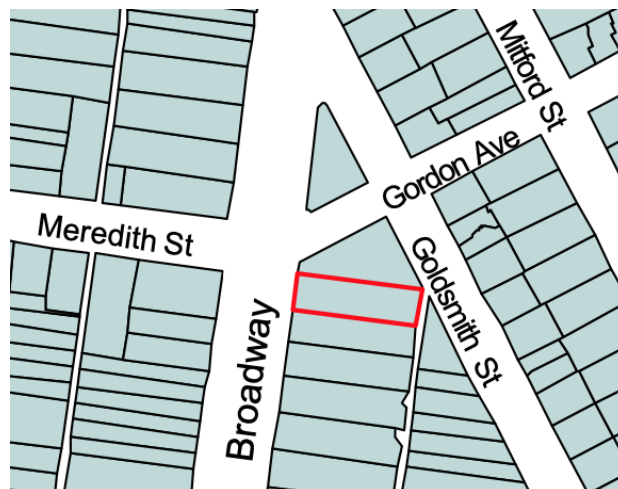


# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** De Mont Rose  
**Other names:** Flats

**Citation No:**  
**443**



**Address:** 1 Broadway, Elwood

**Heritage Precinct:** St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs

**Category:** Residential: Flats

**Heritage Overlay:** **HO7**

**Style:** Interwar: Bungalow, Mediterranean

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1926, 1934

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** J.H. Esmond Dorney (1934)

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

## Significance

### *What is significant?*

De Mont Rose, at 1 Broadway, Elwood is significant. The contributory features are the bungalow built in 1926, including a later addition that created a flat in the former roof space, and the block of two Mediterranean-style flats at the front of the site. These later works, completed in 1934, were designed by J.H. Esmond Dorney.

Alterations and additions made after 1934 are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

De Mont Rose at 1 Broadway, Elwood is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### *Why is it significant?*

Historically, De Mont Rose is significant as an example of a 'conversion' typology of house to flats. It is notable for the relatively short period of time that elapsed between the construction of the original house in 1926, and its conversion to flats in 1934. It demonstrates how the boom in flat building in the 1930s raised land values to the extent that such developments provided a better return on the land than single-occupancy, detached, housing. (Criterion A)

The two-storey block of two flats at De Mont Rose is of aesthetic significance, as a fine example of the Mediterranean-style. The detailing and materiality are typical of the Mediterranean-style, with rendered wall finishes and terracotta roof tiles, deep eaves, projecting balconies with Classically-inspired pressed-cement

balustrading, and arched-wall openings. Added to this, is more distinct detailing, including the covered walkway leading from Broadway to the rear of the site, with its *De Mont Rose* pressed cement signage above; and the crenelated parapet on the north elevation that returns along part of the west. As a sum, they make a distinct, if not eclectic example, of a Mediterranean-style block of inter-war flats. (Criterion E)

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## Thematic context

### Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

### Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.5 Higher-density housing)

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## History

### Contextual history

The early twentieth century saw a marked decline in the viability of large mansions across Melbourne's suburbs in general, but it was particularly felt in the more affluent inner southern suburbs such as St Kilda and Brighton, where land was highly sought-after by a new generation of homebuilders seeking smaller detached dwellings, duplexes or flats. The trend toward higher-density living in St Kilda began with the conversion of mansions and terrace houses into boarding houses in the early 1900s and continued with the first purpose-built flats that appeared at the beginning of World War I. A 1919 newspaper article noted:

*It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats... Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats. When the flat became popular in England the experiment was made in St Kilda, and it did not take long to discover there was a genuine demand for flats (Prahman Telegraph, 18 October 1919, p.4)*

Higher-density housing in the form of boarding houses paved the way to flat development. Flats first appeared in Melbourne around 1906 and slowly spread to the suburbs. They followed a strong pattern of development, appearing close to transport routes, particularly along or within walking distance of tram routes, to allow easy travel to the city. With their proximity to the beach and parklands, good public transport networks and seaside character, the suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood were especially popular locations for flats. Flats became a dominant characteristic of St Kilda and Elwood, and still make up a high percentage of dwellings in those areas. They include some of the earliest surviving flats in Melbourne, some of the best examples of architectural styles and types of flats, and as a group demonstrate the increasing popularity of the lifestyle of flat living from the early twentieth century (TEH).

