

MacDonald, Ranald (b. 1844): First Teacher of English in Japan

In 1848, Ranald Macdonald, a Métis, was determined to visit Japan, which at the time was a closed country. Foreigners were prohibited from entering the country. He shipped from Hawaii on the whaler *Plymouth* and arranged to be dropped off, appearing to be a shipwrecked sailor, near the west coast of Ezo, Hokkaido. The Japanese authorities took him to Nagasaki as a prisoner. During his confinement in a Temple he met Einosuke Moriyami, an official interpreter of the Japanese shogunate and became the first teacher of English in Japan when he was asked to teach Moriyama and the other government interpreters.



A monument commemorating Ranald MacDonald in Nagasaki, Japan

Ranald was born on February 3, 1824 at Fort George (Astoria, Oregon), the eldest son of Hudson's Bay Company fur trader Archibald Macdonald and his wife Raven (Sunday) the daughter of Chinook Chief Comcomly. His mother died shortly after his birth and Ranald was raised by his stepmother Jane Klyne (also Métis). He and several of his step-siblings were sent to the Red River Academy at Fort Garry for their education. Later he was sent to St. Thomas, Upper Canada to train in banking under the tutelage of his father's friend Edward Ermatinger. Ranald had collected an impressive library of books which he had taken with him to Japan and this greatly aided his teaching efforts.

(Contributed by David N. Cooper.)



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