

The Story of Butchart Gardens

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The Story of Butchart Gardens - fact or fiction?

Welcome to the world of Butchart Gardens. In researching this incredible story I've uncovered many "facts" and figures, countless anecdotes, and many "quotations" made by the Butchart family and their successors. A phenomenon such as Butchart Gardens cannot exist without myth and legend, and, of course, the odd tale of haunting. Where possible, I've verified my information, checked the facts, and heard the tales first hand from employees and associates. However, when dealing with almost a century of history, and thousands of people, it is impossible to completely separate fact from fiction. Good legends, I suspect, have a good dose of both.

The gardens themselves, depending on whom you ask, seem to vary in size from twenty-five to seventy-five acres. The distance from the Gardens to Victoria is another elastic measurement, reportedly being anything from ten to twenty miles. Some of these "facts" I've tried to establish, while others will be the topic of debate and discussion for years to come. This is what makes the archivist's job vital, the researcher's job challenging, and, hopefully, the reader's job interesting.

I soon realized that my task was not to prove nor disprove. In a few cases this is impossible, as many answers have long been buried with the only people who could confirm or deny a "fact." The stuff of legend is what makes a good story, and the stuff grows here as quickly as a well-tended flower bed. Legends cannot be proved or disproved, merely recounted and enjoyed. Mystery and speculation only serve to make them more durable. Butchart Gardens is certainly a legend.

Jenny or Jennie? Mrs. Butchart was called both names, both in the press and in her own correspondence. Her daughter was also called Jenny and so, to avoid confusion, I refer to Mrs. Butchart throughout the book as Jennie, (as do the Butchart Gardens in their media) and to her daughter as Jenny.

A similar problem occurs with the name of the estate itself-Butchart Gardens, The Butchart Gardens, or Butchart's Gardens? Each of these names has been used over the years, but the modern version is Butchart Gardens, or The Butchart Gardens. With familiarity, but with all due respect, I tend to call them simply the Gardens. I've also come across many references to "Butchart's Gardens" even in legal, government documents. Robert Butchart's middle name, Pim, has also been variously spelled, as is the Tod in Tod Inlet.

The recounting of legends has long been an oral tradition, especially here on Vancouver Island. Stories are told by one generation to the next, with perhaps minor embellishments on the way. I sincerely hope that by capturing some of this legend in writing I have not removed any of its legendary qualities. This is not the official story. Neither has it been aided, sponsored or endorsed by Butchart Gardens. It's simply a wonderful legend, simply told.

Chapter 1

The Beginning

Late one mid-December afternoon in 1950, an elderly woman looked out of the window of her home in Victoria, and softly whispered to her nurse: "I've never seen a more beautiful sunset."... a moment later, she died.

The woman was Jennie Butchart, and during her eighty-two years on this earth she helped make a small corner of it so beautiful that almost a million people a year travel to see it. The legacy she left rivals the splendor of any sunset and Butchart Gardens continues to amaze visitors from around the world... it's a remarkable legacy, left by a remarkable woman. And one which her family continues to cherish.

Jeannette Foster Kennedy was born on February 26, 1868, in the downtown of fast-growing Toronto, Ontario. Her Canadian-born mother, Martha Kennedy, was of Irish origin but little is known of her Irish father, James Kennedy, except that he was a reasonably successful seed and commission merchant. His untimely death occurred the same year Jeanette was born.

Jennie, as she preferred to be called, lived with her mother at 168 King Street West, then later in a brick-built house at 56 George St. in St. David's Ward, just a short walk from the busy shore of Lake Ontario.

According to her family and friends, the young Jennie was "round-faced, rosy-cheeked, wide-awake and full of laughter... though polite and well-mannered, she was an active child and not afraid to show her natural athletic skills. "I rode almost as soon as I could walk," she told a reporter years later, and she could drive a coach and horses, or a "four in hand" at a very young age.

At twelve years old she could outskate most boys her age, and at sixteen, Jennie blossomed into a sophisticated young lady, but still shunned parading with a parasol in favour of riding bareback ponies around the countryside. She was, it was said, "the best equestrienne in the park," and had an interest in all kinds of sport.

