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# TOORAK HOUSE



TOORAK HOUSE SOHE  
2008



1 toorak house st georges  
road toorak front view

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## Location

21 ST GEORGES ROAD TOORAK, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0207

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO99

## VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

Toorak House was built c1850-51 for the wealthy Melbourne merchant James Jackson, who died in 1851 and never occupied the house, which was the finest in the colony at that time. The architect was probably James Blackburn (1803-1854), who had been transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1833 and was to become one of the most important engineers and architects of the period in Australia. In 1854 Toorak House was leased to the Victorian government, which extended and redecorated it at great expense for use as the home of the new Lieutenant-Governor, Charles Hotham, who replaced Charles La Trobe and in 1855 became the first Governor of Victoria. The house served as Government House until 1876, when the new Government House in the Domain was completed. It gave its name to the suburb of Toorak. It was one of the first Italianate houses in the colony, and as the home of the governor it lent status to the style and had a great influence on the houses built by the new rich after the gold rushes. The house reverted to being a private residence in 1876, and was used as a Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force hostel during World War II. In 1956 it was purchased by the Swedish Church, which converted the property into a church and community centre. It has been extended several times since the 1840s.

Toorak House is an asymmetrical two storey brick and stucco Italianate style mansion with a dominant tower and ground floor Doric colonnade. The corners of the house feature strong quoining and the windows are crested by pediments embellished with classical motifs. The eaves are treated as a cornice with modillion brackets.

### How is it significant?

Toorak House is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Toorak House is of historical significance as one of the oldest surviving mansion houses in the State and as the first substantial government house in Victoria. The house remains as evidence of the early years of the expansion of Melbourne on the south bank of the Yarra. At that time Toorak House, like other mansions in the area, was part of a large estate stretching down to the river. Although it has been altered over the years, Toorak House is an important connection with this period of Melbourne's history. The salubrious character of the Toorak locality and grandeur of Toorak House itself led to its choice as the State Governor's residence in 1854. It was the first substantial Government House in Victoria, replacing the temporary accommodation that had been used since Victoria's separation from NSW in 1851. Toorak House is of architectural significance as one of the first examples in Victoria, and the most influential, of the Italianate style, which became Melbourne's most popular domestic style in the nineteenth century. It is also of significance for its association with the important early architect James Blackburn.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Construction dates	1848,
Architect/Designer	Jackson, Samuel,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	THE SWEDISH CHURCH,
Hermes Number	1166
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

The construction of Toorak House marked the emblematic beginnings of the picturesque Italianate tradition in Victoria. It was imported by Samuel Jackson who had worked with the style in Tasmania, and had adapted the Italianate to colonial conditions. It set a precedent for Victoria. When Government House in South Melbourne was designed by William Wardell he used the same style, albeit influenced by Osborne House on the Isle of Wight in England as much as the existing gubernatorial residence. The picturesque and asymmetrical composition became a favoured style amongst the mansion builders of Toorak and South Yarra, with the key elements being a distinctive formal tower, arcaded loggias and verandahs, heavily bracketed eaves and strong quoining to stuccoed surfaces.

Associated People: Sir Charles Hotham

## Plaque Citation

Designed by the architect James Blackburn and completed in 1851, this house became in 1855 the home of Victorias' first Governor, Charles Hotham, served as Victoria's Government House until 1876, and gave its name to the suburb of Toorak.

## Extent of Registration

*City of Prahran*. No. 207. Toorak House, 21 St. Georges Road, Toorak.  
[*Victoria Government Gazette* No 100 Wednesday, October 9 1974 p.3648]

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*