

# SIR *Albert James Smith* 1822-1883

## LAWYER, POLITICIAN, ANTI-CONFEDERATION LEADER, MINISTER OF FISHERIES

A descendent of United Empire Loyalists, Albert James Smith was born in Shediac and studied law under Edward Barron Chandler in Dorchester. Here he built a practice specializing in marine and commercial law, invested in the local shipbuilding industry and like his mentor, entered politics, but on the opposing side.

In 1852, he won a by-election as a liberal reformer, attacking 'The Compact', the conservative government headed by Chandler. In 1854, he became a member of the Executive Council of the 'Smasher' government that defeated Chandler's government, and for the next decade, championed 'responsible government', extension of the franchise, and modernization of education.

Smith is best known for his opposition to Confederation; like Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia, he believed it would be detrimental

for the Maritimes. In 1865, he led a coalition of both liberal and conservative anti-confederationists to a stunning victory that threatened to scuttle the whole project, largely due to his impressive performance on the campaign trail, where he was known as the "Lion of Westmorland." But when the decision was reversed the following year, owing to mounting pro-confederation pressures from Britain, he accepted the results and went on to win a seat in the House of Commons where he vigorously defended New Brunswick's interests.

In 1868 at the age of 46, he married Sarah Marie Young of Halifax and had one son, John Wilson Young Smith. Nearly one hundred years later, his only granddaughter Marjorie, together with her second husband, Ralph Pickard Bell, became major benefactors of Mount Allison University.

In 1873, Liberal Prime Minister Alexander MacKenzie appointed Smith Minister of Marine and Fisheries. As an expert in marine and commercial law, he was chief advisor to the Canadian delegation that won a \$5.5-million award from the U. S. as compensation for American fishing rights on the Canadian coast. For this achievement, he was knighted by Queen Victoria, becoming a Knight Commander of the Order of St. George & St. Michael.



TOP  
Sir Albert James Smith  
Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, PA-025257

BOTTOM  
Woodlands, 22 Woodlawn Road, home of Sir Albert and Lady Sarah (née Young) Smith. The wood section, *circa* 1840, was built by Robert T. Moore and purchased by Smith in 1862. The brick section was added in 1868. Lady Smith lived at Woodlands until her death in 1926.

