



# James Raymond: Postmaster-General

James Raymond, (1786?-1851), postmaster-general, was reputedly a landowner and magistrate in Co. Limerick, who became involved in disturbances there and was forced to abandon his property when his life was threatened. When his lands became dilapidated in his absence, Raymond decided to emigrate. In July, 1824, Henry Goulburn wrote on his behalf to Earl Bathurst, requesting a free passage for Raymond and his family to New South Wales. Because of their misfortunes in Ireland, Governor Darling was asked to provide Raymond with a suitable colonial appointment and, until it became available, to allow him the means of subsistence. With his wife Aphrasia and nine children, Raymond arrived at Sydney in the *Thames* in April, 1826, and, in May, Darling made him coroner at Parramatta on a salary of £50, with additional allowances of £184 in place of rations and lodgings, until a more suitable appointment could be found.

By September, 1826, Darling was complaining to the Colonial Office that Raymond found his income insufficient and considered that the government should support him. Darling had intended to employ Raymond as a police magistrate because of his supposed Irish experience, but Raymond denied this report, and his work as coroner proved that his education had been insufficient to equip him either for business or for public position. The Colonial Office replied that no other expectation had been held out to



Old Government House, Parramatta.

Raymond than the mere sufficiency afforded by a minor position, and that his allowances were to be only temporary. Meanwhile Darling had decided that Raymond's income was insufficient to maintain such a large family and had increased his allowance to £400. He was forced to withdraw this increase when he heard from the British government, and despite further appeals on Raymond's behalf no additional allowance was approved.

In September, 1827, Darling, reluctant either to allow the family to starve or to be obliged to meet Raymond's debts, made him searcher and surveyor of

customs. In April, 1829, George Paton, the postmaster, died and Raymond was appointed to succeed him at a salary of £400; this was confirmed by Downing Street in September. Despite complaints that Raymond was dependent on his clerk for the executive and legislative duties of his department, and an accusation that he had unfairly dismissed the clerk, Darling upheld Raymond's conduct and later governors praised him as a meritorious public servant. In 1835, his title was changed to postmaster-general and his salary had increased to £650 by the time of his death.

Raymond is noted for suggesting the introduction of stamped sheets to be used as envelopes, on the model of Rowland Hill's proposals; this suggestion was adopted by Governor Gipps in November, 1838, anticipating the British penny postage in 1840. In 1839 Raymond bought Varroville, near Campbelltown, from Charles Sturt and there entertained extensively. He was also a keen follower of horse-racing and owned several horses himself. He died at Darlinghurst on 29 May, 1851, aged 65, and was buried at St. Peter's, Cook's River. His wife, Aphrasia, predeceased him on 1 September, 1848; they had seven daughters and four sons, of whom James and Robert Peel held positions in the post office and William was a landholder at Bathurst.

### Sources

HRA (1), 12, 13, 15-17, 19; R. C. V. Humphrey, 'The early postal and philatelic history of the colony of NSW', JRAHS, 25 (1939); *Sydney Gazette*, 12 April, 6 May, 1826; *Australian*, 28 April, 1829; SMH, 31 May, 1851; MS cat. under J. Raymond (ML). Vivienne Parsons

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Travelling dangerously in Australia.

