

REPORT FROM THE AOLS ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

By Gordon Good, O.L.S. (Ret.), Chair

The Archives and Historical Committee would like to tell you that we are not just a group of pretty faces and we do accomplish a few items of note.

It is best that the whole committee be identified as reference to their names shall be made throughout this presentation. They are: Gordon Good, O.L.S. Retired, Chair; Jim Hill, O.L.S. Retired, Past Chair; W. John Quinsey, O.L.S. Retired, Past Chair; Douglas Culbert, O.L.S.; Douglas Sutherland, CST., CET.; Donald Anderson, CST.; Dr. Lorraine Petzold O.L.S. Retired; Ross Burton, O.L.S. Retired, Past Chair. Vicky Culbert is a committee member by a motion of the committee in recognition of her contributions to our AGM displays.

The most active and continuing project undertaken by your committee has been the W.C. Yates project. It was started by William (Bill) Yates, as he was curious to see if he was somehow related to the Yates brothers from the former surveying firm, Yates & Yates Ltd. This was not to be proven. However, his interest grew and he wondered if there might be some value in developing an Ontario Land Surveyor's genealogy file. In the early seventies the source of the project was pretty much restricted to the list of practising and retired surveyors that were printed in the Annual Reports.

I volunteered to serve on the Committee and my role was to display the results of the project. To assist in finding names and store them in a convenient form, a file was started in Microsoft Excel. Well the file grew and grew. All the names of our active and retired members were added and then all the past members were added, starting with number one. Besides me, John has been the next most important member of the project as he has been able to verify the accuracy of dates, names, and sources of information. When you get a chance to review the file you will appreciate the hours of work that John has contributed.

It is interesting to realize that the numbering process, which was begun by Wilmot Baird while acting as Secretary of the Association, has changed from a system of numerical order, for ease of tracking surveyors, to one of identifying monuments planted by surveyors. Indeed it would appear that the numbering system is now just as important as the surveyor's name. It is rumoured that the original numbering was created by the order in which Land Surveyors registered for the first Annual Meeting in 1892. Progression of the system thereafter and into the 1920s and 1930s was by the chronological order of each surveyor's

commission, which is still the present day custom.

Well the database grew some more as all of the Provincial Land Surveyors were added as well as the Deputy Land Surveyors. Our present records indicate that Lt. Lewis Kotte, James Peachy, Capt. René Hypolite Pepin and Lt. William Tinling were commissioned as Deputy Land Surveyors in the year 1783 for the Province of Canada. We have restricted our recording of commissions to the area known as Ontario. As more evidence is found we hope to add older dates to our records. It also became evident from our records that plans and surveys were completed by men who we cannot identify as being commissioned. An additional page with a list of their names was created to be kept until we can determine their official status.

One of the benefits of computer-based data is the ease of identifying search criteria. The initial shock was to find that over three hundred surveyors were "lost". That is to say, we had lost all office contact with them. Many active and retired surveyors knew where they lived but the AOLS office did not have their contact information.

A report of these findings to those attending the Veterans' dinner in 2009 sure had positive results. Lorraine quickly came to our aid, on a temporary basis, in order to get the numbers reduced. She has been a relentless researcher and I am pleased to report that her effort combined with the work of others has reduced the missing members to only two.

Well the committee couldn't leave the database in its present size. Gord suggested that "links" could be inserted into Excel and all the biographical sketches could be connected. Also any photos that have already been scanned could also be "linked." The process revealed that over one hundred sketches had been overlooked and had to be scanned. Of course it must be realized that present technical knowledge has advanced since the first sketches were scanned and the files are ten times larger when they have enhanced images attached.

The committee is attempting to have the file ready for the new website. This will give every surveyor the opportunity to read the early biographical sketches of some very remarkable surveyors without having to get copies of early Annual Reports.

At the present time our links have been to archives stored only on our premises at 1043 McNicoll Avenue. I recently

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obtained a digital copy of a Provincial Land Surveyors' 1857 journal written by A.B. Scott. This was loaded into the database and a "link" was connected to the file. Now surveyors in Ontario may view and read the daily journal. To continue this concept of linking to journals only naturally leads to "links" to original Township survey notes and will create a file, of incomprehensible size to me, and may be too large for our website.

