

# Brief Histories of Catholic Children’s Orphanages and Child Care Facilities in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

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## Brief History of Catholic Children's Services Administrations

The Managers of the Roman Catholic Orphans' Asylums was incorporated in 1849, and was the title given to both the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Asylums.

The Guardian Angel Settlement Association was founded in 1859 by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul as the House of the Guardian Angel for girls, located at 1029 Marion Street. In 1911, governance was transferred to a lay board from the Daughters of Charity, and the name was changed to Guardian Angel Settlement. The agency moved to its current location at the Child Development Center at 1127 N. Vandeventer Avenue in 2009.

The Conference of Catholic Charities was created in 1912 to connect the various Catholic social charitable organization and institutions in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. In 1917, the Central Bureau of Catholic Charities and Kindred Activities of St. Louis was established to coordinate the organizations' efforts. In 1927, Fr. John O'Grady produced a thick report on each of the orphanages in St. Louis, and recommended that a central Catholic children's bureau be created to coordinate the operations and protocol of the Catholic children's homes. As a result, the Department of Children of Catholic Charities was established in 1928. The Department of Children handled placement, casework, and follow-up services for children and their families. A Committee on Child Care was formed in 1940 to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on programs, standards and problems in the institutions. A Committee on Adoptions reviewed and approved the adoption case of each child. In 1943, a medical program was instituted for the children in these institutions.

The Department of Children was incorporated as Catholic Services for Children and Youth in 1970. In 2006, Good Shepherd Children and Family Services was created through the merger of four Catholic Charities Federation children's agencies: Father Dunne's Newsboys' Home, Marian Hall, Villa Maria, and St. Joseph's Home and Family Support Services.

## A Note on "Half Orphans"

During early periods, orphanages made a distinction between "full orphans" and "half orphans." A full orphan did not have a father or mother living. A half orphan might have one or both parents living, who were under financial difficulty in caring for their child. The parents could pay a donation for the child's temporary stay in the orphanage. Usually, they were not refused for inability to pay, and there was not a cap on how long the child could be placed there.

## Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives Holdings

The Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives **only** holds orphanage records from the **St. Joseph Home for Boys, St. Mary's Female Orphan Asylum, and St. Ann's Foundling Asylum**. Many of these records include information such as the child's name, the date of admittance/separation, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) releasing the child to the orphanage. Orphanage records dated December 31, 1930 and prior are open to researchers. Due to the sensitive and fragile nature of these records, only archives staff members may search and retrieve information from them. Researchers are not permitted to view registers or other files from child care facilities. **Please note: All records relating to an adoption fall under Mo. Ann. Stat. § 453.121 (2011) and the access restrictions outlined therein. Archives staff reserves the right to restrict access to any orphanage records.**

## Finding Other Homes' Records

Some of the Catholic orphan homes' records can be found with the archives of the religious order that ran the home. Please refer to the excellent publication *Researching Orphans and Orphanage Care in St. Louis* by Viki Faygal (St. Louis: St. Louis Genealogical Society, 2018) for detailed information about other Catholic, denominational, and non-denominational orphan homes, including where to find records. The St. Louis Genealogical Society web address is <http://stlgs.org/>. Your local library may have a copy of the publication.

## Catholic Woman's League Day Care Center, 1917-1981

The Catholic Woman's Day Nursery was founded in 1917 at 1023 Selby Place. Preschool aged children were cared for throughout the day, and special programs before and after school hours and during school vacations were provided for children up to 11 years old. The agency was affiliated with the Department of Children of Catholic Charities. It moved to 1515 N. Market St in the early 1940s. It was closed in 1981.

## Child Center of Our Lady of Grace 1947-2005

The Child Center of Our Lady of Grace was opened in 1947 to provide treatment and activities for the mental and emotional health of its children. It was staffed by the Daughters of Charity and partially financed by Catholic Charities. The Center was located at 5320 Cabanne Ave. at the former building of St. Philomena's Technical School. In 1959, the Center moved to a newly-built building complex at 7900 Natural Bridge Road in Normandy, MO.

## DeSales Day Care Center, 1981-present

The Guardian Angel Settlement opened the De Sales Day Care Center at 2652 Iowa St. in 1981.

