In 1869, the Meiji government established the Colonial Commission and began to develop Hokkaido in earnest. The following year, Kyotaka Kuroda was appointed vice-director of the commission and it was soon decided to proactively introduce the latest Western technologies to help with the region’s development. As a result, numerous overseas technicians were sent to Hokkaido, where development soon progressed under their guidance. Kuroda was promoted to director of the Colonial Commission in 1871. By inviting such foreign specialists, Kuroda placed the emphasis on employing experts from overseas regions with similar climates to Hokkaido, especially the United States, where the pioneers had achieved success. Kuroda welcomed the former United States Commissioner of Agriculture, Horace Capron as an advisor to the Colonial Commission, a position Capron held for four years. During these four years a total of 29 Americans worked as advisors to the commission, and a further 19 helped with Hokkaido’s development after Capron returned to the States. The legacy of these people remain in Hokkaido in the form of Western-style architecture; coals mines discovered in the late 1860s and early 70s, when the landscape of Hokkaido had been subject to Western influence; the European and colonial-style architecture which was adopted by the Commission. Crawford’s skills were highly acclaimed, particularly the engineering bridge that spanned the Tohoyira River. The railway construction work began in January 1880 and the route between Tapporo and Sapporo opened in November the same year. The route between Sapporo and Horonai was fully opened in November 1882, and Crawford’s achievements earned him the Order of the Rising Sun (2nd class), which was awarded in 1883.

Edwin Dun

Dun first arrived in Japan in 1873, and for the first few years was stationed at the No.3 Agricultural Experiment Station in a small town near Sapporo. After the Nanan Agricultural Experiment Station was completed near Hokkaido in 1876, Dun was transferred there, where he introduced techniques of castrating horses for the purpose of improving them for both military and agricultural use. In 1876, Dun began work on the construction of a new agricultural experiment station at Makomanai in the south of Sapporo, and the resulting Makomanai Cattle Ranch was completed the following year. From then until 1882, this site provided the base for the experiments, research and instruction required to develop Hokkaido’s agriculture and stockbreeding as an industry. Dun served as agricultural commissioner, encomposing a broad range of agricultural fields, from stockbreeding and general upland farming to land improvement. In 1883, Dun left for the States for only the second time in his career as an official of the U.S. government, and was subsequently made the United States’ Ambassador to Japan. Despite completing his term in 1897, Dun remained in Japan for the rest of his life.

Benjamin Smith Lyman

Lyman arrived in Japan in 1873, and first taught surveying methods, cartography, mathematics and mineral studies at the newly established Colonial Commission Tentative School (later became the Sapporo Agricultural College) in Shiba, Tokyo, before bringing his pupils to Hokkaido, where they spent 3 years surveying the different regions. Their work included geological research combined with topographical surveys, as well as the actual creation of maps. The surveys led Lyman to the discovery of coal in the Horonai coalfields of the Ishikari plains, which played a vital role in the development of Japan. It also led to the publication of the Japan’s first-ever broad-area geological report, which was issued in 1876. In honor of his achievements, in 2007 the Geological Society of Japan and geology-related organizations established May 10th - the day the report was published – as “Geology Day” in Japan.

William S. Clark

Clark was hired by the Japanese government and arrived in Japan along with two other educators, W. M. Wheeler and D. F. Penhallow, in 1876. He subsequently claimed that the aim of the education at the Sapporo Agricultural College was not to simply learn agricultural techniques, but also a wide range of subjects such as English literature, economics and psychology, and therefore all lessons were taught in English. Unlike the Colonial Commission’s demands for the establishment of detailed and strict school regulations, Clark demanded only that his students “be gentlemen.” Sapporo Agricultural College went on to produce many of Japan’s contemporary leaders, including Kanzo Uchimura, Inazo Nitobe and Kingo Miyabe. Despite Clark spending only eight months at Sapporo Agricultural College, his sincerity and enthusiasm remained in the hearts of his students, eventually contributing to the spirit of both the agricultural college and Hokkaido University, which the school went on to become. Even now, Clark’s parting words to his students, “Boys, be ambitious!” remain in the hearts of the people of Hokkaido.
In 1869, the Meiji government established the Colonial Commission and began to develop Hokkaido in earnest. The following year, Kyotaka Kuroda was appointed vice-director of the commission and it was soon decided to proactively introduce the latest Western technologies to help with the region’s development. As a result, numerous overseas technicians were dispatched to Hokkaido, where development soon progressed under their guidance. Kuroda was promoted to director of the Colonial Commission in 1871.

By inviting such foreign specialists, Kuroda placed the emphasis on employing experts from overseas regions with similar climates to Hokkaido, especially the United States, where the pioneers had achieved success. Kuroda welcomed the former United States Commissioner of Agriculture, Horace Capron as an advisor to the Colonial Commission, a position Capron held for four years. During these four years, Capron proposed a framework for the development of Hokkaido in the form of Western-style agriculture; coalmines discovered as a result of geological and mineral resource surveys that were carried out; roads and railways that were constructed; and also in various fields of education at the Sapporo Agricultural College, which the school went on to become.

Joseph U. Crawford

Crawford arrived in Japan in 1878 to carry out surveys on the Horonai Railway as a civil engineer for the Hokkaido Colonial Commission. This was the freight railway line planned to transport coal that had been discovered in Horonai, to the port, and was extremely important to the Hokkaido Colonial Commission. Crawford also produced the proposal for a rail link between Otaru and Sapporo, which was adopted by the Commission. Crawford’s skills were highly acclaimed, particularly the engineering involved in constructing the railway line amid the difficult cliff section between Otaru and Zenibako, and the steel bridge that spanned the Toyohira River. The railway construction work began in January 1880 and the route between Temya and Sapporo opened in November the same year. The route between Sapporo and Horonai was fully opened in November 1882, and Crawford’s achievements earned him the Order of the Rising Sun (2nd class), which was awarded in 1883.

These achievements are also recognized at the Otara City Museum (formerly the Otara Transportation Museum), where a statue of Crawford standing beside some surveying instruments is displayed. A railway facility park in the city of Mikasa also bears Crawford’s name.

Edwin Dun

Dun first arrived in Japan in 1873, and for the first few years was stationed at the No.3 Agricultural Experiment Station in a town in Abaru, Tokyo. After the Nanan Agricultural Experiment Station was completed near Hokkaido in Hokkaido, Dun was transferred there, where he introduced the technique of castrating horses for the purpose of improving them for both military and agricultural use. In 1885, Dun began work on the construction of a new agricultural experiment station at Makomanai in the south of Sapporo, and the resulting Makomanai Cattle Ranch was completed the following year. From then until 1882, this site provided the base for the experiments, research and instruction required to develop Hokkaido’s agriculture and stockbreeding as an industry. Dun was one of the leaders of Hokkaido, encompassing a broad range of agricultural fields, from stockbreeding and general upland farming to land improvement. In 1883, Dun left for the States, only to return the following year as an official of the U.S. government, and was subsequently made the United States’ Ambassador to Japan. Despite completing his term in 1897, Dun remained in Japan for the rest of his life.

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Edwin Dun Museum

Exhibiting records of Hokkaido’s development along with aspects of the life and achievements of the railroad’s founder, the first railroad line to start farming in Hokkaido, the Edwin Dun Museum stands in Edward Dun Memorial Park, which was once the site of Dun’s first farm building.

Address: 2-chome 3-dōri, Sapporo

Opening hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.