al., 2001: 10; Curthoys, 2003: 190). It was at this time in Australia that the stories of the nation’s pioneers began being recorded and mythologized in historical narratives and local histories (Foster et al., 2001: 10). It is perhaps no coincidence that the time at which the frontier began to be mythologized roughly coincided with Australia’s Federation. Federation marked a new beginning and the culmination of the colonist’s work to settle the country. The

mythologizing of the frontier at this time, therefore, served to create a foundation upon which the new nation could be built, and upon which the nation's myths would be inscribed to construct its identity.

Just as societies undergo periods of turmoil or change, so, too, can that society's body of myths change in times of crisis. Slotkin (1993) stated that:

At such moments of cognitive dissonance or 'discontent', the identification of ideological principles with the narratives of myth may be disrupted and a more or less deliberate and systematic attempt may be made to analyse and revise the intellectual/moral content of the underlying ideology. But in the end, as the historical experience of crisis is memorialised and abstracted, the revised ideology acquires its own mythology, typically blending old formulas with new ideas or concerns (Slotkin, 1993: 6).

Identity construction, therefore, is not a stable and constant process. As noted by Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf (1999: 12), "Folkloristic [read mythological] phenomena do not exist as remnants of the innermost core of a people's culture; they are adopted for a particular reason: economic interests in tourism, entertainment, or a particular political agenda". In the case of Australia, one can identify such a period of change or evolution in frontier mythology occurring in the 1980s and 90s (Foord, 2004: 141, 143), a change that was also reflected in Australian historical archaeology at the same time (Ireland, 2002: 17). This came about through the challenges of Aboriginal people to the existing



understanding of the colonial past. They emphasised their prior occupation, direct experience of invasion and racism and their ongoing struggle for survival (Curthoys, 2003: 185), all things which had been generally excluded from the national white mythology.

### *Themes*

What, then, are the recurring themes of this frontier mythology? Let us begin with that of the heroic pioneer. Categories such as 'heroes' are important to identity construction because they represent the compression and simplification of all of the complexities of social and historical experiences into representative individuals. These mythic heroes seem to embody all of the ideological beliefs of a culture (Slotkin, 1993: 13-14), such as courage, hardship, and, through the hero's sacrifices, the right to occupy the land.

A useful early example of the mythologizing of the frontier is *Old Colonials* by A.J. Boyd (1974[1882]). Boyd actually represents one of the earliest frontier 'histories', since his book was published at a time when the frontier was still well and truly alive in the more remote parts of Australia. Boyd's book comprises a collection of short pieces describing the characteristics and adventures of various characters and groups one would find on the frontier. For example, there are pieces on the Native Police, the prospector, the noble savage, the Chinaman and the pioneer. Boyd wrote, "Like America, Australia has had its pioneers, who imperilled their lives in the wild bush to open up country for the benefit of themselves and the coming race" (Boyd, 1974[1882]: 12). He went on to describe examples of pioneers bravely overcoming dangers, the two greatest of which,

according to Boyd, were thirst and the natives (Boyd, 1974[1882]: 12-13). Boyd concluded his piece about the pioneers by writing, “This is the stuff of which our pioneers are made. All honour to them and their work” (Boyd, 1974[1882]: 18). It is statements such as this which influenced succeeding generations as to how to regard their pioneering ancestors, that is, as heroes whose name must not be sullied and who must be honoured.

Rodney Cockburn’s *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia* contains an epic example of frontier heroising, and due to the book’s popularity, an example of arguably one of the main sources of the frontier mythology for South Australia. *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia* was published in two volumes between 1925 and 1927 (Macklin, 1978: 2) and evidently marks the time when South Australia’s frontier period was considered to have ended. The appearance of this book at this time can be seen to denote the moment when the frontier passed from the realm of current affairs to that of mythology. *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*’s heroising of 239 ‘pastoral pioneers’ can be seen most plainly in the fact that every one of the biographies is entirely complimentary (Macklin, 1978: 4). This also shows the importance to frontier mythology of creating a positive identity construction. A reading of *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia* leaves one with the stereotypical impression that the pioneers all “...[g]ained success through sacrifice and initiative, filled the ranks of public office, were noted for their philanthropy and ultimately were given public recognition for their contributions to the colony in their inclusion in the nomenclature of South Australia” (Macklin, 1978: 7).

