

The Convicts Forfeitures Act, 1871, had authorized the Governor to commit the custody and management of the property of a convict (a person sentenced to death, penal servitude, or imprisonment for more than three years) to an administrator appointed by him; and a *Gazette* notice issued in 1906 appointed the Public Trustee administrator of all such property.

In 1907 powers with regard to unclaimed property generally, somewhat similar to those already conferred with regard to unclaimed lands, were conferred upon the Public Trustee.

The Reformatory Institutions Act, 1909, conferred upon the Public Trustee powers in respect of the property of persons committed to an institution under that Act similar to those already possessed by him with regard to the property of convicts.

The Inalienable Life Annuities Act, 1910, provides for the issue of annuities as a personal provision for the annuitants, in which no other person can acquire an interest, and which cannot be assigned or charged. It sometimes, however, becomes undesirable to allow the annuitant to receive the annuity himself, either because of his mental incapacity or because of his financial position and obligations, and in such a case the Act gives the Supreme Court power to vest the annuity in the Public Trustee for the benefit of the annuitant.

During the whole course of the legislation affecting the Public Trust Office objection had from time to time been made to the administration of estates spread over the whole Dominion by an officer resident in Wellington. This difficulty had been got over to a certain extent by the appointment of District Managers and Agents in various parts; but the limited powers possessed by these officers necessitated such frequent references to the Public Trustee, the only official recognized in law, that much delay occurred. In 1912, therefore, was authorized the appointment of Local Deputy Public Trustees, to whom the Public Trustee might delegate in writing such of his powers, functions, and duties as he might think fit, and who in particular might execute deeds and other legal documents.

The Act of this year also authorized the placing in the Public Trust Office of benefit or relief funds for administration by the Public Trustee, the making of periodical payments towards the maintenance and advancement of an infant entitled to a share of an intestate estate, and of advances to beneficiaries not exceeding half the estimated value of their share. Further powers of investment were given by adding to the list of authorized investments mortgages of certain classes of leasehold estate.

In this year also was passed the Aged and Infirm Persons Protection Act, providing for the care of the property of persons who through old age or infirmity are unable to manage their affairs, and the Public Trustee was included amongst those to whom the management of such property might be committed.

In 1913 the Public Trust Office Board was reconstituted to consist of the Minister of Finance, the Public Trustee, the Government Insurance Commissioner, the Valuer-General, the Superintendent of the State-guaranteed Advances Office, and two persons not holding office in the Public Service, to be appointed by the Governor-in-Council.

Provision was also made for the appointment of advisory trustees to act with the Public Trustee in an advisory capacity, and also for the appointment of the Public Trustee to act as custodian trustee of an estate where there were private trustees, in which capacity his whole duty would be to get in and hold the trust property, invest the funds, and dispose of the assets as directed by the managing trustees, who controlled the administration.

The Public Trustee was also given certain powers in connection with the investigation and audit of private trust accounts, and his general powers were added to, while in addition to the functions previously exercised by him he was authorized to act as a receiver or arbitrator, and also to accept documents and other securities for safe custody.

The limit of the amount of the estate which he could administer upon filing an election was increased to £400, and his powers in this regard were extended to include testate as well as intestate estates, with an increase to £600 in the amount necessitating a grant of administration if subsequently to the filing of an election the estate was found actually to exceed £400.

In 1917 the office of Deputy Public Trustee was abolished and provision was made for the appointment of two Assistant Public Trustees, who, with the Public Trustee, were to constitute the Public Trust Office Board. The then existing Board (the constitution of which was altered by substituting the two Assistant Public Trustees for the two non-service members) was thereafter to be known as "The Public Trust Office Investment Board," and its sole function was to control the investment of moneys in the hands of the Public Trustee.

STAFF.

The first Public Trustee appointed was Mr. Jonas Woodward, an officer of the Treasury Department of that period, at a salary of £800 per annum. His appointment was made in December, 1872.

Mr. Woodward continued in office from 1872 to 1880, when he was succeeded by Mr. R. C. Hamerton, Secretary for Stamps, the two positions being for the time amalgamated.

The following is a complete list of the persons who have successively held the position of Public Trustee:—

Period of Occupancy.			Name of Occupant.
1872–1880	..	..	Mr. Jonas Woodward.
1880–1891	..	..	Mr. R. C. Hamerton.
1891–1896	..	..	Mr. J. K. Warburton.
1896–1900	..	..	Mr. J. C. Martin.
1900–1910	..	..	Mr. J. W. Poynton.
1910–1917	..	..	Dr. F. Fitchett, M.A., LL.D.
1917–1920	..	..	Mr. R. Triggs.
1920	..	..	Mr. J. W. Macdonald.