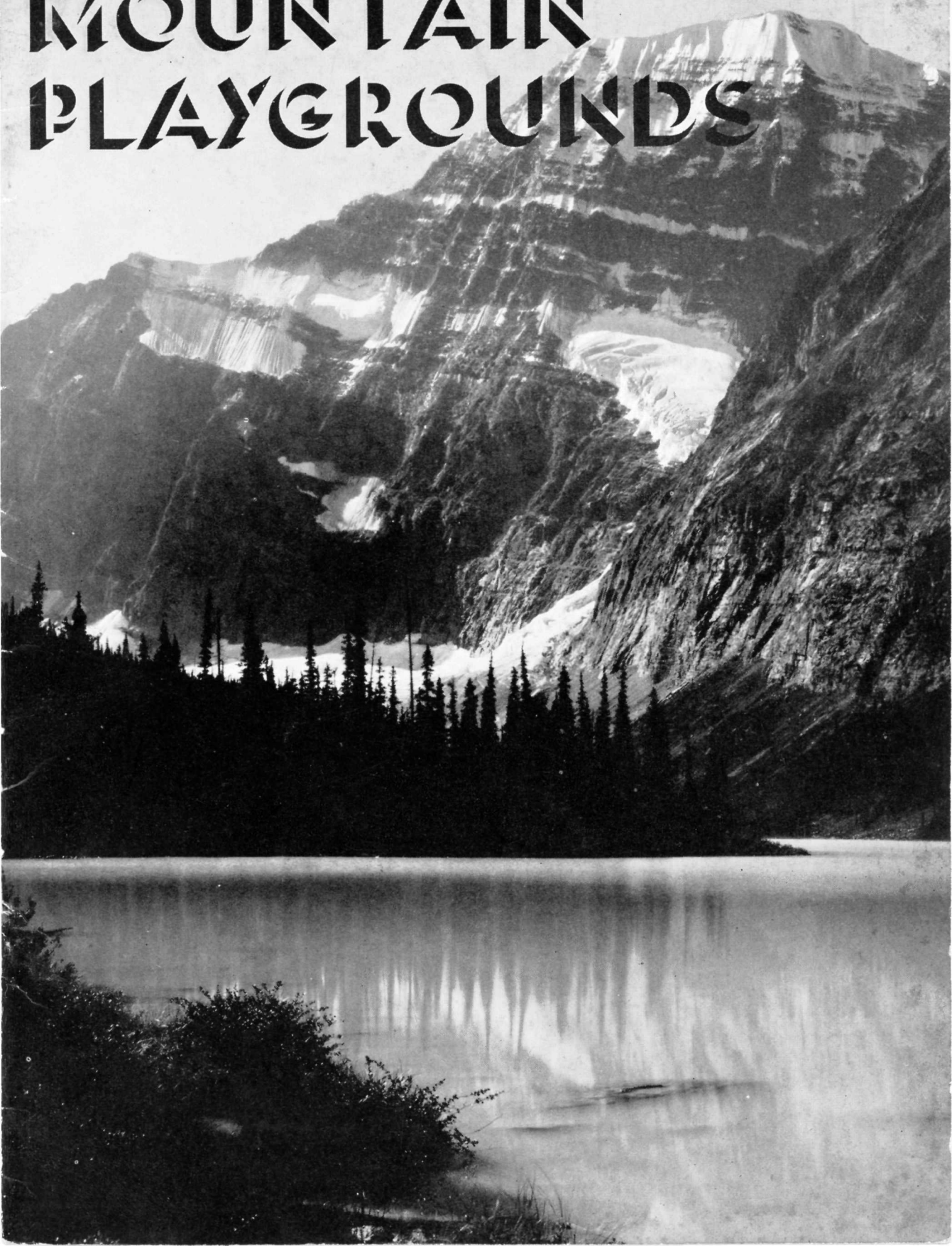


# CANADA'S MOUNTAIN PLAYGROUNDS





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by ROBERT J. C. STEAD

*(Reprinted from the Canadian Geographical Journal)*

FIFTY years ago Canadian statesmen of the time instituted the National Park idea in the Dominion by reserving a little mountain wilderness of ten square miles in the Rocky Mountains surrounding the hot springs at Banff, Alberta. The movement then begun has resulted in the preservation for the people of Canada of a natural heritage of beauty in the form of majestic mountains, peaceful valleys, crystalline lakes and primeval forests. From a small beginning Canada's system of National Parks has grown to a vast outdoor kingdom, consisting of nineteen individual parks with a combined area of 12,403 square miles.

In the parks are preserved the scenery, flora and fauna representative of that part of Canada in which they are situated. Although originally established to preserve the landscape in its primitive state and conserve the wild life of the region, National Parks are now also serving as national recreational areas, where beautiful surroundings are enjoyed each year by thousands of Canadians and their guests from other lands.

In Canada the term "national park" covers the scenic and recreational parks in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island; the wild animal parks established in Alberta for the protection of native wild life, and the national historic parks in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Of the first group, the parks area in the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains of Western Canada is the largest and best known. In these two great mountain ranges are seven national parks, with a total area of 8,720 square miles. "A Sea of Mountains" they have been described. Within their boundaries are regions of alpine grandeur unsurpassed in the world. Immense peaks lift their snow crowned heads high above the clouds, great glaciers move slowly down from ice-bound sources, and deep canyons hide their floors in awesome depths. Between the ranges are green valleys set with sparkling lakes and musical with the sound of tumbling waters. Well has the Canadian mountainland been described as "twenty Switzerlands in one."

