

Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission

1863 – 1908

Details

Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission was established by the Presbyterian Mission Committee, on the banks of the Avon River, near Lake Wellington in Gippsland in 1863. The Moravian missionary, Friedrich August Hagenauer oversaw the settlement. It accommodated people from the Gunai nation of Gippsland. It closed in 1908.

The word Ramahyuck is composed of the biblical word 'Ramah' meaning the 'home of Samuel' and the Gunai (Kurnai) word 'yuck' meaning 'mother' or 'own'.

The Mission provided protection for the survivors of the Brayakooloong and Tatungooloong peoples of the Gunai (Kurnai) nation, but Hagenauer was authoritarian and intolerant of Aboriginal culture. His approach met with resistance at times from the Aboriginal residents.

The community strived to be self-supporting and learned rural tasks such as cultivating crops, fruit and vegetables, and tending sheep and dairy cattle.

The mission was laid out in the form of a hollow square, with the houses of the Aboriginal people on the northern side and the official mission buildings on the other. This plan was also followed at other mission stations at Lake Tyers, Ebenezer and Lake Condah. About 29 buildings were constructed on the station between 1863-1900. The main buildings consisted of the mission house, church, school, dormitory for the school children to live in, teacher's house and about fourteen houses for Aboriginal people.

Bessy Cameron (nee Flowers) who was one of a party of girls sent from the Great Southern region of Western Australia in 1865 to Moravian missions in Victoria came to Ramahyuck as a teacher in its school.

By 1871, Hagenauer had built a separate 'orphan house' where children could be separated from their parents for the purposes of education, 'a factor he considered vital to the process of civilisation' (Hansen, 2009). There was also a gender-segregated playground which could be viewed from all of Ramahyuck's main buildings.

The orphanage at Ramahyuck was run by Louise Pepper-Connolly and her husband Nathaniel Pepper. After Nathaniel's death in 1877, Louise remained in charge of the orphanage.

The 1886 Aborigines Protection Act, which forced those of mixed heritage off the missions and reserves, resulted in a rapid decline in the population. In 1904, Ramahyuck comprised 750 acres, the government having handed back 1400 acres at the reserve to the Department of Lands. In its annual report for that year, the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines remarked on the continuing decrease in number of people living at stations and depots in Victoria.

In 1908 the Mission closed, the orphanage and school were shut down, and those people remaining were sent to Lake Tyers.

Gallery



Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission, Gippsland, Victoria [picture]

Description: This is a photograph of a line of men, women and children standing on a wide grassed area in front of weatherboard buildings with verandas, and a church with steeple on the left.

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Date: 1863 - 1869
- [Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, State Government of Victoria \(1901 - 1957\)](#)
Date: 1900 - 1908

Resources

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 - Massola, Aldo, *Aboriginal mission stations in Victoria: Yelta, Ebenezer, Ramahyuck, Lake Condah*, 1970
 - [History Wall](#), Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health Service (Nindedana Quarenook), 2008
 - Victoria. Public Record Office; National Archives of Australia. Melbourne Office, with an historical overview by Richard Broome., [walata tyamateetja: a guide to government records about Aboriginal people in Victoria.](#), 2014
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 - Boucher, Leigh and Russell, Lynette, [Settler Colonial Governance in Nineteenth-Century Victoria](#), April 2015
 - Harris, John, [CAMERON, Bessie \(1851-1895\)](#), Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 2004
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