

Friendly Brothers' Society

1845 – c. 1880

Other Names:

- Friendly Brothers Melbourne
- Friendly Brothers Geelong

Details

The Friendly Brothers Society (1845-c.1880) was a lay Catholic association which played a leading role in providing for vulnerable children in Melbourne and Geelong. During the 1840s and 1850s members of the society arranged private boarding placements for children in need. From the late 1850s Catholic orphanages emerged as the Church's preferred means of providing for Catholic children and the Melbourne Friendly Brothers reduced this aspect of their work, continuing with other poverty-relief. The Geelong branch ran a temporary orphanage between 1855 and 1857, and St Augustine's orphanage between 1857 and 1878. The society appears to have been largely defunct by the 1890s.

The Melbourne Friendly Brothers Society was established by Father Patrick Geoghegan, the Port Phillip District's first Catholic priest, in 1845. In 1848 a branch was also established in Geelong. The society was an offshoot of the Irish Friendly Brothers of St. Patrick and which also was a lay Catholic organisation whose goal was poor relief. The Friendly Brothers did not exclude non-Catholics from their services, but the presence of other Protestant relief organisations meant that the majority of people coming to the attention of the Friendly Brothers were from Victoria's Catholic community.

Up to 1854 the Friendly Brothers were the only Catholic organisation working to place Catholic children who did not have families who could support them. They arranged boarding placements for children with suitable Catholic families. In 1854 Father Gerald Ward established a temporary Catholic orphanage in the Melbourne suburb of Prahran and so the need for the Friendly Brothers' work with children was reduced from that time. In Geelong, the Friendly Brothers established a temporary orphanage in 1855 in a temperance hotel in Malop Street. In 1857 they moved this work into the purpose-built St Augustine's orphanage. They were responsible for St Augustine's until 1878 when it was taken over by the Christian Brothers.

The public profile of the Friendly Brothers in Melbourne appears to have been highest during the 1850s. Their work continued for a time, though their connection with child welfare work was much diminished.

More info

Related Entries

Ran

- [St Augustine's Boys' Orphanage \(c. 1855 - 1939\)](#)
Date: 1855 - 1878