

The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors

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UNIFICATION

Once formed, the survival of the A.O.P.L.S. depended on the practitioners and their public viewing it as responsible, productive and necessary. Towards this end the Association's leadership initiated activities that promoted the organization amongst surveyors and society at large.

Three of the most dynamic members were W. Chipman, Professor Galbraith and G. B. Kirkpatrick. Among other attributes Willis Chipman possessed exceptional organizational abilities; as Mr. Klotz stated in 1887,

"If there is any officer in the Association who deserves election by acclamation it is Willis Chipman. He is the father of the Association . . . He has worked more than anyone else in setting up the Association, and bringing it to its present state of activity . . . (Applause)". (1887 Pg. 12)

Professor Galbraith, as an engineer represented the academic side of surveying and in this capacity offered an impressive representative with an awareness of the practical needs of the Association. In 1887 he nominated a formidable peer to run against himself as Vice President,

"My reason for doing so," he said "is, that there is no work attached to the office. It is simply an honorary position; and I think that as this is a Land Surveyor's Association, it would be better that the gentlemen who fill the most honorable positions in its gift, should be practising surveyors". (1887 Pg. 12) He was elected despite his objections.

G. B. Kirkpatrick's political abilities complimented the talents of Chipman and Galbraith. As a Surveyor with the Crown Lands Department he had an appreciation of the workings of the political machinery. This combined with his ability to lead, and made him an ideal first president. As V. Sankey stated in 1887,

"No man so good could be found, in the matter of getting legislation enacted on behalf of the Association". (1887 Pg. 12)

He realised that before the Association could move forward, it must view itself in its historical perspective. His first presidential address in 1887 outlined some immediate problems and objectives, and dwelt extensively on the history of surveying in Ontario.

Looking to the future, Kirkpatrick remarked,

"The time has gone when with a compass and Jacob's staff a surveyor was considered to be fully equipped . . ." and that,

"The facilities for education for men about to enter on the life of a surveyor are unsurpassed anywhere". (1887 Pg. 23)

He also recognized a need for a compilation of decisions of the courts, biographical sketches and,

"The desirability of (members) to get their brethren throughout the province to fall into line and join the Association . . .". (1887 Pg. 23)

Although confident of the ultimate success of the organization, he was aware of its frailty,

"I was rather afraid before the opening of this session that the members would not come together . . . but I am more than satisfied with the result". (1887 Pg. 19).

His satisfaction was warranted. In 1886 only 75 of the 250 P.L.S.'s were members; in 1888 this had increased by 70%. Despite this not all of the membership was optimistic. The 1886 minutes reported that,

"William Spry of Toronto, was not very sanguine as to the success of an Association unless it was a very inexpensive one. Unlike the legal and medical professions, which were constantly increasing and becoming more lucrative, our profession was dying out. In surveying there were no prizes to be looked forward to, as in law or medicine. He considered that there were more surveyors than there was necessity for. He thought he could attend to all the local surveying in one or two counties himself if he had a horse". (1886 Pg. 15)

Judging by the following experts, it would appear that the Association remained for some years in much the same financial state as Mr. Spry:

"Copies of the Constitution will be sent upon the receipt of a 3 cent stamp."

"The business of the Association is conducted upon a strictly cash basis." Moved by Mr. Dickson, . . . that the sum of \$40 be paid to the retiring Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. Chipman. Mr. Chipman, . . . I don't think the Association can stand the expense. (Chipman); we had at our meeting last year prophets who foretold pecuniary embarrassment if anything like a report were published. Nevertheless the publication of reports did draw membership, which in its turn created

revenue. Some members felt that the membership could be increased by catering more to peripheral disciplines such as valuation of drainage engineering but generally the efforts of the association to accommodate the needs of its current membership was its best advertisement. There was a move in 1888 to create a library and to approach the law society about the use of their reports. Members were requested to have Member of the Association of Provincial Land Surveyors', printed on business cards and a list of P.L.S.'s was forwarded in 1889 by the Crown Lands Department along with its consolidation of 'Acts Ordinances and Regulations, Respecting Crown Lands in Ontario.' (1889 Pg. 38)

These accomplishments were all the result of the work of committees. Appreciating this fact the 1888 report bore the following notice: "The standing committees should be assisted by all members of the Association. These committees are the life of the Association."

In addition to committee work members were often urged to work on papers. Chipman in 1888 (Pg. 19) wrote,

"I hope that next year each surveyor will feel it his duty to prepare some paper . . ." and in 1888 (Pg. 23) "In soliciting 'contributions' from members we have found three classes: (1) the willing member; (2) the modest member, and (3) the busy member. Of these the third class is the most numerous . . . The fact that a surveyor is busy is the best evidence we can have that he has something to write about."

The papers presented ranged from technical works on bridge design and relevant legislation to practical works on methods of survey. Also presented were works on relevant developing industries such as mining and the potential for development of surveying in areas such as exploratory surveys. Two of the most delightful practical papers were given by E. Stewart (1887 Pg. 43) on Crown Lands Surveys and Sankey (1889) on Decimal v.s. Duodecimal.

Though these papers and the discussion that ensued no doubt made the conventions more interesting, the information they contained could in essence be obtained from the reports. To encourage attendance other small attractions were introduced. The instrument committee displayed the conventional wares of the manufacturers such as theodolites, as well as some of the newer innovations such as the rolling planimeter,

the Arithmometer and Band Chains. Other attractions included sing songs, readings and Rail Fares. However the conventions were not without their organizational problems. In 1888 the entertainment committee reported that:

"The failure to give entire satisfaction of the late dinner at the Rossin was perhaps as much due to the short notice at which it was ordered as to any want of attention on the part of the proprietor."

