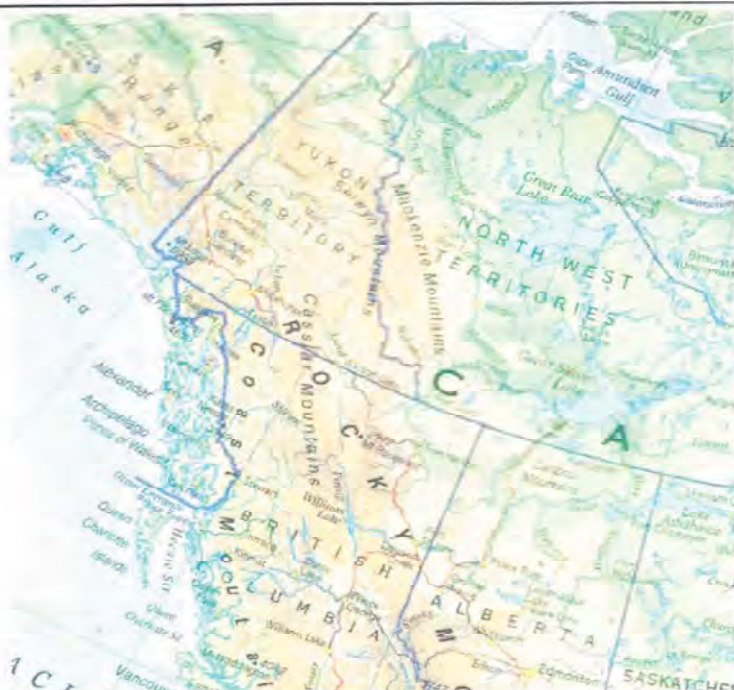




Scots who made their mark on.....

The History of Canada 1: Alexander Mackenzie



Left, the source of Mackenzie River can be located at the S.W. corner of the Great Slave Lake, to the left of "A" on this section of a map of Canada with Lake Athabasca /



Fort Chipewyan bottom right.

Bella Coola is a small town on North Bentinck Arm, a inlet of the Pacific and though not shown on this scale of map is roughly situated by the "o" in "Mountains" of "Coastal Mountains"



Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1764-1820)

In the same decade that Mungo Park was seeking the source of the River Niger in Western Africa, Alexander Mackenzie from Stornoway was also exploring by canoe and foot in North Western Canada, making two major journeys, one in search of the North West Passage and in completing the second so making the first recorded trans-Canada journey by a European.

Mackenzie's family had sought a new life in New York when he was ten but during the Revolution after the death of his father, his aunts had sought greater security for him by schooling him in Montreal. Aged 15 he obtained work with the newly formed fur trading North West Company, which was to become a major rival to the Hudson's Bay Company and when Mackenzie was in his mid -20's he was sent to the far North West to found a trading post at Fort Chipewyan, one of the first such posts in what is now Alberta. Mackenzie learned from the local people that the rivers flowed to the North West and he began an exploration by canoe which led him in July 1789 to "discover" a major river which was eventually named after him, though it did not, as he had hoped, lead to the North West Passage : it is alleged that with typical Scots dourness and candour, he named it his "Disappointment River". Mackenzie published his journal detailing this exploration in which his party had travelled over a thousand miles in 14 days. In all his journey of 3,000 miles took just over 100 days. A scene from this river is shown in the 1994 4th Series of Canadian River stamps.



Late in the century great strides had been made by several scientists in determining better ways of deducing longitude, particularly after the development of John Harrison's chronometers and aware of his own shortcoming in this field Mackenzie

returned to Britain for the latter part of 1791 and the first few months of the following year to brief himself with new knowledge.

He began his second exploration the following year, this time heading due West for the Pacific Ocean, firstly travelling again with native guides and other European adventurers along the Peace River in the Yukon, as he had done three years earlier. Taking the kind of advice from indigenous people that Mungo Park had ignored in Africa, Mackenzie's party eventually managed to traverse what are now called the Mackenzie Mountains, then the Rocky Mountains and finally the Coastal Mountains and made it to the Pacific coast at Bella Coola, British Columbia in mid July 1793. He then had to beat a hasty retreat as gathering local Bella Bella war canoes made it clear that the party's arrival was not a welcome one, possibly because of previous clashes with George Vancouver a couple of months before. But not before Mackenzie had recorded on a rock the fact that he had been there: see photo and stamp above. This (re-inscribed) rock is now to be found in The Sir Alexander Mackenzie Provincial Park. Mackenzie's second exploration had covered 2,300 miles.

At the start of the new century Mackenzie was knighted and served in the parliament of Lower Canada before marrying and returning to Scotland. Mackenzie had been living with serious liver problems for some time when at the age of 56 he died at Dunkeld returning to his home in The Black Isle . His body lies in a cemetery at Avoch, the land around which was the property of his young wife.

Showing immense determination, imagination, strength of character and leadership Mackenzie was an epitomé of the enterprising Scot.

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Scots who made their mark on.....

The History of Canada 2: Sandford Fleming



Time Baronet

Aged 18, Sandford Fleming and his brother David left their Kirkcaldy home to begin a new life in Kingston, Ontario in the Summer of 1827. He was to become one of the most influential Scots emigrants in the history of Canada and a figure of international importance.

A talented cartographer and a faithful diarist he both charted much of the local area and recorded its daily life in revealing detail, but he sought wider horizons both literally and metaphorically. Amongst his first accomplishments were surveying Toronto harbour and several developing railway systems which led to his appointment as Chief Engineer of The Northern Railway. Within a few years he was proposing a railway line running from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts of "British North America".

Amongst his other early accomplishments of note were the design of an in-line skate and the foundation of the the first Canadian society dedicated to science and the advancement of knowledge, The Royal Canadian Institute, (R.C.I.) based at the University of Toronto.

Two years later Fleming designed his new country's first adhesive postage stamp, the 3d American Beaver now catalogue by Gibbons (as S.G. 1) being for sale at £11,000, though reprised in cheaper issues such as S.G. 439, a hundred years later.



But despite this versatility, Fleming's essential calling was to the burgeoning railway system and in 1855 he was appointed to head up the engineering departments of the Northern Railway. Within three years he had proposed a railway to be built from coast to coast which project he then was appointed to survey. For safety and longevity he proposed iron railway bridges when wooden ones were standard as noted in the background of S.G. 892/3 (1977).



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The vast distances to be covered by such intercontinental railways and related communication networks impressed upon Fleming the need for the acceptance of a standard time system which he recommended to the R.C.I. in 1879 and a version of which was gradually adopted by all countries during the following decade.

However, he was not unopposed as the concept was literally "ahead of its time" and as or more controversial than the idea that humans should travel faster than walking pace in motor vehicle or by railway.

In late 1884 the Prime Meridian Conference meeting in Washington D.C. determined on the adoption of International Standard Time and twenty-four time zones across the world, which was the rival proposal of Englishman Sir George Biddell Airy of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich meaning that the Prime or 0° Meridian of the world would run through South East England. Thus the "Anti-Nought-Meridian" by definition was to be located in the Pacific Ocean and run through or around small island groups of states.



Yet it was Fleming who had accepted what seems so obviously correct today—that the universal time and day would begin at midnight 180° longitude and be announced by simultaneous bells ringing at Greenwich. The achievements of Fleming and Airy are marked in stamps from Tonga (1984 and Great Britain (1984 and 1999). Fleming was knighted in 1897

