

## From the life of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller



Baron Ferdinand Jacob Heinrich von Mueller (Michel. No. 192) was born on 30.6.1825 in Rostock as the son of Danish parents. The father died early and the mother moved with the 4 children to Tönning/Nordfriesland at the mouth of the Eider. After school he began an apprenticeship as a pharmacist in Husum, then studied pharmacy in Kiel, but also attended botany lectures with Prof. Nolte. He discontinued additional medical studies in 1847.

At the age of 22 he submitted his doctoral thesis on the ordinary shepherd's purse (Cappella). He created the collection "Flora of Schleswig-Holstein" with great interest. In the same year, 1847, he emigrated to Australia, accompanied by two of his female sisters, and landed there on December 18 in Adelaide. There he accepted an employment as a pharmacist, but after a short time he gave up this job. The urge to deal with the plant world became stronger and stronger. And so he first devoted himself to the flora on his 8-hectare estate near Adelaide.

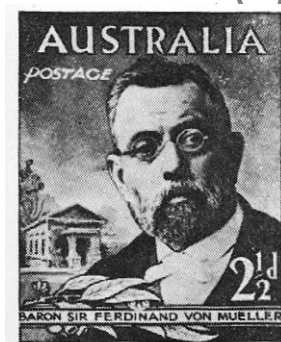
But just one year later, it drove him into the vastness of the Australian country and so he began to travel across Australia in 1848. He discovered and described numerous previously unknown plants. He wrote several essays on botanical topics, including 1852 "The Flora Of South Australia". After this time Mueller moved to Melbourne. He was hired by the Victorian government in 1855 as a state botanist, for which an extra position had been created.

Now began his research work. First in the mountains, whose vegetation was almost completely unknown until then. He explored the Buffalo Ranges, the Goulburn River, the Port Albert area and Wilson's Promontory National Park. He founded the National Herbarium of Victoria in 1855 and participated in botanical research in South and West Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania. Mueller discovered and described more plants than any other botanist and he became the worldwide botanical authority.

In 1855/56 he participated in an expedition under A. Gregory on which he identified more than 800 new plant species and subspecies. He published this result in "Definitions of Rare or Hitherto Undescribed Australian Plants". He was appointed a member of the Institute for Scientific Progress of Victoria from 1854-1872, and even president of this institution in 1859. 1857-1875 he was entrusted with the function of head of the Botanical Garden in Melbourne. During these years he introduced many plants to Victoria. Its activity is remarkable for the extraction of eucalyptus oil and for the distribution of this plant, which is necessary because of its healing effect, as far as Africa, southern Europe, even California and South America.

Mueller received many awards, some of which we mention here: he became a member of several academies within and outside Germany; the genus Eucalyptus Muelleriana kept his name; furthermore he was knighted by Order of St. Michael and St. Georg in 1869, was raised to the nobility in 1867 and in 1871 to the status of baroness. Baron von Mueller died on 10.10.1896.

As early as 1947, virtually all scientific societies in Australia were called upon to issue a commemorative stamp in honour of this personality. At the beginning of 1948, a number of drafts were also available. Two of them were shortlisted (Fig. 2 and 5). The portrait on the stamp issued by him comes from a photograph that can be seen in the Herbarium in Melbourne.



On the lower left of the stamp is a branch of the Yellow Stringy Bank (Eucalyptus Muelleriana).

The stamp was printed in sheets of 120 pieces each.

Dr. K. Knopke

Sources: Internet

"Australian Commemoratives and Air Mail Stamps 1927-1951", Publisher: Australian Post Office, S.30/31.