

Figure 18 Mont Albert Shopping Centre Precinct

## 2.4 Mont Albert Shopping Centre Precinct, Mont Albert

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### Location

2-14A Churchill Street  
9-19, 4-48 Hamilton Street  
Mont Albert Railway Station

### Review

Andrew Ward's *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study* (1990) identified a large precinct to the north and east of Hamilton Street. Ward's boundary included the shops in Churchill Street and Mont Albert Railway Station, but not the shops in Hamilton Street itself.

Whilst the Hamilton Street shopping centre was developed contemporaneously with much of the surrounding housing, the intactness of the streetscape is higher than that of the adjacent streets, notably Mont Albert Road, and Stanhope and Salisbury Streets, and its nature as a group of predominantly retail buildings differentiates it from the remainder of the Mont Albert area.

Although the west side of Hamilton Street has been eroded by the construction of the Salvation Army's Southern Territorial headquarters on the site of former shops at Nos. 3-7, the east side of the street is substantially intact.

### History

The following historical information is derived from M S Webster (compiler). *The History of Mont Albert Shopping Centre, 1887-1985*. Box Hill, 1986:

The Mont Albert Shopping Centre precinct formed part of the Phoenix Park Estate; a lodged plan of the estate, dated 21 January 1887, indicates Hamilton Street, but at the time the street had not been formed, and the area comprised open paddocks, owned by Messrs Andrew, McKirdy and Dunn. The actual subdivision of the street specifically for commercial uses occurred in 1891, and sites were offered for sale at an auction held in the railway station. The auction was advertised as "the first sale of business sites at this handsome location. Following the auction, one or two houses, perhaps with shops attached, were built on the west side of the street, and one house already existed on the east, but no new shops were built. The construction of shops was stalled by debate over the adequacy of the width of the sites, but later that year a width of 18'9" was settled upon. 13

The first purpose-built shop in the area, a grocer's on the north-west corner of Mont Albert Road, was not built until 1912 or 1913, there having been little need for many local shops in an era when delivery of most household supplies was almost universal. By the end of World War I, however, most of the west side of the street had been developed, and by 1930, the entire street, and a number of shops in Churchill Street.

MS Webster's short *The History of Mont Albert Shopping Centre* documents many of the occupants of the shops in Hamilton Street. In 1930, the range of occupants included a pastrycook, milliner, three estate agents, two hairdressers, a tobacconist, two bootmakers, two butchers, a pharmacist, a florist, two grocers, three fruiterers, a confectioner, a dressmaker, and a draper. A post office occupied 30 Hamilton Street from 1930 until 1975. The first bank to open in Mont Albert was an agency of the ES&A bank, which operated from No. 22 until c.1929, when the State Savings Bank built a branch, with attached manager's residence, on the south side of Hamilton Street.

The railway from Camberwell to Lilydale was opened on 1 December 1882 and Mont Albert Station opened on 18 August 1890. The original station buildings were replaced in 1910-11; the present south side building dates from then.

The following contextual historical information is derived from Andrew C Ward & Associates. *City of Box Hill Heritage and Conservation Study*. 1990:

The historical context of the Mont Albert Shopping Centre had its genesis in a number of 1880s Land Boom subdivisions, including an 1882 subdivision of 55 lots facing Churchill Street and Elgar and Zetland Roads. Little building followed these initial sales, and it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that development began in earnest. Churchill Street, and the area north of the railway line between Marlborough Street and Elgar Road were all subdivided between 1904 and 1907. The building stock in that area reflects this phase of the development of the municipality: most of the houses are variously Edwardian and bungalow in style.

### **Description**

Mont Albert Shopping Centre comprises a continuous strip of shops along the east side of Hamilton Street and in Churchill Street, opposite the railway station, and a shorter strip of shops at the north end of the west side of Hamilton Street.

There is a mix of single- and double-storey brick shop buildings predominantly built between the mid-1910s and 1930. Typical characteristics displayed by many of the shops include plain parapets comprising red or clinker brick piers flanking rendered panels, sometimes with raised central sections. Most of the shops in Hamilton Street have skillion-roofed verandahs with timber posts.

Notable buildings in Hamilton Street include No. 32, which has a far more ornate parapet with a raised central pediment; the shops at Nos. 15 (west side), which have a curved parapet, and which adjoin a timber building which appears to be a remnant (altered) Victorian residence.

In common with most shopping centres, several of the shopfronts have been considerably altered, although some retain original or early shopfront elements. A small number of the shops have cantilevered verandahs, the scale of which matches the traditional verandahs.

Mont Albert Railway Station, which terminates the axis of Hamilton Street, is a single-storey Edwardian timber building in an Arts and Crafts style. The walls are of weatherboard and roughcast render. The hipped corrugated iron roof has exposed rafter-ends and a half-timbered gable above the main entrance, which has a segmental-arched highlight.

