

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AND GENERAL JEAN-FRANÇOIS ALLARD

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801-1839), the famous Fauj-e-Khas was heavily influenced by French officers. A former Captain in Napoleon's cavalry who served in Austerlitz, the Russia campaign and Waterloo, General Jean-François Allard was invited by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to create Fauj-e-Khas cavalry brigades modeled after the French heavy cavalry. General Allard led Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army during 1822-39 and modernized the Fauj-e-Khas. He introduced drills, regimental organization, French-style helmets, breastplates and uniforms, saddles, sabres, and trumpet calls; some of these elements are still used in ceremonial form by the modern Indian Army's 61st cavalry. Fond of General Allard, Maharaja Ranjit Singh arranged General Allard to be married to a princess from Chamba, Bannu Pan Dei.



In September 2016, a life-sized bronze bust of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was unveiled in St. Tropez, the birthplace of General Allard, in the presence of General Allard's descendants. The bust was presented by the Punjab Government. Today, at Allard Square in St. Tropez, the statues of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, General Jean-François Allard and Bannu Pan Dei stand as testimony to links forged by Maharaja Ranjit Singh over 200 years ago.
