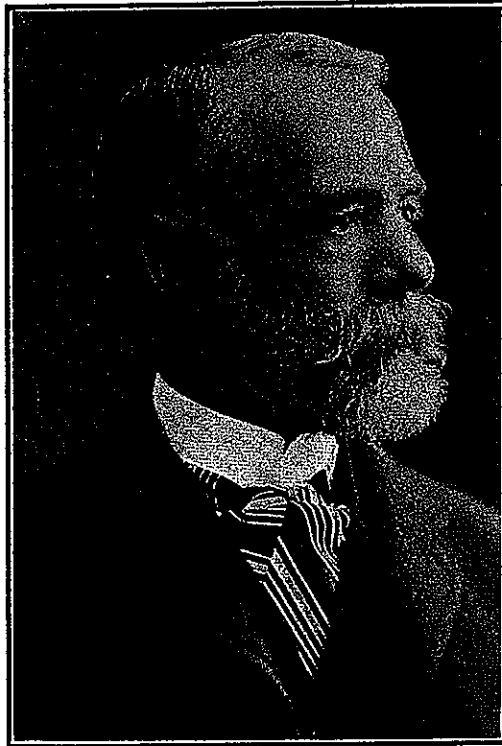


ALEXANDER LORD RUSSELL.

By H. K. Wicksteed.



Among the most useful and least advertised of Canadian Pioneers and the Land Surveyors of the last generation and one of the most notable of them was the late A. L. Russell, who died in Ottawa on June 11th, 1922.

Mr. Russell fell naturally into the profession, being a son of the late Andrew Russell, who was some 50 years in the service of the Government, and latterly as Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands. Naturally he was much in contact with the earlier surveyors and he strove to raise their standards of work and with such success that he was credited by them as being the

“father of astronomical surveying in Canada.”

Lindsay Russell, nephew of Andrew, was a distinguished successor, who had a great deal to do with the mapping of the Ottawa Valley and delimitation of timber limits, etc. In the 60's he ran several exploratory lines north and west from Thunder Bay and was associated with Simon J. Dawson in the exploration and construction of the amphibious route from Lake Superior to Fort Garry which was the forerunner of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Later in the 70's he conducted the trigonometrical survey over the prairie provinces to determine the principal meridians which governed the detached subdivision surveys and he afterwards became Survey General and still later Deputy Minister of Interior.

The subject of our sketch was born at Kingston in Nov., 1842, at which time it was the seat of government. He was

educated at the high school in Quebec and early entered the Civil Service. As a consequence of the "Trent affair" and the difficulty with the United States, the Civil Service Rifle Corps was formed in 1861 and young Russell joined it at 19, and immediately distinguished himself as a rifle shot, winning several first prizes. In 1866 during the Fenian Raid he was continuously on duty and passed 2nd class board of officers. A year later in 1867 he joined the Toronto Garrison Artillery and passed through the School of Gunnery and 1st class board of officers.

In 1869 he published a handbook of rifle shooting which was accepted as an authority in the art. In 1870 he accompanied Col. Wolseley to Fort Garry on the historic Red River military expedition and afterwards read an interesting paper on it before the Thunder Bay Historical Society. The expedition was unique as to transportation and commissariat arrangements and the Colonel was so impressed with the work of the Canadian "Voyageurs" that he incorporated a number of them in his subsequent expedition up the Nile in the futile effort to relieve Gordon in Khartoum. Later he accompanied Governor Archibald from Thunder Bay to Fort Frances on his way to Fort Garry, as first Governor of Manitoba. Archibald's canoe crew was commanded by the famous Iroquois guide, Ignace Mentour, whom the writer also knew well and Russell mentions him appreciatively in his paper. A year or so later he was assistant leveller on one of the survey parties for the Canadian Pacific Railway under John Fleming and was one of those who rediscovered the forgotten Lake Nipigon. Incidentally he became intimate with some of the pioneer residents of this north country. Sir Henry de la Ronde and Mr. Crawford of the H. B. C., in the Nipigon country; John Watt, a well-known half-breed voyageur; "Tchiaton," a Christian Indian of high character who had so perfect a sense of direction that he was credited with having a transit theodolite in his head. The Railway surveys of this date were very unsuccessful and unfortunate owing to the absolute inexperience of the engineers in charge in this class of work and several men were lost in bush fires, while the results were quite misleading.

