David Laird's vigor echoed through paper

"A man so tall he did not seem to have any top" is the memory of a little girl, of David Laird, founder and first editor of The Patriot.

The 6'4" bushy- haired, bewhiskered editor, politician, and long-time foe of Confederation had a powerful voice which could thunder in the halls of legislatures and parliaments but could also be soft when greeting a tiny granddaughter.

Though he had fought against Sir John A. Macdonald's dream of a united country, he was statesman enough to reverse himself when it was for the good of his native province. As a result he was one of the islanders who went to Ottawa to obtain the best terms possible before entering as part of the new country.

Before The Patriot came into being, Mr. Laird had founded another newspaper, "The Protestant and Evangelical Witness", in 1859. However, his descendants think he may have wanted to "branch out" in his writing and may have felt a paper with religious connotations was perhaps not the best medium for expression

And so, just exactly 100 years ago, he started The Patriot. Mr. Laird also went into provincial politics and his fame spread far wider than his native heath. His powerful voice was the perfect medium for the equally powerful arguments he advanced in debate.

After Prince Edward Island entered Confederation, in 1873, David Laird went to the Dominion Parliament as one of the six Island members. It was shortly after Hon. A.A. MacKenzie was called on to form a government and he promptly made the tall Islander the Minister of the Interior.

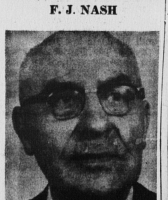
The nature of his work called for the spending of much time with the Indians in Manitoba and the North West territories Efforts were begun to open up the prairies to settlers. As a start toward carrying the law west, responsible government was the first step and Mr. Laird was asked to give up his political career to become the lieutenant- governor of the territories.

The tremendous part he played in the development of the west through his ability to negotiate treaties with sometimes hostile Indians is shown by the success he enjoyed in his work and the growth of what now has become two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

When his term ended Mr Laird returned to The Patriot in 1881. But three years later fire destroyed the premises and it became necessary to reorganize. Among a group of shareholders Mr. Laird became managing director and editor.

He remained in this capacity until the election of Sir Wilfred Laurier in 1896 when his great knowledge of the west and his tact in dealing with the various Indian tribes was put to use again by the Dominion government which named him Indian Commissioner with headquarters at Winnipeg.

His grandchildren never knew him as an editor, but they did remember him as "kind and gentle; an upright man" who well deserved the tribute of the Indians who caled him "the man who never speaks with a forked tongue". A newspaper of London, England, termed him



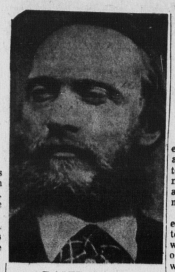
F. J. NASH

W. A. GAUDET

N. A. MATHESON

Famous old names

Some of the outstanding personalities in Island history left records to delight the heart of any autograph collector in the form of cancelled cheques as they paid their debts in modern style. Included in the collection shown are the signatures of an early Victorian governor, Island government leaders and Fathers of Confederation. Drawn on accounts in the Bank of Prince Edward Island, numbers 1 and 1A of the cheques were signed by Col. John Hamilton Gray with the one for 10 shillings being in payment of his subscription to the newspaper of the day, The Monitor, in May 1857. No. 2 was signed by Lieut. Gov. George Dundas in favor of Hon. George Coles in 1859. No. 3 was drawn by Edward Whelan, journalist and orator of the day, while 4 was made out by Lt. Col. T. Heath Haviland to pay the gas bill of the Volunteer Company. Numbers 5 and 6 bear the names of two of the leading statesmen of their time, George Coles and W.H. Pope.



DAVID LAIRD

"a Christian gentleman, a majestic figure".

A granddaughter recently recalled her skimpy memories of the man who died in 1914 and admitted most of her knowledge of him had come from her mother who had lived in the western wilderness as a child.

However, she will never forget the time when as a little girl she fell over the wharf near her Island home and her grandfather, then over 80 years of age, promptly jumped in fully clothed to bring her to safety.

She still thinks of him as a wonderful man.

