

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Former Sebrof House
Address: 514 Orrong Road, Armadale

HO Reference: HO84
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 22 March 2022
Year of Construction: 1884

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Former Sebrof House (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO84.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Mansion

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most prestigious suburbs – seats of the mighty – mansion estates in the 19th century

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO; retain internal controls.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 514 Orrong Road, Armadale (otherwise known as Former Sebrof House) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, setback, detailing and original interior layout of the substantial 1884 boom era Italianate mansion is of local heritage significance. The later alterations and additions, front fence, pool and site landscaping are not significant.

How is it significant?

Former Sebrof House is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington, and possesses rarity value for architectural features very rarely attributed to a private residence but instead are reserved for civic buildings.

Why is it significant?

Former Sebrof House is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of mansions on estates in the suburb of Armadale during the mid-19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the gold rush period. (Criterion A)

Former Sebrof House is a substantial boom era residence that possesses architectural features very rarely attributed to a private residence but instead are reserved for civic buildings. These features include the four-storey domed tower and the smaller – yet still substantial – two-storey tower. (Criterion B)

Former Sebrof House is a high-quality, fine and intact example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion, comprising two towers, wraparound wrought iron verandah, slate roof, conservatory, and ballroom. The building is a landmark residence in Armadale, particularly owing to the tower, elaborate boom era design and deep setback. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Former Sebrof House is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of mansions on estates in the suburb of Armadale during the mid-19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the gold rush period.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	Former Sebrof House is a substantial boom era residence that possesses architectural features very rarely attributed to a private residence but instead are reserved for civic buildings. These features include the four-storey domed tower

		and the smaller – yet still substantial – two-storey tower.
<i>C</i>	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>D</i>	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Former Sebrof House is a high-quality, fine and intact example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion, comprising two towers, wraparound wrought iron verandah, slate roof, conservatory, and ballroom. The building is a landmark residence in Armadale, particularly owing to the tower, elaborate boom era design and deep setback.
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.
<i>H</i>	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	The place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Former Sebrof House is two-storey stucco rendered masonry mansion built in a Victorian Italianate and boom era style, featuring two towers projecting from the north and south façades. The street front west façade facing Orrong Road and north and south façades are defined by a verandah with cast iron columns, lacework, and valance. The street front façade verandah projects in a semi-octagonal form with a hipped roof characteristic of the Italianate style. The hipped roof is clad in slate tiles and corrugated galvanised iron. There are five rendered corbelled chimneys with terracotta chimney pots extending from the main roof.

The façade (north elevation) features a porch in tower form which the main entrance door is located forming a porte cochere. The main entrance door is a four-panel sash door with sidelights. The porte cochre is raised up several steps and is framed by classical motifs that is continued up the four-storey tower. The porte cochre terminates at the first level over a small balcony with an Italianate style balustraded parapet. Details at this level include pilasters with mouldings in a Corinthian form. Beside the porte cochre is a ground level projecting wing with arched group openings with stained glass and Corinthian piers painted black. The projection has a shed roof and is decorated with stucco mouldings around the grouped openings, sunk mouldings, cast-iron spear shaped lacework under the awnings and case iron lacework featuring flowers and vines in the design. There is a similar projecting wing located in the south façade. The verandah terminates. There is an extensive wing extending from the east façade which is part of the original structure and a contemporary extension beside the wing.

The verandahs terminate at the four-storey tower on the north façade and a shorter secondary tower at the south façade. At the first level the four-storey tower opens to the balcony over the port cochre and is framed by Corinthian piers. Moulded brackets extend from the piers to support a projecting pediment. The Corinthian piers and pediment are framed by Doric piers. The entire façade is capped by bracketed projecting eaves. The classical orders continue upwards in the form of corner Corinthian piers with rectangular stucco mouldings and string courses. Each side of the tower from the second-storey is punctuated by paired rectangular windows framed by Doric piers and capped with arched stucco with keystone motif. The top level of the tower takes on an octagonal form with balustraded parapets and precast ball and spear finial. Each side of the top level is punctuated with arched windows and framed by Corinthian and Doric pilasters with arched and keystone stucco motif. The level is capped with closely spaced bracketed eaves. The roof of the tower is capped by an octagonal copper clad domed roof with a smaller cupola with a similar form and clad. The cupola supports a small lightning rod. The secondary tower is a two-storey tower with a steep pitched hipped roof terminating in a flat top. Each roof side has a centred roof vent.

