



Lawsuit alleges St. Anthony Home for Boys was rife with abuse

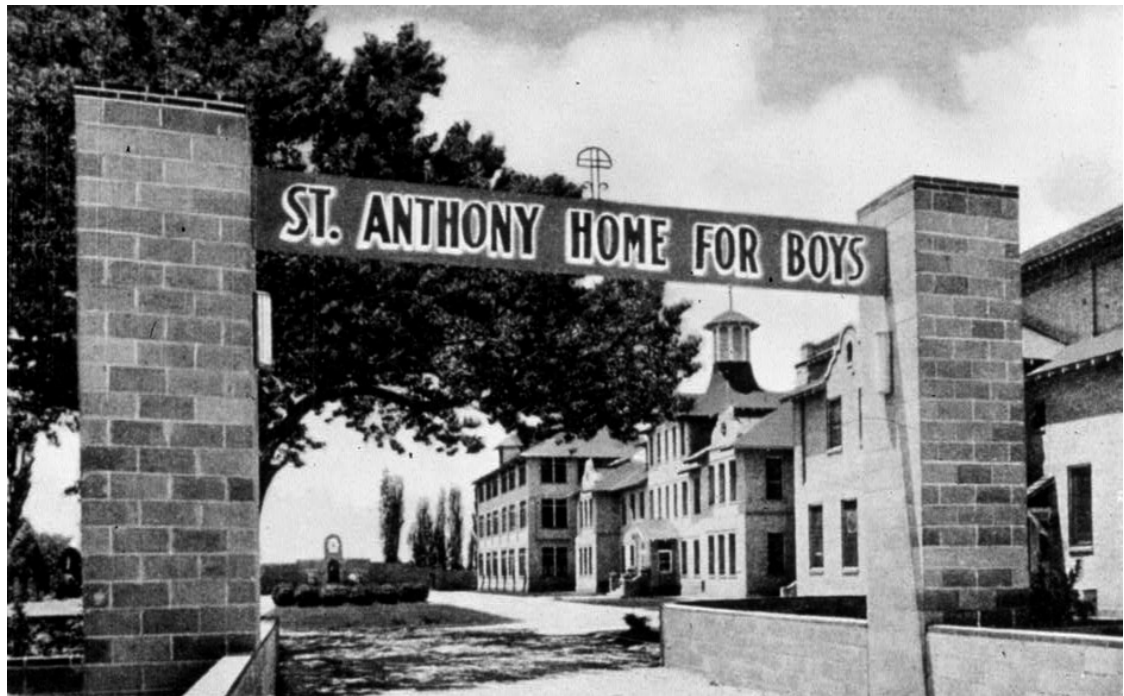


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St. Anthony Home for Boys, north of Downtown Albuquerque, was the state’s first orphanage for boys. A man who lived there as a boy filed a lawsuit this week alleging he was sexually abused beginning at age 6 by the chaplain, visiting priests and nuns. The lawsuit contends there was “rampant sexual abuse occurring at all levels of the home.” (Source: Library Of Congress)

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An estimated 6,000 children passed through the doors of the St. Anthony Home for Boys in Albuquerque during its 68 years of operation.

When Roy Rogers and Dale Evans played the New Mexico State Fair, they visited the home and let the children sit atop Trigger.

U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy was running for president in 1968 when he stopped and ate lunch with the students at the orphanage – the state’s first for boys. Heavyweight boxer Sonny Liston paid a visit to spar with them and tell his story, states an online survey of the historic school from the National Park Service.

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The religious order of nuns that ran the orphanage describes St.

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Anthony’s as a lifeline for boys, where they learned to care for livestock, grow vegetables, and where prayer, sacraments and spiritual life were central to their daily lives.

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But a lawsuit filed in state District Court this week paints a much darker picture, one where children whose parents were dead or couldn’t care for them were tormented and sexually abused by nuns and priests.

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Beginning in the late 1950s, one boy who lived there tried to escape, only to be caught, deemed a runaway and brought back by police, according to the lawsuit filed against the Sisters of St. Francis, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, which ran the school.

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The boy – now a man in his late 60s identified only as John Doe 167 – alleges that behind the walls of the orphanage, he was sexually abused beginning at age 6 by the chaplain, visiting priests and some of the nuns at the school who had “total and complete control of the lives of the children.”

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He finally escaped for good at age 13, running away and convincing an aunt he couldn’t return.

Before that happened, “he was powerless,” said attorneys for the man, who came forward with his account of abuse after the Archdiocese of

Santa Fe filed for bankruptcy in late 2018.

“We believe there are many other victims of sexual abuse who were trapped at the orphanage as children with nowhere to go, who are still silently suffering out there,” said Albuquerque attorney Levi Monagle.

The unidentified plaintiff learned at his older brother’s death bed that he, too, had been “sexually abused horrifically” at St. Anthony’s.

+ The brother “died a homeless alcoholic on the street because he was never able to get his life together after the profound abuse he received at St. Anthony’s,” the lawsuit states.

+ The John Doe plaintiff alleged he became a “captive sex toy” for the chaplain, the Rev. Edward Gallagher, who died in 1969, according to an obituary.

+ His lawsuit says he recalled being taken by nuns to rooms where traveling priests or Catholic brothers stayed a night or two and being delivered to them for sexual abuse. Sometimes, he alleged, the nuns would give him chocolate or other little gifts after the abuse. And some nuns themselves were the abusers, the lawsuit alleges.

+ “Fr. Gallagher, the visiting priests and nuns who sexually abused Plaintiff murdered his soul – his very ability to relate to a loving God,” the lawsuit alleges.

+ Like many other victims of childhood sexual abuse, the plaintiff suffers from PTSD symptoms, anger issues, depression and nightmares. Not until recently did he tell anyone and “fully discover the connections between his injuries and his abuse,” the lawsuit states.

The St. Anthony Home for Boys, at 1500 Indian School NW, announced its closure in the 1970s. (Ray Cary/Albuquerque Journal)

The lawsuit contends there was “rampant sexual abuse occurring at all levels of the home.” Moreover, the suit alleges the nuns also physically severely beat the boy – “a punishment administered to all children when they acted up (as children do) at St. Anthony’s.”

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Sister Marietta Spenner, current Provincial of the order, said she was deeply troubled by the allegations.

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“I do not believe that anything like that ever occurred at Saint Anthony’s Orphanage,” she said in a statement. “The

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mission of our sisters today, as it has been for decades, is to continue the mission of Jesus: standing in solidarity with those who are in any way poor and powerless.”

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Some religious orders have filed to be part of the ongoing Archdiocese Chapter 11 bankruptcy, in which some 400 claims from alleged victims have been filed seeking compensation, but Sisters of St. Francis has not. If religious orders do not succeed in “channeling in” to the bankruptcy action, said Albuquerque attorney Brad Hall, they can be sued in state court.

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The site, at 1500 Indian School NW, now houses the Albuquerque Job Corps Center.

The National Park Service description of the school, its historic architecture and its history states that the Sisters of St. Francis sold the property to the U.S. Department of Labor in 1971 for \$1.5 million.



“Rising costs, declining numbers of children at the institution and drastic changes in child-care concepts had finally rendered the orphanage impractical,” the description said. “Once one of the most lush and beautiful facilities in Albuquerque, it served as a focus of charitable and humanitarian spirit for over 50 years.”

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