

KNOX HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AT THE HISTORY OF THE SALVATION
ARMY HOME AT THE BASIN
The History of the Salvation Army Home at the Basin KATE STEPHEN.

When Mr. Curlewis first asked me to talk about the Bayswater Boys Homes of my Father's day, my mind flew back to my childhood because I grew up there. We came to Melbourne in October 1914 from an inner industrial suburb in Sydney; the move was just wonderful for us children, and I completed my last four years of primary schooling at the little old Basin State School. A couple of weeks or so ago, Mr. Curlewis called again with a rather different challenge, but a story that always thrills me. I just hope I can make it interesting to you also. I'm not sure how the mix will work!

As my parents retired in Bayswater, and I did the same myself later, in one way and another I've kept in touch through the years.

If I'm to speak on "the history of the work of the S.A. Home in The Basin", I'll really need to start with the beginning of the Salvation Army, when William Booth changed the name of The Christian Mission to The Salvation Army, in London in 1878.

The S.A. spread rapidly round the world; people who migrated from the U.K. to the new countries, quickly started to form little groups and sent back to London for leaders. For Australia, it commenced in Adelaide in 1880, then by accident in Melbourne in 1882. Major and Mrs. Barker had been appointed to Adelaide from London, but because of a ~~waterside~~ workers' strike in Adelaide, the ship came into Williamstown in Melbourne. (looks like we've had strikes for over 100 years also!)

In Melbourne, an ageing Dr. Singleton, who was also an active social reformer, introduced Major Barker to his work with prisoners in the gaols, and it wasn't long before the Major realized they were badly in need of aid on discharge. So he appointed one of his prison workers to be at the gate every morning when they would be discharged, to meet their needs of a meal, clothes etc. and soon found temporary accommodation also a necessity for some. He obtained a two storey house in Carlton for this purpose.

That was the very first beginning of S.A. social work anywhere in the world. Incidentally my father's first appointment as a S.A. officer was to the Prison Gate Brigade Home in Abbotsford in 1895. This was the development from that first Carlton house.

Some few years ago it was rebuilt on the same site (Abbotsford) a very modern residence for men, an enormous industrial complex, large show rooms for reconditioned stock of all sorts, opportunity shops etc. From there, my father had similar appointments in New Zealand, before being transferred back to Sydney in 1912, and then to Bayswater to youth work.

General Booth was a genius in his dedication to social reform in his day, which is still valid today. He had a vision of the therapeutic value of farming and the open spaces from the beginning. Major Barker hoped the incoming Government (they had election hopes then too) would heed his plea not to send young offenders, many little more than children, to gaol.

The first farm for this purpose had been established 1891 in N.S.W. with great success, so in 1893 a few acres were bought in Heidelberg, but soon proved too small. A larger property was bought at Pakenham, cleared of trees and bush and prepared for use by unemployed men (not a new problem either), and the boys transferred there in 1895.

The first eight boys for Heidelberg were chosen from a reformatory prison at Ballarat; the officer was told they were very degraded, but he said "we will see what salvation treatment will do for them". We have the answer to that 90 years later, right here in The Basin.

The Government asked the churches to help them in work with delinquent youth, and the Roman Catholic church responded with the Morning Star Reformatory, I think at Mornington, for R.C. youth, and the Salvation Army with Bayswater for the rest. Transfer to Bayswater was made in 1897 after the purchase of the lovely property at The Basin. It was named "The Eden", and called a "private reformatory", partly subsidised by the Government.

Classification soon became necessary, because of increasing need, and two other homes established:

1. One for children without guardians or in need of care. This was opened at Box Hill. Those of you who travel Canterbury Road will know it, at the corner of Canterbury and Elgar Road. There were eventually four homes on this site, from toddlers up.
2. The Liverpool Road home for boys who were neglected, or in danger of becoming involved in criminal tendencies, known as No.2
3. What is now known as the Youth Training Centre was then Bayswater No.1, for boys convicted of some offence, as an alternative to gaol.

The Superintendent who lived at No.1 home was responsible for both, to the Government as well as the Salvation Army. The S.A. provided their own schools with qualified S.A. teachers at No.2 and Box Hill, and these functioned for many years, until the Government Education Department took them over.

My father was born in Scotland; when he was 7 his father died, so he was brought up on his uncle's farm, where he worked till he migrated to Australia when 19 years old. He was well grounded in farming principles and management, and revelled in bringing Bayswater up to its potential of that day. The dairy herd changed from a mixed batch of cows - I didn't know much about them then, but learnt that Ayrshires can jump fences when I saw one take off down the hill and clear the fence at the bottom, much to my surprise.

He had the help and assistance of good friends, Mr. Rudduck the vet, and Captain Payne who had a guernsey stud at Yarra View, in the Lilydale area. He provided advice and young prize winning bulls till the herd became a top grade guernsey herd, which was also one of the first herds in Victoria to be regularly T.B. tested. In recent years a change has been made to the Friesian breed.

There were orchards with their spraying, pruning and packing, berries of various sorts, oats and maize for chaff and ensilage; they were still days of horses when my father retired, and of course there was harvesting to be done, and pig raising. He understood and assisted in all this. Vegetables were grown for market as well as home needs, so as far as possible the homes were self supporting in fruit and vegetables, milk and bread; their own bakery provided this three times a week. Many local and Royal Melbourne Show prizes were won through the years. The boys were trained in all branches of farming, with hand milking of course. On their discharge, most were provided with a tin trunk and a new outfit of necessary clothes etc. and sent to work on farms throughout Victoria. There were always plenty of applications for them, and these were carefully selected. The success rate was high, very few falling into the hands of the law again.

