

## Fletcher Bath Wade, the Railway King

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Fletcher Wade was born in Granville Ferry, Annapolis County, on September 9, 1852. He originally moved to Bridgewater at the age of 16 to teach school, but he became fascinated by law, and ended up studying with Bridgewater barrister W. H. Owen, passing the bar on May 20, 1875. Opening up his own law office, he married Florence Trefry, daughter of Captain and Mrs. Rufus P. Trefry of Bridgewater, and set about making a name for himself in the legal community.

In 1887, Fletcher and Florence bought a grand property at 45 Pleasant Street, for \$3,557. The house had been built in 1871, and Wade purchased it after a mortgage had been foreclosed on Charles Chase. He then set about doing extensive renovations to the home, turning it into a magnificent lavish mansion. He sold the home in 1900 to Hector McInnis for \$5,500, making a considerable profit! (The house was operated as Clark's Hotel until 1923, and eventually became the Pleasant Rest Home in 1967.)

A member of the Liberal party, Wade was held in high regard in the community, and was encouraged to run in the federal election of 1878; however that election resulted in the end of Alexander Mackenzie's Liberal government after only one term in office. Wade's political ambitions, however, were peaked. His law practice with Vincent J. Paton was a fixture of Bridgewater's legal scene during this period, and he played a key role, along with James D. Eisenhauer of Lunenburg, in negotiating and financing the completion of the Nova Scotia Central Railway, which finally reached Bridgewater in 1889.

In 1898, Wade moved to Halifax, and three years later was elected to the House of Commons as a Liberal for Annapolis. Because of his experience with the Central Railway, he was soon made chairman of the National Transcontinental Railway Commission.

In 1905, Fletcher Wade died in Ottawa at age 52. In Bridgewater, the town mourned. Flags were lowered to half mast, and a special train bought his body back to Bridgewater where it was taken to his father-in-law, Captain Trefry's, residence. Dignitaries, including Premier George H. Murray, came from all over for the service, and attended his burial at Brookside Cemetery.

Bridgewater Bulletin, July 31, 1906 – *A large, handsome marble cross and curbing has been erected on the grave of F. B. Wade in Brookside cemetery. The work was done by G. J. Kelly of this town.*