

United Aborigines Mission records

1920s – 1980s

To access these records:

These are the most recent contact details provided by UAM Ministries. In February 2020, it is unknown whether this inbox is still being monitored by UAM.

Contact person: Chris Jones, UAM Ministries

Email: uamministries@gmail.com

In 2022, the Find & Connect web resource was advised by Sharrock Pitman lawyers that the following address was now the only contact information for UAM Ministries:

PO Box 172 Vermont, Victoria, 3133.

Records Location

These records are held by [United Aborigines Mission \(1929 - 2020\)](#)

Details

The United Aborigines Mission (UAM) existed from 1929 to 2020 and it ran a number of missions and children's Homes in South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales. This entry contains details of records known to have been in the custody of the UAM but the whereabouts of which are unfortunately unknown as at April 2023.

This is a distressing situation for former residents of UAM institutions and for their family members. Support is available from organisations such as Link Up and the Find & Connect support services. If you can provide any further information please contact the Find & Connect web resource. We will update this website should any new information come to light.

Access Conditions

In 2022, the Find & Connect web resource was advised by Sharrock Pitman lawyers that the following address was now the only contact information for UAM Ministries:

PO Box 172 Vermont, Victoria, 3133.

Records

As at April 2023, research and consultation by the Find & Connect web resource team and other stakeholders has been unable to establish the current whereabouts of a collection of records known to have previously been held by United Aborigines Mission Archives, last known to be located in Williamstown, Victoria.

In late 2022, [a collection of UAM records](#) was deposited with the State Library of South Australia. This collection comprises some records from the United Aborigines Mission archives, relating to Colebrook, Tanderra and Oodnadatta Homes in South Australia, and the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home in New South Wales.

It is clear that this transfer of records only comprises a small proportion of the collection of UAM Archives. Anecdotal reports to the Find & Connect web resource team, as well as documents in the National Archives of

Australia, indicate that the UAM collection comprised over 100 boxes of records.

Details of these missing records have been documented in a number of sources, including records at the National Archives of Australia from 1997, in the publications *Connecting Kin* (1998) and *Finding your own way* (2005), and in a thesis from 2005. The information in this entry has been compiled from these publicly available sources, to collate and document publicly available information about the archival collection of the United Aborigines Mission. Members of the Stolen Generations have reported problems accessing the records of the UAM over many years.

Information about UAM Records published in Karen George, *Finding your own way* (2005)

Some of the UAM records described in this 2005 publication were transferred into the custody of the State Library of South Australia in December 2022. The records in *Finding your own way* that are now with the State Library of South Australia are:

- Children's records and/or Old Colebrook Home records (1920s – 1980s)
- Colebrook Home [Admission] Register (1941 – 1948)
- Admissions and Discharges for Oodnadatta 1948-1963
- Admission Register, Tanderra Girls' Home (1964-1973)

The whereabouts of the following records described in *Finding your own way* are unknown.

Correspondence Files, Colebrook

Three lever arch folders and two manila folders as follows:

1947 – 1958

Incoming letters primarily addressed to Pastor Samuels, Secretary of the UAM. Most relate to children and mention names, activities, needs and children's behaviour. Correspondence and documents include: (1) Letters about children's holidays such as people offering to have children, letters confirming arrangements and correspondence from parents requesting permission to have children home for holidays; (2) Letters from foster parents about children in their care; (3) Letters to Pastor Samuels written by children, as well as letters written to children in the home from their parents and siblings; (4) List of children and their ages for 1947 and for December 1956; (5) Lists of children attending events; (6) Letters and reports dated 1950s from Superintendent Hill concerning conditions in home. Reports dated 1954, 1955 and 1956 include information about children, their health and activities. Quantity: 1 folder.

1949-1981

Copies of outgoing correspondence from Pastor Samuels and Superintendent Hill and some incoming correspondence, particularly from Superintendent Finck, 1950s. Correspondence and documents include: (1) 1951 letter re whereabouts of child, relating to regular transfers of children between Colebrook Home and Gerard Mission; (2) Copies of Minutes of UAM board; (3) Interview with Superintendent Finck (1957) about discipline of children and correspondence between Pastor Samuels and Superintendent Finck on this subject; (4) Reports from Superintendent Finck; (5) Letters from Pastor Samuels to various children; (6) Some individual school reports, 1960s; (7) Correspondence regarding appointments and resignations of staff and superintendents. Quantity: 1 folder.

