

# BOUNDARIES

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The Alberta Land Surveyors' Association (ALSA), established in 1910, is a self-governing professional association legislated under the *Land Surveyors Act*.

The Association regulates the practice of land surveying for the protection of the public and administration of the profession.

## Celebrating the Centennial

Don George of Edmonton, Alberta was elected president of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association at its 100th annual general meeting held in Banff from April 23-25, 2009.

Mr. George outlined three priorities for the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association as it started its next 100 years. The priorities are: ensuring that this Association continues to protect and look after the public; keeping within budget by monitoring expenses to ensure an appropriate and professional way of carrying out our responsibilities; and ensuring that Alberta Land Surveyors continue to develop, maintain and enhance their competency and high standards in this profession.



Don George received his license as an Alberta Land Surveyor in 1975. He worked for W.D. Usher and Associates Ltd. in Camrose before establishing his own practice, Cam-Alta Surveys Ltd., also in Camrose. In 1994, Mr. George went to work for the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association. As Assistant to the Director of Practice Review, Mr. George was responsible for examining products and conducting field inspections to ensure land surveyors' work met the high standards required by legislation and the public. Mr. George left the employment of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association in 2008 and was promptly elected vice-president.

## Special People at a Special Meeting

At its 100th annual general meeting, the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association recognized the following people for their contribution to the profession:

Syd Loepky of Calgary was made an honorary life member of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association. Mr. Loepky received his commission as an Alberta Land Surveyor in 1970. Throughout his career, Mr. Loepky served as Association president in 1990, received the Professional Recognition Award in 1994 and the Geomatics Award of Excellence in 2002.



Explorer and surveyor David Thompson (1770-1857) was presented posthumously with the Professional Recognition Award. Ruth Peters, one of David Thompson's descendents, accepted the honour on his behalf. The name of David Thompson means but little to the average Canadian and until recently has been practically forgotten. No one did more in his day to open new trade routes through the unknown passes of the Canadian Rockies and to apply scientific methods to map-making and to geographical exploration of the West. The North

American David Thompson Bicentennials (2007 to 2011) recognizes the anniversaries of some of the explorer's greatest achievements.

Monroe Kinloch of Sherwood Park was presented with the Professional Recognition Award in honour of his contributions towards the David Thompson Bicentennial Brigade last spring and other accomplishments throughout his 41 year career as an Alberta Land Surveyor.



Les Frederick, Monroe Kinloch, Gord Olsson

Monroe Kinloch, Lou Breton, Les Frederick and Gord Olsson were presented with the President’s Award in recognition of their tireless work and dedication in putting together a traveling museum display which will showcase the importance of land surveyors in the peaceful and orderly development of the province. The display, entitled Making Their Mark, will be featured in museums throughout Alberta for the next two years beginning with the display area on the Legislature grounds this summer.

### William Pearce – Czar of the Prairies



*This is the story of William Pearce, the Czar of the Prairies and the first president of the Alberta Land Surveyors’ Association.*

*This is the second of two parts of William Pearce’s story. See the January 2009 issue of Boundaries for Part 1.*

When in 1904 the CPR finally moved forward with plans for irrigation schemes, Pearce after 30 years with Department of the Interior

jumped ship. He went to work for the CPR for the next twenty-two years.

Some of Pearce’s papers are in the Glenbow Archives, and some are in Saskatchewan, but the bulk of his papers are at the University of Alberta Archives. It is an extraordinary collection. It covers every aspect of his work, broken into seven series with copious boxes in each. Pearce’s papers cover every aspect of his long career until his retirement in 1926. Pearce was the ultimate bureaucrat. He kept copies of every letter he wrote, and sent copies of each letter to all relevant and potentially interested parties. He would have been a natural, if somewhat pesky, email user! Pearce was also an historian, and carefully recorded the early history of the Dominion Land Survey.

In 1908, as township subdivision finally began in the Peace River Country, the CPR joined the rush to consider a rail line north. Pearce was dispatched to investigate a possible route, as

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well as the resources and potential of the Peace country for settlement. Although Pearce had previously expressed reservations about the Peace Country—because of killing frosts and the lack of rail line—his papers reveal a thorough approach to this new project.

