

# COMO HOUSE



COMO HOUSE SOHE 2008



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h00205 como house 01



h00205 como house 02



After Photograph - Reference F3856 2016



After Photograph - Reference F3856 2016



After Photograph - Reference F3856 2016



Before Photograph - Reference F3856 2014



Before Photograph - Reference F3856 2014



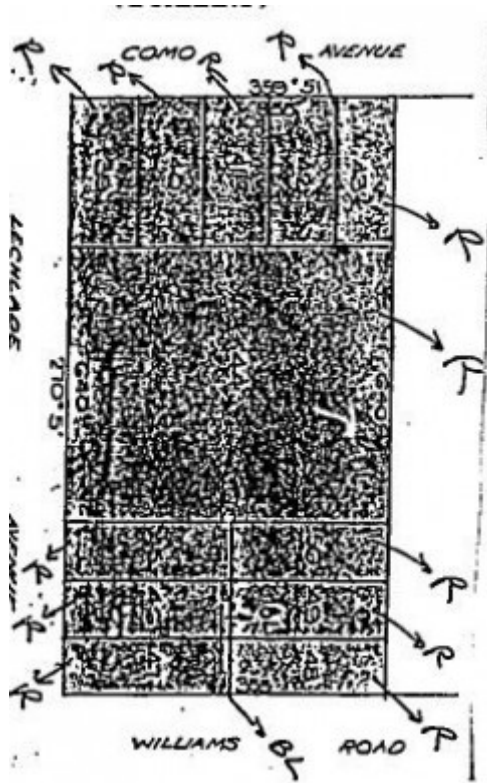
During Photograph - Reference F3856 2015



During Photograph - Reference F3856 2015



During Photograph -  
Reference F3856 2015



h00205 plan h00205

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## Location

16 COMO AVENUE SOUTH YARRA, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0205

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO26

## VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

## Amendment to Registration

August 24, 1988

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 6, 1999

What is significant?

Como House, a large white mansion prominently sited on a South Yarra hill overlooking the Yarra River, consists of a central block built c. 1855, flanked on the west by a kitchen wing dating from the 1840s, and on the east by a ballroom wing, added in the early 1870s to a design by Arthur Johnson. The house was constructed of stuccoed brick. The internal wood work is cedar and the floors of the central block are teak. The house now serves as a Museum House run by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

How is it significant?

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

Why is it significant?

Como House is of historical significance as an illustration of the lifestyle of Victoria's 19th century elite. Built on land purchased in the first land sales held south of the Yarra, the house and outbuildings have been subject to few alterations since the 1870s extensions. Although the estate has been greatly reduced from its original 54.5 acres, the general garden layout and vistas from and around the house have changed little since the 19th century. The maintenance of the house's integrity was facilitated by the fact that it was owned by the same family, the Armytage family, from 1864 to 1959, when it was donated to the National Trust. The house contains many of the Armytage family's original furnishings. This remarkably complete fabric provides a wonderful illustration of the lifestyle of Melbourne's colonial elite, of which the Armytage family was a notable member. The Armytages' prosperity, as with many of the early colony's prominent families, was built on a pastoral empire, and Como is a striking reminder of the wealth that this brought to the landed elite. The family's status in the colony was reinforced by the house's grandeur, and, after the addition of the ballroom, it served as the social centre of Melbourne's elite. An interesting manifestation of this social and entertainment function is the ballroom floor, which was sprung on chains for easier dancing.

The hierarchical social relationships that characterised 19th century society can be clearly detected in the configuration of the house, with its original outbuildings and other features designed to keep servants and the prosaic functions of the house separate from its occupants.

Como House's remnant gardens are of historical significance for their associations with William Sangster, a prominent early Melbourne gardener, landscape designer and nurseryman, who is known to have been responsible for the design of the grounds between 1857 and 1866, and with Baron von Mueller, a friend of the Armytage family and for many years Director of the Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens, who appears to have had some role in their development after 1864.

Como House is of architectural significance as perhaps Victoria's most intact and complete example of a 19th century estate mansion. The house is a most unusual combination of the Australian Regency style with details normally used on Italianate buildings later in the century. These include the verandahs with cast iron balustrading and the parapeted tower at the rear. The timber arcading on the ground floor verandah is unusual and, in combination with the early application of cast-iron pickets, creates a most atypical verandah. The grandeur and hill-top siting of the house reinforce the Armytage family's elevated social status.

Como House is of architectural significance for its associations with Arthur Johnson, the designer of the 1870s additions. Johnson was one of Melbourne's most talented architects and at one stage was employed by the Public Works Department. Other buildings for which he was responsible include the Melbourne General Post Office, Melbourne Church of England Grammar School and the Melbourne Law Courts.

## 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	1847,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	1076
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

In 1959 Como House and Gardens was the first property acquired by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) 'for preservation in perpetuity on behalf of the nation.' The subsequent history of Como is a document on prevailing attitudes to conservation in Victoria. There were no clear guidelines for conservation in Australia before the Burra

Charter was adopted by Australia ICOMOS in 1979, and changes made by the Trust as conjectural reconstructions or 'enhancements' reflected that lack of professional guidelines. Interpretation of the house since 1996 has taken the inter-war period as its basis, and implementation is firmly along Burra Charter guidelines. Source; Como Conservation Policy, May 1996 (Struthers and Hiskins)  
Associated People:

## **Extent of Registration**

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 205 - Como House, Como Park, City of Prahran.

To the extent of all of the buildings and all of the land included in the Certificate of Title entered in the Register Book Vol. 8371 Folio 650 according to the plan held by the Ministry for Planning and Environment.

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G32 24 August 1988 p.2561

*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/>*