

THE SURVEYORS GENERAL IN ONTARIO

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The title 'Surveyor General' has not had a consistent use in the history of the Province's Crown surveys. There was a period of about 80 years during which the position, as such, did not exist. This outline will trace the succession of individuals who directed the Crown's land surveys, from the days of the old Province of Quebec, through Upper Canada and Canada West, to what is now the Province of Ontario.

The preparation of this summary was facilitated by the previous work of Barney Panting, my predecessor. Prior to his retirement, Barney compiled a compendium of biographies of Administrators of Crown Land Surveys, from 1764 to the present.

The first Surveyor General responsible for the administration of Crown surveys for the area that is now within Ontario was Samuel Holland. A military engineer with the British army, he earned a reputation for being a skilful surveyor and accurate map maker. He is known to have taught Captain James Cook the use of the plan table and other surveying instruments.

In 1762, while in London, Holland recommended to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations that a map of all the British holdings in North America be prepared. He argued that this would expedite the orderly settlement and development of the Colonies. The Commissioners, who were responsible for all business connected with the Colonies, were convinced and made representation to King George III. As a result, Holland was appointed Surveyor General of Quebec on March 6th, 1764. True to the instinct of a surveyor to offer more for less, he suggested that he would be pleased to serve as the Surveyor General of the whole of the Northern District of North America at no additional remuneration. Needless to say his proposal was found to be

perfectly reasonable and he was accordingly appointed on March 23rd. When Holland returned to Quebec to take up his duties, the Governor further appointed him to the Legislative Council of the Province of Quebec.

Holland's main task was the preparation of maps of the land along the Atlantic coast. Realizing that he would be absent from Quebec for extended periods, he appointed John Collins Deputy Surveyor General, and charged him with the responsibility for the surveys within the Province.

Holland's work was interrupted by the revolt of the American Colonies. He eventually resumed his duties as Surveyor General in 1778, but only for the Province of Quebec. This was, however, a much enlarged Quebec which now included the unexplored wilderness area that was later to become Upper Canada.

Following the cessation of hostilities, the British government decided to make extensive land grants to Loyalist refugees. Holland and his Deputy were completely involved in the formulation of plans for the necessary surveys. On May 26, 1783, the Governor sent a letter of instruction to Surveyor General Holland directing him to proceed to Cataraqui to minutely examine into the situation, the land and country, and then to send his assistants on to the Niagara area for the same purpose.

As a result of these explorations, Deputy Surveyor General Collins was, as far as is known, issued the first instructions under civil authority for the survey of townships in what is now the Province of Ontario.

In 1791 the Province of Quebec was subdivided into Upper and Lower Canada. Holland continued as Surveyor General of Lower Canada until his death in 1801.



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The Colonial Secretary, back in London, was of the opinion that it was not necessary to fill the position of Surveyor General of Upper Canada. The work could be carried out by Deputy Surveyors, and the Surveyor General of Lower Canada could, at no additional salary, look after matters as necessary. The Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, argued strongly against this arrangement and decided to have the position filled on an acting basis until His Majesty's pleasure was known.

Simcoe commented that the office of the Surveyor General required an individual who possessed both professional ability and integrity. Holland had recommended William Chewett, the surveyor who was placed in charge of surveys in the District which now comprises eastern Ontario. Chewett was capable and willing to take on the job. It is curious that Simcoe chose to offer the position to David William Smith who, as far as is known, had no training in land surveying.

The son of a career soldier, Smith was a Captain in his father's regiment at Niagara. As commanding officer, Smith's father was automatically Chairman of the Land Board of the District. He appointed his son as Secretary. Impressed by accounts of the younger Smith's work with the Land Board, Simcoe offered him the position of Acting Surveyor General of Upper Canada. He was also told there was only a slim chance the appointment would be approved. Smith accepted the offer, but wisely retained his military commission. It took six years for his appointment as Acting Surveyor General to be approved by the Home Government, whereupon he resigned from the army. He was not confirmed to the full position of Surveyor General until 1800.