Pearce left for Peace River from Edmonton on June 8, 1908. The inflatable mattress with pillow he carried with him may have ensured his good humour. He also took the precaution of ordering a life belt for his river trip—“one Manhattan Life belt cut out for arms with shoulder strap forty-six inches.” He later reported the trip was “not nearly so disagreeable as one would expect.”

Pearce compared his own observations with those of the surveyors who had sub-divided townships to date. He pointed out that much of the settlement that would take place would in fact be north not south of the Peace as many people imagined. Then much to Pearce’s amusement, in September 1908, the *Calgary Herald* published a somewhat premature story that engineers were on hand to begin grading the CPR’s projected line for the Peace River through to British Columbia. In his final report to the company Pearce concluded, “there is not sufficient inducement to warrant the building of a railroad into the Peace River country.” He never did change his mind about the Peace River Country. In 1925 he wrote to F.W. Alexander, District Engineer for the CPR: “The attempt to settle that country was probably the most insane idea that ever a body of men, outside a lunatic asylum, attempted.”

There was nothing that touched on the development of Alberta that William Pearce did

not have views on. We have Pearce to thank for our national parks, his vision was largely behind the initial idea of reserving public parks in the Rockies, at Banff and then Waterton.

Pearce freely gave his opinions on many matters, even when they were unsolicited. He wrote to Surveyor General Deville, for example in 1913, with his progressive views on the desirability of extensive development of automobile roads in the Rocky Mountains. He argued for development in the interests of tourism and forest conservation.

Pearce invested in Calgary Petroleum’s Products’ gas exploration in Turner Valley. He was among the prominent Calgaryans on hand watching the condensate pouring into a barrel at Dingman Number One well, June 4, 1914.

It was from his desk at the CPR, following the formation of the Province of Alberta in 1905 that Pearce sent out letters to Alberta-based Dominion Land Surveyors urging them to consider the necessity of forming a professional organization. In 1906 the Public Works Bill introduced in the new legislature allowed engineers to sign road diversion plans for registration at the land titles office. For Pearce this was the thin edge of the wedge for, in his own words, “the dishing of surveying as a profession.” Pearce went on the offensive, and although the issue was quickly rectified by Minister John Stocks, he tried to rally surveyors into action. “Don’t you think,” he wrote in a letter that went to more than 20 surveyors in February 1906, “we had better get together and engage someone to look after the necessary legislation?” Alberta’s surveyors, however, were run off their feet as the pre-World War I

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economic boom was taking off. As Pearce noted in April 1906, “none in this province seem to have any idea of taking any steps except myself.” It was to take almost three years before Pearce managed to get a number of surveyors to meet in his Calgary office to discuss the matter for the first time. Surveyor Jean Leon Côte, member of the Alberta Legislature, subsequently wrote to Pearce on December 7, 1909. “There is no doubt that you as a senior member of the profession, would have more weight in preparing and organizing for the legislation than anybody.” Pearce, however, disagreed, leaving the task of researching and preparing for a private members bill to a committee. The final bill was drafted by Lionel Charlesworth, Director of Surveys, and Richard Cautley, surveyor to the Land Titles Office.

Nonetheless, in early February 1910, Pearce aggressively lobbied behind the scenes, soliciting political support for the bill from a number of influential Albertans. “Ever since the establishment of the Province of Alberta,” He wrote, “I have been trying to obtain the cooperation of my fellow surveyors to procure incorporation, but it was not until this year that we succeeded in making a practical start in the matter.” He pointed out that surveyors were asking no less than the other professions and that it was necessary for the protection of the public. “If there is any one class of people in the country that deserve special consideration,” Pearce declared, “I think it is surveyors. They are the pioneers in the opening up of the country, having endured as great hardships as any and have done good work without being brought into limelight, have been usually too

far in advance to make any money by reason of the knowledge obtained by them.”

