



Charles Joseph La Trobe

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Charles Joseph La Trobe did more to shape the Australian State of Victoria than any other man.

He arrived in 1839, only four years after the first white settlement when the population numbered fewer than 6,000. When he left in 1854, Victoria was the richest and most populous of the Australian colonies. The population was touching 300,000, self-government had been won, the goldfields were booming, the public library and art gallery were established and a university founded - the whole framework of modern Victoria had been set up.

La Trobe was first Superintendent of Port Phillip District from 1839 to 1850 and first Lieutenant-Governor of the new colony of Victoria from 1851. He had worked as a teacher in England and tutor in Switzerland, before he visited the West Indies to report on Negro education. After travels in Europe and North America, he wrote four books on his experience.

At Port Phillip, he encouraged the development of Aboriginal welfare and education and authorised establishment of the native police corps in 1842. Travelling on horseback, he visited

many sheep stations in the district and saw at first-hand the emergence of settled communities. In Melbourne he had interests in the churches of St James and St Peters, the inauguration of the Melbourne Hospital, the National Museum and the Mechanics' Institute.

During the 1840s, the first Government offices were opened on Batman's Hill, the Botanic Gardens site was reserved, the Melbourne Town Council was established and the first Elizabeth Street Post Office opened. La Trobe served as Administrator of Van Diemen's Land during 1846-47.

He gave assent to the Victorian act to establish the University of Melbourne in 1853, and in 1854 the Constitution Act was passed. Between 1851 and 1854, Government departments such as the PMG, the Goldfields Commission and the Police Force were created by La Trobe. New towns appeared and the building of railways and telegraph lines began. The Supreme Court was established in 1852.

La Trobe sailed for England in May, 1854. He was created a Companion of the Bath in 1858. He died in England on 4 December, 1875.