The street front boundary is demarcated by a tall grey coloured blockwork wall with piers with a hipped cap. The car and main entrance gate are a black iron palisade fence that sits recessed behind the main front wall. The driveway is laid in a stone tile that terminated in a paved parking space off the west façade of the main structure. Aerial imagery shows the grounds of Former Sebrof House to be well maintained. The west side of the lot includes an expanse of lawn and mature trees including a Canary Island Palm and an Arborvitae tree. These two trees were maintained during extensive landscaping work undertaken on site in 2013. The north and south side consist mostly of landscaped garden beds and a contemporary five-bay pointed half-arched garden sculpture. The east side of the lot includes a lawn area and a lap pool.

The interior of Former Sebrof House was described in an auction advertisement, written and published by Sothebys in 1995, as follows:

The interior offers sixteen main rooms, all of grand proportions. The main entrance hallway features eleven Grecian ladies holding lighted Amphoras and eight marble columns highlighted by magnificent ceiling cornices detailed with 24 carat gold leaf and antique crystal chandeliers. The formal dining room features another crystal chandelier and an enormous fireplace with a Belgium black marble mantel and surround. Other outstanding features include polished pink

Baltic and Kauri floors, imported wall papers, delicate stencils, [and] multi-colored plaster mouldings... (Sothebys 1995)

The condition and integrity of the interior is currently unknown. Though, these internal features, if extant, are considered to be significant to Former Sebrof House.

Former Sebrof House is located on Orrong Road close to Dandenong Road and the Princes Highway and is located directly opposite The King David School. Former Sebrof House is currently used as a residential property and is considered to be in good condition. The structure has a major rear extension however the original structure and detailing appears to be intact and would be considered to be of high integrity. The grounds of Former Sebrof House were entirely relandscaped in 2013.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

- Corrugated galvanised iron roof cladding added to part of the roof.
- Air-conditioning units added to the roof.
- One skylight added to the original east wing roof.
- Major extension to the east side of the main structure (2013).
- Swimming pool repositioned from parallel to the east wing to its current position perpendicular to the east wing by the east boundary wall (2013).
- Major landscaping works to the site (2013).
- Driveway and paved parking area straightened (2013).
- Mature row of *Arborvitae* trees along the north boundary wall removed (2013).
- Front wall render removed (2013).
- Driveway paved in stone tiles (2018).
- Garden sculpture added (2018).

[History](#)

- [Historical Context](#)

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

The first land sales in what would become Armadale began in 1854 following the surveying of Glenferrie Road and High Street. The suburb of Armadale was formally included in the City of Prahran and, as is the case with many of the suburbs in Stonnington and surrounds, it received its name from a lone but notable property. Armadale House was built by one James Munro, son of the first keeper of the Prahran pound. On arriving in Australia from his home in Sutherland, Scotland, Munro worked for the stationer business Fergusson and Moore—Fergusson being James Fergusson of Kooyong. Armadale House, built in c.1887, was the first of many grand houses constructed in the suburb in the late 19th century. Munro went on to become Premier of Victoria and, later, Attorney General, before losing all in the economic crash of the 1890s. Following the turn of the century, many of the original 19th century properties faced

demolition and subdivision, encouraging growth in early 20th century and the interwar period. While Armadale today enjoys an affluent reputation for its association with the surrounding suburbs of Toorak, Malvern and Kooyong, traces of remnant working class houses can be seen at the small timber workers cottages present in some parts off High Street and near the border with Malvern (Cooper 1924, 268).

- **Place History**

A search of Prahran rate books showed that the first rating for the Former Sebrof House was in 1884-5 when it was listed as a brick house of fourteen rooms and land with a very high NAV of £450, owned and occupied by one W. Williams, merchant (Prahran Rate Book 1884-85). The mansion was erected in the grand boom style manner which was prevalent in Melbourne in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Its grounds were listed as 6 acres in 1886-87 (Prahran Rate Book. 1886-87). The following year a change in ownership was recorded; Mary Forbes was listed as owner/occupier (Prahran Rate Book. 1888-89). It was during this time that the building acquired the name Sebrof – Mary Forbe’s surname reversed.

