

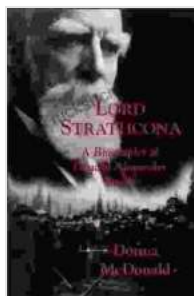
# Lord Strathcona: Biography of Donald Alexander Smith, Canadian Pioneer and Philanthropist



Donald Alexander Smith, 1st Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal (1820-1914), was a prominent Canadian pioneer, businessman, and philanthropist

who played a pivotal role in the development of Canada's transportation and tourism industries. Born in Scotland, Smith immigrated to Canada in 1838 and quickly rose through the ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), eventually becoming its governor.

In 1881, Smith was instrumental in negotiating the purchase of Rupert's Land from the HBC, which paved the way for the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). As a director and major shareholder of the CPR, Smith played a key role in its construction and expansion, linking Canada's east and west coasts and opening up vast new territories for settlement and development.



## Lord Strathcona: A Biography of Donald Alexander

**Smith** by Mario T. Garcia

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 617 pages



Beyond his business ventures, Smith was a generous philanthropist who supported numerous charitable causes, particularly in the areas of education and healthcare. He donated land for the establishment of McGill University's Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal and provided funding for the construction of many schools and libraries across Canada. Smith's contributions to Canadian society were recognized with numerous honors,

including a knighthood and a peerage as Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal.

## **Early Life and Career**

Donald Alexander Smith was born in Forres, Scotland, on August 6, 1820. His father was Alexander Smith, a merchant, and his mother was Mary Stewart. Smith received a good education, attending the Elgin Academy in Morayshire. At the age of 17, he emigrated to Canada with his family, settling in Lachine, Quebec. Smith's father hoped that he would become a farmer, but he soon found work as a clerk for the HBC in Montreal.

Smith quickly demonstrated a keen business sense and a talent for negotiation. In 1841, he was promoted to the position of chief factor of the HBC's Labrador district. During his time in Labrador, Smith developed close relationships with the local Inuit population and learned valuable skills in managing fur trade operations.

## **Governor of Hudson's Bay Company**

In 1868, Smith was appointed governor of the HBC, the largest fur trading company in the world. Under Smith's leadership, the HBC expanded its operations into the Northwest Territories and established trading posts throughout the region. Smith also played a key role in the negotiations that led to the purchase of Rupert's Land from the HBC by the Canadian government in 1881.

The purchase of Rupert's Land was a major step in the development of Canada. It gave the Canadian government control of a vast expanse of territory, including the Northwest Territories and the Arctic archipelago. The land purchase also paved the way for the construction of the CPR, which

would link Canada's east and west coasts and open up the West for settlement and development.

## **Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway**

In 1881, Smith was one of the main promoters of the CPR, a transcontinental railway that was to connect the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada. The construction of the CPR was a challenging and ambitious undertaking, but Smith was determined to see it through. He personally invested heavily in the railway and used his influence to secure government support for the project.

The CPR was completed in 1885, and it had a profound impact on the development of Canada. The railway opened up vast new territories for settlement and development, and it helped to unify the country. By providing a fast and efficient means of transportation, the CPR also played a major role in the growth of Canada's economy.

## **Later Years**

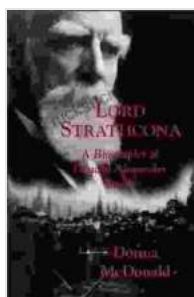
In addition to his business activities, Smith was a generous philanthropist. He supported numerous charitable causes, particularly in the areas of education and healthcare. He donated land for the establishment of McGill University's Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal and provided funding for the construction of many schools and libraries across Canada.

Smith was recognized for his contributions to Canadian society with numerous honors, including a knighthood and a peerage as Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal. He died in London, England, on January 21, 1914, at the age of 93.

## Legacy

Lord Strathcona was a visionary leader who played a major role in shaping the development of Canada. His work in the HBC and the CPR helped to open up the West for settlement and development. His philanthropy had a lasting impact on Canadian society, and his legacy continues to inspire Canadians today.

Many places in Canada are named in honor of Lord Strathcona, including Mount Strathcona on Vancouver Island, the Strathcona Glacier in the Canadian Rockies, and the Strathcona Hotel in Ottawa. His image has appeared on Canadian stamps and currency, and he is remembered as one of the most important figures in Canadian history.



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