

Guide to the Robert Provo Norris Collection

MSS 11



YCBA Library Court. Photograph by Richard Caspole, YCBA, 2016.

compiled by Heidi N. Abbey and Fiona Robinson; edited by Francis Lapka

2011

Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
1080 Chapel Street
P. O. Box 208280
New Haven, CT 06520-8280
ycba.rarebooks@yale.edu

<https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
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P. O. Box 208280
New Haven, CT 06520-8280
ycba.rarebooks@yale.edu
<https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts>

CALL NUMBER: MSS 11

CREATOR: Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851

TITLE: Robert Provo Norris Collection

DATES: 1846-1854

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection comprises personal diaries, watercolors, and drawings by Robert Provo Norris, most of which were created while he was a soldier stationed on the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa during the Frontier ("Kaffir") Wars of the 1840s and 1850s.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0011>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0011>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired 1995, Paul Mellon Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The collection is the physical property of the Yale Center for British Art. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Preferred Citation

Robert Provo Norris Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund.

Biographical / Historical

Robert Provo Norris was born ca. 1825 at Broome in Norfolk, England, the eldest son of Reverend D.G. (Dennis George) Norris, a Church of England parson who was Vicar of St. Edmund Church, Kessingland, Suffolk for 35 years. Robert was the first of eight children born to Reverend Norris and his wife, Mary Pellew (born ca. 1800 in Halifax, Nova Scotia). Only three of the Norris children would survive childhood and live past the age of twenty-five. An illness seems to have swept the Norris household in 1844, for Mary Pellew and three of her children--Henry (1828-1844), Ellen (1840-1844), and Elizabeth (b/d 1844)--all died in this year. Reverend Norris lived on until 1865. Surviving daughters Mary (1830-1906), Christiana (1831-1895) and Rose Gernton (b. 1833, married 1863) remained in the Suffolk area for the rest of their lives.

On 9 June 1846, Norris joined the 6th Regiment in Kessingland and was stationed there for approximately two months. By 30 July 1846, he had left Kessingland and travelled to Cork, Ireland, where he remained for over one month. In early September 1846, Norris and the rest of his regiment were sent to the Cape of Good Hope. During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain took possession of the Cape of Good Hope, which was previously a Dutch colony. The Cape area was an ideal resting point for European traders en route to India. However, the original Dutch colonists in the area, many of whom were farmers, became engaged in the wars between different aboriginal African tribes, including the Xhosa. Britain became involved in the wars primarily for political reasons and to protect British trade interests. As early as 1795, British troops were sent to the Cape of Good Hope in order to keep the peace. Until 1895, the British were engaged in many frontier wars in South Africa, including but not limited to the Seventh Frontier War or the War of the Axe (1846-1847), the Xhosa/"Kaffir" Wars (1850-1853 and 1877-1878), and the Anglo-Zulu War (1879).

Although he spent over five years in South Africa, Norris was not involved in all of the Cape's numerous frontier wars. When sent to South Africa in 1846, he was first stationed at Fort Peddie, a camp situated between the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers, approximately 20 miles from the Indian Ocean. Norris and other members of the 6th Regiment were subsequently sent to Cape Town, thereby avoiding the skirmishes of the War of the Axe from 1846 to 1847. In addition, Norris spent some time at Fort Cox and approximately seven months at Fort White, where, in 1848, he was promoted to Lieutenant in the 6th Regiment.

While in Cape Town, however, Norris prepared for the forthcoming military campaigns and enjoyed weekly socializing with fellow soldiers and other British citizens living on the Cape of Good Hope. He also occupied his time by concentrating on his artwork, making watercolors and drawings of local scenes and people. Norris' diaries and art reflect his observations of life in South Africa, and his writings trace the development of a friendship and romantic relationship with a young woman named Annie de Smidt. Annie was a member of the well-established de Smidt family, of Dutch origin, who had settled in Cape Town in the early years of the nineteenth century. On May 9, 1850, just before Norris was to be thrown into battle on the eastern frontier, he wrote the following passage regarding his nearly two-year relationship with Annie: "Spent naturally a very pleasant evening, but the more I know the more difficult will it be to leave her. Such is life. We no sooner know and make friends than we are doomed to part" (Diary 1). In June, 1850, Norris' regiment was moved to the eastern frontier and involved in skirmishes during the early days of the Xhosa ("Kaffir") War.

In October 1851, members of the South African Xhosa people, then known to Britons as "Kaffirs," were gathering in great numbers near the Amatola Mountains and the town of Waterkloof, close to the Kroomie

Mountains. Norris's 6th Regiment, consisting of approximately 611 soldiers and under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Michell, was ordered to march toward the Kroomie Mountains and attack the stronghold of the Xhosa chief, Maqomo. During the early morning of October 14, 1851, while pursuing the Xhosa into the depths of the Kroomie mountain range, Norris was shot through the abdomen as he led his men into battle near the edge of a deep ravine; he died in his sleep later that same day. His body was taken to a nearby military post and buried by a clergyman of the English Church, Reverend J. Wilson.

