

Swan Downer, esq. Of Aldermanbury, was a wealthy London Apothecary who, according to authors J.D. Parry and R. Sicklemore "was a native of Brighton". There is a record of Swan Downer being the son of Francis and Ann Downer, being christened at Union Street Chapel Ship Street-Independent, Brighton on 06th January 1734. Francis Downer is mentioned as residing in North Street in the town rates of 1744. There is some evidence that Swan Downer was later involved with the Quakers in Brighton.

In his will dated 17th January 1811, (although he died in 1816) he bequeathed the sum of £12,100 to be divided as follows:- £7,100 to be invested in Government Securities for the endowment of a charity school for girls and a further £5,000 to clothe 24 poor men and 24 poor women of Brighton. Originally the will contemplated clothing and schooling 20 girls, but this number was greatly exceeded. The two executors to the will, Rev. R. Thomas Jervis and Ebenezer Johnston administered the bequest and four trustees were appointed for the purposes of the running of the charity school.

The school girls were chosen from those aged over six years old of "such parents as do not receive parish relief". They were required to leave before they attained the age of twelve.

Upon entry and twice yearly the girls were given two suits of a distinctive blue colour with white collars and cuffs, together with a cloak when thought necessary by the trustees.

They were instructed in needlework, reading and writing.

First opened in Gardener St and then Church Hill, From 1867 until 1939 the school was housed in a new building at 11, Dyke Road, designed by George Somers Clarke. (pictured above)

The information above is derived from Thomas Walker Horsfield's "The History, Antiquities and Topography of the County of Sussex" reproduced here with kind permission of Andy Grant

**Here lie the remains of FRANCIS
DOWNER and of ANN DOWNER his
wife. Also of ELIZABETH LOWDELL
their daughter who departed this
life on 12th January 1797 aged 67
years**

**Within this tomb lie the remains of W.
SWAN DOWNER son of FRANCIS and
ANN DOWNER died February – 1816
aged 81 years**