

# Guide to Researching Orphan Asylums at the Daughters of Charity Provincial Archives (Province of St. Louise)

The Archives of the Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise contains the collections of missions, ministries, and sponsored works of the Daughters of Charity in all states east of the Rocky Mountains dating to 1809. This includes a number of orphan asylums, some of which provide extensive resources for genealogists and descendants of individuals who were raised there. However, only a few orphan asylums contain full or partial intake records. Many of them contain information about the operation and history of an asylum, but do not contain intake records. Very often, these records are located in other organizations and face a certain level of restriction based on relation to the individual in question or length of time.

Many of the orphan Asylums were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most of them functioned on the group home model and as residential programs until the 1960s and 1970s, when they began to shift to the model of foster care. Many of the orphan asylums closed or merged with other organizations as they began to provide a range of social services to children and families rather than full-time residential care.

The Daughters of Charity Provincial Archives contains **full intake records** over **any period of time** for the following institutions (alphabetical by city, thereafter by institution name):

Boston, MA - Laboure Center. 1907-1925, **with all intake records restricted for 100 years after their creation.** Subject to staff use only, where researchers are welcome to make requests, and archivists will pull materials related to specific individuals, but researchers are not permitted to look through these as a whole. Girls only.

Detroit, MI - St. Vincent's Orphan Home. 1941-1946 **with all intake records restricted for 100 years after their creation.** This collection also contains limited financial information for the years 1856-1880 that contains information about family members. It also contains communion lists from the years 1918-1945 that can be used to confirm a family member's residence at the asylum, as well as a Master's thesis by Alice R. May entitled "A Study of the Catholic Child Welfare Services in the Archdiocese of Detroit" (1946), which contains experiential accounts of orphans at St. Vincent's. The sacramental records are restricted to staff use only, and only for those before the year 1930. Researchers are welcome to make requests, and archivists will pull materials related to specific individuals, but researchers are not permitted to look through these as a whole. This policy is in accordance with the Archdiocese of Detroit, whose policies are set for review in the year 2030. Girls institution only.

Farmington Hills, MI - St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center. 1944-50, **with all intake records restricted for 100 years after their creation.** The Master's thesis "A Comparative Study of the Adjustment of Infants in Adoptive Homes" by Sister Mary Magdalen Simms (1967) also provides anonymized experiential observations of the

Sarah Fisher Nursery. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Zita McLaughlin, published 1949. Girls only.

Kansas City, MO - Kansas City Orphan Home. Limited copies of admission records 1897-1964, **with all records being closed until 76 years after their creation**. The collection also contains experiential accounts of residents from the 1930s to the 1980s. While these do not provide genealogical information, they provide a sense of the life that many of the residents led at the Home. Boys only.

St. Louis, MO – Guardian Angel Settlement. Contains full intake records from 1859-1939. Girls institution only.

St. Louis, MO – St. Mary’s Orphanage. Contains full intake records from 1843-1900. There are also financial registers from the years 1843-1905, which provide further familial information about some residents. Also called “Female Orphan Asylum.” Girls only.

Troy, NY – St. Ann’s Infant Asylum. Contains full intake records 1889-1892. Boys and girls prior to 1892.

The following institutions contain **financial records only**, which can be used **in some circumstances** to determine familial relationships (alphabetical by city):

Albany, NY – St. Vincent’s Asylum. Contains copies of financial records from 1846-1847 housed in the Diocese of Albany Collection at Notre Dame University Archives and Special Collections. Girls only.

Mobile, AL – St. Mary’s Home. Contains copies of financial ledgers from 1838-1873 and 1919-1933, currently owned and in possession of St. Mary’s Home in Mobile. Contains information about individual payments, which can be used alongside other information to assist researchers about ancestors. Girls only.

Philadelphia, PA – St. Joseph’s/Gonzaga Home. Contains financial records from 1914-1944. This collection also contains First Communion records from 1895-1976, confirmation records from 1895 to 1960, and lists of child residents from 1857-1984. These can be used to confirm an individual’s residence at the Home, but do not provide further genealogical information. Girls only.

The following institutions contain **lists of children** housed at the institution for certain periods of time, which can be used to confirm a relative’s residence at the institution. These lists are often complete only for certain periods of time.

Chicago, IL – DePaul Child Care Center. 1916-1944, **with all lists of children restricted for 100 years after their creation** and subject to staff use only, where researchers are welcome to make requests, and archivists will pull materials related to specific individuals, but researchers are not permitted to look through these as a whole.

Hyattsville, MD (after 1962) /Washington, DC - St. Ann's Infant Home. 1943-1948 (Washington DC period), **with all lists of children restricted for 100 years after their creation** and being subject to staff use only, where researchers are welcome to make requests, and archivists will pull materials related to specific individuals, but researchers are not permitted to look through these as a whole. This collection also contains dissertations by Barbara Bailey Etta (1988) and a Master's thesis by Sister Anna Marie Hayes (1949). Etta's work draws upon testimony which can provide experiential testimony for residents of the Home. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Zita McLaughlin, published 1949. Hayes's work references the "Children's Registers," which are now housed at Catholic Charities of Washington.

