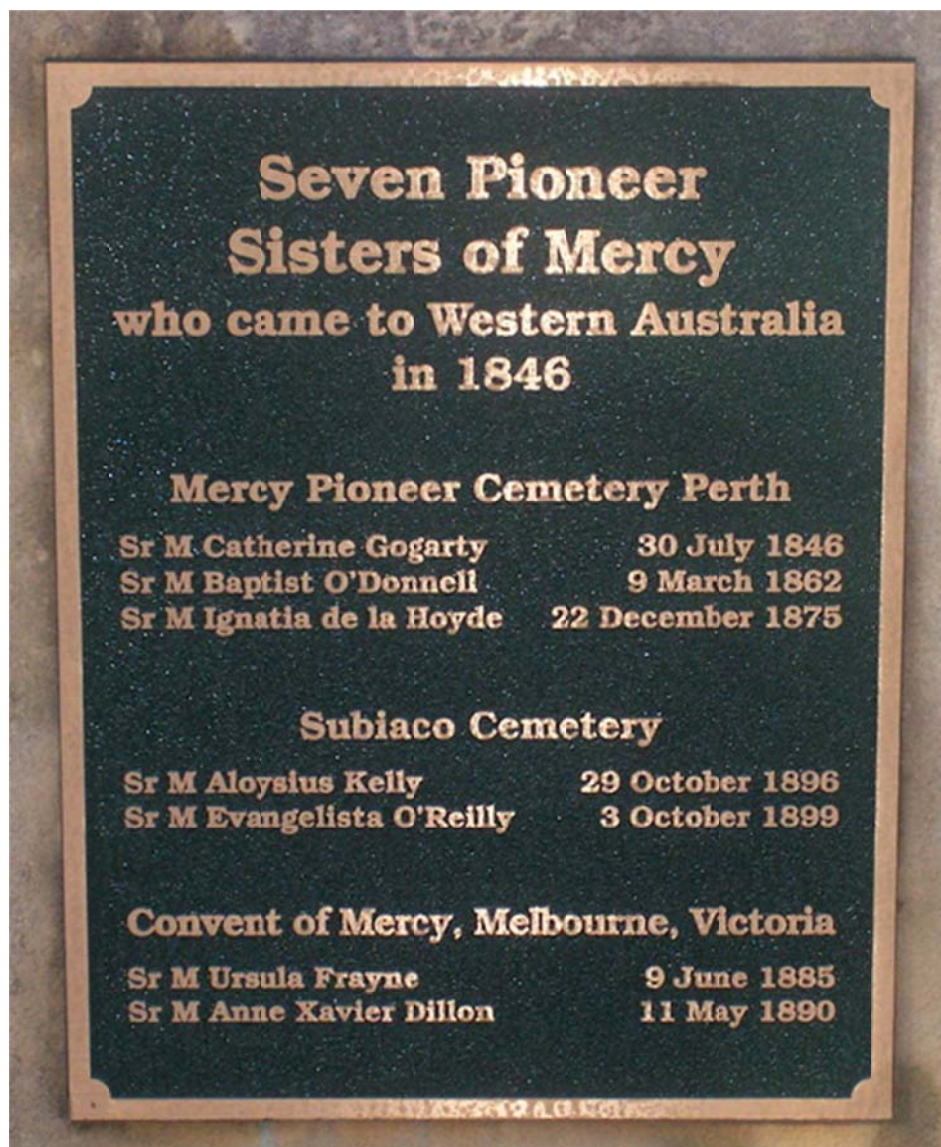


# The Pioneer Women

who came to Perth, Western Australia,

1846



## Anne Xavier (Margaret) Dillon

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	County Tipperary, Ireland
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	1818
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 1842</b>
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> December, 1844
<b>Date of Death:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> May, 1890
<b>Place of Burial</b>	Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, Convent of Mercy, Nicholson Road, Fitzroy, Victoria Australia.

Following the death of Mother M. Catherine Gogarty, Anne Xavier was appointed to the office of Mother Assistant on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1846.

Sr Mary Anne Xavier Dillon resigned as Mother Assistant on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1856 and accompanied Mother Ursula Frayne to Melbourne in January 1857.

She worked with Ursula Frayne until she died in 1890.

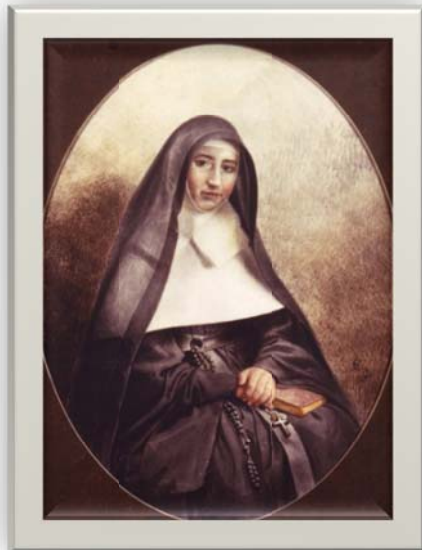




Photo: March 1857

## **Ursula (Clara) Frayne**

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	Dublin, Ireland
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> October, 1816
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> July, 1834
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> January, 1837
<b>Date of Death:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> June, 1885
<b>Place of Burial:</b>	Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, Convent of Mercy, Fitzroy, Victoria Australia.

