

**WILLIAM LYON MacKENZIE**

(Condensed from complete biography prepared by his daughter, Mrs. J. W. Lyon)

In the Parish of Dories, near Inverness, Scotland, on January 16th, 1801, there was born John A. MacKenzie, son of Alexander MacKenzie and Elizabeth MacBean.

When grown to manhood, John A. MacKenzie decided to try his fortune in the new world. He set sail for America, settling for a time in the Genesee Valley of the State of New York. But he was not content for long under another flag, and in 1824 made the long hard trip overland to Upper Canada.

In a lovely spot in the Township of North Dumfries, Waterloo County, he bought a farm bordering on the old Clyde Road, and about two miles distant from the small settlement of Shade's Mills, now the prosperous City of Galt.

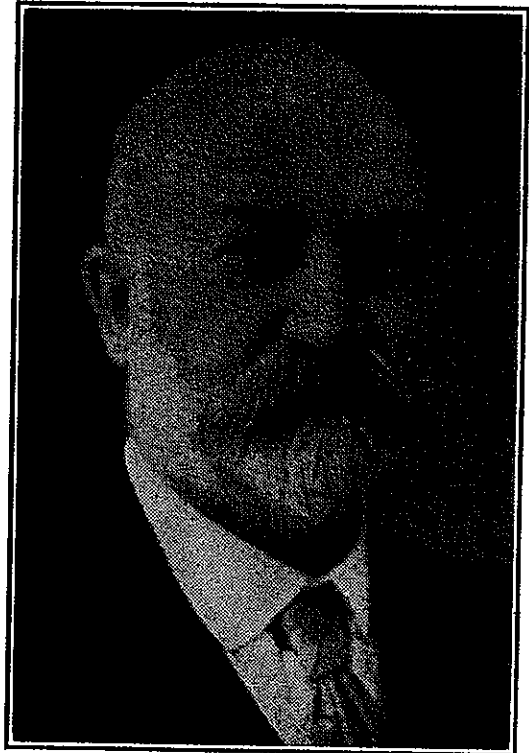
It is interesting to note that this township was originally part of the lands granted to the Iroquois Indians, but was not long retained by them. In the fall of 1816, the first surveys for settlement were made by Adrien Mar-

lett, Deputy Surveyor, of Ancaster, and the land in general, taken up by Scotsmen of whom John A. MacKenzie was one.

He built his house near the banks of the beautiful Mill Creek, and called it "Ness-side" in memory of his native land, and it was to this home that he brought his bride, the former Janet Gillespie.

The Gillespie family had come out from Scotland in 1832, and had settled in the Township of Puslinch. The father, Hugh Gillespie, had been Chief Millwright in the Deanston Ironworks, Scotland.

From the union of John A. MacKenzie and Janet Gillespie



were born five sons and three daughters. The youngest of these, the subject of this sketch, was born Monday, April 2nd, 1860, and was named William Lyon MacKenzie on account of his father's admiration for the leader of the 1837 rebellion.

W. L. MacKenzie, or "W.L." as he was generally known, attended the country school near his father's farm, and the Galt Collegiate Institute, of which the celebrated Dr. Tassie was at that time Head Master. Here he won prizes in modern languages and mathematics.

He passed his preliminary examination as a provincial land surveyor in April, 1879, and in the same year obtained a position as rodman on the construction of the Credit Valley Railway (now Canadian Pacific Railway), which passed close to his father's farm through the Town of Galt.

The following year he joined the staff of the Toronto and Ottawa Railway Company under A. L. Hogg, Chief of the party, and served first as rodman, and then as transitman on the location survey between Peterboro and Ottawa.

On February 6th, 1882, he severed his connection with the Toronto and Ottawa Railway Company, and in April of that year was engaged as leveller and transitman on the location of the Ontario and Quebec Railway, under Hugh D. Lumsden, chief engineer. This location was finished in May, and two months later, the construction of the work began. "W. L." was given charge of a section, 13 miles in length from Peterboro westward, with headquarters at Springville, under James H. Barber and Chief Engineer Lumsden. He remained with this company until tracklaying was completed in August, 1884.

On February 27th, 1884, he was married to Isabella Jane Fleming Laing of Springville, Ont. For a short time they made their home at Norwood, Ont., and in August of the same year, he began new work as assistant engineer of construction on the Northern and Pacific Junction Railway, under J. C. Bailey, chief engineer, with headquarters at Bracebridge, Ont. This work lasted until June, 1886. Following this he moved his family to Galt, which became the family home for the next nineteen years.

On April 4th, 1887, "W. L." went to Toronto, where examinations for land surveyors were held. There he spent the next three days, trying the tests, some of which were oral. He had some anxious moments, in fact so anxious that he became very warm, and asked permission to remove his coat. This was granted, and the examination proceeded. He was successful in passing these tests, which were the final ones,

and he was now a full-fledged surveyor. His certificate is dated 7th April, 1887.

