



Scoundrels, Dreamers & Second Sons: British Remittance Men in the Canadian West

Mark Zuehlke

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“‘Remittance man’ was meant to be a disparaging term. It reflected the fact that these young men had been sent to the colonies to spare their families continuing embarrassment or shame. At home they had been scoundrels, dreamers, and second sons without future prospects. Perhaps in...the Canadian West they would make something of themselves. If they didn't, at least they would be far enough away that little disgrace would fall upon their families.” —Mark Zuehlke

Beginning in 1880, thousands of young, upper-class British men with few prospects were sent to the Canadian West to distance them from British society. Still supported by their families, thus earning them the title “remittance men,” these men set out to continue their lives of leisure in this new land.

With education, respectable breeding and the belief “from birth that they were superior beings,” the remittance men descended upon Western Canada with expectations of accomplishing something great and increasing their wealth. In reality, they hunted, played games, courted women, and enjoyed distinguished pursuits that squandered their parents' money and made hard-working Canadians raise their eyebrows.

Though their era in Western Canada was short, 1880–1914, “they left an indelible mark perpetuated by the stories and legends that sprung up around them.”

In *Scoundrels, Dreamers & Second Sons*, first published fifteen years ago, Mark Zuehlke traces the path of the remittance men through Western Canada, highlighting their adventures, limited successes and glorious failures.

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