Ursula spent time in Carlow and Booterstown (Dublin) and nursed the foundress Catherine McAuley in her last illness.

In 1842 Ursula accompanied by two other Sisters of Mercy sailed on the *Sir Walter Scott* to Newfoundland, where she remained until 1843. In 1845 she was chosen to lead the five other members of the Sisters of Mercy who were to begin the journey to form a

foundation in Perth, Western Australia. On her arrival in Perth she immediately set about establishing a school for the people in the Swan River Colony.

After eleven years in Western Australia, Dr James Goold Bishop of Melbourne, Victoria, invited Ursula to commence a community and ministry in that City. She left Perth in January 1857 with Srs. Anne Xavier Dillon and Sr Joseph Sherlock .

The Sisters established a boarding and day school, two primary schools and a domestic training school for orphans in Melbourne. They made their first country foundation in Kilmore in 1875.



## Catherine (Anna Maria) Gogarty

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	County Louth, Ireland
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	1817
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	January, 1840
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> September, 1842
<b>Date of Death:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> July, 1846
<b>Place of Burial:</b>	Grounds of Convent of Mercy, Victoria Square, Perth Western Australia.



**Site of the Pioneer Sisters' Graves  
Victoria Square Perth.**

Sr Catherine died six months after her arrival in Western Australia. She had been in ill health before leaving Ireland and it was hoped that the sea voyage and change of air would be of benefit to her.

During this short time Catherine was the Mother Assistant in the new foundation. Mother Ursula Frayne wrote to the Sisters in Ireland – *"..I don't know what I shall do when I lose her...I have depended perhaps too much on her...I would wish to be resigned and listen to the will of God. I often say so, but I fear my heart goes not with my words."*

## **Ignatia (Catherine) de la Hoyde**

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	County Louth, Ireland
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	1804
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> October, 1842
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> January, 1846
<b>Date of Death</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> December, 1875
<b>Place of Burial:</b>	Convent of Mercy Victoria Square, Perth Western Australia.

Sr Ignatia entered the Sisters of Mercy in Birmingham England. Birmingham Convent was the last Convent founded by Catherine McAuley (1841). Ignatia then went to the the Convent in Dublin Ireland and was chosen to join the foundation group going to Perth, Western Australia.



Birmingham Convent

Sr Ignatia was the senior novice in the pioneer group of three professed Sisters, three novices and one postulant who arrived in Perth in 1846.

She was the first woman to make her Religious Profession in Australia. This took place in the Holy Cross Convent. Except for a few months in Fremantle (1847) Sr Ignatia lived in Perth, Victoria Square and was the first of many sisters to be the Cathedral Sacristan.

Sr Ignatia became involved in the Perth Schools and took on the entire management of a “bazaar on a totally new plan”. She was determined not to make less than one hundred and fifty pounds – however this was not achieved.

Sister Ignatia was one of original group of Sisters who moved into the Convent built in 1871.

However, Sr Ignatia gradually became involved entirely in visitation of the homes and an outreach to the poor. *“She was worshipped of the poor as an instructress and benefactress.”* Cf W.A.R 29.9.1913 (1) and written by J F Whitely.

The final entry in the Community Register states *“her death was truly placid and holy.”*

1. W.A.R – West Australian Record (Catholic Paper)

## **Sr Mary Aloysius (Eliza) Kelly**

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	<b>Dublin Ireland</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	<b>1822</b>
<b>Entered Religious Life</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> March, 1844</b>
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> March, 1847</b>
<b>Date of Death:</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> October, 1896</b>
<b>Place of Burial</b>	<b>Cemetary Catherine McAuley Centre, Western Australia</b>

Having come to Australia as a novice, Eliza Kelly, made her Religious Profession in the Holy Cross Convent on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1847, taking the name Aloysius.

She was appointed as Mother Assistant on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1858 and on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1862 became Mother Superior until 1883.

She then took over the office of the Sister in charge of Novices which at the time numbered one novice and thirteen postulants.

Sr Mary Aloysius was, however, a great administrator. She was responsible for overseeing the building of the Victoria Square Convent which was completed in 1871. She recognised that, in 1868 when Bishop Griver requested that the girls who lived at "The Home" in Goderich Street be transferred to the care of the Sisters of Mercy at Holy Cross Convent, that that building would



be entirely inadequate. So she set about beginning the process of building the new Convent.



Mother Aloysius was also a member of the opening of a branch Convent in York in 1872 – a community of four. She also joined the new community in 1876 in the former Benedictine Monastery at Subiaco.