## Father Dunne's Newsboys Home and Protectorate 1906-1970, and Father Dunne's Colored Orphans' Home 1931-circa 1940

Rev. Peter J. Dunne opened the Father Dunne's Newsboys' Home in 1906 to care for homeless boys, most of whom were selling newspapers as a means of living. The first home was located at 1013 Selby St., and was moved to 2737 Locust St. the same year of 1906. In 1907, a new

home was built at 3010 Washington Ave. A separate home called Father Dunne's Colored Orphans' Home was opened in 1931 at 3028 Washington Ave. for African American boys. It moved to 901 N. Garrison in 1934. It closed in either 1940 or 1941.

Along with the Newsboys Home, a summer camp was opened for the residents in Jefferson County, operating from 1942-1985. Around 1956, the Newsboys Home moved to 4253 Clarence Ave. It moved again in 1984 to the former convent building at Aquinas-Mercy High School at 853 Dunn Rd. The Home operated an independent living program called Martin de Porres House for older boys from 1985-1995, which was first located at Holy Name Parish at 2047 E. Grand, and then at the former convent of St. Paul the Apostle Parish at 4008 Jennings Rd in Pine Lawn, MO. Father Dunne's Newsboys Home was part of the 2006 merger that formed Good Shepherd Children and Family Services.

### Gabriel Child Care Center, 2000-present

The Gabriel Child Care Center was opened in the Cochran Community Center by the Guardian Angel Settlement Association in 2000.

### German St. Vincent Orphan Asylum, 1850-present

In 1849, the cholera epidemic and a devastating fire caused great hardship among immigrant populations like the Germans. On June 14, 1850, the German St. Vincent Orphan Association was formed to maintain an orphanage specifically for the children of German parentage. German parishes funded the home. The home officially opened in 1851 at 1421 Hogan Street, and was operated by five German-speaking Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In 1916, the home was transferred to Normandy. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet ran the Home until 1888, when the Sisters of Christian Charity took over. In 1996, the administration was turned over to a lay staff. The Home still operates today under the name St. Vincent Home for Children.

### Guardian Angel Settlement Association, 1911-present

The Guardian Angel Settlement Association was originally the Guardian Angel Day Nursery in 1911 located at 1029 Marion St. and operated by the Daughters of Charity. Preschool aged children were cared for throughout the day, and special programs before and after school hours and during school vacations were provided for children up to 12 years old. The program was affiliated with the Department of Children of Catholic Charities. In 1963, it moved to the Darst Housing Project on 12<sup>th</sup> St. and operated there until 1990. In 1971, the Guardian Angel Settlement took over the St. Patrick's Day Nursery, and in 1981, it opened the De Sales Day Care Center at 2652 Iowa St. In 1988, its headquarters transferred to the former Holy Guardian Angels Parish site at 1022 Saint Ange Lane. St. Patrick Day Care Center was closed in 2000, and the Gabriel Child Care Center was opened in the Cochran Community Center. In 2001, it took over operations of the Hosea House, a 25-year-old social services agency. In 2009, the Child Development Center opened, serving as the headquarters for the agency.

## Hessoun Bohemian Catholic Orphanage, 1905-1952

The Hessoun Bohemian Catholic Orphanage was organized in 1905 and began operations in 1910 on Smizer Mill Road in Fenton, MO. The Notre Dame Sisters from Bohemia staffed the home, which was under the supervision of a board of trustees. The home was named for Msgr. Joseph Hessoun, who was the pastor of St. John Nepomuk Parish in St. Louis. The home initially only cared for children of Czechoslovak and Slavic parentage, and then later opened to other nationalities. The Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross of Moravia took over the home in 19... By the early 1950s, child welfare studies recommended that it was healthier to place children with foster families than in orphanages, and institutional placement dramatically decreased. The Hessoun home was closed in 1952.