There was huge growth in flat development in St Kilda and Elwood in the 1920 and 1930s, attracting migrants, single people, and people of diverse sexuality. In 1920 there were 527 purpose-built flats in 92 blocks in St Kilda municipality. By 1925 this had increased to 884 flats in 164 blocks, including large complexes such as the Ardoch flats in Dandenong Road. By 1935, despite a slowing of development due to the Great Depression, there were more than 2,800 flats in over 500 blocks. A further 2,000 flats were added by 1940; however, the onset of World War II slowed development. Nonetheless, by 1947 St Kilda contained 5,500 purpose-built flats, a quarter of all flats in Melbourne (TEH).

## De Mont Rose

Although reclamation of the Elwood Swamp began in 1889, the area that it occupied - bounded by present-day Marine Parade, Dickens Street, Mitford Street and Shelley Street - still remained largely undeveloped at the turn of the century. MMBW plans of this area shows that the triangular tract of land between Barkly Street, Dickens Street, Mitford Street and the newly-formed canal was entirely vacant at that time.

The opening in 1906 of the electric tramway from St Kilda Station to Elwood and Brighton Beach via Mitford Street and Broadway encouraged development. Building was slow at first but improvements to the tramway including progressive duplication from 1913 stimulated development and encouraged the building of flats especially along Mitford Street and Broadway, but also in adjoining streets. The first blocks of flats were duplexes constructed in 1917: at 71 Mitford Street, designed by Schreiber & Jorgenson and 13 Southey Street, designed by J.J. Meagher. In the following year, W.A. Tombs designed Birnam, a block of four flats, at 15 Mitford Street. The building of flats gathered pace during the interwar period and by 1940 more than 30 blocks had been erected in Mitford Street, with a further 15 in Broadway (BP).

Development on the east side of Broadway proceeded more slowly than on the west. By 1925 the west side was almost fully developed between Mitford Street and the Canal, while there were only three houses on the east side with a further three under construction.

In 1926 a house was constructed on this property for William Clarke as his own residence. Then, in 1934, Clarke engaged J.H. Esmond Dorney to design two-storey additions at the front of the house, which contained two flats, one on each level. An additional flat was created in the roof space of the original house. Access to the upstairs flats was via external stairs leading from an internal courtyard, which was accessed by a porte cochere at the north end of the new building (BP).

## J.H. Esmond Dorney, architect

James Henry Esmond Dorney (1906-91) trained in the office of Walter Burley Griffin in the mid-1920s and, on commencing his own practice in 1930, initially designed in conventional styles such as Tudor Revival before developing his own variation of the Moderne and Functionalist styles in the later 1930s. While he is said to have rejected the solidity and heaviness of Griffin's style, some of his flats of the mid-1930s clearly demonstrate influences of the 'Prairie School'.

A resident of Elwood since a teenager, Dorney designed numerous blocks of flats in the area, including several speculative apartment projects for his mother and his father-in-law, John R. Lambie who was a local real estate agent. After World War II, Dorney moved to Tasmania, where he became an innovative and highly regarded modern architect.

