

Mount Gambier Aborigines' Home

1865 – 1867

Other Names: • Mount Gambier Native School

Details

The Mount Gambier Aborigines' Home was opened in Mount Gambier in 1865 by missionary Mrs Christina Smith. The establishment of the Home was assisted by the Bishop of Adelaide and funded by charitable donations. Up to 16 Aboriginal children lived and were taught at the Home at one time. Due to declining donations the Mount Gambier Aborigines' Home officially closed in 1867, however, several young people remained living with Mrs Smith for a number of years afterwards.

In 1854, Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, James and Christina Smith, moved to the Mount Gambier area and purchased a small farming property. James Smith established a school for local Aboriginal children. According to newspapers he 'maintained' and taught several 'half-caste' children for some time and was paid a subsidy by the government for their maintenance. After her husband's death in 1860 Christina Smith continued their missionary work with the local Aboriginal children.

In the mid 1860s the Bishop of Adelaide received a large donation of funds from an English philanthropist with the proviso that it was to be used for the 'improvement of the aborigines of the colony'. The funds were used to build a substantial stone building at Commercial Street West, Mount Gambier, to be operated as an Aboriginal Home and school. Christina Smith was given charge of the institution and the Mount Gambier Aborigines' Home, also known as the Mount Gambier Native School, opened in 1865.

Up to 16 Aboriginal children lived and were taught at the Home at one time. The children learned hymns and prayers and worked on religious exercises based on the text of the Bible. Mrs Smith received an allowance from the Government to assist with the upkeep of the Aboriginal children in her charge. In 1867 due to a decrease in funds available from the Bishop of Adelaide the Home was officially closed. However, according to the writings of Christina Smith, several Aboriginal children remained with her at the property, maintained through Government subsidies and charitable donations from local residents of Mount Gambier.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Anglican Diocese of Adelaide \(1847 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Smith, James Mrs, *The Booandik tribe of South Australian Aborigines : a sketch of their habits, customs, legends, and language : also an account of the efforts made by Mr. and Mrs. James Smith to Christianise and civilise them*, 1880

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Smith Family \(c. 1838 - c. 1950\)](#)

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