Banff, the oldest of Canada's National Parks, located on the eastern slope of the

Rockies in Alberta, has an area of 2,585 square miles and contains the world-famous resorts, Banff and Lake Louise. Nestling in the picturesque valley of the Bow River, the little town of Banff is the administrative centre of the Park, and the hub for a system of motor roads and trails which radiate into the primitive wilderness. Lake Louise, forty miles west of Banff, is superb among the beautiful lakes of the Rockies. Surrounded by massive mountains on three sides, it sparkles in ever-changing hues, mirroring the reflection of forest, peak and sky.

To the southeast, in the lonely Valley of the Ten Peaks, is Moraine Lake, walled in by the curving arc of ten majestic mountains, while nearby is Paradise Valley, its green meadows brilliant with flowers and musical with waters. Mount Assiniboine, loftiest peak in the park, stands astride the continental divide. It rises to a height of 11,870 feet in the form of a great glacier-hung pyramid and has been aptly termed the "Matterhorn of the Rockies" from its configuration similar to the famous Swiss peak.

North of Banff Park is Jasper Park, largest of Canada's national playgrounds. It includes an area of 4,200 square miles—a magnificent region of mountains, icefields, canyons and exquisitely coloured lakes. Its central geographic feature is the wide valley of the Athabaska River which forms an ideal route of travel for both railway and highway. Rich in historical associations, the valleys of Jasper Park were travelled more than a hundred years ago by the fur-traders, explorers and missionaries who made their way along the "Athabaska Trail" from eastern headquarters to the Columbia River on their way to the Pacific coast. Notable points of interest in Jasper Park are Maligne Canyon, the Miette hot springs—among the hottest on the North American continent—Mount Edith Cavell, the Tonquin Valley and Maligne Lake. The largest of all glacier-fed bodies of water in the Canadian Rockies, Maligne Lake is also breath-taking in beauty.

High on the shoulders of the peaks forming part of the great continental divide which separates Alberta from British Columbia is the great Columbia Icefield.

LEFT: Mount Lefroy and Lefroy Glacier near Lake Louise, Banff National Park, Alberta.

## CANADA'S MOUNTAIN PLAYGROUNDS

This vast sea of snow and ice, estimated at 110 square miles and the accumulation of centuries is the birthplace of mighty rivers flowing finally into three oceans—the Pacific, the Arctic, and the Atlantic, through Hudson Bay.

Waterton Lakes National Park in southwestern Alberta is one of the smallest but one of the most beautiful of the national parks in the Rockies. It contains 220 square miles and adjoins the United States Glacier National Park, with which it forms the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. While its mountains lack the great height of those to the north, their colouring is extraordinary. Upper Waterton Lake, the central feature of the park, stretches across the invisible International boundary like a great arm, to unite the two park areas in one vast playground and sanctuary.

Crossing the Great Divide of the Rockies into British Columbia, the visitor enters Yoho National Park, 507 square miles in extent and differing in character from the parks to the east. Noticeable is the greater richness of the vegetation, and, for the most part, the narrower confines of the valleys. Yoho Valley is a wonder spot of the Rockies. Indeed, "Yoho" is an Indian exclamation of wonder and delight, and the beauty of the scenery fully justifies the name. Into this narrow valley, fourteen miles long and more than a mile deep, down sheer rocky sides pour dozens of waterfalls. Takakkaw, most beautiful of these cascades, falls a total distance of 1,500 feet to reach the valley floor.

Yoho Park also contains Lakes Emerald and O'Hara, as lovely as any in the mountains. It is said that one may count twenty shades of green in Emerald Lake. Lake O'Hara has been compared by noted artists to Lake Louise, both for setting and for colour.

To the south of Yoho Park in British Columbia lies Kootenay National Park, which was established to preserve the landscape along the Vermilion-Sinclair section of the Banff-Windermere Highway, the first motor road built across the central Rockies. Kootenay Park contains an area of 587 square miles, and its outstanding scenic features include remarkable canyons and beautiful valleys, as well as the famed Radium Hot Springs, at which a large swimming pool and bath-house have been constructed. Sinclair Canyon, just inside the western boundary of the park, is a great notch in the wall of the Rockies, and forms a natural gateway to an alpine wonderland.

Beyond the Rockies to westward are the Selkirk Mountains, in which are Glacier and Mount Revelstoke Parks. It has been said that "no snows are so white as the Selkirk snows, no forests so darkly, beautifully green." While the average height of the peaks is less than that of the Rockies, the richness of the flora contrasted with the abundance of ice and snow forms a combination that is particularly beautiful. Glacier National Park has an area of 521 square miles and may be reached only by railway, since no motor roads have yet penetrated its rugged fastnesses.