## References

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plans nos. 1392, 1393

O'Hanlon, Seamus, 'Home together, Home apart: Boarding house, hostel and flat life in Melbourne c.1900-1940', PhD Thesis, History Department, Monash University

*Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH)* **Version 1, July 2020**

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 6571, 17 September 1926; 8443, 9 January 1934

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1935, 1940

Sawyer, Terry, (1982) 'Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to 1950', Honours thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne

## Description

De Mont Rose is a two-storey, block of inter-war flats, with a shallow setback from Broadway, built in front of an earlier interwar bungalow that contains two flats. Its façade is a busy composition of decorative elements, that results in an eclectic design in the Mediterranean style. The flats have a hip roof clad in

terracotta tiles; this roof is partially concealed from view from Broadway by a crenelated parapet that returns along the north elevation. Below this parapet is a projecting balcony, which forms the top of a covered walkway to the rear of this flat complex. Above the corbelled opening of the walkway is rendered signage *De Mont Rose*. The walkway, which has arched openings along the north side, leads to a central courtyard formed by the U-shaped plan of the block. A rendered staircase leads from this courtyard to the upper level flats.

Much of the wall surfaces on the front of the flats are rendered, which are relieved in places with brick, particularly around wall openings. Two other balconies are on the upper level. One of these is broad, and a trio of arched windows and doors are on the rear wall of this balcony. A smaller, yet finely detailed balcony, sits upon a corbelled base at right, which is accessed by a pair of arched doors. All balconies have rendered balusters in the distinctive style that is a hallmark of Dorney's apartments. Windows on the flats, which are of various arrangements, have leadlight glazing. The flats are complemented by a low brick front fence.

Behind the front building is the original house, which is an attic bungalow constructed of red brick with a steeply pitched tile roof.

The building has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

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## Comparative analysis

The inter-war period was a time of extreme stylistic diversity, to an extent that exceeded the diversity of approaches of the nineteenth century. Boundaries between styles were often crossed in the one building, creating eclectic fusions of features from different styles (Trethowan et al, 1992, Volume 1, p.61). Such buildings were very popular in St Kilda and Elwood and make an important contribution to the distinctive character of these areas. While such designs have often been attributed to speculative builders and 'lesser' architects, this approach was also used by well-known or prominent architects such as James H. Wardrop, H.V. Gillespie and J.H. Esmond Dorney.

The work of architect, J.H. Esmond Dorney, in Port Phillip through the 1930s displays an extraordinary spectrum of fashionable styles, from the Old English style Surrey Court (1933, 71 Ormond Road Elwood) Old English through to the stark Modernist geometry of Windermere (1936, 49 Broadway, Elwood) and St Kiernan's (1940, 51 Ormond Esplanade, Elwood).

*De Mont Rose* is one of several flats by Dorney, designed in the early 1930s, which demonstrate the influence of the Mediterranean style. It retains some of Dorney's trademark details such as the distinctive balusters, stylish used on several other projects beginning with *Chenier*. Other details such as the unusual crenelated parapet show the stylistic diversity that is characteristic of Dorney's early work and was continued in later buildings such as *Garden View*, which shows the transition to the *Moderne* style evidenced in Dorney's flats of the later 1930s (1935, Citation 429).

*De Mont Rose* compares well with the quirky Mediterranean style flats built (and presumably designed by) E. Jennings & Co, which include *Colombo Court*, 52A Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 389), *Harley Court*, 52 Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 390), *Corinthian*, 5 Robe Street, St Kilda (1933, Citation 789), and *Maison Parisienne*, 122 Brighton Road, Elwood (1932, Citation 2424).

Other Mediterranean style flats in Port Phillip include *Southey Court*, 41 Milton Street, Elwood (1925, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 805), *Ormond Court*, 1 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood (1926, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 411), and *Hawsleigh Court*, 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava (1928, Hugh Philp architect, Citation 2010).

*De Mont Rose* is also representative of a distinctive building type in Port Phillip, which is the conversion of houses to flats, which required alterations and additions to the original building. Often, these were flats built in the large allotments of nineteenth century mansions or villas. *De Mont Rose* is unusual as it was built in the front yard of a suburban bungalow itself built only 8 years prior. It demonstrates how the boom in flat building in the 1930s raised land values to the point that such developments became viable. In the



same year Dorney designed the remodelling of his mother's house, Chenier, at 8 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood into two flats (see Citation 1985).

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## Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

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## Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with paint controls and apply front fence controls.

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## Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

## Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, 1992

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## Other images

