

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

DONALD MACKENZIE

June 16, 1783-January 20, 1851

Number 547

1971

In 1800, Donald Mackenzie left the highlands of Scotland for Montreal. He was only 17 years of age. Entering the fur trade as a clerk for the North West Company, he joined John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company in 1809, and spent the fall of 1811 exploring southern Idaho on his way to Astoria. He had a winter post at Lewiston in 1812, but with the complete failure of Astor's enterprise during the War of 1812, he left the Northwest for a few years. Returning with the North West Company in 1816, he organized the annual Snake expeditions which continued until 1832 for Hudson's Bay Company. In the process he laid the foundations for developing the fur trade in the region that later became Idaho. Both as an explorer and fur trader, he had a leading part in the beginnings of white occupation of Idaho and in establishing peaceful relations with the Indians. In 1822 he left the Northwest and soon assumed one of the most important posts in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, managing operations in the region around Winnipeg.

Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428