



The Birth of a School

↻ The Early History of Deaf Children Australia ↻

(Formerly known as the Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institution, then the Victorian School for Deaf Children and later as VSDC Services for Deaf Children)

- 14 February 1859 A letter appeared in the 'Argus' newspaper drawing attention to the educational needs of deaf children in the Colony of Victoria. Signed 'G'.
- 16 February 1859 A second letter appeared in the 'Argus', written by 'A Widow,' (Mrs Sarah Lewis,) appealing to the public for a school in the Colony. Mrs Lewis had a deaf daughter, aged eight, for whom 'there is neither books nor instruction ...' and 'if nothing can be done speedily in the colony I shall be put to the peril and danger of a sea voyage to get her educated in Old England.'
- 24 February 1859 Mr F J Rose, a deaf man, offered his services to establish an 'asylum for the instruction of those who may be unfortunately deaf and dumb', through the columns of the 'Argus'.
- April & May 1859 Mr F J Rose and Mrs S Lewis met, beginning a longstanding partnership to establish deaf education in Victoria.
- 12 November 1860 The school opened its doors to pupils, the first being Lucy Lewis, aged 10, daughter of Mrs Sarah Lewis.
- Mr and Mrs Rose took up residence at No 3 Watford Terrace, Peel Street, Prahran. A modest piece of cardboard on which was printed 'School for the Deaf and Dumb' was suspended in the front window.
- 1860 Mr Rose and Reverend William Moss became acquainted, marking the beginning of another long and fruitful partnership.
- 6 May 1861 An historic meeting was held in the vestry of Scots Church, Collins Street, East Melbourne. A Provisional Committee decided that:
- '... immediate steps be taken to establish an Institution for the mental and moral training of the deaf ...'.
- August 1861 Mr Rose was recommended to the Denominational School Board as a suitable person to take charge of the School. A grant of £100 per annum was made for a Teacher's Salary.
- The first Objects of the Society were printed for circulation.
- 1862 The School moved to more convenient premises in Henry Street, Windsor. There were eight pupils. Four were receiving free education.
- The number of applications was increasing. Larger accommodation was needed and the School moved to the Windsor Hotel, Nelson Street, Windsor.
- Mr Rose was authorized to collect subscriptions and the first public appeal for assistance was made. This system was changed in 1871 to collection by circular letters which proved very successful.
- 16 August 1862 His Excellency, the Governor and Lady Barkly honoured the School with a visit, which was recorded in the 'St Kilda and Prahran Chronicle'.

- 28 August 1862 A public meeting was held at the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute to inaugurate the organization and advocate its claims. His Excellency, Sir Henry Barkly, KCB, presided. Reverend Moss read the Report of the Provisional Committee. The Constitution was adopted.
- 4 September 1863 The first Annual Meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institute. The Government promised a grant of £250 to supplement the funds of the Institution.
- 1863 Visits to country districts by the Touring Groups were undertaken. Mr Rose and Reverend Moss toured the roads and tracks of Victoria with a group of pupils, using 'horse and buggy'. They educated the public and interested them in the work of the Institution, thus gaining their financial support. Five groups toured over several years. The date of the first touring group is uncertain, but it probably started work in the first year of the school. The groups were still touring in 1875.
- Beginning 1864 There were twenty eight pupils on the roll and applications were still coming in. The School moved to Peel House, Commercial Road. The Committee realized the necessity of providing a permanent building, as soon as possible.
- Miss M Taylor, a qualified assistant teacher from the Deaf and Dumb School, Edinburgh, was appointed.
- Miss Taylor left to marry. Miss Lorrigan, a deaf teacher, educated at the Claremont Deaf and Dumb Institution, Dublin, was appointed.
- A paid Collector was appointed to relieve Mr Rose of this task.
- September 1864 An application was made to the Board of Lands and Works for a grant of land which was unsuccessful. Further applications were made which led to the allocation of the current site on St Kilda Road and High Street, through a Crown Grant, for the purpose of building a school.
- 1865 A series of public meetings was held to make known the objects and claims of the Institution and to enlist sympathy and support. These meetings led to the establishment of a Building Fund.
- Messrs. Crouch and Wilson were commissioned to prepare designs for the proposed building from the plans of internal requirements devised by Mr Rose.
- 4 January 1866 The building contract was signed.
- 10 January 1866 Work started on a portion of the building - the central edifice and southern wing.
- 6 March 1866 The Memorial Stone was laid by His Excellency, Sir Charles Henry Darling, KCB, in the presence of dignitaries and the pupils of the School. Important documents and photographs were put in a lead case and placed in the cavity of the stone.
- 13 October 1866 The inaugural ceremony of the opening of the New Building was conducted by the Governor, His Excellency, the Hon. Sir J H F Manners Sutton, KCB.
- 1868 Mr Rose presented the Committee with the fountain and pool, still at the front of the building today, serving as a memorial to his generosity and thought.
- 1869 The Committee took responsibility for the Institution and appointed Mr and Mrs Rose as Superintendent and Matron respectively, at mutually agreed salaries. A Code of Rules and Regulations was framed.
- The first inspection by the Board of Education recommended that Mr Rose spend more time teaching and that another teacher be appointed.