On April 16th, 1873, he qualified as a Land Surveyor in Ontario and in the same year he was appointed one of two Canadian Surveyors as aids to the Royal Engineers in marking the boundary line, the 49th parallel of latitude from the Lake of the Woods westerly, and later he assisted his cousin

Lindsay in the accurate triangulation survey for the determination of the principal meridians and base lines, and it was at this period that he acquired that taste for precise work which was a hobby with him for the rest of his life. His work on these surveys was highly commended and mentioned in the reports of the Royal Engineers.

In 1876 he married in St. John's Cathedral, Winnipeg, Aurora Caroline, daughter of Henry Codd, a gentleman farmer of Ottawa. Tiring of his incessant absence from home he shortly afterwards moved to Port Arthur where he had some property and started a general surveying business in partnership with the writer. He was a citizen of Port Arthur up to within two years of his death, and besides subdividing a great deal of the present city he surveyed a number of mining claims, Indian Reserves, rights of way for the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern Railways, etc., etc.

He was for a time a town councillor, also school trustee. He was the originator of the Current River Park and water power development and an enthusiastic worker in every scheme for the welfare of the city and district.

His military instincts still showed and in 1889 he was appointed paymaster of the 96th Algoma Rifles, from which he retired subsequently with the rank of captain. At this period he showed again his wonderful skill with the rifle, making the possible 7 consecutive bulls eyes at 800 yards and winning the all-comers' military rifle match. In 1912 he was elected captain of the Lake Superior Imperial Veterans, inspected and favorably commented on by the Duke of Connaught. In 1914 he joined the home guards and was placed in charge of Dominion registration of Thunder Bay and Rainy River districts.

In 1920 at the age of 78 years he won the Civil Service Rifle cup in Ottawa with the record score of 9 consecutive bulls eyes.

Russell still persisted in survey work and in 1919 he was commissioned by the Ontario Government to make a detailed survey of Lakes Shebandowan and Greenwater to the northwest of Port Arthur. Misfortune came upon him and Mrs. Russell went through a very serious illness which finally ended fatally. He moved her, on the advice of friends, to Ottawa, intending to complete the draughting work in connection with this survey there. A few months before his death he met with a very serious street car accident from which he never recovered completely and he died as above recorded in his

80th year. Mrs. Russell survived him by only two weeks. As executor for the little estate it fell to the writer's lot to complete the mapping of his last survey and he begs here to testify to the great courtesy shown him by the director of surveys and his staff.

Mr. Russell is survived by three sisters—Mrs. J. B. Simpson of Ottawa, Mrs. Osborn Lambly of Belleville, and Mrs. Roy of Boyn Attryn, Pennsylvania. Only one son was born to him early in his married life who died in infancy.

A. L. Russell was a professional man to his finger tips. He had a great love for and belief in his country and his chosen city of Port Arthur and while he could with his record during the latter years of the 19th century and his many influential Ottawa friends have undoubtedly secured and filled a good position in the Civil Service he steadfastly set his face against the change. He saw the great future development which was coming and believed he could profit by it.

Like many professional men he was an artist in temperament and he had a surpassing contempt and hatred for modern business methods and the trickery and chicanery so often involved and he was extremely outspoken in his denunciation of them. As a consequence he made many personal enemies. Although of Scotch descent he was absolutely devoid of thrift and his association with Royal Engineers and military men probably contributed to this characteristic. In private life he was delightful, hospitable, generous, and possessed of a great fund of anecdote and considerable humor as a raconteur. His private generousities were carried to a fault and were not always discriminating or wise. No former associate or veteran ever applied to Russell for help in vain and many of his \$5 bills were spent on whiskey by the recipient instead of on the sick wife or child which was the ostensible excuse for the appeal.