Oldtime Island newsman reminisces on early days

Interesting items from the earlier days of newspapering are recalled by Robert L. Cotton, Charlottetown, the only man now living who had a close association with Charlottetown newspapers of the longtime past.

Mr. Cotton became associated with the Examiner, a contemporary of the Patriot, in 1885 when he was a boy of 15 years of age. His father, W.L. Cotton, was the publisher at the time but the son took over the operation later and became what he believes to be the only man to publish a daily paper and sell it for one dollar per year.

David Laird, the first editor of The Patriot, went on to become Governor of the North West Territories about the same time R.L. Cotton started to apprentice as a printer, and he remembers Mr. Laird as a tall, slight man who was editor of the then Government paper, Liberal, while W.L. Cotton edited the opposition paper, the Examiner, which was Conservative.

Newspapers took their politics seriously in those days and the editorial battles waged on behalf of the two political parties were fierce. The Guardian at the time was an independent paper and kept aloof from the political wars, though it was later to become fiercely partisan as it was purchased by strong Conservative supporters.

Mr. Cotton recalls that Charles Dalton, later Sir Charles, a co- founder of the Island's fabulous fox industry, purchased the controlling interest in The Guardian and it became aligned on behalf of the Tories. Sir Charles was a one-time Conservative member of the provincial legislature, who later died in office as a Lieutenant- Governor in 1933. The Guardian was later purchased by the late Chester McLure and Lieut.- Col D. A. MacKinnon and the Conservative traditions were maintained.

Party patronage meant a great deal to a newspaper back in those days, noted Mr. Cotton who recalled the shock it had been to his father and the Examiner when the Federal Conservative party was defeated in 1896.

At that time the P.E.I. Railway was owned by the federal government but it ran as a separate entity, and the newspaper on the right side of politics received a great deal of lucrative printing, as well as other government printing.

"I came in to the Examiner about the time it lost its patronage— the Conservatives were defeated in Ottawa in 1896, after having held office since 1867 with the one exception of the years 1874-78," Mr. Cotton said as he recalled some of those happenings of the years that are past.

LIBERALS WIN

The Liberals repeated their federal victories at general elections in 1900, 1904 and 1908, but the Laurier government fell in 1911 on the issue of Reciprocity with the United States, and the Conservatives were back in power.

Mr. Cotton remembers that one very well, for one of the best known printing firms of the day, Haszard and Moore, fell upon evil times financially shortly afterwards and Mr. Cotton, then a young man in his middle 20s, purchased the firm and started the Maritime Stationers which he ran some several years before disposing of it to his brother William (Billie) Cotton who is still carrying on the business.

The printing business was run on Grafton Street in the building now occupied by Lepage Shoe Company, along with a bookbinding business upstairs. The Maritime Stationers was on the ground floor The equipment was sold later to Irwin Printing Company, following a fire in their own plant.

W. C. Lawson was one of the early Patriot editors, Mr. Cotton recalls, at the time David Laird was a member of the Alexander MacKenzie government at Ottawa.

LAIRD ELECTED

Laird was elected as a member from Queens by acclamation, in 1874, along with Peter Sinclair, who was the father of John E. Sinclair, who won election to the House of Commons in 1917, 1921 and 1926— he was not a member of "the short parliament" which lasted less than one year following the election of October 29, 1925; the next election was on September 14 1926.

Mr. Cotton recalls as a child going to the railway station here one night to see the Lawson family leave Charlottetown for Victoria B. C. where Mr. Lawson had gone to be editor of the Victoria Times.

The train in those days left Charlottetown at night for Georgetown and passengers sailed next morning on a boat for the mainland. That was the regular travelling routine in the winter months. That, of course, was long before the advent of the carferry service between Borden and Tormentine which did not get into operation until 1917, though the first carferry, "Prince Edward Island" which is still running, had arrived here prior to that.

Incidentally Mr. Cotton, and Mrs. Cotton, who is not now living, were passengers on the longest trip of the old Prince Edward Island, he believes. She spent two nights in the Strait after leaving Tormentine, and it was more than 36 hours before they finally left her near Borden. The ice was packed so tightly on the Borden side the ship could not dock.