When her mother died in 1880, Jennie moved to Owen Sound, another busy Great Lakes port of the time, to live with her aunt, Mrs. Robert Paterson. Although there were seven other children in the family already, Jennie settled down quickly into her new home, and enjoyed outdoor life. She would help out on the farm and a favourite companion was a large collie dog, which helped Jennie chase and round up cattle; an illicit pastime that earned them both a frequent scolding.

"My aunt was an excellent housekeeper," she later recalled, "and we were taught domestic science in the good, old fashioned, unforgettable school of experience." The skills she learned in that basic kitchen would stand her in good stead, when later the world, as it would seem, began to visit her home and appreciate her role as gracious hostess.



Jennie Butchart

Jennie's uncle Robert had moved to Ontario from his native Scotland in 1847, and soon became an influential member of local society. He served as the mayor of Owen Sound, and well-connected company for his family was never far away. Despite her Irish name, Kennedy, which comes from the Gaelic, Ceinneidigh, meaning "ugly head" Jennie was an attractive young woman, always popular, and extensively courted.

Often on the lookout for adventure, she had several ascents in hot air balloons, and was one of the first to sit at the controls of a "flying machine." She even flew with Louis Blériot, the French aviation pioneer who made the first solo aircraft crossing of the English Channel. Jennie was fascinated by the daring of Blériot, who only managed the crossing because a chance rain shower had cooled the overheating engine.

No one would suspect that this woman, thrilled as she was with the high life, would later scold her husband and cancel the purchase order when he tried to buy a helicopter.

Jennie was artistically gifted and extremely bright, so it's hardly surprising to learn she attended one of the most prestigious schools in Canada. At least, the Canada of the 1880s. The Brantford Young Ladies' College was built in connection with the Presbyterian Church, by spending fifty thousand dollars to convert the luxurious, rambling home and grounds of the Honorable E. B. Wood, who'd recently left the place to become Chief Justice of Manitoba.

With room for about eighty boarders, plus a few local day students, the college gained a reputation for its literature and fine arts programs, with awards being presented by British royalty on at least one occasion. Affluent students were attracted from across the continent, and among Jennie's ten classmates were young ladies from New Jersey, British Columbia, and Quebec. She graduated in 1885 and although her academic performance and talent as a painter won her a scholarship to study art in Paris, she never took the opportunity. At eighteen she already had another, more important, project in mind: marriage.

Robert Pim Butchart was a tall, lean young man of Scottish descent, with a good head for figures and a fine business career unfolding before him. Owen Sound, in the township of Sydenham, was a burgeoning port, first settled in 1840, as steamers were busily opening up this part of the continent via the Great Lakes.

Initially, the Scots had never really been excited about the "New World" but after 1770 many were leaving their home to seek asylum and a new life in Canada. During the 1850s they were arriving by the boatload to ply their trades and seek their fortunes. Between 1851 and 1855 approximately seven thousand people left Scotland for British North America, keen to find work as engineers and skilled labourers. Robert's grandfather, James Butchart was among them. Born in the Forfar district of Scotland in 1805, he brought his wife Mary (née McLaughlin) and seven children to start a new life in Canada.

There were many Butcharts in the area, and most were doing well. Working together, the family prospered in the booming town, providing trades for settlers and shipping lines. James junior was a carpenter, David a tailor, and George McLaughlan Butchart, Bob's father, a tinsmith who established a thriving hardware store.

As a youngster, and eldest son of eleven children, Bob didn't take much of a shine to schoolwork, possibly because of a Mr. P. A. Black, a whiskery school master who apparently carried a rubber strap under his coat and "had no compunction about bringing it down on your arm smartly." After nine years he left the classroom, anxious to take his place behind the counter of the family business. His father, a town councillor and captain in the 31st Grey Battalion of Infantry, was something of a disciplinarian. With his son's best interests at heart, he insisted Bob return to studies, which he eventually did, at the Owen Sound Collegiate.

