

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

CAPTAIN CHARLES SWANSTON

Papers, 1891-93, 1960

Reel M445

**Major-General C.D. Moorhead
Warehorne
Ashford, Kent**

**Mrs A.N.M. Swanston
Bank Crescent
Ledbury, Herefordshire**

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Charles Swanston (1789-1850) was born in Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland. He arrived in India in 1805 and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Madras Army of the East India Company. He attended the Military Institute at Fort St George. In 1808 he was attached to a force under General Sir John Malcolm that was proceeding to Persia, but the expedition was abandoned. He took part in a campaign against the Rajah of Travancore and in 1810 was in the expedition that captured the French colony of Mauritius. Swanston carried out a military survey of Mauritius and produced a report on its defences. He returned to India in 1814 and was assigned to the Quarter-master General's Department. In 1817-18 he was given command of the Poona Auxiliary Horse and took part in several actions in the Anglo-Mahratta War. In 1819 he received the brevet rank of captain in the Madras Army. In 1821 he became the military paymaster in Travancore and Tinnevely, but his hopes of obtaining a more substantial promotion were disappointed.

In 1828 Swanston was given a year's leave. He and his family arrived in Hobart in June 1829. He brought £10,000 with him and immediately acquired a number of properties, including a town house in Newtown. Swanston decided to settle in the colony and he returned briefly to India to give up his army appointment. In 1831 he acquired a fifth of the shares in the Derwent Bank and was appointed managing director. In addition, he was an import and export agent, investment agent and wool broker and he acted as an agent for firms in Madras, Calcutta, Canton, Manila and Mauritius. He was a member of the Legislative Council from 1833 to 1848.

In 1835 Swanston was one of 15 leading Tasmanian colonists who formed the Port Phillip Association with the aim of acquiring land and forming a settlement at Port Phillip Bay. The Batman deeds were declared void by Governor Bourke and most members of the Association sold out to Swanston. One of the main streets in Melbourne was named after him in 1837. The name of the Port Phillip Association was changed to Derwent Company, before being dissolved in 1842. Swanston acquired land in the Geelong district and later he and his son-in-law, Edward Willis, held a number of pastoral properties in the Western District of Victoria. The Derwent bank had prospered in the 1830s under Swanston's management, but it struggled during the economic depression of the early 1840s. It went into liquidation in 1849, leaving him with substantial liabilities.

Edward Willis (1816-1895) arrived in Van Diemen's Land with his family in 1823. In 1837 he established a sheep station near Melbourne. In 1840 he married Catherine Swanston and in 1844 he formed a partnership with her father Charles Swanston. The Geelong firm of Willis and Swanston acquired Koolomurt Station in the Wimmera, which Willis developed into one of the finest merino studs in Victoria. Charles Lambert Swanston (d. 1897), the eldest son of Charles Swanston, sold out his share of Koolomurt to Willis in 1854.

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1. *Statement of the services of Captain Charles Swanston of the 2nd Battalion, 12th regiment, Madras N.I., Uxbridge, 1891. (printed, 33pp)*

The pamphlet provides a summary of Swanston's service in the Madras Army from 1805 until his retirement in 1833. In particular, it deals with his involvement in the Third Anglo-Mahratta War in 1817-18. The latter part of the work consists largely of letters commending Swanston and discussing his claims for promotion. The correspondents include the Duke of York, Major-General Henry Warde, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Hislop, Major-General Sir John Malcolm, Brigadier-General Lionel Smith, Colonel J. Cunningham, and Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Resident at Poona.

2. *Rough diary of a journey from Scutari to Baghdad performed on horseback in 1814, Uxbridge, 1893. (printed, 16pp)*

Swanston left England in May 1814 to return to India. He carried despatches for the Governor-General of India reporting the defeat of Napoleon and the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Swanston accompanied Henry Ellis, the British envoy to the Shah of Persia, to Constantinople. He left Scutari on 3 July 1814 and, accompanied by four Tartars and two guides, he rode for 48 days through Asia Minor and the upper desert to Mosul and Baghdad. From there he sailed to Basra and Bombay, which he reached on 10 October 1814.

3. C.D. Moorhead. 'The Swanston Family 1789-1960', August 1960. (typescript)

The work consists of the following sections:

The Swanston tree.

Short biography of Captain Charles Swanston. (4pp)

Descendants of Captain Charles and Mrs Swanston 1789-1960. (5pp)

Descendants of Charles Lambert Swanston. (tree)

The Willis Family of Koolomurt Station, Victoria. (5pp)

4. Photograph of a portrait of Charles Swanston and a photograph of Swanston with a horse.