

SYDNEY GEORGE SMITH

P.Eng.

Sydney George Smith, known affectionately to all the older members of our Association as Syd passed away in Toronto, 24th December, 1957, at the age of 69.



Son of George and Martha Smith, of Derrington Park, Hereford, England, he was born on 5th October, 1888, and lived in the United Kingdom until 1911, when he emigrated to Canada. Syd joined the engineering staff of McKenzie, Mann & Company in Toronto as a draughtsman and from that time onward was a dedicated railroader.

His education and experience in surveying and engineering in England enabled him to rise to Instrumentman very quickly and as such he took part in the construction of the Montreal-Hawkesbury line of the Canadian Northern Railway in 1912. He served on location with Mr. Whitney in the Lake Nipissing area and with Mr. Henry K. Wicksteed on the location of the Toronto, Niagara and Western railway. Both of these men were famous in railway circles and it was a great experience for Syd to have been associated with them.

When the First Great War started, Syd answered the call, enlisting in September, 1914. He served abroad with the Canadian Field Artillery from 1914 to 1918, when he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and became a pilot. It was on the 19th June, 1918, while with the R.F.C. in England, that he married Dorothy Wolfenden of Worsley, Lancashire, England who survives him. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had one son, George W., now a doctor with offices in the Medical Arts Building, Toronto.

After a year spent as instructor in the Air Force, he retired from it and rejoined the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway in Toronto, working with Mr. E. Fitzgerald, O.L.S., who was then Regional Land Surveyor for Central Region.

Syd served his land surveyors apprenticeship with Mr. Fitzgerald and was commissioned as an Ontario Land Surveyor on 3rd February, 1928. He was transferred to the engineering department in 1929 and was in charge of the Grade Separation Programme at London, Ontario. This was a three-year task during which time he also managed to supervise construction of the Grade Separation at Simcoe Street in Oshawa and the reconstruction of a portion of the steel bridge crossing the Bechancour River on the Sorel subdivision in the Province of Quebec.

Upon completion of these programmes, Syd returned to the Survey Department which had been drastically reduced in size due to the depression.

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO LAND SURVEYORS

He succeeded Mr. Fitzgerald in May, 1937, as Regional Land Surveyor, jurisdiction Central Region. The Region is comprised of most of Ontario, Quebec and parts of the New England States, and extends from Port Arthur to Portland, Maine. His title was later changed to Engineer of Surveys.

In January, 1940, the Canadian National Railways was called upon by the Federal Government to assist in the acquisition of property for aerodromes and industrial sites considered essential for war purposes. The Land Surveys Department under Mr. Smith played a big part in this programme. More than 40 airports in Ontario, scores of industrial and munition sites and a number of War Time Housing sites, together with hundreds of easements for sewers, pole lines, water drains, rights of way, etc., appurtenant thereto had to be surveyed, marked out and deed plans and descriptions prepared. Time was of the essence, and the success of these ventures was due entirely to the energy and supervision of Mr. Smith, and he did not spare himself physically during the whole period of the war. He was a tremendous example to his staff and the amount of work produced was outstanding.

In October, 1953, after 42 years of faithful service, Mr. Smith retired. The number of senior executives who attended his farewell party indicated the esteem in which he was held by those for whom he worked or was associated with. Syd's friends in the railway were legion, and travelling with him was an experience in fellowship. During his farewell speech at his testimonial dinner, he sang some verses of his favourite song, "I've Been Working on the Railroad." There were few present with dry eyes when he was finished, for Syd was a railroader, and devoted his whole working life to his company.

Following his retirement from Central Region, he was retained to supervise the survey of the Newfoundland Railway, the field work of which he completed in 1957. It was during the last Summer's field work that Syd contracted the illness from which he did not recover.