1958 – 1962

Correspondence and documents include: (1) Letters requesting children for holidays; (2) Letters from children to Pastor Samuels; (3) Lists of children in home, 1955, 1961 and 1962 with ages; (4) Letter from Superintendent Finck re allowed activities of children; (5) Letter from Superintendent Finck, 1962, outlining children's home routine; (6) Letters from parents to children; (7) Monthly reports from 1960s including comments about children. Quantity: 1 folder.

1947 – 1948

Letters from Pastor Samuels, mostly to Brother Eaton who was in charge of the Home during this period. Includes list of children and ages for 1947. Quantity: 1 folder.

[no date] Correspondence relating to the 'Edwardstown Colebrook Home Landscape Scheme' fundraising appeal. Quantity: 1 folder.

Finniss Springs/Colebrook/Nepabunna B [Photographs] (1930s – 1960s)

Finniss Springs/Colebrook/Nepabunna B [Photographs] includes 2 albums and a collection of loose photographs.

(1) Album 1 contains photos of Colebrook Home at Quorn and at Eden Hills including buildings, children and staff. (2) Album 2 begins with potted history of Home then follows with individual pages for each child with details of child (including name, date and place of birth, admission date, parents' names, address, remarks re health and schooling) and photograph. Not all entries include photographs. Album then records details from School reports, 1969. (3) Loose photos include buildings, staff and children at Quorn and Eden Hills, school photos from Blackwood Primary School, photographs relating to the Children's Home at Oodnadatta and miscellaneous unlabelled photos. Quantity: 1 box.

Correspondence Files, Gerard Mission Children's Dormitory

1945-1987 (with gaps)

Ten folders of various sizes comprising incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Letters, reports and other documents addressing many subjects including: (1) General running of the children's dormitory, (2) Repairs and maintenance, (3) Food and clothing requirements, (4) Children's health, (5) Staff changes and letters from staff to Secretary of the UAM, (6) Fortnightly, monthly and yearly reports from the Mission superintendent which include mention of the dormitory, (7) Correspondence relating to individual children. Correspondence on various subjects sometimes refers to children by name.

1947-1972

Nine folders of various sizes comprising incoming and outgoing correspondence.

As above, documents relate to many different subjects. Regular reports from the Superintendent of the Mission, Mr Bateman (particularly from 1950s-1970s) include comments on named children being admitted or discharged from the dormitory.

Murray River Mission

Date range not known.

One lever arch folder of correspondence.

Letters to and from Commonwealth Railways. A small number of documents relate to the establishment of the Gerard Mission and general claims for child endowment, not including names.

Child Endowment Records

Children and Aboriginal Reports, SA

1940-1950s

Four manila folders with a series of types of claim form for child endowment and other related documents.

Records concern children in all UAM homes. Forms provide (from sample Child Endowment Claim Form 1951): (1) Number, (2) Surname, (3) Christian name, (4) Date of birth, (5) Place of birth, (6) Father's full name, (7) Mother's maiden surname, (8) Mother's Christian name, (9) Additional information.

Notes on contents – Box also contains some miscellaneous lists of Gerard dormitory children from the same period. These mostly provide only names and ages of children.

Admission and Discharge forms for Oodnadatta only include the name and age of the child and his/her admission and/or discharge date. One loose, undated sheet titled Oodnadatta gives a list of children in the Oodnadatta home.

On page 16 of section 8, *Finding your own way* has this statement about UAM records about Ooldea Mission Children's Dormitory: "The United Aborigines Mission Archives holds some records relating to Ooldea Mission,

including correspondence and reports which may contain references to the children's home. These records have not yet been sighted."

Information about UAM Records in Alison Longworth, "Was it worthwhile? An historical analysis of five women missionaries and their encounters with the Nyungar people of south-west Australia", 2005

In her 2005 thesis 'Was it worthwhile?', Alison Longworth mentions visiting the UAM Archives when they were located in East Doncaster, Victoria, and cites records relating to the UAM's missionary activities in Western Australia.

This is the list of records from UAM Archives that she cites:

"A short history of the New South Wales Aborigines' Mission, Melbourne, n.d. in Box 49, file: Correspondence from Missionaries, 1940.

Box 49: Federal Council, file: Correspondence from Missionaries, 1940.

