



Celebrating

175

SINCE 1846

YEARS

since the Sisters of Mercy's
arrival in Western Australia

 *MercyCare*



On January 9, 2021 we celebrate 175 years since the Sisters of Mercy sailed up the Swan River with the vision of creating a better, more equal, caring and compassionate outlook for all Western Australians, no matter who they were.

In these pages we can see Perth through the eyes of a young Sister Ursula Frayne as it was in 1846. Her incredible journey, along with the six other pioneering Sister's of Mercy, has created a lasting impact on the Western Australian community.

At MercyCare, we hold this story with great pride. It is a legacy we can draw inspiration from as we respond to the needs of the Western Australian community today.


Seven brave and driven young women led by 28-year-old Sister Ursula Frayne, departed Dublin and arrived in Perth in 1846. To commemorate this occasion, we take a step back in time through the eyes of Sister Ursula Frayne.

Sails are set on the good ship Elizabeth

In Dublin, it was decided a group of Sisters of Mercy would be sent “to the new diocese of Perth, WA; a country not far from the 32nd degree Latitude.”

The Sisters joined a party hastily assembled and boarded the barque Elizabeth. After a voyage of 113 days, anchor was dropped off Fremantle on 7 January 1846. The journey had been long and often arduous.

“Our good ship Elizabeth sometimes treats us very unceremoniously; fancy to yourself a grave Sister of Mercy walking in slow religious pace across the cabin, when suddenly a lurch of the vessel prostrates her on the floor and rolls her from side to side...”



Perth (pictured from the South Perth foreshore in 1868) as the Sisters of Mercy would have seen it. Courtesy State Library of Western Australia.



To the sandy beaches of Fremantle

Arriving off Fremantle, the Elizabeth cast anchor at Gage Roads with the Sisters to first set foot on Australian soil the next day.

“Early in the morning the boats were lowered and we were speedily conveyed in them to the landing

place, which was neither more nor less than a sandy beach without pier or jetty, and without any manner of accommodation for landing dry shod.”



Journey up the Swan River

The next morning, the Sisters walked along the sand to a large boat that would sail them up the Swan River to Perth.

“We had the most delightful sail up the Swan River. The weather was glorious; a strong breeze tempered the heat of the burning sun, and, filling our sails, propelled us along so smoothly that we hardly felt the motion...”

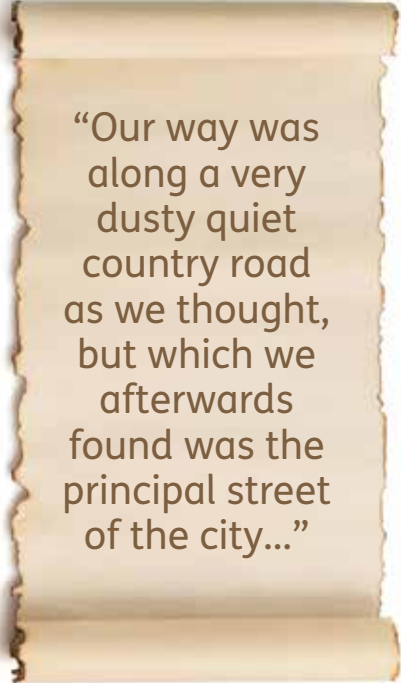
“The scenery was charming, the river broad and winding. Nature here had undivided empire; human industry had literally done nothing. At length we came to the landing place, a veritable jetty, upon which were assembled a crowd of sightseers, a few of whom hailed us with delight.”

A dusty road

The Sisters arrived at Perth and proceeded along the quiet road of St Georges Terrace to the Catholic church in Victoria Square, which had scarcely been completed before their arrival.

“At long last we stopped at the Catholic Church. We arose from our kneeling position and walked out from the Church, expecting to be conducted to the house provided for us, but, alas! Our arrival was totally unexpected.”

After travelling for months to their new home, the Sisters found no permanent accommodation had been organised for them.



“Our way was along a very dusty quiet country road as we thought, but which we afterwards found was the principal street of the city...”

EDUCATION.

THE SISTERS OF MERCY possessing now every facility, have arranged to open on the 3rd September, a distinct **DAY SCHOOL** for a limited number of young Ladies.

Besides a solid English Education, comprising Grammar, Geography, History, Writing, Arithmetic, &c., &c., the French Language will be taught; also Music, Drawing, and Plain and Ornamental Works

Parents wishing to avail of this opportunity, and be informed as to the terms and other details, will have the goodness to call at the Convent of Sisters of Mercy, Perth, on any day from this date until the 5th August, and from the 16th August afterwards, Sundays excepted.

Perth, July 25, 1849.

Finding home

“On Saturday, January 17th 1846, we date the foundation of the first Convent of Mercy in Australia.”

By August the Sisters had permanent lodgings alongside the church where Mercedes College now stands.

Their Mission begun

Despite their initial trials, the Sisters wasted no time commencing their mission, opening their first school on 26 January 1846, welcoming just six children. But by September of that year it had grown to 60 children, the largest school ever known in Perth.

“We have nearly as many Protestants as Catholics... and the greatest harmony exists.

“The people cannot forget, that until our arrival, the education of their children seemed to be a matter of very little importance.”

The Sisters went on to open the first secondary school in Western Australia in 1849.






An Enduring Legacy

Nearly two decades after they first arrived in Australia, the Sisters of Mercy established the St Joseph's Girls Orphanage in Victoria Square.

Eight years later, the Sisters took over management of the Subiaco Boys Orphanage, situated on the current site of MercyCare's Wembley campus. In 1901, the Sisters moved St Joseph's to the Subiaco site, where they remained until March

2002. For the next century and a half the Sisters of Mercy delivered education, welfare and health services in Perth and beyond without judgement; caring for all.

In March 2002, MercyCare assumed management of the Wembley site to continue the Mission and uphold the values of the seven pioneering Sisters of Mercy.



Begun by the Sisters of Mercy in 1846, today MercyCare continues to strengthen, adapt and grow to meet the needs of Western Australians.

We support Western Australian families and communities – from the smallest members in our early learning centres; young people supported through fostering, accommodation and wellness; vulnerable families through housing and support; new Australians through our multicultural services; Kimberley communities through our accommodation; and our most senior members through our aged care services.

We do all this founded on our vision for people and communities to thrive.