The MMBW. Detail Plans dated 1901 show Sebrof (spelled Seabrof) with verandahs at its front and rear, asphalt paths leading back to large stables and a conservatory, and a carriage drive around circular garden beds sweeping up to its Orrong Road entrance (MMBW 1901).

A further change in ownership took place in 1892-93 when Alexander Goldie became owner/occupier (Prahran Rate Book, 1892-93). An article in the *Prahran Chronicle* on 10 June 1893 reported that Goldie had purchased,

‘the two-storey brick mansion with tower, known as 'Sebrof', situated in the Orrong Road, Armadale. Sebrof contains 16 rooms, ballroom, conservatory, stabling, coach-house, man’s room, and every modern convenience, the grounds comprising about 3 acres. The sale included the magnificent furniture and effects on the premises, and the whole realised nearly £10,000.’ (Prahran Chronicle 1893, 5)

Former Sebrof House is historically important as one of five substantial mansions constructed between 1877 and 1889 for a group of prosperous Melbourne professional men in the block on Orrong Road between Dandenong Road and High Street. MMBW drainage plans dated to 1901 show these buildings in their prime in their splendid Victorian garden settings on large allotments ranging from three to eleven acres. Today only four of those mansions still remain. They are:

- Trelowarren, formerly Kilbryde (543 Orrong Road, Armadale) built in 1876-77 for Robert D. Reid, merchant and member of the Victorian Legislative Council, later becoming a Senator.
- Larnook (519 Orrong Road, Armadale) built in 1881 for W. H. Miller, banker, son of Henry “Money” Miller. Recorded by National Trust.
- Former Sebrof House (514 Orrong Road, Armadale) built c.1884 for William Williams, merchant, and later owned by the Forbes family who renamed it Sebrof.
- Redcourt (506 Orrong Road, Armadale) built in 1888 for Edward Yencken, merchant.

Two additional mansions to add to this group, now demolished, are:

- Karbarook which was the home from 1881 of the distinguished barrister and politician Thomas a'Beckett, M.L.C.
- Lalbert constructed in 1880 for Cornelius Job Ham auctioneer and Melbourne City councillor.

Comparative Analysis

In Armadale there are remnant examples of large Victorian mansions reflecting the suburbs affluent history. Though these residences no longer grace manicured gardens set on acreage, they still represent a period of booming development and affluence in Armadale. The Former Sebrof House can be compared to four mansions; three that are on Orrong Road as well as an additional mansion nearby on Elgin Street.

Comparative examples include:

- **‘Trelowarren’ formerly known as ‘Kilbryde’ (543 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO86).** Built in 1876-77 for Robert D. Reid, merchant and member of the Victorian Legislative Council who would later become a Senator, Trelowarren is directly comparable to Former Sebrof House as a boom era Italianate mansion formerly on a large estate dating from the late 19th century. Trelowarren directly reflects a period of rich development and expansion, informing Former Sebrof House’s construction and providing a remnant landscape context for Former Sebrof House. Today, both houses provided historical evidence of Armadale prior to the subdivision of the 19th century estates.
- **‘Larnook’ (519 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO85).** Built in 1881 for W. H. Miller, banker and son of Henry “Money” Miller, Larnook is comparable to Former Sebrof House as a late 19th century boom era Italianate mansion formerly on a large estate. Like Trelowarren, Larnook contextualises the historical setting of Former Sebrof House and provides evidences of an Orrong Road streetscape that no longer exists.
- **‘Redcourt’ (506 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO166).** Redcourt was built in 1888 for Edward Yencken, merchant, and shares a boundary with Former Sebrof House. Though architecturally different, Redcourt is still directly comparable to Former Sebrof House as a boom era mansion built on Orrong Road in the 19th century and formerly located on a large estate. Like the above examples, both houses provided historical evidence of Armadale prior to the subdivision of the 19th century estates.