## La Salle Institute, Reformatory for Boys (St. Joseph's Industrial School) 1858-1885

In 1858, Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick put the Christian Brothers in charge of a small orphanage for boys in Carondelet at 4<sup>th</sup> and Fillmore. The boys were educated and trained in various trades, the most well-known being the printing office. In 1872, property in Glencoe was donated to Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick for an orphanage for children of cholera victims. In 1873, the Orphanage board began building a new structure to house up to 150 boys. The Christian Brothers began operating the orphanage in 1876. The boys worked the farm and attended school. In 1884, the name was changed to St. Joseph's Industrial School. A fire consumed the building in 1885 and without sufficient funds to rebuild it, the Orphanage board sold the property to the Christian Brothers, who turned it into their Province headquarters and novitiate, calling it La Salle Institute

## Martin de Porres House 1985-1995

Father Dunne's Newsboys Home operated an independent living program called Martin de Porres House for older boys from 1985-1995, which was first located at Holy Name Parish at 2047 E. Grand, and then at the former convent of St. Paul the Apostle Parish at 4008 Jennings Rd in Pine Lawn, MO.

## Marygrove (formerly House of the Good Shepherd, Convent and Asylum of the) 1849-present

When the Sisters of the Good Shepherd arrived in St. Louis in 1849, they immediately opened their convent on 9<sup>th</sup> and Marion St. to delinquent teenage girls. They moved to 17<sup>th</sup> and Pine in 1852, and then to 3801 Gravois in 1895. In 1969, it moved to 2705 Mullanphy Lane in Florissant, MO where it was renamed Marygrove. In 1984, the Marygrove program opened to males and females between 6 and 17 years old. In 1987, the program received accreditation to educate children with behavioral issues. In 1990, the program opened Sequoia House, a psychiatric group home for young women aged 17 to 21 years old. The program also began providing emergency day and overnight services. In 1995, it opened a residential therapeutic foster home by the name of Sycamore House. Catholic Services for Children and Youth

(formerly the Department of Children) provide social work services. Marygrove is currently within the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

### Mercita Hall, Marian Hall, and St. Joan of Arc Hall, 1960-1985

Mercita Hall was opened in 1960 by the Sisters of Mercy when they moved their St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy program to the building of the former St. Domenico Home at 1340 Partridge Ave. The Managers of the Roman Catholic Orphans' Asylums took over Mercita Hall in 1963. In 1983 it was moved to 325 N. Newstead to provide structural living for adolescent girls. Two programs operated under Mercita Hall. Marian Hall was an emergency shelter for adolescent girls, and St. Joan of Arc Hall was an independent living program for older girls. The Sisters of Mercy withdrew from the program administration in 1984. The St. Joan of Arc Hall program moved to the former convent building at St. Ann Parish in Normandy, MO. Mercita Hall and Marian Hall were merged to simply be called Marian Hall. It was located in the Cathedral Tower building at Newstead and Maryland Ave., which was formerly McAuley Hall. The residential program relocated to the former convent at Rosary High School in 1988, and then back to the Partridge Ave. location in 1994. The independent living program was discontinued in 1993. Marian Hall was part of the 2006 merger that formed Good Shepherd Children and Family Services.

### Mullanphy Orphan Asylum 1827-1946

In 1827, John Mullanphy donated property at LaSalle and Hickory Street next to Mullanphy Hospital, to be turned into an orphanage by the Sacred Heart Sisters. This was the first orphanage opened in the state of Missouri. The Sisters also opened the Academy of the Sacred Heart in the building, which was kept separate from the orphanage. In 1893, the home moved to 334 N. Taylor Ave. It closed in 1946.

### Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Convent 1836-1846

In 1836, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet were operating a school in Carondelet. It became a makeshift orphanage when 4 girls were placed in the Sisters' care within just a few weeks. In 1846, the Sisters took charge of St. Joseph Home for Boys. In 1851, they began operating the German St. Vincent Orphan Asylum, and in 1859, the St. Bridget Orphan Asylum. Please reference the descriptions for each of those homes.