The passengers walked down a ladder in the ice surface, walked a short distance to shore and then climbed ladders again to the land level, Mr. Cotton said.

EARLY PRESSES

"When I went to work first all the newspapers were printed on flat-bed presses, and the presses were turned by hand. It took a pretty tough man to turn the press," he recalled. The circulation ran about 1,000 papers and it took a good man to turn out 300 per hour, so the job was prolonged.

"I think it was the father of Joey MacDonald"— he operates the Rolloway Club on Grafton Street now— "who turned the press for The Patriot Tommy Cahill operated the press for the Examiner. He was not a big man but he was powerful and tough," Mr. Cotton recalls.

The papers of those days were four page affairs. One side was printed in the morning, the other side in the afternoon. A man sat back of the press to fold the newspapers, as this work had to be done by hand in those days.

The laborious printing job of those days contrasts with the present when high speed presses can print up to 30,000 per hour.

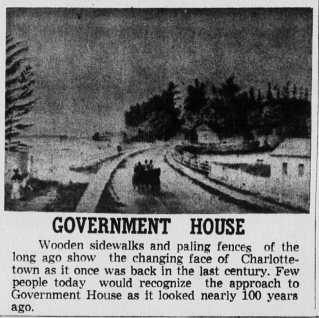
TYPESETTING

All the type was set by hand in those days; that included the small type, and some was mighty small. It required about 12 printers to set the type for the four-page paper.

Wages were small, as might be expected. Mr. Cotton started as an apprentice printer and received $1.50 per week, girls got $1.00. If a beginner stuck with it for a second year the pay was two dollars. Pay for the third year was three dollars and it was four for the fourth Many never got any more than that, apparently, but the foreman printer received $10.

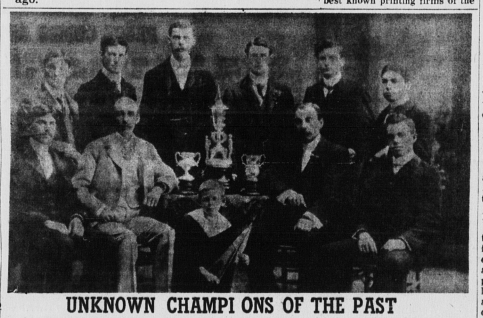
"My father never received more than $100 a month in his time for editing the paper," his son recalled. But, he "was comfortably fixed" with that amount. He sent three daughters to Edgehill where it would take more than that to send one now. And Mr. Cotton, Senior, sent one son, Walter, to college who became a clergyman of the Church of England and served for 30 years as a missionary in South Africa.

Of course $100 was a lot of money in those days. It would probably compare in buying power to $400 or $500 per month at the present time.



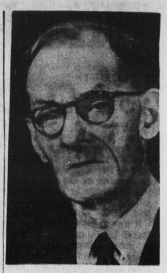
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Wooden sidewalks and paling fences of the long ago show the changing face of Charlottetown as it once was back in the last century. Few people today would recognize the approach to Government House as it looked nearly 100 years ago.

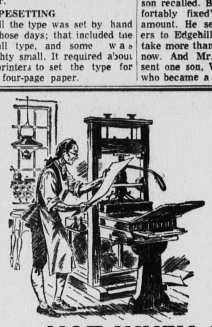


UNKNOWN CHAMPIONS OF THE PAST

In the days when Charlottetown was producing top athletes in all sports some of its greatest fame was gained in track and field events. Above is pictured one of the championship teams somewhere in the years 1875-1900. Though a specific date is missing and the members are unidentified, it is known the team was managed by the late Major Bartlett and Colonel Leigh.



CALVIN LEWIS



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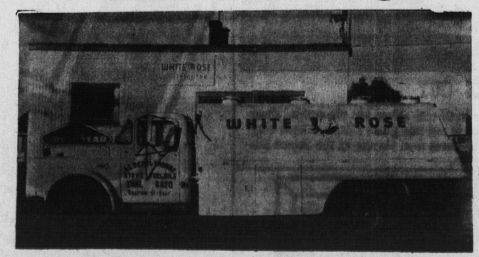

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