Smith was an upright, meticulous individual with a reputation for hard work and concern for the public interest. His abilities made him one of the most distinguished and respected men of his time. He was elected one of the first members of the first Parliament of Upper Canada, and was chosen to be

the first Speaker of the new House. He was not, however, a completely happy man during his years in Upper Canada. By 1802, having lost his wife four years earlier, Smith was concerned that he no longer had a future in the Province. He visited England with a view to seeking a placement there. In 1804, at the age of 40, he retired to England.

Chewett and Thomas Ridout, Smith's capable lieutenants, undoubtedly hoped to be promoted to Surveyor General. Smith, however, recommended Charles Wyatt, a young, inexperienced newcomer. He was a tactless and impetuous person who, almost immediately after assuming his duties, quarrelled with Ridout and later dismissed him. About the same time, Wyatt made the mistake of unsuccessfully dabbling in politics. When Lieutenant Governor Peter Hunter died in 1805, Wyatt conspired with a rather outspoken judge to discredit the interim administrator.

Wyatt then offended newly appointed Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore by submitting the Surveyor General's books to the Assembly for inspection, rather than to the Executive Council as was the custom for administrative matters. Further, he quarrelled over fees. Wyatt made a serious error in judgement by opposing the Executive while receiving government pay. The Lieutenant Governor, concerned that there was no suitable replacement for Ridout, over-ruled his dismissal. Then, on the advice of the Executive Council, he suspended Wyatt.

William Chewett and Thomas Ridout were appointed jointly Acting Surveyor General following Wyatt's suspension. This arrangement continued until 1810.

Thomas Ridout originally settled in Maryland where he established himself as a trader. He spent the years during the American Revolution trading with the West Indies and France. This was a time when trading vessels plying the high seas had to run a gauntlet of privateers. It was a strange twist of fate that brought Ridout to Upper Canada.

On a journey to the western settlements of Kentucky, Ridout and his party were captured by Indians. Most of his companions were slain. His life was spared. This was either because one of his captors took a liking to him, or more probably because he was bearing letters of introduction from George Washington and other well known men of the time. He was forced, over a harrowing four month period, to travel with his captors by foot and canoe through the wilderness to Fort Detroit where he was ransomed. From there he made his way to Montreal, settled at the Bay of Quinte with the daughter of a United Empire Loyalist, and eventually moved to Niagara where he received an appointment with the government.

Ridout joined the office of Surveyor General Smith at York, in 1793, as Chief Clerk. He had no formal or practical training in surveying. However, as both Ridout and Chewett were appointed Acting Surveyor General during Smith's extended absences, the officials concerned with the running of the office must have considered both of them equally suitable.

Following Wyatt's suspension, Ridout went to England to seek appointment to the full position. He was successful and installed as Surveyor General in 1810. He held the position until his death in 1829. Wyatt's most notable contribution to the surveying of Ontario was the introduction of the Double Front system of survey in 1818.

William Chewett was trained as a hydrographer. Shortly before sailing from England to his first commission for the East India Company he contracted smallpox. Upon recovery he instead sailed for Quebec where he was taken into the office of Deputy Surveyor General John Collins. Chewett was placed in charge of the surveys in the District that now comprises eastern Ontario.

Following the formation of Upper Canada, Chewett was directed to report to Lieutenant Governor Simcoe. Simcoe had earlier advised him that the position of Surveyor General was already promised to someone else. He

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told Chewett that he should, however, be made Deputy Surveyor General. On presenting himself at Niagara, Chewett discovered to his disappointment that Smith had been appointed Acting Surveyor General and that he was assigned the positions of Senior Surveyor and Draftsman.

When Smith announced his intention to retire, the Lieutenant Governor promised Chewett he would be recommended for Surveyor General. Again he was to be disappointed with the appointment of Wyatt. Following Wyatt's suspension, Chewett was passed over in favour of Ridout. As consolation he was given Ridout's old job of Chief Clerk, which he performed together with his other two jobs of Senior Surveyor and Draftsman. He was promised the position of Surveyor General should it become vacant. When Ridout died, Chewett made his final bid for the post. The appointment went to Samuel Hurd. Chewett continued on until 1832 when he eventually retired after 58 years of government service.