Overall Redcourt, Trelowarren, Larnook and Former Sebrof House can be understood as a collection of remnant boom era mansions, contextualising the development of Orrong Road between Dandenong Road and High Street prior to the subdivision of the late Victorian estates in Armadale. The four surviving mansions, however, no longer stand in their Victorian gardens and their grounds have been drastically reduced by the subdivisions which created Karbarook, Larnook and Lalbert Crescents on the west side and Redcourt Avenue.

Two additional sites worth noting for their comparable value to Former Sebrof House are:

- **R.C. Church Seminary & Offices (21 Elgin Avenue, Armadale) (HO36).** The Roman Catholic Seminary, formerly known as ‘Elgin’, is directly comparable to Former Sebrof House as a boom era Italianate mansion located between High Street and Dandenong Road, and only approximately 300 metres north of Former Sebrof House. Elgin and Former Sebrof House share architectural characteristics, including a similar form and verandah design. They are also historically aligned as remnant boom era mansions reflecting the history of the suburb prior to the subdivision of the late Victorian estates in Armadale.

- **Malvern Town Hall (1251 High Street, Malvern) (H0483 / H2288).** Though not located in Armadale or originally used as a residence, Malvern Town Hall is comparable to Former Sebrof House. Former Sebrof House observes architectural themes usually reserved for civic buildings. The use of towers at Former Sebrof House is stylistically similar to that of Malvern Town Hall, though the tower at the town hall is taller and equipped with a clock. In addition, the application of architectural flourishes at both sites directly reflects the prosperous wealth and growth not only of privately owned properties within the municipality but that of the broader council area and neighbouring historical council areas.

References

Context Pty Ltd. 2009. *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*. Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF File.

Cooper, JB. 1924. *The History of Prahran: From Its First Settlement to a City 1836–1924*. Melbourne: Modern Printing Co.

Heritage Victoria. 1999. Heritage Citation Report: Malvern Town Hall, 1251 High Street, Malvern, Hermes ID 4679. Unpublished report. PDF file.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria). 2008. Heritage Citation Report: Sebrof, 519 Orrong Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 66737. Unpublished report. PDF file.

NEWS AND NOTES. (1893, June 10). *Chronicle, South Yarra Gazette, Toorak Times and Malvern Standard (Vic.: 1892-1893)*, p. 5.

Prahran Rate Books; 1880; 1881; 1884-85; 1888-89; 1886-87; 1888-89; 1892-93.

State Library of Victoria, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, detail plan No. 998, dated 1901.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: Larnook House, 519 Orrong Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 30672. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: R. C. Church Seminary & Offices, 21 Elgin Avenue, Armadale, Hermes ID 30561. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: Redcourt House, 506 Orrong Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 30833. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: Trelowarren House, 543 Orrong Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 30673. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

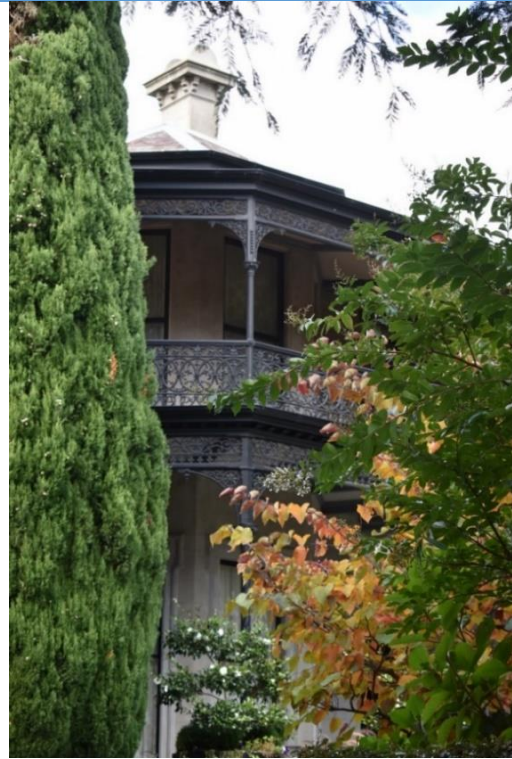
Further Images



Northern elevation of dwelling (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North western corner of residence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North western detail of verandah and chimney (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of southern tower (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Dwelling viewed from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of tower dome (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of northern verandah (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of northern verandah and plantings (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 2008.

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.