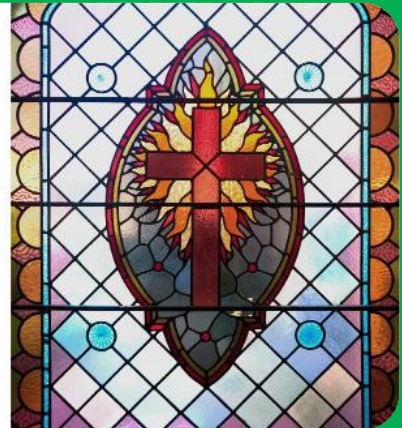




Mercedes College

The Mercy Heritage Project



Name: _____

Homeroom: _____

LESSON ONE: Catherine's Story

<http://www.mercyworld.org/foundress/story.cfm?loadref=49>



Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland in 1831. The Sisters of Mercy came to Australia in 1846 and established a school on this site. That school, now known as Mercedes owes its existence to Catherine.

As a young woman living in the early nineteenth century in an Ireland where most people lived in great poverty Catherine responded to the needs of the poor and made a difference in their lives. She provided schools for poor children, shelter and training for poor women and cared for the poor sick and dying.

TASK: Using the website above, read carefully through Catherine's life story. When you have finished reading, complete the retrieval chart below which summarises the great life of Catherine McAuley.

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION Today, Sisters of Mercy, through Mercy International Association use their resources to respond to issues of global poverty demonstrated in the massive displacement of persons worldwide

FOUNDRESS

Catherine McAuley

This section of the web site is an authoritative source of information about Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, and the early years of the Congregation.

Let charity be our badge of honour... so that it may be truly said that there is in us but one heart and one soul in God.

Catherine's Canonisation Cause

With Catherine McAuley's vision as our shared inheritance MIA is called at this time to promote the vision in ways that are creative, life-giving, appropriate to the times and sufficiently compelling to claim Catherine as a canonised saint.

Why Canonisation

Full name:

Birth date:

Place of Birth:

Parents Names:

Why was Coolock house significant?

Who did Catherine begin to devote her life to?

What did Catherine inherit after the deaths of William & Catherine Callaghan?

When & where was the House for the Poor opened?

Why was the House for the Poor opened?

How many children was Catherine the legal guardian for?

Why was Catherine's work at the House for the Poor criticised?

What type of congregation did Michael Blake suggest that Catherine should found?

When did Catherine (accompanied by Anna Maria Doyle & Elizabeth Harley) enter the Convent?

When did they profess their vows as the first Sisters of Mercy?

Name and provide the date of three different cities in which Catherine established a Mercy Convent.

When did Catherine die?

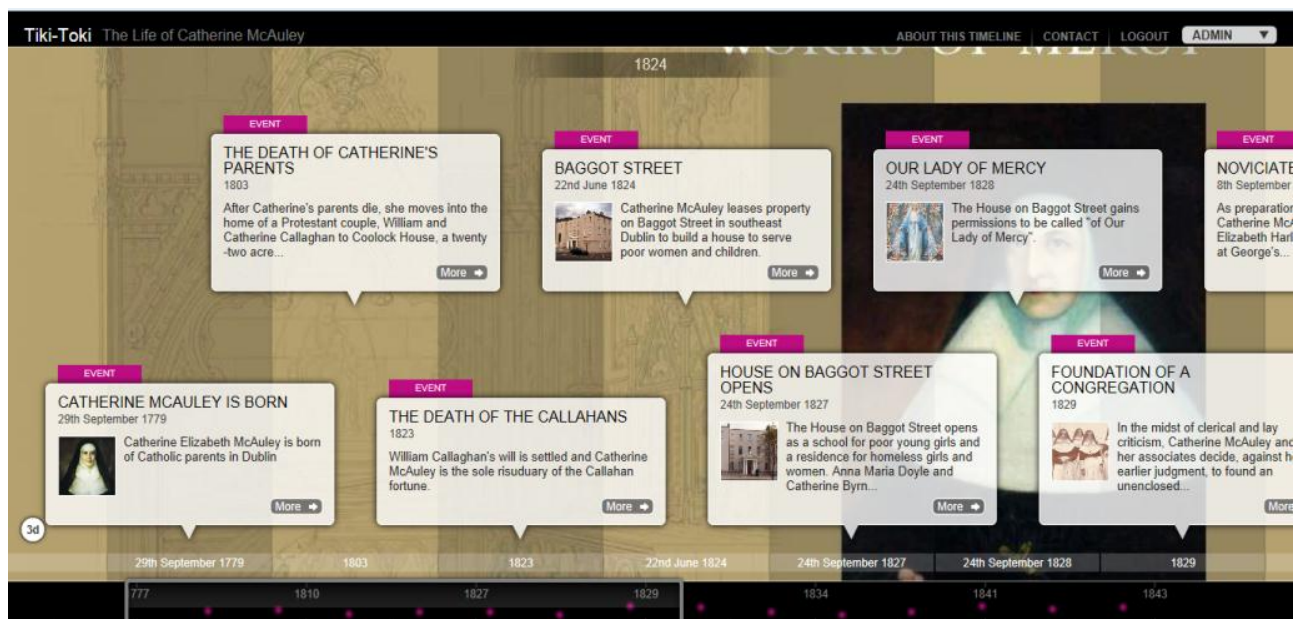
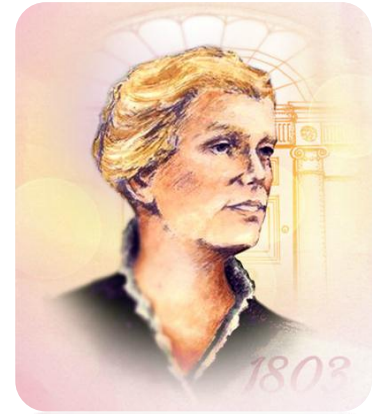
Summarise her two final requests for the future of the Sisters of Mercy?

