

Wodonga Street Albury

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Wodonga Street has played an integral part with each of the 3 Union Bridges to have spanned the Murray at Albury. The first opened in 1861. The second, in 1899 was located about 10 metres upstream. The present concrete bridge was opened in 1961 when both the street and the bridge returned to their original positions of 100 years earlier. The *Government Gazette* July 16th 1858 included "The Governor, having deemed it expedient to make a street between Wodonga Place and the Murray is to be called Wodonga Street" etc.



First Union Bridge, opened September 2nd 1861.

Became toll free January 1st 1871. Customs not totally lifted until 1915

Tenders were called and five contracts awarded for various sections of the main road through Albury in conjunction with the proposed bridge. The route was all of Wilson Street (known as Sydney Road) to Kiewa, Dean, Townsend (through the swamp drained by Mudges Canal in the 1870s), Ebdon Streets, Wodonga Place and finally Wodonga Street.

Mr Miles won the Wodonga Street contract for 4000 pounds, which included bridges over a creek (Oddies) and two other depressions. He also won the contract for the Victorian approaches. The bridge contract itself was won by Messrs Kidd and Brickell for 7500 pounds. It was a far cry from July 1838 when Governor Gipps advised that a township be established where the road (track) to Port Phillip crosses the Murray. Discovered in 1835, the gravel bar known as *The Crossing Place*, running at an angle across the river directly behind the Hovell Tree, was extremely dangerous but a magnet for travellers with dozens perishing while trying to cross.

For twenty years prior to the bridge, a punt operated but was useless at high river levels, leaving travellers stranded, sometimes for weeks.

In 1928, the road between Sydney and Melbourne via Albury, was named the Hume Highway. Numerous changes to its route through Albury have occurred, a major one in

1933 when Bowna was flooded by the new Hume Weir, seeing Albury being entered from the north rather than the east.

2007 saw the Internal Freeway opened giving Albury a much needed second river crossing and Wodonga Street no longer such a short but vital part of a journey from Sydney to Melbourne.