

It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.

Theodore Rockwell Hinsdale (1865- 1941)

By Jerry Olson

Theodore R. Hinsdale was born at Ellaville, Prince George County, Maryland, the only child of Solomon Rockwell and Julia Merritt (Jackson) Hinsdale, on January 31, 1865. Solomon was in the Treasury Department in Washington, D. C. Theodore studied at the Institute at Rittenhouse Academy, Washington, D. C. in preparation for his entrance to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York on September 22, 1882, from which he later graduated in 1886. Soon after graduating, he married his wife, Frances Augusta Crandell.

From 1887-1890 he practiced civil engineering in Washington, D. C., and by 1893 he was a "Clerk" in that city, probably with the General Land Office. The Commissioner appointed him as a "Detailed Examiner", or a Special Examiner of Surveys, in April 1895, to work directly for the Commissioner in Washington D. C. and not for the Surveyor Generals in the States or Territories. His first assignment was the examination of Robert A. Webster, Contract 414 in Washington Territory. The following is from his report:

*The Hon. Commissioner
General Land Office
Washington D. C.*

Sir:

Pursuant to your instructions of April 19, 1895, I left Washington, D. C. April 22, arriving in Olympia, Washington on April 30th where I obtained the necessary data on the contracts to be examined, leaving there on May 1, for Portland, Oregon, where I arrived the same evening.

At Portland I organized my party, bought groceries, provisions and camp outfit and left there with team on Sunday May 5 in a heavy rain. I reached Vancouver, Washington, the same day and camped for the night – in a shed.

On Monday May 6th we left Vancouver in a driving rain and travelled until dark, camping in Section 29 of T3N R3E.

Tuesday, it was still raining, we had to break our load at this point and make two trips to the end of the road to a small shack owned by a Mr. Wenzel in Section 24 of T3N R3E reaching there just at dark.

On Wednesday May 8, we started to cut a trail into T3N R4E in order to get on the work. We all chopped all day in a heavy rain, and cut less than a mile out.

Thursday, Webster the contracting deputy appeared on the scene, and informed me that the only way to get into the Township was to go in on an old trail on the south side of Section 32, as the "Old Doyle Trail" was filled up. We accordingly packed up and after a long, hard days drive reached a point two miles south of the end of the road. It cleared off during the afternoon which made it better going, but, it was all we could

do to haul the wagon through the mud holes with the assistance of my saddle horse and also the deputy's.

On Friday May 10th we packed the four horses and started early for a small hunters cabin situated in the NE ¼ of Section 29, T3N R4E. It took us all day to reach this point with part of our outfit as a great many trees had fallen, and we had to cut our way in many places, the trail was poor and about seven miles long.

Saturday we packed in the remainder of our outfit, this was the first sunny day we have had so far.

On Sunday May 12, we settled camp, tested our chain and adjusted my instrument by direct sun observation.

The next four days were spent by Hinsdale and crew, including Webster, in retracing 6 miles of Section line in Webster's contract, going around Sections 17 and 20. The following table is a summary of that survey:

T3N R4E, Contract 72, 4, 14 Wash.
Table of Latitudes & Departures.

Line by Sections	Distance (Fms)	Bearing	Latitude		Departure	
			N	S	E	W
20-29	41.33	W		.05		
19-20	40.54	N	71			82.40
"	80.44	"	80.44		.83	
17-18	39.82	"	79.94		1.39	
8-17	43.06	E		.19		6.77
16-17	40.33	S		.66	86.00	
"	80.17	"	80.17		.11	
20-21	39.76	"	80.08		.54	.18
"	80.08	"	80.08		.01	
<i>Total</i>			166.09	161.15	89.04	89.35
<i>Error</i>				161.69		89.04
				.07		.31

A number of small errors were found in the description of accessories, the variation, the location of topographic features, etc. It appears that Webster was closing his east/west lines and moving the

quarter corners, and that except for the six chain error, he appears to be close to the specifications.

Theodore's inspection survey showed a closure of about 1:1600, which would be very good. Hinsdale finished his report on July 9, 1895 with the following discussion:

General Description

This township although comparatively near a settled country is almost without human habitation, as there are only two or three hunter's cabins in it and as the township is situated in a sort of basin in the mountains, it is accessed only by trail.

The most of the township is covered with heavy timber and dense underbrush, and is very rough. The survey of T3N R4E is in good condition, with the exceptions noted, and considering the country over which it is projected, bearing trees and corners are all well and plainly marked. I therefore recommend that after the deputy has returned to the field and made the corrections necessary to remove the errors shown by the foregoing notes, that the survey may be accepted.

The Commissioner rejected Webster's survey, and he resurveyed the west half of the township to avoid the GLO collecting on his bond, which had been secured by his father's farm. After a new examination, the survey was approved in 1898.

