

## Early Catholic Schools in Albury

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A denominational school board was established in 1848 to distribute funds to church schools in NSW. Subsequent legislation required that denominational schools submit to government inspection and use the National Curriculum as a condition of funding.

The first Catholic school in Albury had a humble beginning in late 1855. Teachers at the school were Michael Tuohy and his wife Margaret. Albury historian Arthur Andrews recorded that in 1855 the “Catholic children were taught in the room, on the site of the Chinese camp.” The site was behind the store of T H Mate on the south-west corner of Hume and Townsend Streets.

Not all Catholic children in Albury attended the Catholic School – in the return of National (Public) Schools in March 1858, Albury National School had 36 Church of England pupils, 48 Catholic, 10 Presbyterian, 3 Wesley and 4 other pupils. The school was under the charge of William Dwyer, who became the father of two Australian Catholic bishops.

In October 1858 St Bridget’s opened on the south-west corner of Olive and Smollett Streets, the building doubling as a church and school house.



An early image of St Bridget’s Catholic Primary School, the eastern end of St Patrick’s Church behind (viewed from the Olive St side).

In July 1868, four Sisters of Mercy and two women soon to join the Sisters, arrived in Albury. When the convent school opened in 1870 there were 100 girls enrolled, both day pupils and boarders. Four years later the convent had 225 pupils.

A second Catholic school, St John's was opened at Newtown in 1869 with 32 pupils. It later became better known as St John's Orphanage. In about 1870 a boys' school with a reported 91 scholars opened in Albury and became known as St Patrick's Catholic School.

NSW instituted the 'Public Instruction Act' in 1880. Among other changes, the Act introduced compulsory education for children aged six to fourteen years. Critically, the Act withdrew all government funding to denominational schools from the start of 1883.

In spite of a determination within the Catholic community to continue Catholic education in Albury, St Patrick's school for boys was forced to close in June 1882.

In October of 1882, the Christian Brothers order purchased land on the south-east corner of Olive and Smollett Streets. It was the Patrician Brothers who first taught boys at this site, arriving in 1883. They left Albury in 1898 with Catholic boys either moving to government schools or back under the care of the Sisters of Mercy.

A Christian Brothers College (CBC) opened in Albury with 80 students in 1917 under headmaster Brother Thomas Seery.

More details are available in a book written by Greg Ryan. *A history of Catholic education in Albury* (2018 – 170 pages), available from the Xavier High School Office, Fallon St or from Albury LibraryMuseum).