

## JOSEPH EDMUND ROSS 1861 - 1944

by Wm. John Quinsey, OLS (Ret), CLS

In January 1944, in British Columbia, the *Kamloops Sentinel* reported that Joseph Edmund (Joe) Ross, surveyor, whose death was recorded last week, was born in Renfrew County, Ont., June 9, 1861.<sup>1</sup> Funeral records indicate that he was 5 feet 6 inches tall with a fair complexion, blue eyes and a weight of 146 lbs. We have no record of any of his relatives who attended his funeral. But we do know that his grave was ordered by wire by his brother, Robert Ross, of Keystone, Saskatchewan.<sup>2</sup> Robert, who died eight months later, was born in 1855.<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Edmund Ross was born in the Township of Westmeath. His parents were John Ross, a farmer, and his wife Margaret Jane. Both were born in Ireland; about 1820 and 1823. Their religion was Presbyterian. Their farm home was located on the east half of Lot 15 in Concession 7, about 3 miles south-east of the village of Westmeath and about 4 1/2 miles from Beachburg. Joseph was the youngest in the family. His three sisters and four brothers, and their birth years, were as follows: Mary Ann 1845, Sarah Jane 1848, William 1850, Agnes 1852, Robert 1855, Hugh 1858 and John Junior 1860. The latter, John Jr, died prior to 1871.<sup>4</sup>

At the age of 19 in 1881, Joseph Ross was employed as a school teacher. At that time, his sister Mary Ann had left the family home. His brothers William and Robert were both farmers. Robert was married to Nettie and lived nearby in his own house. They had a year-old daughter. His brother Hugh was a blacksmith. His father's land ownership had grown from 100 acres in 1861 to 300 acres.<sup>5</sup>

Having saved sufficient money from teaching, Joseph then went to the School of Practical Science at Toronto. He graduated as a gold medallist.<sup>6</sup> Employed in land surveying in the area of Sault Ste. Marie, he was sworn as a Provincial Land Surveyor on 11 November 1890.<sup>7</sup> He may then have begun a private practice with his office at Beachburg. That was his address when he received his commission as a Dominion Land Surveyor on 12 February 1891.<sup>8</sup> He resided at home, with his parents, in April 1891.<sup>9</sup>

Later that year, he moved to the Town of Kamloops in British Columbia. A photograph of the town's volunteer fire brigade of 1891 shows nine members including J.E. Ross pulling on ropes of the fire pump.<sup>10</sup> For that same year, another photograph shows him in a group of seven, as members of the cast of a play. The photograph shows Joseph E. Ross sitting on the floor in front centre. He is in workers clothing with his hat on his lap and a pair of metal cutters. Others shown in the photo are: in back row, Oscar Kidd, Miss L. Reese and George Strevens; in middle row, Miss B. Kidd, F.W. McGregor holding a shot gun, and Miss L. McConnell. The latter wears a bonnet and a light coloured formal gown.<sup>11</sup> Two years later, Joseph married that Miss L. McConnell.

In 1892, J.E. Ross received his commission as PLS #12 for British Columbia.<sup>12</sup> A third photograph, dated 1892 or 1893, shows him as a member of the Kamloops Citizens' Band. It was a 10 member brass band. Joe Ross played an instrument which



appears to be a coronet. Another bandsman who played a tuba was D.C. McLaren.<sup>13</sup> Also in 1893, in June, J.E. Ross became a member of the Board of the Methodist Church in Kamloops.<sup>14</sup>

In 1893, he had a mailing address at New Westminster. That was probably in the area of his working field seasons. He paid his fee of \$1 to register as an Ontario Land Surveyor with the address of Box 207, New Westminster, B.C. For the following years, 1894 to 1909, his status as an Ontario Land Surveyor was "registered and withdrawn". His address for those years, by OLS Annual Reports, was New Westminster.<sup>15</sup>

The caption of an article in the Kamloops paper of Sept. 16, 1893, was "A well known resident of Kamloops united to a fair Victorian". The wedding took place on Wednesday evening, Sept. 6, at the residence of Mr. & Mrs. J.P. McConnell, 46 Third Street, Victoria. Lilla McConnell, their daughter, was married to Joseph E.

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Ross of Kamloops. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Joseph Hall. The groom, or best man, was D. McLaren (possibly the bandsman previously mentioned). Reported wedding presents were about thirty-three in number. Included were presents from Mr. and Mrs. John Ross, from Frank McConnell, and from Master Fred McConnell.<sup>16</sup> The bride's maiden name, as reported in the Victoria paper, was Miss Eliza McConnell.<sup>17</sup>

That same year, in December, the Kamloops paper reported that J.E. Ross was elected an officer of the L.O.L. No.1570."<sup>18</sup> The L.O.L. was the Loyal Orange Lodge.<sup>19</sup>

About 1896, if not before, it is believed that J.E. Ross was associated in some capacity with Mr. J. Vicars, PLS, and probably was his assistant for many years throughout the late 90s.<sup>20</sup>

In 1896, J.E. Ross traversed the north shore of Nicomen Slough.<sup>21</sup> In March 1897, he was first appointed to survey dominion lands in the Railway Belt, and until the close of the field season of 1911 was employed by the Department of the Interior.<sup>22</sup> His work on the Railway Belt continued through into 1903 and in 1905. Reports during the period 1897-1906 indicate that he had the qualifications of a civil engineer.<sup>23</sup> The Railway Belt was a 20 mile wide strip of land.