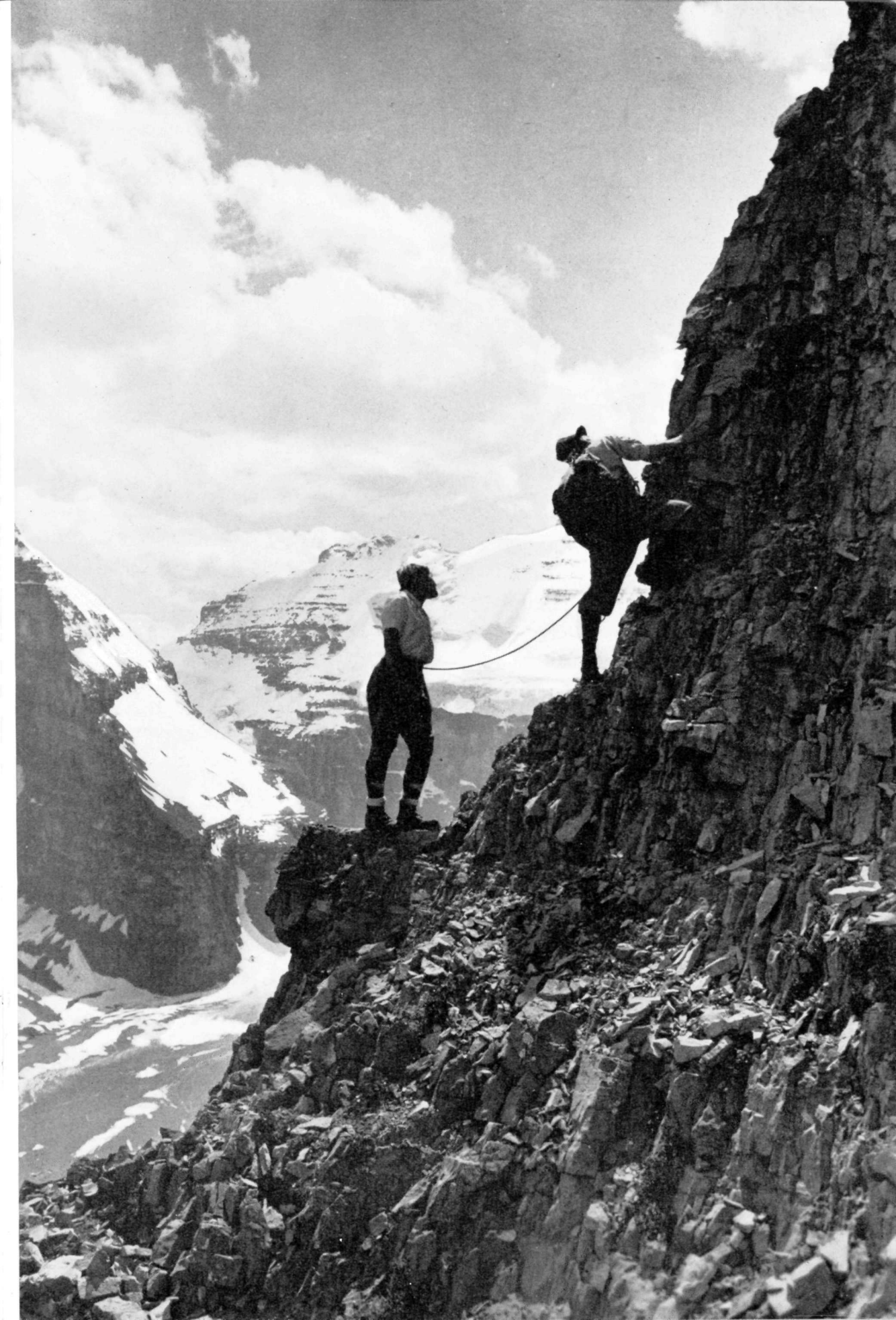
The last link westward in Canada's chain of national playgrounds is Mount Revelstoke Park, an area of 100 square miles. Occupying a wide rolling plateau situated almost at timberline, the park contains several small lakes and is approached by a scenic motor road which winds up the side of Mount Revelstoke, providing along the way magnificent views of the Illecillewaet and Columbia River Valleys.

