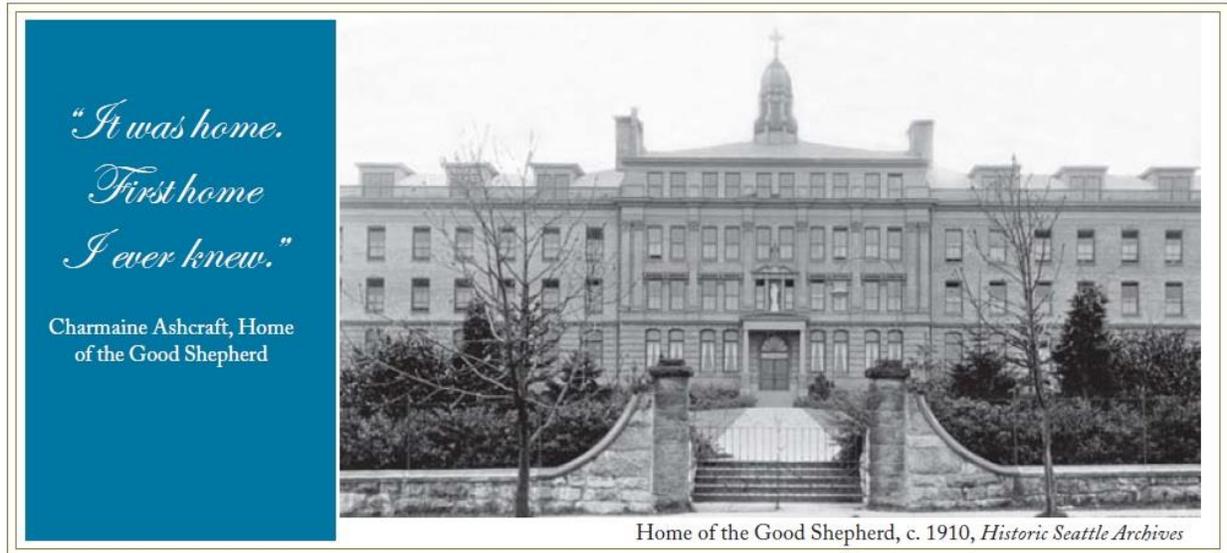


History of the Good Shepherd Center



Who were the Sisters of the Good Shepherd?

Mary Euphrasia Pelletier founded the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd in 1835 in Angers, France. Compelled by harsh childhood experiences, she dedicated her life to providing shelter and guidance to vulnerable girls and women. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd arrived in Seattle in 1890 and established a home for "wayward" girls on First Hill. When the First Hill location became too small to accommodate all of their residents, the Sisters purchased an 11.5 acre plot in Wallingford. They hired notable architect Alfred C. Breitung to design the new facility. The building was completed in 1907 and housed 171 girls, with room for a total of 180.

"She is placed in the Home of the Good Shepherd, not as a punishment, but in the hopes that she will mature into all the beauty of womanhood with knowledge, abilities, and ideals, which evolve into a happy life, and which, in turn, she may share with others."

-Mother Superior and Principal of St. Euphrasia

Who lived at the Home of the Good Shepherd?

Girls were referred to the center by courts or brought in by their families. These "penitent" girls, whom society considered "wayward," were considered "incorrigible," had friends of questionable character, or were chronic runaways from their homes or other institutions. The primary mission of the Good Shepherd nuns was salvation of "penitent" girls. They believed that by providing the benefits of a stable, loving home, the girls could become responsible, moral, and caring women.

The nuns at the Home of the Good Shepherd also ran an orphanage. However, the orphans were transferred to Mother Cabrini's Sacred Heart Villa in Seattle's Laurelhurst neighborhood in 1926.

Funding

Tuition depended on what the family could afford or what each county that referred the girls could provide.

The Good Shepherd Aid Society, begun in 1901, provided consistent financial support. Other private benefactors, including Mr. M. J. Henry of the Great Alaskan Railway, also supported the home. In 1921, the Seattle Community Fund, the precursor to United Way, named the Home of the Good Shepherd as one of its beneficiaries. Throughout the years, the Seattle Times, the Bon Marche, Boeing, and other local organizations made major contributions.

The nuns also operated a laundry, another significant source of income, on the Good Shepherd grounds.

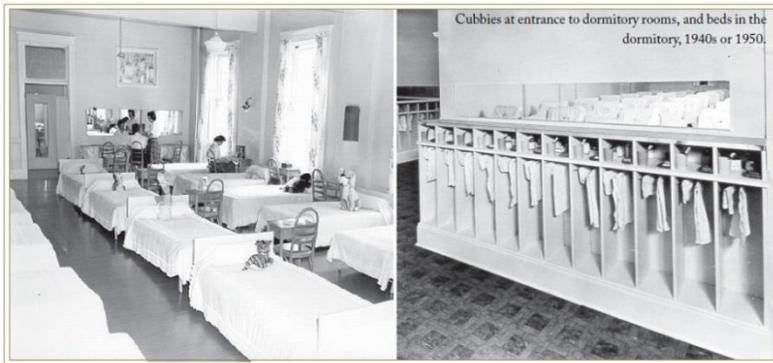
Daily Life

The Sisters governed the institution with surveillance, strict rules, rewards, and “motherly” love.

