



Fitzroy, not far from Richmond, is famous as her birthplace, but [Saint Mary MacKillop](#) lived in Richmond for longer than she did in Fitzroy. Mary was just three months old when her parents Alexander and Flora MacKillop faced with serious financial problems, had to sell their comfortable home and property in Brunswick Street and move to the Merri-Darebin farming area (now Preston) and depend upon the Scotch hospitality of friends and relatives.

Mary's father was not a successful farmer - he was well educated, an intelligent man able to educate his children when regular schooling was impossible for them. This was his first attempt at farming. By the time Mary was seven, life for her family was difficult - little ready money coming in and five children to provide for. Mary was sent to live with Mr and Mrs Joseph L'Estrange of Richmond. Mr Joseph L'Estrange was the owner of home 'Erindale' where, according to tradition, the first Mass in Richmond was offered while a search for a permanent church site in Richmond was being made.

The L'Estranges were well known to Mary. Her uncle, Peter MacKillop, had married Julia Keogh, Mrs L'Estrange's sister; and another sister, Margaret, married to James Seward, was next door neighbour to the MacKillops at Darebin. Adeline Seward was Mary's best friend. Mary knew the L'Estranges as Uncle Joseph and Aunt Mary. Hence Mary was among friends and relations by marriage when she arrived at L'Estrange's beautiful home "Erindale", a handsome bluestone building built by Joseph L'Estrange (chief clerk in the Crown Law Department) about 1846.



What a change this must have been for Mary - peace and security and good nourishing food after the poverty of the MacKillop home and the strain of helping her mother care for the four

little ones. Mary would never forget the kindness and care she received from her wonderful friends at "Erindale".

In 1856, the MacKillop family, now living at "The Plenty" (probably Grandfather McDonald's old property) were again in financial difficulties, so Mr and Mrs L'Estrange offered Mary the position of governess to their two adopted daughters. Mary was very happy here - she had time to herself and an opportunity to read helpful books from the extensive L'Estrange library and, very importantly, money to send to her mother. Mary's sister, Annie, said that every penny Mary earned went to her mother.

Mrs L'Estrange's brothers, Michael and Edmund Keogh were wholesale druggists and chemists. Michael lived in Rowena Parade off Punt Road. Michael's wife had been Mary Jane Plunkett and her brother's diary supplied so many interesting details of Mary's life at "Erindale" and Rowena Parade.

In James Plunkett's diary we can see Mary with her two little charges walking down Lennox Street to Rowena Parade. With the L'Estranges, Keoghs and Plunketts, Mary had her first real taste of social life. The following are a few entries from his diary:

- 01 November 1854 *Went to Melbourne. Saw Exhibition. Mrs McLaughlin and young lady with us. Dearest Mother v*
- 15 January 1859 *lost her little baby F Ward died last night R.I.P. Went to L'Estrange's dancing & c. Dr*
- 30 March 1859 *Ward came. Adeline, Mary MacKillop and two little L'Estranges spent the evening here*

