

DR. E. G. DEVILLE

Although Dr. Deville was not an Ontario Land Surveyor, he was known to many of our members, and as Director-General of Dominion Surveys he and his work were known to all Land Surveyors in Canada. The Committee, therefore, considered it quite proper to include in this year's report a biographical sketch.



Edward Gaston Deville was born at La Charite sur Loire, Nièvre, France, on February 21st, 1849.

He was educated at the Naval School at Brest, from which he graduated in 1868. He then entered the French naval service, and was in charge of extensive hydrographic surveys in the South Sea Islands, on the coast of Peru, and of other countries. In 1874 he resigned his Captaincy and came to Canada.

He immediately entered the service of the Province of Quebec, and was employed as Astronomer and Inspector of Surveys until 1879, when he joined the staff of the Surveys Branch of the Dominion of Canada.

In 1877 he was commissioned as a Provincial Land Surveyor in the Province of Quebec and in 1878 as a Dominion Land Surveyor and a Dominion Topographical Surveyor.

In 1880 he performed the following surveys in the Canadian West,—

- South Boundary of Twp. 27 — R 13 to 16
- North Boundary of Twp. 30 — R 13 to 16
- East Boundary of Twp. 27 to 32 — R 13
- East Boundary of Twp. 27 to 32 — R 17
- All West of 2nd Meridian

In 1881 he collaborated with Dr. W. F. King in preparing the "Manual of Survey". In this year he was appointed as Inspector of Surveys and the following year Chief Inspector.

In 1884 in addition to his other duties he took astronomical observations at Ottawa, Toronto, Port Arthur, Brandon, Regina and Battleford.

In 1885 he was elected Honorary President of the Association of Dominion Land Surveyors, and when it was re-organized in 1905 he was made patron. He always took an active interest in the Dominion Association. He was a Charter Member of the Royal Society of Canada, and for over twenty years was Secretary of the Scientific Section.

His ability and initiation soon brought promotion and when Lindsay Russell resigned as Surveyor General in 1885, Captain Deville was appointed to succeed him in March of that year, which position he held until the early part of 1921, when he was made Director General of Surveys, and was placed in charge of the different surveying branches of the Department of the Interior,—comprising, Topographical, Geodetic and International Boundary Surveys.

There have been but three Surveyor-Generals in Canada since 1869, when Col. John Stoughton Dennis was appointed. He was succeeded in 1879 by Lindsay Russell and he in turn by Dr. Deville.

Dr. Deville was probably responsible to a greater degree than any other official for the system of survey followed in our Western Prairie Provinces, then known as the North-West Territories. The manuals of survey issued from time to time were largely the result of his careful study. While striving for accuracy, he also had a practical mind. Some of the older surveyors, who had been employed for years in the forests of Eastern Canada, were disposed to consider some of the rules and regulations as "new fangled" and unnecessary. The majority of the surveyors, however, who were employed in the West, more particularly during the period of settlement and expansion that followed the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, gave Captain Deville the credit due him for introducing and enforcing a more scientific method of survey than had been followed in the older Provinces.

The system of subdivision of land as first introduced was changed from time to time, but the principle of blocking out by Principal Meridians and Base Lines surveyed astronomically, was followed in surveying the entire area from Ontario to British Columbia.

In 1905 Dr. Deville received the degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Toronto, and in 1916 King George appointed him a companion of the Imperial Service Order, a striking tribute to his public service.

In October, 1922, he was honored by the Engineering Institute of Canada by being elected an Honorary Member, the total number of Honorary Members being only twelve.

Dr. Deville contributed numerous papers to technical journals and was also the author of "Astronomic and Geodetic Calculation" and "Photographic Surveying", two text books highly valued by surveyors.

He was recognized as an authority on surveying and it is worthy of note that in the recent Mount Everest Expedition, photographic surveys were made by cameras copied from those designed by Dr. Deville.

In May, 1924, he was appointed to represent Canada at the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics at Rome, Italy, where not less than twenty countries were represented.

He was Chairman of the Board of Topographical Surveys and Maps; Chairman of the Board of Examiners for Dominion Land Surveyors; Chairman of the Geographic Board of Canada; Member of the Air Board of Canada, etc.

He took an active interest in St. Luke's Hospital of which institution he had been a Governor since its inauguration in 1898. He was also a Governor of the Alliance Francais.

He was noted for his untiring energy and unflagging zeal in everything he undertook.

In 1881 he married Josephine Ouimet, daughter of the late Hon. G. Ouimet, LL.D., the Prime Minister in Quebec. They had one son only, Gaston, who was employed in the Immigration Department at Montreal, but died on May 10th, 1925.

Dr. Deville had been in failing health since April, 1924, but his condition was not considered as grave until September 21st. He died at his residence, 60 Lisgar Street, Ottawa, on September 22nd, 1924. He was buried from the Sacred Heart Church, interment being in Notre Dame Cemetery. Practically every branch of the Civil Service was represented at his largely attended funeral.

Upon the occasion of the presentation to Dr. Deville of the Gold Medal of Honorary membership in the Engineering Institute of Canada, his deputy, Mr. Thomas Shanks, who had been associated with Dr. Deville professionally for about a quarter of a century, bore testimony to his Chief as follows:—

"I feel it would not be out of place to call attention to Dr. Deville's positive genius for certain phases of scientific work; to his unflagging industry; to his patient and humble devotion to duty; to his mastery of essential details as the executive head of a rather complex organization; to his power of concentration on the larger problems connected with his chosen life work; to the incorruptible integrity of his administration; to his honourable and fair dealing with subordinates and to his loyalty to superiors in office; to his scrupulous and painstaking research into every phase of any subject which he was called upon to study; and to the consequent accuracy and finality of his decisions.

"There was one problem upon which Dr. Deville never squandered any time or wasted any energy, and that was to solve his own personal equation in the hall of fame. Although the English language was not his mother tongue, as a master of terse and clear expression in English, he had few superiors."

Mr. K. M. Cameron, then Chairman of the Ottawa Branch, of the Engineering Institute of Canada, and now Chief Engineer of Public Works, Canada, upon this occasion said that Dr. Deville had brought recognition to the Engineering profession in Canada and had placed it on a par with the foremost in the world.

Mr. Chas. A. Magrath stated that Dr. Deville stood for all that was best in the advancement of Canadian interests and that he could stand up before the best in the world and do honor to his position.

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