In what year, and by whom, was Catherine declared “venerable”?

LESSON TWO: Catherine's Biographical Timeline

www.tiki-toki.com

Catherine McAuley was a woman who made a difference. Catherine dared to take a close look at her social environment: she saw the needs of her time; she responded to those needs, she made a difference.



TASK: Using the website above, scroll carefully through Catherine's life story. Study the website's timeline creation tools. This website will be used when completing your first Religious Education assessment. You will be asked to create your own timeline detailing the history of Mercedes College.

LESSON THREE: The Influence of

Ursula Frayne



As we prepare to enter our 168th year it is only fitting that we should pay tribute to Ursula Frayne, an outstanding pioneer of Catholic Education who can rightly be called the foundation Principal of our school. Ursula entered the Convent of Mercy, Baggot Street, Dublin in 1834 – three years after the Order had been founded and her training was done under the guidance of the foundress Catherine McAuley, and obviously she took on some of Catherine's wonderful spirit. Ursula helped nurse the foundress when she was dying.

In 1845 Father John Brady visited Baggot Street Convent to beg for Sisters for his far-flung mission of Western Australia. He said there were "4000 little ones who had no one to break for them the bread of instruction". Little did the Sisters know there were not even 4000 people in the whole State and only 300 of the population were Catholic – mostly in name only and the majority were very poor. However, within two weeks a small band of 6 Sisters under the leadership of Mother Ursula Frayne were ready to make the long and arduous journey, and on the 17th September 1845 the barque "Elizabeth" sailed from Gravesend in England carrying the Sisters, Benedictine Monks, lay missionaries and settlers to their new far-flung mission.

The "Elizabeth" arrived at Fremantle on the 8th January 1846 and the next day the Sisters sailed up the Swan River – disembarking where the Old Swan Brewery now stands. In spite of Father Brady's promises on his visit to Ireland, no accommodation had been provided for the Sisters and so they moved in with a Methodist lady – Mrs. Martha Crisp – who ran a small boarding house. The Irish ladies in their strange religious habits would certainly create much interest in the little village that was Perth at that time. Within a few days Ursula had found accommodation in what is now St. George's Terrace and the Sisters opened their first school there on the 2nd February, 1846 – with one student – it was certainly an unfavourable beginning – but by the end of that first historical day, five more students had joined them. Undaunted, Ursula Frayne and the Sisters went out into the community and canvassed for pupils and by the end of that first year there were 100 children in the school which by that time had been moved up to the Victoria Square site.

As the years passed and with the Bishop close to bankruptcy and unable to provide any real support, lack of funds was always a major problem, not only for the development of the schools, but also the Sisters' works of Mercy among the sick and poor. Money sent from Dublin was used to build the first Convent of Mercy in Australia which was started in 1847 and opened on the 3rd May 1848 – it is still in use today and stands as a testimony to those brave pioneers who though almost starving in those early years, were brave enough to commence building. Secondary education was established by the Sisters in 1849 – the first in Western Australia.

Those early years were a time of great struggle – apart from the lack of funds and a very anti Catholic population, one of the first in the group, Sister Catherine, died 6 months after their arrival and she is buried in the Pioneers' Grave below the Chapel with two other pioneer sisters. Through it all the Sisters remained cheerful, their faith in the mission never wavered and gradually success crowned their efforts, as more Sisters arrived from Ireland and new Convents were opened up. Soon after the turn of the century there were Mercy schools, from Geraldton to Bridgetown and Leonora to Esperance. At the Victoria Square site four schools were set up, each educating a different group of youngsters in the town as well as boarders from country areas.

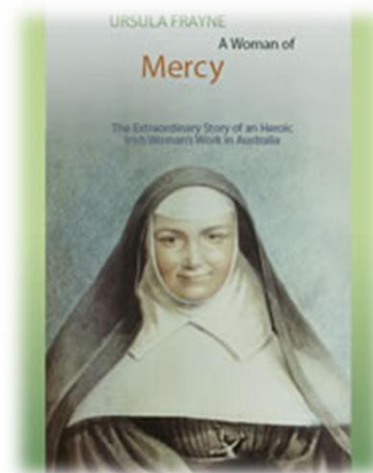
These schools became one in the 1960's under the one name 'Mercedes'.



In 1856 Ursula Frayne and two members of her community accepted an invitation from Bishop Goold for a foundation to be opened in Melbourne. On their departure from W.A. The Governor sent his carriage to take them to the ship. They were the first teaching nuns in Victoria – quickly opening schools, orphanages, a boarding school and a House of Mercy and visiting the goals and asylums. Ursula died in 1885 and is buried in the Chapel in the Fitzroy Convent of Mercy. She was an outstanding educator of great Vision, a warm and caring Sister of Mercy greatly loved by the Catholic Communities of Perth and Melbourne.

Her work, and that of those early pioneers has had a lasting effect on the history of Catholic Education throughout Western Australia. The Sisters of Mercy were the first teaching Order in the whole of Australia – there is so much in our school's history of which we are proud of – we are part of the history today.

The Influence of Ursula **Frayne: DVD - Woman of** **Mercy**



This fascinating docu-drama set on locations in Perth, Fremantle, Guildford, Melbourne, Warrnambool and Port Fairy (Victoria, Australia) traces the events faced by Ursula Frayne and her pioneering companions. It reveals the social issues of early settlement in Perth and post gold rush Melbourne and highlights the same challenges calling for action today.

