

ROBERT A. WILSON

Robert Alexander Wilson was born at Chatham, Argenteuil County, Province of Quebec, on July 23rd, 1851. He was the second son of Robert Wilson, who was born at Blairgowrie, Scotland, and of Agnes Logie of Ayrshire, Scotland. Robert Wilson, Sr., came to Canada about 1842, and took up his residence in the Township of Chatham, County of Argenteuil, for a short time, then removed to Alexandria, Ont. He was born in 1821, and was accidentally killed by a horse in 1879.

The eldest son, John Ruthven, born in 1847, attended at McGill in 1870 and died in 1874. The youngest son, Jas. Lockie Wilson, born in 1856, is now in the public service, Province of Ontario. The three sons received their primary education at Alexandria.

One sister, Margaret, widow of Rev. Dr. John Ferguson, is now living in Toronto. She was born in 1845.

At the time of the Fenian Raid, in 1866, when only fifteen years of age, Robert A. joined the Militia, his eldest brother being Captain.

Robert A. matriculated at McGill in 1872 and graduated in Civil Engineering in 1875.

Immediately after graduating he went to Fort Garry, and became indentured to Joseph Doupe, D.L.S., with whom he served for one year on surveys in Manitoba in vicinity of Lake Manitoba and Oak Lake. The party remained under canvas during the Winter 1875-76. In the years immediately following he was employed with Mr. Doupe on subdivision surveys in the Battleford district.

In 1878 he qualified as a Dominion Land Surveyor, and when the Association of Provincial Land Surveyors of Manitoba was constituted by Provincial Act in 1881, Mr. Wilson was one of the first officers and a member of the Board of Examiners.

In 1881 he subdivided Township 22, R. 4 to 10 W. of 2nd Meridian at Melville.

In 1882 he entered into partnership with H. P. Bell and A. J. McLean, under the firm name of Bell, Wilson and McLean.

In December, 1882, he was elected an Alderman in the City of Winnipeg, and he was married on October 9th, 1883, but owing to illness he decided to leave Winnipeg and return to his native town of Alexandria, where he remained for about a year.

On July 11th, 1884, he was admitted as a Provincial Land Surveyor in Ontario, but only practised for a short time in this Province at Alexandria and at Cornwall.

His health not improving, upon medical advice, he spent the winter of 1885-1886 at Denver, Colorado, returning to Alexandria for the following summer, but eventually took up his permanent residence in Denver, where he continued to reside until 1920. He visited his old home in this Province on alternate summers during this long period with few exceptions.

When he left Ontario in 1885 his medical adviser gave him about six months lease of life. Gaining strength and health gradually, however, he was soon in active practise again, on various engineering projects, irrigation dams and ditches, surveying, etc. He formed a partnership with T. D. Robinson under the firm name of Wilson & Robinson, architects and civil engineers, which terminated about 1893.

One of his most important engineering works was the success-

ful construction of sewers at Greely, Col., where, owing to quicksand, contractors and engineers had failed. This was in 1892.

About 1897 he was elected on the Republican ticket as County Engineer, and in 1897-98 was President of the Denver Society of Civil Engineers.

His last public position at Denver was that of City Building Inspector, to which office he was elected in 1901. He retired from active practise in 1903, but continued to reside in Denver until 1920.

He was an active member and worker in the Central Presbyterian Church, Denver, and for many years an elder.

The following incident in his career is worth recording. A short time after he had removed to Denver in a delicate state of health, the death of a Robert Wilson at Denver was reported at Winnipeg, and upon the assumption that it was their ex-alderman, the newspapers, in their desire to serve the public, published his biography with appropriate comments. His Scottish Rites Masonic Lodge in Winnipeg also issued mourning badges to its members. Mr. Wilson preserved for many years the newspaper clippings referring to his early career and demise, and took much comfort in reading them to his intimate acquaintances.

In 1883 Mr. Wilson married Elizabeth Ann Colquhoun, eldest daughter of Wm. Colquhoun of Cornwall, member of the first Ontario Parliament, and of his wife, Hester Bailey. Mrs. R. A. Wilson's sister, Robina Colquhoun, married A. H. U. Colquhoun, Deputy Minister of Education in Ontario, who was her distant cousin.

Three daughters were born to Robt. A. Wilson and wife. Hester Agnes, married Dr. Wm. Harvey McNairn, Professor at McMaster University, Toronto, four sons being the result of this union. Edith Roberta (Robin), second daughter, married Edward Eric Billington of West Kirby, Cheshire, England. She studied music at McGill in 1912, and Billington graduated as B.A.Sc. at McGill in 1913. He served during the great war as Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers and was severely wounded. They have three sons and one daughter.

The youngest daughter, Miss Margaret C. Wilson, resides with Mrs. McNairn in Toronto.

Mr. Wilson's first wife died at Denver in April, 1893. In December, 1894, he married Mary Doran, the widow of Wm. Doran, of Iroquois, Ont., who died at Denver in January, 1918. Her daughter, Miss Jennie. E. Doran, is now residing in Toronto.

In the month of May, 1920, Mr. Robert A. Wilson came to

Toronto, and the following winter being a mild one, he remained the entire winter with Dr. and Mrs. McNairn, and intended to spend the summer holidays with them on the St. Lawrence below Cornwall. He died at his daughter's home in Toronto on June 30th, 1921, after only a few days of severe illness. His death was a great shock to his friends, as he attended the McGill banquet at Hart House on May 6th, 1921, where he sat beside his McGill classmates, Dr. J. W. Spencer (who died on October 9th, 1921) and Henry K. Wicksteed.

He was buried at Cornwall.

ma
etc
flec
an

pla
are
La
an
wh
vic
the
the

sai
ex
of

su
do
wi
a
tic
an
ma
pr
pa
en
we
of
th
W
an
su
it
nc