

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

John Trutch (1828-1907) Sir Joseph William Trutch (1826-1904)

By: Jerry Olson

Figure 1, John Trutch about to begin leading one of the first survey parties for the Canadia Pacific Railroad.

(Photo courtesy of the Royal Museum in British Columbia, H-02497.)

The Royal Museum of British Columbia requests \$25.00 to display this image. It can be seen by contacting Jerry Olson, or by visiting the URL shown under the photo section of the First Land Surveyors web page.

The Trutch brothers lived such parallel interwoven lives, their story will be told together. They were conscientious competent engineers, with Joseph having a burning desire to be somebody and accumulate great wealth. Their fortunes blossomed upon reaching British Columbia, culminating in Joseph becoming Lieutenant Governor and ultimately knighted by Queen Victoria. John was the younger brother, supporting Joseph, and benefiting from his successes.

William Trutch, their father, was a landowner and government official in St. Thomas, Jamaica when they were children. Joseph was born in England on January 18, 1826, and John in Jamaica in 1828. The family moved back to England in 1834 and settled in Somerset where the boys attended school at Mount Radford College in Devonshire.

After finishing school at 17, Joseph apprenticed to Sir John Rennie, a prominent British engineer, where he assisted on the Great Northern and Great Western Railways. The news of the Gold Rush of

1849 in California spread even to England, and Joseph, bored with his life, was ready for prosperity and new challenges. Before the end of 1849, he was on his way to San Francisco, arriving in January 1850. Wanting to achieve wealth and social standing, he found California uncouth, and its citizens rude and vulgar. He stated that “the most discouraging accounts that had been drawn of the place, as far as regards comfort and customs of the town had not surpassed reality.” To his sister Emily he wrote, “These Yankees are the most disagreeable vulgar lot...I cannot manage to coalesce with them... their swearing is awful - the most revolting and blasphemous oaths are quite common in conversation.” To John he wrote that the

Americans were ill-mannered, neglecting to address him as “Sir,” substituting the salutation “I say you.” In a letter to his parents he explained, “If I could get known among the best people, I mean the capitalists, I should be sure to do well.” After only four months of successful business, he left California for Oregon where he found the residents more acceptable.

Various projects within his profession kept him busy in 1850, 1851 and 1852, including surveys at the mouth of the Columbia River, and for the townsites of St. Helens and Milton, although these developers left him holding a \$3000 bill. Having been encouraged by his brother, John left England and joined Joseph in late 1851. Joseph surveyed a railway from the Skookum Chuck coal mines to the Puget Sound in 1852, where the papers reported on the killing of a moose. They were listed as early settlers in both Milton and St. Helens. Joseph may have surveyed for Edward Warbass of Cowlitz Prairie for what he called “Warbassport”. (what eventually became Toledo, WA.) In 1855 Joseph filed suit in Lewis County for collection of a note from Warbass.