Up to 180 residents lived in three large dorms. Supervising nuns had their own rooms. The girls had small cubbies outside their dorms, and toiletries were lined up with precision in these cubbies. Lockers on the bottom level held extra belongings. The nuns required rigid routines, and cleanliness and tidiness were highly valued.

“We were assigned one day a week to take our bath and wash our hair. We washed our underclothes and socks every night and hung them over the bed rail. The dorm monitors would always check to see that you had washed your clothing.”

-Jackie Kalani, 1949-52



Fresh, hot meals were served to the girls in their own dining hall at round tables to simulate the intimacy of family. Nuns supervised the residents from an elevated platform and frequently used the time to read and censor the girls’ mail.

An orchard and vegetable garden were maintained on the property, and cows and chickens were also raised.

In the 1960s, the large dormitories were converted into smaller, more home-like spaces with kitchens and sitting areas. This was part of the sisters’ push to give the institution a more home-like atmosphere.

Education and Rehabilitation

In the early years, the curriculum included character education, music, needlework, dressmaking, public expression, catechism, vocation training, basic academics, and physical education.

In 1937, the nuns founded a high school program called St. Ephrasia School, and the 1940s brought an emphasis on



homemaking and business skills. Classes were held Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. During these hours, the girls were required to work in the laundry, kitchen, altar bread room making hosts for the parish, sewing room, or the office. In addition, they attended to regular school classes.

In the sewing room, the girls and nuns made school uniforms. At the beauty school, girls could choose to pursue a beautification certification.

In 1954, the North Annex was constructed. It provided additional space for art and science classes and included a model apartment for the home economics program.

Arts and music were important to the Sisters. Classes offered included ceramics and painting; piano, voice, and other instruments; choir; and drama. Both nuns and lay people taught classes.



Recreation

The Sisters also recognized the value of recreation.

There were Sunday night movie viewings and, beginning in the 1950s, television on Tuesday nights. Formal graduation dances, much like a high school prom, were held. The “backyard” of the home provided a summerhouse (now an open pavilion shelter); a paved area for roller skating, tennis, and square

“At the end of the year, graduating seniors had a prom. The girls were all there in their formals and flowers, and there was an all-girl band. They had it all decorated up, and it was just like it would be in a high school except they did not have boys for dates.”

-Lay Teacher

“...and when the girls wanted to really upset us, they would jump in the pool with all their clothes on.”

-Good Shepherd Sister

dancing; and grassy fields for baseball, speedball, and volleyball. A swimming pool was constructed in 1959. Many of the girls relished the opportunity to swim, as many had never been in a swimming pool. The pool was deemed hazardous and filled in after the home closed. Ping pong, dancing, and listening to music were also popular pastimes, although the girls weren’t allowed to listen to male voices until the 1960s.

Laundry

A commercial laundry opened in 1908 in the present-day South Annex. The Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads were major clients along with some downtown hotels.

Leonard Boyle, first delivery man and later superintendent, supervised the laundry. He and his male crew washed the laundry and maintained equipment. The girls never handled soiled laundry or saw the wash crew. Once the laundry was clean, it was sent to the girls to be shaken, sorted, pressed, folded, and packed.

The laundry closed in 1970 due to the decline in railroad travel and a demand for girls to spend more time in school.

Security

For the first half of the institution's history, the girls were rarely allowed to leave the grounds or hear news of the outside world. However, well behaved residents could receive approved visitors every other Sunday during "parlor." In these early years, doors were locked and

"The windows were all frosted. We did not see into the outside world. Our job was to stay in here and concentrate on making women out of ourselves, as Mother would have put it."

-Jackie Kalani, 1949-52

opaque glass was used in windows to prevent residents from seeing the outside world and leaving the home. A few years later, barred windows, barbed wire fences, and window alarms were installed.

The first home visit away from the Good Shepherd was in 1942. A girl who had been there for quite a while was allowed to go home for a day. After that, girls began to earn days off, at first one day per month, and eventually one weekend per month. By the 1960s, girls were allowed to participate in camping trips, shopping trips, picnics, and other outings.

By 1970, small groups of girls were permitted to walk unsupervised to the University District on Saturdays.

The Good Shepherd Center Today

The Home of the Good Shepherd suffered major financial losses in the early 1970s. In addition to the loss in laundry income, several major benefactors cut back significantly on charitable giving due to the economic crisis. Maintenance of the building became an overwhelming financial burden, and the home closed in 1973. Increased governmental paperwork, more stringent education requirements for staff, and declining resident numbers also contributed to the home's closure. During its 66 years of operation, the Home of the Good Shepherd served over 8,000 girls.

After the home closed, the property was sold at an auction. Wallingford residents fought and defeated a subsequent proposal to turn the site into a shopping center. The city of Seattle bought the property in 1975 and then transferred it to Historic Seattle for use as a community center. The City Parks Department took over the landscaped lot in 1977.



The Good Shepherd Center's tenant policy favors community and non-profit organizations, and Historic Seattle has a long-term commitment to providing affordable and accessible space at the center. In 2002, Historic Seattle added six studio apartments for artists. It also converted the home's chapel into a performance and rehearsal space in 2005. Over 30 organizations are currently tenants.

"I worked in the laundry room. I was a presser. You know how much a nun's outfit weights? 40 pounds! A lot of the girls couldn't work the laundry room because they couldn't handle the steam and it was sweaty and hot in there. I liked it- maybe it got some of my aggressions out."

-Resident, 1959-63