

SOCIAL LIFE AT LAVINGTON – pre 1869

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Gold was first discovered north of Albury in November 1851. It however attracted few diggers. More attractive fields held back any potential of the area. As a result, digger numbers at Black Range, later named Lavington, were low and fluctuated over the years.

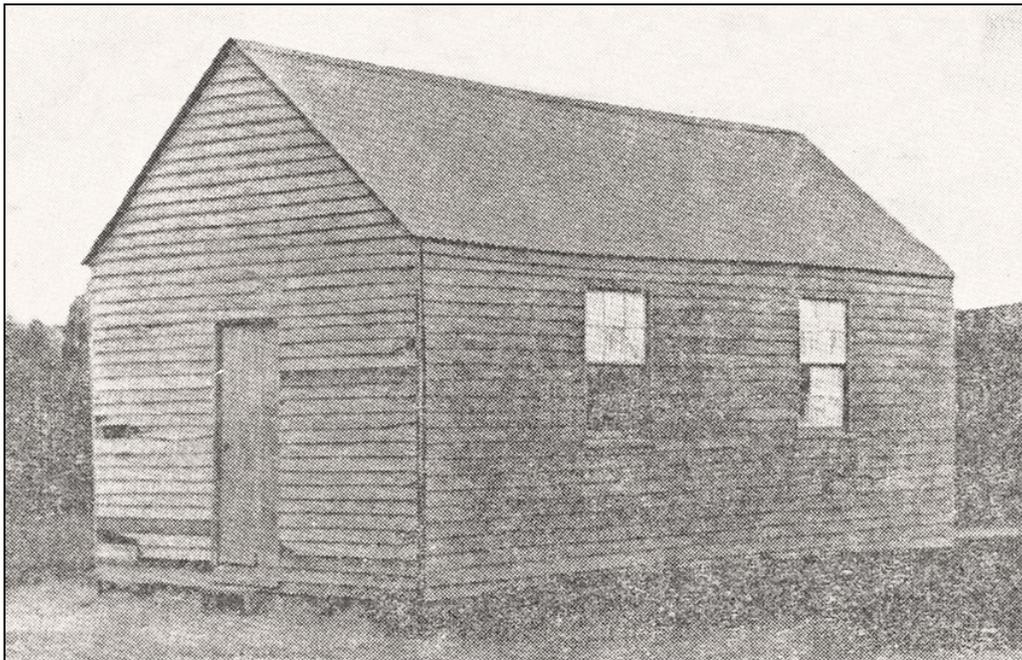
In September 1860 some two hundred Chinese men were engaged in mining besides some fifty Europeans. It was in this month that one of the earliest social events, a Chinese Festival, was held at Lavington.

According to the *Albury Banner* in September 1865 a village settlement was emerging. A population of about three hundred existed, businesses were establishing and the settlement “had more women and children than new diggings usually boast.”

Businesses were established, included hotels where, in addition to offering drink, company and relaxation, social activities for the diggers would have been provided.

September 1865 also saw a building completed, later to be a national school, for the celebration of divine worship by the Church of England, Presbyterian and Wesleyan denominations. It was opened by the Reverend David Ballantyne. In addition to serving a religious function, churches provided places for community gatherings.

A month later a national school opened with twenty-seven pupils. Englishman William Swindlehurst was teacher. In June 1867 the school had forty children on its roll. It closed in late 1868 and did not reopen until early 1874.



The original Black Range School of 1865
on the north-west corner of Prune and Murphy Streets Lavington.

The christening of the Lavington Company's steam crushing machinery in late 1865 by the mayoress, Mary Blackmore, was a large affair with some three hundred persons attending. The day was declared a public holiday and arrangements made for a range of sports and games to be participated in.

Easter 1866 saw a Races and Sports Day held at Culnane's Black Range Hotel with a Ball and Supper held after the races. Horse racing consisted of a programme of four events with a total stake of £25. Sports consisted of quoits playing, foot racing, wheelbarrow match and blindman catching bellman in the ring. According to reports the day was "well attended and drew together a goodly company."

In April 1866 Ashton's Anglo-Saxon Circus performed at Black Range. Performances presented included feats of horsemanship, gymnastics, vaulting and contortions.

A Race and Sports Day was again held in 1867 however by late 1868, digger numbers were again low.