Ursula's faith and vision, and the tenacity with which she addressed the problems of disempowered people in her time will inspire viewers.

The story is told in 6 chapters:

- Voyage and Arrival in Australia
- The first Ten Years
- Coming to Melbourne

- Royal Commissions and Education Act
- The Years Pass, the Work Continues
- Death and Burial

TASK: Whilst viewing the DVD, Woman of Mercy, your aim is to record important dates and events during Ursula Frayne's journey and settlement in Western Australia. Ensure the dates entered are accurate and summary notes are made to explain each event.

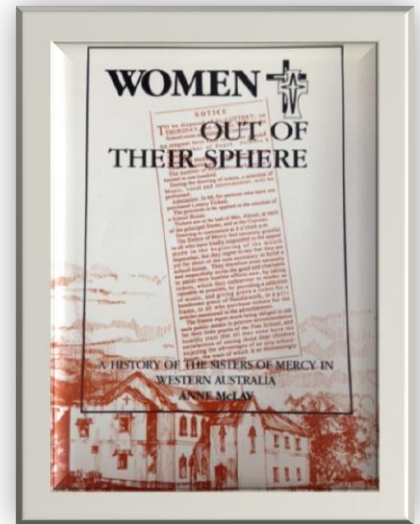
Date of Event	Summary Notes

ADDITIONAL READING: The Arrival of the Pioneer Sisters

Women Out of Their Sphere, Anne McLay (1992) **(Chapter 2: The Original Vision)**

"The Wilds of Australia"

When the first little group of Sisters of Mercy arrived in Perth, they did so in the white heat of a Western Australian summer. It was January 8, 1846, when they berthed at the tiny port of Fremantle and stood at last in "the wilds of Australia", the mysterious and rather frightening southern continent that had fired their imaginations sixteen thousand miles away in Dublin, Ireland. They were glad to say goodbye to the barque "Elizabeth" in which they had sailed from England and had spent four uncomfortable if fascinating months. The long, weary and, at times, dangerous journey was over. Now they had arrived but the hot summer sun was burning their fresh Irish skins; there was deep sand to plough through; and hostile colonists to be faced. It was a rude awakening. Their leader, a young nun of twenty-nine, described it dramatically: We stood in the wilds of Australia on that midsummer night and we could truly say with our Divine Model "We have nowhere to rest our head."



Seven Pioneering Women

Their names in the Order of Mercy were Ursula Frayne, Catherine Gogarty, Anne Xavier Dillon, Ignatia de la Hoyde, Aloysius Kelly, and Baptist O'Donnell. With them was Catherine O'Reilly, aged twenty-one years. Ignatia was forty-two, the others were all in their twenties. Ursula, appointed Mother Superior, was second eldest at twenty-nine. Her assistant, Mother Catherine Gogarty, was twenty-eight and already a dying woman. They were the earliest women religious to set foot on the western edge of the continent, and the first of thousands of Australian Mercies, the second and largest order of women religious in the country.

But, alas, their arrival was earlier than expected and the sisters literally did not have anywhere to lay their heads, until lodgings were given them in the house of a Mrs Martha Crisp. From Mrs Crisp's, they moved to a rented house in St. George's Terrace, the first Convent of the Holy Cross.³ It was a very elegant house, Ursula wrote home, "too nice indeed for Sisters of Mercy"; and only five minutes' walk from the Church. On 1st August, 1846, the day after the death of Mother Catherine Gogarty, the sisters moved to other rented premises, in Lord Street. They were more in keeping with their desire to live simply, and only about two minutes' walk from the church where the school classrooms were. There they remained until 1848, when they were able to shift to permanent quarters in Lord Street (later called Victoria Avenue), attached to the church. The first stone of the new convent was laid on 3rd May, 1847. Building was costly and slow and could not be completed before they took over. So it was a welcome first day of May, 1848, when the Sisters took up residence in their new Convent, and on the third, the Feast of the Holy Cross, the bishop solemnly blessed the new dwelling. The Perth Gazette called it "a great ornament to the Town of Perth".

PIONEER SISTERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Ursula Frayne

Born Clara, on 15th October, 1816, in Dublin, Ireland, Ursula Frayne had entered the new Institute of Mercy at Baggot Street, Dublin, on 2nd July, 1834, just three years after its official beginning as a religious order. Her father, Robert, was a prosperous business man and a Freemason, who had been converted through the persuasion of his eldest daughter, a Sister of Charity. The Mercy foundress, Catherine McAuley, had herself become Clara's religious guide, leading her to permanent profession of vows on 25th January, 1837 as Sister Mary Ursula. She was rather tall and well-built, fair of complexion with blue eyes.' Well educated according to the standards of nineteenth century Dublin, she was also expert at the piano. Her letters from Perth show her to be genuinely simple and single-minded, clear headed and articulate, keenly interested in people and places, a lover of the abundant natural beauty around her, very affectionate and loving. She was also practical, even to the extent of being the first to succeed in making bread in the Perth convent.

Catherine Gogarty

Mother Catherine (Anna Maria) Gogarty had been in weak health when she was chosen for the Perth mission. Doctors had declared that her only chance of ultimate recovery was a milder and a more settled

climate. It was thought that the sea voyage and fresh warm air of Australia would improve her condition. She was obviously very homesick leaving Ireland, but could write: "Australia is my home until I go to the dark land". In fact, she was sick throughout the voyage and did not recover. Ursula dreaded losing her, in reality, depending on her advice and presence. She went "to the dark land" she had been awaiting, on July 30th of her first year in her new home. She was not quite thirty years old. Bishop Brady wrote that she had been "a fruit ripe for a better life. Her very presence and example prevailed and instilled piety and the fear of the Lord into all who knew and saw her".



