

The legacies of the Duder family

Through the generation, one family saw political victories scientific triumphs
and financial disasters

By Bert Riggs

The Duder family has been resident in Newfoundland since at least 1833 when Thomas Duder (1785-1855) and his wife, Ann Congdon (1785-1863) - together with most of their 10 children - left St Mary's Church, Devon, for Newfoundland.

The family settled in St John's, where first the father and later four of the sons would make their mark on the mercantile and political life of Newfoundland.

The oldest of these sons, John Congdon Duder, was born in 1817. He worked in his father's business in St John's before moving to Twillingate, where he married Lavinia Pearce in 1861. He eventually settled at Little Bay Islands, where he was agent for the family business. He died there on Feb. 3 1894.

The Next son, Charles, and his twin brother Frederick, who died while still an infant, were born in 1819. Charles joined the family business, and probably lived for a while in Twillingate, as he was elected to the House of Assembly for that area as a supporter of Charles Fox Bennett and his anti-Confederation movement in 1869.

He was re-elected in 1873, but shortly after that election switched allegiance to Sir Frederick Carter and his Liberal Conservative coalition. This helped to bring down Bennett's administration and make Carter prime minister.

Duder became chairman of the board of works in Carter's new cabinet, a post he held until 1878, when he left politics. He died at St John's on Jan. 26 1879.

Success in business

The third son, Henry John, (1820-1888, was also a successful businessman, involved in the fish and timber trades as well as shipbuilding. He and his wife, Sophia Pitts, were the parents of seven children.

The oldest, Thomas Cogdon Duder, was born in St John's on April 16, 1850. He was educated there at the Wesleyan Academy and then joined his uncle Edwin Duder's firm as an accountant. He became the company agent in Fogo in 1874.

Thomas established his own business in 1895. Two years earlier he had been elected Conservative MHA for Fogo, and served in Prime Minister Augustus Goodridge's short lived administration in 1894.

Re-elected in 1897, Thomas was appointed minister of mines and agriculture by the new prime minister, Sir James Winter. He retired from politics with the defeat of the Winter administration in 1900 and became magistrate at Bonne Bay, a position he still held at the time of his death on Dec. 19, 1912. Henry's youngest son, Charles (1862-1922), married Ida Carter, a daughter of Sir Frederick Carter, and was grandfather of Newfoundland's 1935 Rhodes Scholar, Rudolph Duder (1912-1980), who was for many years a member of the Canadian diplomatic corps.

One of Henry's daughters, Emma married Campbell Macpherson (1851-1908). They were the parents of Cluny Macpherson (1879-1966), inventor of the gas mask in the First World War and Harold Macpherson (1885-1963), who is credited with saving the Newfoundland dog from possible extinction.

Another daughter, Jane, married Charles Harvey, son of Rev. Moses Harvey (1870-1901), for many years rector of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

The fourth son

Thomas and Ann's fourth son, Edwin, was born in 1822. He too became a successful member of the St John's mercantile community, operating an import-export business in partnership with his brother-in-law, Robert Muir, from 1858 to 1865, and later with his sons.

Edwin quickly expanded his business, creating branches in Twillingate, Fogo, Herring Neck, Change Islands, Barred Islands and Greenspond.

Upon his death on Feb. 20 1881, his sons Arthur and Edwin Jr. took over the business. Arthur's death the following year left the business in Edwin Jr.'s hands.

Edwin John Duder Jr. was born in St John's on Feb. 5 1853 and educated at the Church of England at Mansion House School, Exeter and King's College School, London.

After taking over his father's business, he expanded it further, particularly in the areas of shipping and trade.

At one point the company owned more than "200 sail of fishing and foreign going vessels, besides a large number of boats and skiffw. He is said to be the largest shipowner (numerically) in the world," author H.Y. Mott once remarked.

Edwin's success was not to last, however. He had much of his capital invested in the operation and expansion of his business, and lost everything in the Bank Crash of 1894.

Edwin Duder Jr. ended his career working with the Newfoundland railway and died at St. John's on Oct. 12 1918.

Charles Duder, the son of Thomas Duder and Ann, married Catherine McLachlan in 1848, and they were the parents of eight daughters and one son. The son, Alexander, was murdered in

Arizona in 1901. The eldest daughter, Laura Muir Duder, married Richard White, son of Edward White (1811-1886), a prominent sealing captain and politician.

Another Story altogether

One of their daughters, Dorothy Katherine, married the George P. Story (1853-1894), a methodist clergyman.

They were the parents of five children, including Janet Story, former director of nursing at the St. John's General Hospital, and Dr. George M. Story, university professor, internationally acclaimed scholar, and one of the editors of the Dictionary of Newfoundland English.

Thomas and Ann Duder gave Newfoundlanders a legacy of which they can be justly proud.

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