The main obstacle the pioneer hero has to contend with is nature. Just like the Aborigines, the land is portrayed as an antagonist. This is a feature that Australian frontier mythology shares with the Canadian north. Attwood wrote of the latter that “...popular lore...established early that the North was uncanny, awe-inspiring in an almost religious way, hostile to white men, but alluring; that it would lead you on and do you in; that it would drive you crazy, and, finally, would claim you for its own” (Attwood, 1995: 19). The Australian equivalents of cold, snow and ice were heat, fire and thirst (Curthoys, 2003: 191).

Such stories, when read today, especially by those who live and work in rural areas, would no doubt appeal to people’s image of their pioneering forebears. Even for people in the urban environment, such stories appeal because they represent the epitome of everything they are not. Although the pioneers had, in fact, invaded and stolen the land they settled on, heroic pioneer myths present this in such a way that it seems as if they *earned* the right to occupy it through their hard work battling the harsh conditions. This relates back to British colonial agendas to ‘civilise’ their possessions and serves to justify the ever-expanding imperial impulse. The heroic pioneer mythology represents “...a national rural myth, democratic in its social bearing, conservative in its political implications” and silent on race and ethnicity. It also obscures “...the dispossession of indigenous peoples almost entirely” (Curthoys, 2003: 191).

Another common theme in frontier mythology is that of the pioneer ‘success story’. Such characterisation provides role models and suggests a legacy of working hard to be

successful which following generations should live up to. This is essential to capitalist ideology because, even though hardly ever true, its apparent truthfulness serves to justify the capitalist system. In a way, such themes are an example of the political dimension of folklore, as pointed out by Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf (1999: 19). Generally, these kinds of stories are about a pioneer who, through hard work and determination, manages to better his/her station in life, usually by becoming wealthy. Because these stories have a particularly capitalistic ideological basis, they require a capitalistic audience/society in order to be appealing. Such values as expressed through these stories are often presented in such a way that they demonstrate that the country was, and is, a 'land of opportunity'. How true this was, is, however, open to debate, depending on the particular contexts and cases. The following theme, for example, commemorates those who failed in this respect.

There is also a significant theme of 'heroic failure' running through Australian and North American frontier mythology. In the United States, Kammen has gone so far as to argue that making defeat honourable is a national tradition (Kammen, 1991: 8-9). So, too, in Australia, where in popular mythology, narratives of tragedy and loss (failure) are often heroised due to the courage and struggle of those who ultimately failed (Goodall, 1999: 167; Curthoys, 2003: 187). Though prominent in Australian mythology, this theme is also found in other settler societies such as Canada, where there is the story of the disappearance of explorer Sir John Franklin and 135 other men in 1845, while looking for the North-West Passage (Attwood, 1995: Chapter 2). One profound Australian example of the heroic failure is the story of Burke and Wills. As Alan Moorehead pointed out, the Burke and Wills story became mythic because it "...perfectly expresses the early settler's

deeply-felt idea that life was not so much a struggle against other men as against the wilderness” (Moorehead, quoted in Curthoys, 2003: 192). Indeed, the mythological association between failure and landscape is a central theme in Australian heroic failure myths, though it is also often compounded by other factors, such as bureaucracy and sometimes class conspiracy (Goodall, 1999: 167).

As far as frontier-themed myths are concerned, none inspire stronger emotions and more contentious opinions than that of frontier conflict. Frontier conflict myths can be found in the mythology of many ex-colonial nations. However, they have often been heavily adapted or suppressed for political reasons. For example, in all cases in both Boyd and Cockburn (Boyd, 1974[1882]; Cockburn, 1927), it is the Aborigines who were the aggressors and no attempt was made to explain or justify why the Aborigines are attacking the settlers. As outlined above, this reversal of frontier conflict, and hence ‘customisation’ of the past’s events, is also a common feature of settler mythology, the purpose being to cast the indigenous people as the invaders, and the settlers as the defenders of their land (Curthoys, 1999). In Cockburn, when the Aborigines attacked, reprisals were carried out “...in a spirit of self-righteous indignation” (Macklin, 1978: 82). Furthermore, in every case where the pioneers acted violently towards the Aborigines, the former were either exonerated from blame or supported by the law (Macklin, 1978: 83). Considering that *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia* “...has been recognised as an authentic source by historians concerned with research into the early pastoral industry of South Australia and is widely used by both general and local historians” (Macklin, 1978: 9), one can see how its version of the pioneers and frontier