There are two memorial tablets erected in memory of Norris, both of which are at St. Edmund Church, Kessingland, Suffolk. The first seems likely to have been installed by his family; it notes that he died at just 25 years of age, while leading his men in battle. The inscription on a second plaque declares it to have been "erected as a mark of esteem by his brother officers."

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises personal diaries, watercolors, and drawings by Robert Provo Norris, most of which were created while he was a soldier stationed on the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa during the Frontier ("Kaffir") Wars of the 1840s and 1850s. It also includes letters written by other correspondents and miscellaneous manuscripts about his life and death. The bulk of the collection represents the years 1846-1851.

Bibliography

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- Bull, Marjorie. *Abraham de Smidt 1829-1908: Artist and Surveyor-General of the Cape Colony*. Cape Town: Printpak, 1981.
- Godlonton, Robert. *A Narrative of the Kaffir War*. Cape Town: C. Struik, 1962.
- King, William Ross. *Campaigning in Kaffirland, or, Scenes and adventures in the Kaffir war of 1851-2*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1853.
- Le Cordeur, Basil. *The War of the Axe, 1847*. Johannesburg: Brenthurst, 1981.
- Lister, Georgina. *Reminiscences*. Johannesburg: Africana Museum/Cape Times Limited, 1960.
- Robert Provo Norris Memorial Tablets, St. Edmund Church, Kessingland, Suffolk.
- Suckling, Alfred. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk*. London: John Weale, 1846.
- Wellesley, Edward. *Letters of a Victorian Army Officer, Edward Wellesley*. Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing for the Army Records Society, 1995.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four series: I. Diaries; II. Correspondence and Writings; III. Sketchbook; IV. Watercolors and Drawings.

Collection Contents

Series I: Diaries

b. 1, f. 1

Diary*182 pages ; 19 cm*

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851

1847 September
1-1850 May 9

Holograph diary, including personal accounts of Norris' daily activities and observation of life in South Africa.

Several pages at various intervals appear to have been torn out of the diary. It is not clear whether they contained any portion of text.

The fly-leaf features a pen and ink drawing of a barking dog, along with Norris's name and regiment. It is dated August 22, 1846. "Cork Barracks" is listed as the location. Four graphite sketches, including one labeled "Cape Town" and another labeled, "Fort Albert from Camp," preface the diary portion, which begins in September, 1847. It tapers off in October, 1847 and then picks up January 1848. Norris resolves to write "more regularly than" before.

Norris records daily life at Fort Peddie, including "[p]arade in fatigue dress," and receiving orders for various companies to ready themselves to proceed to "undetermined places." Norris also notes envying other companies sent to King William's Town, which he regards as "the best post on the Frontier," although he does acknowledge that such a designation is "not saying much..." He helps to drive cattle (a resource much fought over during the Frontier Wars), writes of a horse race held between various officers, and records official treks to King William's Town and back. Norris writes of interactions with some locals, such as the buying of a pipe from a "friendly Kaffir," but tense relationships also are in evidence: "Brought a Kaffir boy...with a rope round his neck intending to take him a prisoner...but let him go as he returned the knife he had stolen." Life at camp appears fairly comfortable for an officer like Norris, although the South African frontier presents many hazards (sunburn and dangerous waters on the "Line Drift," a path on which Norris and others drive cattle frequently).

Norris writes of attending a court martial trial for theft in which the accused was found guilty and given "50 lashes & 6 months...hard labour." Norris's presence at other court martials is noted, including one for drunkenness. He also notes appearing in court to "give evidence on White- trial for the murder of Serg't Jelly."

Once he is transferred to Cape Town, Norris records frequent drills and parades, as well as an active social life. He seems interested, to a certain degree, in his surroundings and in South African culture. He sketches landscapes occasionally and at one point visits an acquaintance, "who shewed me some Bushman's poisoned arrows with a quiver and bow; a great curiosity being very hard to get them; the arrows are about 1 1/2 feet in length made of reed with about an inch of bone in which is beautifully set a small iron barb which has the poison on it; they are certain death. The Caffirs dread the sight of a bushman particularly when they utter their boar cry [?] on an ostrich feather. The poison which they get from some root is only known to themselves." Norris is so well integrated into the colonial culture, however, that he does not comment frequently on such matters. He longs for mail from home, recording letters, newspapers, and copies of "Punch" sent to him by his family. He writes to loved ones in England frequently and notes, in 1848, having his "portrait taken in daguerreotype" to send home.

Norris occupies some of his free time with reading, noting that Sheridan's "School for Scandal" is one of his favorite works. He also reads the work of Alexandre Dumas and Horatio Smith. Norris's journal records many dances and other assemblies at which the British and Dutch citizens of Cape Town are present.