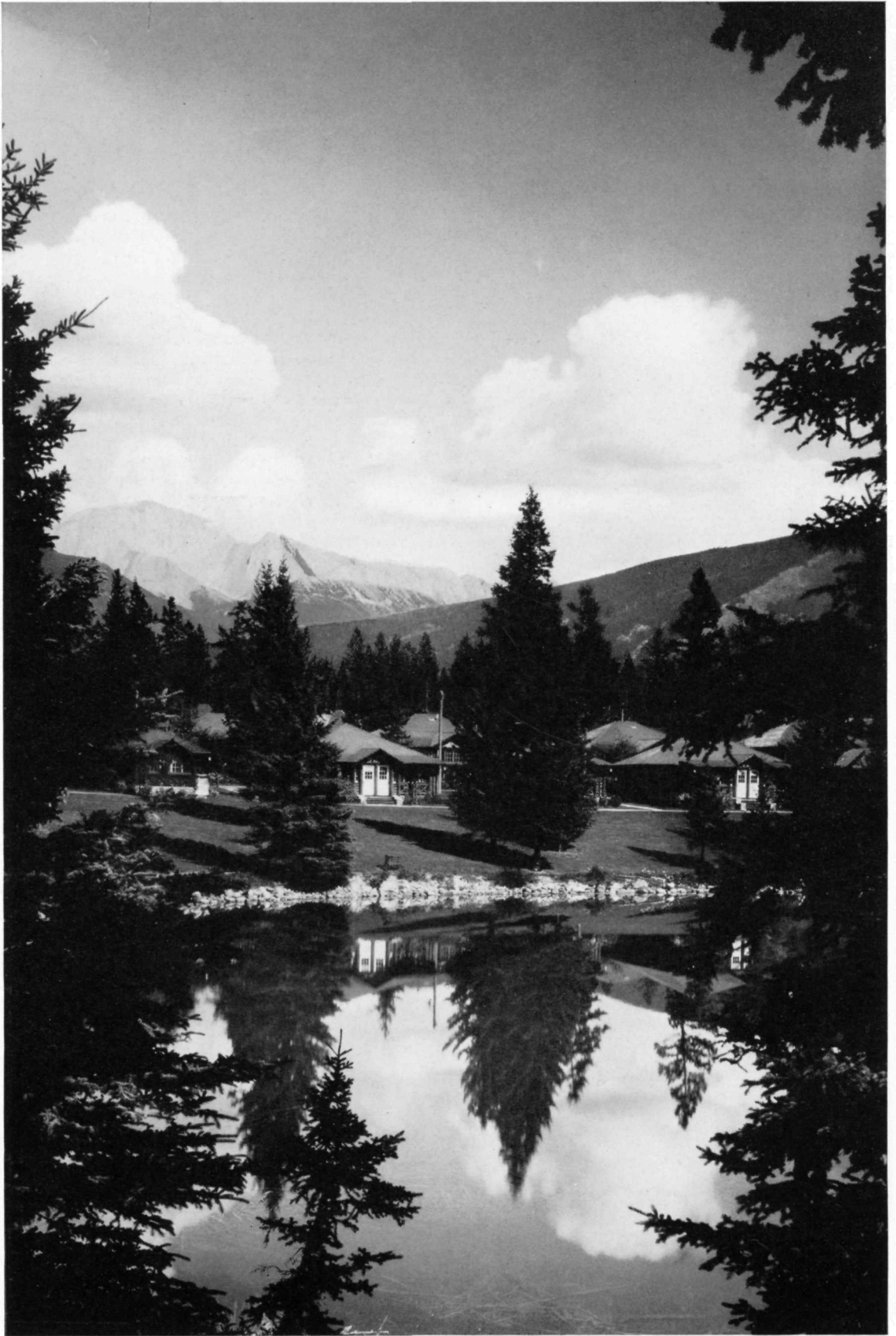
Fine motor highways, threading their way through the valleys and over the passes by easy gradients, and crossing the turbulent streams on modern bridges, afford access to the principal centres of interest. More than 500 miles of motor highways and secondary roads have been constructed which either traverse the mountain parks or link them with the main avenues of travel. Now under construction is a new motor highway which, when completed, will link Banff and Jasper National Parks and provide a travel route through a magnificent region bordered by lofty peaks and gleaming glaciers and ice-fields. The Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railway systems also afford luxurious transportation to the mountain parks.

One of the greatest attractions of national parks is the variety of wild life found within their boundaries. The rigid protection received by the creatures of the wild appears to have freed them from fear of man; and deer, elk and bear now come within a few yards of human habitation. It is quite a common sight while driving along the park highways to observe a group of bighorn sheep cropping the grass by the roadside, while along the trails deer, moose and elk may frequently be seen. The parks are serving as breeding places for many species of big game which spread beyond the park boundaries and re-stock surrounding districts.

Recreational opportunities in the parks are many and varied. Riding, hiking,

RIGHT: Climbing the Needles at Lake Louise, Banff National Park, Alberta.





The Bungalows at Lac Beauvert. Jasper National Park, Alberta

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motoring, mountain-climbing, boating and swimming may be enjoyed under ideal conditions. Opportunities for golf have been provided in many of the parks by the construction of sporting courses, and tennis courts are open to the public at several places. Many of the mountain lakes and streams have been stocked with different species of game fish, and fine sport awaits the angler, particularly in Banff, Jasper and Waterton Lakes parks.

An event of interest to lovers of the outdoors is the camp of the Alpine Club of Canada held annually in the mountain parks. The Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies and the Sky Line Trail Hikers also sponsor outings which are becoming increasingly popular. The "Indian Days" celebration at Banff provides a unique spectacle for visitors, and international golf tournaments held at Banff and Jasper attract outstanding competitors from near and far. Outdoor sports are not confined to summer alone, for in winter the snow-clad slopes of the Rockies provide ski-ing rivalled only at the best European resorts. The annual winter carnival at Banff attracts skiers, skaters, curlers and other winter sports devotees from many points in Canada and the United States.

In Banff, Jasper and Waterton Lakes parks picturesque towns have grown up at the administrative centres, where excellent hotel and bungalow camp accommodation is available. Chalets or bungalow camps are also maintained at Lake Louise, Emerald Lake, Lake O'Hara, Radium Hot Springs, and other well known beauty spots. Equipped motor campgrounds, situated in the park townsites and along the park highways, also offer excellent facilities to the visiting motorist.