conflict could have significantly influenced how people today view their past and thus the process of contemporary identity construction. There is nothing in these myths to suggest that it was naturally the invading pioneers who were the initial aggressors. This has the purpose of freeing the later audience/readers from any sense of shame for the actions of the settlers, or empathy with the Aborigines. Frontier mythology's role is to make the descendants of the invaders proud of their history, not guilty or shameful. Also, by highlighting the one-sidedness of the pioneer's struggle, such myths serve to reinforce people's belief in their right to be there.

As Edward Said (1983: 20-22) explained, the dominant groups in society (such as governments for example) make use of myths to create a 'national mythology' in an attempt to provide a set of ideals and values that they hope society in general will affiliate with and emulate. In effect, this is the creation of "social order through cultural strategies" (Said, 1983: 20-22, 175; Schwarzer, 1994: 2). This is intended to have the effect of binding society through a shared sense of respect and reverence for the ideals and values of a myth-historic past, as Kammen stated, "a surge in tradition can supply the basis for social cohesion", and this is especially useful in very heterogeneous nations such as the United States and Australia (Kammen, 1991: 4). However, accomplishing this is never a simple or straightforward process, but one which tends to involve "infinite political contests over the limits, symbolic content and future implications of that identity" (Ireland, 2002: 15), in effect, "the politics of culture" (Kammen, 1991: 5).

Material culture, in particular, is used to produce meanings as a focus for social memory. (Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 5). ‘Social memory’ represents the collective meaning and understanding of the past of a particular society and hence is the ‘thing’ that can become influenced through myths. However, while it is true that this influencing of social identity is sometimes a deliberate strategy of the dominant myth-makers, the process of giving meaning to mythology (and hence the ideology it is associated with) also occurs in a much more subtle way. As demonstrated by this study, myths are created, remembered and given meaning by, and for, a much more localised audience. This makes the myths appear much more naturally occurring and thus infinitely more powerful. Yentsch discussed the use of myths about old houses to identify their use in binding society and promoting solidarity in the late 1980s, when she investigated several case studies in the United States (Yentsch, 1988: 16). More recently, Lydon and Ireland have also discussed this process. A prime example is the concept of the ‘National Estate’, which sought to meld all of Australia’s colonial and natural history into a united national story, the “nationalisation of the past” (Ireland, 2002: 16; Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 3). Here a parallel can also be seen in the United States, where Rubertone pointed out how heritage preservation initiatives have been used to establish a national identity (Rubertone, 1997: 827).

One of the ways that groups attempt to bind society, and promote solidarity, is through fostering patriotism. By highlighting and/or tailoring myths in order to reflect all that is ‘great’ about a nation, patriotism, and thus solidarity, can be created and reinforced (Shackel, 2001: 3). This use of mythology often becomes apparent during times of strife,

such as war, because it is in such times that patriotism is most needed by governments to engender social support for their actions. Myths of 'fear' become particularly potent at these times because they provide analogies with which to face other challenges currently occurring within society (Yentsch, 1988: 17).

Myths are also used to develop a sense of nostalgia about the past. This serves to legitimise the heritage of the group who is doing the myth-making (Shackel, 2001: 3). By legitimising and reinforcing a group's heritage, that group's place and rights in the world are strengthened. In other words, myths can be used to enhance the prestige and authority of certain groups (Lydon & Ireland, 2005: 4). As an example, Schwarzer analysed the way that "preservation ideologies and programs" were used when presenting historic buildings as symbols of an all-inclusive cultural system, one that was intended to embrace all Americans, but actually served to ensure the hegemony of the dominant social powers (Schwarzer, 1994: 3). In the case of settler societies, for example, myths associated with 'pioneer' struggles, successes and failures serve to legitimise the right of the non-indigenous people to be there. Even when the very sites that are used to reinforce this legitimisation are examples of the invasion and conflict between the colonists and the Indigenous (such as fortified structures), the myth-makers still manage to turn them into sites they can be proud of. Thus the creation of a nostalgic past occurs through 'rose-tinted glasses', where things appeared better and more stable than in the present.