In particular, Norris grows close to a young woman named Annie de Smidt and remarks upon the occasions when he can dance with her or escort her home. Norris calls frequently on the de Smidt family. Annie was the fourth of six children of Johannes de Smidt, Esq., the Assistant Commissary General. Annie's cousin, Abraham de Smidt, Jr., became a well-known surveyor for the Colonial government and a keen landscape watercolorist.

At the close of the journal, in May of 1850, Norris is ready to ship out on the "Hermes," and reflects on having to leave Cape Town. He seems to want to draw his relationship with Annie to a close, although he records giving her a brooch and confessing his feelings of love to her, shortly before his departure.

Subjects:

Xhosa (African people)

Geographic Names:

South Africa -- History -- Frontier Wars, 1811-1878

Genres / Formats:

Diaries

Names:

De Smidt, Annie, 19th century

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 -- Diaries

b. 1, f. 2

Diary

160 pages (with many blanks); 13 cm

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851

1848 September
8-1851 October
9

Holograph diary, including an alphabetical roll of British squads, personal entries and notes about Norris' debts and expenditures, some graphite sketches, and one pen and ink sketch.

The diary's fly-leaf has pen and ink drawing of a barking dog and the inscription "R.P. Norris." It contains various types of entries, the first being an alphabetical roll of "No. 2 Squad of 'B' or Captain E. Staunton's Company, 22nd Sept. 1847." Soldiers' vital statistics (age, height, marital status, etc.) are recorded here.

There are several pages of journal entries (in graphite and pen-and-ink), most of which record increasingly dangerous conditions near Fort White. Norris writes of multiple skirmishes involving heavy gunfire which incurred serious losses. He writes of seeing men dead on the battlefield and of the wounding of his friend "Cathy," a fellow soldier mentioned frequently in his other diary. Details of the native tribespeople's intimidating presence are found here--Norris at one points notes that "heat and fatigue compelled...[some] to drop coats and blankets which the enemy picked up and displayed to us, yelling most frightfully."

After a particularly serious skirmish, Norris writes, "what was our horror on seeing 15 of our countrymen lying dead partially stripped, 7 with them about 4 kaffirs & 2 wagon drivers. It was indeed a painful sight and to be obliged to leave the bodies unburied." Gunfire is never far away from the men at Fort White, and it is almost constantly within earshot, according to Norris's entries. The situation seems very grim as the diary entries cease, suggesting that Norris continued to face dangerous encounters with the opposing forces on a regular basis.

A few graphite sketches show landscapes and some small studies of various figures. At the back of the volume are pages of accounts paid and received, some of which consist of notes penned by other soldiers, stating that they have received money from Norris (presumably to pay back a debt).

Geographic Names:

South Africa -- History -- Frontier Wars, 1811-1878

Subjects:

Xhosa (African people)

Genres / Formats:

Diaries

Names:

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 -- Diaries

Series II: Correspondence and Writings

- | | | |
|----------------|--|---------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 3a(1) | <p>Envelope, addressed to "Captain Lawlor, R.A., 13 Marine Parade, Lowesloff ... with Rev. Mr. D.G. Norris's kind regards and best thanks."
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9</p> <p>Includes another unsigned and undated note, in a different hand, indicating that the manuscripts originally stored in the envelope (items 3a(2-7) in the present collection) should be saved for future generations.</p> <p>Genres / Formats:
Correspondence</p> <p>Names:
Lawlor, Captain
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851</p> | between 1847
and 1852? |
| <hr/> | | |
| b. 1, f. 3a(2) | <p>Manuscript copy of a letter, dated 1851 October 15, from John Michell, Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Regiment, to Reverend Dennis George Norris.
Michell, John, Sir, 1781-1866</p> <p>Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.</p> <p>Genres / Formats:
Correspondence</p> <p>Names:
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851</p> | 1851 October 15 |
| <hr/> | | |
| b. 1, f. 3a(3) | <p>Manuscript copy of a letter, dated 1851 October 15, from John Craven Mansergh to Reverend Dennis George Norris.
Mansergh, John Craven</p> <p>Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.</p> <p>Genres / Formats:
Correspondence</p> <p>Names:
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851</p> | 1851 October 15 |
| <hr/> | | |
| b. 1, f. 3a(4) | <p>Manuscript copy of a letter, dated 1852 January 15, from Captain Lawlor to John Michell, Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Regiment.
Lawlor, Captain</p> <p>Genres / Formats:
Correspondence</p> <p>Names:
Michell, John, Sir, 1781-1866
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851</p> | 1852 (?) January
15 |

