

THOMAS BAILEY SPEIGHT

Edited by a Friend of Many Years

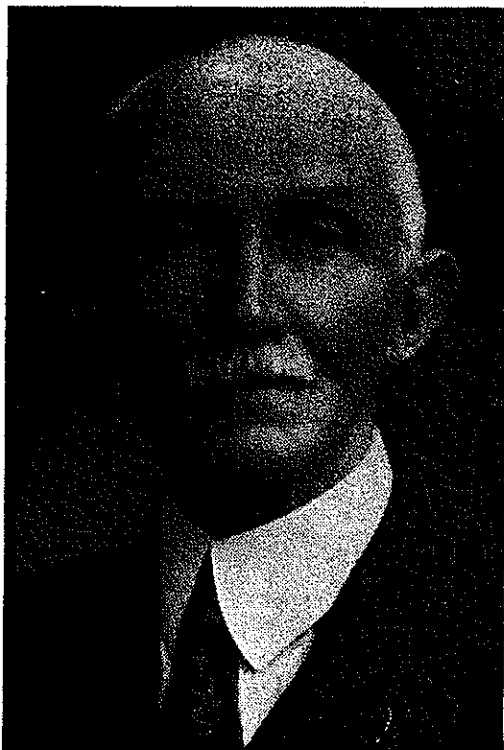
FEW names among Ontario and Dominion Land Surveyors hold the honoured place that Thomas Bailey Speight won by sheer merit.

To all who knew him, both inside and outside his profession, he was regarded as the embodiment of absolute sincerity and unswerving integrity. He lived a life that would bring honour to any profession. Unassuming to an unusual degree, he avoided all possible publicity and any honours he received in later life had to be thrust upon him.

His English ancestry could be traced back many generations and he inherited from his parents those sturdy and worthy traits of character that were conspicuous from his boyhood to his honoured advanced age. His father, William Speight, and his mother, Ann (Bailey) Speight, were both natives of the busy and picturesque town of Bingley in Yorkshire, England. The father was a shoemaker, an intelligent, aggressive and conscientious tradesman.

Thomas, the subject of this biography, was born on February 8th, 1859, and attended public school in Bingley until nine years of age when the family decided to cross the Atlantic and start new careers in Canada, the great West Land of promise.

In 1868 the new home was established at Fisherville, Ontario. Very soon the boy, Thomas, was on a farm and continued at that hard work—for it was desperately hard work in those pioneer days—until 1877. Between seasons he obtained such education as was possible by tramping the muddy or snow-drifted roads to York County schools. With fewer opportunities than most of the boys and handicapped



as he was by his lost weeks of tuition through farm work, he nevertheless ranked well up with the all-year students. Later in life he often regretted his inability to complete the education he so greatly coveted, but his friends knew that he possessed an unusual amount of that rare thing we call commonsense and that he had cheerfully learned the most valuable lessons life has to teach by his varied and often hard experiences.

Later in that year (1877) he secured a position with Silas James, a Dominion and Provincial Land Surveyor. Some months later he was able to spend a short time at the Model School in Toronto. Having successfully passed the necessary preliminary examinations, he was articled to Mr. James, who at that time was Superintendent of York roads. In 1881 he passed his examinations as an Ontario Surveyor, and during that year was accepted as a partner by Mr. James. The partnership continued for four years under the name of James & Speight.

During the partnership mentioned, Mr. Speight (in November, 1882) broadened his possibilities and activities by successfully writing on the examinations for Dominion Land Surveyor.

In April, 1885 he entered into a new partnership, and for half a century the names of Speight and van Nostrand have been favourably known throughout the Dominion. They have been entrusted with work of outstanding importance in the City of Toronto, in the Province of Ontario and, indeed, throughout the Dominion. In Northern Ontario few surveyors were so favourably and well known as Mr. Speight. For thirty-eight consecutive seasons he was surveying new townships, timber lands, base and exploration lines, the last-named chiefly occupying the latter half of the thirty-eight years mentioned and being done for the Department of Lands, Forests and Mines. Although withdrawing from the partnership in April, 1935 (at the expiration of fifty years of service together), Mr. Speight's name was still retained, so that, although additional firm names have been included, those of the two veterans, T. B. Speight and Col. A. J. van Nostrand, are reminders of the men who built up a reputation for accuracy and conscientious work and for reliable decisions on intricate points.

