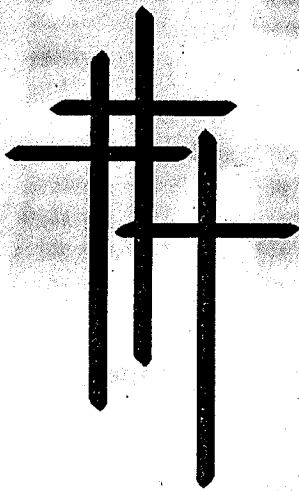


# The history of the Parish of St. Joseph's Coraki est 1890

*erving the communities of Evans Head, Coraki & Woodburn*



## One in Christ

Article 7 - Church History -  
The Sisters of St. Joseph.

The first article in this series, told something of the trials that were faced by the Sisters of St. Joseph at Swan Bay.

When we look at the origins of the Order, those trials were about par for the course. It was on St. Joseph's day 1866 that Mary MacKillop donned a plain black dress to signify her dedication to a Religious life. That was the official beginning of the Order of St. Joseph, Australia's second home grown order, the first being the Good Samaritan.

Something of the unique Christian quality of Mary MacKillop was probably inherited from her Gaelic Highland Scottish background. The ability to withstand hardship and difficulty,

despite how dark things seemed, was to her a normal response. The 4 first born daughter of Alexander MacKillop and Flora MacDonald, was born in 1842 at Fitzroy, Victoria. She developed on Australian soil, with an inherited and unswerving Catholic background.

It was as a governess to her cousins at Penola station in 1860 that Mary acquired her first teaching skills. In 1863 she was appointed to a denominational school at Portland. It was in 1867 that Mary opened the first Convent-cottage in Grote St, Adelaide and brought to life a school. In that same year Mary took preliminary vows, and opened the first country school at Yankalilla. Mary took final vows on December 8th, 1869 and headed for Queensland. Opposition to the Sisters of St. Joseph grew, some of it from the orders refusal to accept Government grants for education, such was their determination to be independent in how, and who, they taught.

The world fell upon Sister Mary in 1871, when a bitter Bishop proclaimed her excommunicated

. This was lifted a year later and Sister Mary went to Rome in 1873 for an audience with Pope Pius IX. In 1875 the constitution of the order of the Institute of St. Joseph was accepted and Mary elected Superior General.

By 1880 eight foundations of the Order were made in Sydney and the Sisters were invited to Armidale. In 1883 (they year Josephites came to Swan Bay) Mother Mary was again having trouble with the Australian hierarchy and was ordered to leave Adelaide. Rome supported Sister Mary in 1887, and refused approval of decrees asserting Diocesan control. The Sisters commenced duties at Northampton, Western Australia. The move to WA meant Mary MacKillop's Sisters had now served in five states.

A decree from Rome in 1888 constituted the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart as an approved Regular Congregation with a Mother House in Sydney. Diocesan congregations were to be distinct from that Order and they were to make some alterations in their habit and Rule.

Mother Mary was elected Assistant General in 1889, but in 1891 her health began to fail. Nevertheless in 1899 she was again elected Superior General. She suffered a stroke in 1902 and died in Sydney in 1909.

It seems Mother Mary of the Cross had many qualities to promote her cause for beatification that commenced in 1926.

Perhaps to the typical Australian the fact to grab us is that here was a person prepared to stake everything on the very Australian and Christian precept of "a fair go".

The Josephites second and longest period to the Parish of Coraki commenced in 1914. They conducted Catholic education at Woodburn from 1915 until 1976. Ten pupils to attend the first school at Woodburn were Thomas and John Boland, Charles and Cecil Birney and Francis Ross. Girls were Kathleen Taylor, Kathleen Boland, Iris Gray and Violet and Lily Ronan. The first school was a site near the Police Station in Bank St, with an overflow into the Church across the street. The second school, on its present site commenced in 1933.

Old timers, who were boys, when the building project took place, told tales of extra curricula duties. They became very adept at extracting nails from planks, these planks from the old Swan Bay church. Maybe it started some on the way to the trade of carpentry.

When the Swan Bay Church was demolished, all the usable material was moved by voluntary equine horsepower in cart or dray. A little story of Bill McCormacks' is worth the telling.

Father Duggan was the boss architect, clerk of works, overseer, and an Irishman with at

times a sharp derisive tongue. It was a hot day. One of the hauliers, a skilled horseman, was using an overweight horse, fresh from a spell, in the dray. He was making sure that he brought the horse back to condition by not asking too much in the way of heavy loads. Along came Fr Duggan, to add his expertise to the job, and immediately saw the part loaded dray.

"You call that a load, why to be sure, I could pull it myself".

The haulier looked at Father, he had been taught respect for the cloth, so his only answer was "You could Huh". He proceeded to back the dray to where there was support for the shafts and took out the horse.

"The loads ready for you Father".

Maybe the voluntary hauliers were given a little more autonomy after that incident.

The Sisters of St. Joseph had more than a fair share of flooding. It was not only at Swan Bay that troubles occurred. The 1954 flood saw the Sisters as guests of Mr & Mrs Barry Taylor on "School Hill", where they spent the flood helping to care for a number of sick patients. Sisters at Wardell enlisted an "Army Duck" to establish that the Nuns at Woodburn were OK. Following that flood the convent was raised to a height of expected safety.

