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# Montrose House



montrose house.jpg

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## Location

38 Huntingtower Road Armadale, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO367

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The double storey Victorian Italianate villa at 33-35 Mercer Road, known originally as *Lynton* and later as *Montrose House*, is of architectural and historical significance at a local level.

Although *Montrose House* was originally constructed c.1890 for Arthur H Manton, the building derives much of its historical significance for its association with William Thomas Appleton (1859-1930), an outstanding figure in the social, political and economic life of Victoria in the early twentieth century. An English-born businessman and prominent public figure, Appleton and his family moved into *Montrose House* in 1899, a year after his

appointment as Managing Director of the shipping company, Huddart, Parker & Co Pty Ltd. Appleton was the founding president of the Australasian Steamship Owner He was an active Council member of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce for twenty-five years and was its president from 1914-16. Appleton died in 1930 having risen to a position as one of the most influential men in the shipping world. *Montrose House* remained in the Appleton family for approximately three quarters of a century.

*Montrose House* is of architectural significance as a solid but comparatively modest example of boom-era residential design. In terms of both its scale and design, the residence provides a contrast to some of the more extravagant mansions of other prominent figures of the time. It is a substantial brick and stucco dwelling, drawing its inspiration from Italianate antecedents and is of some note for its rendered decoration and the informal massing of its building elements. Locally, the Italianate mode of architectural expression pervaded all strata of residential design and had, by the late 1880s, come to define the architectural character of Melbourne's inner ring of suburbs. *Montrose House* forms part of small extant group of substantial free-standing Italianate villas within the Municipality which illustrate the role of houses generally, and classically-inspired houses in particular, as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's middle classes. The house and its extant curtilage continue to illustrate the nineteenth century suburban ideal of a *rus en urbe*.

The dwelling has lost much of its original cast iron balcony verandah but remains clearly legible to its nineteenth century form. The extent to which the early rendered ornament, and the built form more generally, remains intact contributes to the significance of the place. *Montrose* was converted to four two-bedroom flats in 1949-50 to designs by prominent Melbourne architect, JFW Ballantyne but these works had little impact on the external expression of the building. Further, relatively minor, works were undertaken after c.1975 to accommodate its adaptive reuse by Lauriston Girls School. Modest works have also occurred within the front setback but the original curtilage remains undeveloped and legible to its late-nineteenth century state. The building is of some additional significance for its role in the development of the private school system within the Municipality.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Montrose house, Armadale Heritage Assessment, Bryce Rayworth Pty Ltd, 2008;
Hermes Number	154904
Property Number	

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## Local Historical Themes

8.2.1 'Country in the City' - suburban development in Malvern Before World War 1. 8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion 9.3 Developing the private school system

## Physical Description 1

Montrose House is a double-storey Italianate Victorian mansion at 33-35 Mercer Road. It is located on the western side of the street, to the south of the intersection with Malvern Road. At least one source suggests that the place had previously been known as Lynton. It was constructed as a cement-rendered masonry building to an asymmetrical footprint with a double-storey return verandah terminated at either end by a projecting double storey faceted bay window. This form became popular during the 1880s, and in this respect Montrose House stands as a large but relatively typical suburban Italianate villa. The original verandah has been substantially removed with a small section surviving above the entry along the south elevation. The Malvern Urban Character Study (1989) noted:

*Now bereft of its ornamental verandah, the house nevertheless possesses ample cement, iron and timber enrichments. An unusual recessed architrave margin, keystones and timber blind hoods distinguish the forward room bay's ground level fenestration, which graduates to a basket arch on the upper level. Vermiculated quoin*

*stones, garlands to upper level sub-sill panels and the unusual sill treatment itself are further embellishments to an otherwise typical suburban Italianate villa form.*

It is not known when the return verandah was removed although it may have accompanied the conversion of the residence into flats in 1949-50. A remnant section of the verandah has been retained over the principal entry to the south elevation and this gives some insight into the original detailing.

Otherwise, original details remain intact. Montrose House retains its vermiculated quoin-stones, cement garlands, keystones, timber blind hoods, recessed architrave margins, entry stairs flanked by urns, unusual projecting sill treatments with cast iron lacework trim, as well as a number of other ornamental features. Despite the loss of its return verandah and the construction of a fire escape to its the northern facade, the exterior remains largely intact and the building is readily legible as a substantial nineteenth century residence. Lightweight play equipment and an unsympathetic steel fence have been constructed in the front setback of the site but the original curtilage remains evident.

The interior of the building was not inspected as part of this exercise. However, plans held in the State Library of Victoria Architecture Collection show that the alterations made to convert the mansion into maisonettes during the late 1940s were generally confined to the interior of the building. This said, two flights of stairs were added to the northern facade, and one new external stair was added to the west (rear) facade. These provided separate access to flats 1 and 2, while flats 3 and 4 shared the entrance at the rear. It is likely that further internal alterations were made to facilitate the building's subsequent conversion into a school building. Despite the loss of the original verandah and the addition of modern stairs to the north and west elevations, the building appears to survive in good condition. The MMBW plan of 1902 shows a number of outbuildings towards the rear of the site. These are no longer extant. All of the above notwithstanding, the property survives on its original substantial curtilage and remains readily legible as a grand suburban residence despite its adaptive reuse as flats and subsequently as a school.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*