-
- b. 1, f. 3a(5) **Manuscripts copy of excerpts from W.R. King's Campaigning in Kaffirland.** 1853?
The excerpts concern the death and burial of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
King, William Ross, 1822-1890
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-
- b. 1, f. 3a(6) **Manuscript copy of a letter from Morris Hall, Captain of the 6th Regiment, to Reverend Dennis George Norris.** 1854 July 30
Hall, Morris, Captain
Concerns the intention to erect a tablet in memory of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-
- b. 1, f. 3a(7) **Manuscript copy of excerpts of a letter from Captain Morris Hall of the Cape Mounted Rifles to an unidentified recipient.** 1851 November 12
Hall, Morris, Captain
Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-
- b. 1, f. 3b(1) **Newspaper clipping of an article (from an unidentified source) describing the Kaffir Bush, or Acacia Horrida.** circa 1850-1852
The native plant species served as protection for Xhosa fighters and as an obstacle to British troops during the Kaffir War.
- Genres / Formats:
Clippings
-
- b. 1, f. 3b(2) **Manuscript copy of excerpts of a letter from Captain Morris Hall to an unidentified recipient.** 1851 November 12
Hall, Morris, Captain
Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-

-
- b. 1, f. 3b(3) **Letter from John Craven Mansergh, Captain of the 6th Regiment, to Dennis George Norris.** 1851 November 12
Mansergh, John Craven
Written from Waterkloof, Kaffraria. Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-
- b. 1, f. 3b(4) **Manuscript letter from John Michell to Dennis George Norris.** 1851 October 15
Michell, John, Sir, 1781-1866
Written from camp near Waterkloof. Concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-
- b. 1, f. 3b(5) **Manuscript copy of excerpts from Graham's Town Journal.** 1851 October 25
Titled "Testimony to the worth of a beloved son"; concerns the death of Robert Provo Norris.
- Subjects:
Newspapers
- Names:
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
-

Series III: Sketchbook

b. 1, f. 4 **Graphite drawings and watercolor sketches of miscellaneous subjects, chiefly landscapes in South Africa.** 1848?

1 sketchbook (82 leaves); 11 x 21 cm

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851

Inscribed: "R.P. Norris." A piece of paper has been pasted onto the inside cover, with a note in ink reading, "Robert Provo Norris/Killed in Action 1851/ (Kaffir War)." Many of the sketches are dated 1848, which suggests that most of the content dates to this year.

Multiple sketches appear within the volume, including watercolor landscapes and graphite portraits. Norris depicts "Simon's Town, from the North Battery" in a particularly striking graphite landscape. He sketches a map (in graphite) labeled, "Post at Line Drift," a route (the Line Drift) which he traveled frequently while stationed at Camp Peddie. Norris's sketches are carefully observed, showing military forts and the surrounding natural settings in clear and vivid detail. Included are graphite portraits of Xhosa/"Kaffir" men and women, as well as a fine graphite portrait of a "Zolah Warrior" with shield and spear held aloft and a tall feathered headpiece. There are some more melancholy sketches of local African people in Western clothes, drinking liquor and looking destitute or debauched.

Both military and domestic architecture are shown in Norris's sketches, including parts of Cape Town, British forts, and a "Vicarage." He also features "Barnard Castle" in one highly finished drawing. Norris also tries his hand at comic sketches, perhaps imitating some of the content in his beloved "Punch" magazine, which was sent to him from his family at home in England.

A brief set of diary entries in graphite are recorded at the end of the volume, along with a newspaper clipping about the marriage of Captain P.W.P. Wallis, the brother-in-law of Robert Provo Norris's father, Rev. D.G. Norris, to Jemima Mary Gwyne.

Genres / Formats:

- Graphite drawings
- Sketchbooks
- Travel sketches -- South Africa
- Watercolors (paintings)

Geographic Names:

- South Africa -- Pictorial works

Subjects:

- Xhosa (African people)

Series IV: Watercolors and Drawings

Artist's portfolio, with two interior pockets. With gilt-stamped leather label of "R.P. Norris" on front cover. Includes various notes by Norris, in graphite and in pen and ink, on interior pockets. Several graphite, watercolor, and pen and ink sketches.

	Watercolors: landscapes and architectural subjects Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist	ca. 1846-51
b. 1, f. 5a(1)	<p>Unidentified fort and buildings on hilltops. <i>1 watercolor; 23 x 28.5 cm</i> Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist</p> <p>Watercolor depicts grassy hills with a set of fort-like buildings arranged on hilltops in the foreground. The scene is viewed from a distance and there are no indications of where the sketch was made. Unsigned.</p> <p>Genres / Formats: Watercolors (paintings)</p>	circa 1846-1851
b. 1, f. 5a(2)	<p>Landscape with unidentified fort at center. <i>1 watercolor sketch; 15 x 24.5 cm</i> Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist</p> <p>Watercolor sketch showing a small military fort in the middle of a grassy valley, with brushy hills surrounding it. A few figures can be seen at various points on the outskirts of the area, with one figure appearing near a small hut with a smoking chimney at right, guards stationed at points around the fort, and what seems to be a woman walking with a basket on her head at left in the foreground.</p> <p>Genres / Formats: Watercolors (paintings)</p>	circa 1846-1851
b. 1, f. 5a(3)	<p>Landscape with fort as seen from riverbank. <i>1 watercolor sketch; 22.5 x 28.5 cm</i> Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist</p> <p>Watercolor sketch showing a large stone building from a distance. In the foreground, a river or stream curves to the left. Large square rocks appear on one bank and a gnarled tree sits on the opposite bank at right. Brush covers the flats and hills surrounding the river and large blue mountains can be seen in the distance beyond the valley in which the building sits. Unsigned and unidentified.</p> <p>Genres / Formats: Watercolors (paintings)</p>	circa 1846-1851