### *Identity Construction in Settler Societies*

The identity construction processes of settler societies have particular needs and influences as a result of their settler and frontier past. Australia is no exception. Identity construction is accomplished through values that create a shared past. These values and views are spread through various media, such as literature, film, visual art and music. When people learn about the past through any media that conveys a myth, the way they 'know' what happened is shaped by that myth. As we have seen, myth, and the recording of history in general, is influenced by various factors. A group's current identity is therefore shaped by the construction of myths drawn from what actually happened in the past. Therefore, how the past is presented has a strong effect upon how people today see themselves in terms of where they come from and what their past was like.

This 'whitening' of history is one of the characteristics of settler societies' identity construction processes. Jane Haggis, for example, investigated the presentation of the frontier in the south east region of South Australia through the person of Christina Smith, an early critic of violence against Aboriginal people (Haggis, 2001). Through an investigation into the presentation of Christina Smith in three different contexts, Haggis was able to demonstrate the 'whitening' of history and the construction of a social memory of a settler society. Haggis looked at three very different contexts in which Christina Smith has been interpreted: The Lady Nelson Discovery Centre (a local history museum in Mount Gambier); the writings of her great-granddaughter; and Christina's own self-presentation in her book, *The Booandik Tribe* (Smith, 1963[1880]).

Turning first to the Lady Nelson Discovery Centre, Haggis found that, although at first this museum's integration of Aboriginal and European history seems to be a model for reconciliation history, the way Christina's writings are used paints a less than complimentary picture of the local Aboriginal Buandig people. Claims of physical mistreatment of women and infanticide are used to justify the need for the paternalistic educating influence of 'good' white people like Christina, who is portrayed as a saintly ghost in long white robes (Haggis, 2001: 94).

Next, Haggis looked at Christina's presentation in the writings of her great-granddaughter Heather Carthew, and in particular, in Carthew's 1986 book *Twisted Reeds*. Most of this book dealt with Christina and her son Duncan's encounters with the local Aboriginal people and the other European settlers of the district. In it, Carthew portrayed Buandig society as violent, cruel to women, and 'primitive'. The dominant message given here was that Aboriginal people needed to be protected not only from 'bad' whites, but also from their 'savage' selves (Haggis, 2001: 94-95).

Haggis then looked at Christina's own presentation of herself in her own book. Although intended as a book about the "habits, customs, legends and language" (Haggis, 2001: 95) of the Buandig people, only 41 of the total 129 pages actually deal with this. The remainder was used by Christina to document why and how she spent her days trying to 'civilise' the Aborigines, and accounts of various Buandig people who 'successfully' converted to Christianity. Overall, then, the story is one of integration (Haggis, 2001: 95).

Thus, in these three contexts, the historical 'site' of Christina Smith is used to stand in for the Aboriginal presence in the region instead of coming from Aboriginal people themselves. It represents the appropriation of Aboriginal history by Europeans, and thus, is portrayed in a way that is acceptable to the goal of settler identity construction, that is, the forging of a past that people can feel proud of. Christina's portrayal as a benevolent saintly figure also serves to soften the violence and dispossession of the frontier and her femaleness is used to provide white people with a softer option than complicity in violent destruction (Haggis, 2001: 96).

The appropriation of Aboriginal history is evidently a key characteristic of the Australian settler identity construction process. Another example, and one which has a direct association with the sites investigated here, is the use of Aboriginal words by white Australians to name their places, as investigated by Sam Furphy (2007). Aboriginal motifs, Furphy argued, have been used and adapted for mainstream Australian society as part of the development of a settler identity. This he described as the 'indigenisation' of the Australian settler identity (Furphy, 2007: 59). Furphy also showed how European use of Aboriginal words is part of a process of building a nationalistic identity, albeit one that simply appropriates Aboriginal culture in a very superficial way that does nothing to really recognise Aboriginal culture (Furphy, 2007: 65).

