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LA TROBE

Traveller, Writer, Governor
by John Barnes

Who was Charles Joseph La Trobe?

At once a household name and a man about whom little is known, the first Governor of Victoria was described by Washington Irving as “a man of a thousand occupations”. Not just an imposing colonial figure, La Trobe was also a gifted artist and globetrotting author—journeying across Switzerland, Italy, Mexico, the West Indies, and on horseback through the wild west of America.

Despite La Trobe’s high profile in the history of Australia, no fully researched biography has been published before. John Barnes’s new book reveals a man often villified by opponents and misunderstood by modern admirers.

This comprehensive biography is illustrated by La Trobe’s own water colours, while extracts from personal notebooks and letters illuminate his life—from Moravian upbringing, and youthful odysseys, to later life in Melbourne, during which he navigated the new colony through the upheavals of the Gold Rush.

The Author

John Barnes is Emeritus Professor of English at La Trobe University, where he taught for 25 years, specialising in Australian literature. He has previously written two biographies, *The Order of Things: A Life of Joseph Furphy* (1990), and *Socialist Champion: Portrait of the Gentleman as Crusader* (2006). He was founding editor (1982–96) of *Meridian: The La Trobe English Review*, and editor of *The La Trobe Journal* (1998–2007).

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