Street planting within the precinct is confined to a few young exotic trees. Kerbs and gutters are concrete; the brick paving on the footpaths appears to date from the 1980s. Street furniture includes timber benches, traditional in style. The lanes to the rear of the Hamilton Street shops are concrete.

### **Statement of Significance**

The Mont Albert Shopping Centre is of considerable aesthetic significance. The precinct is the most intact inter-War shopping centre in the City of Whitehorse. Although several shopping centres in the municipality were developed adjacent to railway stations in the inter-War period, Mont Albert retains the greatest number of relatively intact shops which display typical inter-War architectural details, particularly at parapet level. Historically, the stylistic homogeneity of the precinct's building stock reflects the large amount of residential development which occurred in the Mont Albert area in the first three decades of the twentieth century.



Figure 19 East side Hamilton Street, looking south



Figure 20 West side Hamilton Street looking north

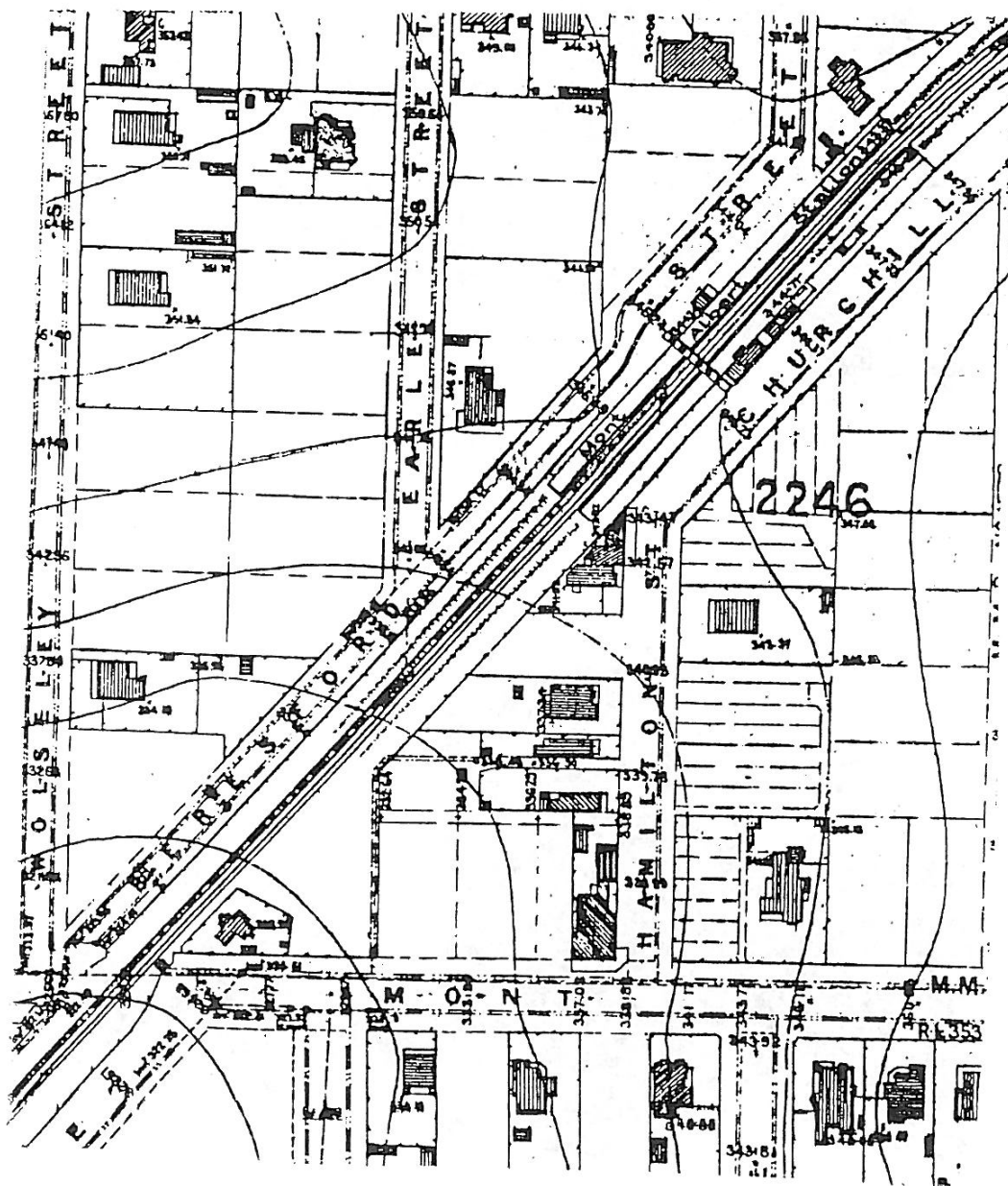


Figure 21 Part of MMBW Map No. 72, showing the layout of the precinct by c.1928  
The exact date of the map, which does not show most of the 1910s and 1920s buildings, is unknown.  
Source: MMBW Map No. 72. 160' to 1" Series. Map Room, ERC, The University of Melbourne.

