

Orphanage Care in St. Louis

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Laws for the protection of children

- ❖ In territorial Missouri, the court could apprentice orphan children.
- ❖ The earliest child welfare laws were based on the laws against cruelty to animals.
- ❖ The Humane Society of Missouri had control of cruelty to animals' complaints.

Orphans' Court

- ❖ The Missouri Statute creating Orphans' Courts, was passed 4 July 1807 in the Louisiana Territory.
- ❖ The Orphan's Court, operated under the jurisdiction of the judge of the court of common pleas.
 - The law set the process for the handling of estates for orphans with property, both real and personal, and
 - Set the process for a poor orphan to be bound out.
 - Orphan Court records exist for St. Louis County in the early nineteenth century.

Adoption Laws

- ❖ The first mention of adoption in the State Statutes of Missouri was 23 February 1857.
- ❖ For the purpose of this act, the words "neglected child" shall mean any child under the age of sixteen years who is destitute or homeless, or abandoned, or dependent upon the public for support, or who habitually begs or receives alms, is found in any house of ill-fame, or with any vicious or disreputable person, or who is suffering from the cruelty or depravity of its parents, or other person in whose care it may be.
- ❖ Children were treated as property.
 - The adoption of the child was recorded in the deed records, using language similar to that in land transactions.
- ❖ The first Juvenile Courts in Missouri were enacted into law on 23 March 1903.
- ❖ The act regulated the treatment and control of neglected and delinquent children, but only included counties with 150,000 population or larger.
- ❖ The Juvenile Courts originally had jurisdiction of children under the age of sixteen. That later changed to age seventeen.

Why were there Orphans?

- ❖ Epidemics
- ❖ War
- ❖ Fires
- ❖ Natural Disasters
- ❖ Economic depression

The Oldest Orphanages in St. Louis started

- ❖ Orphan children wandered the streets of St. Louis.
 - Some sought shelter in churches
 - Orphans often brought to pastors by police officers, not wanting to put a young child in jail.

- ❖ The ultimate driving force for orphanage care in St. Louis was church women.
- ❖ Many religious orders took children off the street into their convents to care for them.
- ❖ In 1834, one Methodist, one Episcopal, and two Protestant women gathered together to start Protestant Orphan Asylum.

Orphanage Farms

- ❖ Feeding and clothing large numbers of children in orphanage care meant the homes all had farms on or near the grounds of the orphanage.
- ❖ Many raised chickens for eggs and cows for milk.
- ❖ Huge vegetable gardens were the norm at orphanages.
- ❖ Children learned farm work early and as the boys aged into their teen years, they could be apprenticed to farmers as farm laborers.
- ❖ The girls helped with weaving and sewing.
- ❖ The girls learned cooking skills and helped with meal preparation and cleanup, preparing them for working as house maids.

Changing Times

- ❖ Early twentieth century saw a shift away from large institutions.
- ❖ Move to small cottage structures
- ❖ Placing children in orphanages was replaced with placing children in the least restrictive environment
- ❖ The child should be kept with its own family or relatives.

