**RICHARDSON-MEECH**

**Bio of Arthur Remington Richardson – Grandma Halliday’s Uncle (mother Macilla, other Uncles were Wallace mayor of Sydney and Chesley Somerville Ma. Surgeon)**

[**http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/richardson\_arthur\_remington\_16E.html**](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/richardson_arthur_remington_16E.html)

**RICHARDSON, ARTHUR REMINGTON**, carpenter, farmer, harbour pilot, and politician; b. 13 May 1862, 1863, or 1864 in Sydney, N.S., son of William J. Richardson and Mary Ann Brown; m. 12 Oct. 1892 Frances Amelia Wyman, and they had four daughters and five sons; d. 7 Jan. 1936 in South Bar, N.S.

The family of Arthur R. Richardson had settled in South Bar on Cape Breton Island in 1842. His father was a carpenter and Arthur also entered the trade. Family tradition has the younger Richardson working in New England for a while; he probably went there in August 1887 (the records of his Baptist church show that he asked to be dismissed at this time). He would have been one of 9,000 who left Cape Breton that decade. By 1891 he was back in South Bar, working as a carpenter. Richardson built numerous houses in the area, including his own, and in 1907 helped reconstruct South Bar Baptist Church after it was destroyed by fire. He ran a mixed-farming operation, raising cows, chickens, and geese. According to a later account, he was “one of the most prominent and successful farmers” in Cape Breton. Given South Bar’s location at the eastern entrance to Sydney harbour, it is not surprising that the Richardson family had marine connections. In 1906 Arthur had become a harbour pilot, a position he would occupy for more than a decade. His brother Wallace A. served as Sydney’s mayor for seven terms, and he too had an interest in politics.

Historian Ian McKay writes that the few years before the 1920s would prove to be the “last years of abundant hope” for the Maritimes. Labour groups had some success in their fight for improved wages and conditions for workers; World War I brought an increased demand for resources, resulting in economic growth and prosperity. Richardson was one of the optimists who believed that these trends would continue. He replaced James Bryson [McLachlan](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mclachlan_james_bryson_16E.html) as president of the Independent Labour Party, formed in Cape Breton in 1917, when the latter resigned to concentrate on union activities in June 1918. The choice of Richardson, a farmer, as leader of a party traditionally supported by workers reflected a desire on the part of the ILP to extend its appeal. Subsequently it issued a cordial invitation to agricultural and rural clubs and fishermen’s unions. The initiative took root. Though farmers and labourers did not share common ground on all matters (at its 1920 convention in Truro, the United Farmers of Nova Scotia would denounce labour’s push for an eight-hour day), both groups saw cooperation as desirable. On 12 June 1920 Richardson, who had stepped down from the ILP presidency the previous year, was nominated to represent the UFNS’s newly formed Cape Breton branch in the upcoming provincial election, and he was endorsed by the ILP the same day. Normally third parties had little chance of success in Nova Scotia – and farmer support for Labour was uneven heading into the contest – but recession had hit the province by the spring of 1920 and many voters were ready for change. On 27 July 1920 Richardson and ILP candidates Joseph Steele, William Forman Waye, and Daniel William Morrison for the Great War Veterans’ Association of Canada won Cape Breton County’s four seats.

According to James Murray [Beck\*](javascript:void(0)), Richardson “saw himself as Farmer–Labour,” an accurate description given his solid footing in both camps. He joined six Farmer and four Labour representatives in the official opposition. The two groups worked together harmoniously in 1921. Richardson shared platforms with individuals such as McLachlan and Progressive Party leader Thomas Alexander[Crerar\*](javascript:void(0)) in support of Farmer–Labour candidates in the federal campaign that year. But cracks were beginning to appear. As the 1922 legislative session closed in April, Farmer–Labourites and Conservatives met secretly, and fruitlessly, in the hope of combining to defeat the Liberal government of George Henry[Murray\*](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/murray_george_henry_15E.html), blamed in part for the region’s economic woes. Richardson and the Farmer representative from Antigonish were excluded from the meeting, a hint of more divisions to come.

As industrial conflict in Cape Breton’s coal and steel industries worsened, the ILP veered increasingly to the left. At its convention in July 1922 in Nova Scotia the Third (Communist) International was endorsed, and, the Sydney Postreported, “a large party of the delegates sang the Red Anthem enthusiastically and gave three cheers … for the social revolution.” A month later Cape Breton miners struck over wage reductions at the British Empire Steel Corporation (Besco) collieries [see Roy Mitchell [Wolvin\*](javascript:void(0)" \o "This biography is not yet published)], and Cape Breton Liberal mp George William Kyte wired Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie [King\*](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/king_william_lyon_mackenzie_17E.html): “People in terror of revolution which radical element threaten. Rush more soldiers with all speed.” It was, and continued to be, a time of harsh rhetoric, from both the left and the right. Paranoia – or fear-mongering – was part of the mix. Richardson would find himself caught in the middle. The provincial government’s response was to approve a temporary provincial police force, limited to 1,000 men, for duty in Cape Breton County. They were neither trained nor experienced.

