

The Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital

1902 – 1906

Details

The Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital in East Melbourne was new name given 1902 to the former Victorian Infant Asylum. It accepted 'foundlings' ('abandoned' children), and mothers with their infants. In 1906, its name changed again to the Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home.

The Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital in East Melbourne was formerly known as the Victorian Infant Asylum.

The new name from 1902 reflected a change in the institution's admission policy. Previously, it had not accepted 'foundlings' (abandoned or unwanted children).

In her history of Berry Street, Penwill writes that there was some opposition to the idea of the Victorian Infant Asylum taking in foundlings – it was argued that married people would 'take advantage' of the institution, using it to 'get rid of their children'.

In 1899, the *Argus* reported that the Infant Asylum:

does not admit foundlings. It opens its doors only to babes accompanied by their mothers ... It is quite prepared though, to expand its sheltering wings so as to cover those little ones who are usually found on doorsteps but would require monetary assistance to engage in the new enterprise.

The foundlings taken in at Berry Street were given new names by the nurses, often reflecting the surroundings or situation in which they were found. Penwill writes:

'Jack Frost' was found on a frosty night. 'Belle Lane' was discovered early one morning still alive after spending the night in the open. Night nurses heard the bell of the back gate into the lane, but disregarded it thinking it was caused by the wind. 'Peter Daw' was left in the doorway of Berry Street at night. Many of the babies were given the name of the street where they were found as a surname and a Christian name after doctors or nurses. These names were usually changed when the babies were adopted.

In 1902, work had commenced on a new 'Foundling Wing' at the building in Berry Street.

In 1906, the institution's name changed again to the Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home.

Berry Street Victoria is the custodian of records from the Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital.

Gallery



Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home, Foundation Stone

Description: This is an image of the Foundation Stone of the Foundling Hospital and Infants Home. The inscription reads: Foundling Hospital and Infants Home. This stone was laid by Lady Talbot, wife of the Governor of Victoria, to commemorate the opening of the Foundling Wing, 14th September 1905.

More info

Chronology

- The Victorian Infant Asylum (1877 - 1902)
 - **The Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital (1902 – 1906)**
 - The Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home (1906 - 1964)

Resources

- Cerreto, Alicia, [Berry Street 140 Years: restoring trust and hope](#), 2017
- [The Victorian Infant Asylum \(1877-1902\) later known as Berry Street](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to The Victorian Infant Asylum and Foundling Hospital

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records held by other organisations

- [Berry Street Heritage Collection \(c. 1877 - current\)](#)
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