

Ebenezer Mission

1859 – 1904

Details

The Ebenezer Mission was established in 1859 on the banks of the Wimmera River, the land of the Wotjobaluk people, approximately 70 kilometres north-west of Horsham. Two Moravian missionaries, F W Spieseke and Friedrich Hagenauer took on its management. The Mission was gazetted in 1861 as the Lake Hindmarsh Aboriginal Reserve. It closed in 1904.

The main aim of the Mission was to 'civilise' and Christianise the Aboriginal inhabitants of the area. Rations were provided to the Aboriginal residents on condition they attended church services and school.

At Ebenezer the residents attended three church services on Sunday, two for prayer and one for singing. The women and girls also attended Sunday school after each service.

Children were commonly separated from their parents and lived in dormitories attached to the mission manager's home or the schoolhouse. The managers undertook disciplining the children, even when it was directly against the wishes of the parents.

The buildings at the Ebenezer Mission increased to include a schoolhouse, girls' and boys' dormitories and cottages. In 1870 a girls' dormitory was constructed, but was used as a school from 1874. In 1873 a new building was erected which included a girls' dormitory and boys' dormitory. The dimensions of the dormitories were 18 feet long, by 20 feet wide, with 12 foot high ceilings. By 1874 there were eight beds in the boys' dormitory and 12 in the girls'. It was described as a substantial building with a corrugated iron roof and tongue and groove wooden floor boards and through ventilation.

As a result of the 1886 Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria which forced half caste aborigines off missions, by 1892 the number of residents at Ebenezer Mission Station dropped to only 30 people.

The mission closed in 1904, and most of the land was handed back to the Victorian Lands Department and made available for selection.

In 1971 landowner Robert Bond gifted the freehold part of the land to the National Trust. It contains several nineteenth century Mission buildings including the kitchen, dormitory and toilet block and footings of the Mission House.

In 1980 the Trust acquired more land and in 2012 the Trust signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Barangi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation with a view to returning it to its traditional owners. This was accomplished in December 2013.

Gallery



Moravian Mission House Blacks Station

Description: This is a painting by S. H. Roberts of the Mission House on Ebenezer Mission.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines \(1860 - 1869\)](#)
- [Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, Colony of Victoria \(1869 - 1900\)](#)
- [Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, State Government of Victoria \(1901 - 1957\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [An Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria, Victoria \(1870 - 1890\)](#)
- [The Aborigines Protection Act 1886, Victoria \(1887 - 1890\)](#)
- [Aborigines Act 1890, Victoria \(1890 - 1915\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Koorie Records Unit, Public Record Office Victoria \(c. 2001 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Nelson, E., Swain, S. and Grimshaw, P., *Letters from Aboriginal women of Victoria 1867-1926*, 2002
- Massola, Aldo, *Aboriginal mission stations in Victoria: Yelta, Ebenezer, Ramahyuck, Lake Condah*, 1970
- Victoria. Public Record Office; National Archives of Australia. Melbourne Office, with an historical overview by Richard Broome., [walata tyamateetja: a guide to government records about Aboriginal people in Victoria.](#), 2014
- Public Record Office Victoria, [Aboriginal Victorians \(1830s - 1970s\)](#), 2014
- Public Record Office Victoria, [Koorie Heritage - Koorie Index of Names](#), 2014
- Board for the Protection of Aborigines, [Fortieth Report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, 1904](#), 1904
- Edwards, Bill, *A Moravian Mission in Australia: Ebenezer through Ernabella Eyes*, 2004

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