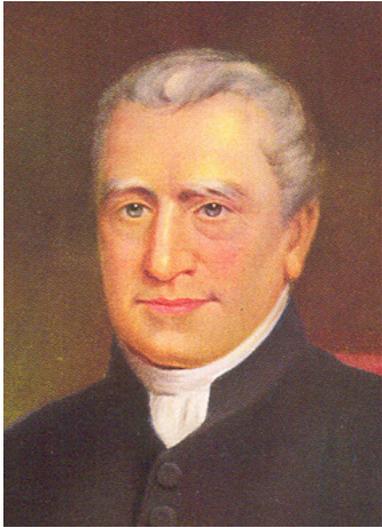


## Edmund Rice



Edmund Rice was born in 1762 in Callan, Co Kilkenny .

As an adult , he became involved in the provisioning of ship's business in Waterford. Through this business, he became very wealthy. In 1789, when Edmund was 40 years of age, his wife died tragically leaving him with a handicapped baby daughter, Mary. Edmund became a frequent visitor to the poor side of 18<sup>th</sup>. century Waterford and he was horrified by the poverty he witnessed, especially when he lived in such comfort himself and had a wide circle of very rich friends.

In 1802 , at the age of 40, Edmund turned his back on his business career and opened a temporary school for poor boys in New Street, Waterford. He sold his house and business in order to build a permanent school and residence at Mount Sion. Other young men soon joined him and they formed the Irish Christian Brothers. Their schools spread to many towns in Ireland and to the USA and Australia. But for the education provided by the Christian Brothers in 19<sup>th</sup>. Century Ireland, only the rich people would have had access to schools.

At a time when the state did not provide education for any of its citizens , Ireland managed to change from being a mainly illiterate peasant society in the 1800's to being a highly literate and educated society by the early 1900's . Much of this achievement is thanks to the efforts of the Christian Brothers , Presentation Brothers, Mercy Sisters and Sisters of Charity and it is seen by many historians as a very important factor in the struggle for Irish Independence of the early 20<sup>th</sup>. Century and the eventual nationhood achieved in 1922. The cornerstone of any democracy is education.

The Christian Brother School in New Ross was founded in 1849 and that was the first time in history that the poor of New Ross had free access to an education. The CBS school in New Ross was part of the town now for over 160 years and so it is fitting that the heritage of Edmund Rice be remembered in the name of one of the new schools.