

Eleven men who shaped our century are not forgotten in their graves

BY DAVID CARMICHAEL

THE ELEVEN men who lie buried beneath the headstones on this and the following pages were of widely varying origins, temperaments and abilities. But during the past 100 years all of them served as prime minister of Canada.

Some left office broken in health and spirit; some left knowing that they had

been unequal to the task; some left knowing that history would vindicate them.

One, R. B. Bennett, took his defeat so personally that he quit the country.

All of them did the best job they could, and none used his position for personal financial gain. Each, in his

own way, tried to preserve the fragile racial alliance that is Canada and to guide it toward eventual independence and nationhood.

Their headstones are as austere and lacking in ostentation as the wilderness from which many of them came. Their graves are scrupulously maintained by

history-conscious custodians and are visited from time to time by their descendants and by local school children.

And one prime minister has the remarkable good fortune — should he happen to lack for convivial company in the afterlife — to be buried in close proximity to a most likeable town drunk.

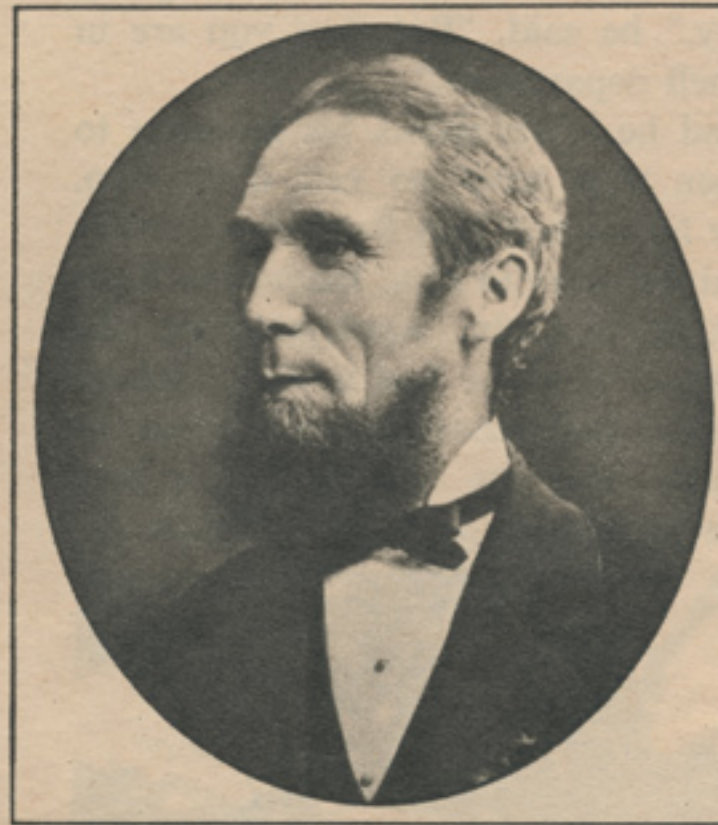


Sir John A. Macdonald (Cons.)
Prime Minister 1867-1873, 1878-1891

Though he originally opposed Confederation, Macdonald pushed it through, then fought to preserve and extend it. Under his leadership, the Canadian Pacific Railway was built, the west was opened and British Columbia was brought into the union. Defeated in 1873, as a result of a campaign funds scandal, he made a comeback in 1878



and remained prime minister until his death at 76 in 1891. A man who felt the end justified the means, he believed deeply in Canada. Drink masked personal tragedies. Once, when chided about his drinking, he said: "The voters would sooner have me drunk than [my opponent] sober." He is buried at Catarqui Cemetery in Kingston.



Alexander Mackenzie (Lib.)
Prime Minister 1873-1878

The first Liberal prime minister of Canada, Mackenzie held office during the five years that Sir John A. Macdonald was in the political wilderness. He was honest and industrious, but he lacked imagination and self-confidence. He and his administration went down to defeat because of hard times. His throat paralyzed, he finished his years in Opposition, croaking objections at Macdonald across the Commons floor. A stonemason who came from Scotland at 20 with 16 shillings in his pocket, Mackenzie saved enough money to bring his mother and six brothers to Canada. He died at 70 in 1892 and is buried in Lakeview Cemetery at Sarnia, Ont.