### St. Ann's Lying-In Hospital, Foundling Home and Widows' Home, 1853-1955

St. Ann's Home was established in 1853 as an infant asylum under the direction of the Daughters of Charity. It was located on Marion Streets between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, which had been previously occupied by the Convent of the Good Shepherd. The property was donated by Ann Biddle, and thus it was also informally known as Biddle Infant Home. In 1858, the Sisters consolidated their operations into one building as a home for aged widows, a maternity hospital, and a foundling asylum. The institution was legally incorporated as St. Ann's Home for Widows, Lying-In Hospital and Foundling Asylum. In 1905, the home moved to 5301 Page at Union. In 1940, the maternity hospital limited their services to unwed mothers only. In 1941,

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the hospital portion closed and merged operations into DePaul Hospital, but the home still provided services to unwed mothers. Also in 1941, the maximum age for children was capped at 3 years old, at which time they could be transferred to other institutions. In 1955, the home discontinued its program for unwed mothers and children, and converted into a home for aged women only. The unwed mothers program was transferred to Villa Maria Maternity Home. The name changed to St. Anne's Home, and in 1970 to DePaul Community Health Center – St. Anne's Home Division. The home moved to the DePaul Community Health Center in Bridgeton in 1975.

### St. Bridget Orphan Asylum (Half-Orphan Asylum) 1859-1883

In 1859, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet made arrangements to open the St. Bridget's Orphan Asylum. Due to nationality friction, non-German girls that were formerly housed at the St. Vincent orphanage were moved to St. Bridget. The home was also informally called the Female Half-Orphan Asylum. The orphanage was located at 26<sup>th</sup> and Christy Ave. When it closed in 1883, the girls were transferred to St. Mary's Home.

### St. Domenico Italian Orphan Home 1930-1960

The St. Domenico Italian Orphan Home was established in 1930 at 1340 Partridge Ave. in University City, MO. This was the former building of St. Mary's Home. The home took in children of Italian heritage of 6 to 12 years old. The St. Domenico Board ran the home and the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon staffed the home. The Department of Children of Catholic Charities provided medical and social work services. The home closed in 1960, and the St. Domenico Corporation merged with the Managers of the Roman Catholic Orphans' Asylum in 1963. In 1964, Mercita Hall opened in the building.

### St. Elizabeth's Day Nursery, 1915-1984

The St. Elizabeth's Day Nursery was founded in 1915 at 714 Geyer Rd. Preschool aged children were cared for throughout the day, and special programs before and after school hours and during school vacations were provided for older children up to 12 years old. The home was run by the Central Bureau, Catholic Central Verein of America and staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Social work and medical services were provided by the Department of Children of Catholic Charities. With the addition of another building in 1945, the three buildings were referred to as Christopher Hall, Petra Hall and Kenkel Hall. Financial issues caused the agency to close in 1984.

### St. Frances Catholic Colored Orphan Asylum, 1887-1965, and St. Frances Day Care Center for Children, 1965-1991

In 1887, the Oblate Sisters of Providence opened and operated the St. Frances Catholic Colored Orphan Asylum for girls between 6 and 18 years old. The Home was located at 4838 Page Ave until it moved in 1896 to 3501 St. Mary's Lane in Normandy, MO. The Department of Children provided casework and medical services. The Home also had elementary education, though some girls attended school outside the home. The Home was supported by boarding payments from parents, donations, fundraisers, and the United Fund. The residential program ended in

1965, and the Sisters operated the St. Frances Day Care Center for Children until its closure in 1991. Some years prior to St. Frances Home being opened, the Sisters also had boarders and a school at their convent located at 1411 Morgan St.

### St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy 1856-1937, and St. Catherine's Home for Girls 1856-1960

The Sisters of Mercy established a home and skills training program for unemployed working girls at their convent in December 1856. The Industrial School was for girls whose parents could not afford to care for them. These girls were sheltered, clothed, fed, and educated, as well as trained in domestic work. The Sisters also began an orphanage for girls, calling it St. Catherine's Orphanage. Both of these programs were incorporated under St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy. In 1861, they moved to 22<sup>nd</sup> and Morgan Streets. The Home for working girls was separated and relocated at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Locust Streets in 1912, occupying the old St. John's Hospital building. The home for working girls closed in 1937 to make way for the new McAuley Hall opened at Newstead and Maryland. The Sisters moved the St. Catherine's Home into their new motherhouse in Webster Groves in 1919. Social work and medical services were provided by the Department of Children of Catholic Charities. The program changed again when it moved to 1340 Partridge Ave. and became Mercita Hall in 1960.

