

An Account of the Rise and Fall of the Australian Cameleering Industry, 1830-1930

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The Australian cameleering industry, which thrived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, played a crucial role in the exploration of the Australian outback, and development of the mineral riches of the new colony. The Australian cameleering industry emerged at that time as one of the most thriving and profitable businesses in Australia. It presents a unique scenario whereby immigrants not only came with highly sought after and locally scarce skills but they also brought their own lucrative transport 'technology', camels, to their adopted country. This paper intends to open up the aforementioned industry to the Australian business history scholarship. This paper presents an account of key events of the Australian cameleering industry, in order to elicit feedback for further developing theoretical frameworks for that aspect of hitherto inadequately investigated Australian history.

Two possible lines of investigation would be specifically elaborated for feedback from business history colleagues. First, the paper traces the rise and ultimate demise of the industry in the wake of the introduction of mechanised transport in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; is there a story of an industry going through its life cycle, which could be a good teaching case study in business history? Second, the paper also highlights the dynamics of the cartage industry of that time in terms of the clash between the interests of the powerful and unionised industry incumbents (the horse and bullock drawn cartage) and the economically more efficient but less politically influential new entrants (the camel carriers). Could this clash of various industry actors also inform policy making on contemporary issues on optimum regulatory responses to managing the interests of various industry actors?

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