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Chief Engineer: Life of a Nation Builder, Sanford Fleming

Lorne Green

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Chief Engineer is the story of one of the most creative, adventurous, and yet too-often overlooked giants of the Industrial Age — Canada's Sandford Fleming. His influence spanned the North American continent and beyond. As chief engineer of the Intercolonial and Canadian Pacific railways, he shaped and steered the greatest engineering challenge of his day: the laying of the ribbons of railway steel that bound together a fledgling country. He can be credited as well with the telegraph cables that began to criss-cross the globe.

Few are aware that it was Fleming who gave us the system of universal time. He also designed the first Canadian adhesive postage stamp, which was issued in 1851.

Sandford Fleming's triumphs are all the greater considering the natural and human adversities obstructing every step of his way. Jealousies, back-stabbing, pork-barrel politics, and bureaucratic ineptitude were as intrinsic to mega-projects then as they are now. Fleming's life story constitutes a compelling and universal drama.

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