Samuel Hurd was the son of Captain Thomas Hurd, second Hydrographer to the British Admiralty. Samuel was appointed Surveyor General of Upper Canada in September of 1829 and was relieved of his position as Surveyor General of New Brunswick in November of that same year. Oddly, he did not assume his duties until 1832. In the interim, William Chewett discharged the responsibilities of the Office as Acting Surveyor General. There was obvious concern about Hurd's absence. After two years of waiting, he was eventually threatened with suspension if he did not report to execute the duties of his office.

Under Hurd's administration, the efficiency of the Surveyor General's office steadily declined. Incompetent and unqualified persons were employed as surveyors. Numerous survey errors were made, incorrect descriptions were prepared, overlapping titles were issued, and illegal fees were charged to remedy mistakes. Field notes were lost. Maps and plans were allowed to fall into disrepair. And, it was discovered

that certain clerks had been privately engaged by outsiders as confidential agents for the purchase of lands. Taking a hint from the Lieutenant Governor, Hurd decided to retire, citing ill health as a reason.

The Lieutenant Governor selected a military engineer as successor to Hurd. The Chief Clerk of the Crown Land Office, who had expected to become the next Surveyor General, took exception, gathered support for his cause, and created a small scandal. This Clerk had previously been denounced for running a private land agency. When lands came up for disposal, rather than letting them go to public auction as was required, he would sell the best lots to friends for a commission. The charges, temporarily suppressed at the time, were remembered and his application was denied. Meanwhile, the military engineer who was offered the position, convinced that the Chief Clerk would never be appointed and that the Lieutenant Governor's recommendation would not be turned down, resigned from the army. Unfortunately, the Lieutenant Governor was ordered to appoint someone else to the position.

John Macaulay, a gentleman of the Province, was offered the position and commenced to execute the duties and responsibilities of the Surveyor General in 1836. He was not confirmed in the position until 1837.

Macaulay, born to a well-to-do Kingston family, started out as a businessman. He set himself up as a general merchant in Kingston and later, with other merchants, established what was to become the first bank in Upper Canada. He was to become a newspaper editor, president of a commission on internal navigation, school trustee, magistrate, chairman of the District Court of Quarter Sessions, church worker and an officer in the local militia. He gained considerable influence through his newspaper editorials, from the counsel he offered on local and provincial matters, his proven capabilities and intelligence, and his participation in local institutions. When he eventually moved to Toronto in 1835, he was appointed to

the Legislative Council, the Upper House of the Provincial Legislature.

Macaulay was offered the position of Surveyor General in 1836. Almost simultaneously, he was nominated a customs arbitrator for the Province. He accepted both positions.

The Surveyor General's office, at the time of Macaulay's appointment, was in a chaotic state of affairs. He had hoped to achieve some reform of what he described as a disagreeable office that required constant supervision. On acceptance of the position, he vowed to devote his life to remedying the injuries inflicted on individuals by the careless works of the early surveyors. It is not known if he succeeded. There is little reference to his involvement in surveying or the administration of the office. It appears that he was more caught up in the affairs of government, the Upper Canada rebellion, and the responsibilities of his other positions. Macaulay relinquished the duties of Surveyor General in 1838 following his appointment as Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor.

Robert Sullivan succeeded Macaulay. A lawyer and a renowned orator, he served as Mayor of Toronto and was a member of the Legislative Council. He was Commissioner of Crown Lands and Surveyor General of Woods and Forests. The position of Surveyor General of Woods and Forests originated in 1791 when land grants were made subject to a reservation of any considerable growths of masting or other timber fit for the use of the Royal Navy. Land grants could not be made until first inspected by the Surveyor General of Woods and Forests. The position was also responsible for the enforcement of reservations, the provision of advice to the government regarding the location and volume of timber suitable for cutting, and the issuance of timber cutting licences. Sullivan was the third and, it appears, the last Surveyor General of Woods and Forests.

Sullivan's appointment as Surveyor General was partly in response to criticism of overlap in the office of the Surveyor General and the office of the

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Commissioner of Crown Lands. It was felt that the need for surveys was about to decline. In the interest of economy, the two offices were consolidated, the number of staff was reduced, and Sullivan was placed in charge. Unfortunately, more supervision, rather than less, was required and the amalgamation was destined for failure.

