

The Exchange Hotel

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In its time considered the finest hotel in Albury, the Exchange occupied the south-east corner of Townsend and Smollett Streets. William Conley had purchased the site in 1848 for £4 and in about 1850 built the hotel, originally known as the Squatters' Hotel.

In April 1857 Conley was advertising in local and metropolitan newspapers to sell the lease, describing the hotel as on "an acre and a quarter of ground" and containing "24 rooms ... by far the best situation in the town of Albury, its superior accommodation for man and beast cannot be excelled in or out of the metropolitan towns." Conley stated he was looking for "a man of business habits, married, with £2,000 at his command."

Later that same year, Conley enlarged the hotel, adding a second storey. In December 1857, Conley died in an accident, leaving a wife, five children and a large Albury property portfolio.

In March 1858 the *Border Post* informed that the hotel lease had been taken over by Americans, Messrs Adam Kidd and William Brickell. The *Albury Telegraph* in July noted that the new proprietors "have 'come out' in a style somewhat new for Albury; the furniture and decorations having been got up 'regardless of expense' ... everything in the style of a crack Melbourne house."

In 1860 major extensions include a third storey, balconies and a theatre, Albury's first, that could seat 300 patrons. Stabling was also provided in a two-storey building that survives in 2023, in Smollett Street, west of Townsend Street.



A grainy photo survives from about 1870 of the Exchange Hotel.
The verandah was later extended to cover the Smollett St frontage.

Kidd & Brickell returned to America, and in 1862 the new lessee was Lewis Jones. Mail and coach lines had operated for several years from the hotel. Jones was for many years the booking agent for Cobb & Co and Crawford, Connolly & Co's coaches.

In January 1879, a fire started in the Smollett Street premises of Higgins and Baker, coach builders. It quickly spread, destroying the Exchange Theatre. The *Albury Banner* reported losses of several thousand pounds, "the furniture alone in the Exchange Hotel cost £2500,"

also commenting "The cellar was rushed by a crowd, who had done nothing to stay the progress of flames, and the liquor stolen wholesale."

Jones sold his lease to Richard O'Keefe in mid-1879 and there were several licensees over the next few years.

The hotel was later owned by Farmers & Graziers and they demolished the hotel in early 1933 as they extended their Smollett Street wool stores.