

## St Mary's Melbourne: Take a walk around places significant to Australia's first saint

Thursday 15 October 2020

### *Communications Office*

*As a child of Melbourne, St Mary MacKillop spent her first 18 years in and around the city in places like Fitzroy, Darebin Creek, Merri Creek, Clunes, Glenroy, Collingwood and Shamrock Street in Richmond. During her time in the city, where did she go? What did she see? To celebrate ten years since St Mary's canonisation, we list some places Mary frequented around Melbourne. Because cities change over time, it's hard to imagine Melbourne through Mary's eyes, but this is a sample of places that would have been familiar to her. Many of these places are located around the north-eastern corner of the city, which in Mary's time was a slum where many of the poorest people in Melbourne lived.*

### Mary's birthplace, 7 Brunswick St.

This Brunswick Street house was built in 1840, and purchased by Mary's father Alexander in 1841. The MacKillops named it 'Marino Cottage'. You can see the outline of the tiny cottage which was owned by her parents Flora and Alexander. Architectural reports describe it as a weatherboard house with five rooms plus a kitchen. Several tenants occupied the house after the MacKillops and it was eventually demolished in 1855. Today the site is known as the Mary of the Cross Centre, and is owned by the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

### St Mary of the Cross Square, 20 Brunswick St.

Located opposite Mary's birth site in Brunswick Street Fitzroy, this would have been small simple residential buildings in Newtown. Today, it provides a public space within the surrounds of St Patrick's Campus of Australian Catholic University. In the midst of this tree-lined square is an inspiring statue of a young Mary MacKillop, created by Melbourne artist Louis Laumen.

### St Francis' Church, Lonsdale St.

A significant church in Mary's life. St Francis was a simple timber church when Mary's parents were married there. Mary was baptised here in 1842 as construction began on the current church building and on 15 August 1850 at the age of nine, it was where she received her first communion and confirmation in 1858. The name she took for her confirmation was 'Agnes'.

### Sands, Kenny & Co. Stationers, Collins St.

Mary worked as a stationer's clerk or forewoman, at Sands Kenny & Co Stationers in Collins Street, Melbourne. It was one of the largest firms of its kind in Australia, famously producing the *Melbourne Directory*, an annual directory of people and professions in Melbourne. The building no longer exists and the space is now occupied by Collins Place. Given that Mary possessed a keen mind and received a good education from her father, it is believed she had a position of some responsibility within the firm.

The first Providence. 45 La Trobe St.

Mary returned to Melbourne when the city was in the depths of depression. At the invitation of Archbishop Carr of Melbourne in 1891, Mary MacKillop set up a 'Providence', which was a residence that provided safe accommodation for unemployed, homeless, and vulnerable women. These places she set up were not convents per se but accommodation that provided accommodation for the sisters as well as the poor and needy. The first Providence was a rented property at 45 La Trobe street which was used as a convent, a refuge for women and a children's night school. The building no longer exists and the space is now occupied by an apartment block.

The second Providence. Nottingham Place, 535 Victoria Pde.

In 1892, the Sisters of St Joseph opened a home for unemployed servants at Nottingham Place at 535 Victoria Parade. The original house no longer exists.

The third Providence. Floraston, 39 Victoria Pde.

In 1892, the Providence was moved to this house in Victoria parade and used until 1895. Women and girls employed in warehouses could board there. The building still exists and is a private residence.

The fourth Providence, 362 Albert St.

In 1901, Archbishop Carr encouraged Mary to purchase somewhere permanent for the sisters. This building was constructed and used as St Joseph's Providence East Melbourne. It later became a hostel for young women from the country. It is now the Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre, which is a Museum and Conference Centre.

Cumberland Place School.

In the late 1880s, an estimated 10,000 children between 6 and 15 were making their living on the streets of Melbourne selling things like matches and newspapers. In 1897 Mary MacKillop and Sister Gertrude opened the Catholic Poor School in a two-roomed cottage in Cumberland Place, located behind the Providence on La Trobe Street. St Joseph's Poor School provided a basic education for children from the nearby slums. The cottage was demolished in 1978. The street was also demolished, but Cumberland Place once ran east-west, parallel to La Trobe and Little Lonsdale streets, in the north-east corner of the city. The space is now occupied by The Telstra Exhibition Exchange.

### Little Lonsdale St.

'Little Lon' (Little Lonsdale Street) was the Red Light district of Melbourne and was also home to recently arrived immigrants from Ireland, Italy, China and Syria. There were an estimated 35 brothels in Little Lon, with the most famous being Madame Brussels. Mary helped the girls working in the brothels. Sister Ethelburga, who nursed Mary when she became gravely ill while working in Little Lon, wrote of Mary: 'I have known her to go into some of the slums of Melbourne, and get men and women from ill-famous houses, and got them to go to Mass, also to their religious duties.'

### St Patrick's Cathedral.

Mary raised money to assist her friend Archbishop Thomas Carr in the second phase of the cathedral's construction. She would have seen the new high altar of emperor red marble, the golden doors of the tabernacle, and the mosaic-tiled floors. In her lifetime, she saw the cathedral completed and consecrated, and the proximity of St Patrick's Cathedral to the East Melbourne Providence means that Mary MacKillop would have spent time and prayer here. There is a simple shrine to Mary MacKillop in the St Joseph's Chapel, reflecting her devotion to St Joseph. There is a further commemoration of St Mary MacKillop's life in the grounds of the Cathedral with the statue of St Mary stepping out to begin her ministry as a Sister of St Joseph. This statue is also by Melbourne artist Louis Laumen.

*The Mary MacKillop Museum is located at Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre 362 Albert Street East Melbourne & is normally open 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday. The Mary MacKillop Heritage Centre will reopen when restrictions are lifted and people are welcome to visit and explore the life and story of St Mary MacKillop.*

source: <https://melbournecatholic.org.au/>