

## Charles La Trobe Superintendent later Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria



Charles La Trobe's family were [Moravian](#) and [Huguenot](#) descendants. His grand father Benjamin had friendships with people like the poet Cowper, John Newton and Hannah Moore. He was a member of the [Eclectic Society](#) founded in London in 1783, instrumental in beginning the [Church Missionary Society](#) and English anti slavery movement.

Charles had trained for the Moravian ministry and brought with him one hundred Bibles and three hundred New Testaments, a gift from the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was also instrumental in bringing Moravian missionaries to Victoria to work amongst the Aboriginal people between the Gold Fields and Swan Hill.

In his book *One Blood* pages 159 to 162, Dr John Harris describes how La Trobe introduced these Moravian missionaries to North West Victoria.



One Blood

By John Harris

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In January 1839 he was appointed superintendent of the Port Phillip District; he arrived at Melbourne on 30 September with his wife and daughter, two servants and a prefabricated house. For a short time in 1846-47 La Trobe acted as lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land.

In August 1851 La Trobe reported the discovery of gold at Ballarat, then after regaining control of

the gold fields, he submitted his resignation but was not relieved until 1854. During his 15 years of his oversight of Victoria the population grew from nearly 6,000 to 300,000, over 70,000 in one year 1851/52!

In La Trobe's first speech in Melbourne La Trobe declared,

" I pray to God to whom I look for strength and power that I may be enabled through his Grace to know my duty and to my duty diligently, temperately and fearlessly...It is not by individual aggrandisement, by the possession of numerous flocks or herds, or by costly acres, that the people shall secure for the country enduring prosperity and happiness, but by the acquisition and maintenance of sound religious and moral institutions without which no country can become truly great."

Indeed he was never accused of self seeking or personal aggrandisement and "remained conscientious, energetic, just, and impeccable in character." (Alan Goss Charles Joseph La Trobe Melb 1956 p72)

His active dedication to these values, in a society motivated almost entirely by materialistic acquisition, left a heritage and an influence which benefited future generations. La Trobe was an active supporter of the religious, cultural and educational institutions, often initiating their existence and straining his limited income for their benefit.

It is he whom Melbourne must thank for its magnificent Botanic Gardens, and he gave leadership, prestige and support to the formation of the Mechanics' Institute, Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum, the Royal Philharmonic, the University of Melbourne.

For further reading <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/la-trobe-charles-joseph-2334>