

Dr. Frank Roy Davis, the Politician

The name Frank Roy Davis doesn't mean much to most people in Bridgewater. However, to anyone attending high school in Bridgewater in the 1950's it would ring a bell ...their high school was named the F. R. Davis Memorial High School. Who was this man that the school would be named for him?

Davis was born in Shelburne in 1888, the son of a Methodist minister. Graduating from Dalhousie Medical School in 1911, he and his new wife Elizabeth, also a doctor, practiced medicine in Petite Rivière. In 1919, they relocated to Bridgewater, and purchased a grand Queen Anne-style home at 23 Pleasant Street which, despite many alterations, still stands today.

Frank was on staff at the new Dawson Memorial Hospital, where Elizabeth worked as an anaesthetist, and he also operated a medical practice in his Pleasant Street home. Said to enjoy the small town atmosphere that Bridgewater offered, he served on the Town Council in 1926 and 1927, and as Mayor from 1930 to 1933. It is said that, despite the onset of the Great Depression, he saw to it that Bridgewater schools never suffered financially.

Entering provincial politics in 1933, Dr. Davis was elected as Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Liberal Party, under Premier Angus L. Macdonald, and was given the Public Health portfolio. He was to make a huge impact on health care in Nova Scotia; spearheading plans for the new Victoria General Hospital in Halifax, old-age pensions for blind people, free tuberculosis treatment, and being actively involved in the founding of Nova Scotia's Children's Aid Society. In 1943, a new Department of Public Welfare was created under his direction.

Sadly, on September 17th, 1948, while attending the annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Medical Society, Dr. Davis suffered a heart attack and passed away. His body was brought back to Bridgewater and buried in Brookside Cemetery.

In 1951, the Town of Bridgewater decided to build a new High School to complement the existing Academy, and the structure was named the F. R. Davis Memorial High School, in honour of the contributions Dr. Davis made to health and education, in Bridgewater and throughout Nova Scotia. When a new wing was added on in the 1960s, the structure became the F. R. Davis Memorial Wing of Bridgewater High School. It was completely replaced during renovations in 1991.