Watercolors: landscapes and architectural subjects (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5a(4) **"Fort Cox," brushy hills and mountains in background.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 11 x 23 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor depiction of a low stone fort with wooden gates. A British flag flies from the flagpole at center. A sentry in a red coat stands guard at right. Brushy hills and purple mountains rise in the distance. Labeled "Fort Cox" on reverse in graphite.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(5) **Church building in grassy valley.** 1850 September
1 watercolor; 17.5 x 25 cm 10
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor of a Victorian style stone church with an arched Gothic glass window at front and narrow arched windows. Two figures sit on a rock in the foreground, before a small pool of water. Other buildings lie to the side of the church and an imposing blue mountain range rises in the distance. Labeled on reverse, "Sept. 10th/50."
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(6) **Castle, "Near KW Town."** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on either side of sheet; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor image of a castle seen by night. It rises on a rocky shoreline, with water seen at the right and beyond it. The viewer is situated behind the building, with some low-lying rocks in the foreground. Unlabeled.
 On the reverse is a view of grassy and bush-covered hills, with low stone buildings, sketched in graphite, seen in the distance. This image is incomplete. Labeled in graphite, "Near KW [?] Town," likely meaning that this was a view of the area near King William's Town.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(7) **Stone tower on coastline.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Somewhat incomplete watercolor sketch of a rocky but flat coastline on which a tall stone tower (presumably a military lookout) appears. Blue mountains are seen on the waterfront in the background. Rocks are loosely sketched in the foreground. Unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: landscapes and architectural subjects (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5a(8) **Cypress trees with man sitting under them, church tower in background.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 25 x 17.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 A fine watercolor showing a man in a blue jacket, beige pants, and pointed straw hat sitting on a stone block under a small grove of cypress trees. Beyond this area, which appears to be a fenced park, a stone tower rises in the center distance. Unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(9) **Lookout tower or blockhouse on coastline/ Brushy rock chasm.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on each side of sheet; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor sketch of a multi-storey stone lookout/blockhouse structure on flat coastline with rocky prominences. A ship is sketched loosely in the water and blue mountains lie on the distant shore.
 On the reverse side is an incomplete watercolor sketch of a brush-covered rocky chasm. The rock surfaces are reddish, with mountains seen in the distance.
 Neither image is labeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(10) **Stone fort buildings in grassy lowland, rocky feature on hilltop beyond.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor image of stone buildings, likely part of a British fort. There is a large two-storey building and a smaller, lower, building to its side. A low wooden fence runs along a lush green space with trees and bushes--perhaps a garden or lawn area. The buildings lie in a grassy lowland, with a hill behind them. A rounded rocky formation rises at the hilltop in the background. Unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5a(11) **Coastline fort / Wooden cabins.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on either side of sheet; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor sketch of a mutli-storey stone fort sitting on a rocky coastline. The fort is seen at some distance, with the beach, a rocky formation, and the water in the foreground. Unlabeled.
 On the reverse is a watercolor and graphite sketch (incomplete) of wooden cabins. They appear to be part of some kind of settlement or military post. Trees are sketched in around the two cabins visible here. Unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: city views

- b. 1, f. 5b(1) **Rooftop view of stone buildings with verandas, ships just off shore / Sketch of arched bridge.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, 1 on each side of sheet ; 18 x 27 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Watercolor sketch of a set of stone buildings with a low stone wall around them. The buildings have a couple of false fronts but are otherwise simple, with long pillared verandahs. Ships can be seen, their sails unfurled, in the body of water that lies just beyond this area. Mountains are ranged along the distant shoreline. Label is mostly illegible.
- On the reverse is an incomplete sepia wash sketch showing an arched bridge and a tall tree. Unlabeled.
- Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

- b. 1, f. 5b(2) **View of stone buildings with verandas and false front / Mountainous chasm.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on either side of sheet ; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Watercolor sketch, incomplete, showing buildings with long pillared verandas seen in another of Norris's watercolors. The waterfront can be seen beyond these buildings. On the reverse side is a watercolor sketch of a craggy, grass and bush covered chasm or pass. Both images are unlabeled/unsigned.
- Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: people