The Owen Sound of that period wasn't a cheap place to live. Roads were primitive and the railway hadn't arrived, so groceries were about twice the price they were in major cities, such as Toronto. Natural resources were in abundance, however. Pigeons were especially plentiful, to the extent they occasionally "blocked out the sun" and were a staple in many a kitchen pot. Local deer, partridge and rabbit were also welcome pantry visitors, making hunting a useful, if not essential, pastime for the young men of the town.

Bob was no exception, learning militia rifle skills at his father's side and taking fish with apparent ease from the lakes and rivers. Also, like his father who made "a good showing" in the first ever regatta in the area, Bob took to boating, with a love that would eventually land him a page or two in the history of Canadian shipbuilding.

Bob's father died in 1882, at the age of fifty-four, leaving his boys in charge of the busy hardware store, which had risen to dominate the business district of town.

Church attendance and associated social gatherings were requisite, and Bob soon became friendly with Jennie Foster Kennedy. Bob's father and Jennie's uncle Robert had been colleagues on the town council and active members of local society. Jennie and Bob's courtship was deemed to be a good match, and well encouraged.

In 1882, Bob started to look beyond the small realm of hardware sales, even though the Butchart business was doing well, having established two stores in the frontierland of Manitoba. Bob had bigger ideas, and after collecting all the investment capital he could lay his hands on, he set up a primitive cement works with J. M. Kilbourn at Shallow Lake, about nine miles northwest of Owen Sound.

Despite their best efforts and numerous consultations with "experts" in the new field of cement manufacture, this venture failed miserably. They couldn't get the recipe right and were guessing at the process for the most part. But so committed to the idea was Bob that he bought out his partners, and promised himself he'd find a solution to the manufacturing problem.

At twenty-seven years old, having outsmarted or out-maneuvered Jennie's other suitors, Bob Butchart won the hand of his eighteen year-old bride. They went down to Buffalo for the wedding and Jennie shelved any thoughts of furthering her career in visual arts, devoting herself instead to her new husband and providing support to this determined entrepreneur.

The wedding celebration was followed by a holiday in Europe, and during their stay in England Bob's industrial career took a short-cut. A new kind of cement was being made, quite successfully, in England, and Bob badly needed the recipe. However, manufacturers of the new

Portland Cement were understandably tight-lipped, and as an industrial spy Bob failed repeatedly, being turned away or shunned by such as the famous firm of White and Sons in Kent.

But one day, while walking down a street in a small town, he noticed a store which advertised the new cement, and more importantly it advertised the name of its owner: a Mr. A. J. Butchart. After some minutes of jovial conversation, it was established that A. J. and Bob were distant relatives, and shared the bond of the clan. It wasn't long before the secret recipe for making Portland Cement was discreetly revealed to him.

On his return to Canada, Bob scraped more financing together, formed a second partnership, and put the new manufacturing process into play. By 1888 he was turning out the first Portland Cement ever made in Canada, and on his way to becoming father of the Canadian Cement Industry.

Bob and his partners initially had a hard time convincing engineers of their product's quality. The biggest hurdle, it seemed, was the packaging, which they had changed from traditional wooden barrels to burlap sacks. But appearances aside, the new cement was ideal for a country still in the making. Bob kept close watch on his enterprise, and he and Jennie lived close to his first Ontario plant, on a small island off Owen Sound.

Despite a temperance movement that lacked nothing in gusto, Owen Sound, like many active ports, was gaining a reputation for its drinking problem. Eighty per cent of the adult population drank, earning Owen Sound the nickname "Corkscrew Town." Genteel society and Church-based communities seemed to be in decline, so no doubt Jennie, who was now the mother of two young daughters, Jenny and Mary, would greet the chance to move away with her new husband when the right opportunity arose.

The move West

Almost three thousand miles away, at the other side of the country in British Columbia, a man called John Grieg had discovered lime deposits on the shores of Tod Inlet on southern Vancouver Island, and had run a small business providing local farmers and homesteaders. The operation was sold to a Robert Grey, who in turn passed it on to a local fishmonger called Joseph Wrigglesworth.