Anne Xavier Dillon

Ursula was surprised at how much support she now received from someone about whom she had had no great expectations. Ursula and Anne were to become close friends, first in Perth and then in Melbourne, where they both went in 1857 to found the Order in that town. Margaret Dillon was born in County Tipperary in 1818. She had entered the Institute in 1842, just after Catherine McAuley's death, but with so many novices and postulants at Baggot Street, she and Ursula did not really know each other. Hence Ursula's surprise that such an unassuming person could become such a comfort and assistance to her in the stormy days of Perth.

Of delicate health, Anne Xavier nevertheless performed capably and creatively, complementing Ursula's more manifest leadership qualities.

Ignatia de la Hoyde

The one mature-aged woman within the party proved to be the least adaptable. Catherine de la Hoyde, born in County Louth in 1804, was still a novice when she came to Perth. Her profession in the Convent of the Holy Cross, Perth, took place two and a half weeks after arrival. It was the first Mercy ceremony in Australia, 25th January, 1846, and a very moving affair for those present. Ignatia did not settle easily into her new land. Before the end of their first year, Ursula wrote to Mother Cecilia: "Poor Sister M. Ignatia has been suffering from what I would consider a dangerous temptation that is a wish to return home. From the first week of our voyage I could perceive that she regretted the step she had taken. She continued to believe she was being punished for having asked to come". She appears to have become the first permanent cathedral sacristan and was one of the sisters sent to the first branch convent, St. Francis Xavier's, Fremantle, officially opened 3rd December, 1847. Evidently she settled down tolerably well in the end, for she never returned home but lived at Victoria Square until her death nearly thirty years later. She became more fully involved in visiting the poor and sick people in the neighbourhood. Two weeks before her death, in her seventy-fifth year, she was still giving religious instruction to young and old.



Aloysius Kelly

The second novice, Eliza - Sister Mary Aloysius - Kelly was also a Dubliner. Eliza was twenty-four when she came to Australia, and a novice for less than a year. She was professed in Perth on 25th March, 1847. Sister Mary Aloysius was an excellent community member, according to Ursula. "(She) is a real good child and most anxious to be useful as well as good; in her I see a striking proof of what a true call to the religious state can enable one to do. She has learned to make bread, to milk a cow and to perform many other such duties, which of all things are the most opposite to her natural inclinations. But she is blessed with humility and good sense and therefore can see the necessity of suiting herself to all the casualties of a missionary religious life.". Aloysius herself had a flair for writing in a popular entertaining style. So Ursula gave her the task of writing letters home. In her time, the *Record* stated on her death in 1896, she was regarded as "a highly cultured woman, a linguist, a poet and a writer of no mean ability". When Mother Ursula was seeking someone to put in charge of the new branch convent at Fremantle, she confided to Rev Mother Cecilia Marmion that she had consented, tho' reluctantly, to let Sister Mary Aloysius go in charge. In a very short time, she and her

companion, Ignatia, had exerted much labour in getting the convent in order, and improving the school, which had been languishing under the care of an inexperienced young laywoman. With a later arrival, Sister Mary Francis Goold, Aloysius was to help establish what was virtually the first secondary school in Western Australia, at Victoria Square, 3rd September, 1849. She was to contribute significantly to leadership in

subsequent years, becoming Mother Assistant in mid-1857 and Reverend Mother from 1862-1883 and again from 1889-1892.

Baptist O'Donnell

The third novice, Mary Baptist O'Donnell, was to take Ursula's place in leadership in 1856, when the latter resigned before going to Melbourne. Born in 1816, she had entered at Baggot Street in January, 1845, and received the habit 2nd July, 1845. Baptist herself wrote that she had "nothing to desire now as by (her) holy Profession all the wishes were fulfilled". The Bishop was commencing a school house adjoining the new Convent and she had been told that as she would have charge of the school she would be accountable for the expenses. By 1856 Ursula had decided to leave to establish the Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne. Accordingly, she resigned in June of that year and Mother Mary Baptist O'Donnell was elected in her place.



Catherine (Evangelista) O'Reilly

The final member of the founding group was Catherine, Sr M Evangelista O'Reilly. She was born in Co. Cavan in 1824 and came with the first band as "the postulant not wearing a cap". She was to be the fourth Reverend Mother of Perth, and at the time of their Golden Jubilee was superior of some seventy Sisters of Mercy. During her first period of office, four new branch houses were set up: Geraldton and Bunbury in 1883, Newcastle (Toodyay) in 1884, and West Perth in 1888. She herself had gone to help set up the branch house at Guildford in 1855; had been in charge of establishing a convent in York in 1872 (while acting also as Mother Assistant of the total group); and from 1879 to 1883 had been responsible for St. Vincent Boys' Orphanage, Subiaco. In the end, Mary Evangelista was professed as a choir sister - which enabled her to serve all that time as Mother Superior. She continued to be "a real comfort" for some fifty odd years, dying a much respected Sister of Mercy, three months before the close of the century.

LESSON FOUR: Symbols of Mercedes College – Name, Motto, Crest, Prayer, Values



THE NAME "MERCEDES"

"MERCEDES" is the Spanish word for Mercy, and it was chosen to commemorate the first Sisters of Mercy who came from Dublin in 1846.

THE COLLEGE MOTTO

Our motto is "Laudate Dominum" which means "Praise the Lord"

THE COLLEGE CREST

1. The Crown Bearing the Monogram -

The Patroness of the Mercy Institute, the Mother of Mercy, who is a queen. The Monogram means MARIA REGINA.