- b. 1, f. 5c(1) **"Eno: A Kaffir Chief."** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor, tipped into decorative mat ; 14.5 x 17 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Portrait of "Eno: A Kaffir Chief," showing a middle-aged African man with a leopard-skin cape draped around his shoulders. He wears a black beaded necklace and earring. His hair is cropped short. It is unclear how Norris came to paint this portrait--whether Eno was a prisoner of the British regiment or had some kind of pact of non-aggression with colonial forces.
- Subjects:
 Xhosa (African people)
- Genres / Formats:
 Portraits
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: people (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5c(2) **"Attack on Fort White, 3 January 1851."** 1851 January
1 watercolor; 15 x 25 cm
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
Watercolor sketch showing an encampment of Xhosa/"Kaffir" warriors in foreground, with the British Fort White seen in the middle-distance in a grassy valley floor. The warriors, who appear to be naked, hold rifles and are clustered in small groups here and there on a flat dusty area. There are no British troops seen in this image, done presumably sometime after the attack. Labeled in graphite on reverse. Unsigned.
- Geographic Names:
South Africa -- History -- Frontier Wars, 1811-1878
- Genres / Formats:
Watercolors (paintings)
- Subjects:
Xhosa (African people)
-
- b. 1, f. 5c(3) **"Kaffirs" portrait of man, two women, and infant.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 26.5 x 18.5 cm
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
Watercolor portrait of three Xhosa/"Kaffir" tribespeople. A man stands holding a long wooden implement, keeping his hands and body wrapped in a beige colored cloak. A woman with a beaded or colorful band around her breast, beige skirt, and golden bangles stands holding a small wooden or woven bowl. Another woman kneels in the foreground holding a bushel of reeds. She has an infant strapped to her back. It is not known whether the three subjects posed for this portrait or were observed from a distance by Norris. Labeled in graphite. Unsigned.
- Subjects:
Xhosa (African people)
- Genres / Formats:
Portraits
Watercolors (paintings)
-

Watercolors: people (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5c(4) **Xhosa /"Kaffir" man addressing tribe members.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor; 18.5 x 26.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor sketch of a Xhosa/"Kaffir" man standing to address other assembled tribespeople. The standing man wears a leopard cloak draped over one shoulder, an arm- and waist-band of thin woven or metal material, and has a necklace. His body is largely uncovered, while the gathered men are mostly wrapped up in beige capes. They look attentively at him as he speaks, pointing his finger towards some object in the distance at right. They are gathered in a dusty stretch of lowland. Colors are labeled on reverse in pen and ink and graphite title reads, "Fancy [?] sketch of Kaffirs." Unsigned/undated.
- Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
- Subjects:
 Xhosa (African people)
-
- b. 1, f. 5c(5) **"Meeting of Kaffirs on 21 Dec[ember] 1850 at Fort Cox...to Meet Sir H. Smith."** 1850 December
1 watercolor with graphite sketch on reverse; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor depicts assembly of Xhosa/"Kaffir" people outside the Fort Cox buildings. Inside, presumably, is Sir Harry Smith, the colonial governor, who held a meeting with Xhosa leaders in late December, 1850. The watercolor is loose in style, with people depicted as vertical dashes of brown paint with darker brown dots for heads. The sketch is labeled in graphite. This meeting was to be the last of its kind before war again broke out within days.
- On the reverse is a loose graphite sketch of a wooded area with low squarish buildings at left. It is labeled "Mick [?]."
- Geographic Names:
 South Africa -- History -- Frontier Wars, 1811-1878
- Subjects:
 Xhosa (African people)
- Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-

Watercolors: people (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5c(6) **"Cape Corps," portrait of an African man in military garb.** 1850 November
1 watercolor; 21.5 x 17.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Watercolor portrait, full-length, of an African man with a moustache wearing a British or European military costume. He has a billed cap (with initials "C.M.R." for "Cape Mounted Rifles" embroidered or stamped on it) and a tight, high-collared, jacket, both in dark blue, and beige trousers. He also wears black leather boots. He stands with arms crossed, looking sideways at the viewer. A metal sword is slung at his waist. In graphite are sketched mounted military men, at considerable distance in the background. The image is labeled in graphite.
- Subjects:
 Xhosa (African people)
- Genres / Formats:
 Portraits
 Watercolors (paintings)
-

Graphite drawings: people

- b. 1, f. 5d(1) **Mounted officer riding a galloping horse.** circa 1846-1851
1 graphite sketch; 18.5 x 22.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- A detailed graphite drawing of an officer in full uniform (including cape, tall hat, and sash) astride a horse who runs or leaps with wide eyes and outstretched feet. The officer looks back over his shoulder and his sword is held out in his right hand. His heavy saddle and other equipment are shown clearly. Unlabeled.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
- Subjects:
 Horses in art
-
- b. 1, f. 5d(2) **Jockey on horseback with dog.** circa 1846-1851
1 graphite sketch; 16.5 x 20.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Graphite sketch of a jockey or rider in a lightweight cap and riding clothes astride a horse who leaps or gallops forward. A dog is shown running alongside the horse, although the dog has been sketched over with shading/cross-hatching. The image is initialed "RN." It likely represents a scene from one of the many horse races that Norris seemed fond of attending while in the Cape Town area.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
- Subjects:
 Horse racing
-

