

Community struggle for a school

Red Jacket School 1871 - 1899

An application for funding for the Red Jacket School House started early in 1871 by Reverend Kearns. In 1873 the school was in trouble and struggled to make ends meet.

The Catholic school opened under head teacher Mr Edward Purcell. It had been a temporary shack erected by generous donations from the community. The school was also used periodically as a Roman Catholic place of worship however this was not enough to keep the school viable.

Residents wrote a petition to the Department of Education stating,

" [the parents] all send their children to the Red Jacket but indeed the greater proportion of the parents find it very hard to pay at the rate of one shilling per week for the instruction of each child. In plain language they are not able to do it and the teacher who has been instructing those children for the past few years has scarcely received sufficient money to buy food not at all speaking of his clothing."

Community efforts were in vain. The government refused to provide any funds for Red Jacket School. Instead it suggested building a new school at Blue Jacket. A new building was leased as a school house in 1873 under the new head teacher Patrick Cunningham.

It took six months before an official school house was gazetted. Students from Red Jacket, Dry Creek, Violet Town, Blue Jacket and Jericho attended.

A month later the house was almost burnt down by a local man with a grudge against the

government. Minimal damage was sustained and the man was later caught and sent to gaol. In 1882 an iron water tank was delivered to the school house. It was a 400 gallon tank formally from a ship. The tank did not have a pipe leading from the roof to it, making it rather useless. The tank can still be seen today riddled with rust.



Photo: The last class of the Red Jacket School, late 1880's. From Tomlin, O.F., Bosa, M., Chamberlain, P.G., 1979, 'Gold for the Finding: A pictorial History of Gippsland's Jordan Goldfield'

Source: Rodgers, J.G., 1998, 'Jericho on the Jordan: a Gippsland Goldfields History'

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