

# THOMAS J. WILKIE DIES: WAS Y.M.C.A. PIONEER

First Secretary of Movement in  
Toronto

BEGAN SOLDIERS' WORK

Founded Long Branch and Many  
Boys' Camps—Established County  
Associations, Which Have Spread  
Over the Continent.

A veteran and conspicuous figure in Y. M. C. A. work passed away yesterday in Los Angeles, Cal., in the person of Thomas J. Wilkie, first Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. in Toronto in 1869. Mr. Wilkie, who was eighty years of age, had been in poor health for some time. His sister, Miss Wilkie, and two sons, were with him at his death. Mr. Wilkie was the first man in the world to start Y. M. C. A. work among soldiers. This he began at Niagara Camp in 1871, and from there it has spread throughout the British Empire, and has played a specially noble part in the present war. At Niagara that year were camped the Queen's Own Rifles and the Royal Grenadiers. In the former Brigadier-General Otter was at that time Adjutant.

### Humble Start in Toronto.

Forty-five years ago Mr. Wilkie began to take an active interest in the Young Men's Christian Association in Toronto. Then the meetings were held in the private homes of its leaders. Previous to 1869 he was Manager of the old Provincial Telegraph Company. When the company was merged with the Great Northwestern Telegraph Company he was given a position under the late Mr. H. P. Dwight. It was at this time (1867) that the association began its work in rooms on King street, and Mr. Wilkie became a volunteer worker and Secretary. Later he was appointed to fill the first general secretarial position in Toronto. In 1868 he journeyed to Detroit, and brought back D. L. Moody and other prominent workers, who saw the need of closer supervision, and accordingly organized the Provincial Committee.

### Organized Niagara Camp.

A campaign for funds for a permanent Y. M. C. A. building in Toronto was commenced in 1871. It was erected at the corner of James and Queen streets. The enormous amount of work connected with the collection of money brought on a severe attack of brain fever, which nearly caused Mr. Wilkie's death. His next effort, in connection with Mr. W. E. Burford, was the inception of the Railwaymen's Y. M. C. A. quarters in Parkdale, which is now known as the West End Y. M. C. A., at Dovercourt road and College street.

### Founded Long Branch.

In 1880 Mr. Wilkie accepted a call to Brooklyn, and in seven years he freed the association of a heavy debt, and secured an endowment of \$150,000. Returning to Toronto, he opened the first boys' camp at Long Branch, which has now developed into Camp Couchiching. This was accomplished with the aid of Mr. J. G. Cornell, now Reeve of Scarborough, and was the beginning of this popular summer resort. Next came a call from Texas, where he worked for three and a half years. Later his health broke down, and he was sent to California.

One of Mr. Wilkie's later undertakings was the organization of county Y. M. C. A. systems, which he has seen expand widely in Canada and the United States. He was a travelling Secretary for these, and was instrumental in bringing into being a host of summer camps.

In his early Y. M. C. A. work in Toronto Mr. Wilkie was associated with Mr. J. K. Macdonald, Rev. Canon Dixon and Mr. A. W. Jocelin, who recall his lovable, boyish nature and his splendid and unselfish organizing capacity.

Mr. Wilkie, who had resided in the United States for the past ten years, was twice married, first to a sister of Reeve Cornell of Scarborough, and second to Miss McCord, daughter of Toronto's first chamberlain. Both predeceased him.