Graphite drawings: people (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5d(3) **African (Xhosa?) woman carrying baskets on her head.** circa 1846-1851
1 graphite sketch; 18.5 x 14 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- An African woman is seen from behind in this apparently incomplete sketch. She bears three baskets on her head and carries a fourth basket in her hand. She wears some kind of band-like top, with a wrapped long skirt. Her feet are bare and she wears bracelets on her wrists. A palm tree is sketched loosely at left. Unlabeled.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
 Portraits
- Subjects:
 Xhosa (African people)

-
- b. 1, f. 5d(4) **Portrait of a young man.** 1836
1 graphite sketch; 18.5 x 13.8 cm
- Graphite portrait by an accomplished artist, showing a young man who appears to be in his twenties. The subject has large clear eyes, long sideburns, and no beard. He has a pleasant expression and wears a high-collared jacket, shirt, and cravat. It is unlikely that the subject is Robert Provo Norris, as the drawing is initialed and dated, "ER. 1836," and Robert would have been only ten years old at the time. The portraitist, "ER," is unidentified.
- On the reverse is a partial and incomplete graphite portrait of another sitter.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
 Portraits

Graphite drawings: landscapes

- b. 1, f. 5d(5) **"Panoramic" view of military buildings and encampment.** circa 1846-1851
1 graphite sketch; 23 x 50 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- The sketch is unsigned and unidentified, although it has "Road" written faintly to indicate a narrow road running in the foreground. An unusual building with two stories and a hinged sort of structure atop it is seen here. A sentry stands on guard near a small post. Another building is visible at left and there are trees and a small tent. The image carries over past the folded edge and onto the reverse. A military encampment is sketched faintly on the last two portions.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings

Graphite drawings: landscapes (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5d(6) **View of a lowland or valley floor with hills in distance/ "Fort White."** circa 1846-1851
2 graphite sketches, one on either side of sheet ; 17.5. x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Graphite sketch of a British fort in a low-lying grassy area. Hills can be seen in distance. Labeled, "Fort White."
- On the reverse is a graphite sketch of a grassy lowland with hills in distance. It appears to depict a location similar to that shown on the opposite side of the sheet, so it is likely of the area surrounding Fort White.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
-
- b. 1, f. 5d(7) **Tents inside a fort/Incomplete sketch of tents.** circa 1846-1851
2 graphite sketches, one on either side of sheet ; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Graphite sketch of tents set up on the inside yard of a stone fort. There are seventeen tents, all assembled at close quarters to one another. Presumably, these were officers' tents, much like the one Robert Provo Norris occupied (according to his diary). This is a detailed depiction. Unlabeled.
- On the reverse is a view at slightly closer range of the same tents. Though incomplete, this image shows one tent's structure and rigging in some greater detail. Unlabeled.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings
-
- b. 1, f. 5d(8) **Coastline with mountains and ships in water.** circa 1846-1851
1 graphite sketch ; 16.5 x 24 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
- Graphite sketch, somewhat incomplete, of tall brushy mountains, whose tops are obscured by clouds, towering over a coastal settlement. A few ships can be seen in the water. Unlabeled.
- Genres / Formats:
 Graphite drawings

Pen and ink drawings

Pen and ink drawings (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5d(9) **Sketch of an officer in uniform.** circa 1846-1851
1 pen and ink sketch, with a partial (torn off) watercolor on the reverse ; 17.5 x 12.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 , artist
 Pen and ink sketch of an officer wearing a feathered and visored helmet and full uniform. He stands with his sword pointed at the ground. A loose profile is sketched above this image.
 On the reverse is part of a watercolor landscape, torn in half. Graphite scribbles and writing covers this watercolor, with some handwriting practiced and the name "Charles Henry de Rouvignes" written at the bottom of the page. It is unclear why this name appears here, although similar scribbles appear over another of the pieces in this collection.
 Genres / Formats:
 Pen and ink drawings
 Portraits