### St. Joseph Home for Boys, 1835-2001

The St. Louis Male Orphan Asylum was established in 1835 on Third and Walnut Streets, and originally operated by the Daughters of Charity. It was located next to the Old Cathedral, giving it the nickname of "Cathedral Orphanage." The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet took over in 1846, and the name then changed to the St. Joseph's Male Orphan Asylum. The Sisters staffed the home until 1988. The Managers of the Roman Catholic Orphans' Asylums was incorporated in 1849, and was the title given to both the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Asylums. In 1849, the home moved to 15<sup>th</sup> and Clark Avenues, and in 1894, it moved to Grand Blvd. and Itaska St. Eventually, it was renamed as St. Joseph Home for Boys. In 1935, a new building was constructed for 150 boys at 4735 S. Grand. The home closed in 2001.

### St. Mary's Home for Girls, 1841-1952

The St. Mary's Female Orphan Asylum was founded in 1841 in a building near the Old Cathedral, giving it the same "Cathedral Orphanage" nickname as its St. Joseph Home for Boys counterpart located at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Walnut Streets. In 1843, Mrs. Ann Biddle donated property for a new building, and opened her home on North Broadway to be used at the girls' orphanage in the meantime. The home on 10<sup>th</sup> and Biddle Streets opened in 1845. The Managers of the Roman Catholic Orphans' Asylums was incorporated in 1849, and was the title given to both the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Asylums. In 1894, the home moved to 15<sup>th</sup> St. and Clark Ave. In 1900, it moved to 5341 Emerson Ave. in Walnut Park. Eventually, it was renamed as St. Mary's Home for Girls. By the early 1950s, child welfare studies recommended that it was healthier to place children with foster families than in orphanages, and institutional placement dramatically decreased. St. Mary's Home was closed in 1952.



### St. Patrick's Day Care Center, 1910-2000

The St. Patrick's Day Nursery was founded in 1910 as part of Father Dempsey's Charities. It was located at 1209 N. 6<sup>th</sup> St in the old building of St. Patrick Parish School. The Daughters of Charity took over in 1914. In 1971, the Guardian Angel Settlement took over the St. Patrick's Day Nursery. It was closed in 2000.

### St. Philomena's Industrial School, 1834-1942

In 1845, Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick erected a building at 5<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets for the St. Philomena's Industrial School, which was officially incorporated in 1864. The Daughters of Charity operated the home for unemployed working girls. The home moved to Clark and Ewing Ave. in 1868. In 1910, the home moved to a new building at Union and Cabanne Ave, and the title was changed to St. Philomena's Technical School.

### Stella Maris Day Care Center, 1943-present

The Stella Maris Day Care Center was established to provide day care for children of mothers working in the war effort. Two years after its founding by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Stella Maris became a separate agency which the Daughters of Charity continued to staff. It was affiliated with the Department of Children of Catholic Charities, which provided social work, health and medical services. In time, the Daughters of Charity withdrew, and in 1989, the center separated from Catholic Charities.

### Villa Maria, 1956-2006

Villa Maria was formed by Catholic Charities in 1956 to take on care for "unwed mothers" previously carried by St. Anne's Home, a Catholic agency that was not a part of Catholic Charities. Villa Maria originally opened in a large home on Florissant Road owned by the Sisters of Divine Providence. Obstetrics and pre- and post-natal services were provided by Desloge Hospital. In 1972, that building was sold, and Villa Maria moved to a former convent building on the grounds of St. Philip Neri Parish. In 1983, the agency made its first stop at 1340 Partridge, where it took over space previously used by Mercita Hall. When a fire badly damaged that property in 1992, Villa Maria moved to the motherhouse of the Sisters of Divine Providence on Florissant Road. When that property was subsequently sold, the program moved yet again, this time taking residence in the former convent building on the grounds of St. Francis De Sales Parish in 1996, where it remained for nearly two decades. Villa Maria was part of the 2006 merger that formed Good Shepherd Children and Family Services. It is now simply referred to as the Maternity Program.