

# Out of the Archives

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## Grandma Gorman's Home for the Poor

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It sounds like something from a children's novel, but Grandma Gorman's Home for the Poor was an official nonprofit organization that operated in Seattle from 1910 until around 1914. Agnes Gorman, or "Grandma Gorman" as she liked to be called, is a rather mysterious figure.

Her death record states she was born around 1834 in Georgia. By the early 1900s, she was an active member in Seattle's charitable community, working with organizations like the Ryther Home (which is still active today as the Ryther Center for Children & Youth). She opened her home to displaced children and single mothers around 1906.

In 1909, she reported to have cared for 533 children in the past three years with little compensation. In 1910, with the support of Seattle philanthropists, Grandma Gorman was able to move her charges into a large, new house in what is now the Seward Park neighborhood. The same year, prominent Seattle businessmen William H. Finck, Charles William Chamberlain, Otto A. Case, Norman M. Beers, and J. B. Lincoln formed the board of trustees for Grandma Gorman's Home for the Poor and incorporated the organization as a nonprofit charity. She was able to begin receiving aid from Seattle and King County.

Operating a home for children was tough work. Newspapers reported stories of a disgruntled father abducting his children in the night, the home's dairy cow hay supply being destroyed by fire, and staff being quarantined for illness.

The home had difficulty keeping up with city regulations and temporarily closed due to unsanitary conditions in 1913. However, it appears many members of the community supported Grandma Gorman and rallied to her aid in times of need.



"To Build Home for Homeless Boys,"  
The Seattle Sunday Times (Seattle,  
WA), September 27, 1908.

She was described by one member of King County's poor commissioners as "[a] fine old lady [who] deserves everything the public will do for her."

Grandma Gorman passed away on November 26, 1914, and her home closed permanently.

The Washington State Archives holds the articles of incorporation for Grandma Gorman's Home for the Poor. The research for this article was mainly done using online newspaper articles and city directories, but the author has a suspicion that much more information about this organization may be found at the [Seattle Municipal Archives](#), [King County Archives](#), or [Puget Sound Regional Branch of the State Archives](#)!

<sup>1</sup>"Indorsement Not Given Gorman Home for Boys," *The Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, WA), July 21, 1910.

<sup>2</sup>"Seeking Larger Home for Poor Children," *ibid.*, August 11, 1906.

<sup>3</sup>"Boys' Friend to Have Tag Day," *The Seattle Sunday Times* (Seattle, WA), September 26, 1909.

<sup>4</sup>"Half-Distracted Mother Searches for Missing Boys," *ibid.*, October 16, 1910; "Boy's Hay Cigarette Starts \$3,000 Blaze," *The Seattle Daily Times*, July 25, 1910; "Lodge Notices," *The Seattle Sunday Times*, May 20, 1906.

<sup>5</sup>"Gorman Home Closed," *The Seattle Daily Times*, February 23, 1913.

<sup>6</sup>"Boys' Friend to Have Tag Day."

*Grandma Gorman's Home for the Poor, 1910,  
Secretary of State, Corporations and Trademarks,  
Nonprofit Corporations, 1874-1967, Series AR3-  
6-0-28, Washington State Archives.*