In 1897-99, some of his time was spent with his assistant, George F. Austin, DLS, at Stave Lake, New Westminster District, Kamloops area and at the head of the Arrow Lakes.<sup>24</sup> It was reported on Dec. 16, 1898 that J.E. Ross, DLS, and his crew are at work surveying dominion lands south of Campbell's Meadow 18 miles from town.<sup>25</sup> During that year, he also worked south-east of Savona, at Spence's Bridge, Cheam Lake and the Soo Wah Lie Indian Reserve.<sup>26</sup> In 1900-01 and 1904, much of his work was in the Kamloops area.<sup>27</sup> In 1901, 1903, 1905 and 1907, J.E. Ross surveyed in the Salmon Arm valley.<sup>28</sup>

From 1900 to 1909 his status as an Ontario Land Surveyor was reported as "Associate" under By-law No. 39, and his address continued to be New Westminster. In 1906, an additional title after his name in the list of Ontario Land Surveyors was the designation "D.L.S."<sup>29</sup> Possibly this is an indication that in 1906 he had succeeded Col. J.R. Vicars as the official "Dominion Land Surveyor" and had taken over the Colonel's practice.

On Dec. 24, 1907, it was reported that J.E. Ross, D.L.S., has returned to town after an eight months season surveying between Enderby and Grand Prairie. During the summer he paid a short visit to the United States.<sup>30</sup>

In 1913, he did a contract for the B.C. Department of Lands on the upper portion of Deadman River, north of Savona.<sup>31</sup>

The occupation of land surveyor, and the address of Kamloops were given for Joseph Edmund Ross on the B.C. Voters List for the 1916 General Election.<sup>32</sup> That year, he was once again reported in the OLS list of members, with his address at Kamloops, B.C. He was reported continuously at that address each year up to, and including 1943, as registered and withdrawn from practice.<sup>33</sup>

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In 1917 he worked in the North Thompson River valley, and in 1918 in the Lower North Thompson River, Kamloops District.<sup>34</sup> In those two years, he was surveying pre-emptions west of Barriere. In the latter year he reported considerable mining work in the area such as the Queen Bess Mine near Blackpool and at Birch Island where a road had been built to Lydia Mines. In 1920 he returned to Deadman River valley to continue pre-emption surveys.<sup>35</sup>

In 1924, the occupation and address for Jos. E. Ross was shown in Wrigleys B.C. Directory as "surveyor r", 174 Fourth Ave., Kamloops.<sup>36</sup> Probably the letter "r" indicates "retired". His field notes, in B.C. Lands file No. 16014, are for the area of Kamloops and are for the years 1913 to 1930.<sup>37</sup>

J.E. Ross was the original owner of the Sovereign Ranch in the North Thompson valley. He also owned, at one time, considerable real estate in Kamloops.<sup>38</sup>

For the years 1938 and 1939, he is listed in Wrigleys B.C. Directory as Jos. Ross, retired, at 156 Seymour W.<sup>39</sup> Records of the Kamloops Cemetery Office indicate that he had resided, for several years prior to his death, at the Provincial Old Men's Home, which was located at 425 Columbia Street. In those records he was listed as "single".<sup>40</sup> He died at the City of Kamloops on 19th Jan. 1944, in his 84th year.<sup>41</sup>

We have not searched for information on Lilla (Eliza) Ross, the wife of J.E. Ross. It appears that there were no relatives who could attend his funeral. It seems unlikely that any children resulted from that marriage. Services were conducted Saturday morning (Jan. 22, 1944) by the Rev. J. McTurk, minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, from Dwyer's Funeral Home. Interment was in Pleasant Street cemetery. Pallbearers were A. McClughan, Andy Thompson, W.U. Homfray and Claude Scott.<sup>42</sup> A gravestone was not subsequently erected.<sup>43</sup>

But we do find that Joseph Edmund Ross, Grad. SPS, PLS/OLS, DLS, and PLS (B.C.), had a long and very active professional life. Also, in his early years, he participated in the affairs of his community of Kamloops.

Joe Ross had many friends among the engineering profession and was known for his high sense of duty and integrity, for efficiency and accuracy. His kindly, quiet nature won for him the highest respect from all with whom he came in contact.<sup>44</sup>

My thanks to John A. Whittaker, B.C. Land Surveyor, and former Chairman of the Historical & Biographical Committee, for providing the bulk of the information used in this biography.