2. The Seven Bars -

These stand for the seven spiritual and corporal works of Mercy, the Mercy Apostolate proper. In the colour scheme for these bars, some history is implied. Four of them are red and three green; they are arranged alternately. The four red ones are taken from the flag of King James of Aragon (1213-1276). The three green bars represent three extra vows to serve the Poor, Sick and Ignorant, taken by all Sisters of Mercy. These seven bars signify also, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Celtic Cross -

Represents the Irish origins of the Sisters of Mercy. From the point of view of salvation, it combines the symbol of Redemption and of the Sacred Passion with that of the Holy Eucharist

4. The Anchor

Testifies to Mother McAuley's unwavering faith and confidence in God.

THE COLLEGE PRAYER

The Mercedes College Prayer is widely attributed to the 13th-century Saint Francis of Assisi. Saint Francis of Assisi was an Italian Catholic friar and preacher. He founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of St. Clare. Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.



Lord: make me an instrument of Your Peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy

O Divine Master, grant that I may seek not so
much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved
as to love, for it is in giving that we receive, it is
in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in
dying that we are born to eternal life.

THE MERCY VALUES

Mercedes College is a faith community and a centre of learning which enables young women to continue the Catholic tradition of our founder, Catherine McAuley, by walking the same path as Jesus in making a difference in their own and others' lives. In the journey to realise our vision, we will all commit to bringing to life the message of the Gospel, by showing:

Compassion

Justice

Integrity

Excellence

Service

Compassion

We are a caring community. We walk with others in empathy, respond with mercy, and are prepared to give each other another chance.

Excellence

We strive to excel at all times, gaining strength from each other, and following in footsteps of Catherine McAuley with courage and conviction.

Justice

We uphold the rights of the individual, are accepting of difference, and treat all people with fairness and respect.

Integrity

We act with commitment and honesty, holding steadfast to our principles in all that we do.

Service

Service to others is an integral part of our College and the way we live our lives.

TASK: Using the definitions for the Mercy Values above, brainstorm three ways in which you have seen these values put into practice or on display during your time here at Mercedes College. Use the table below to assist.

Mercy Value	Where have I seen this value lived out at Mercedes?
COMPASSION	1.
	2.
	3.
EXCELLENCE	1.
	2.
	3.
JUSTICE	1.
	2.
	3.
INTEGRITY	1.
	2.
	3.
SERVICE	1.
	2.
	3.

LESSON FIVE: House System

The House system is one of Mercedes College's great strengths and contributes greatly to the spirit of our school. It is designed to promote an environment in which students and staff, experience a sense of community and feel valued and engaged. Older students learn to care for, and encourage and support younger students in a wide variety of House activities. The House system is student centered and provides many leadership opportunities.

Students are allocated to houses to participate in a wide range of events throughout the year including sports, dance, drama, music, choir, film, debating, chess and art. Each House has a Teacher Leader as well as a Prefect and her Deputy.

The House names recall significant women of the Sisters of Mercy; Catherine McAuley, Ursula Frayne, Brigid McDonald, Dolores Serisier, Mary Cooper, Assisium Wright. Each House honours and strengthens its tradition and namesake.

	<p>Sr Mary Loyola Cooper was an English and French teacher at the College between 1920 and 1980. Sr Loyola was the first woman to receive a Bachelor Degree at the University of WA. She was instrumental in establishing the class library, a new innovation in those days. She was a member of the Staff of the Teacher Training College which commenced in 1938.</p>
	<p>Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin in 1831. Mother McAuley was a woman of great mercy and compassion to those in need.</p>
	<p>Mother Ursula Frayne was in charge of the Foundation Members of the Sisters of Mercy in Perth in 1846, and could possibly be called the first Principal. Mother Frayne and her companions worked tirelessly to establish Catholic Education in WA. She was a woman of great courage and fortitude. A plaque in St George's Terrace commemorates her endeavours.</p>
	<p>Mother Brigid McDonald was the Mother General of the Sisters of Mercy in WA from 1920–1950 and was responsible for many building projects including the Chapel, Santa Maria College, St Anne's Hospital and many Mercy convents. Mother McDonald was a woman of great wisdom and foresight.</p>
	<p>Mother Dolores Serisier was the first Principal of Mercedes College, which was the amalgamation of two schools on the Victoria Square site, in 1967. Prior to 1967 the two schools were St Joseph's (where Mother Dolores Serisier was Principal for 27 years) and Our Lady's College. Mother Serisier stood for truth and justice.</p>
	<p>Sr Mollie Wright was a boarder at St Joseph's Victoria Square and entered the Convent Victoria Square in 1950. She was appointed to Mercedes staff in 1970 and served the College as Deputy Principal from 1971 to 1976 and Principal from 1978 to 1996. Sr Wright was an energetic Principal who oversaw land acquisitions and many new developments including the McDonald classrooms, College Hall, the Mercy Administration and Library wing, the Performing Arts Centre and Catherine's Garden.</p>

TASK: Visit the Mercedes Hall as a class. On the walls you will find each of the six house banners. For each house banner identify the symbols used and provide a definition for each house's motto.

