

# Female Orphan School

1801 – 1850

## Details

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The Female Orphan School opened on 17 August 1801 in George Street, Sydney. It first housed 31 girls aged between seven and 14 years old, but by 1803 there were 103 inmates. In 1818, the girls were relocated to a new building on Arthur's Hill (now Parramatta), and in 1819 the George Street site became the Male Orphan School. In 1850, the Female Orphan School and the Male Orphan School together became the Protestant Orphan School located at the site of the Female Orphan School.

The Female Orphan School was opened in Lieutenant William Kent's house on George Street, Sydney on 17 August 1801 with 31 girls. By 1803 the school had 3 times the number of girls and the need for bigger, purpose built premises was already apparent.

The demand for places continued to grow and Governor Macquarie realised that the Female Orphan School required new, larger premises. The Governor laid the foundation stone for the new building of the Female Orphan School in 1813, in Parramatta. It was thought here the girls would be away from the 'moral corruption' of the workers in the city.

In 1818, the girls were relocated to the new building on Arthur's Hill (now Parramatta) overlooking Parramatta River, away from the moral turpitude of Sydney Town. The original George Street site became a Male Orphan School in 1819.

By 1829 the female orphanage housed 152 girls from a cross-section of colonial society including Aboriginal communities. Girls were accepted in the Home from two years of age, with most girls having convict parents or mothers and many one living parent.

Education at the Female Orphan School was limited with girls being taught spinning and sewing and just a few taught reading and writing. The aim of the orphanage was to give the girls enough skills to become a domestic servant around the age of thirteen.

The orphanages originally operated under the supervision of a select committee comprising leading members of the clergy (including Reverend Samuel Marsden), government officials and prominent settlers. Funding was raised by donations and public revenue from government. In 1826, the newly formed Clergy and School Lands Corporation took over responsibility for the management of orphan schools, until 1833 when the schools came under control of the Colonial Secretary.

In 1850, the Male and Female Orphan Schools were amalgamated to form the Protestant Orphan School which operated until 1886. The Protestant Orphan School was located in the same building as the Female Orphan School in Parramatta (Rydalmere).

## Gallery



## Female Orphan School, Parramatta, 1870-1875, by the American & Australasian Photographic Company [Protestant Orphan School]

**Description:** This is a digital copy of a carte de visite, or postcard, taken from 1870 to 1875. The Female Orphan School, by that stage, was known as the Protestant Orphan School.



The Female Orphan School, George Street, Sydney, 1813.  
F. Chase Sketched in Sydney August 10. Robertson, Sydney, 1946.

## The Female Orphan school, George Street, Sydney, 1813

**Description:** This is a sketch of the Female Orphan School building on George Street, Sydney, as it was in 1813. It shows a large two-storey building with a stone wall in front of it, surrounded by smaller cottages. The building was used as the Female Orphan School until 1818, and then used as the Male Orphan School until 1823. This image was published in *Children of the Back Lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales* in 1986, and had previously been published in *Serenade to Sydney: Some Historical Landmarks* in 1968. The original artist and publisher is not known.



## View of the Female Orphan School

**Description:** This is an artwork showing the Female Orphan School at Parramatta. It shows three large buildings on top of a hill facing the Parramatta River, with bushland in the background.

## More info

### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Colonial Secretary \(1 Jan 1821 - 1 April 1959\)](#)
- [Secretary to the Governor \(26 Jan 1788 - 1 Jan 1821\)](#)

#### Related Legislation

- [Orphan School Estates Act 1826, New South Wales \(1826 - 1881\)](#)
- [Apprenticeship Act 1844, New South Wales \(1844 - 1894\)](#)
- [Apprenticeship Act 1851, New South Wales \(1851 - 1901\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Protestant Orphan School \(1850 - 1886\)](#)  
The Protestant Orphan School was created in 1850 when the Female and Male Orphan Schools were combined.
- [Male Orphan School \(1819 - 1850\)](#)  
The Male Orphan School moved into the buildings vacated by the Female Orphan School in 1819.

#### Is amended by

- [St Patrick's Orphan School \(1840 - 1845?\)](#)

## Resources

- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Guide](#), No date
- The Whitlam Institute, [Female Orphan School and Historical Precinct, Parramatta Campus](#), 2013

- Museums of History NSW, [Child Care and Protection Index 1817-1942](#), No date
- Museums of History NSW, [School Student Records Guide](#), No date
- Bubacz, Beryl M, [The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales, 1801-1850](#), 2007
- Laurent, Nicola, [The Starting Point](#), Find & Connect web resource blog, 14 August 2015
- Australian Heritage Council, [A thematic heritage study on Australia's benevolent and other care institutions](#), 2016

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Female Orphan School records, State Archives NSW \(1817 - 1886\)](#)
- [Male Orphan School records, State Archives NSW \(1819 - 1850\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/female-orphan-school/>