In June of last year our Committee visited Archives Ontario where we saw some very impressive records, namely the original David Thompson map of the Province of Canada. We intend, with Council's approval, to enter into negotiations with Archives Ontario to gain permission to have "links" to their database to access archived surveyors' journals, notes, plans and any other pertinent data concerning surveyors.

One very important detail that was pointed out by Lorraine is that it is important for every surveyor to understand how not to become lost. A retired surveyor, who is in good standing at the time of his/her retirement, is a member of the profession for the rest of his/her life, unless directed to the contrary by the surveyor and is entitled to use the term "Ontario Land Surveyor (Retired)" or "O.L.S. (Ret.)" after his/her name. A recorded member may use the title Ontario Land Surveyor on a memorial marker bearing his/her name. The current payment of sixty dollars for a retired membership is not a professional payment for the use of the title but is primarily a subsidy for copies of the Annual Report, the Ontario Professional Surveyor, and any other information forwarded to the membership.

The loss of personal contact in the past few years, since Lorraine retired from the office of the Association, has been an oversight and we need to develop a format that will enable each surveyor to be contacted annually to maintain updates on his/her well being and place of residence.

Don Anderson and Doug Sutherland have become the custodians of our antique items. Don takes pictures of any new antiques and maintains the pictures of past surveyors. Don solicited help from Vicky to re-mount the photos in our albums onto acid free paper to maintain their quality. Doug handles all of the lending of the antiques and the evaluation of the inventory. We have been advised by our museum contacts that some of our antiques should not be loaned out for any occasion unless they are under the supervision of a registered surveyor. Doug is pretty busy throughout the year as he is sent out to review and evaluate donated items, always keeping in mind that we have very limited space for storage in our present facilities.

I hope that the members and visitors who have attended the last few Annual Meetings and visited our committee's booth have been impressed with our displays. Vicky brings a new level of presentation. Her ideas are fresh and inspiring. She is a member of the museum in Goderich and applies her museum experience to the presentation of our booth. Vicky is always happy to assist in any project even

though the booth at the AGM is really now her personal project. I have to admit that she does have some flair in soliciting major help from her husband Doug, who just happens to be close by and very handy.

Inspired by our first woman Surveyor General, Susan F. MacGregor, Vicky is appropriately developing a history of "Women in Surveying" for release in 2012. Now this subject is just not about female registered surveyors but includes office help, field help, and surveyors' wives. I am fairly sure that some seminars are going to be presented at the AGM. These are going to be very popular and I am not sure how you may guarantee a seat.

I have no idea how our committee could continue without the input of John and Jim, who are both Past Chairs. Their willingness to assist in almost any project brings an added range of scope and integrity. John maintains his passion for accurate research which was generated as a young surveyor when tracing land registry grants back to the Crown. He will hate me for saying this but I am going to quote him anyway. "Young people (surveyors) just don't know how to do proper research." (He is referring to property titles I am sure.) Over the years John has produced several papers and Volumes One, Two and Three of the "Research Index of the Early Days of Land Surveying in Canada" which were published by our Association and are a result of his work. Many references to these volumes can be found in the W.C. Yates Project.

Jim is our buoyant historian. As he cleans out his old cubbyhole files at home he finds articles of astounding interest which he shares with the committee. This usually generates many laughs with much jovial repartee. Jim does proclaim to be a "luddite" (his definition "Not wanting to use or understand a computer"). I must warn you however, that if you have been an associate of Jim Hill or even a casual friend, you should start looking over your shoulder, as it appears he has made it his life's vocation to find some tale about everyone he has met and even those he has not.

Ross Burton is back in the fold. In his semi-retirement he undertook some research of some older pieces of survey equipment that were found about six years ago by a Mr. Mark Hart while scuba diving with his daughter. They were found at the bottom, near the north shore, of Lower Beverly Lake (about 30 kilometers south of Smith Falls.) It turns out that they were manufactured in the late 1800s and if anyone has some knowledge of how they ended up being where they were discovered then please get in touch with Ross so he can complete his report. The committee was not interested in purchasing these pieces as we already have better preserved artifacts in our possession.

I would propose that Ross's relentless research is but a testimony to the various contributions made by every other committee member of your Association.

Many thanks to Maureen who generously edited my original proposal and helped turn it into a readable submission.