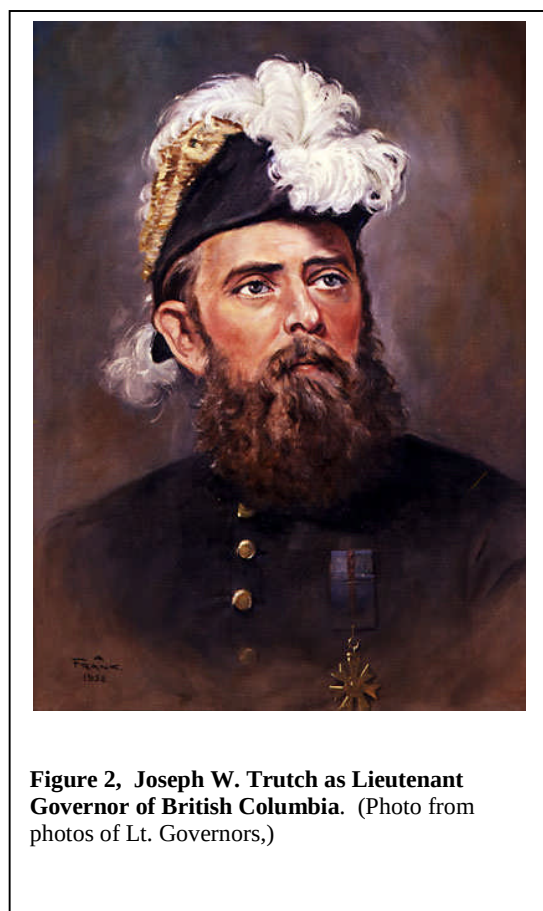


Figure 2, Joseph W. Trutch as Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. (Photo from photos of Lt. Governors,)

With the passage of the Donation Land Claim Act in 1850, and even before, in anticipation of its passage, settlers poured into the Willamette Valley and western Washington. They were offered free land, 320 to 640 acres, if they made improvements and settled on it. John B. Preston, a Whig, was appointed the first Oregon Territory Surveyor General.

From Surveyors of the Public Lands in Michigan:

“With a key corp of deputies he boarded a steamer for California, traveling by way of the Chargres River and Panama, arriving in San Francisco on May 3, 1851. They included Preston, James E. Freeman of Wisconsin, William Ives, Butler Ives, Joseph Hunt and George W. Hyde. (Hyde was a brother-in-law of either Preston or Hunt)”

With Preston at age 38 and the rest averaging 26 years old, this was young man’s work.

The March/April 1990 Oregon Surveyor relates that:

“These men were experienced Deputy Surveyors who had conducted many surveys in Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, using the Solar compass. They had four solar compasses made by Young and sons, magnetic surveying compasses, a transit, sextant and all the other surveying equipment required to begin the work.”

George Hyde was slated to be Chief Clerk upon their arrival in Oregon, but he resigned that position to undertake his own contracts. Kimbal Webster indicated that the job then went to a Mr. Elder, another Whig. William Ives surveyed the Willamette Meridian North, and James Freeman surveyed the Meridian South. As the backbone of the grid was completed, more contracts could be given for township exteriors and then subdivisions of townships.

Joseph Trutch finally found his way into the inner circle in Oregon City to be associated with those in power. He was given a position in 1852 as assistant to John Preston as chief draftsman. He kept this position even after John Preston was replaced in 1853 when the national political parties changed. (His party lost.) Then and now, political patronage jobs paid very well, had short working hours in nice offices, and were dependent upon which party was in power.

In the process of meeting the right people, he also met Julia Elizabeth Hyde and fell in love. She was the sister in law of Surveyor General John Preston, and the sister of George W. Hyde. They were married August 1, 1855 in Portland or Oregon City.

Joseph managed to get his brother John two Claim Contracts, number 14 in 1853 and number 42 in 1854. Claim contract 14 contained only three claims, but must have been important to someone to set up a contract for three claims. One was for W. W. Chapman, a businessman and future Surveyor General of Oregon, another for Stephen Coffin and the other for Benjamin Stark. They were finished quickly. Oregon Claim Contract number 42, to survey 37 Donation Land Claims in Columbia, Cowlitz and Lewis Counties, was dated August 1854. This was a good contract, as the claims were in the Columbia River Bottoms near Scappoose and Woodland and in the Cowlitz Prairie area around Winlock and Toledo. One of the Claims was that of the aforementioned Edward Warbass. John began immediately and finished by December 21, 1854. It was approved in November of 1855.

Together, Joseph and John were awarded Contract 50 out of the Oregon Surveyor Generals Office on December 23, 1854. The survey, consisting of about 700 miles of line, included 2 townships just northwest of Forest Grove, OR. The rest were in the foothills of the Coast Range west of where State Highway 30 runs from Scappoose to St. Helens to Rainier. The southerly portion was in Washington County near North Plains, OR, and it extended to the Columbia River and Rainier, OR on the north. Both brothers were settlers near Scappoose and St. Helens, making this work within 25 miles of that location. John surveyed the exterior lines on the southerly half and Joseph on the northerly half. Both surveyed the township subdivisions in various parts. Joseph always had David P. Thompson as compassman, while John mainly worked without a separate compassman. Thompson would soon get his own contract, and among other things, eventually become Governor of Oregon. They began March 19, 1855 and by October were finished and signing the oaths for the field notes. Joseph married Julia in July during this contract, but there doesn't appear to be any breaks in the field notes for a honeymoon. Probably Thompson had effective control of one party much of the time, while Joseph worked on the field notes.

