

James Dalton, (1834-1919), merchant and pastoralist, was born in Duntryleague, Co Limerick, son of James Dalton, inn-keeper, and his first wife Eleanor, née Ryan. Because of the famine he went to New South Wales with his father in the late 1840s. In 1849 James senior opened a bark and slab store in Orange. In 1853 James junior set up as a store-keeper in Orange, where he married Margaret Mary Collins in 1858. In that year his brother Thomas joined him and the firm became known as Dalton Bros. James helped displaced miners and in 1857 promised to build a mill if they grew wheat; his flour-mill was built in 1861. The firm's business expanded until it became the largest wholesale distributor west of the Blue Mountains. They had great success producing roasted and ground coffee on a large

James Dalton: Mayor of Orange and Papal Knight

scale and later built large wool stores in Orange, where in 1865 they built an impressive retail store in Summer Street. By 1871 they had acquired three stations in the Lachlan district.

Dalton Bros continued to flourish in the 1870s, and in 1876 James built Duntryleague, a mansion set in magnificent

grounds, reputedly for £50,000. Aware that the coming of the railway, for which James had turned the first sod in 1874, would mean the end of wholesale distributors in the west, Dalton Bros. established an importing agency in Sydney, managed by Thomas, and in 1878 built Dalton House, Pitt Street.



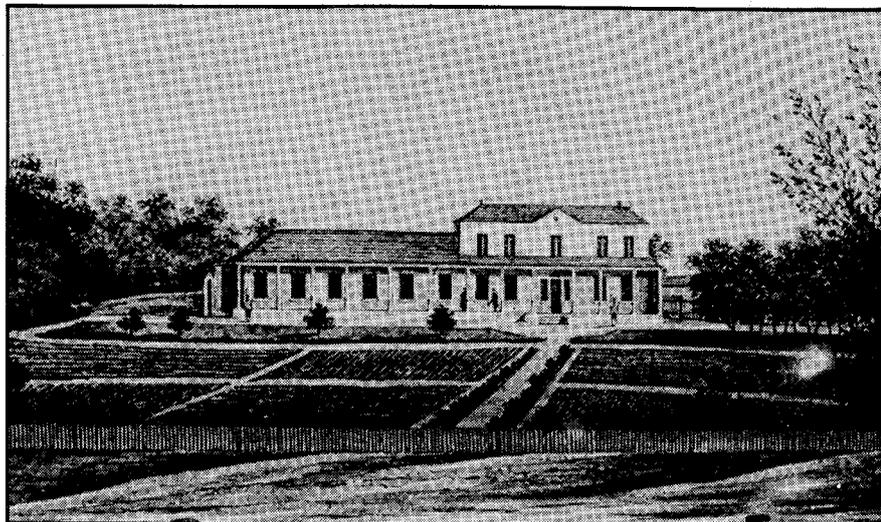
New Government House, Sydney, c. 1845.



They built stores in lower Fort Street and had a wharf and bond and free warehouses at Millers Point. In 1878 James bought Ammerdown, near Orange, and later, Kangarooobie.

James Dalton provided funds and leadership for the Irish nationalist movement in New South Wales. In 1882 his presiding over an Irish Land League meeting was questioned in the Legislative Assembly. He was closely associated with the visit of the Irish nationalists, John and William Redmond, to the colony in 1883. As president of the local branch of the Irish National League, Dalton with two other magistrates signed an address of welcome to Redmond, which praised their 'resolute resistance to the oppressive proceedings of a foreign senate'. The address provoked a public outcry and a demand for the removal of the 'seditious' justices. The premier, Alexander Stuart, requested explanations from the three magistrates, but found them unacceptable. Dalton claimed that he had done nothing incompatible with his 'oath of fealty as a magistrate'. Asked to resign, he refused and was dismissed on 28 April. The bond between the Daltons and Redmonds was cemented when on 4 September John Redmond married Dalton's half-sister Johanna; later William Redmond married Dalton's daughter Eleanor. In 1883-84 Dalton was in Britain and America.

Dalton was an active townsman, a member of such local bodies as the local council and mayor of Orange in 1869. In 1885 he built the Australian Hall because the Redmonds had been obliged to lecture in a shop. In the early 1890s he dissolved the partnership with Thomas, sold his Sydney interests and formed two family companies, Dalton Bros in Orange and Dalton Estate



Government House, Sydney.

Ltd., covering his pastoral holdings, to which he had added Belowra in the 1880s, Gobala, Nevertire, in 1898, and the Lookout at Mullion.