It has been well said that "beauty, spiced by wonder, is the greatest lure to travel," and beauty is the outstanding appeal of Canada's mountain parks. No one can spend even a few hours among their natural wonders without gaining a new conception of the greatness of the Dominion. Since they were first opened to the public, the beauty spots which lie hidden away among the great peaks and ranges of Canada's mountain playgrounds have been visited by thousands of travellers from all corners of the earth. They have climbed the ice-clad walls, camped beside crystal lakes, and in cool and fragrant forests have communed with nature in her deepest moods. The mountains yield their riches only to those who come and live among them; from their beauty and endurance come strength, health and restoration of spirit against the stress and cares of a restless world.

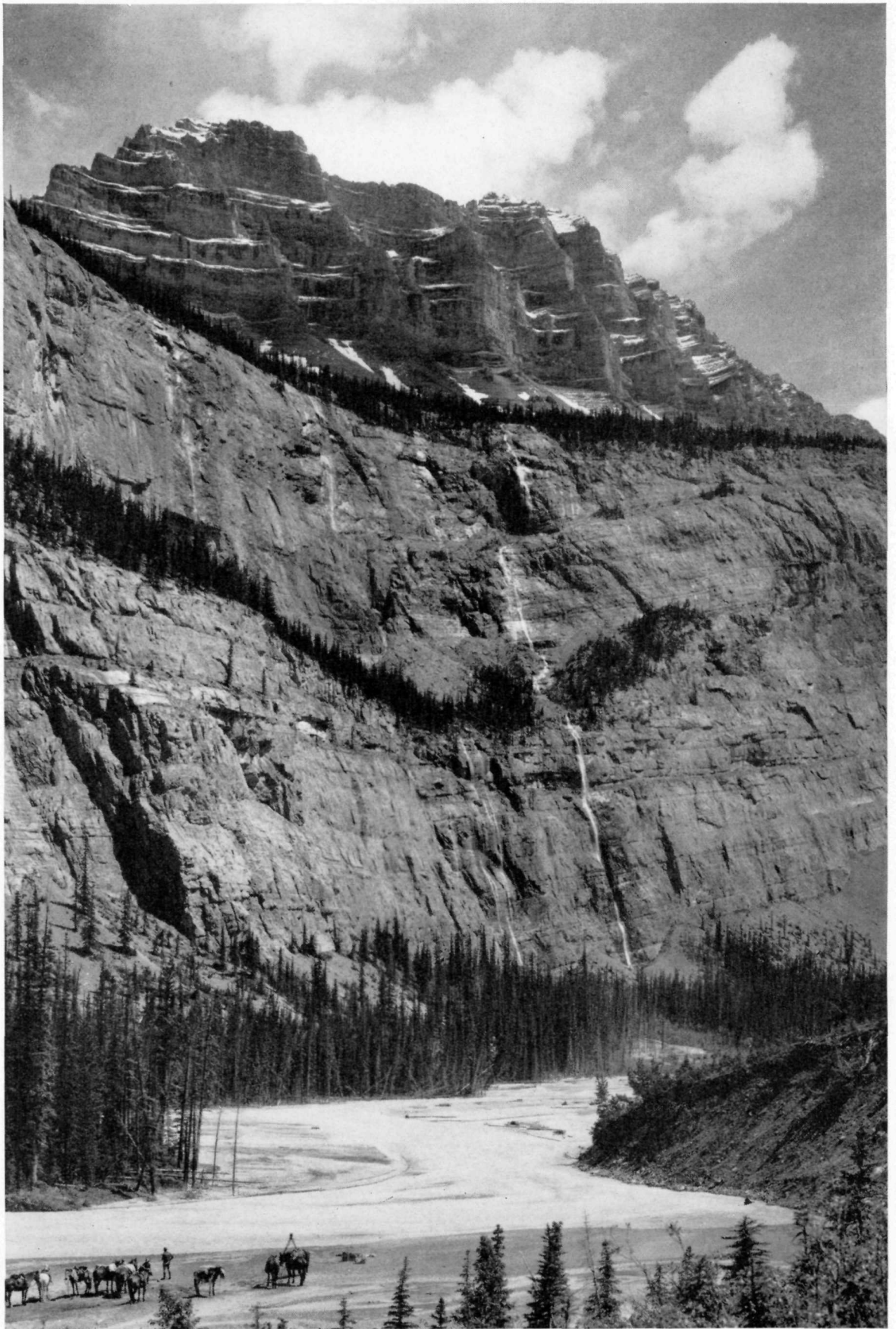


Clouds hanging below Pyramid Mountain. Lac Beauvert and Jasper Park golf course in foreground.



Riders on trail bridge at Sunwapta River Falls, Jasper National Park, Alberta.

