

Noted Island Confederation Father's Career Is Reviewed

Following is a summary of the address delivered by Dr. Frank MacKinnon, Principal of Prince of Wales College, at the unveiling of the Pope monument at Bedeque yesterday by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board:

The Popes of Prince Edward Island were descendants of Thomas Pope and his large family who were timber merchants in Plymouth at the turn of the nineteenth century. The older members of the family were prosperous and energetic business men who sought to extend their activities in their trade, and, to this end, two of them, John and Joseph, came to Prince Edward Island to buy and cut timber for shipment. John, who arrived first, settled in Bedeque, and Joseph came later, in 1819. Joseph was for sixty years one of the Island's prominent politicians and civil servants. During this time his two sons, W. H. Pope and J. C. Pope, were among the most influential leaders in the public life of the Province.

James Colledge Pope was born in Bedeque on June 11, 1826. After some schooling at home and at his family's old city of Plymouth, and a short adventure to California during the gold rush of 1849, he worked with his father in Bedeque. After his apprenticeship, he established his own business at Green's Shore, now Summerside. In time he became prosperous both as a timber merchant and land owner.

Turbulent Politics

Pope entered the Island Legislature in 1857 as member for Bedeque. This was one of the most interesting periods in the Province's political history and Pope played an important part in it. The Island had achieved responsible government in 1851 and for the first time her Executive Council and Legislature were primarily responsible for the administration of public affairs. But the system was new, and it took local politicians many years to become accustomed to it. The Governor, who had previously directed the government, himself, occasionally meddled in the exercise of powers which were no longer his. Ministers of the Crown were often confused in their attempts to follow constitutional practice. And the people were not yet familiar with the new status of their House of Assembly.

At this time, too, politics was kept in constant turmoil by those of the liveliest public questions in Provincial history. The teaching of the Bible in the schools and the incorporation of the Orange Lodge roused denominational bitterness; landlords and tenants disputed the rights and wrongs of the land question; and the Confederation issue was everywhere a topic for discussion and argument. The combination of controversy and political inexperience provided the Islanders of the 1850's and '60's with a turbulent political life

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Government pledged to your Honor to pursue any definite policy. The people of this Island have the right to self government, and as one of their representatives I can never undertake, at the instance of the representative of the Crown, to do any act calculated in the slightest degree to abridge this right."

Robinson persisted in his attempt to commit Pope but the latter refused to take office unless the Governor gave him a completely free hand. After some argument Robinson was forced to give in. This episode gave Pope an excellent opportunity of publicizing his views on the Confederation, and not the Governor, was primarily responsible for administration.

Pope played an important part in the negotiations which led the Island into Confederation. When the Dominion of Canada was formed in 1867 the Island refused to join. She had only recently achieved responsible government and she wanted to retain her independence; she had never had much political

or economic association with the other provinces and she did not wish to unite with them; and the terms of union were not sufficiently attractive to her. By 1873, however, economic difficulties and political turmoil forced the Island to join the union.

Incessant Quarrels
The political parties were merely groups of factions in the late 1860's and these factions quarrelled incessantly over Confederation and religious issues. After the general election of 1870 no one could form a government along conventional party lines and Pope finally succeeded by getting certain factions to lay aside their grievances for the time being.

Meanwhile a few of Pope's supporters were demanding the construction of a railroad through the Province, and to retain their support the new cabinet promised to build the road. The necessary legislation was pushed through the House in 1871 amid violent opposition, and when corruption and mismanagement in the construction

of the railway were charged the Pope cabinet resigned.

The Haythorne government which followed became involved in branch lines and a steady accumulation of railway debt. Financial embarrassment finally forced it to seek terms of union from the Dominion. Haythorne and David Laird went to Ottawa and made an agreement with Sir John A. Macdonald and his colleagues but they were defeated in the general election which followed their return to the provinces.

J. C. Pope again became Premier. He and his family had always been friendly with Sir John Macdonald and when he went to Ottawa he received a warm welcome from the Prime Minister. Again an agreement was made and Pope was subsequently able to get it approved in the local Assembly. Consequently, the Island became a Province of Canada on July 1, 1873 and Pope formed the first Cabinet under the new constitution.

Federal Politics
Federal politics was an inviting

field for local politicians after union and Pope was among those who ran successfully for the House of Commons in 1873. The western railway scandals drove Macdonald from power in the following year and Pope was among the Conservatives who fell in the election of 1874. He tried provincial politics again in 1875 without success but in the following year he re-entered the House of Commons in a by-election. He was again elected in 1878 when Macdonald and the Conservatives returned to power. When the new Government was formed Pope was included in the Cabinet as Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Pope was not an eminent Federal Cabinet Minister. Like David Laird who had been Minister of the Interior in the MacKenzie Government, he was not sufficiently familiar with politics and administration outside his own Province to wield much influence either in Parliament or on the hustings. His chief work was in the building up of friendly associations between the

Island Conservatives and their Federal counterparts, a task which was similarly performed for the Liberals by Louis Davies for a few years later. Pope never really had an opportunity of achieving experience and prominence in Federal politics, for ill-health dogged him soon after he entered the Cabinet. The strain resulting from financial losses in his business enterprise brought on a nervous breakdown from which he died on May 18, 1885.