Sullivan had no knowledge of surveying and it must be presumed that, like his predecessor, he relied on his Deputy, James Chewett, son of William Chewett, to make the technical decisions.

Sullivan's administration of the dual office was during a time of political unrest and discontent in Upper Canada. There was great dissatisfaction with the administration of Crown lands, and his office was in the centre of the criticism. Routine business had fallen behind, original field notes were not being entered, some were even lost, and poor record keeping was resulting in long delays in processing land claims. Charges against the Chief Clerk resurfaced. This was the same individual that aspired to the Surveyor General's position.

There was open feuding between the Chief Clerk and a junior clerk regarding corruption charges. Another clerk was accused of misappropriating funds.

Investigations into the workings of Sullivan's office concluded that it was poorly managed and supervised, and that there had been irregularity and a departure from established rules in the conduct of business. Sullivan himself was exonerated, however, chiefly because of his work on Legislative Council. Nevertheless, he was relieved of his duties as Surveyor General and Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1840.

Kenneth Cameron, the Sheriff of Niagara, was temporarily appointed Surveyor General after Sullivan's departure. Being a Sheriff and associated with the law, it is assumed that his placement was an attempt to regain public confidence in a corrupt and mismanaged office. He was charged with implementing a number of changes recommended by the inves-

tigators. Cameron continued in an acting capacity until the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841.

Cameron's successor, Thomas Parke, was an architect and a builder. He had been a member of the Legislative Assembly and was an ardent supporter of the proposal to unite Upper and Lower Canada. He was, in turn, elected to the first parliament of the united Province of Canada in 1841. He was appointed Surveyor General that same year and continued in that capacity until 1845.

The Office of the Surveyor General was abolished by Provincial Statute in 1845. The duties and powers of the Surveyor General was vested in the Commissioner of Crown Lands, or his designee. Survey instructions, for a time, were signed by Assistant Commissioners of Crown Lands. Those responsible for the ongoing management of the Crown's land surveys were to hold various titles.

Andrew Russell was placed in charge of the Surveys Branch of the Crown Lands Department for Canada West in 1841, reporting to Surveyor General Parke. He relinquished the Senior Surveyor position in 1857 following his appointment as Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands. He commenced signing survey instructions in 1851, and continued to sign until 1869. Russell was styled the father of astronomic surveying in Canada. He is credited with implementing the use of the transit for government surveys, replacing the compass and magnetic bearing references.

Thomas Devine succeeded Russell as Senior Surveyor. He obtained his training in surveying under the Royal Engineers in his native Ireland. Following admission as a Provincial Land Surveyor in 1846, he joined the Surveys Branch of the Department of Crown Lands as Surveyor and Draftsman.

From Senior Surveyor, Devine's title evolved to Head of Surveys for Upper Canada, and eventually to Deputy Surveyor General. He retired at the end of 1879.

Devine's most notable contribution to surveying was the development of the split line method of preparing field notes. This was approved for provincial use in 1859.

George Kirkpatrick followed Devine as Head of the Surveys Branch. He was licensed as a Provincial Land Surveyor in 1863, went into private practice, and eventually joined the Department of Crown Lands three years later as Surveyor and Draftsman. When he assumed charge of the Surveys Branch, Kirkpatrick did not inherit the title Deputy Surveyor General. He was, however, later successful in convincing the Commissioner of Crown Lands to have his title changed to Director of Surveys. He held this position from 1891 until his death in 1917.

Kirkpatrick directed the systematic exploration of Northern Ontario. As a result of the published reports of the exploration parties, the Ontario Government built the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway north from North Bay to service the agricultural lands of the Great Clay Belt. It was under Kirkpatrick's administration that wrought-iron posts were first introduced in Crown surveys.

Kirkpatrick was elected President of the Association of Provincial Land Surveyors following its organization in 1886. He served in this position for two years. He was a staunch supporter of the incorporation of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors in 1892.

Louis Rorke was appointed Director of Surveys on the death of Kirkpatrick. He received his license as a Provincial Land Surveyor in 1890. Prior to joining the public service, he worked in private practice as both a surveyor and engineer.

