

The First Double-Front Township of Ontario

BY HUGH GOEBELLE

Which township, Smith or Emily, became the first surveyed under the double-front method or the "new principle" of surveying as it was then known? A misunderstanding with respect to the answer to this question has persevered over the years. The various publications which voice an opinion about this issue cite two main sources: The Association's *Manual Relating to Surveys and Surveyors* and L.M. Sebert's comprehensive article entitled "The Land Surveys of Ontario 1750 - 1980." Certainly Smith and Emily were on either side of the watershed between the single-front and the double-front systems but which one was surveyed under which method?

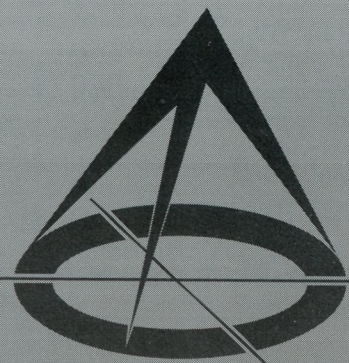
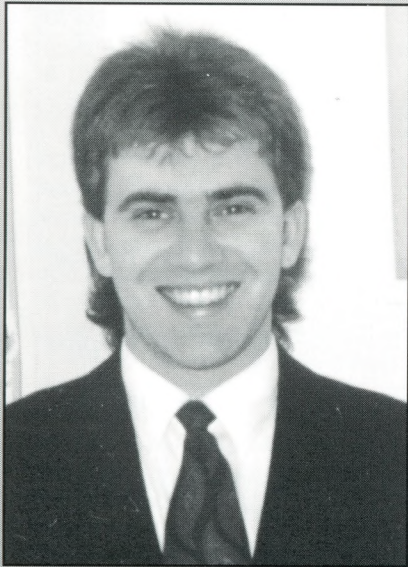
To begin, the Surveyor-General's Office engaged Samuel Wilmot, Deputy Surveyor (D.S.), through instructions dated May 12th, 1818,¹ to survey two townships - one behind Monaghan and the other behind Cavan. These townships became known as Smith, no doubt in honour of David Smith, the former Surveyor-General, and Emily. An undated note appended in the margin of these instructions summarises two subsequent letters: the first directed Wilmot to make "double fronts" and the second communicated Wilmot's acknowledgement of this change in surveying format. Unfortunately, the appended note does not state whether one, the other or both of these two surveys constitute double-front townships. The *Manual Relating to Surveys and Surveyors*, which categorizes all townships in Ontario, records Smith and Emily as double-front and single-front townships respectively.² Sebert, a surveyor himself, further explains that Wilmot received a letter from the Surveyor-General, Thomas Ridout, which instructed him to begin planting two rows of posts instead of one, thereby switching from a single-front to a double-front system. Sebert relates the chain of events as follows: "Evidently when the instructions arrived the survey of Emily Township was far too advanced to be changed so it was

completed under the Single-Front System. Smith became the first Double-Front Township."³ Regrettably, the author cannot support the preceding conclusions reached by Mr. Sebert.

A review of the events surrounding Wilmot's survey of Smith and Emily reveals a different outcome than stated above. For ease of reference, the author has chosen to present this chronology in point-form notation.

- May 12th, 1818 - the Surveyor-General instructed Wilmot to proceed with the survey of the townships of Smith and Emily following single-front specifications.
- May 5th to June 30th, 1818 - Wilmot performed the field survey of the township of Smith.⁴
- September 24th, 1818 - Wilmot informed Ridout of the completion of the survey of the eighteen concessions, the communication road and part of the shoreline traverse in the township of Smith.⁵
- October 5th, 1818 - Ridout acknowledged the receipt of Wilmot's letter, stated that he was looking forward to acquiring the remaining returns, and authorized Wilmot to proceed with the survey of Emily.⁶
- October 17th, 1818 - Wilmot recorded the following entry in his diary: "Returned to my previous Depot near the landing having completed the survey of the Township of Smith so far as practicable until the winter,...." Wilmot never returned, as he had planned, to complete his traverse of the shorelines along the borders of Smith.⁷
- October 22nd, 1818 - Wilmot received a letter from Ridout informing him that, from this time forward, the posts "will be planted in 2 rows of pickets - the one shewing [sic] the front lots in the 2nd Concession: and the other line in the rear lots in the 1st Concession and so on through township by which means the letter[s patent] will each have the location of 100 acres."⁸

In other words, Ridout ordered Wilmot



to switch from a single-front method to a double-front method of monumenting his survey. Since he received no other procedural amendments, Wilmot continued to lay out this township's grid according to his original instructions - lots of 29 chains in frontage, concessions of 69.40 chains in breadth and allowances for sideroads every sixth lot. The format which became the standard for surveying double-front townships did not emerge until the following February.