- 1 Kamloops Sentinel, Jan. 26, 1944, p.5. [B.C. Archives and Records Service].
- 2 Funeral directors, Kamloops. Courtesy, Elenore S. Chamberland for Kamloops Family History Society.
- 3 Keystone SD - From Sod to Solar, 1980. (Robert Ross was buried 25 October 1944 at Cottonwood Church Cemetery. No stone in 1980.) Also, Pense Community 1882 - 1982, p.281; Article on Ross Family with photo, contributed by Joe Ross. (Robert Ross married Nettie Jackson 1861-1935. They had 7 daughters and 4 sons.) Both, courtesy of Laura Hanowski, Saskatchewan Genealogical Society.

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- 4 Census Records for Renfrew County, Westmeath Tp: 1861, C-1071, Dist. No. 2, p.33; 1871, C-10021, Dist. No. 82, p.45; 1881, C-13234, Dist. No. 114, p.52/53; 1891, T-6365, Dist. No. 113, Div. 2, p.5 & Div. 3, p.10.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Early Land Surveyors of British Columbia, 1990, by John A. Whittaker, B.C.L.S., p.122.
- 7 Examination Book, PLS & OLS, office of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors.
- 8 DLSs, DTSs, & associated lists (1872-1964), R.W. Clark, DLS, Secretary of the Board of Examiners.
- 9 Census 1891, Westmeath Tp, T-6365, Dist. No.113, Div. 2, p.5.
- 10 Photo No. 1404, Kamloops Museum & Archives (copy in Early Land Surveyors of B.C., p.123).
- 11 Photo No. 356, Kamloops Museum & Archives. Reproduced here courtesy of that Museum.
- 12 Early Land Surveyors of British Columbia, p.122.
- 13 Photo No. 353, Kamloops Museum & Archives.
- 14 Kamloops Inland Sentinel, June 3, 1893, p.8.
- 15 Annual Reports of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors 1893 - 1909.
- 16 Kamloops Inland Sentinel, Sept. 16, 1893, p.4. [B.C. Archives and Records Service]
- 17 Victoria Daily Colonist, Sept. 8, 1893 p.5. [B.C. Archives and Records Service]
- 18 Kamloops Inland Sentinel, Dec. 30, 1893, p.8.
- 19 Elenore B. Chamberland for Kamloops Family History Society.
- 20 Early Land Surveyors of British Columbia.
- 21 Report of the Dept. of the Interior for 1896 (from Early Land Surveyors of B.C.).
- 22 Canadian Surveyor, Report of April 1944, Vol. 8 #4, by the Canadian Institute of Surveying, p.31.
- 23 Reports of the Dept. of the Interior, 1897-1906; B.C.L.S. Data on computer.
- 24 Early Land Surveyors of British Columbia, p.122.
- 25 Kamloops Inland Sentinel, Dec. 16, 1898, p.4. (from Early Land Surveyors of B.C.).
- 26 Report of the Dept. of the Interior, 1898 (from Early Land Surveyors of B.C.).
- 27 B.C.L.S. Data on computer.
- 28 History of Salmon Arm 1885 - 1912, p.71, article by Ernest Doe. Courtesy, Gail P. Mackay for Vernon & District Family History Society.
- 29 Annual Reports of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, 1900-1909.
- 30 Kamloops Inland Sentinel, Dec. 24, 1907, p.6.
- 31 B.C. Land Report for 1913 (from Early Land Surveyors of British Columbia).
- 32 Voters List for the 1916 General Election in B.C. [B.C. Archives and Records Service]
- 33 Annual Reports of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, 1916 - 1943.
- 34 B.C.L.S. Data on computer.
- 35 B.C. Land Reports, 1917-1918, 1920 (from Early Land Surveyors of B.C.).
- 36 Wrigleys B.C. Directory. Courtesy, Gail P. MacKay for Vernon & District Family History society.
- 37 B.C.L.S. Data on computer.
- 38 Kamloops Sentinel, Jan. 26, 1944, p.5. [B.C. Archives and Records Service]
- 39 Wrigleys B.C. Directory. Courtesy, Gail P. Mackay for Vernon & District Family History Society.
- 40 Cemetery office, Kamloops. Courtesy, Elenore B. Chamberland for Kamloops Family History Society.
- 41 Canadian Surveyor, April 1944, Vol. 8 04, p.31, by the Canadian Institute of surveying.
- 42 Kamloops Sentinel, Jan. 26, 1944, p.5. [B.C. Archives and Records Service]
- 43 Elenore S. Chamberland for Kamloops Family History Society.
- 44 Canadian Surveyor, April 1944, Vol. 8 #4, by the Canadian Institute of Surveying, p.31.