According to Furphy, white Australians have always been ready to use Aboriginal words to name their houses and properties, representing their need to find symbols of Australian-ness (Furphy, 2007: 60). However, there are some underlying identity issues

within this process which need to be investigated. It is argued here that the use of Aboriginal words by Europeans to name their places only started to become a factor late in the development of Australia's settler identity. The initial settlers did not see themselves as 'indigenised', but as Europeans (and in particular, British). Their status as 'colonists' was something they were very aware of and was how they identified themselves. The transition from trying to retain and preserve their European-ness in an alien land to that of indigenisation was one that occurred at different rates for different people over the colonial period. The sites investigated here provide good examples of this. Although Denis Byrne notes that "Aboriginal words provided original-sounding place names...from the earliest days of the colony" (Byrne, 1996: 96), stations in the Northern Territory, for example, established in the late 1870s and 1880s, usually bore British names, such as 'Newcastle Waters', 'Delamere', 'Glencoe', and 'Springvale'. Some place names were later indigenised, for example, 'Mount Benson' homestead became 'Wangolina', and the run initially known simply as 'Mortlock's', after its owner, became 'Sheringa'. Other places, however, were never indigenised, even though their names changed. For example, 'Lizard Lodge' changed to 'Glenthorne'.

These changes, and the different times in which they took place, are the result of underlying identity issues. When settlers first invaded an area, they found themselves in hostile and alien territory. Given the circumstances, such as numerical inferiority, fear and isolation, settlers could not identify themselves as indigenous Australian by any stretch. All they had to cling to was their European-ness. Thus, places were given European names. This would be even more so in the case of their dwellings, since these

were their comfort zones, their places of security. This explains the phenomenon, observed in the sites investigated here, that initially European names were given to sites, even though the most recent site was established over fifty years after the earliest one. It was not, therefore, a matter of time, on a nation-wide level, that determined when Europeans were 'ready' to adopt indigenous words for their place names, but the particular site's temporal remove from the conditions of the 'frontier'. When the Aboriginal presence was largely absent, Europeans felt secure enough in their identities to appropriate Aboriginal words for their places. Tony Birch explained this process as "an exercise in cultural appropriation, which represents imperial possession and the quaintness of the 'native'" (Birch, 1992: 234). This European incorporation of Aboriginal culture into mainstream Australian culture serves to gloss over the realities of colonisation and invasion (Furphy, 2007: 60) in the same way that the presentation of Christina Smith (discussed above) does.

Another aspect of settler identity construction is the masking of divisions within settler society in order to create a unifying identity (Burke, 1999: 17). Here, it is interesting to look at this process in the context of the settler society of the east cape of South Africa, because this region's frontier development shared similar characteristics to Australia's in terms of its civilian use of defensive architecture. British settlement of the east cape of South Africa began in 1820. Lester, who analysed the construction of settler identity in this area, showed that, like Australia, the common aspirations and fears the settlers held helped to erode imported class divisions (Lester, 1998: 515). These settlers modified their inherited discourses of class, race, gender and nationality in order to forge a solidarity in

the face of their collective fears and insecurities, in particular, fear of indigenous resistance. This led to the creation of a “unifying social identity” (Lester, 1998: 515). Three of the main ways this was achieved was through the creation of a shared past, the creation of a unifying settler ‘character’, and a change in women’s role from that of ‘boundary markers’ for class to being harmonisers of ‘Britishness’ (i.e. ‘refinement’ and civilisation) (Lester, 1998: 516).

### *Discussion*

Thus it can be seen that the process of identity construction is enacted through a combination of mythic ‘memories’, constantly changing and being redefined, supported and opposed by various groups for various reasons. This ‘public memory’, which can either be formed at the local community level, the national level, or as a combination of local vernacular and ‘official’ expressions (Bodnar, 1992: 13), undergoes these changes and is important to ideology because it shapes a community or nation’s ethos and sense of identity. This explains why public memory is always selective and often contested (Kammen, 1991: 13).

A society’s fear, as with any other influence, can sometimes be observed through material culture, and in particular, architecture. However, although it is one matter to observe fear through archaeology, the meaning with which this material is imbued can add a much greater depth to the investigation. This is because when this material becomes part of a mythology, for example a frontier mythology, it becomes subject to all of those factors which come into play in the myth-making process, such as ideology,

identity construction, and struggles for dominance. The next chapter describes the methods adopted here in order to use historical archaeology to investigate these issues, focussing on buildings believed to have been built by civilians for defence on Australia's frontier.