1916

A swimming pool was installed in the ~~late 1920's~~ and was a great asset.

My father's official appointment was as Superintendent of both homes, with total responsibility for administration, financing, all Government records, papers, reports etc, and this could have been full time office work, but was usually done in the evenings; he rarely had the office light out before 9.00pm, and was ready then for an early start again next morning. That was his pattern right till he retired 14th July 1931 - having served there for 16 years and 9 months.

The years brought changes, but a totally new era began in 1946 when the senior home was rebuilt in brick, and officially opened July 21st in that year. Plans had been drawn up in the late 1920's, and the first section of dormitories in brick completed; this is still there, but nothing ~~more~~ has been done. A third home was opened below the No.2 home, when a Government building was transferred from Code Island to the foot of the Sugar Loaf. This was officially opened at the end of 1931, and called the No.3 home, the boys from there being transferred to the new No.1 home in 1946.

A new era in care also began, with each boy having his own room, and facilities included a large recreation room, TV room, visitors' room, canteen open twice a week, school and workshops, etc. In 1960 the No.1 home was renamed Youth Training Centre, and became accredited by the Social Welfare Department.

Today it is the only Y.T.C. run by a voluntary organization in

Victoria. The lads are called Trainees, and come through the Social Welfare Department Reception and Y.T.C. Turana at Parkville. With rebuilding of the home, all other facilities were rebuilt as well, including the dairy with modern milking machines, and mechanization of farm management. The orchards were phased out.

The stated objectives were -

1. To provide a home for delinquent youth, so that they can be taught acceptable social standards and community values, and to bring them within the orbit of a controlled environment, which follows a pattern of normal co-operative living conducive to their return to society as useful citizens.
2. To provide a training program so that the socially mal-adjusted youth can be assessed as to his need, given the required schooling and participate in the trade class of his choice, and thereby be trained in some skill to assist him in his successful return to the community.
3. To provide spiritual guidance and counsel.

In 1976 the Education Department seconded a teacher for the education section, and in 1978 an arts and crafts teacher, followed later in the year by a qualified home crafts teacher, thus enabling the whole program to include study courses which could be continued on release. These covered a wide range of art and craft skills, such as painting, pottery, copperware, etc. and they learned basic cooking, care of clothing, maintenance of a flat, budgetting etc. It is a recognized centre of the Education Department.

The trade schools were introduced about 1960, each section being run by a fully qualified instructor. They were taught elementary theory of the trade, together with the basic skills. The schools include:

1. Maintenance, and woodwork class, use of hand and machine tools.
2. Woodwork production - making of kindergarten and pre-school furniture and woodwork articles, going on to more advanced cabinet making.
3. Sheet metal workshop - welding (gas and electric arc), general metal work, steel fabrication, trampolines etc. The steel framework for the woodwork building was built in this workshop.
4. Motor Mechanics - cars are reconditioned as a learning process, general servicing of cars, maintenance of the Centre's vehicles. G.M.H. provided manuals, also an engine. Second hand cars are sometimes reconditioned and sold.
5. Painting and sign writing - general painting work round the centre is done, also finishing of articles manufactured in the other work shops.

Rural activities include -

1. Dairy farming
2. Farm maintenance and livestock management.
3. Pig raising for market in a recently renovated piggery, stud stock.
4. Poultry raising of day old chicks for dressed poultry market; sold when 10 weeks old, up to 28,000 annually.

If all this sounds rather like an "all work and no play" routine, its not really like that. Just how 48 boys are fitted into all those slots, I'm not quite sure, but it does work! There is time for hobbies, the recreation room has facilities for chess, T.V., billiards, table tennis etc. and films are shown on a monthly basis. Sporting activities include -

1. Football team, in association with Clinda and Upwey football clubs.
2. Cricket, in association with Heathmont Uniting Church club.
3. Basket Ball in Croydon leisure centre.
4. Volleyball in Croydon C.V.B.A.
5. Table tennis - Salvation Army competition.

Church and other groups visit regularly to entertain, and for spiritual care, a church service is held every Sunday, conducted by the Salvation Army, other churches, and groups including God Squad. Gideons etc. visit on a rostered basis, chaplains are available of course, also counsellors, and a voluntary Bible Study is held weekly.

In January 1969 the Boys' Home in Liverpool Road came under separate management. I think this was because the Government classifications changed, and this home came under Family Welfare, and the Y.T.C. to the Corrective Services. Since then the Government has phased out all children's institutions, even the cottage homes catering for 6-8 children, in favour of foster care in their home localities. The large home on Liverpool Road was closed at the end of 1981, and the last of 3 cottage homes there in June 1983. It has now become a Convention Centre, renamed the Salvation Army Mountain Valley Convention Centre, and is becoming well established as such.

Before I finish, I think I should add that General Booth and his wife Catherine were equally concerned with the plight of women and children, and work with them developed side by side with that for men and boys. In some instances work with women may have come first. You will probably be surprised to know the S.A. had a reformatory home for girls at Riddell's Creek in the early days, and I believe some farming was done there.

We have been talking of Boys' Homes in The Basin, but an amusing thing is that when the last cottage home closed last year, the remaining child was a small girl, the only one in its long history.