St. Louis Orphanages

Catholic Orphanages

- ❖ Cathedral Orphanage (later St. Joseph's Male Orphan Home), 1835, Third and Walnut Streets
- ❖ Catholic Protectorate for Boys of St. Louis, 1876, Glencoe, St. Louis County
- ❖ Child Center of Our Lady of Grace, 1947, 5320 Cabanne Avenue
- ❖ Convent of the Good Shepherd, 1849, Ninth and Marion Streets
- ❖ Father Dunne's Colored Orphans' Home, 1931, 3028 Washington Boulevard
- ❖ Father Dunne's Newsboys' Home and Protectorate, 1906, 1013 Selby Place
- ❖ German Saint Vincent Orphan Asylum, 1851, Tenth and O'Fallon Streets
- ❖ Hessoun Bohemian Catholic Orphanage, 1908, Smizer Mill Road, Fenton, St. Louis County
- ❖ House of the Guardian Angel, 1859, Marion and Menard Streets
- ❖ Mullanphy Orphan Asylum, 1827, Broadway between LaSalle and Hickory Street
- ❖ St. Anne's Widows' Home, Lying-in Hospital and Foundling Asylum, 1853, Tenth and O'Fallon Street
- ❖ St. Bridget's Orphan Asylum, 1833, Carondelet
- ❖ St. Catherine's Orphanage, 1856, Tenth and Morgan Street
- ❖ St. Domenico Italian Orphan Home, 1930, 1340 Partridge Avenue, University City, St. Louis County
- ❖ St. Frances Colored Orphanage, 1880, Fourteenth and Gay Avenues
- ❖ St. Mary's Female Orphan Asylum, 1841, Biddle and Tenth
- ❖ St. Philomena's Female Orphan Asylum & School, 1834, Third and Walnut
- ❖ St. Rita's Convent, 1912, 1309 Pine Street

- ❖ Villa Maria Center, 1956, 8201 Florissant Road

Protestant/Jewish Orphanages

- ❖ Arthur Brittain Hall (Home for Boys), 1914, 1900 Louisiana Avenue (Episcopal)
- ❖ Baptist Orphans' Home, 1886, 2651 Morgan Street
- ❖ Christian Orphans' Home, 1889, 1235 Bayard Avenue (Disciples of Christ)
- ❖ Epworth Home for Girls, 1909, 3410 Morgan (Methodist)
- ❖ German Evangelical Lutheran Orphans' Home, 1868, Ballas and Manchester Roads, Des Peres, St. Louis County
- ❖ German General Protestant Orphans' Home, 1877, Chouteau Avenue and Thirteenth Street
- ❖ German Protestant Orphans' Home, 1858, behind Good Samaritan Hospital (Evangelical and Reformed)
- ❖ Jewish Orphans' Home of St. Louis, 1914, 3117 Lafayette Avenue
- ❖ Jewish Shelter Home for Children, 1910, 2236 Tower Grove Avenue
- ❖ Methodist Episcopal Orphans' Home, 1866, Twelfth and Monroe Streets
- ❖ Mission Free School, 1863, 48 North Eighth Street (Unitarian)
- ❖ Mothers' and Babies' Home of the Christian Church, 1899, 2016 Lafayette (Disciples of Christ)
- ❖ Protestant Episcopal Orphans' Home, 1845, Spruce Street (Episcopal)
- ❖ Salvation Army Children's Home, 1902, 1243 North Garrison Avenue

Non-Sectarian

- ❖ Bethesda Christian Home and Infant Asylum, 1899, Russell Avenue and Ninth Street
- ❖ Children's Home Society of Missouri, 1891, 4062 Juniata Street
- ❖ Freedmen's Orphans' Home, 1864, Twelfth street, between Cass avenue and O'Fallon street
- ❖ Masonic Home of Missouri, 1889, 5351 Delmar Boulevard
- ❖ St. Louis Association of Ladies for the Relief of Orphan Children, 1834, Seventh Street between Morgan and Franklin
- ❖ St. Louis Colored Orphans Home, 1887, 1247 North Twelfth Street

Researching Orphanage Care

- ❖ Learn the history of the orphanage by doing the genealogy of the home
 - Check current websites, if the home is still open
 - Check city directories
 - Read local histories
 - Read newspapers, and, when possible, search digitized newspapers
 - Check census records for the time period
 - Use Google searches
- ❖ Beware of homes with similar names
 - Compare addresses and the names of staff
- ❖ Don't overlook the House of Refuge

Where are the Records?

- ❖ If the home is still open, check for the records there first.
- ❖ Check local archives and historical societies for records.
- ❖ If a religious order operated the home, check the archives for that order.

- ❖ If the home was founded by a specific religion, check the archives for that religion.
- ❖ Check FamilySearch and other online genealogy sites.
- ❖ Google the name of the orphanage to see if there are printed records.

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