In another joint contract in 1856, they garnered Contracts 61 & 62 from the Oregon Surveyor General, even though the political parties changed, although they did employ Charles T. Gardner son of the new Surveyor General, as chainman and compassman. Awarded in January, work began in March. The work consisted of the Second Standard Parallel North from Rainier to the Pacific Ocean, the Coast Meridian from Cannon Beach to the Columbia, and many of the township lines and subdivisions along the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean. They finished the Parallel and Meridian by July, and the rest by February 1857. The notes reflect a sharing of the work, but three compassmen were noted. One was Charles T. Gardner, previously mentioned;

second was David P. Thompson, used on the previous contract; and third was Henry S. Gile, another future Deputy Surveyor in Washington.

In a letter from Surveyor General Zeiber, asking Congress for more money per mile, he used the Trutch brothers as an example of how they had surveyed 100 miles of line without the benefit of horses because of the terrain and vegetation. He said they carried all their supplies on the backs of the surveyors.

Before finishing this contract, Joseph and Julia joined John Preston in Chicago, Illinois in late autumn of 1856, where Preston was involved in engineering and land speculation. While there, Joseph was assistant engineer on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and on the Illinois River improvement works. Tiring of the United States, he returned to England with his wife to lobby for political positions with the new government at Victoria, then a colony of England. He hoped to live “*under our own flag and laws*” and “*make something out of this gold excitement.*”

John stayed in the United States and continued his career as a Deputy Surveyor in Washington Territory under Surveyor General James Tilton. Washington Contracts 23 & 24 involved T2-4N R2-3E, in the heart of Clark County, around Battleground. This occurred from February to July 1857. John Newsome and Lewis Van Vleet were compassman, both future Deputy Surveyors. One of the sureties on these contracts was John McLaughlin of Oregon City, the former Chief Factor for Hudsons Bay Company at Fort Vancouver. Tilton gave Trutch another contract, number 28, in the same vicinity in the summer of 1857. Near Amboy and Yacolt, it included T5N R2-3E. He surveyed it in the fall, and it was approved in January 1858. There were no compassmen listed. On a scary note, the General Description in his notes described several homesteads and improvements on Chelatchie Prairie, but that everything was deserted due to the Indian War.

John may have been working in Southwest Washington because of its proximity to Columbia County, Oregon, where his land claim was located. He filed his intention to become a United States citizen, but never followed through, and abandoned his claim since citizenship was a requirement. Ten years later, his claim was still available, and two parties were in dispute over it, resulting in the dynamiting of a house. His next contracts were numbers 32 and 33, located around Port Townsend. First to be surveyed was the extension of the Seventh Standard Parallel North running West from Hood Canal through Range 4W, just East of Sequim. He surveyed the subdivisions of townships around Port Ludlow and south of Dungeness. The same crew worked for him all of the contract, and included no known surveyors. The contract was dated April 1858, and the approval was granted in the winter of 1859. While he was in the northern part of Washington, he traveled north to do a survey contract for J. D. Pemberton of the North and South Saanich and Lake District in British Columbia in September 1858.

Figure 4. Zoe Musgrave Trutch, wife of John Trutch.
(Photo courtest of the Royal Museum of British Columbia, F-00497.)

The Royal Museum of British Columbia requests \$25.00 to display this image. It can be seen by contacting Jerry Olson, or by visiting the URL shown under the photo section of the First Land Surveyors web page.

Figure 3. John Trutch. (Photo courtest of the Royal Museum of British Columbia,G-00365.)