	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p> <p>Symbol 3: _____</p>	<p><u>Peace</u> can be defined as:</p>
	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p>	<p><u>Mercy</u> can be defined as:</p>
	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p>	<p><u>Courage</u> can be defined as:</p>
	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p> <p>Symbol 3: _____</p>	<p><u>Wisdom</u> can be defined as:</p>
	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p>	<p><u>Truth</u> can be defined as:</p>
	<p>Symbol 1: _____</p> <p>Symbol 2: _____</p>	<p><u>Vision</u> can be defined as:</p>

ADDITIONAL READING: The Formation of Mercedes College

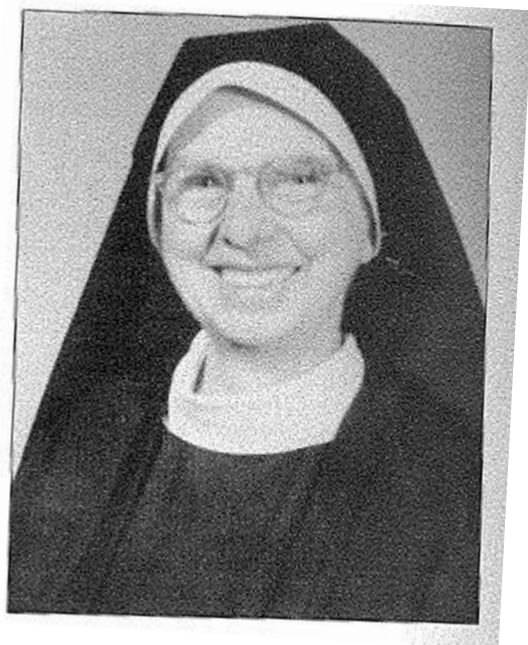
Women Out of Their Sphere, Anne McLay (1992)
(Chapter 8: The Founding Myth Seems Alive and Well)



Mercedes College 1967

As an outcome of the 1966 Provincial chapter, it was decided to combine St. Joseph's High School and Our Lady's College. It was felt that such a step would be advantageous to both pupils and teachers. The presence of two separate schools with separate fee structures did not seem appropriate to present understandings of the Mercy charism in the Australian context. Moreover, some rivalry had grown up between the two schools which was not in keeping with the spirit of Mercy. A single merged school administration seemed now preferable, with an internal division into upper and lower schools. The new entity was initially named "Mercedes Catholic School for Girls" and opened at the beginning of 1967. It now enrolled over 1,000 girls. Teacher specialisation was possible in the secondary section. A science grant from the Commonwealth government to Our Lady's College in July 1966 allowed the building of a science room and classrooms for the new school. In 1969, "Romansleigh" was demolished and replaced by "Glenrowan"; a new block of eleven classrooms.

The **new Mercedes School, with Sr. M. Dolores Serisier as principal**, kept up the traditions indicated by its title. Sister Dolores had been principal of St. Joseph's from at least 1943. She was noted for her concern for each student and her support for each member of the staff. Her deputy was Sister IVI. Raphael Coady, principal of Our Lady's College since 1959. The new school moved quickly into a number of curricular and extra-curricular innovative activities. In 1969, the *Record* reported a two day exhibition of student activities (MESA), which netted 1,000 pounds for the library.



Towards the end of the 1970s it was agreed to phase out boarders at Victoria Square. Mercedes was to be a day school from 1981. The boarding school, a two-storey building, occupied a quarter acre of the western corner of the whole school complex of almost four acres. It looked over Hay Street and Victoria Avenue. A 1976 report on the boarding school had shown that facilities were inadequate and that it had a very limited future in its present form.

Somewhere about the mid-1970s a record was reached with 43 nations of origin among the students. In 1977 a swimming pool was installed and in 1979 the name of the school was changed to Mercedes College.

The old Music Centre in Coolock House had become increasingly inadequate, and the school had nowhere to assemble as a whole. Accordingly, Coolock House was demolished and a new multi-purpose hall was opened in 1981 on its site. This new hall could also serve as a gymnasium, and was indicative of the importance of sport in the curriculum.

It also was part of a larger development project. Stage One involved conversion of the old Our Lady's College, built in 1896, into facilities for administration, staff, drama, music, and media studies. Stage Two meant the upgrading of the old St. Joseph's Victoria Avenue building, built in 1896, for Years 11 to 12. Stage Three led to the demolition of the Boarding School fronting on Hay Street (built in 1853), to allow tennis and netball courts, and remodelling of the section which was the first convent, built in 1848, running parallel to Victoria Avenue.

This was to provide facilities for Home Economics, Commercial Studies (a Year Eleven Secretarial Course gave wider opportunities to senior pupils), and Art. Further down Goderich Street, Victoria House 53 was
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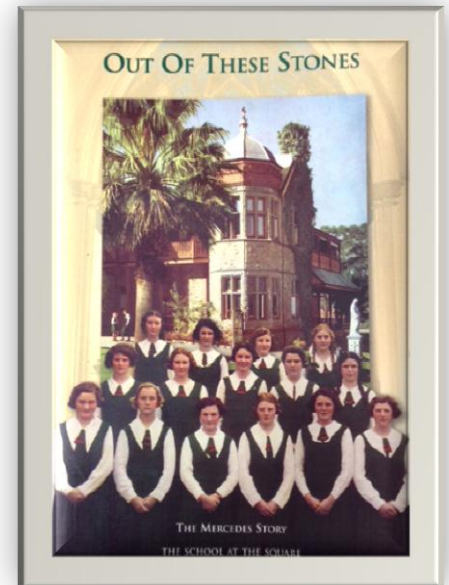
demolished to give a car park. More garden areas were established elsewhere. The fourth and final stage was the building of the multi-purpose hall. As the only inner city school, Mercedes made its up-graded facilities available to other organisations.

In 1985, the acquisition of two blocks of land adjoining the hall in Hay Street allowed for a sports oval, a very popular area of the school. Buildings were further extended in 1990, when a new Library and Administration Block was constructed, and blessed and opened by Archbishop, William Foley. A new Performing Arts centre was constructed in 1991, a contribution designed to enhance and continue the long tradition of performing arts.