Hinsdale continued in his role of Special Examiner for several years through at least 1896, ending up in Montana in 1900 where he continued a long activist role as a Christian Scientist begun by him and his wife in 1894. The Christian Science Church there was formed in 1901 while they were there, and they

posted cards advertising education. He was the Lewis and Clark County Surveyor in Helena, Montana 1899-1903, a civil engineer in Kirkland, WA, in 1910 and 1920, and in Seattle in the same role in 1930. He died in Seattle in 1941 and Frances died there in 1951.

From: Progressive Men of the State of Montana¹, 1903.

THEODORE H. HINSDALE. — In the very early days of the colonial epoch the original American ancestors of Mr. Hinsdale, in both the agnatic and maternal lines, were among the citizens of New England, and in that and each succeeding generation have been found men of virile powers and sterling character and women of gentle and gracious refinement. Fortunate, indeed, is he who stands as a scion of worthy ancestry. Such is the happy lot of Mr. Hinsdale, who holds the office of county surveyor of Lewis and Clarke county, and has himself achieved distinction in his profession and been identified with many important undertakings, and who is today one of the popular citizens of the capital city, where he has made his home since 1893.

Theodore R. Hinsdale was born in Prince George County, Md., on January 31, 1865, the son of Solomon R. and Julia M. (Jackson) Hinsdale, natives of Connecticut and New York. Both are living, having their home in Washington, D. C, where the father was formerly connected with the federal treasury as special agent of customs. The grandfather of Theodore R. was Theodore Hinsdale, a native of Connecticut, a manufacturer of scythes and cutlery, and one of the first to engage in this line of enterprise in his state, where he passed his entire life. He was the son of Bissell Hinsdale, a member of a Massachusetts

regiment of the Revolution. From him the ancestral line traces back to Rev. Theodore Hinsdale (who lived in Hinsdale, Mass., which town took his name), John Barnabas, Barnabas, Jr., and Robert, the original American ancestor, who, a native of Scotland, came to Massachusetts, of which colony he was a freeman in 1639. He and his sons, Barnabas, John and Samuel, were killed by the Indians on September 18, 1675, while at work in the cornfield, this being at the time of the massacre of Bloodybrook, near Greenfield. A paternal great-grandmother of Mr. Hinsdale was Temperance (Pitkin) Hinsdale, a daughter of Rev. Timothy Pitkin, a son of Gov. William Pitkin, of Massachusetts. His paternal grandmother was Jerusha (Rockwell) Hinsdale, whose paternal ancestry traces back through Solomon, Samuel (who died in 1794, in his old house in Colebrook, Conn.), Joseph, Joseph (2), Joseph (i), and Dea William Rockwell, who came from England to Dorchester in 1630. From his daughter Ruth, who married a Huntington, Gen. U. S. Grant was descended. Mr. Hinsdale's maternal grandfather was Samuel Jackson, a prominent shipbuilder of New York City, where he was born.

Theodore R. Hinsdale passed the major portion of his boyhood in the public schools of Connecticut, after which he entered the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, at Troy, N. Y., where he graduated in 1886, from which time forward he was associated with railroading until he took up his residence in Helena. He was connected with the Pennsylvania railroad, the Chicago & Northwestern, the Wabash, the Illinois Central, the Freeport, Dodgeville & Northern, and the Fort Worth & Rio Grande, being locating engineer of the last. He was also assistant engineer for the United States war department, in which connection he laid out Rock Creek Park, in Washington, D. C. For nine years he was inspector of surveys

under the secretary of the interior, and was one of the three engineers who compiled the United States manual of surveys. He was also connected with the surveys of the boundaries of the Yellowstone National Park; the Colville (Wash.), Indian reservation, the Klamath (Ore.) reservation, and the Red Lake reservation in Minnesota. He has also held other positions of responsibility in connection with his profession, in which he stands as an authority. He had the distinction of being the chief engineer of the first underground trolley electric railway system in the United States, that installed in the city of Washington. For three years he was the business manager of a Washington, D. C. newspaper, his administration showing executive ability and greatly promoting the success of the enterprise. Coming to Montana, in 1893, Mr. Hinsdale has since been engaged as a civil engineer and in dealing in timber and mineral lands and mining investments. His technical education and his experience have made him an expert in engineering, and his services as such have been in great requisition since he has lived in Montana. He is identified with the Rensselaer Engineers' Society, an organization composed of graduates of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Recognizing his peculiar eligibility for the office, Mr. Hinsdale was placed on the Democratic ticket as candidate for county surveyor of Lewis and Clarke County in 1900, and he was elected by a satisfactory majority. In 1887 was solemnized the marriage of Mr. Hinsdale and Miss Frances Crandall, who was born in Louisiana, her parents being natives of New York. Her father, Lee Crandall, was a politician of national reputation, and editor and publisher of the National View, issued at the national capital in the interests of the free silver cause. In politics Mr. Hinsdale supports Democratic principles, and in religion he

holds to Christian Science, being an earnest and devoted worker in the cause and the "first reader" of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Helena.



ⁱ Bowen, A. W. Progressive Men of the State of Montana. Chicago : A. W. Bowen & Co. ca. 1903.