

St Vincent de Paul Orphanage

1857 – 1874

Other Names:

- St Vincent de Paul Orphanage, Emerald Hill
- St Vincent de Paul Catholic Orphanage
- St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage

Details

The St Vincent de Paul Orphanage was established in 1857 in Emerald Hill, now known as South Melbourne, by the St Vincent de Paul Society. The Orphanage was established to care for Catholic children who were orphaned, or considered abandoned, destitute or neglected. In 1861 the Sisters of Mercy took over the running of the Orphanage, caring for the boys and girls separately. In 1874, the Orphanage formally split into two, with St Vincent de Paul Orphanage for Girls run by the Sisters of Mercy, and St Vincent de Paul Orphanage for Boys run by the Christian Brothers.

The foundation stone was laid for St Vincent de Paul Orphanage in Emerald Hill in 1855. The building works took two years before enough of the building was complete to open in 1857. The Orphanage was the first purpose-built Catholic orphanage in Melbourne, but there were constant concerns about the quality of the building and its size. It was run by a Committee of Management until 1861 when the Sisters of Mercy took over the operations of the Orphanage.

In December 1858, it was reported in the *Bendigo Advertiser* that there were 58 children at the Orphanage. Children found to be destitute could be placed in the Orphanage, or they could be placed voluntarily for an annual fee. The Orphanage was largely funded through subscriptions and donations, and events were regularly held such as Grand Fancy Bazaars.

By 1864 *The Herald* reported the number of children totalled 136, with 74 boys and 62 girls in residence, aged between six to twelve years, with employment arranged for them by the institution once they reached twelve. The size of the original building was unable to meet the demand, and a new bluestone building was built to accommodate the girls. It was situated on the same block but separated by the Temperance Hall and was completed by 1867.

Life in the Orphanage is described in the 1864 *The Herald* article:

Separate school and dining rooms are provided for each class of children, and a separate staff of teachers is employed for each. The girls are instructed by the sisters of mercy, while a master and one or two assistants are entrusted with the education of the boys. The course of study embraces the usual branches of a good English education, the boys, in addition, being taught to repair their own boots and shoes, while the girls are instructed in various kinds of needlework. The children rise betimes, none being allowed to remain in bed after six a.m., and all assemble in the school-room by nine o'clock. At twelve, dinner takes place, and a reasonable interval having been allowed for the meal, the children then amuse themselves in the playground until two o'clock, when school is resumed concluding for the day at four.

By 1868 the original building that accommodated the boys had deteriorated to the point that it was reported in *The Advocate* that “it is fast falling to ruin, and urgently needs extensive repairs”. Over the following year, many fundraising initiatives were held to finance the repairs and an extension to the original building. By 1869 the *The Advocate* reported “nearly 300 orphans are maintained, educated, and in every respect superintended by the Sisters” at the Orphanage.

In 1870, the *The Advocate* reported that the Sisters of Mercy regularly sent older girls from the Orphanage to the House of Mercy for training in domestic service.

Following the arrival of the Christian Brothers in Melbourne in 1868, the Sisters of Mercy requested they take over the boys’ part of the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage, while the Sisters would operate a separate girls’ orphanage. The St Vincent de Paul Orphanage formally transitioned to two separate orphanages, one for boys run by the Christian Brothers, and one for girls run by the Sisters of Mercy, on 2 July 1874.

Gallery



St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage, Emerald Hill



Former St. Vincent de Paul Boys' Orphanage

Description: Orphanage located at 231-241 Cecil St and 199-201 Napier St and 34 Church St, South Melbourne. This image is one of a series of photographs available from the Victorian Heritage Register.

More info

Chronology

- St Vincent de Paul Orphanage, Prahran (1854 - 1857)
 - **St Vincent de Paul Orphanage (1857 – 1874)**
 - St Vincent de Paul Orphanage for Boys (1874 - 1967)
 - St Vincent de Paul Girls' Orphanage (1874 - 1962)

Related Entries

Run by

- [St Vincent de Paul Society \(1854 - current\)](#)
- [Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation \(1857 - 2011\)](#)

Date: 1861 - 1874

Resources

- Australian Heritage Council, [A thematic heritage study on Australia's benevolent and other care institutions](#), 2016

- Grogan, Robert, [*From green to red and white: a chronicle of the Parish of St Peter and Paul's from its origins in Emerald Hill to the present day in South Melbourne.*](#), 2009
- [Heritage Display](#), MacKillop Family Services website, 2013
- [St Vincent de Paul Orphanage/Home \(1854-1997\)](#), Finding Records, No date
- Golding, Frank, [Lost & Found: State Children in Victoria](#), Frank Golding: author, researcher, historian and consultant specialising in child welfare, 27 July 2017
- [Prominent Topics - Boys' Orphanage, Emerald Hill](#), Advocate, 11 June 1874
- [St. Vincent de Paul's Orphanage Jubilee Year](#), Advocate, 16 September 1905
- [St. Vincent de Paul's Orphanage](#), Advocate, 23 May 1929

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [MacKillop Family Services Records, Victorian institutions \(1857 - current\)](#)
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