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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Careers Are Recalled Of Island 'Fathers'

By NEIL A. MATHESON

MY FRIEND Allison MacLeod suggested back in early summer that I should review the careers of the Island Fathers of Confederation in this "Centennial Year". The "Fathers" listed here are the five men who participated in the Charlottetown Conference in 1864.

My main sources of information are the books written by Lorne C. Callbeck and Dr. F.P. Bolger. Callbeck's book is "The Cradle of Confederation". Dr. Bolger's is "Prince Edward Island and Confederation".

Both books are available at Island book stores. They would make good presents at any time, particularly for native Islanders who are living outside the province now.

Edward Palmer was a son of James B. Palmer, a founder of the "Royal Electors", one of the earliest political organizations on the Island.

He entered political life in 1834, was elected to the House of Assembly, was returned in every subsequent election until 1861 when he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council. He was returned by acclamation in 1863 when the Council became elective.

### Two Legal Portfolios

HE WAS named Solicitor-General in 1848, Attorney-General in 1854. He was Premier 1859 to 1863. The two positions Solicitor-General and Attorney-General existed at that time, I have found.

Mr. Palmer was twice a delegate to the Imperial Government in London. In 1848 he accompanied Joseph Pope and Andrew Duncan to seek the recall of the unpopular Governor Huntley. In 1863 he went with William Henry Pope to negotiate for a settlement of the land tenant problems.

A son, James Palmer, was premier in 1911. H.L. Palmer, QC, former judge of Probate Court, is a grandson.

I have been unable to learn definitely when the two positions, "Solicitor General" and "Attorney General" were blended into the present title of Attorney General. I suspect the single portfolio was adopted when this province entered Confederation in 1873. If some reader has accurate knowledge to the contrary, I would appreciate a call or a letter.

### Outstanding Liberal Figure

HON. GEORGE Coles operated a brewing and distilling business in Charlottetown, his birthplace. He became a member of the Assembly for Third Queens in 1842 and, says Dr. Bolger, "soon became the outstanding figure in the Liberal Party".

Hon. Mr. Coles was premier from 1851 until 1859, with the exception of a few months. He was leader of the Liberal Opposition at the time of the Charlottetown Conference in 1864.

He strove continually for the democratization of the Island's politics. A "Family Compact" dominated the Island government when Mr. Coles entered political life, Dr. Bolger observes, and Coles "immediately began a campaign for reform".

"Responsible government, universal suffrage and free education were granted largely as a result of his efforts. With a very limited education he succeeded in becoming the Island's greatest reformer" is the high tribute Dr. Bolger pays to this man.

Mr. Callbeck says that under Hon. Mr. Cole's leadership the Island gained responsible government in 1851 "and a notable advance was made in the land tenure problem with the passing of a Land Purchase Act in 1853."

It was his administration that established the Provincial Normal School in 1856, Mr. Callbeck added. He said Mr. Coles again became premier in 1867 but "The heavy and continuous strains of public life, climaxed by over-exertion in combating a great fire that swept the lower part of the City in 1866, so weakened his physical and mental powers that in 1867 a melancholy change was observed in the veteran statesman. His vigorous mind . . . was giving way." The condition necessitated his retirement from public life in August of 1868 and he was a semi-invalid until his death on August 21, 1875.

The Island Argus termed him "The brightest star that illuminates the pages of the political history of his native province."

#### Hon. William Henry Pope

WILLIAM HENRY POPE was born in Bedeque, the son of Hon. Joseph Pope, who had been a leading member of the legislature for nearly 30 years.

The father sent the son to England for his education, then arranged for him to "read law", as it was called then, in the office of Edward Palmer; he finally sent the son to the Inner Temple in London to complete his studies.

In 1856 he was appointed Provincial Secretary and Clerk of the Executive Council. In 1863 he won election as a Conservative member of the Fourth District of Queens.

He was publisher and editor of The Islander and wrote strongly on leading subjects of the day, with particular reference to the system of land tenure and the issue of Confederation.

Dr. Bolger says that Pope was "one of the most brilliant political figures in the history of the Island. Suave and impeccable in his demeanor, he was to friend and opponent the essence of dignity and urbanity. His influence extended beyond the confines of his province. His advice in public affairs pertaining to the Island was frequently sought by British and Canadian politicians.

"He developed a highly cultured literary taste and was elected on three different occasions as an honorary member of the Athenaeum club in London.

"He became the most dedicated advocate of Confederation on the Island and retired from an active political career to further the movement.

"As a journalist, politician, and a judge he made an outstanding contribution to the society of his time."

W.H. Pope and his brother, James C. Pope were leading shipbuilders in their day. The former was named Judge of the County Court for Prince in 1873. He died six years later.

### Leading Statesman Here

ANDREW ARCHIBALD Macdonald was born at Brudenell Point, the grandson of Andrew Macdonald who had purchased 10,000 acres of land in the Kings County area of the Island away back in 1805.

(I have tried without success to get material for a column on this original Macdonald settler there. If anyone can assist me I would still do that story.)

A.A. Macdonald had his brothers, Archibald J. and Austin C. associated with him in an extensive ship-building business, as well as a mercantile shipping business.

He was a member of the Assembly for Georgetown from 1854 through the 1899 Assembly, was made a member of the Council in 1863 and became leader of the Liberal opposition.

“A.A. Macdonald’s political influence really commenced at this stage. He became one of the Island’s leading statesmen in the last four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century”, Dr. Bolger observes.

“HIS NOTES compiled at the Quebec conference are an indispensable record of that historic meeting. He filled with dignity the office of Lieutenant-Governor of his native province from 1884 to 1889 and spent the last years of his public life as a Senator”, Dr. Bolger concludes.

Mr. Callbeck notes that Mr. Macdonald became Provincial Postmaster when the Island became a province, and later in 1881 was Postmaster of Charlottetown and Supervisor of Postal Services for Prince Edward Island.

He notes also that Mr. Macdonald “was the only man from outside of Charlottetown who had the honor of sitting at the Charlottetown Conference (Confederation) table”

### Conference Chairman

JOHN HAMILTON GREY, premier at the time, chaired the Charlottetown conference. I have written several columns already on this interesting man. I have not previously talked of the other four.

AND NOW to all of you I wish the happiest Christmas that is possible under your individual circumstances. Many homes are saddened by serious illness, or the loss of loved ones. Others are beset by other worries, but my own reaction – and it is most sincere – is that I would easily forget many of the problems that once worried me greatly at our home, if I could once more have my sweetheart greet me on her two feet, with a sound body and the happy and cheerful disposition she always had in the past.

To the many readers who ask for her, from all over the province, Mrs. Matheson’s condition is not good. She is confined to our home, and most of the time to bed. Our sincere thanks to the many, many people who continue to write her messages of good cheer, etc. We are most sincerely appreciative.