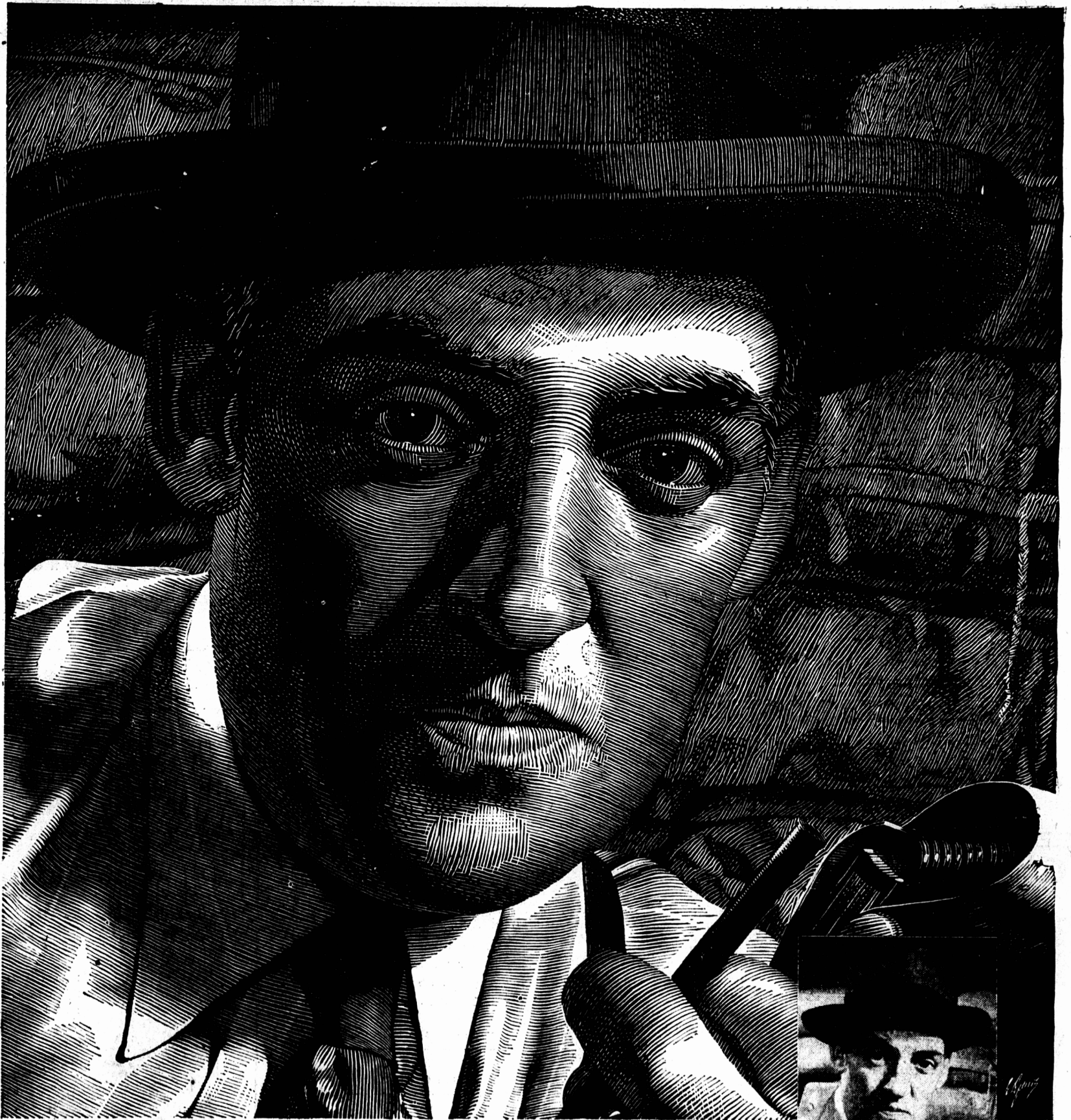
A Great Strategist

J. C. Pope's striking characteristic as a politician was his skill at manipulating men and policies. He was a strong advocate when necessary, but he also knew when to wait for the strategic moment. Moreover, his views were never so strong as to alienate important political factions, an important point in days of coalition parties. In many ways he was a contrast to his father and brother, both of whom were strong in their viewpoints, quick to challenge, and decisive in their actions. Whereas Joseph was a constitutional reform-

er and W. H. was a political warrior, J. C. was an effective party leader who wielded a large amount of personal power through conciliation and compromise.

Pope can be criticized for acquiescing to the demands of the railway promoters and thereby bringing the Island to virtual bankruptcy. Perhaps, however, he was one of the several astute observers who knew that railway troubles were sure to result in Confederation, and that after union, the Dominion would take over the railway debts. If so, he was one of the perpetrators of what was perhaps the cleverest political manoeuvre in the history of the Province.

He received at least one appropriate reward for the Prince Edward Island Railway is reported to have spent \$25,000 for the funeral train which carried him to his last resting place and The Examiner commented in its obituary that as long as there was a railroad on the Island the name of J. C. Pope would never be forgotten.



*MR. F. C. LAMBERT...

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*Frederick C. Lambert lives at 740 Britain St., Saint John, N. B. Employed as a clerk with Atlantic Sugar Refineries Ltd., he is 43 years of age, married and the father of an 18-month old boy. His hobbies include carpentry and candy-making.

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