In late March 1923 Richardson supported Waye, Steele, and others in an unsuccessful bid to establish an investigation into the operation of some Cape Breton mines. For two months the provincial police were again placed on duty in response to unrest among the steelworkers at Besco, who were demanding union recognition. In the House of Assembly, Dan Willie Morrison stated that the government’s aggressive response had only served to heighten tensions. Steele warned there would be “bloodshed in Cape Breton.” Premier Ernest Howard[Armstrong\*](javascript:void(0)), who had replaced the ailing Murray earlier in the year, would not budge. Richardson stood apart from other Labour members by refusing to censure the government for sending in the police. This position precipitated his final break with the ILP. On 9 April the Halifax Herald reported that in the House of Assembly Richardson answered charges that he had betrayed Labour by stating that “he believed in the eight-hour day system … [and] better pay. He did not believe in revolution or the taking over of plants on the committee system.” The Farmer–Labour group soon splintered into warring factions. Richardson defected, but remained in the assembly as an independent, despite demands from the workers that he should “resign his seat or join Besco’s flunkeys on the other side of the House.”

At the end of June the Sydney steelworkers decided to strike, prompting another call for the Canadian military. The provincial police also reappeared and, on Sunday, 1 July 1923, led a charge down Victoria Road into the Whitney Pier neighbourhood of Sydney, injuring picketers and churchgoers alike. Urged on by J. B. McLachlan, 8,500 unionized Cape Breton miners joined in a sympathy strike two days later. Their leaders would soon after be deposed for this action [see McLachlan]. The miners returned to work without having achieved their objectives, and eventually the steelworkers would be defeated too. In the house Richardson continued to press for increased tariffs on American coal and “steadier employment and better wages” for miners, but to no avail. Discontent would grow, culminating in the bitter struggle of 1925 [see William [Davis\*](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/davis_william_15E.html)].

Richardson did not contest the 1925 provincial election in the newly gerrymandered riding. No Farmer candidates ran, and no Labour members were returned. He went back to South Bar and spent his time engaging in spirited discussions with his brothers, teaching basic astronomy to the next generation of Richardsons, and farming – with particular attention paid to his geese. A progressive individual, Richardson steadfastly maintained his political views in the highly charged 1920s. He died of heart problems, at home. The Sydney Post-Record noted he had been “a figure closely identified with the agricultural and political life” of Cape Breton County.

[Don MacGillivray](http://www.biographi.ca/en/contrib/16)

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The year of Arthur Remington Richardson’s birth is uncertain. The census return for 1901 gives a birth year of 1864, and the returns for 1881 and 1891, as well as his testimony during the 1918 commission of inquiry investigating pilotage districts, suggest that this date is correct. However, the 1911 census states that he was born in 1863, and a number of secondary sources give 1862.

LAC, Census returns for the 1911 Canadian census, Cape Breton South, South Bar, Ward 12: 16; R233-35-2, Cape Breton, Sydney, P, Ward 1: 61; R233-36-4, Cape Breton, Victoria, roll T-6310; R233-37-6, Cape Breton, South Bar, Ward X-1: 4; R1191-30-9. NSA, “Nova Scotia hist. vital statistics,” Cape Breton County, 1897; Halifax County, 1931: [*www.novascotiagenealogy.com*](https://www.novascotiagenealogy.com/) (consulted 9 Jan. 2013). Halifax Chronicle, 5, 7 April 1923. Halifax Mail, 7 April 1923. Sydney Post (Sydney, N.S.), 31 March 1923. J. M. Beck, The government of Nova Scotia (Toronto, 1957); Politics of Nova Scotia(2v., Tantallon, N.S., 1985–88), 2. Can., Parl., Sessional papers, 1906–7 (reports of the harbour commissioners, 1906). David Frank, J. B. McLachlan: a biography (Toronto, 1999). Don MacGillivray, “Military aid to the civil power: the Cape Breton experience in the 1920’s,” Acadiensis, 3 (1973–74), no.2: 45–64. N.S., House of Assembly, Journal and proc., 29 March 1923: 98. G. A. Rawlyk, “The Farmer–Labour movement and the failure of socialism in Nova Scotia,” in Essays on the left: essays in honour of T. C. Douglas, ed. Laurier LaPierre et al. (Toronto and Montreal, 1971), 31–41.