

LADELL, John L. *They Left Their Mark. Surveyors and Their Role in the Settlement of Ontario.* Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1993. 312 p.

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LADELL, John L.

They Left Their Mark. Surveyors and Their Role in the Settlement of Ontario. Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1993. 312 p.

To celebrate the centenary in 1992 of the incorporation of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, John Ladell was commissioned to provide a history of surveyors and their work in the province. Although its intended audience appears to be the profession itself, his book is of wider interest, notably in regard to the profession's formation. Public policy and law; knowledge, training, and work settings; and rivalries and relationships with civil engineering, law, and other fields are all extensively considered.

Ladell takes a large view of his subject — indeed, it is page 50 before he reaches the British Conquest — and he includes exploration and map-making, military surveys, Indian policy, and public works along with the surveying of land for settlement and development. Unlike most studies of Ontario, his book takes the reader into every corner of the province. The main source is the Association's *Proceedings*, which provide extensive coverage of annual meetings and many biographies of surveying pioneers and leaders. As the latter and this book both show, surveyors recognize that their authority and role have been built over time. In fact, earlier surveyors' notes are valuable assets for modern firms.

In the land-oriented society of early Upper Canada, surveyors were among the first, and arguably the most important, skilled professionals and quasi-professionals. Still, the book's title is in some respects ironic, for much early work had to be revised, checked, and even redone by their successors. Certainly the volume of work, while cyclical, has tended to grow for much of the province's history. From fewer than 20 for the entire colony in 1805, numbers grew to a peak of 267 in 1915. Expansion resumed only after 1945; there were 500 surveyors by 1960 and almost 800 when the book ends in 1992. By then, 21 were women, the first of whom was admitted only in 1969. Lorraine Settrington (later Petzold) had the highest standing on that year's examinations and went on to be the AOLS's executive secretary (later executive director) from 1976 to 1992.

What did surveyors do? They worked for all three levels of government, and not only laying out basic lines and doing detailed land surveys. Drainage, waterworks, sewage, canals, railways, highways, and resource development all supplied work, as did litigation and real estate appraisals. Some were as much engineers as survey-

ors, and their skills had wider links too. Otto Klotz, for example, was an “astronomer” with the federal Department of the Interior. In recent years, after considerable debate, the profession has begun to recognize as members such non-traditional practitioners as aerial and geodetic surveyors who do not venture onto the land at all.

The bias of the book is to the drawing of base lines and boundaries and the opening of townships. By comparison, the routines of surveying in settled areas (which seems to have been the majority of the work) are sketched more generally. It is hard to believe that the quoted rates of pay, notably in early years, represented sufficient inducement to fight the swamps, bugs, and recalcitrant workers on the job and government auditors afterwards. Yet father-son transitions and long-lived firms suggest that a successful surveying practice delivered attractive returns. A closer discussion of some private practices would have clarified how such returns were actually earned.

For context, the book’s bibliography of secondary sources is eclectic and less than comprehensive. There are also more stylistic infelicities and typographical and minor factual errors than is desirable. Nevertheless, and in comparison to most such officially commissioned histories, *They Left Their Mark* represents a substantial piece of research. The AOLS and the various surveyors who sponsored this publication deserve much credit for their initiative.

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