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# HO94 - John Campbell Miles Farmhouse



Farmhouse site

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## Location

Shamrock Place MELTON WEST, Melton Shire

## Municipality

MELTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO94

## Heritage Listing

Melton City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The John Campbell Miles farmhouse site in Melton West is significant as a rare surviving relic of the small farms that established in Melton West from the time of Crown land sales in the 1850s; and for its association with John Campbell Miles, the founder and namer of the Mount Isa mining field.

The place consists of the land around the former Miles cottage, extending down to the gullies and flats of Djerriwarrh Creek. The site of the former cottage includes all ruinous fabric and detritus associated with the cottage, and potential archaeological evidence. It includes the small grove of peppercorn trees characteristically

associated with early farmhouses, and other remnant plantings, such as prickly pear and aloe, and, in the native scrub towards Djerriwarrh Creek, wild white irises. Evidence of an underground tank formerly used for domestic purposes is likely to survive. The place is also likely to retain evidence of gold prospecting undertaken by John Campbell Miles (including a shaft dug by him in his adult years).

The John Campbell Miles farmhouse site in Melton West is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, H1).

The scant remains of the place are representative of the negligible remaining evidence of nineteenth century small farming in the area west of Melton, and particularly along the Djerriwarrh Creek; the only other more substantial remaining places being two underground water tanks on nearby properties. Its isolated setting, closer to the water source of Djerriwarrh Creek than nearby roads and neighbours, is scarce evidence of early small farming practice.

Its isolated rural setting is also evocative of the reclusive itinerant bushman and prospector, John Campbell Miles, who in 1923 discovered the Mount Isa copper, lead, zinc, silver mine. By the late twentieth century Mount Isa was one of the world's great mines, and a major contributor to the Australian economy. Miles was raised at the cottage and commenced his life of prospecting on the Djerriwarrh Creek which forms the western boundary of the property. As an adult, until at least the 1930s, he intermittently returned to the property, lodging at the then dilapidated and deserted cottage, and sunk a prospecting shaft on one of the gullies of the creek.

The property is expressive of the pervading significance of 1850s Victoria, which had provided ordinary people across the world with new opportunities for wealth, originally from alluvial gold and subsequently from the developing economy and access to rural farms, and which was the origin of a caste of single male prospectors whose lifestyle and achievements are etched into Australia's national folklore. While Thomas Miles, like the majority of diggers, was unsuccessful, the name of his son John Campbell Miles is now celebrated in one of the world's most important mining towns

The John Campbell Miles farmhouse site in Melton West is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C2). It has the potential to contribute to an understanding of the small farming and domestic lifestyles in the dry Melton Plains area, and to the life of prospector John Campbell Miles.

Overall, the John Campbell Miles farmhouse site in Melton West is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Melton - Shire of Melton Heritage Study phase 2, David Maloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie, Sera Jane Peters, 2007;
Construction dates	1892, 1930,
Other Names	Miles family homestead site, Shamrock Place, Melton West (Allot. A1 Sec. 6 Parish of Djerriwarrh),
Hermes Number	30213
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

The place is the site of the former Miles family residence, situated on the plain near the escarpment of Djerriwarrh Creek, and west of a late twentieth century trotting track on Shamrock Place, Melton West.

The former house was a vertical slab cottage built in the nineteenth century. It survived, in a derelict state, until sometime between the late 1930s and 1953. The house had a timber shingle roof (under later corrugated iron), and hessian and paper internal walls.

The place today consists of a small grove of four pepper trees, and building materials, including handmade bricks (most likely from a former chimney), and twisted tin sheets. There is evidence of household detritus, such as bottles. An underground tank, probably filled in, is likely to survive near the house site. The place may retain evidence of cottage footings, and other archaeological evidence of the former occupation by the Miles family and John Campbell Miles. There may be some archaeological evidence dating to the early farming occupation of the site (from 1856-57).

There is evidence of other former plantings, including prickly pear and aloe. On the scrubby Djerriwarrh Creek escarpment wild white Iris said to have been planted by Mrs Miles softens the landscape.

Evidence of the 40 feet deep gold prospecting shaft dug by John Campbell Miles in one of the gullies is likely to survive. Any such remains of prospecting in the gullies of the creek would constitute significant evidence of a major theme in Australia's history.

There is a small dam nearby that may or may not have been associated with the Miles occupation.

## **Historical Australian Themes**

Melton Historical Theme - Community'; 'Farming'; 'Other Industries' (Gold)

## **Integrity**

Integrity - Damaged/Disturbed

## **Physical Conditions**

Physical Condition - The remnants of buildings are Ruinous / Archaeological in nature. The associated pepper trees appear to be in good condition.

*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/>*