Box 55: Federal Council and Conference, file: Conference 1932.

Box 95 South Australian Head Office, file: Correspondence re Schenk 1941.

Box 98, file: Publicity – Messenger, New Life etc.

"Old brown case – WA reports etc", file – Circulars.

"Plastic box marked 'Gift books'", photograph scrapbook, UAM Book 1, films 1-10, p.21, 35/7.

National Archives of Australia records re UAM Archives

There are a number of files at NAA documenting the UAM's interactions with members of the Cultural Ministers Council Archives Working Group in 1997. Convenor of the Group Evan Williams describes the UAM's collection as highly significant and "one of the most significant collections of records relating to indigenous Australians outside government custody" (NAA: B899, 1997/203, p.56). The Archives Working Group corresponded with the UAM about establishing a pilot project to arrange and describe their records relating to Aboriginal people and providing the UAM with archival storage boxes to assist in preservation. The UAM decided not to participate in this project that would have resulted in the indexing and listing of their records.

There is a document with notes from a meeting of the Working Group with the UAM on 27 November 1997. At this meeting, President of the UAM Chris Jones stated that "most of the photographs had been removed from the [UAM] collection and placed with 'a library' in South Australia". In April 2023, the library to which these photographs were transferred has not been determined.

There is a report on a visit in October 1997 by staff from the Australian Archives to the UAM Archives in East Doncaster (NAA: A750 1997/1988).

The report describes UAM Archives holding approximately 120 commercial archive boxes equivalent in size to an AA Type 4 box. This included 6 boxes of loose photographs and albums, depicting mission schools and stations, missionaries and "Aborigines connected to the missions".

The records comprised central administration records of the UAM, copies of the UAM publication "United Aborigine Messenger" and "Australian Aboriginal Advocate", and records relating to UAM missions and children's homes.

The report describes the following records being held by UAM Archives.

Colebrook Children's Home South Australia, local administration records and misc records, name index (incomplete), admissions book 1948 – includes details of family illnesses etc, 2 boxes.

Bomaderry Children's Home, local administration records and other miscellaneous records including family details, 2-3 boxes.

Mt Margaret Mission Children's Home, WA, some admin records and personal information a complete index to all the children is held in WA by private individuals, 2 boxes.

Warburton Ranges set up as a station with a community boarding school where parents were able to visit their children and take them home for holidays. Administration records 2 boxes.

Other community records by location, 6 boxes.

There were several large boxes of records on the floor to the left of the shelving but these were identified by the UAM staff as short term financial records due for destruction.

The 1997 report on a visit to UAM Archives also described objects – a hanging display from Warburton ranges from 1951, approximately 50 plans and a display board of Aboriginal artefacts.

Another document in the NAA was prepared by Andrew Wilson dated 11 November 1997 (NAA: B899, 1997/203). It contains details of more UAM Archives records relating to South Australia.

Swan Reach and Gerard Missions, South Australia

Three large albums containing photographs with captions mentioning family groups and names ... numerous loose photographs relating to other UAM missions in South Australia. Amongst these, there were definitely photographs relating to Nepabunna, Ooldea, Finniss Springs and Oodnadatta. They were in a box marked "Old Nepabunna, Gerard, Colebrook Home, Ooldea and South Australia".

Correspondence Files, Gerard Mission

There is a complete set of correspondence files for Gerard. This includes correspondence relating to the establishment of Gerard in 1945 and other activities up to the 1980s. Two boxes.

*Box 1 – Gerard – outward (general correspondence)
1945-1954, 1955-1957, 1962-1976, and miscellaneous.*

*Box 2 – Gerard – inward (general correspondence)
1947-1948, 1952-1956, 1956, 1957-1961, 1957-1961 (part two), 1966-1972.*

*Gerard – outward (general correspondence)
1949-1953.*

This document also mentions records relating to Swan Reach and Murray River Mission.

These records were known to be housed in Williamstown, Victoria at least until 2021. The whereabouts of the records is currently unknown (except for the records transferred by a UAM representative to the State Library of South Australia in December 2022).

This is a distressing situation for former residents of UAM institutions and for their family members. Support is available from organisations such as Link Up and the Find & Connect support services. If you can provide any further information please contact the Find & Connect web resource. We will update this website should any new information come to light.

More info

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/united-aborigines-mission-records-2/>