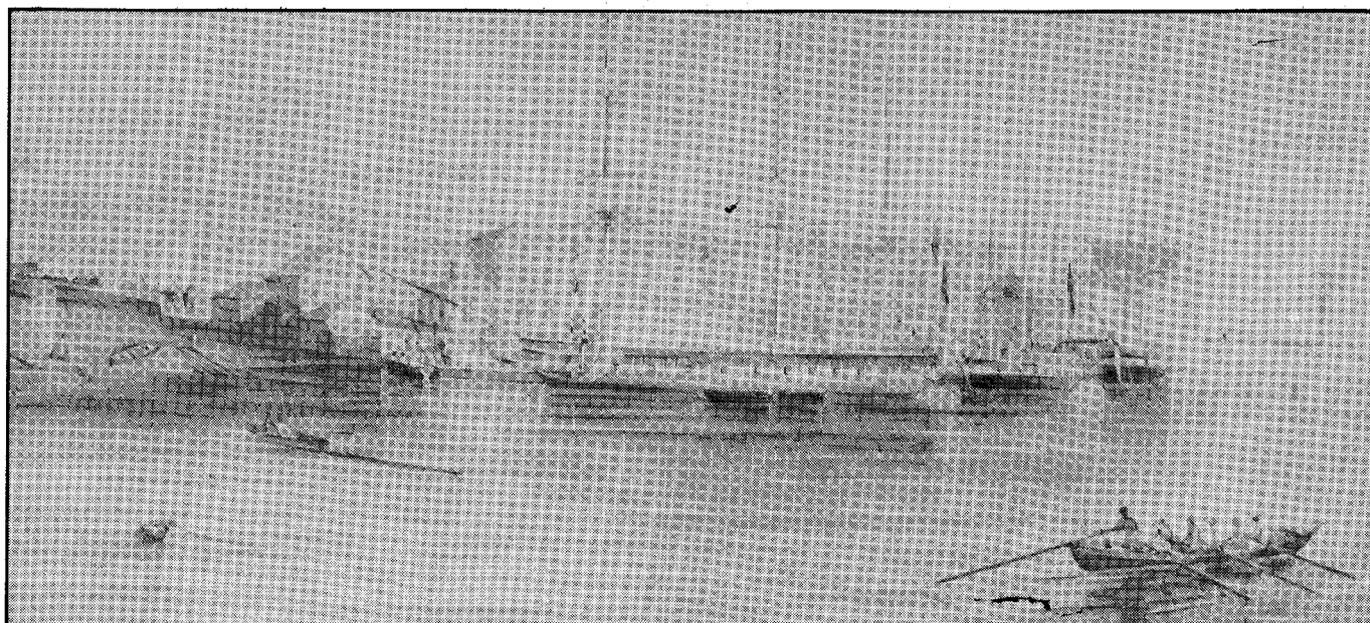
The Dalton family was one of the colony's richest and most influential Catholic families. Thomas, a papal knight, became mayor of Orange in 1877, represented Orange in the assembly in 1882-91 and was a member of the Legislative Council in 1892-1901. He died in Sydney on 26 June 1901. His daughter Blanche married Sir Mark Sheldon. James's second son, James Joseph, became the first native-born Australian member of the House of Commons when he was elected for West Donegal in 1890 in the Parnell interest. Despite exceptional enterprise and business ability James was kindly, unassuming and ever ready to help an Irishman in distress. He was a friend of Cardinal Moran and Bishop Dunne and a benefactor of St

Mary's Cathedral. He received a papal knighthood in 1877. He died aged 85 on 17th March, 1919, at Duntryleague, Orange, Predeceased by his wife, he was survived by four sons and four daughters. His estate was worth £73,000.

Sources

H.N. Maitland (ed.) *New South Wales, 1920-1923* (Syd, 1923); J. Jarvis et al, *Orange 1860-1960*, O. and A. Ziegler eds (Orange 1960); PD (LA NSW), 1883, 848, 1545-65; SMH, 9 Mar, 18 Apr, 1883, 19 Mar, 1919; *Dubbo, Dispatch*, 18 Mar, 1919; G.M. Tobin, *The sea-divided Gael: a study of the Irish home rule movement in Victoria and New South Wales, 1880-1916* (M.A. thesis, ANU, 1970); Mahon papers (NL); printed cat. under Dalton (ML); CO 201/598.

Martha Rutledge
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Moores Wharf and warehouses, Millers Point, Sydney.