Wrigglesworth built a lime kiln there in 1890 and sent some rock samples back to his native England for analysis. The samples turned out to be of a grade ideal for making the new Portland cement and the market for this powdery white rock suddenly seemed a lot bigger, and more lucrative. Thanks to an agent named J. E. Murphy, word of this limestone deposit soon got back to Bob Butchart who came out to Victoria to see for himself the potential it held for his cement business.

Bob came out again to personally inspect the site in the late spring of 1903 and, after doing his homework and calculating the risk, he sent this letter, as Manager of the Owen Sound Portland Cement Co. Ltd., to a Mr. W.E. Losee, his contact in Victoria.

July 18, 1903

Dear Mr Losee:-

On my arrival home about a week ago I found your favor of the 30th ulto, and to-day am in receipt of your letter of 8th inst. I should have written you earlier but have been unable to get my men together and discuss the subject with them. We have decided to erect the plant at Tod Inlet providing we can make suitable arrangements for future supply of coal. I am pleased with your very full description of the Sooke River Power. It looks as if this power can be developed at a reasonable cost. I have sent your figures to the Wm. Hamilton Co. who are to give me a figure for suitable Samson Water Wheels. They say that with this fall and head 1150 Horse Power can be developed with their Wheels. Your suggestion to try and obtain the use of the water free is a good one, and on my return to Victoria will take this up with the Hon. Mr. McBride.

We will require all the assistance possible from the Government and Municipality because I have just learned that the importations of cement into British Columbia last year were only 40,455 bbls. The cost per barrel to manufacture this small quantity will be very high. I hope the Electric Railroad to the head of Saanich Inlet may become an assured fact and that it may run close past the cement works. It will be very convenient for our Employees. We will have to run chances that they do not get on to our Sooke River Power. If cutting the timber over the transmission line will not cost more than \$100 per mile we will be getting of pretty safe.

Sorry to hear that you have contracted such a bad cold and trust you are quite better.

Your sketch showing Ferry slip noted. I am not sure if it will not pay us to purchase a barge to carry our coal and also to use the barge for conveying the cement to Victoria, Vancouver, and elsewhere. I am not sure what time I will return to Victoria. Am awaiting a letter from Nanaimo. In the meantime am getting figures on machinery, etc. Thank you very much for the valuable information you have been able to get me. Trusting it may prove profitable to both of us, I remain, with kind regards,

Yours truly,

(sig.) R.P.Butchart

With that, a decision was made to move the Butcharts and their young family out to British Columbia, to start a new life, and a garden.

Land at the time was fairly cheap, around seven dollars an acre, so Bob also bought the neighbouring Peter Fernie farmstead, a quiet, waterfront property with a small cottage and a couple of rustic outbuildings. He retained the farm's Chinese employees and kept the original lime kiln in use for a while, using it to build the coarse walls of the first cement factory. It was to be the start of a huge, lucrative industry for the Butchart family, but it was also a very sad time for homesick Jennie, who missed her eastern family and friends terribly.

When Bob first took Jennie out to the site, over the dusty, bumpy trail known then as Limekiln Road, she didn't know what to expect. "We drove out with a span of horses and had a picnic lunch at the inlet," she told Maclean's Magazine, years later. "Where the house and upper garden are now was a deep ravine with steepish banks. I sat there having our picnic and crying with loneliness. I wanted to go home to Ontario."

But the landscape of British Columbia charmed her, as it has done so many travellers and new arrivals, and the lush green slopes were an enchanting, enticing backdrop. "It was very pretty, that ravine, and the woods all around, and the view of the inlet. After a while I agreed to stay and try it."

Welcome to Saanich

Saanich covers almost seventy square miles of a peninsula on southern Vancouver Island, and was the winter home of some Northern Straits Salish Indians. "Saanich," in their Sencoten dialect, meant "fertile." Huge Douglas fir trees covered the steep slopes of Mount Newton, whose thousand foot summit dominated the landscape. To the north and south, gently rolling areas were ideal for homesteading, with rich soil and a moderate climate. Beaches to the east were smooth and good for shellfish and crabs, while to the west the shore was steeper, falling away into the depths of Saanich Inlet with its teeming fishery.

Natural resources were plentiful, with game, such as deer, being a major food- source for the Salish, who also ate dried salmon with dried berries, waterfowl, shellfish and seaweed.

Sir James Douglas, the Hudson Bay Trading Company factor who built Fort Victoria in 1843, expected new immigrants would swallow up pastoral Saanich as they rolled the boundary of Victoria northward. But immigrants didn't always care for city life.

Many of Saanich's first settlers and pioneers were fiercely independent, and not given to falling into uniform communities. In fact, most came here to start a new life away from rules and restrictive municipal disciplines. Some were fleeing the oppressive class structure of Victorian England, to carve a livelihood out of a bountiful wilderness, where owning a patch of land was quite within their reach. Others were retiring from organizations such as the Hudson's Bay Company, or leaving the British Navy. The Royal Sappers were dispatched to build the early roads of Saanich, and many stayed on when their work was finished, keen to put down roots and call the place home.

There were a few prospectors, too, who came north from San Francisco, dabbled in a nearby gold find at Leechtown near Sooke, but saw that raising chickens and planting orchards was an easier life than digging for nuggets.

Early Saanich saw natives and white settlers work and trade with each other in a spirit of cooperation. The Butcharts moved to an area where neighbour helped neighbour and the challenge of establishing a whole new community, let alone an industry, was met with many helping hands.

British Columbia Cement Company Limited



The Tod Inlet Cement Works

Work began on construction of the cement plant in March 1904, and a few weeks later, on April 19, The Vancouver Portland Cement Company Limited was formed with a \$500,000 capital investment. A Toronto financier, Mr. E. R. Wood was president, with Bob taking on the role of managing director plus many other duties. Another newcomer from Ontario, twenty-six year-old Mr. Harry A. Ross, was appointed treasurer, and would soon earn a place in the Butchart family.

Many other skilled workers were brought in and employment opportunities were welcomed by the region. The deep, safe waters of Saanich Inlet were ideal for getting supplies in and out of the plant, and by March 1905, the first sacks of Portland cement were making their way by the barge Alexander, to a waiting market.

Business took off almost immediately. The strength of cement as a building material had been tested in the east and now local engineers and builders were anxious to get their hands on some. By spring of 1906, Bob's cement business was booming. A daily newspaper report of the time said: "R.P. Butchart, manager of the Vancouver Island Portland Cement Company at Tod Creek, this morning said that he was working night and day to supply the local demand, and has ordered another mint which is now on its way here. He will increase the plant from six hundred barrels, and will supply the Canadian trade before filling orders for San Francisco, although builders there are offering seventy-five cents to one dollar more a barrel just now."

The San Francisco fire had builders there crying out for cement, and willing to pay a premium for it. Bob refused to take advantage of the situation, insisting that local builders and engineers were to be supplied first, even if Californians were offering up to a dollar more per barrel. The steamer Trader did set sail from Tod Inlet with one load for the States but much more was already on its way from Europe.

New equipment was ordered and the plant was enlarged again, with production increasing by another fifty per cent to nine hundred barrels a day. Alberta was also hungry for cement, and by September 1906 Bob was heading out to Calgary to help establish another manufacturing plant there. "We expect to be in running shape by June 1st next," he told a reporter, "and there is a very good outlook for the product. The country in that part of Canada is building up rapidly, and the works will doubtless be operated to capacity."

Hydro electricity, too, was an ally in Bob's venture. Architects soon realized that electric elevators could replace stairs and carry people quickly and easily-buildings became taller, and the demand for cement increased again. Municipal authorities were also finding that wooden boardwalks were expensive to maintain, so they ripped them up and replaced them with smooth, level cement sidewalks. To add to all this, motor vehicles had arrived, bringing with them increased wear and tear on roads and bridges, which would soon be made more durable, thanks to cement.

The last frontier of the Dominion of Canada was now enjoying phenomenal growth and finally had its own supply of the precious building material, which would place it alongside the other "civilized" regions of twentieth century North America.

But like many industrialists of that boom time, Bob was having trouble finding a steady supply of labour for his plant. He was often under-staffed, and had to achieve more with less. Despite hiring hundreds of Chinese and fifty or so East Indians for labouring jobs, this staffing problem delayed installation of the new kiln. However, the early years were lucrative and a bustling little village sprang up on the banks of Tod Inlet. (The only surviving portion of the original cement factory is a tall chimney still seen from the Sunken Garden lookout. The plant stopped manufacturing cement in 1916, but continued to make drain tiles and flower pots until 1950.)

Although she was proud of her husband's success, Jennie mentioned, only half jokingly, the price the environment was paying. "You're ruining the country, Bob," she said, "just to get your old cement!"

Chapter 2

Time to Plant a Garden

While the cement works churned out valuable grey powder and smoked its way to financial success, Jennie was looking at an area being devastated by industry. The old Fernie farmhouse and outbuildings were down across a meadow in the northwest corner of the property, more accessible by boat than road, so work on a new house for the Butcharts had begun almost immediately in 1904. She and Bob had a small home with surrounding verandah built near the quarry, but they spent only the summer months there, living the rest of the year in Victoria or travelling.

"Our first little house was a cottage of only three rooms," said Jennie. As for gardening she was the first to admit she "knew nothing at all." But her friend, James Lawson, gave her a few sweet pea seeds and she bought some Caroline Testout roses from the Layritz Nurseries, to brighten the yard next to her new home. "So wild it was that the deer used to come right up to the door." These deer ate much of the garden, and would continue to do so for decades to come, (despite hundreds of local tricks and ideas, and the best efforts of nine head gardeners).

But Jennie wasn't deterred. "I had a small garden," she would later recall, "and I think it was that first horticultural venture, and seeing the marvellous way things grew out here where there were no cold winters, which started my enthusiasm. "Jennie soon learned, as do many migrants to Vancouver Island, that getting things to grow is often easier than getting them to stop growing.

An Ideal Climate

The Butchart estate sits at 48'34" North and 123'28" West, being protected from prevailing westerly winds by the Malahat Mountain, and by Willis Point and the Partridge Hills which rise to around 800 feet on the far shore of Tod Inlet. The Gardens enjoy a long, frost-free growing season of almost nine months in this Sub-Mediterranean climate. Shrubs and trees here tend to grow more quickly and up to forty per cent larger than they would in parts of Europe and the east coast of North America.

The small garden flourished and soon expanded. Because of the natural slope of the land, broad terraces were made, with the surrounding rough ground being leveled out, stumps and brush removed and plantings made. Part of the cement manufacturing process required clay, hauled from across what is now Wallace Drive, just east of Tod Inlet. As the clay was stripped for use in the factory, the larger soil and sand particles were put aside, and Jennie had these piles gleaned to fill in the holes and craters of what would become the Upper Garden. A rough meadow soon became an expansive lawn. Tennis was highly fashionable at the turn of the century and an area of grass immediately behind the house was set aside for this genteel sport. The other lawn areas were used for croquet and, occasionally, archery.

The Butcharts called their home Benvenuto, Italian for welcome, and everyone who visited them certainly was. As the gardens grew, houseguests would ask if their friends could

also visit, so just before the First World War, Bob and Jenny opened their gardens to the public, initially for just three days of the week. Word of mouth spread the news and tea was offered to all who came, with 18,000 people served in 1915. Jennie would often run around the outdoor tables herself with a teapot, making sure everyone was comfortable.

If the weather was unusually harsh, visitors might be invited indoors, and Jennie came up with the idea of buying several umbrellas which would be loaned to any visitor caught in the rain, (this idea is still in use at Butchart Gardens today). It wasn't long before "visiting hours" were extended to five days a week, with the Butcharts keeping just Thursday and Sunday to themselves.



The Japanese Garden, the first to be landscaped in 1906

The Japanese Garden

North of the Butchart home the sloping ground drops from around one hundred feet above sea level to a small, sheltered cove below. This little neck of Tod Inlet was ideal for mooring small boats and, given the state of local roads, it was often the preferred route of visitors to the household. They would tie up their boats and walk the few hundred yards up to the house. It seemed obvious, to Jennie at least, that this should be one of the next areas to receive careful attention, and work began in 1905. Initially, the area was mostly stumps and brush, never having been properly incorporated into the adjacent farmland. Native salal and Oregon grape covered the sloping ground between tall Douglas fir, arbutus and Western cedar. It presented no small challenge, especially for what Jennie had in mind.

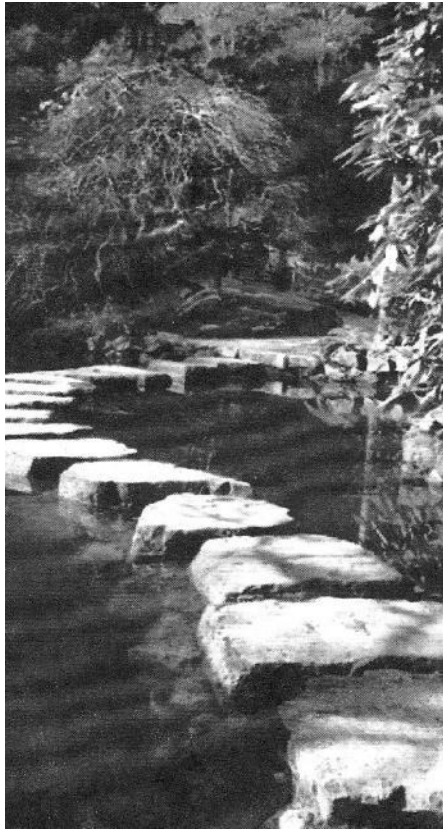
The Japanese style of garden was by now quite fashionable. Nearby Hatley Castle, built by wealthy coal baron Robert Dunsmuir, had employed a Boston company to develop its gardens, who in turn had employed the services of Isaboro Kishida to design a Japanese Garden there which still exists today. This talented Japanese landscape artist from Yokohama also designed a garden with tea rooms for the Gorge, Victoria's weekend society playground of the time.

Jennie, who was interested in the Orient and had travelled there many times on her winter cruises, hired Isaboru Kishida in 1906 to draft up a design. With the help of books and the guidance of more knowledgeable friends, she planted Japanese maple trees, some of which grow so slowly they have not been replaced to this day. She marked the entrance with a grand, red lacquer gate, or Torii, and planted copper beech trees at either side of it. These trees are now among the oldest on the estate.

After she married, Jennie's daughter Mary hired a Scottish gardener, Hugh Lindsay, to create a garden around her new home on St. Charles Street in Victoria. Jennie was so impressed by his talent that she poached him away to become Benvenuto's first head gardener. Lindsay implemented the plans for the Japanese Garden, bringing it to the first stage of completion by 1910.

Jennie was confident enough to ignore the advice of Joseph Conder, who wrote in his 1912 book, *Landscape Gardening in Japan*: "Very rare flowers however beautiful, are not considered desirable material for gardens, the strange and unfamiliar being favoured only by vulgar and ignorant persons." Jennie, of course, was neither, and her Japanese Garden became a showpiece, and one of the rarest flowers of her time, the Tibetan Blue Poppy, grows there exquisitely.

On a June afternoon in 1917, the Natural History Society of Victoria drove out to Benvenuto in one of the large sight-seeing cars of the time, to be met and personally guided around the garden by Jennie. They reported: "The Japanese garden with its multitude of dwarfed but sturdy shrubs was much admired, as were the little lakes and pools where trout of various kinds could be seen swimming in the clear water."



Translating a Japanese Garden

Butchart's Japanese Garden incorporates many of the classic features which have inspired people for centuries: viewpoints, false perspectives, miniaturization, compositional balance and harmony, and clever applications of rock and water.

The first Japanese Gardens were influenced by the Chinese, who formed a relationship with the natural world, expressed in their art, philosophy and religion. (Buddhists tried to create paradise on earth and used the garden for reflective meditation).

Ying and Yang (positive and negative energy, respectively) must be balanced.

In Japanese culture, the Ying of sky, for example, needs balancing by careful placement of trees and screening. Stone is the most important element in the Japanese landscape but the other natural elements, sun, moon, stars, land, water and plants, each have their place in the overall scheme. Traditional plants include azalea, ferns, grasses, wildflowers and mosses, with trees coming from the cedar, cherry, fir, maple and pine families.

The Zen Buddhist garden of three and four hundred years ago had little colour or flowering material. This helped place the focus on their important tea ceremony, with evergreens displaying an eternal, as opposed to transient, beauty. The teahouse, so often a peaceful haven in which to relax and contemplate, is a legacy of this style.

Early Japanese gardens were explored on foot or by boat, while the Zen gardens were designed to be enjoyed by a sitting visitor. Trees are trained to lean out and bend over, or weep, to frame a bridge or reflective pool of water. And enclosure, made from natural elements such as cedar hedging or bamboo, is important, creating a private space and an immediate division between the domestic world and that of the garden.

All this has been achieved here, (with the help of two extensive renovations), and even on the busiest days of summer it's still possible to find a little peace and solitude in the cool, shady corners of the Japanese Garden.

The New Village

Tod Inlet now had its own little community. The hastily-built shanty town of cabins with canvas roofs had soon become a village, housing over 400 workers from the cement plant. The principal workers lived in small cottages just east of the wharf, (the foreman had a tennis court behind his, the remains of which can still be seen).

The Chinese lived further east still, by Tod Creek, most of them in a huge bunkhouse that was later used by the Red Cross during the First World War. A small settlement of East Indians was just above, in a ramshackle collection of huts. There was a barn, stables and a field for growing hay, and many workers grew their own vegetables, and kept chickens or small livestock. They also planted fruit trees, some of which survive today.

Apart from a little fishing and hunting, the people of this new village were in need of entertainment. A two storey bunkhouse had been built for single men, with a large cookhouse and dining room next door. This dining room was occasionally used for dances and card parties but was hardly ideal for community socializing. So in 1910, a few of the workers and locals formed the West Saanich Hall Committee and set about raising money to build a community hall. An obvious fundraiser was a garden party, which put almost \$40 in the coffer, then Bob took an interest and donated \$200.

Plans for the concrete and wood hall were drawn up and submitted to Bob, who not only gave some advice but another \$50 to complete the project. The hall was a huge success, used for dances, shows and other social functions. Bob's employees were active on the committee until the Second World War, but in 1947 the society was folded and its residue funds donated to a local church. The hall stood approximately where the first Butchart Gardens sign and small garden are today, on the northwest corner of the Benvenuto Avenue and West Saanich Road intersection.

Before the Butcharts built a village here, the nearest post office was up on the main road, informally named after a pioneer family called Sluggett. Until the telephone became commonplace, a post office was the hub of nearly all communication, and a vital landmark. When Tod Inlet finally got its own post office this placed the village officially on the map of 1911. (Although it wasn't acknowledged by the Geographic Branch of the province until November, 1922, by which time the cement works had closed, most workers had left and the village was all but abandoned).

In summer, workers and their families were often treated to boat rides and short cruises around Saanich Inlet. At Christmas the children were remembered by Bob and Jennie with gifts of money and colourful sweaters. After they returned from a foreign trip there would often be tropical fruits or candy preserves to share among the youngsters.

The good will was reciprocated. Staff presented Bob with colourful flags and a pair of binoculars one Christmas, to use on his new motor launch. Then in 1923, the Butcharts were presented with a silver tea service inscribed "Land of Enchantment. "The Butcharts nurtured staff loyalty and many people spent a lifetime in employment at Benvenuto, often being followed into service by a son or daughter. It's a legacy that has continued, where staff meetings take the form of family gatherings, and after almost a century's operation there have been less than a dozen head gardeners.

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