The Alberta Land Surveyors’ Act passed on March 9, 1910. It clearly stated that no one could survey lands within Alberta—other than Dominion Lands—unless he had been duly authorized as a registered member of the Alberta Land Surveyors’ Association. The Association was to be set up “as a body politic and corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal.” While others subsequently took over the role of actually setting up the Association, Pearce’s crucial role in prodding Alberta’s surveyors into action was recognized through his election as the Association’s first president in January 1911. He was awarded the first life membership of the Association in 1924.

By the late 1920s Pearce was beginning to slow down, as his knees were stiffening— making walking less the pleasure it used to be. Pearce’s stiffness was soon afterwards diagnosed with what doctors referred to as “an aneurism of the artery” and he was ordered to curtail his walking. William Pearce died on March 3, 1930. Bow Bend Shack was torn down in 1957, and in 1965 became the site for Simpson Sears’ main Calgary warehouse. It was an ignominious end for the grand residence of Alberta’s best known surveyor, a somewhat enigmatic historical figure, who played a major role in shaping the development of the west, and whose biography is long overdue.

*Excerpted from Judy Larmour’s at the Past-President’s Breakfast, 2005 ALSA Annual General Meeting*

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# What is the difference between a plan of survey and a descriptive plan?

## Plan of Survey

- this method requires field visits by the land surveyor;
- it also requires the establishment of the existing property lines of the property being subdivided;
- it results in new property corner monuments being placed by the surveyor;
- its newly created boundaries are "stand alone" and give a higher sense of security to the landowner;
- the cost to provide this service is usually higher due to the establishment of the existing property lines which may or may not have survived over time, and the placement of new property corners which mark the new boundaries;
- this method does not require prior approval by Land Titles.

- this method creates new boundaries that are related to old boundaries and are therefore not "stand alone" boundaries;
- its cost is usually lower due to the lack of field visits required and the lack of the requirement to placement of new property corners marking the new boundaries being created;
- land owners requiring the field location of the boundaries in future years will be required to hire a land surveyor to mark the boundaries when they wish to see them on the ground;
- this method requires prior written approval by Land Titles before the land surveyor can proceed to prepare the plan.

## Descriptive Plan

- this method does not require a field visit, although it may be beneficial to know where the existing development is located (if there is any) so as to ensure that the new property lines that are to be created do not pass through existing buildings etc. or that the placement of the new boundaries yield the desired sideyard to existing dwellings/buildings as the municipality may want;
- this method does not require the establishment of existing boundaries or the finding of the existing property corners;
- this method does not result in the establishment of new property corners;

The above explanation of the differences between the two methods allowed by Land Titles to accomplish a subdivision as outlined above is not intended to be comprehensive in nature, but only illustrates the highlights of the two products offered by land surveyors in Alberta.

*David McWilliam, ALS, Registrar*



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## In the News around the World

### [Land Surveying Program to Host High School Educators Retreat](#)

*Woodlands Online, LLC, TX*

The Lone Star College-Montgomery land surveying and mapping technology program, in partnership with the Texas Society of Professional Surveyors, will host a High School Educators Retreat for area teachers and technical/career counselors

### [Whose Fence Is it?](#)

*Jamaica Observer, Jamaica*

It is usual for Jamaican landowners to erect perimeter fences; whether for reasons related to privacy or security or to ensure that the boundaries or "property lines" of the land are clearly shown and preserved.

### [New survey shows Great Wall may be longer than previously thought](#)

*CCTV, China*

The Great Wall is referred to as the Long Wall in Chinese. And according to a recent survey, it may be even longer than was previously thought.

### [Students step back in time](#)

*Daily Herald Tribune, Grande Prairie*

School children across the County of Grande Prairie are going back in time, learning about the survey in a 45-minute presentation, a mix of a live re-enactment and a multi-media exercise.

### [Survey Opened up the Peace Country](#)

*Daily Herald Tribune, Grande Prairie*

The last major land rush in North America before the First World War happened in the County of Grande Prairie 100 years ago after Walter McFarlane and his crew surveyed the area. This allowed families to legally live on the land.



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