

**DESCRIPTIONS OF  
LAND: A TEXT-BOOK  
FOR SURVEY STUDENTS**

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Descriptions of Land: A Text-Book for Survey Students by R. W. Cautley

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# DESCRIPTIONS OF LAND

A TEXT-BOOK FOR SURVEY  
STUDENTS

BY

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COLUMBIA BOUNDARY COMMISSION

Univ. of  
California

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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## INTRODUCTION

Title to land is based upon the description contained in the deed conveying it. It is not enough that the boundaries should be accurately surveyed: the land itself must be so described in the deed as to identify it without ambiguity and beyond any possible doubt. The importance of a precise description is enhanced when the boundaries are partially or wholly unsurveyed: it must then be so bounded that all the surveyors who may be employed in laying out the boundaries shall find identical lines if their operations are conducted with accuracy, and that the land lying between the lines so located shall be the particular piece of land which the parties to the deed are intending to deal with. A surveyor who is drafting a description must be able to express what he wishes to say in sentences that will admit of only one interpretation; he must have a clear conception of what he has to describe, of the surveying operations involved and of the exact meaning of the words he is using, as interpreted by judicial decisions.

The writing of descriptions cannot be governed by absolute rules. Whether a piece of land should

be described by adjoiners, or by land marks or by the courses and length of the boundaries depends upon a variety of circumstances: when in doubt the surveyor should be guided by legal advice. While it is true that most lawyers are quite ignorant of the most elementary principles of surveying, it is equally true that few surveyors, if any, are able to understand the intricacies of a complicated title. The coöperation of surveyor and lawyer is necessary.

One of the blessings of the Dominion Lands System of Survey is that descriptions generally assume such a simple form that the average surveyor should have no difficulty in writing them if he will only take the trouble to conform to a few rules.

In the pages which follow Mr. R. W. Cautley has endeavored to formulate these rules: his experience as a surveyor in active practice for a number of years and subsequently as Surveyor to the Land Titles Office at Edmonton having given him exceptional opportunities, his views on the questions involved are especially valuable.

E. DEVILLE.

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## PREFACE

While there are a great many standard works on the subject of conveyancing, they deal, for the most part, with the legal aspect of the subject, with which a survey student has nothing to do. At the same time all survey students in Canada are required to pass an examination on "Descriptions of Land," which is one important branch of the subject of conveyancing. I have therefore written the following text-book in the hope that it may prove useful in helping survey students to get up the subject for their examination, and—what is far more important—to realize the importance of the subject, and, by further study of it, to become capable of filling a more useful position as a surveyor in after life. Writing descriptions of land is essentially a branch of surveying and every complicated description should be drawn by an authorized surveyor. Unfortunately a great many surveyors are satisfied with obtaining proficiency in field work, as the most important and lucrative part of surveying, and do not take the trouble to become proficient in description writing, draughtsmanship, survey law or any other kindred subject once they have



obtained their commission. I venture to say that any surveyor, having just acquired his commission, who will devote a year or two to acquiring a knowledge of office work and general business methods in a department of the Government, in the land department of a railway system or in the employ of any corporation having extensive dealings in land, will find that the knowledge so obtained will open to him a wider field of opportunity that will more than compensate him for the increased earnings which he might have had by undertaking field work at once.

In studying this subject it is important to note the close connection between the practice of surveying, the writing of descriptions of land and a knowledge of the laws governing registration of land titles. It is absolutely essential that any surveyor who undertakes to write descriptions of land in any given province must first have a knowledge of the Real Property Act in force in that province.

6th July, 1913.

EDMONTON, ALBERTA.

## CONTENTS

	Section	Page
DESCRIPTIONS BASED ON ACTUAL SURVEY	1-2	1
DESCRIPTIONS MUST REFER TO PLANS OF RECORD.....	3	7
PLANS AND HOW TO REFER TO THEM, GENERAL.....	4-5	9
Departmental Plans.....	6	11
Subdivision Plans.....	7-9	13
Explanatory Plans.....	10-17	16
Railway Plans.....	18-19	23
USE OF NATURAL BOUNDARIES IN DESCRIPTIONS.....	20-25	27
USE OF WORDS "MORE OR LESS" IN DESCRIPTIONS.....	26-29	34
USE OF BEARINGS IN DESCRIPTIONS.....	30-39	37
DESCRIPTION OF REMAINDERS.....	40-42	48
DESCRIPTION BY EXCEPTION.....	43-47	54
DESCRIPTION OF RAILWAY RIGHT OF WAY	48-50	59
EXCEPTION OF MINERALS IN DESCRIPTIONS	51	68
INTERPRETATION OF FAULTY DESCRIPTIONS	52-53	71
FORMS OF PREAMBLE.....	54	75
EXAMPLES, DESCRIPTION OF:—		
city lot with appurtenant easement.	55	76
partition of two city lots.....	56	77
part quarter section.....	58	82
part bounded by right of way.....	59	84
ordinary right of way.....	49	60
right of way by metes and bounds..	60	85
additional right of way.....	62	87
interior parcel of quarter section ...	15	18