For a few months he practised as a provincial land surveyor in Galt, making surveys for Warnock's, Lutz', Cowan's, and The Galt Water Works System, but railway work again beckoned, and the call was too strong. He was offered work as assistant engineer of construction on the International Railway of Maine, (Atlantic and North West Railway) under his old chief, Hugh D. Lumsden, and he left Galt May 17th, 1887. This work, between Megantic, Que., and Mettawamkeag, Me., lasted until the end of 1888, when he returned to Galt, where his father and mother had both died.

The following years he was engaged on the construction of the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway, under A. L. Hogg and H. K. Wicksteed, and on the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railway under A. N. Molesworth.

Returning to Ontario, from October, 1892 to the end of 1897, he served as assistant engineer of construction on a number of branches of the Canadian Pacific Railway under M. H. MacLeod, chief engineer, traversing country as far north as Lakes Kipawa and Timiskaming. Here he made friendships lasting the remainder of his life with such men as M. H. MacLeod, Thomas Turnbull and Alan Fraser, all outstanding engineers and surveyors.

On 12th December, 1897, he left Galt for the west, and again under M. H. MacLeod, was engaged on the construction of the British Columbia Southern Railway (Crow's Nest Branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway), where among other things, he had charge of the construction of the Kootenay Bridge near Nelson, B.C. On completion of this work, he returned to Winnipeg and left the service of the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. on 20th July, 1900.

The next day he joined the staff of the Canadian Northern Railway Co. and for nearly three years acted as locating engineer, and as assistant engineer of bridges, with headquarters in Winnipeg. Then for two years he was resident engineer on the construction of bridges over the Saskatchewan River at The Elbow, Clark's Crossing and North Battleford. The first train passed over the permanent Battleford Bridge on 9th March, 1906.

In April, 1906, he was moved to Winnipeg, and given the official position of "Bridge Engineer" over that part of The Canadian Northern Railway between Port Arthur, Ont., and The Yellowhead Pass, Alta. His wife and family left Galt,

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and after a few months at Battleford, took up permanent residence at Winnipeg.

"W. L." filled the position of "Bridge Engineer" of the Canadian Northern Railway until his death in 1917. These were strenuous days, and starting with a staff which, including office and field help, could be numbered on one hand, he found it necessary to expand until office staff alone in 1914 amounted to 14 men. Of this period his successor, Mr. William Walkden writes:

"If any man ever had a work-crowded period of life, William Lyon MacKenzie had in the years 1907 to 1917. Following upon the building of the North Saskatchewan Bridge at Prince Albert, and Rainy River Bridge at Fort Francis, the Canadian Northern built its main line from Edmonton to Albreda Summit, involving major structures over the Pembina and McLeod Rivers. Actually his work was extended down the North Thompson River to include three steel bridges over that mountain stream. Then there were branches to Calgary and the Brazeau Coal Fields, on which branches there were many bridges. His relations with his staff were ideal. In the Permanent Bridge work, he had the assistance of Prof. E. E. Brydone-Jack of the University of Manitoba as consultant, but as regards foundations and management he was without a peer."

On 14th May, 1908, he was elected a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada, and at the time of his death, was chairman-elect of the Manitoba branch.

On 6th February, 1917, when only fifty-six years of age, his death came after a full day at the office, and an evening spent quietly at home. His heart just stopped. After his death a close family friend wrote:

"Robust in mind and body, he loved virile men, and deferred to women with the gentleness of the strong. In him the rightness of his Presbyterian forbears was tempered by great understanding, human kindness and Christian tolerance."

His widow who still survives, lives with her elder daughter in Winnipeg. The family consisted of three children, one son and two daughters. The son Colin Murray MacKenzie, born in Peterboro, studied engineering at The School of Practical Science in Toronto, and served with the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific. He passed away very suddenly while on a prospecting trip in the Cariboo District of B.C. on

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June 21st, 1934, leaving a widow (the former Roselle Howlett of London, Ont.) and two sons, Murray and Hugh, now living in Vancouver, B.C.

"W. L.'s" elder daughter, Jessie Wright MacKenzie married John Nevins Lyon of Winnipeg, Man., where she still resides. They have two children, Grant MacKenzie, and Gwen Lyon. Grant is a graduate in civil engineering of the University of Manitoba, and is engaged in mining in North-western Ontario.

"W. L.'s" second daughter, Ona Fraser MacKenzie, married Cecil Havelock Lick of Davidson, Sask. They have four young daughters, Roberta, Dorothy, Margaret and Allison.

The photograph of William Lyon MacKenzie which is published herewith, was taken at the age of fifty-six years, shortly before his death.

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