Port Arthur showed gratitude for his public service, the papers published long complimentary articles, and the secretaries of different clubs and organizations to which he belonged, wrote letters of appreciation and sympathy. It is to be hoped that a city of 15,000 or more, amongst whom he lived and worked for 40 years, will eventually do something more than this and that in connection with the historic monuments to be erected, one of which will be placed by Port Arthur, some more enduring memorial will commemorate his unselfish work as a pioneer. The present generation has been so busy mak-

ing money out of Canada's resources that they have given little thought to those of former generations who made the resources accessible and available. In all Canada, for instance, I think there is no memorial to the Verendryes, father and son, who opened up a trade route from Lake Superior to the Saskatchewan and from the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, nor to Thompson who carried the work on through the mountains to the Western ocean. Both died in neglect and poverty and the passengers who ride today in luxury over the route they initiated have most of them never heard of Verendrye, and of Thompson only because a river bears his name. The very spirit which tempts a man into the wilderness and bids him prepare the way for the toiling and scheming generations which follow and carry on his work in a more selfish spirit if not less efficiently appears to cut him off from the sympathy and fellowship of his kind. Russell was of this class. He had vision without what is called today business capacity. With all respect for some of the great names of the day he was perhaps better without.

Russell inherited a fine constitution and while not a particularly strong man he was a good traveller and a fair woodsman. His physical specialty was his wonderful eyesight which made him not only famous as a rifle shot, but also an exceptionally good instrument man. He seldom or never used a magnifying glass for vernier readings and his favorite instrument was a tiny transit theodolite which could be carried in his overcoat pocket. By repeating and reversing he did work with this little concern such as I have never seen excelled with much larger instruments, and withal he was quick as well as precise and in test plotting of his work he was wont to use a sheet of foolscap and a miniature protractor and scale with 80 or 100 divisions to an inch. Precision and astronomical work was a hobby with him and with a better mathematical education he would have made an exceptionally good observer. His love for instruments and precision was an obsession and in our association I sometimes used to be obliged to call him down for devoting too much time to purely academic studies when more important issues were at stake. But his caution in his work did not extend to his care of himself and while I do not remember that he ever had a serious accident he suffered much hardship and privation which a little forethought would have prevented. I well remember one night when we travelled the length of Thunder Bay together with a dog train and arrived at Port Arthur in the

morning in record time to the great astonishment of the mail carrier who had been held up by open water the day before. The ice we travelled on could not have been more than an inch or two in thickness, but on this occasion at any rate our recklessness was successful if not good policy.

Russell died painlessly in his bed. He was a good and kind man. "Requiescat in Pace."

For the Ontario Government Mr. Russell made the following surveys:—

Flying survey of waters West and South of Twps. near Whitefish Lake—March, 1886.

Part Twp. Conmee—May, 1886.

Lakes between Arrow Lake and Agnes Lake on Hunter's Island—Dec., 1887.

Certain lands North of Twps. Ware, Gorham and MacGregor—June, 1915.

Traverse shore of Lower Shebandowan—Sept., 1917.

Traverse shore of Upper Shebandowan—June, 1919.

For the Dominion Government Mr. Russell made the following surveys:—

1872—South outlines Twps. 11-5, 6, 7 and 8-Pr.; North outlines Twp. 3-1-Pr.; Twps. 7-1 and 2-Pr.

1873—Outlines and subdivisions.

1874—Outlines and traverse part Lake of Woods.

1875-76—Outline work.

1877—Parts of 2nd meridian and 3rd meridian and outline work.

1878—Outline work West of 2nd meridian.

1879—Outline work and exploring Carrot River district.

1880—Outline work West of 2nd meridian.