

RICHARD BIRDSALL ROGERS

Richard Birdsall Rogers was born at Ashburnham, Ontario, January 16th, 1857, and lived in Ashburnham and the City of Peterborough until 1916, when he moved to "Beechwood Farm," in the Township of Douro.



He was the son of Robert David Rogers and Elizabeth Birdsall Rogers, and was educated at the Union School in Peterborough and afterwards at Trinity College School, Port Hope, going thence to McGill University, Montreal, from 1872 to 1878, graduating with the degree of B.A.Sc.

Mr. Rogers became a Provincial Land Surveyor on January 9th, 1879, and a Dominion Land Surveyor in 1880. He was in private practice till 1884, when he was appointed superintending engineer of the Trent Valley Canal, which position he retained until 1905.

Between 1879 and 1884 he did some local land surveying at Millbrook and in Manitoba, south west of Winnipeg, probably as assistant to some older surveyor.

It was during the first years of his employment on the canal that he suggested the use of hydraulic lift locks to the then Minister of Railways and Canals, Hon. John Haggart. The idea impressed the Department, and he was commissioned to go to Europe and ascertain the facts and methods made use of in constructing two locks with such a function. He left Canada in February of 1896 and inspected the lock at LaFontinette, in Southern France, at LaLouvinere, in Belgium, and at Norwich, England. The latter lock was a small affair, built to serve the purpose of a salt works in the neighborhood. All were small structures, in comparison with the size and capac-

ity of the locks at Peterborough, and at Kirkfield, on the line of the Trent Canal beyond Balsam Lake. He was afforded all information, the European engineers being fully convinced that there would be no professional skill available in Canada to undertake such design and construction.

On his return to Canada he was instructed by the Department to prepare the plans for the letting of the contracts for construction. Eventually, the steel work was handled by the Dominion Bridge Company of Montreal and the concrete work by subcontractors for the Department. The Peterborough lock was officially opened on July 9, 1904, when a large gathering of government officials were present, as well as structural engineers from all parts of the continent. The Kirkfield lock was opened some two years later. These structures were affirmed in the governmental reports to be "the greatest work of the kind in the world."

After retiring from the Government service in 1906, he was associated with Smith, Kerry and Chace in their projects on the Trent River, and for about two years he was in charge of the Campbellford plant of the Northumberland Pulp and Paper Co. He then entered into partnership with Mr. Dennon, and the firm of Dennon and Rogers completed several contracts along the canal. The partnership was terminated in 1916.

He then retired to his small farm a short distance north of the north city limits, where he found congenial employment and identified himself with agricultural societies and other public activities.

The children of Robert David Rogers were Eliza Maria, 1841-1870; James Zaccheus, 1842-1909; Sophia Louisa, 1844-1899; Maria McGregor, 1845-1908; Amelia Mary, 1848-1917; Mary Birdsall, 1850-51; Cecily Emily, 1852-53; George Charles, 1854-1883; Richard Birdsall; Edwin Robert, 1859-1917; and Alfred Burnham, 1864 (living).

On the 24th of February, 1881, Mr. Rogers married Clara Mina Calcutt, of Peterborough, and their children were George Charles, died in infancy, 1883; Harry George, b. 1884; George Norman, b. 1886; Edna Isabella, b. 1898, widow of Ivan Fairweather, of Sussex, N.B.; Lillian Kate, b. 1890; Leah, b. 1892 (Mrs. Herbert Geale) and Heber Symonds, b. 1895.

During the war years he was the chairman of the recruiting committee of five citizens, and materially aided in the work. His son, Heber Rogers, went to the war with the First Contingent (2nd Batt., 1914) was taken prisoner at the Battle

of Ypres, and held in the hands of the Germans until the end of the war. His son, Harry G. Rogers, enlisted in October of 1915, with the 8th Canadian Mounted Rifles, and was badly wounded and taken prisoner, and not heard of for nearly three months, eventually being released on exchange.

Mr. Rogers was a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada and of the Inst. of Civil Engineers of London, England. He died at Peterborough on Sunday evening, October 2nd, 1927, as the result of a stroke of paralysis in April of the same year. His wife died on May 28th, 1927, after a long illness.

In the Report for 1923 will be found a sketch of Richard Birdsall, P.L.S., the maternal grandfather of R. B. Rogers, and after whom he was named. In the 1924 Report the sketch of Aaron Greely includes much information respecting the Rogers family contributed by R. B. Rogers.

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