ADDITIONAL READING: The Beginnings

Out of These Stones, Sister Maureen Cream (1999) **(Chapter 1: The Beginnings)**

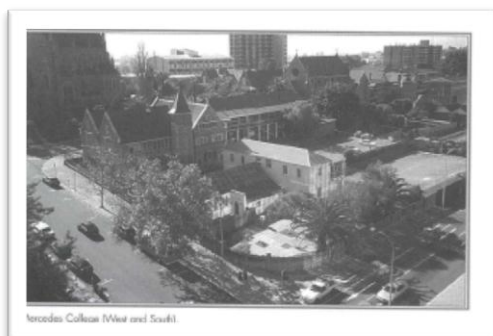
Mercedes is the first school in the state to continue from its inception to the present day; it is also the first school in the whole of Australia to be founded and conducted by a religious congregation - the Sisters of Mercy. Like any worthwhile venture the Mercedes story is one of enterprise and courage, of hardship and suffering, but above all of amazing growth, the fruit of trust in Divine Providence. Those early pioneers knew that their Lord, having called them, would not fail them.



To situate our story we must know something of the early days of our State, or the Swan River Settlement as it was then called. Under the administration of Governor John Hutt, who in 1839 had succeeded the first Governor James Stirling, the Catholics of Perth numbered about 300 out of a population of approximately 3,400. Over a decade after the beginning of the settlement, Catholics were still without Mass or the sacraments. As education was a pressing need, Bishop Brady set out for Rome early in 1844 to seek missionary personnel and funds for his work. He had already secured a land grant in Perth for a church, the foundation of which he had laid before leaving for Europe. Brady himself was consecrated the first Bishop of Perth. He then recruited missionaries in Europe and it was from the Mercy Convent in Baggot Street, Dublin, that he was successful in procuring six sisters and one postulant to become missionary educators in his diocese.

Who were these Sisters of Mercy? In 1846 that would have been a valid question, since their congregation was not quite fifteen years old. Their foundress, Catherine McAuley, had devoted herself and all her resources to the cause of education, particularly of the poor, and to the training and protection of poor women. Thus it was that from a young institute, this band of women - all but one under thirty years of age - set out for a newly established colony, to a diocese in its infancy. On 14 September 1845, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Bishop Brady offered Mass with his missionary band at St Edward's Convent, London, after which Mother Ursula Frayne was named leader of the sisters. From this solemn occasion the Mercedes story began. Three days later Bishop Brady with all the priests, catechists and sisters set sail from Gravesend, England, on the ship "Elizabeth". The voyage took over three months, so they arrived in Fremantle on 8 January 1846, and the next day sailed up the Swan River to Perth. It could be said, in hindsight, that the sisters, and hence Mercedes collegians, share a sacred site with the Aboriginal people, for these first sisters stepped ashore where the Swan Brewery was later located, and which the local Aborigines regard as sacred in their culture.

It is now time to name those missionary sisters. Ursula, already mentioned as the leader of the group, was a significant link with the spirit and thinking of the foundress." Catherine Gogarty, Ursula's assistant, was in delicate health, but in a very positive frame of mind for mission. The others in the party were Sisters Anne Xavier Dillon, Mary Ignatia de la Hoyde, Aloysius Kelly, Baptist O'Donnell and a young woman, Catherine O'Reilly, an aspirant to the congregation. Later in the same *year* she became the first to be received into the congregation in this country and was henceforth called Evangelista, a name significant for that first period of evangelisation through education.



To return to the account of that evening of 9 January 1846. Following the solemn pontifical blessing - the first in Perth,¹⁰ the band proceeded to the church. Hundreds, who had gathered to welcome and cheer the bishop, followed on in justifiable curiosity. The church, which still stands adjacent to Mercedes' grounds" was then incomplete. Bishop Brady, as well as his band of missionaries, witnessed the building for the first time. It was small and airy, for the floor boards were but loosely laid and the roof allowed the starlight through, while generous spaces for doors and windows were yet without those facilities.

If the church was meagre, the sisters' accommodation was more so - it was non-existent, as Ursula wrote, *We stood in the wilds of Australia on that midsummer night and we could truly say with our Divine model 'we have not hereon to lay our heads'*

A good Methodist lady, Martha Crisp took them in as boarders, till they acquired a rented dwelling in St George's Terrace, opposite Government House entrance gates." It is recorded that on 17 January the bishop blessed the house there and installed the Blessed Sacrament. The house, then designated Convent of the Holy Cross was appropriately named.

The sisters from their St George's Terrace home, which also served as the school, busily prepared for opening day, Monday, 2 February 1846; Sister Ann Xavier was appointed in charge. Probably the best known fact of that opening day was that only one student presented herself. Nothing daunted, the sisters went out to find the children. The bishop gave them a list of Catholic families. From small beginnings, lacking in material resources, inspired by faith in the person of Jesus, the sisters trusted in, and were empowered by, Divine Providence - the spirit inculcated by their foundress Catherine McAuley. Their effort on behalf of the church proved to be the spearhead of Catholic Education in the West. The sisters offered Christian education to Catholics and non-Catholics, black or white alike." In this first part of their story they did have some Aboriginal children at the mission school, but in later decades New Norcia became the centre of Aboriginal education.

In light relief back at the convent a little incident with a happy ending occurred. Two of the sisters' trunks disappeared from the verandah but were later discovered in the garden, empty of all their contents - clothes. A Catholic soldier sent natives to track the thieves and they successfully recovered the missing items. They had been carefully hidden in a hole in the bush. Trouble of a more serious nature was the declining health of one of the sisters. Sister Catherine was dying and duress was on the sisters to vacate their home and school. Their lease had terminated three weeks prior to Catherine's death, and the new tenant was anxious to move in with his large family. On 1 August the Sisters moved to another house nearer to the church.

