



Scots who made their mark on..... *The History of Canada 7: Donald A. Smith*



Sandford Fleming was but one of several historical figures whose name is associated with the early railway infrastructure of Canada and what was to become The Canadian Pacific Railway, many of them Scots, such as

Sir Donald Alexander Smith, (1820-1914) Lord Strathcona

Smith was born in Forres, Moray to a local merchant and a Canadian mother. Through an uncle, who was brother to famous fur-trader John Stewart (after whom a Lake and a River in Canada are named) Smith at the age of 18 was given a post as a junior clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company. He himself had a flair for trapping and for horticulture and by the age of 40 he had become the chief trader and factor on Hudson Bay.



Ten years later he was the well-established Governor based in Montreal and through calm diplomacy he helped to prevent the Red River rebellion developing further. When the Canadian Parliament purchased the Hudson's Bay interest in the North-West Territory Smith again played a vital role, seeing fair compensation for all traders.

Thus having established a formidable reputation for common sense, business practice and fairness, Smith became a partner in an insolvent railway line. Forming an at times awkward partnership with Sir John A. Macdonald they put together the St Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba company and pushed forward the Canadian Pacific Railway Company project to completion, being given the honour of driving in the last "Golden" spike at Craigellachie in the Rocky Mountains (the original village of that name also being in Moray).

See photo below taken on 7th November 1885.



The Golden Spike ceremony, with Donald Smith right at the centre, a photo used almost in its entirety by this 1999 Nicaraguan souvenir sheet printed in sepia.
Catalogue reference Michel B288

In 1896 Donald Smith, by now an experienced politician and Member of Parliament, was appointed High Commissioner for Canada by the British Government which later elevated him to the House of Lords with the imposing title, Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal.

By now a man of great wealth, he donated funds to hospitals and universities in Scotland and in Canada and worked to improve the Canadian waterways. He also raised a cavalry regiment of Canadian troopers to fight against the Boers in the South African Wars and died at the age of 96. Strathcona Provincial Park on Vancouver Island is named after him, as are various other settlements in Canada.



2000 issue in Regiments series showing Lord Strathcona's Horse



Forbidden Plateau, Strathcona National Park



1965 issue; medical missionary to Newfoundland Sir Wilfred Grenfell steering his ship the *Strathcona*



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Scots who made their mark on.....

The History of Canada 8: Sir Hugh Allan



Controversial Entrepreneur who became The Richest Man in Canada

One hundred and fifty years ago Hugh Allan, who hailed from Saltcoats in Ayrshire, as a shipping magnate and business entrepreneur with fingers in many other business pies, became the richest man in Canada with wealth which would rival that of Bill Gates today .



His father, Alexander, a cousin of Robert Burns, had founded the Allan Shipping Line early in the 19th century which transported cargo and

passengers between Scotland the North America and it was only natural for his six sons to take an interest in business, particularly in shipping.

Hugh Allan born in 1810 settled in Montreal in his teens and worked for the grain merchant William Kerr. After a spell back in Britain he returned to Montreal in 1831 to become a commission agent in a leading importer, Millar, Parlane and Co. Allan enjoyed so much success in this role that he became a partner in the company on its expansion in 1835. He then sought to borrow very large sums of capital from his father and brothers to purchase both sailing ships and steamers and within a few years the company had the largest fleet in the North Atlantic merchant marine, including ocean-going and smaller vessels for use on the St Lawrence River.

Within a further fifteen years he had become President of the Board of Trade of Montreal and used his influence to encourage the government of Lower Canada to establish a fortnightly commercial shipping service between Montreal and Liverpool, run by the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company but popularly known as "the Allan Line". Many of the ships he used were Clyde built.

This line also carried mail and helped to bring new citizens to Canada from Britain and Europe. The conditions in which passengers, encouraged by the sentiment that "Canada is a cheap place to live in" were taken from Europe to the New World were not particularly good, as they were packed in in stowage alongside troops, mail bags, wheat and other cargo for the princely sum of £3/10/0 a head in the mid 1850's, though this carried free passes to use the Grand Trunk Railways (with which Allan had an arrangement) once they got to Canada. Passengers were guaranteed "a religious, sober but cheerful atmosphere on the journey", "a good supply of biscuits" if their own food ran out and a "a patent life preserving pillow" in case of emergencies !

As any good businessman would Allan began to diversify his interests investing in mining and in the production of cloth, shoes, newspapers, insurance, tobacco and iron and steel. But it was his interest in telegraphic technology that made him most money. As President of the Montreal Telegraph Company he sold the firm to the American Bell Telephone Coy for \$75K in the mid 1850's. In 1878 Allan himself had made of the first long-distance telephone calls in the history of Canada from Montreal to Princes Louise is Ottawa.

Because of his interests both in steel making and



Se-tenant pair from Canada in 2004 depicts Canadian born Sir Samuel Cunard and Scot Sir Hugh Allan as founders of the transatlantic mail service.

telecommunications Allan was keen to be involved in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and he offered a very sizeable inducement to the then Conservative Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald's re-election campaign in 1872, in order to be granted the contract for building the railway. Ironically, this happened the year after Allan had been knighted by Queen Victoria. As Sir John A had accepted the donation this "Pacific Scandal" brought about his electoral defeat the following year, and Allan's great plans fell through.

Allan also owned shares in a whole series of banks and himself established the Merchants Bank of Canada which for a while was the second biggest bank in Canada, though it nearly collapsed in 1877 when its assets proved not to be what they seemed ! All his financial, insurance and newspaper interests permitted him great influence over politicians, lawyers and local businessmen. If he wanted something done, he usually just had to ask for it and it was delivered. However, he did not have a good reputation as an employer in any of his business concerns, being more concerned with making money than the welfare of his many employees. He owned a great deal of real estate in and around Montreal including his personal family home the palatial "Ravenscrag", - with a ballroom that held 500 people - on Mount Royal, overlooking the city.

Sir Hugh died in Edinburgh at the age of 72 shortly after the death of his wife Matilda who had born him nine daughters and four sons but his body was returned to Canada and buried in Montreal.

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