

# Surveyors Of The Past

BY CHARLES FAIRHALL



MAJOR VILLIERS SANKEY —  
1853-1905

**W**AS BORN at Brookborough, County Fermanagh, Ireland, 3rd October, 1853, and was the eldest son of Matthew H. Sankey, J.P., who was agent for Sir Victor Brooke.

His early education was received at home, and at the age of twelve years he went to Aspilley School, Bedfordshire, England, where he remained for two years, going thence to Portora Royal School, Enniskillen, Ireland, for a further term of three years, and for the two following years attended Kingstown School for special studies.

He passed the technical examinations for the Royal Indian Engineering College at Sandhurst with the purpose of taking Government service in India. Failing at the time to meet the requirements of the medical examination, he decided to remove to Canada, which he did about the year 1875, and studied land surveying as a pupil of V. B. Wadsworth, receiving his commission as a Provincial Land Surveyor 11th January, 1878. He became a member of the firm of Wadsworth & Unwin in 1879, and, on its dissolution, a member of the firm of Unwin & Sankey, but shortly afterwards the firm of Unwin, Browne & Sankey was formed.

In 1889 the office of City Surveyor was established in Toronto and Major San-

key was selected as the first incumbent. During his tenure of that position, a period of more than fifteen years, his valuable services to the city, particularly in regard to arbitrations and litigation, were well known and recognized by those officials who had the best opportunity of appreciating them.

The profession of Land Surveying was indebted to Major Sankey for much advancement in status owing to his efforts at the time of the organization of the Association in 1886, the incorporation of the same in 1892, and in the subsequent years, during which he held the office of Chairman of the Council of Management and Board of Examiners.

His natural inclination towards military affairs led him to enroll as a private in the Queen's Own Regiment shortly after his arrival in Canada, and to take out a commission as lieutenant about three years later. From that rank he rose to second in command, with the rank of Major, when, personal matters preventing him from assuming the command, he entered the list of Reserve of Officers.

On the establishment of the Corps of Guides in connection with the Intelligence Branch of Lord Dundonald in 1903, Major Sankey was selected to organize the corps in Military District Number 2; and so successful was he in promoting the interests of the service that arrangements were in progress for his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in Command of Intelligence Office for Western Ontario. In his military capacity he stood high in the estimation of the authorities for his general grasp of detail, and he was a welcome addition to the staff, whether for the purpose of organizing, arranging manoeuvres, transport work, camp details, parade or rifle shooting at the ranges at Long Branch.

In January, 1905, he was offered the charge of a party in the survey of the National Transcontinental Railway, and spent seven successful months in the prosecution of that work in the District of Rainy River, but his approaching promotion to the position of District Engineer had a tragic termination.

On 10th July of that year, he, with a party of three assistants, set out from

Kenora for their camp, about twenty-five miles distant, by canoe. In attempting to cross Manitou Lake during a high wind, the canoe was swamped and two of the men sank at once. With Mr. Temple, the survivor, Major Sankey clung to the canoe for a considerable time, in the hope of drifting ashore, but the odds were too great, and he also disappeared. Left alone, Mr. Temple managed to reach shore and alarm the camp. Six days later the labors of a search party were rewarded by the finding of Major Sankey's body in seventy-five feet of water at a distance of only fifty yards from the shore.

He was buried at Toronto with full military honors. A widow, two sons and five daughters survive.

*Reprinted from the 1906 Annual Report.*

## Articles from Periodicals

**The Canadian Surveyor.** The Canadian Institute of Surveying. Volume 37, No. 2, Summer, 1983.

"The Township System of Surveys in Newfoundland." Dr. Alec McEwen. pp 39-50.

"William MacKay, Nova Scotia's 'Invisible' Mapmaker." W. K. Morrison. pp 51-59

"A Survey of Continuing Education Requirements in Surveying and Mapping in Western Canada." C. S. Fraser. pp 79-84.

**Survey Review.** The Ministry of Overseas Development. Volume 27, No. 209, July, 1983.

"Doppler Positioning in the Indian Ocean." P. Staniczenko. pp 99-108.

"Azimuth and Latitude Determination by Observations of an Unknown Star - A New Solution." A. Vassallo. pp 109-111.

"Geodesy in Britain: A Review of Some Current Activities." J. G. Olliver. pp 113-115.

"Britoc: A Geodetic Terrestrial and Space Network." V. Ashkenazi, W. J. Preiss and B. Anderson. pp 117-124.

"Present Developments in High Accuracy Surveying in Engineering and Industrial Sites." A. Allen. pp 125-136.