

COMMITTEE ON BIOGRAPHY

The death of Mr. Code marks the second break in the unique family record of five brothers being registered as Ontario Land Surveyors at the same time.

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**JAMES S. DOBIE**

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When the grandfather of James Samuel Dobie, B.A.Sc., O.L.S., D.L.S., came to Bruce Mines, Upper Canada, from Cornwall, England, about the year 1850, Bruce Mines was a thriving little town, about three times as large as the Canadian Sault of that time. He had come out with the John Taylor Company of England, who were just opening the Mines at that point.

The subject of our sketch was born there on 15th October, 1873, the eldest son of James Barnes Dobie and Mary Caroline Lobb. He spent his early childhood in Bruce Mines, but about 1882, the family moved to Thessalon, where his father had established the business of Marks Dobie & Co. He attended the Public School in Thessalon, the Collegiate Institute in Owen Sound, and received the degree of Bachelor of Applied Science in 1896 from the University of Toronto. Immediately upon graduation he took up the work of Surveying, and his first assignment took him to the Province of Quebec, in connection with the Beatharnois Deep Water project.

In 1898, his marriage to Miss Esther Maude Smedley of Toronto, took place, and he and his wife took up residence at Port Arthur, where he was located for two years. While there he qualified as an Ontario Land Surveyor, receiving his Commission on 21st February, 1898. Later, in 1912, he was elected Vice-President of the Association, and President in 1913.



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Mr. Dobie's life work was in Ontario, with the exception of about a year and a half when in 1908 he qualified as a Dominion Land Surveyor, and was appointed Director of Surveys for the newly-formed Province of Saskatchewan. However, indoor work did not agree with him, and he returned to active surveying in Ontario.

Making his headquarters first at Bruce Mines, and later at Thessalon, his work carried him through every important chain of lakes and rivers in Ontario, from the Great Lakes to James Bay. The "Dobie Base Line" in Patricia, run in 1919, is a monument to his name. For about eight or nine years his work covered the Western part of Ontario. During that time he ran a practically continuous traverse line following the course of the Albany River from the Manitoba boundary to James Bay. In 1915 and 1916, he surveyed the islands of Lake Huron, from Bruce Mines to Little Current, and in 1930 and 1931, mapped the islands along the North shore of Lake Superior. During all these surveys he formed enduring friendships, and the loyalty of the men who worked with him, both white men and Indians, is a great tribute to his memory. Some of these men were with him for over twenty years.

But Mr. Dobie's associations were not solely confined to surveying. One project that was very dear to his heart, and which he had just brought to completion before his death, was the building and equipping of a Red Cross hospital at Thessalon, to replace the one burned. He was President of the Organizing Committee, prepared the original plans, and was responsible for collecting a large part of the necessary funds. He was also an Elder and Clerk of Session of Zion United Church, an active member of the Thessalon Board of Trade, and a member of Dymont Lodge A.F. & A.M. He had great faith in his fellow-man, and a deep and abiding faith in the future of Canada, and especially the Northern part of Ontario, to which he had dedicated nearly half a century of his career.

And his love of music also played a great part in his life. Wherever it was possible, he carried his banjo with him. He developed a wonderful technique in playing that instrument, and played a wide range of classical, as well as folk-lore music. His daughter tells of sitting by him at many a camp-fire, and listening to Beethoven, Paderewski, Chopin, and other great masters' works echoing through the woods.

His death came with startling suddenness on 28th October, 1942. On that day he was camped some miles North

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of Blind River, and was engaged on a Township survey. Apparently he was quite well until that afternoon, when he began to suffer from shortness of breath. In the evening he decided to consult a doctor in Blind River. His men drove him there as quickly as they could, but the way was rough, and the car not in good condition, so that it was eight o'clock in the evening when they reached the doctor's door. Mr. Dobie ascended the steps, but collapsed and was beyond human aid before the door could be opened. The end came after a full day's work in the woods he loved so well, and only a few days after celebrating his 69th birthday.

The funeral service was conducted in the Zion United Church at Thessalon, with interment in Little Rapids Cemetery.

Mr. Dobie is survived by his wife and five daughters: Mrs. David Munroe of Ormstown, Que., Mrs. A. W. Derby of Noranda, Que., Mrs. J. M. Keith of Montreal, Mrs. John Fullerton of Thessalon, and Mrs. D. R. Wilson of Timmins, Ontario.

To Mrs. Munroe the Association is indebted for the greater part of the material for this biography.

We cannot close this sketch without some reference to the outstanding paper presented to the Association by Mr. Dobie, entitled "The Past Half-Century in Northern Ontario", and which is published in the Annual Report for 1937.