He joined the Department of Crown Lands in 1909 as Assistant Surveyor and rose through the ranks to the position of Director. In 1928, the Public Lands Act was amended and, after nearly a century, the title Surveyor General was re-instituted. Rorke was appointed to the position. In addition to his duties as Surveyor General, he was Ontario's representative on the Geographic Board of Canada and

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Ontario's Provincial Boundary Commissioner for the survey of the Ontario-Manitoba boundary. He retired in 1935.

Rorke served as Secretary of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors from 1912 to 1923. He was President of the Association in 1925. Following retirement from public service, he again served as Secretary of the Association until his death in 1943.

Charles Fullerton, who succeeded Rorke, received his licence as an Ontario Land Surveyor in 1907. A graduate engineer, he first practised civil and municipal engineering prior to becoming an Ontario Land Surveyor. He moved to Cobalt when the mining area opened up and operated a surveying and engineering office for nine years before he was eventually convinced to enter the public service. He joined the Department of Public Works where he was Director of the Northern Development Branch and Superintendent of Colonization Roads. When the Department of Northern Development was organized, Fullerton was made its Deputy Minister. This was a period of great activity in the north, and his personal knowledge of the country was invaluable. Under his direction, roads such as the Ferguson Highway, which is now part of Highway 11 from North Bay to Cochrane, were laid out to open large areas of northern and north-eastern Ontario.

Fullerton moved to the Department of Lands and Forests in 1934 as Surveyor General, an appointment he held until his retirement in 1946. Fullerton was very active in the affairs of the Association, serving as president in 1945 and Secretary from 1947 to 1953. In recognition of his service, he was named Honourary President in 1959.

Frank Weldon Beatty was appointed Surveyor General following Fullerton's retirement. He received his Ontario Land Surveyor's licence in 1920.

Beatty first joined the federal Topographical Surveys Branch after graduating with a civil engineering degree. While there, he received a Dominion Land Surveyor's commission. He eventually left to join his brother Herbert, also an Ontario Land Surveyor, in private practice at Pembroke. This partnership carried out extensive surveys for close to a quarter of a century in the Ottawa valley and northern Ontario. Numerous base lines, meridian lines and township outlines were surveyed by the firm for the Ontario government. The 7th base line, which extends across the Province from Manitoba to Quebec, bears Beatty's name.

While in private practice, Beatty was very active in Pembroke's municipal affairs, at one time serving as Mayor.

Beatty was Surveyor General from 1946 until 1962, when he retired. He was the provincial representative on the Canadian Board on Geographic Names and its successor, and was a member of the Provincial Boundary Commission. During his time in office, the last remaining section of the Ontario-Manitoba boundary, extending to Hudson Bay, was surveyed and confirmed.

During his career as an Ontario Land Surveyor, Beatty served on almost every committee of the Association and became its President in 1939. He was active in the Canadian Institute of Surveying, serving as President for one year. He was also an Honourary Quebec Land Surveyor. It is of interest to note that he and his

brother were not the first surveyors in the Beatty lineage. Second cousins Walter and David were Provincial Land Surveyors who practised during the 19th century.

Robert Code, who succeeded Beatty, joined the Department of Lands and Forests in 1955. He was appointed Surveyor General and Chief, Lands and Surveys Branch in 1962. On the formation of the Ministry of Natural Resources he became Director, Surveys and Mapping Branch, from which he retired in 1983.

John Hugh O'Donnell was appointed Surveyor General and Director of the Surveys and Mapping Branch following the retirement of Robert Code. He returned to private practice in 1985 and later moved to Energy, Mines and Resources Canada as Assistant Deputy Minister, Surveys, Mapping and Remote Sensing Sector.

Stephen Bernard Panting was appointed Surveyor General and General Manager, Surveying Services in 1985. The Surveyor General now reports to the Director, Surveys, Mapping and Remote Sensing Branch. Panting retired in 1990.

The appointment of Surveyors General, in past years, tended to be political in nature. They were usually drawn from the military, the executive of government, and business. Few had training in surveying. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that their competency varied significantly.

That the basic responsibilities of the Surveyor General's office continued to be discharged in a reasonable manner is due, in no small measure, to the professional and trained staff who provided continuity during successive administrations.