



The History of Mary MacKillop in Richmond

Richmond Catholic Parish

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Contents

Mary and Her Family	1
The L'Estrange Family of Richmond	1
Mary as Governess in Richmond	1
Mary as Forewoman in Melbourne	2
Mary as Governess in Penola, South Australia	2
Mary returns to Richmond.....	2

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Mary and Her Family

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.



*Saint Mary MacKillop.
Artist: Unknown.*

The L'Estrange Family of Richmond

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".

Mary as Governess in Richmond

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.

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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 went with Michael's party consisting of Mrs Seward, Adeline and Nancy. Mrs L'Estrange, Mr and Mrs MacKillop, Mrs Sandy MacKillop and Mr MacKillop senior, Mr and Mrs McDonald, Michael, Mary Jane, and dearest Mother.

15 January 1859

Mrs Archer lost her little baby F Ward died last night R.I.P. Went to L'Estrange's dancing & c. Dr and Mrs Stewart there. Miss (Mary) MacKillop's birthday.

30 March 1859

Nanny Seward came. Adeline, Mary MacKillop and two little L'Estranges spent the evening here dancing & c.



*Detail of Saint Mary MacKillop window at St Ignatius' Church.
Photographer: Unknown.*

Mary as Forewoman in Melbourne

Late in 1859, Mary was offered a position with Sands & Kenny, a firm of printers and stationers at 365 Collins Street, Melbourne. Perhaps Joseph L'Estrange recommended her. The MacKillop family were in desperate financial trouble and it was only because Sands & Kenny gave her wages in advance that the rent for the two small adjoining cottages in Brighton Street, Richmond at the corner of Shamrock Street, Richmond, could be paid. Sands & Kenny were generous and gave her a forewoman's wage from the start as they saw how trustworthy and competent she was. Mary used to walk from her home into Collins Street. Her brother John was working at Flinders Street Railway Station so probably they walked to and from the city together.

In 1861, the MacKillops were still in Brighton Street. Grandmother McDonald died there on 20 August 1861 as the death certificate read "at the home of her son-in-law, Alexander MacKillop".

Mary as Governess in Penola, South Australia

Mary loved the people at Sands & Kenny, now Sands & McDougal. Mr McDougal, especially, remained a lifelong friend. However, unfortunately the work and the city air did not agree with her health. Her doctor ordered a change of air and, early in 1861, Mary's aunt, Mrs Cameron of Penola, offered her the position of governess to her children. Mary gratefully accepted - not without regret, I'm sure, at leaving home and her kind Keogh and L'Estrange friends.

No doubt some of the happiest days of her life were spent in Richmond.

Mary returns to Richmond...

In 1994 Mary came again to Richmond, this time to stay as Saint Mary MacKillop in the stained glass window of St Ignatius' Church, Richmond.

Source: *The History of Mary MacKillop in Richmond*, Sr Philomena McGuigan.



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CATHOLIC PARISH
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