

Balwyn Road Residential Precinct  
Place Citation

168a Mont Albert Road, Canterbury

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Name	Montalegre	Survey Date	Dec 2005
Place	Residential	Previous Grading	B
Type		Grading	B
Date	1921-2		
Architect	Lionel D San Miguel		
Builder	Not known		

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Intactness  Good  Fair  Poor

Heritage  HV  AHC  NT  BPS Heritage Overlay

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### History

Francis Rennick purchased a 9.5 acre site at the south-west corner of Balwyn and Mont Albert Roads on 15 February 1865 and commissioned the construction of a large villa, *The Grange*, in about 1876.<sup>1</sup> *The Grange* was located further to the west on Mont Albert Road. In 1905, there was no construction east of *the Grange* towards Balwyn Road.<sup>2</sup>

Following the death of Francis in 1915, the Rennick family subdivided the remaining 7 acre holdings (2.5 acres had been excised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) into allotments closely resembling the current configuration and sold them over a thirteen year period.<sup>3</sup> In 1916, the

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- 1 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', p5
  - 2 MMBW plan no 71 and detail plan no. 1997 (1905). *The Grange* was located further to the west.
  - 3 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', p6

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existing site consisting of allotments 20 and 21 was excised from the Grange holdings.<sup>4</sup>

The existing house was constructed for Rebecca San Miguel during 1921-2 having been designed by her son, Lionel Dudley Alphonso San Miguel.<sup>5</sup> The name of the house, *Montalegre*, was derived from a small town in northern Portugal, near the Spanish border.<sup>6</sup> Rebecca San Miguel<sup>7</sup> lived at the house until the late 1920s when she moved to Bow Bey Avenue Canterbury and subsequently Lionel and Ines San Miguel occupied the house. Rebecca was living back at the residence again in 1934.<sup>8</sup>

Lionel (1896-1959), fourth child of Rebecca and Antonio, designed the house when he was a recent graduate of the newly established Melbourne Architectural Atelier. After graduating, Lionel initially set up practice in Clarke's Buildings at 430 Bourke Street. He designed several other houses in the area including his own two storey Spanish Mission Style house at 7 Bowley Street, Balwyn.<sup>9</sup> Some of his notable buildings in central Melbourne include the former Town Auto Wholesalers Building (1936) and the Advocate Press Building (1937) both in A'Beckett Street. His residential work tended to be in the Spanish Mission or Mediterranean Styles and commercial buildings in the Moderne Style.<sup>10</sup>

The site was purchased by the Kathleen and Ida Anderson Glenn, graziers from Jerilderie, New South Wales, in late 1949. Three years later, Kathleen was the sole owner. It was subsequently taken over by George and Edna Stewart, who sold it to Donald and Florence Hibberd in 1957. Suraj and Isabel Kashyap bought the site in 1972.<sup>11</sup>

### Description & Integrity

A broad timber picket fence with metal gates and a clipped and profiled Cypress hedge provide the spectacular perimeter to this prominent corner site. The mature landscape character pervades the garden generally, which surrounds the relatively modest scale house (in comparison to the size of the site).<sup>12</sup>

The near symmetrical single storey Mediterranean style house is set at an angle to the adjacent streets.<sup>13</sup> It consists of projecting bays

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- 4 Land Victoria, subdivision plan, LP6879
  - 5 G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991, vol 4, p204
  - 6 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', p14
  - 7 Rebecca's husband Antonio (1852-1919) was born near Barcelona in Spain. He immigrated to Australia as a young man living in both Victoria and NSW and established a cork importation business at a time when the wine industry was rapidly developing. The business expanded into brewing and cordial making. He married Rebecca Albon in Sydney in 1887 and they had six children.
  - 8 G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991, vol 4, p204
  - 9 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', pp15-18
  - 10 G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991, vol 4, p204
  - 11 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', p7
  - 12 G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991, vol 4, p204
  - 13 The Mediterranean Style was promulgated by Leslie Wilkinson, who was Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney from 1918. He

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with a central loggia/verandah. The hipped roofs are clad in cement tiles and there are exposed rafters to the wide eaves. The tall rendered chimneys have campanile-like detailing with hipped caps. The upper sashes to the front windows have inset square timber mullions and there are black painted, louvred shutters. The walls are painted white.

A single car garage has been designed in the same mode as the house.

The garden setting consists of perimeter Cypress hedge and topiary, broad flat picket fence, wrought iron gates, formal garden layout, mature plantings and specimen trees, screen fences, garden arbours and seats and fine gravel pathways, is an exemplar of the Beaux Arts inspired villa garden of the 1920s in Melbourne.<sup>14</sup>

### Statement of Significance

One of several Interwar houses which represent the third major phase of development in the precinct. The intact single storey, Mediterranean style house was one of the earliest works of the architect, Lionel San Miguel, who designed several other houses in the area.

The house is set an extensive garden which is largely intact and has been noted as being significant.<sup>15</sup>

### Grading and Recommendations

The site is part of the identified Balwyn Road Residential Precinct, which is recommended for inclusion within the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay.

### Identified By

G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991, vol 4, pp203-204

### References

G Butler, 'Camberwell Conservation Study', 1991  
Land Victoria, subdivision plan, LP6879  
MMBW plan no 71 and detail plan no. 1997 (1905)  
A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury' 2004

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promoted this style as an appropriate architectural response to the Australian climate, a notion that was much discussed at the time, because of the many parallels with the climate of the southern parts of Europe.

14 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury', p25

15 A Willingham, 'Montalegre - San Miguel Residence, 168A Mont Albert Road, Canterbury'