Watercolors: landscapes and exterior/natural settings

- b. 1, f. 5e(1) **Rocky coastline scene /unfinished shoreline village.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolor and graphite sketches, 1 on reverse side of the other ; 25 x 36 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 , artist
 Watercolor sketch showing a rocky coastline with large mountains stretching up from water at left, a small building on the shore towards the foreground at left, and a curving dirt road or path in the immediate foreground. Unsigned/unidentified.
 On the reverse: an incomplete watercolor and graphite sketch of a shoreline village. Natural features are painted with a light wash of color and buildings and other features remain only outlined in graphite.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
- b. 1, f. 5e(2) **Unfinished tree with rocky shore in the distance.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor ; 25 x 36 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 , artist
 Unfinished watercolor sketch showing a grassy area in foreground with a tree at left. Purplish rocky hills rise along a coastline seen in the background. Unsigned and unidentified.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: landscapes and exterior/natural settings (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5e(3) **"Near [?] Zanderend," river and mountains / "River Loudes [East London?] End" graphite sketch.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor with a graphite sketch (incomplete) on reverse; 17.5 x 25 cm
 Watercolor scene of a calm river with spiky green plants growing at banks in foreground and at left. On the left shoreline are bulbous rocks and trees. Lowlands extend to the right, and large mountains rise in the distance. The watercolor is signed, "Near [?] Zanderend," suggesting it was done near the Zander End mountain range/river.
 On the reverse is a loose graphite sketch of a five-pillared bridge. It is labeled "River Loudes [?] End," but possibly indicates the area of East London, a South African port city.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5e(4) **Zander End scene /graphite sketch of coastal buildings.** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor, with graphite sketch on reverse; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor image of the Zander End river/mountains. A similar image to another in Norris's watercolors. This version appears to be slightly more complete, with a more finished look to details. The watercolor is done with careful attention to detail. Unlabeled.
 On the reverse is an incomplete graphite sketch of some low tower-like lookouts on a rocky bit of coastline, along with other stone buildings. The sketch is partial, and other graphite 'doodles' suggest that the paper was used to practice drawing shapes (a horse's head and architectural features are loosely sketched here). Unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5e(5) **Village in grassy hills /"Fort Cox," distant view.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on either side of sheet; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor scene of grassy hills dotted with brush and trees. Low stone buildings, presumably part of Fort Cox, are seen on a hilltop in the background. Unlabeled.
 On the reverse is an image of two African men sitting in the foreground, one of whom looks towards Fort Cox, which can be seen as a congregation of many buildings and tents grouped on neighboring hilltops. A dirt road connects the various parts of the fort and its outlying buildings. Labeled in graphite.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Watercolors: landscapes and exterior/natural settings (continued)

- b. 1, f. 5e(6) **Brushy hills and mountains / Zander End view.** circa 1846-1851
2 watercolors, one on either side of sheet ; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor view of brushy, grassy, hills and purplish mountains in distance. A few buildings appear at the right.
 On the reverse is an image of the Zander End river/mountains that feature a few times in Norris's paintings. Neither image is complete. Unsigned/unlabeled.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5e(7) **"__amber's __op, Taben-Dodo, June 51, In front of Fort White" hilltop beyond a dusty lowland.** 1851 June
1 watercolor ; 17.5 x 25.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Watercolor sketch of a dusty lowland in foreground with brushy hill rising to a slightly rocky peak in the background. A dirt path appears to wind up towards the peak. The title is not completely legible, but indicates that this image is of a location in the Tabendodo Mountains (a name which seems to have become obsolete).
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. 1, f. 5e(8) **"Cape Town/Henry de ____ [?]"** circa 1846-1851
1 watercolor and 1 watercolor-and-graphite sketch, on either side of sheet ; 10 x 15.5 cm
 Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851, artist
 Small watercolor sketch of Cape Town, done with fine attention to detail. Scene shows two people standing at some distance from foreground, under a group of cypress trees. They look down through hills on either side to the town at the base, on the shore. Mountains are shown on the distant coast. Labeled in graphite.
 On reverse is a rough graphite/sepia wash sketch of an African man wearing a pointed straw sunhat. Written in graphite is the name, "Henry de ____," along with other graphite scribbles, done as though to practice handwriting.
 Genres / Formats:
 Watercolors (paintings)

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

British -- South Africa -- History -- 19th century
Memorials
Xhosa (African people)
Xhosa (African people) -- Colonization -- South
Africa -- Cape of Good Hope

Geographic Names

Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) --
Description and travel
Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) -- History --
1795-1872
Great Britain -- Colonies -- Africa -- History --
19th century
South Africa -- Description and travel
South Africa -- History -- Frontier Wars,
1811-1878

Genres / Formats

Diaries
Graphite drawings
Landscape drawings -- South Africa
Letters
Travel sketches -- South Africa
Views -- South Africa
Watercolors (paintings)

Names

De Smidt, Annie, 19th cent
Hall, Morris, Captain -- Correspondence
Mansergh, John Craven -- Correspondence
Michell, John, Sir, 1781-1866 -- Correspondence
Norris, Dennis George, b. 1798 or 9 --
Correspondence
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851 -- Diaries

Corporate Bodies

Great Britain. Army. Royal Warwickshire
Regiment
Great Britain. Army -- Military Life

South Africa. Army. Imperial Cape Mounted
Riflemen

Contributors

Norris, Robert Provo, d. 1851
Hall, Morris, Captain
Mansergh, John Craven
Michell, John, Sir, 1781-1866