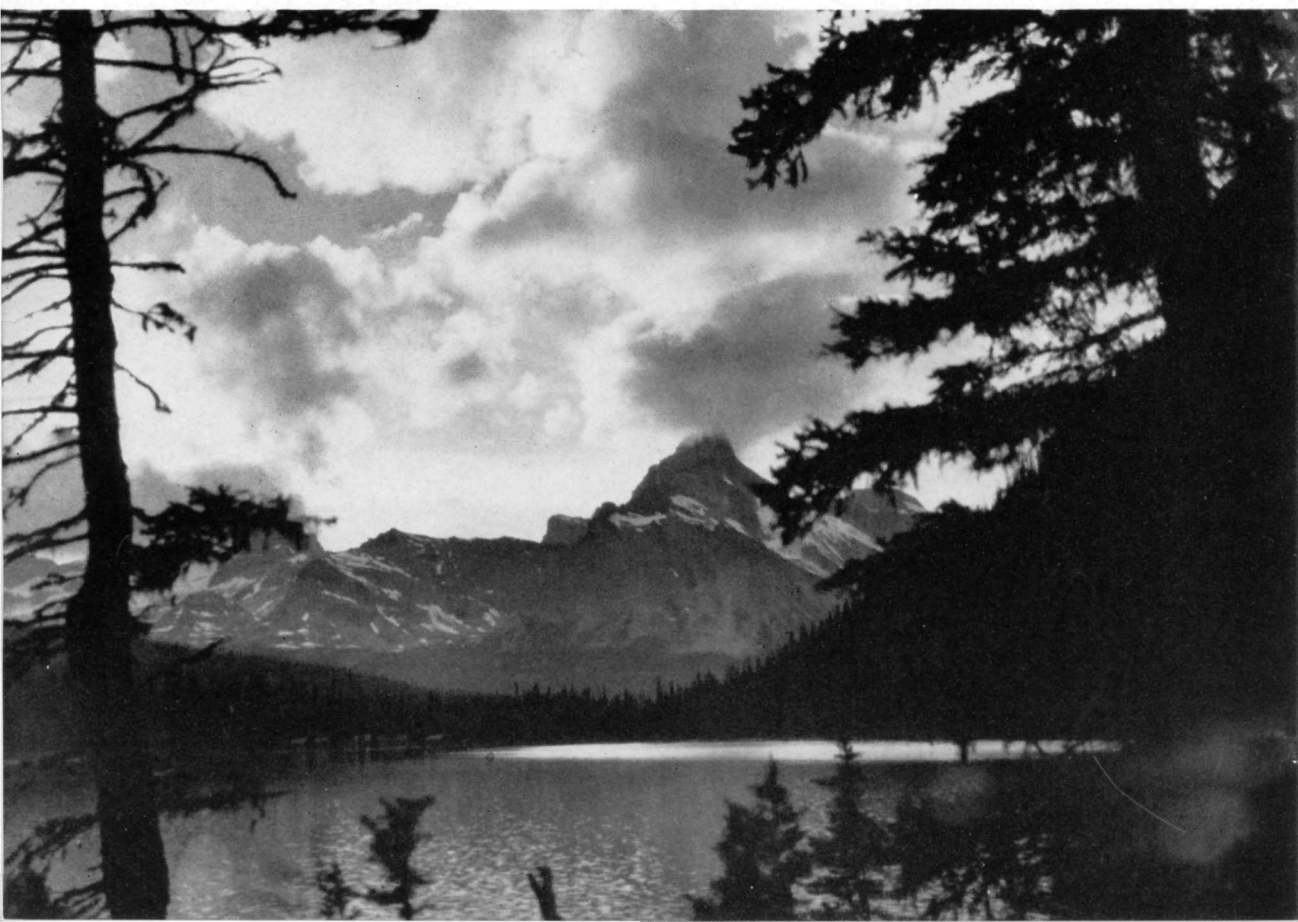




The sheer walls of Mount Coleman rise high above the North Saskatchewan River along the route of the new Banff-Jasper Highway, now under construction. Banff National Park, Alberta.