Mr. Speight was elected President of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors for the year 1912, of which body he was a member for many years. He succeeded the late George B. Kirkpatrick, late Director of Surveyors of the Department of Lands and Forests of Ontario, as chairman of the Council and chairman of the Board of Examiners until he resigned

COMMITTEE ON BIOGRAPHY

these offices in February, 1930. Mr. Speight was a member of the Board of Examiners for twenty-seven years, and was a member of the Dominion Land Surveyors' Association. (Appointed a member of the Board of Examiners on April 21st, 1908, to complete the term of Mr. J. Robertson who resigned. Elected Vice-President, 1911. Elected President, 1912. Elected member of Council, 1915. Appointed chairman of Council April 17th, 1917, carrying with it the office of Chairman of the Board of Examiners. Resigned from these two offices, April, 1929.) He was elected to Honorary Membership of the Association of Dominion Land Surveyors in January, 1927, and at the annual banquets was always one of the honoured guests at the head table.

Politically, Mr. Speight was independent. His church affiliations were for some years with the Northern Congregational Church on Church Street, a congregation that was later established in North Rosedale and is now the Rosedale United Church, of which Mr. Speight was for many years an elder, a trustee and active worker.

He married Jennie Phillips of Maple, Ontario, on November 16th, 1903. Miss Phillips was a descendant of one of the earliest York pioneer families. Mr. Speight never ceased to be grateful for the joy and comfort she brought to their home at 224 Douglas Drive, Toronto, and few, if any companionships could have been happier.

A partial list of Mr. Speight's surveys is appended. At least fifty summers and ten winters were spent in Government surveys and explorations, including timber berths and estimating timber and mining locations in the Rainy River District.

Mr. Speight was a member of the following clubs: The Canadian Club, The Engineers' Club and The Ontario Club.

His death occurred on October 14th, 1945.

List of Mr. Speight's Government Surveys

Township of Merritt	1883
“ “ Grant	1884
“ “ Montgomery	1886
“ “ Dymond	1887
“ “ Kerns	1888
“ “ Blain	1890
“ “ Dorion	1891
“ “ Bigelow	1892
“ “ N $\frac{1}{2}$ —Street	(for James Warren) 1892
“ “ Laughlin	1893

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO LAND SURVEYORS

Mr. Speight's Government Surveys

Township of Ledger	1894
" " Wainwright	1895
" " Eton	1896
Township Outlines	1897
Township Meridian in Algoma	1897
Township Base and Meridian in Algoma	1899
In charge of Exploration Party No. 1	1900
Outline of Townships—Onaping Lake, Winter	1901
Algoma and Thunder Bay Boundary, south of C.P.R. commence near White River Station	1902
Townships of Eby and Meridian Line from N.W.L. of this Township, extending as far as the Abitibi River	1902
Township of McCann	1903
Base and Meridian Lines in Algoma and Nipissing	1903
Surveyed the northerly part of Lake Timagami and Islands during the last three months of the winter	1904
Base and Meridian Lines, District of Nipissing	1904
Base and Meridian Lines, District of Nipissing	1905
The instructions this year (1905) were issued in the name of the firm of Speight & van Nostrand and were continued in that way since that date.	
Base and Meridian Lines	1906
Base and Meridian Lines	1907
Survey of Abitibi	1908
Base and Meridian Lines, Algoma and Thunder Bay	1909
Base and Meridian Lines north of Woman River	1909
Survey of Gillies' Timber Limit (subdividing mining claims)	1909
Base and Meridian Lines, District of Sudbury	1910
Base and Meridian Lines, District of Sudbury	1911