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Meanwhile, Joseph was in London lobbying for a government appointment in the Colonies at Victoria or Vancouver.

From Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online¹:

“There were no positions available, but he did receive a recommendation from Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the secretary of state for the colonies, to James Douglas, the governor of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. He also met Richard Clement Moody, who had been placed in command of a detachment of Royal Engineers being sent to British Columbia and been appointed chief commissioner of lands and works as well.”

He and Julia set sail for British Columbia and arrived in June 1859. The Olympia newspaper reported on July 1, 1859 that Joseph had obtained the contract with the British government for the rural surveys of British Columbia at \$20 per mile, on the American basis of surveys.

John next surveyed two quick townships for contract 42 on Marrowstone and Indian Islands, probably an extension of Contract 32 & 33. The contract was signed on September 2, 1859 and completed by the end of the month. His last one, Contract 43, began in April 1859 in the same vicinity he had been working along Hood Canal. He surveyed Dandos Peninsula and townships around Duckabush, Quilicene and Poulsbo. It was finished in the fall, approved by Surveyor General James Tilton in February 1860 and officially approved a short time later. So ended the

¹ Biography of Sir Joseph William Trutch. Library and Archives Canada, Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, www.biographica.ca

Trutch's GLO careers in the United States. After tidying up his paperwork, John joined Joseph in Canada at his brother's request.

Continuing from Canadian Biography:¹

"Without a permanent position in the colonial service, he worked on government contracts. He did surveying along the lower Fraser River and was given road construction contracts on the Harrison-Lillooet trail to the Cariboo. In 1862 he was contracted to build the section of the Cariboo Road up the Fraser canyon from Chapmans Bar to Boston Bar. The stretch would include his best-known engineering achievement, the Alexandria suspension bridge. With a 268-foot span, a 90-foot clearance from the river, and a 3-ton load capacity, the bridge was a considerable feat. It was also a source of significant income for Trutch, since under the contract he was allowed to collect tolls on it for seven years. The income has been estimated to have ranged from \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year. Moving about on survey contracts, Trutch learned where desirable land was to be found, and he soon amassed substantial holdings, particularly on Vancouver Island.

Trutch also became involved in colonial politics. He had won a by-election in Victoria District in November 1961 to become a member of the Vancouver Island House of Assembly. His construction work took him out of Victoria a great deal and he was an infrequent attender of the meetings but, once again, he made important contacts. Although his first foray into politics ended with the dissolution of the assembly early in 1863, another opportunity came when Moody and the Royal Engineers were recalled to Britain later the same year. Trutch was named by Governor Douglas to the vacant position of chief commissioner of lands and works for British Columbia in April 1864. The appointment was a controversial one. In the local press, opponents of the colonial administration argued, not unreasonably, that Trutch's government contracts and large landholdings meant he would have an obvious conflict of interest. Nevertheless, in a colony where expertise was limited, Trutch's

Figure 5, The Alexandria Bridge near Yale B. C. (Photo courtesy of the Royal Museum of British Columbia.)

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undoubted ability as a surveyor and engineer got him the office. He was now in a position to make major decisions on the allocation of land to settlers and works contracts to developers. The dismay of his detractors was only partly assuaged when Trutch proposed to hand his interest in the Alexandria suspension bridge over to his brother John. As chief commissioner of lands and works he also became, ex officio, a member of the Executive Council of British Columbia."

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Figure 6. The Trutch Family at Fairfield House. From left, Joseph Trutch, Julia Hyde Trutch, unknown, Zoe Musgrave Trutch, Mother Trutch, John's child Charlotte, and John Trutch. (Photo courtesy of the Royal Museum of British Columbia, D-03510.)