#### LISTING (NOT COMPLETE) OF SISTERS

##### SWAN BAY

- 1883 Srs Casimir Meskill, Agatha Doherty, Petronella, Justinian  
(There were other in this period)  
1895 Srs Ambrosine O'Donnell, Hilary Toohey, Felicitas Pelley

##### Woodburn

- 1914 (There were 4 sisters, not recorded)  
1915 Srs Augusta Williams  
1916 Srs Avellino Pola, Ambrose Ryan, Mida Dwanne  
1917 Srs Avellino Pola, Elizabeth Elliott, Ambrose Ryan, Mida  
Dwanne 1918-1921 Srs Avellino Pola, Elizabeth  
Elliott,  
1922-1924 Srs Avellino Pola, Elizabeth Elliott, Martha Condon  
1925 Srs Gabriel Jordan, Elizabeth Elliott, Martha Condon.  
1926 Srs Gabriel Jordan, Martha Condon, Dorotheus Brannigan  
1927-1928 Srs Gabriel Jordan, Martha Condon, Mary Edwin Joyce  
1929-1931 Srs Conception Byrne, Martha Condon.  
1934-1935 Srs Pauline Page, Cuthbert Bagshaw  
1936 Srs Michael McGinty, Cuthbert Bagshaw, Avellino Pola  
1937-1939 Srs Michael McGinty, Louis Daly, Avellino Pola  
1940-1941 Srs Bernadette Hynes, Louis Daly, Elizabeth Finlay  
1942 Srs Bernadette Hynes, Dympna Dynan, Elizabeth Finlay  
1943 Srs Bernadette Hynes, Dympna Dynan, Muredach Lynam  
1944 Srs Bernadette Hynes, Dympna Dynan, Muredach Lynam, Benilda Fehily  
1945 Srs Bernadette Hynes, Dympna Dynan, Muredach Lynam, Eymard  
Harvey  
1946 Srs Vianney Finnegan, Phillis (Gregory) McCann, Muredach Lynam, Patricia  
Burford 1947 Srs Bernarda Dwyer, Alice (Thomas)  
Cook, Margaret Maher, Patricia Burford 1948 Srs Bernarda Dwyer, Alice (Thomas)  
Cook, Gertrude Mary Seage, Rita Mary Moggs.  
1949 Srs Bernarda Dwyer, Editha Larkin, Gertrude Mary Seage, Margaret (Anthony) Ferris  
1950 Srs Editha Larkin, Agnes Francis Millar, Gertrude Mary Seage, Anastasia Gray  
1951 Srs Editha Larkin, Agnes Francis Millar, Gertrude Mary Seage, Celestine Campbell  
1952 Srs. Antonius Abbott, Juith Murnane, R. Regan (Postulant)

- 1953 Srs. Antonius Abbott, Joseph Carmel Coughlan, Hilarinus Pierce
- 1954 Srs. Antonius Abbott, Maris Morris, Patrick Enright
- 1955 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Maris Morris, Catherine {Alberta} Corkill
- 1956 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Maris Morris, Fidelis McAnespie
- 1957 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Maris Morris, Catherine {Robert} Thom
- 1958 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Rosalie {Celine} O'Neill, Paul Marie
- 1959 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Rosalie {Celine} O'Neill, Mary {Colletta} Noonan
- 1960 Srs. Patricia {Andrew} Clement, Rosalie {Celine} O'Neill, Macarten O'Toole
- 1960 Srs. Josephine Mitchell, Leonie Maguire, Macarten O'Toole
- 1962 Srs. Josephine Mitchell, Jerome Starr, Michaeli
- 1963 Srs. Jerome Starr, Loretto
- 1964 Srs. Jerome Starr, Marie Therese {Eugenia} Harrison
- 1965 - 67 Srs. Jerome Starr, Therese Agnes Hynes
- 1968 Srs. Therese Agnes Hynes, Rita Sheedy
- 1969 Srs. Therese Agnes Hynes, Dorothy Starr, Geraldine {Romuald} Gairns
- 1970 Srs. Therese Agnes Hynes, Teresa {Cyril} Keane, Mary {Alphonsus} Dennehy, Margaret {Antonita} Harnett
- 1971 Srs. Therese Agnes Hynes, Margaret {Antonita} Harnett, Mary Agnes {Everilda} Ryan
- 1972 Srs. Noelene Nelson, Margaret {Antonita} Harnett
- 1973 Srs. Josepha Walters, Anne Martin
- 1974 Srs. Josepha Walters, Antoinette Walsh, Paula Nickle, Elaine Walker
- 1975 Srs. Antoinette Walsh, Anne Gabriel Love, Paula Nickle, Elaine Walker
- 1976 Srs. Antoinette Walsh, Kaylyn Taylor, Paula Nickle, Elaine Walker

{From 1974-1976, Sisters Paula Nickle and Elaine Walker conducted a Motor Mission within the district, working with families and children in preparation for the sacraments.}

When the order left Woodburn in 1976 after 62 years of continuous service, there was much sadness. However the above Nuns had achieved a remarkable service to the persons to come within their touch, and these would have been far more numerous than the Sisters could calculate. The Sisters remained, and remain true to their tough guidelines pronounced by their foundress. To conclude let us use an extract from Mary MacKillop's letters.

"The true Sister of St. Joseph should never think of herself, her tastes, her spiritual conveniences, etc, but go where obedience calls her, and she should never think she has the true spirit of her vocation were she to find herself attached to place, person or circumstances".

The Parish of Coraki thanks, and prays for,  
THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH.