

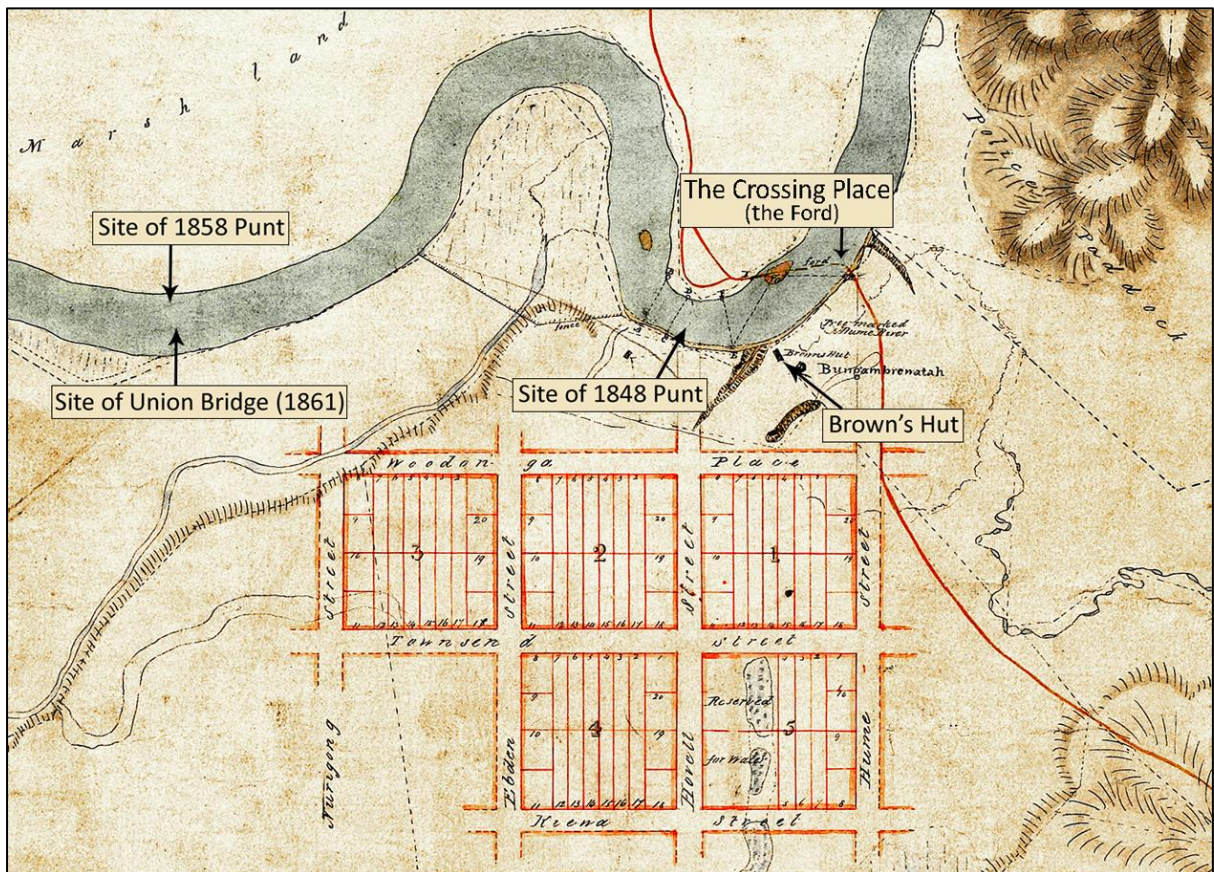
The Crossing Place

Greg Ryan

'The Crossing Place' at the western end of what we now know as Hume Street and on the Sydney to Melbourne overland track became the principal place to cross the Murray, especially for overlanders driving livestock from NSW to southern pasture land.

There was a steady demand for the boating skills and river knowledge of the local Indigenous population. We are told that the first punt across the Murray was operated by an Aboriginal man, named 'Merriman' by the Europeans.

Robert Brown, the first European settler at 'The Crossing Place,' ran the first punt. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of March 6, 1841 published *Overland Route to Port Phillip – a Bushman's Letter* which said (in part): "Mr Brown, at the crossing place of the Hume River, is now building a splendid punt for the accommodation of the public."



A section of Thomas Townsend's 1839 map of the village of Albury.

In 1848 the punt was moved about 350 metres upstream. Edward Crisp, operated the punt – it could ferry a loaded dray drawn by an eight-bullock team for £1.

NSW colonial government took over the running of the punt in August 1849. They auctioned off the licence to operate the ferry. Anyone could apply for the licence, but must provide their own ferry. Edward Crisp was the only person with a ferry.

In 1858 the punt was again relocated a further 600 metres upstream to Wodonga Street at the southern end of Wodonga Place. That punt continued to operate until the first Union Bridge opened next to it in 1861.

Tenders for the first Union Bridge were called in October 1859. The successful bid of £7,046 14s 3d came from Albury business partners originally from America, Adam Kidd and William Brickell. The bridge opened for traffic on September 2, 1861.

The NSW government levied a toll on the newly completed bridge. The right to collect the toll was auctioned to the highest bidder. Once NSW had introduced a toll, Victoria followed suit so there was no free inter-colonial travel.

Toll charges to apply from January 24, 1862 were: foot passengers 1 penny; every gig, dray, cart or other vehicle 6 pence; every horse ass or mule 3 pence; every ox or head of cattle 2 pence; every sheep, lamb, pig or goat one halfpenny.

On February 20 1875, the *Albury Banner* reported "Rather late in day is the formal notification which appears in the last issue of the *Government Gazette* to the effect that the toll has been removed from the Union Bridge."