

ERECTED
TO THE MEMORY OF
ONTARIO LAND SURVEYOR
JAMES DICKSON.

BORN IN SCOTLAND, 1834
EMIGRATED TO McNAB TOWNSHIP,
RENFREW COUNTY, ONTARIO,
IN 1841.

COMMISSIONED AS A PROVINCIAL
LAND SURVEYOR

IN 1867 AND APPOINTED IN 1889

A MEMBER OF THE
ROYAL COMMISSION
WHICH REPORTED ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT
OF ALGONQUIN PARK.

HE SURVEYED MANY OF THE
SURROUNDING TOWNSHIPS
AND STAUNCHLY ADVOCATED
MAINTAINING THIS REGION
IN A STATE OF NATURE.

HE TOOK UP RESIDENCE AT
FENELON FALLS IN 1869
WHERE HE DIED IN 1926,
AGE 92 YEARS.

JAMES DICKSON O. L. S.*by D.W. Baird.*

From the first township subdivision to the most recent urban development, the Land Surveyor has been largely responsible for the geography of the face of our province. There are few people whose mark has been as indelible or work as significant as the Land Surveyor, for which public recognition has been so slight. For the most part, the work of the surveyor has been anonymous.

There may be those who say, "that's fine, I don't want anyone to know about my work," but we hope they are a small minority. For the surveyor to be appreciated or rewarded his work must be known to the public.

In the past, the most in public recognition a surveyor might expect was to have a township named after him as did Dickson, Niven and Speight. This honour is not to be belittled, as they are associated with those of high estate, such as Athlone, St. Laurent, Eisenhower; as well as with those about whom we have had second thoughts, e. g. - Stalin. We lesser persons would be content with much less, perhaps a street or even a short cal-de-sac named for us.

Thanks to the interest taken in him by Leslie Frost, Q. C., Prime Minister of Ontario, James Dickson, O. L. S. is one surveyor who will not be forgotten.

Dickson lived in Fenelon Falls from 1869 until 1926. He had worked with surveyors in the Ottawa and Madawaska valleys in the 1860's, writing his exams in 1867. It is interesting to note that he paid S. T. Evans, P. L. S. fifty dollars for the privilege of articling to him for his final year of apprenticeship.

Although Dickson made his home in Fenelon Falls, his work ranged far and wide. He made surveys along the north shore of Georgian Bay, he spent seven seasons sub-dividing townships in the West, and at various times was employed by the Ontario Government as an Inspector of Surveys. He sub-divided nine townships for the Provincial Government, eight of which are now in Algonquin Park. Dickson may be best remembered for his work as a member of the Commission which established Algonquin Park.

In 1886 Dickson wrote a book "Camping in the Muskoka Region", which was re-published by the Department of Lands and Forests in 1960, and is available in public libraries. It is a story compiled from his experiences and trips while surveying in what is now the Algonquin Park area. His book, written in a stylized and dated manner, is uncomfortable to read for prolonged periods, but it happily reflects Dickson's love for his work and enthusiasm for the outdoors. We recommend it to all surveyors, as we are certain everyone will share Dickson's pleasure in his trips, particularly those of our members who ally themselves with the old school and who are accustomed to disparaging "steam heated radiators" and such, at our annual meetings.

Much credit for establishing Algonquin Park is given to Alexander Kirkwood, Senior Officer of the Lands Branch of the now Department of Lands and Forests. However, he never saw the Park and it is the belief of Leslie Frost that Kirkwood's inspiration came entirely from Dickson. Any reader of Dickson's book cannot help but share this belief.

Because of Mr. Frost's interest, a monument was recently built in the Park commemorating Dickson and his work. Placed on the lawn in front of the nature museum there, it will tell the thousands who visit the park each summer of Dickson's contribution to our province.

Undoubtedly there are many other surveyors whose service should be remembered. Perhaps our members might have suggestions as to how this might best be done.