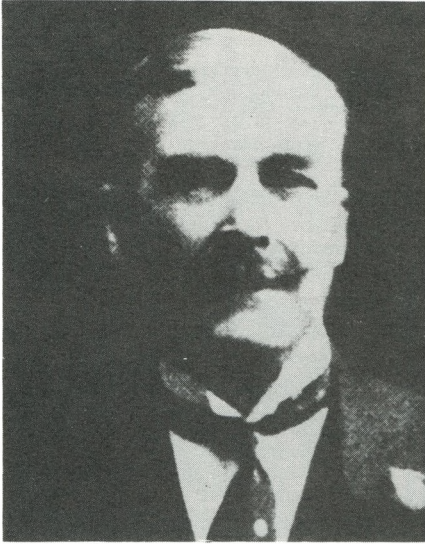


Surveyors of The Past

BY CHARLES FAIRHALL



JAMES WILLIAM TYRRELL
1863 - 1945

As a surveyor, engineer, explorer and author, our subject, James William Tyrrell, was a man of attainment.

In the field of polar research, his name occupies a prominent place. Accompanied by his brother, Joseph B. Tyrrell, a man who enjoyed a brilliant career in the federal services as a geologist, he made an epochal journey through the Barren Lands in 1893-94. This 3,200-mile trip by canoe and dog team with Indians and Eskimos through a part of Canada then only known as Hudson's Bay Company lands, is described in a book he wrote entitled "Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada", published by Wm. Briggs, Toronto, in 1897.

Born in Weston, Ontario in 1863, he graduated from the School of Practical Science in Toronto with the degree of B.Sc., and subsequently earned the degree of C.E. He was admitted to practice as an Ontario Land Surveyor on April 8, 1885, and then obtained his DLS commission. Always active in the affairs of the OLS Association, he was elected President at the 1905 Annual Meeting. In his presidential address to the 14th Annual Meeting, he expressed the need for a surveyor's manual of instructions, his interest in the question of the adoption of the metric system, and his concern over the lack of a proper provincial tariff.

Always a vivid outdoorsman, in 1885 he joined the Gordon Expedition as a hydrographer and weather observer on the vessel "Alert". From Halifax outward and northward, this federal expedi-

tion carried out a geographical and geological examination of the coasts of Newfoundland, Labrador and Hudson Bay to Fort Churchill.

A man of many interests, Mr. Tyrrell tried his hand at prospecting. The year of 1897 found him in the Red Lake area of northern Ontario seeking gold. The site of the claims he staked and worked was close to the numerous producing mines of today.

In 1900 he was commissioned by the Department of Interior to explore the country between Great Slave Lake and Hudson Bay. This journey of 4,600 miles by canoe and dog sled resulted in a large sheet map of the country traversed, about 100 photographs, a large number of astronomical and magnetic observations, together with some notes and specimens of rock formation and minerals. The story of this trip is told in his own words in a paper presented to the AOLS and published in the 1942 Annual Report.



Once again in 1905, he was back in the Hudson Bay area, this time to explore a route for a railway from Prince Albert to Fort Churchill.

An expert linguist in the various dialects of northern Indians and Eskimos, Mr. Tyrrell took a lively interest in the

affairs of the Eskimo people. He presented a paper detailing their appearance, origin and life-style in the 1894 Annual Report.

Having been appointed Surveyor and Engineer for the City of Hamilton in 1888, he served his adopted city well in the years that followed. He finally established a practice with James J. MacKay, O.L.S. The partnership became a noted one, specializing in municipal surveys. This practice was eventually carried on under the name of MacKay & MacKay.

Amidst his professional activities, he found time to serve as alderman and controller between 1914-18.

Many years of Mr. Tyrrell's active life were spent in meridian surveys, base line surveys and township subdivision in north-western Canada. For the Ontario government, Mr. Tyrrell spent the year 1912 exploring the Nelson, Hayes and Severn Rivers, and 1934-37 traversing much of the shoreline of the Bruce Peninsula and the shoreline of Edmund's Township on Lake Erie.

Mr. Tyrrell died at the age of 81 in Hamilton in 1945. ●