Despite these set backs and the fact that 'good roads' and the auto were non-existent the first six conventions boasted around 50% attendance. At these meetings discussions of mutual concerns began to develop a sense of unity and purpose among the membership. Typical of this was a call for standardization of steel tapes and discussions regarding accuracy and precision. Dickenson remarked in his 1891 Crown L. S. paper that;

"Perfect accuracy is neither expected nor looked for, but perfect truthfulness is."

Perhaps more quantitatively oriented, Mr. Morris remarked in 1890 (Pg. 68) that,

"we must form some estimate of the difference between mistake and error in our work."

In keeping with concerns about precision the Association acted in 1891 to purchase a compass and chain as a 'curio'.

Also considered were the age old problems regarding monumentation. Due to burning over the wooden marks were being lost and by 1891 the D.L.S. were using metal pins. Regardless of their make up monuments were often obliterated. In 1889 report on original land marks G. B. Kirkpatrick recounted the time when a conscientious client reported that in order to offset the thievery of posts in his area he had,

". . . got that post you took so much trouble to plant, it is up in my house."

The author then explained that,

". . . monuments are sacred things-surveyors' idols, if you please, to be removed only by due formality if not without ceremony."

He goes on to suggest that each surveyor should have a 'mark' to identify his posts and that,

"It has been too much the case that the knowledge as to the position of an original point has been treasured by surveyors kept to themselves, and used in court as a surprise to break up a survey made by another."

Hand in hand with discussion of monuments was the question in 1888 and 1889 of the desirability of regis-

tering surveyors' field notes. It was never realized primarily because then as now many surveyors considered notes to be their private property rather than a public document. Proposed in 1889 as an amendment to the Surveyors Act to read "field notes shall be filed" rather than "may be filed", it failed. Mr. Aylsworth's opinion was perhaps typical.

"What use would the field notes be unless locating the posts? I do not believe in supplying other surveyors with information about posts." (1889 Pg. 27)

Many discussions such as this originated in a forum known as the Question Drawer. Introduced in 1888 questions were submitted throughout the year and responded to at the next convention by a panel of the most respected members. Its function was to ventilate, (Pg. 41 1888) doubtful points but the decisions that arose came to be viewed as authorities. As Kirkpatrick noted (1889 Pg. 21)

". . . an opinion of that kind would certainly have some weight and should be a good opinion, equal to some of the Courts and at all events better than some lawyers."

Many interesting and varied questions were tackled over the first six years. Some of the responses offer an interesting reflection of the times. When asked in 1890 whether one of the surveyors major clients should be compelled to have all governing lines established the response was cautious: it should be left to the discretion of each municipality. However they provided guidance for an ideal plan for an inland city in just two paragraphs. Nevertheless many of the resolutions were invaluable and often guided future legislative changes.

Though considered in the 1890's many problems aired seem to stem from the nature of the profession rather than the period. Many of the comments would be quite comfortable in a discussion a century later. For example:

1. There is a tendency due to the modern day hurray and excitement to approach our work in a utilitarian fashion, losing sight of the 'artistry' demonstrated by our predecessors." (1890 Pg. 81)

2. I think \$1000 is too little for a professional man to exist on in Toronto. It may be enough in a village. However I don't think there is anything gained by pressing a heavy fee where people are poor and unfortunate. (Pg. 36 1889)

3. I of course, refuse to certify, and say that under circumstances "no Surveyor of any standing would do so". In reply I receive a letter saying, "The plans are registered. . ." (Pg. 104 1888)

4. . . . how is it that society will smile on the lawyer after collecting such ex-

tortionate charges, and would frown on the surveyor who would be sufficiently courageous to charge even one tenth of what the former does? (1891 Pg. 90)

5. In vain I explained to him (to the client) witnesses are sometimes observed to call 'old' stakes "originals" (1888 Pg. 40).

6. The statute of limitations, which prevents a line from being moved to its true position after a lapse of "ten years", is in my opinion a most unjust and absurd law. . .

7. With regard to descriptions I don't think that any deed should be drawn until the description was written by a surveyor (Pg. 51 1888). As far as the townships are concerned there is no use in paying any attention to them: they would get it done for \$1 if they could.

The question of tariff, was constantly under discussion and was finally quelled when a \$6 per day minimum was carried in 1890.

Related to the problem of tariff was the concern about the practise of unqualified persons as Land Surveyors. The association, not being incorporated, had no legal authority to restrict this practise but nevertheless passed a motion in 1890,

"That the Executive Committee be empowered and instructed to take such means as they may deem advisable to prevent unqualified persons practising as Land Surveyors" (1890 Pg. 13).

These resolutions combined with the work done by committee members and the authors of papers united the membership. They began to feel a part of a dynamic and cohesive organization. Though not overly confident the Association was beginning to feel comfortable with itself. This is evident by the tone of V. Sankey's 1891 Presidential Address.

"Now let us inquire what is still to be done. There are still a few more surveyors in the Province to be brought into our Association, I think we can show them fast and good reasons for joining, and surely no one having once joined will seriously think of leaving. Some no doubt, cannot always manage to attend our meetings. Do not, therefore, let those of us who do attend, look down upon, or think less of those who are not so fortunate, but let us try and make our Reports all the more attractive. (Pg. 43 1891)

The Association has developed confidence in itself. If it could, at the same time, sell its credibility to the public, incorporation would be within reach.

NOTE:

All dates and page numbers refer to A. P. L. S. Reports.