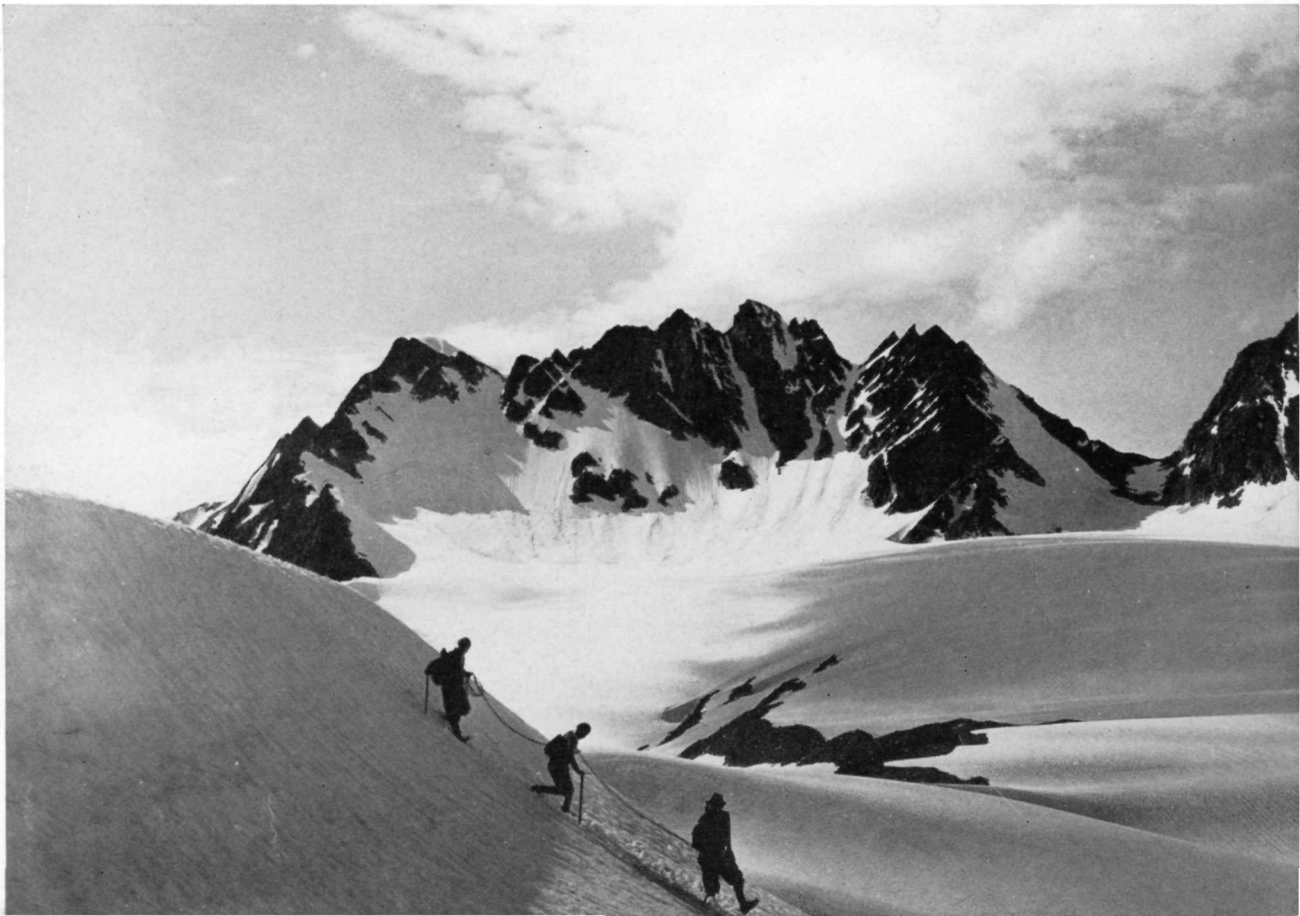


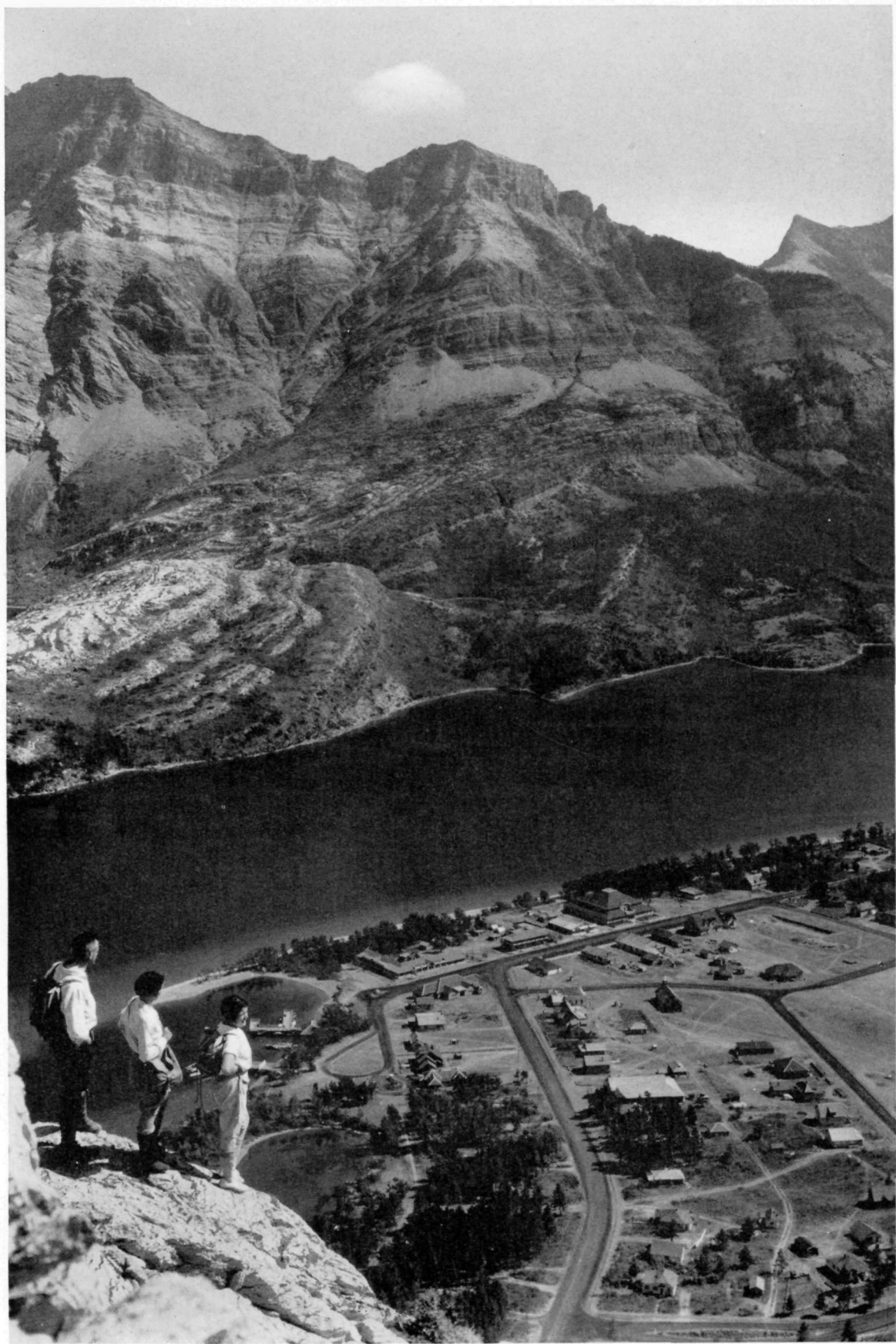
Ski-ing near Lake Louise, Banff National Park, Alberta.  
Evening on Lake O'Hara, Yoho National Park, British Columbia.



