

The Canadian Hydrographic Service
From the time of its inception in 1883
to the end of the Second World War

by

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edited by William Glover

with David Gray

FOREWORD

This history by Mr. O. M. Meehan began as a contribution to "Soundings," an in-house publication for the staff of the Canadian Hydrographic Service. The first article covered the early history of charting up to the earliest explorations of Canada. Subsequent articles dealt with surveys during the French Regime, the Colonial Era and the British Admiralty surveys in Canadian waters.

Mr. Meehan's articles arouses interest both inside and outside the Service, and he was therefore encouraged to expand the history to include surveys initiated by the Canadian Government - the first in 1883 and known as the Georgian Bay Survey. In 1904 other hydrographic units in the Department of Railways and Canals and the Department of Public Works were amalgamated with the Georgian Bay Survey in the Department of Marine and Fisheries. This then became the Hydrographic Survey Branch of that department. It also includes the story of the Tidal Survey which was established a few years later than the Georgian Bay Survey, and its incorporation in the Hydrographic Survey in 1924. This history concludes in 1947 after the end of the Second World War.

Mr. Meehan spent considerable time, much of it on his own, in detailed research in the records of the Canadian Hydrographic Service, the Public Archives - National Library, Department of Transport, and Department of Public Works offices. To record those things that escape the official record, he interviewed many retired members of the Service and others who had connections with the Service. He has provided a valuable document that contains much of interest to those who served in the Canadian Hydrographic Service. It will be an essential reference tool to anyone who wishes to study the men and the ships that produced the charts which were, and still are, a basic requirement in the economic development of Canada.

It is fitting that this should be undertaken during Canada's Centennial Year when we all have cause to reflect upon the labours of those who made our work easier. It is also fitting that it should be one of the last publications commenced during my own tenure of office as Dominion Hydrographer.

N. G. Gray

PREFACE

The story of the Canadian Hydrographic Service which is about to be unfolded, is primarily an historical outline of charting and recharting Canada's inland and coastal waters by hydrographic surveyors of the Government of Canada. It is also an accounting of water-level investigations in non-tidal waters; tidal and current investigations on the sea coasts, and the production and distribution of nautical charts and publications - all of great importance to navigation and shipping, marine engineering works, oceanographic research, fisheries, and national defence.

Gone are many official files and documents from which more detailed information could be further researched, and also gone from our midst are most former Hydrographic personnel who made this story possible.

To everyone who in any way assisted me in acquiring notes, memoranda, clippings, and especially photographs, I extend my sincere thanks. Acknowledgements are herewith extended to past dominion hydrographers Messrs R.J. Fraser, F.C.G. Smith and N.G. Gray; to regional hydrographer Mr R.B. Young; to former hydrographic officers Messrs M.A. MacKinnon, N. Wilson, E.A. Ghysens, J.L. Foreman, W.F. Elliott, A.F. Wightman, R.E. Hanson, L.R. Davies, T.M. Tardif, J.A. Deveault, G.E. Lowe, P. Radakir, and Capt. D.M. Snelgrove. Also to the widows and survivors of Messrs G.B. Dodge, H.D. Parizeau, G.L. Crichton, H.W. Jones and C.A. Price; and to Messrs J. Pritchard, G.W. LaCroix, C.H. Martin and A.L. Mack of the Marine Sciences Branch.

Others whose notes and historical sketches were most helpful were Rear Admiral E.C. Irving, Vice Admiral Sir A. Day and Capt. R.M. Southern, formerly of the Admiralty Hydrographic Department, London; Mr George Classens and Mrs Margaret Larnder of this Department, and Mr Don W. Thomson - the author of *Men and Meridians*.

It is not the writer's intention that this story should be an authoritative text of the Hydrographic Service. However it does contain considerable unwritten information about the Hydrographic Service to the end of the Second World War. Therefore, if it can in any way enlighten the reader on major historical events of yesteryear, this story will have served its purpose well.

Neither time nor space permits detailed accounts of any one particular division of the Service, but should there be any significant errors in statement, or omissions of importance, the writer would be most grateful in learning about them.

O.M. Meehan

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