Therefore the Pro-Cathedral building in the south-west corner of the present Mercedes' grounds is the oldest existing site of the school. There, more suitable furniture was found to replace the bricks, planks and packing cases that had hitherto served as desks for the sixty students. The first school examination was recorded as being held on 14 September 1846 with parents and the bishop in attendance. The pupils acquitted themselves very well and Ursula records that the sisters had taken extraordinary pains to teach them. She also commented on the progress in the whole demeanour of the children.

A date of significance in our story was 3 May 1847 as on that date the students and teachers witnessed the laying of the foundation stone of a much needed convent, for which Baptist O'Donnell's dowry was used as part payment. Today we can view the outward appearance of the completed building, known now in 1996 as Frayne. Subsequently it had varying uses, but in 1980 it was adapted as the home of the secretarial, art and home economics classes of the College. On 2 May 1848 the sisters moved to the new convent. On the next day, the feast of the Holy Cross," it was officially blessed and opened. From the convent the procession of the official party, followed by the whole congregation, moved to the laying of the foundation stone of the new school, the exact site of which is not known.' The building is no longer in existence.

A small government grant in 1849 must have rendered the sisters' school venture a little easier for in the same year the following advertisement appeared in *"The Inquirer"*

EDUCATION

The Sisters of Mercy, possessing every facility, have arranged to open, on the 3rd of September, a distinct Day School for a limited number of young Ladies. Besides a solid English Education, comprising Grammar, Geography, History, Writing, Arithmetic, etc., etc., the French Language will be taught; also Music, Drawing, and Plain and Ornamental Works.

Parents wishing to avail themselves of this opportunity, and be informed as to the terms and other details, will have the goodness to call at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Perth, on any day from this date until the 5th August, and from the 16th August afterwards, Sundays excepted. July 25, 1849



ADDITIONAL READING: The

Chapel of the Immaculate

Conception

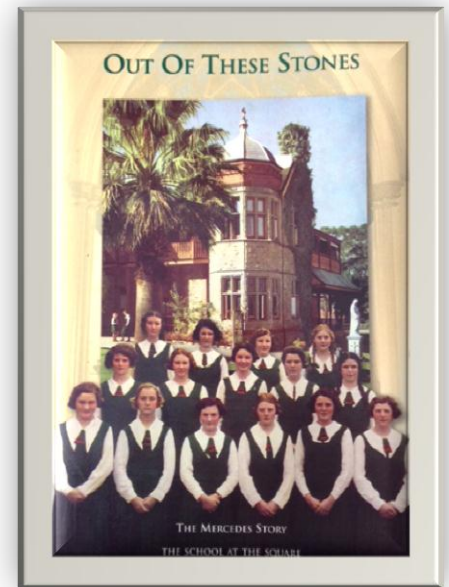
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(Chapter 4: More Building)

On the 14 December 1924 a very important event, peaking many months of building, occurred in the blessing and opening of the present Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. Students from both schools watched the slowly emerging Gothic structure, the embodiment of the genius of E Le B Henderson, the architect, whose plans were executed by J J Hewitt, the builder. To quote from the relevant article in the College *Link* –

Those of us who recall the discomforts of the small chapel which for so long served the purpose both for Sisters and pupils, can enter into the feelings of joy which possessed our hearts on hearing the good news that a larger chapel, so long desired was at last to become a tangible thing. Then followed months of weary waiting and watching as stone was laid upon stone, and no perceptible difference in the height of the building was evident from week to week. Too frequently came prolonged delays when materials failed and the work had to remain for weeks untouched.

Underlying, and built at the same time, was the large hall with adjoining rooms and cloistered verandahs which later became the novitiate building. Hence the students of both schools were very familiar with the sight of postulants, novices and sisters in first vows in and around the cloisters and the front gardens, and this factor possibly directed the thoughts of many to the religious life.

Even in the decade prior to 1924 there had been a rich flowering of vocations to the sisters. That trend continued in the three years immediately following. Largely drawn from the schools, those young women included many possessed of talent, expertise and promise which assured the continuance into the future of good educational standards at Victoria Square and beyond to the many branch convent schools.



LESSON SIX: The Physical Features of Mercedes College



Frayne



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

The Chapel of the Immaculate Conception



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Pioneer Sister's Grave

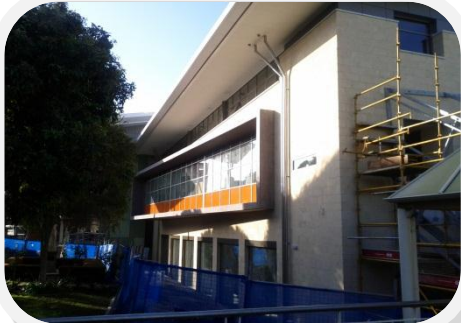


Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Serisier Learning Centre



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Coady Sports Centre



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Memorial Garden

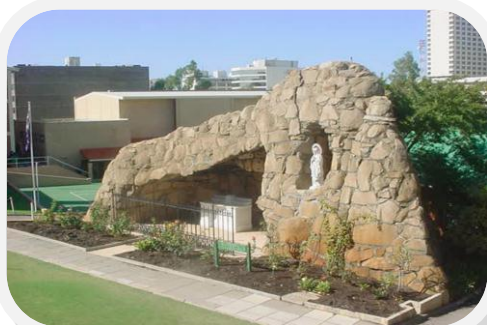


Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

The Grotto



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Mercy Wing



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Our Lady's Wing



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Performing Arts Centre



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Catherine's Garden



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Glenrowan



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

McAuley



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

McDonald



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

The Hall



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

The Oval



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

The Village



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:

Rostrevor



Built in: _____

Historical Notes:

Today's Purpose:
