

## Appendix F

Memorial of William John Sutton by William Fleet Robertson, *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*, Volume 27, 1916, editor Joseph Stanley-Brown. Digitised by the Biodiversity Heritage Library.

William John Sutton was born in Kincardine, Ontario, on January 19, 1859.

His earlier education was acquired in the public schools of Walkerton, Ontario, and later at Trinity College School, Port Hope, Ontario. This was followed by special courses in geology and assaying at Cornell and the Columbia School of Mines.

In 1887 Mr. Sutton moved to British Columbia on the first flood of the "to the West" movement created by the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Settling in Victoria, he was very shortly after appointed the official government assayer, which position he held for some two years.

The report of the Minister of Mines of British Columbia for the year 1888 contains Mr. Sutton's first published report, "A description of the mineral resources of the province" and "List of economic minerals found in the province."

In those earlier days in British Columbia, although placer gold mining had been extensively developed in the interior and coal mining was in operation on the seaboard of Vancouver Island, lode mining had hardly gained even a foothold and the work was in the hands of "practical" men, who, it is more than suspected, classed geologists, chemists, and poets together as purely "ornamental frills," to be respected individually, but of little economic value.

Finding scant financial encouragement in his chosen work, Mr. Sutton, like most of the earlier pioneers, not having "come West for his health," felt obliged to resign from his position as government assayer and entered the lumber business, subsequently securing large tracts of timber and land.

Having thus acquired some little competency, his love for his earlier studies in geology and mineralogy again asserted itself, and feeling the need for further instruction in these pursuits, which at that time could not be had here in the West, he went, in 1894, to the Michigan School of Mines at Houghton, Michigan, where he remained four years, taking a technical course and continuing as instructor in mineralogy and crystallography.

Returning to British Columbia, Mr. Sutton entered the service of the Wellington Colliery Company as geologist, and on the company's interests being acquired by the Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir), Limited, he continued with the new company in the same capacity until the time of his death, on May 19, 1914.

During his connection with the Wellington Colliery Company, Mr. Sutton also acted as consulting geologist for Mr. James Dunsmuir, who had numerous interests in the various metalliferous mining camps of the province.

The Wellington Colliery Company owned the coal rights under a large portion of Vancouver Island, and these were unsurveyed and undefined; it therefore fell to Mr. Sutton to survey and geologically map all these areas and to prospect portions of these for workable coal. In this way he mapped geologically the greater part of the island, an extensive and valuable piece of work, but of such a confidential nature that its publication would have been contrary to the interests of the company.

In connection with this work and his personal timber interests, he acquired a knowledge of the geology of Vancouver Island probably more extensive than that possessed by any other person. He was regarded as the authority on the Cretaceous coal-bearing strata of Vancouver Island, and his opinions were often sought by the government departments.

It was always a matter of sincere regret on Mr. Sutton's part and that of his friends that his official position prevented the publication of the mass of valuable geological information he had acquired. It seemed as though he had been obliged by his commercial duties to "keep his light under a bushel," and few but his personal friends and professional confreres realized the extent of his geological work.

So irksome to Mr. Sutton had become this feeling of restraint that he had planned to retire from commercial life and to devote his time to the preparation of his geological and mineralogical data for publication and had practically arranged with the writer that such should be done, under the auspices of the British Columbia Bureau of Mines. This intention was, however, frustrated by his sudden death, at Ucluelet, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, while in the active pursuit of his work.

Mr. Sutton was a man of unusually strong physique and his death was probably due to heart failure, as he was never sparing of himself in his work, and there were few professional woodsmen who could keep pace with him through the dense forests.

While geology was his work, mineralogy was his hobby, and he had personally collected one of the best collections extant of British Columbia rocks and minerals, which he had amplified with rarer and more unique specimens acquired during a trip to Europe.

His interests in science were varied. He was an energetic member of the Natural History Society of British Columbia, being president of the Society in 1912 and 1913, before which he read a number of papers, chiefly on forestry and its conservation.

He was also a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, the Canadian Mining Institute, and the American Institute of Mining Engineers.

Mr. Sutton's death is a great loss to scientific investigation in British Columbia, where devotees to science are few, and it seems a great pity that he was unable to leave more published records of his store of information.

<sup>1</sup> Written by Mr. Robertson at the request of Dr. R. W. Brock.

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