Made to Measure “A History of Land Surveying in British Columbia”

Katherine Gordon

Made to Measure is another monument in the history of the Canadian land surveying profession.

Katherine Gordon has a great gift for telling the history of the British Columbia surveying profession. She has woven the stories of land surveyors in with the archival history of the formation of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia to create a fascinating story about the trials and tribulations of surveyors now known as British Columbia Land Surveyors. Gordon has sourced a wealth of technical and academic literature, government documents, personal papers and oral interviews to chart the course of the creation and development of the professional association in an interesting and entertaining fashion.

Made to Measure is a complete history of the advancement of surveying as well as mapping in British Columbia with stories about urban, rural, railway, triangulation, provincial and international boundary surveys as well as many references to the men and women who have been instrumental in the development of the province. The author also deals with the delicate situation of native land claims and how the surveyors worked with native bands on the original surveys of reserve lands up to the present settlement of land claims.

This hard cover book contains a number of interesting features not normally seen in a book. Firstly, the author uses a very smart method of dealing with the multiple forms of measurement that we all have to worry about. Rather than using a proliferation of confusing conversions she deals with the appropriate measurement for the period and sets out a general guide for those who wish to convert to the terminology that they are familiar with. Secondly she has carefully chosen the names for the titles of each chapter based on a quotation from one of the sources used in that particular chapter with a special section entitled Notes on the Chapter Headings at the end. As can be expected she has an extensive Bibliography which in itself is worth the price of the book. She also has a number of General Sources and a list of Useful and Interesting Websites. The Index is very useful and the book also contains black and white photographs of surveyors and relevant survey activities throughout the 373 pages of the book.

Made to Measure is a book that any Canadian land surveyor would enjoy reading. It is interesting, educational, well illustrated and contains many anecdotes that we can all relate to. Made to Measure is another provincial land survey association’s contribution to the recordation of their fascinating history for the enjoyment of future generations.

The book is available from the Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors at #306 - 895 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1H7. Price $32.00 plus shipping. Website – http://www.bclandsurveyors.bc.ca and click on Foundation.

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