In 1882 she returned to Ireland with Mother M de Sales Byrne to invite Sisters of Mercy and young women interested in missionary work to come to Australia. In 1883 she returned with three professed Sisters, one novice and eleven postulants. The arrival of these women into the Perth Community inspired fresh courage and confidence.

Mother Aloysius was regarded as *“a highly cultured woman, a linguist, a poet and a writer of no mean ability.”* W.A.R  
6.11.1896 .

Her death in October 1896 brought innumerable expressions of regret on her passing. Aloysius had become universally loved and who, for the previous fifty years had contributed so graciously and so effectively to the life and culture of the newly established Swan river Colony.



Convent opened in 1871 as it stands today 2011

## **Sr Mary Baptist O'Donnell**

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	<b>County Tipperary, Ireland</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	<b>1816</b>
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> January 1845</b>
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1847</b>
<b>Date of Death:</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> March, 1862</b>
<b>Place of Burial</b>	<b>Grounds of the Convent of Mercy, Victoria Square Perth Western Australia.</b>

Ellen O'Donnell came to Australia as a member of the foundation group. She made her Religious Profession in the Holy Cross Convent, Perth, taking the name Mary Baptist.

Sister M Baptist was elected to the office of Mother Bursar in 1851 and Mother Superior in 1856. She remained as Mother Superior until her death in 1862, aged forty eight years.



*A model of the Barque  
"Elizabeth" in which the  
Pioneer Sisters  
including Sr Baptist  
O'Donnell travelled  
England to Perth. W.A.*

## **Sr Mary Evangelista (Catherine) O'Reilly**

<b>Place of Birth:</b>	<b>County Cavan, Ireland</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	<b>1824</b>
<b>Entered Religious Life:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> February, 1846</b>
<b>Date of Religious Profession:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> September, 1848</b>
<b>Date of Death:</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1899</b>
<b>Place of Burial</b>	<b>Catherine McAuley Centre, Wembley western Australia</b>

Catherine O'Reilly entered the Holy Cross Convent in Perth in February, 1846. She received the habit on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1846 and made her Religious Profession 2 years later.

Sr M Evangelista was appointed Mother Assistant in 1865 and in April 1872 left the Victoria Square Convent to take charge of the new branch house in York. Here she lived until 1879 when she went to take charge of the orphanage at Subiaco.

In 1883 Mother M Evangelista became the Mother Superior and remained in this position until her death in 1899 aged seventy five years.

It was during her time as Rev Mother 1883 – 1889, that an exceptional expansion of branch convents were established. Geraldton, May 1883; Bunbury, June 1883; Newcastle (Toodyay), 1884; West Perth, July 1888.

Sr Evangelista's practicality seemed to be her greatest trait. Her natural resourcefulness was much appreciated during the planning of the 1848 Holy Cross Convent. Mother Ursula Frayne wrote of her as "*our old carpenter*" as Evangelista was always ready to hammer a few nails here and there.

When the first branch convent and school was set up in 1855 in Guildford Sr Evangelista was a member of the community.



*Photo of the entire school enrolment taken outside the "classroom" in Guildford. It had been the "place of residence" of Fenians during part of their contribution to the building program in the Colony.*

As with the other pioneer Sisters, Sr Evangelista had a great love of the poor in the colony. She was the last member of the pioneering group to die and as stories were told of her life, there was gratitude expressed that she, a generous hearted woman, contributed so much to the progress of education and the development of so many schools and communities.



**Acknowledgements:** Photos of Ursula Frayne and Anne Xavier Dillon received from and used with permission of the Melbourne Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and copy in Perth Congregation Photo Collection.

Photos of - Guildford, Model of Barque Elizabeth, Victoria Square 1871 Convent, Graveside of Pioneer Sisters, Cross on Ursula Frayne's grave – Mercy Heritage Centre, Perth Collection.

**These are only introductions to the  
Founding Sisters of Mercy  
who came to the Swan River Colony,  
Western Australia in 1846.**

**These pioneer women began their Mercy Ministry in Australia day after their arrival. Stories of their ministry may be found in various letters written back to the Sisters in Ireland.**

**“Valiant Women” – Letters from the foundation Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, 1845 – 1849 by Geraldine Byrne.**

**Writings of Katherine Kovesi Killerby and Sr Anne McLay also make wonderful reading on the foundations in W.A.**

**References are also made to the ministry of Sisters of Mercy in Writings of J.T O’Reilly, Lucille Quinlan, and John Winship.**

**You are invited to visit the Mercy Heritage Centre, 86 Victoria Square, Perth (Corner of Goderich St).**

**Here you can learn more of the Sisters of Mercy and their extensive ministry throughout Western Australia .**

**Contact: [joanis@ozemail.com.au](mailto:joanis@ozemail.com.au)  
Mobile: 0401 786 100**



*Catherine McAuley*

*Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy*

*Ireland*

*12<sup>th</sup> December 1831*



