

## **Mount Pleasant Primary School.**

This was the first State School built in Ballarat.

It was a local decision. Following the 1872 education Act, local boards of education were established to advise on its implementation. The Ballarat East board chose Mount Pleasant as the site for the first new school. Trethowan Street was included in the original hectare (two acres) of reserved land.

Like many early State Schools the ecclesiastical look drew on the authority of church architecture as the same firms were often used to design Wesleyan chapels. Within a few years the original narrow windows were replaced with the larger ones we see today. A slate roof remained until 1965.

State School No. 1436 was officially opened on August 3, 1874 to great community celebration. Designed by Henry Bastow, the State Architect, and built by Llewellyn and Edwards at a cost of nearly £8000, it was a monument to free, secular and compulsory education in the colony of Victoria. There were six class rooms and a master's room. The desks were fixed to the floor and pupils were seated in rows one above the other. It was built to take 500 students but attendance was usually less, with class sizes averaging about sixty.

The school is the direct descendent of the 1855 Wesleyan tent school at the reserve. William Nicholls, previously head teacher at that school, became head teacher here for its first ten years during which it gained a colony-wide reputation. Some students even boarded in the area so they could attend the school. The upper part of the school was like a training college. At a time when private schools had a monopoly on secondary education Nicholls established night classes that allowed more than a hundred mature-age students to matriculate directly from this school. A marble plaque naming the students and commemorating Nicholls and his associates may be viewed with permission from the school office.

The 1918 Honour Board may also be viewed with the names of forty-eight former pupils who died, and 220 who served in the Great War.

Tommy Gray, who was born in a tent on Magazine Hill, came with Nicholls from the Wesleyan school and taught at the new school until 1889. When the matriculation class started, Gray joined it as a pupil. He later taught that same night class. Annie Hicks was another who trained at the school where she later became a teacher.

Many of the early staff were women. In the first ten years the assistant teachers included Annie Hicks, Jane Shaw, Jane Trathan, Catherine Berriman, Eliza Magill, Grace Coad, Isabelle Sinclair, Sarah Ballantine, Mary Embleton, Agnes Heinricksen, and Angelina Treweek.

In 1927 the school was granted land in Magpie Street to establish a pine plantation for future revenue. From 1934 to 1958 a Rural Training School was conducted in a separate classroom modelled on a one-teacher country school. In the early 1990s, due to the

determination of the headmaster and the community the school survived a rationalisation process under which many State schools were closed.

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