- October 24th, 1818 - In his reply to Ridout, Wilmot expressed his concerns with respect to the reduction of land grants to 100 acres and the increase by one-third, according to his estimation, of time required to complete such a survey. After including his own recommendations regarding alternative methods to reform the single-front system, Wilmot made the following remark: "I shall proceed as directed by you in your letter..."⁹
- October 18th to December 31st, 1818 - Wilmot performed the field survey of southern portion of Emily.¹⁰
- November 3rd, 1818 - Wilmot recorded his arrival in Emily and his commencement of the work in that township.¹¹
- November 6th, 1818 - Wilmot made the first of three entries in his diary relating his compliance with the new method of surveying in Emily township: "Raining very hard all night, opened to the East Boundary of Manvers & returned 4 lots planting posts at the corner of each 100 acres on each side of the allowance for a Road as pr instructions from Thomas Ridout Esquire Surveyor General dated the 8th Octr 1818."
- January 1st to March 31st, 1819 - Wilmot performed the field work of the northern portion of the township of Emily.¹²

Given the order of occurrences related above, it seems clear that Emily, not Smith, followed double-front township specifications.

The court case *Marrs v. Davidson*,¹³ concerning the northern half of Lot 9, Concession III in the township of

"Wilmot never returned, as he had planned, to complete his traverse of the shorelines ..."

Emily, supports the preceding conclusion. This case discussed the issue of whether surveyors should run the sidelines from one side (or the front) of each concession straight through to the other side (or the rear) as in a single-front system or whether they should run the sidelines into the centre of each concession from both road allowances as in a double-front system. Even though Chief Justice Draper failed to discuss the aforementioned chronological information, he believed that the posts *found* along both fronts of the concessions came from the original township survey. As a result, he stated that the township of Emily followed the double-front pattern.

Given the preceding statement made in the courts in 1867 and given Wilmot's completion of the survey of Smith before receiving instructions to change his posting procedure, one must conclude that Emily constitutes the first double-front township surveyed in Ontario.



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References

1. Instructions from the Office of the Surveyor-General to Samuel Wilmot, D.S., to survey the Townships of Emily and Smith dated 12 May 1818. Instructions to Land Surveyors, Volume 3, No. 312, pp 336-337, Survey Records Office, MNR.

2. Manual Relating to Surveys and Surveyors, 1st ed., (Toronto: n.d., 1974), pp 4.29 and 4.11.
3. L.M. Sebert, "The Land Surveys of Ontario 1750-1980," *Cartographica*, 17, No. 3 (1980), p 87.
4. Field Notes of the Survey of the Township of Smith by Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 31 October 1818. Field Book No. 392, Survey Records Office, MNR.
5. Letter from Samuel Wilmot, D.S., to Thomas Ridout, Surveyor-General, dated 24 September 1818. Surveyors Letters, Volume 37, No. 94, Ontario Archives, R.G.1., Series A-I-1.
6. Letter from Thomas Ridout, Surveyor-General, to Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 5 October 1818. Letters Written, Volume 24, pp 36-37, Ontario Archives, R.G.1., Series A-I-2.
7. Diary of the Survey of the Township of Smith from 1 July 1818 to 17 October 1818 by Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 17 October 1818. Ontario Archives, R.G.1., CB-1, Box 36.
8. Letter from Thomas Ridout, Surveyor-General, to Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 22 October 1818. Letters Written, Volume 24, pp 47-48, Ontario Archives, R.G.1., Series A-I-2.
9. Letter from Samuel Wilmot, D.S., to Thomas Ridout, Surveyor-General, dated 24 October 1818. Surveyors Letters, Volume 37, No. 100, Ontario Archives, R.G.1., Series A-I-1.
10. Field Notes of the Survey of the Township of Emily by Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 31 December 1818. Field Book No. 201, Survey Records Office, MNR.
11. Diary of the Survey of the Township of Emily from 18 October 1818 to 31 December 1818 by Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 31 December 1818. Ontario Archives, R.G.1., CB-1, Box 9.
12. Field Notes of the Survey of the Township of Emily by Samuel Wilmot, D.S., dated 31 March 1819. Field Book No. 200, Survey Records Office, MNR.
13. *Marrs v. Davidson* (1867), 26 U.C.Q.B. 641 (C.A.).

NEXT ISSUE : A SURVEYOR IN THAILAND

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