

A FEW THOUGHTS ON SURVEYING AS A MEANS OF EARNING A LIVELIHOOD*

Why are Surveyors always poor? Why cannot a Surveyor, by the practice of his profession without sidelines such as Engineering and Contracting, make more than a bare living? When you consider the Surveyor's professional training and the necessity for intensive study and application necessary to fit him for the service he renders to the public, it is difficult to understand why he is not able to attain the same affluence as members of other professions.

It may be to some extent due to the Surveyor himself, who does not as a rule aspire to the social status accorded the other professions nor has he, until recently, referred to himself or his work in a professional manner. For instance, not so very long ago in offices of several Surveyors with whom the writer was acquainted, it was the practice to say that so and so had ordered a survey, just as you would order a pound of sugar or any other commodity, and their clients were their customers.

The Surveyor is altogether too prone to figure on the time that it takes to make a survey, rather than on the value of the survey to the client. No one can imagine a surgeon estimating his time on an operation at so much a minute; instead he looks his patient over and charges in accordance with his value to the community expressed in terms of his possession of worldly goods. Similarly, the Lawyer and the Valuator value their services in proportion to the amount at stake. The difference between a professional man and a tradesman is that the latter charges the value of the job to himself (i. e. his time), the former, the value to the client, and the Surveyor is content for the most part to fall in line with the tradesman or artisan. A comparison of the fees charged in connection with the purchase of a property for conveyancing, valuing and surveying will reveal this very clearly, the Surveyor getting about 25 per cent of what the others get in spite of the fact that he assumes as much if not more professional training, knowledge and experience to bear on the matter. A surveyor's responsibility is directly proportionate to the value per foot of the property surveyed and an advalorem scale of charges is the only one that will gain for the Surveyor in general practice an adequate return for his services.

The necessity for a Surveyor, in the course of the practice of his profession to perform with his own hands certain acts of manual labor such as planting monuments and disinterring the remains of an important corner post many years lost to view, has perhaps something to do with the attitude of the public towards the profession and, if we could all wear frock coats and plug hats on the job and have a man to do digging, we might be better appreciated. It is perhaps a fact that, due to the Surveyor's fence climbing and excavating duties, he is not always as sartorially resplendent as he might be, and in the rainy season, might easily be mistaken for a drain digger after a hard day in the trenches, and to this extent suffers in the public estimation in comparison with the members of other professions.

The remedy is in the Surveyor's own hands. He must at all times conduct himself to the end that his occupation may assume its proper professional standing. He must disabuse the public of the idea that he ranks with the artisan and must base his charges on the value of his services to his client and not on the value of his time to himself.

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