

Rapid Creek Mission

1882 – 1891

Other Names: • St Joseph's Mission

Details

Rapid Creek Mission was established by Jesuit Missionaries at Rapid Creek in 1882. Missionaries opened a school for children in 1883. No dormitory was established and children continued to live with their families. The Mission closed in 1891 due to financial and other problems.

The Rapid Creek Mission, also known as St Joseph's Mission was officially opened on 10 October 1882. It was located approximately 11 kilometres north east of Palmerston, later known as Darwin.

The Mission was established and run by four Austrian Jesuit Missionaries, led by Father Strele, who had moved from Sevenhill in the Clare Valley of South Australia. The missionaries cleared the land and established gardens. The land was part of a grant of land from the South Australian government which was set aside to be an Aboriginal reserve.

One year after the opening of the mission, a newspaper article noted that 50 Aboriginal people, 'including a large proportion of children', lived at the site. These were mostly Larrakeyah and Wulna people. At that time, a school house was being planned. No dormitory was built and children remained living in their family groups.

By March 1883 morning and evening classes for children aged between 6 and 10 years were run at meal times. Lessons included religious instruction and 'the rudiments of language and figures'. The Jesuits learned the Larrakeyah language and translated hymns, prayers and lessons.

The Mission operated under strict routine. Residents at the mission:

were expected to rise at six and labour until eight o' clock when they were given a breakfast of tea and bread. They then worked until lunch. During the intense heat of early afternoon, they enjoyed free time but resumed work from three to six. Game and produce from the gardens supplemented their diet of rice, tea and bread.

The Rapid Creek Mission closed in December 1891 as a result of financial and other issues including proximity to the developing town of Palmerston.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Jesuit Aboriginal Mission \(1882 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Queen of the Holy Rosary Mission \(1886 - 1891\)](#)

The Queen of the Holy Rosary Mission was operated by Jesuit missionaries at the same time as the Rapid Creek Mission which was also known as St Joseph's.

Resources

- National Archives of Australia, [Tracking Family: A Guide to Aboriginal Records Relating to the Northern Territory](#), 2006

Records

Records held by other organisations

- [Records held by Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Darwin \(1882? - 1983\)](#)
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