

Ontario Land Drainage Practitioner – Biography

McGeorge, WM. G., Sr. (1838 to 1906)

William Graham McGeorge was born in Wales in 1838, although he was of Scottish heritage. He moved with his family to Rondeau (Blenheim), Kent County, Ontario at the age of 19.

McGeorge taught school for a several years while he studied surveying. He was apprenticed with Sherman Malcolm, P.L.S. and admitted to practice as a Provincial Land Surveyor in 1866. He originally practiced at Rondeau and then moved to Chatham where he worked for the remainder of his life. During the beginning of his career, he surveyed, retracing and running lines in Kent and the adjoining counties. McGeorge completed several re-surveys for the provincial government, including:

- 1872 - Ninth concession Aldborough, line between Counties of Elgin and Kent
- 1873 - Five concession lines in Raleigh, and one concession in Oxford
- 1876 - Re-surveys of lines in East Dover and Oxford
- 1877 - Two concessions in Romney and lots in Howard
- 1881 to 1885 - Middle Road, Township Oxford

Early in his career, he turned his attention to the engineering work to drain and reclaim much of Kent County. Two gravity drainage works of note

- Little Bear Creek Drain in the Townships of Chatham and Dover. The Little Bear Creek Drain was twenty miles in length with a mouth of approximately forty-five feet. The aggregated development cost in 1893 was \$60,000.
- The Raleigh Plains Drain in the Township of Raleigh. This drain was five miles in length, provided an outlet for eighty or ninety thousand acres of land, and had bottom widths from twenty to eighty feet. It cost approximately \$50,000.

McGeorge designed embanking and pumping schemes including

- The Skinner Drainage Works, Township of Chatham which reclaimed 5,500 acres of land.
- The Pike Drainage Works, Township of Raleigh. Over 3,000 acres were reclaimed, much of it below lake level.

These lands are considered among the most productive in Western Ontario.

McGeorge acted as County Engineer for the County of Kent for approximately 25 years and was responsible for many bridges over the Sydenham and Thames Rivers. He worked on the following bridges which ranged from 200 to 400 feet in length: Bothwell, Dresden, Kent, Moraviantown, Thamesville, Tupperville and Wallaceburg bridges.

In 1903, McGeorge re-surveyed the Moravian Indian Reserve and in 1906 was re-surveying the Walpole Island Indian Reserve in the St. Clair River when he was stricken

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with heart trouble. He returned to his home in Chatham and passed away on July 1, 1906.

William McGeorge supported many apprentices during his practice including James A. Bell of St. Thomas, Alex Baird of Leamington, and F. W. Flater of Chatham.

McGeorge married Miss Jane Gardiner of Chatham in 1873 having seven children, four who survived including William Graham McGeorge Jr. Mrs. McGeorge passed away in 1901.

Based on the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, Reports of Committees. N.d.