



The Baseline

The Newsletter of the Alberta Geomatics Historical Society

Collecting, Preserving and Sharing the History of Land Surveying in Alberta

Vol. 1 No. 3

March, 2025



Message from the President

Greetings and a happy new year to everyone. I sincerely hope that you all had a wonderful break for the Christmas season. I also want to thank all of you who have become members and continue to support the AGHS.

As we approach the one-year mark since the formation of the AGHS, it's hard to believe how much has been accomplished in such a short time. While it may seem like progress has been slow, I can assure you that a great deal has been achieved. Reflecting on where we were at this time last year compared to where we stand now, I'm truly impressed by all we've done.

One project I'm especially proud of is the society's website. A lot of time and effort went into its design to ensure it's user-friendly, and I want to personally thank Ed Titanich for his dedication to updating and maintaining it. He took on this task with commitment and did a fantastic job. The website has become our primary point of contact with the public, showcasing our stories and artifacts.

We are in the process of submitting a proposal to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) for the supply and installation of four display cabinets covering approximately 80 square feet, to showcase a significant number of our historical survey artifacts. The cabinets will be located close to the classrooms of the Geomatics and Natural Technologies (GNT) program.

The artifacts to be displayed will highlight the technological progression of land surveying for over one hundred years. These items hold significant historical and educational value, and by installing the cabinets in the GNT program area, this will allow students, staff, and visitors to explore and learn about Alberta's long history in geomatics and engineering.

We have always maintained that artifacts stored away and not visible deprives the public of the opportunity to learn and engage with the history of land surveying. By showcasing these items at SAIT, we are creating an opportunity for students to bridge the gap between theory and real-world applications and engage with Alberta's surveying history.

Syd Loeppky, ALS (Hon Life) will be the project lead for this very worthwhile initiative. If you have any questions, please contact Syd or myself. We will be planning a fundraising drive for the opportunity for individuals or companies to sponsor a cabinet. Stay tuned for more updates!





On February 24, I had the privilege of giving a presentation to the 1st and 2nd year students at NAIT entitled "The History of Land Surveying in Alberta, Governing Evidence and Evidence Assessment." This PowerPoint presentation covered the aspects of transportation, accommodation, instruments and monuments used on surveys in the past. The third system of survey, split line field notes, official plans, and the concept of original monumentation was also discussed. The presentation also introduced the Alberta Geomatics Historical Society. The presentation was well received and more will be planned in the future.

In other news, we were recently approached by the Canadian Tractor Museum in Westlock to present a talk about the history of land surveying in the Westlock area. They had received a copy of a 1906 plan in the Pickardville area south of Westlock. They were impressed by the accuracy of the early surveyors and would like to know more about how they achieved that. This presentation is scheduled for April 22, 2025.



Looking ahead, our second Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on March 20, 2025. The positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President will be up for election at the AGM, and I encourage all members to participate in this process. I'd like to stress that our society greatly requires more members to participate in its operation. As my mother used to say, "many hands make light work." For the AGHS to continue thriving, we require a strong Board of Directors overseeing governance, and committee members with inspiring ideas for programs that will enable us to share our story with the public. If you would like to see what each position entails, please refer to our bylaws which are available on the website where a description of each position is described.

If a Board position is not in your plans, please consider volunteering in some capacity. As a volunteer, you'll not only contribute to an important cause, but also help shape the direction of our programs and initiatives. Your efforts will directly contribute to preserving Alberta's surveying history and making it accessible to the public.



Please join us in making our history come alive for the next generation. Whether you can contribute a few hours a month or take on a leadership role, your involvement will be appreciated. Together, we can build a stronger and more vibrant AGHS.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Les Frederick, President



Names from the Past: Allan Poyntz Patrick, PLS, CE, DLS/DTS, LS(BC), JP, ALS



A. P. Patrick - taken before December 11, 1915
(Unknown photographer)
Provided by Mary Park, great granddaughter, on
February 19, 2021

This summary of AP, as some of his friends called him, outlines the life of an Alberta Land Surveyor with one of the longest survey careers in Canada, spanning from 1869, when he articulated with Robert Sparks, PLS, in Ottawa, Ontario, until he fell down some stairs in his Calgary home in 1943 at the age of 93. While his broken hip healed, AP ceased his formal surveying activities later that year, ending a 74-year stint as a surveyor!

Patrick was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada East, on July 18, 1849, to a family deeply involved in running the government of Upper Canada and then the Province of Canada. Raised in Toronto, Canada West, and Quebec City, Canada East, educated first at the Galt Grammar School and then at Upper Canada College, AP also certainly trained at a "School of Cavalry and Artillery" in Toronto, one of the forerunners to the Royal Military College in Kingston, likely in 1868. He secured an articling role with Robert Sparks' survey firm in Ottawa in the summer of 1869, while still an officer in the local Militia. Chief Engineer Sandford Fleming hired him to be part of the CPR railway route survey crew in Northern Ontario in June 1871, as an Assistant Leveler.

In April 1873, AP received his Provincial Land Surveyor's (PLS) Certificate for Ontario. By that August, the firm of "Sparks, Wolff and Patrick" (SWP) was formed, with AP as PLS and CE (Civil Engineer). The next year, Allan found himself in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories as part of the Special Surveys Group under Lindsay Russell, whose crews were promulgating a triangulation network west from the Prime Meridian towards the 2nd Initial Meridian. During the bitterly cold winter of 1874/75, Russell's crews extended a baseline east across Lake-of-the-Woods for later use in the surveying of "DLS-like" townships in Northern Ontario.

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