

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO LAND SURVEYORS



NORMAN DOUGLAS WILSON, B.E.M., B.A.Sc., C.E., O.L.S.,
D.L.S., P.Eng., M.E.I.C., M.T.P.I.C., M.I.T.E.

1883 - 1967

by A. A. Outram, O.L.S.

N. D. Wilson, the son of John T. Wilson, was born in Toronto on August 26, 1883.

He attended public school and Harbord Collegiate and University of Toronto. In 1903 he obtained a diploma from the School of Practical Science and next year graduated from the University of Toronto in civil engineering with degree of Bachelor of Applied Science.

He qualified as a Dominion Land Surveyor in 1909 and was admitted to the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors in 1910, being its president in 1943.

In 1923 he obtained the postgraduate degree of C.E. (Civil Engineering) from the University of Toronto, after which he was admitted to the Institute of Traffic Engineers, the second Canadian to be so honoured. Mr. Wilson was a registered Professional Engineer in both Ontario and Alberta, a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada, the Town Planning Institute of Canada and the Institute of Professional Town Planners.

Norman D. Wilson's earliest work was surveying. During the summer vacations of 1902 and 1903 he was draftsman and instrument man for the Toronto and Niagara Power Co. and rodman on construction of the Toronto and James Bay Railway. From then until 1909 he was instrument man on construction for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, Qu'appelle Valley, Sask.; draftsman on location of the Regina to Brandon line; instrument man and resident engineer on construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway east from Saskatoon. He was, after this, surveying timber limits at Lake Winnipeg and subdividing town-

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ships in southwest Saskatchewan. During the winter of 1906 he returned from the west and was in charge of a survey party for the City of Toronto seeking a railway route along the face of Scarborough Bluffs and down the East Don Valley.

From 1909 to 1911 Mr. Wilson was in private practice in Niagara Falls and Toronto. He maintained that his most frustrating survey was done for the Toronto and Niagara Power Company. Triangulation was necessary with long sight lines across the Niagara River. Clouds of mist and spray occurred at the most unexpected times and it was found impossible to fully protect temporary points from the crowds of excursionists.

He was next Engineer of Surveys and Lands for the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and so remained until 1923. During this period he was engaged in land condition and hydrographic surveys and layout of construction. He made surveys and plans for leases, applications for water lots, railway siding approval, etc. In 1915 Mr. Wilson was on loan from the Commissioners to the Civic Transportation Committee re proposals to bring in radial railways to a central terminal on the water front. This involved the preparation of surveys, traffic counts, analyses and graphic presentations.

In 1923 he formed a partnership with Mr. A. E. K. Bunnell later expanded to Wilson, Bunnell and Borgstrom Ltd., specialists in city planning, urban transportation and real estate development. The land survey section was headed by G. L. Berkeley, O.L.S.

In 1930, W. B. & B. Ltd. was dissolved to be succeeded by two partnerships, Berkeley and Wilson on land surveying and Wilson and Bunnell on engineering. The Berkeley and Wilson practice lasted until about 1935 but the association with Mr. Bunnell continued much longer. Various land surveys works continued through the '50's, much of it in connection with H. C. G. Wheeler, O.L.S.

Although one of our foremost members in surveying, engineering and town planning, Mr. Wilson will long be remembered on two continents for his work on transportation. In this phase his interest was evident as a young man when he developed his instinctive feeling for railway location. In the early '30's he worked out subway proposals for Yonge St., Toronto, with an estimated cost of twelve and a half million dollars. The "*Toronto Daily Star*" printed as follows:

*"Wilson and Bunnell
Would build a fine tunnel,
But isn't it funny
That Toronto lacks money,
To pour down a funnel."*

In 1954, N. D. Wilson had the pleasure of quoting this back to the editorialist on the inaugural trip on the Yonge St. subway built at many times the early estimate and on basically the same route.

In 1959 Mr. Wilson worked out a preliminary design for future subway construction in Winnipeg. Previously, he had made extensive detailed designs for a "Metropolitan" in Rio de Janeiro and in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The latter two systems were not constructed due to breakdown

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of negotiations between Brazilian Traction and the municipal authorities. He did work on transit routing in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo and Santos in Brazil.

During the second world war Mr. Wilson served as Deputy Transit Controller for Canada supervising all transit systems to ensure maximum service for our war effort. For these services he was awarded the British Empire Medal.

His postwar assignments for rehabilitation and development of transit systems and reports on street traffic problems included at least eighteen Canadian cities from Victoria, B.C., to St. John's, Newfoundland. It is regrettable that space does not permit further mention on many of his activities in surveying, engineering, town planning and transportation.

Norman D. Wilson was a great man and like many such was modest and unassuming. His quiet voice gave no indication of his great intelligence, integrity and force of character. He was a member of Park Road Baptist Church, Toronto.

He was married in 1912 to Ellie Lane Sheppard who died in 1960. There were three children, all surviving. Charles L. of Barrie, Douglas S. of Toronto and Mrs. Karel Buzek of Toronto.

Norman Douglas Wilson passed away on March 2, 1967.