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In addition to entering the colonial administration, Trutch had become a prominent figure among the social elite of Victoria. Indeed, the two groups were closely related. His home, Fairfield House, on the city's outskirts commanded a superb view of Juan de Fuca Strait and became a center of social life. Trutch smoked fine cigars, kept an excellent wine cellar, and entertained often. An Angligan, he often read the lesson at Christ Church Cathedral on a Sunday morning. Members of the government, from Governor Douglas down, were among his personal friends and it was a close-knit community. The attorney general, Henry Pering Pellew Crease, had been a friend since their school-days together at Mount Radford. Peter O'Reilly, the gold commissioner, married Trutch's sister Caroline Agnes in 1863. In 1870 Trutch's brother John married Zoe Musgrave, the sister of Anthony Musgrave, the last colonial governor of British Columbia. These were the people who ran British Columbia and they ran it in their own interests and those of their class. Anyone who stood in the way of the development of the colony was likely to get short shrift from Joseph Trutch and his kind."

Joseph continued in his position as Commissioner until at least 1870. At that time he was named as one of three to go to Ottawa to represent the crown colony of B.C. in negotiation talks about the future status of B.C. Trutch enjoyed great political influence in B. C. and might be less influential under the Canadian Federation. However his worry that B. C. might become part of

the United States motivated him towards confederation. Governor Musgrave assured Trutch that he and his brother would be well treated in a new province of B.C. Joseph negotiated a very favorable position for B.C. in joining the Canadian Federation, mainly securing a promise of funding the transcontinental railroad to link B. C. with the rest of the federation. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, on the strength of his ability and influence, appointed Joseph as the first Lieutenant Governor of the Province of British Columbia in 1871, serving until 1876.

Little is known about the activities of John during this time. He was busy as a surveyor and engineer, probably securing many contracts on account of his brother. Running the toll bridge he purchased was a financially rewarding effort, and kept him near the Fraser River and the gold fields in the Cariboo. He lived in a house in Yale near the bridge. In 1867 he somehow received a severe wound to his leg, taking a long time to heal. He surveyed land at Cornwall Ranch that belonged to the brothers and surveyed the Indian reserve at Enderby.

Figure 7. The Trutch Family at Fairfield House. (Photo courtesy of Royal Museum of British Columbia, F-04196.)

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With the successful admission to the Federation came the promise of the Canadian Pacific transcontinental railroad to link B.C. with the rest of Canada. Money was furnished for the surveys and John was in the middle of it. In the first season in 1871, he had charge of Group U and V, surveying from Lytton over Eagle Pass to Kamloops, and from Lytton to Yale down the Fraser Canyon. His friend from GLO days, Jared Hurd, was in charge of group U.

Figure 8. Sir Joseph William Trutch. (Photo courtesy of the Royal Museum of British Columbia, A-08291.)

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The second season, John was again in charge of Groups U & V, surveying up the North Thompson, south from Kamloops, and east from Hope. In 1873 he led Group M, surveying west from Cache Creek. The next year he surveyed routes in the lower Fraser valley.

Joseph finished his five-year term as Lieutenant Governor in 1876, at a time when his party was not in power. He returned to England with Julia until after the Conservatives came back in 1878. In 1880 Joseph was appointed Dominion Agent of Canada for British Columbia. In this capacity he was distributing land to the RR, creating and staffing the Surveyor General's Office, supervising all Indian affairs, and representing the Canadian Government in B.C. Also he was generally supervising the RR construction and being friends with Onderdonk, the general contractor. Joseph retired from this and all public work in 1889, and was rewarded with Knighthood by Queen Victoria at that time.

John finally got a job more suitable to his age in 1889 when he was appointed land commissioner for the Esquimalt and Nanaimo RW. He stayed in Victoria until his wife Zoe died in 1894 and Joseph's wife Julia died in 1895. By 1896 he was living in England. Joseph had returned to England after his retirement in 1889, but came back to Victoria at the request of his ailing wife. After Julia died, he went to England to stay. The 1901 British Census found them living at Willett House, near Elworthy, Somerset, England. With them were John's daughter Charlotte, their niece Josephine Pender, and 6 servants.

Joseph died March 2, 1904 and John died February 2, 1907, both in England. Joseph was honored in 1920 with the naming of Mt. Trutch in his honor, a mountain about 20 miles northeast of Donald, B.C..