Philadelphia/Drexel Hill, PA - St. Vincent's Asylum/Home. This collection contains a list of former residents created in the year 1999, which can be used to confirm in limited circumstances whether an individual was in the Asylum. Due to the presence of personal identifying information, archives staff will conduct all research in response to requests utilizing these documents. This collection also contains *We Called It Home* (2003), by Martin F. Whalen, Jr., which provides the narrative experience of the home based on his time there in the 1920s. It also contains personal scrapbooks from the early 1950s.

St. Louis, MO – St. Anne's Home – Contains birth registers from 1932-1947. These can be used to confirm place and date of birth. This collection also contains a recorded testimony of the life of Alan Moore, who was a resident of the home from 1928 to 1931. recorded in 2000. This can provide an experiential account of the life of a resident. Boys and girls.

Syracuse, NY - St. Vincent's. 1883-1919; 1944, **with all lists of children restricted for 100 years after their creation** and being subject to staff use only, where researchers are welcome to make requests, and archivists will pull materials related to specific individuals, but researchers are not permitted to look through these as a whole. Girls only.

The following collections contain **experiential narratives** describing daily life at the institutions.

Boston, MA – St. Vincent's Home and School (also called St. Aloysius School and Immaculate Conception School). Relates to 1940s, written by Mary McHugh Pawlikowski. Girls only.

Chicago, IL – St. Vincent’s Asylum and St. Vincent de Paul Center. Contains Master’s thesis by Marion Phillips Gilman from Loyola University, which contains experiential information about the Asylum, 1933. Boys and girls.

Detroit, MI – House of Providence. The library contains a Master’s thesis by Sisters Blanche Culligan, Anne Joseph Edelen, and Agnes Flynn that incorporates experiential information and post-adoption life of residents from the years 1945-47, published 1954. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Zita McLaughlin, published 1949. Girls only.

Milwaukee, WI – St. Rose’s Orphan Asylum. The library contains a Master’s thesis by Sister Mary Lawrence Wiltzius, which incorporates experiential accounts into its research. Published in 1954. Girls only.

Richmond, VA – St. Joseph’s Villa. Contains scrapbooks from the 1940s through the 1980s, often with names. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Ellen Sheldon, published 1948. Girls only. Boys and Girls.

Saginaw, MI – St. Vincent Home. The library contains a Master’s thesis by Sister Irmina Foley which incorporates experiential notes of children from the home from 1934-1945. Published 1950. Boys and girls.

Syracuse, NY – St. Joseph’s Asylum & House of Providence. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Ellen Sheldon, published 1948.

Timonium / Baltimore, MD – St. Vincent’s Child Care Center. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Zita McLaughlin, published 1949, and in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Ellen Sheldon, published 1948. Girls only.

Utica, NY – St. Joseph’s Infant Home. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Zita McLaughlin, published 1949. Girls only.

Washington, DC – St. Vincent’s Asylum & School. This institution is also addressed on an experiential level in a dissertation found in the library by Sister Mary Ellen Sheldon, published 1948. Boys and girls prior to 1846; girls thereafter.

Wilmington, DE – St. Peter’s Cathedral Asylum / School. The library contains a Master’s book titled *As They See It* by Sister Madeleine Wheeler, Ph.D, which incorporates experiential notes of children from the home from the mid-1960s. Published 1973. Boys and girls.

The following collections contain **administrative information only**.

Austin, TX – Marywood / Home of the Holy Infancy  
Birmingham, AL – St. Thomas-on-the-Hill  
Boston, MA – St. Mary’s Infant Asylum  
Brooklyn, NY – St. James Asylum & Free School  
Brooklyn, NY – St. Paul’s Asylum  
Buffalo, NY – St. Mary’s Infant Asylum / Buffalo Widows Asylum  
Buffalo, NY – St. Vincent’s Orphan Asylum  
Lowell, MA – St. Peter’s House / Asylum & School  
Milwaukee, WI – St. Vincent’s Infant Asylum  
Mobile, AL – Allen Memorial Home  
Natchez, MS – St. Mary’s Asylum  
New Orleans, LA – Female Orphan Asylum  
New Orleans, LA – St. Elizabeth’s Home  
New Orleans, LA – St. Vincent’s Home  
Norfolk, VA – St. Mary’s Asylum  
Oak Cliff, TX – St. Joseph’s Orphanage  
Philadelphia, PA – Cathedral Day Nursery  
Pittsburgh, PA – St. Paul’s Orphan Asylum  
Reading, PA – St. Catherine’s Asylum  
Rochester, NY – St. Patrick’s Cathedral School & Asylum  
Topeka, KS – St. Vincent’s Children’s Home

The following collections contain **newspaper clippings only**.

Cincinnati, OH – St. Peter’s Asylum  
New York, NY – New York Orphan Asylum / New York Foundling Home  
New York, NY – Roman Catholic Asylum Orphan Asylum / St. Patrick’s School & Parish  
New York, NY – St. Mary’s Institute / St. Joseph’s Half-Orphan Asylum  
Philadelphia, PA – St. John’s School and Asylum

The following works address sisters’ experiences and the experiential aspects of child development in orphan asylums, although the institutions are de-identified:

Sister Margaret Mary Bruns, “A Study of Ten ‘Non-Participant’ Boys in a Group Setting” (Master’s thesis, 1954)  
Sister Dolores Doyle, “The Practice of Sending Children Residing in Institutions to Schools Outside the Institutions” (Doctoral dissertation, 1951)  
Sister M. Louise Voorhies, *Children’s Institutions* (book, Saint Louis University Press, 1947)