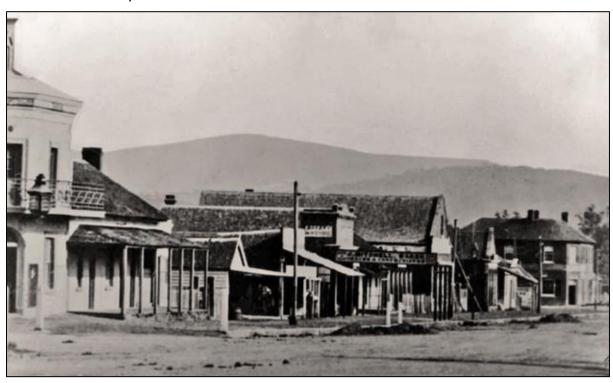# Albury's First CBD

Greg Ryan

First Nations people knew well the ford of the river that gave Albury its early name, "The Crossing Place." For European overlanders of the 1830s the site became the principal crossing place of the river. From the time it was gazetted as a township in 1839, Albury was on the weekly mail route from Sydney to Melbourne.

It is not surprising that the infant village of Albury was established on the floodplain close to "The Crossing Place." Robert Brown's hut and store were established just south of the ford and his Hume Inn was on Wodonga Place.

Development of Albury was initially slow with the population rising to only 65 in 1846. Growth accelerated after the discovery of the rich Victorian goldfields in the early 1850s.

During the late 1840s, business premises started to establish along Townsend street and by the early 1850s it had become known as "the main street of Albury."

Being part of the main route in and out of town, hotels were among the earliest businesses to establish on Townsend street. In 1846 William Wyse was the publican at the Albury Inn, owned by his brother James, just south of Hume street on the western side. James Layton established the Royal Hotel on the north-west corner of Hume street in 1850.

An 1870s photo of the eastern side of Townsend street
from Smollett street to Hume street

From left in the photo is a glimpse of a hotel on the south-east corner of Smollett street. It started as William Conley's Squatter's Hotel and by the late 1850s it was run by Americans Kidd & Brickell. Re-named the Exchange, it was the largest hotel in Albury. Kidd & Brickell also leased the next building as a general store and amassed a small fortune which they took back to America.

Beyond that is the bakery of James Mitchell also advertising as "confectioner." By the 1870s, the large building on the south-east corner of Hume street was the Albury Customs House. The building started life as the "Beehive Store" in 1857, then the following year, under Flora McEachern, it became the Gold Diggers' Hotel. On the opposite corner was Thomas Mate's first general store of 1850.

Major banks established in Townsend street, the Bank of NSW in the building that still survives as *Kia Ora*, 1858 and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney on the north-east corner of Smollett street, 1859.

Much of this development was on the floodplain and due to years of severe flooding, by late nineteenth century, Albury's CBD had shifted north to Dean street.