- A carpenter, gardener and tailoress were engaged to 'train the boys to some useful handicrafts.'
- The pupils celebrated His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to the Colony.
- October 1871 The north wing of the building was completed, comprising dining hall, dormitory, assistants' dining room, workroom, lavatory, bathroom, clothes press, kitchen, scullery, laundries and pantries, at a cost of £610.
- 12 July 1872 The Government Inspector of Education reported:
 'I have again to record my satisfaction at the manner in which the school work is conducted. The English exercises are remarkable for the intelligence and active interest displayed by the pupils. Considerable advance has been made by the upper classes in their knowledge of geography. In arithmetic, also, good progress is shown as regards both the difficulty of sums worked and the rapidity of the working. G Wilson Brown. Inspector.'
- 1873 The School was placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education.
- 1878 The Oral System was introduced by Mr E O Hutchinson, a celebrated deaf teacher from England. Mr Hutchinson had trained in the German (Oral) system under Mr Van Asch. The French (Sign) system continued to be the principal method of education.
 Mr David Piper, a former scholar of the School, was appointed as a pupil teacher.
 Samples of boots and shoes made by the pupils were sent to the Paris Exhibition where they won prizes - the Bronze Medal and the Certificate of Merit.
- October 1878 Reverend William Moss resigned as Honorary Secretary to accept the Superintendence of the Asylum and School for the Blind.
- 17 December 1878 A reunion of past and present pupils was held. Rev. Moss was presented with an illuminated address, still in existence in 1989, as an expression of their gratitude and self esteem. Rev. Moss died in 1890.
- 1882 Mr Samuel Johnston, a trained teacher from Claremont Deaf and Dumb Institution in Dublin was appointed. He became Headmaster in 1882, and so ended the Rose teaching period. Samuel Johnston married Mabel Stokes, Assistant Teacher, in 1887.
 Miss Emma L Rose, eldest daughter of the founder, F J Rose, was appointed as an Assistant Teacher.
 Mr William Delafield Cook was appointed as an Assistant Teacher. He was both a successful teacher and a celebrated Victorian artist.
- 1882/83 The Committee started the systematic training of teachers because of the great difficulty in obtaining qualified instructors from Europe or America.
- 1887 The pupils were awarded a Diploma and Commemorative Medal for school work sent to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London.
- 31 December 1887 Mr Hutchinson's appointment ended. Miss Florence A Vardon, a certified teacher of the Pure Oral System, Ealing College, London, was appointed in February 1888.
- 1890 Exercises in penmanship, drawing, mapping and arithmetic, sent to the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, were awarded a Certificate of the Second Order of Merit.

April 1890	A collector was appointed to assist the Superintendent to solicit donations.
December 1890	Mrs Rose resigned as Matron of the School. Her daughter, Miss Emily Rose, resigned as teacher.
30 June 1891	Mr Rose retired from the School.
1894	Mr S Moss, a former pupil, was appointed as Collector. He visited nearly all the principal cities and towns in the Colony, making five different tours and travelling 3,000 miles.
1910	The Amending Education Act 1910, which contained clauses making the education of deaf children compulsory, was passed. This followed successive deputations to Ministers of Education over several decades begging that they give the matter serious attention.
22 April 1910	Old scholars assembled to commemorate the Jubilee of Instruction (1860-1910). The prizes for 1910 were distributed by F J Rose.
17 August 1910	Dr Graham Bell, inventor and oral educator of deaf children from America, visited the school.
1913	The Education Department assumed responsibility for the educational program and teaching staff.

Taken from F. J. Rose's own history, and some Annual Reports