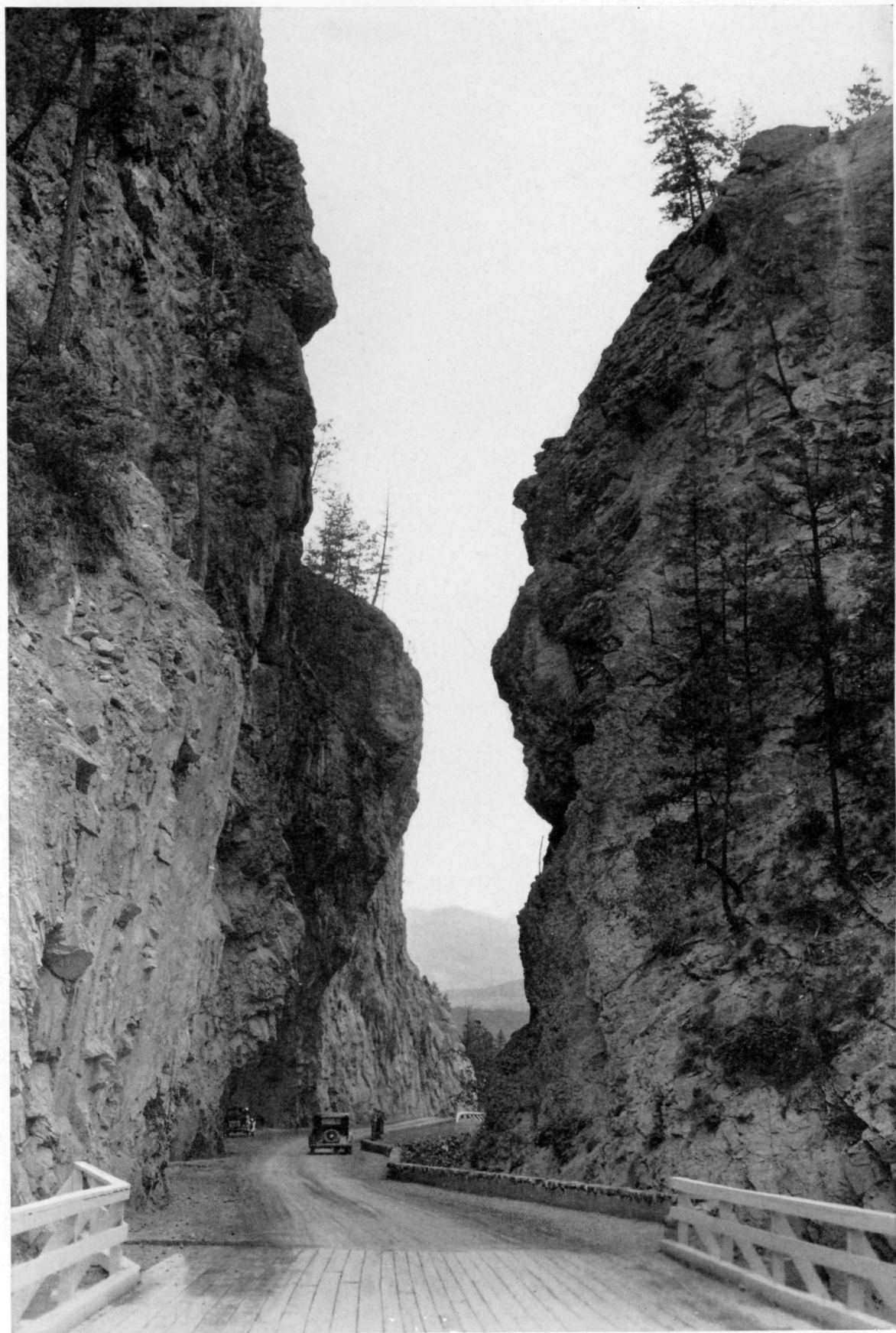


Crowfoot Glacier near Bow Lake, Banff National Park, Alberta.  
The Swiss Peaks and glacier. Climbers descending from Mount Tupper, Clacier National Park, British Columbia.





Like a toy village, the townsite of Waterton Park lies at the foot of Mount Crandell, Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta.



Through Sinclair Canyon, a giant notch in the wall of the Rockies, may be seen the Selkirk Mountains in the distance. Kootenay National Park, British Columbia.



Mount Ishbel, named after Ishbel MacDonald. Part of the Sawback Range which overlooks the Bow River Valley, Banff National Park, Alberta.

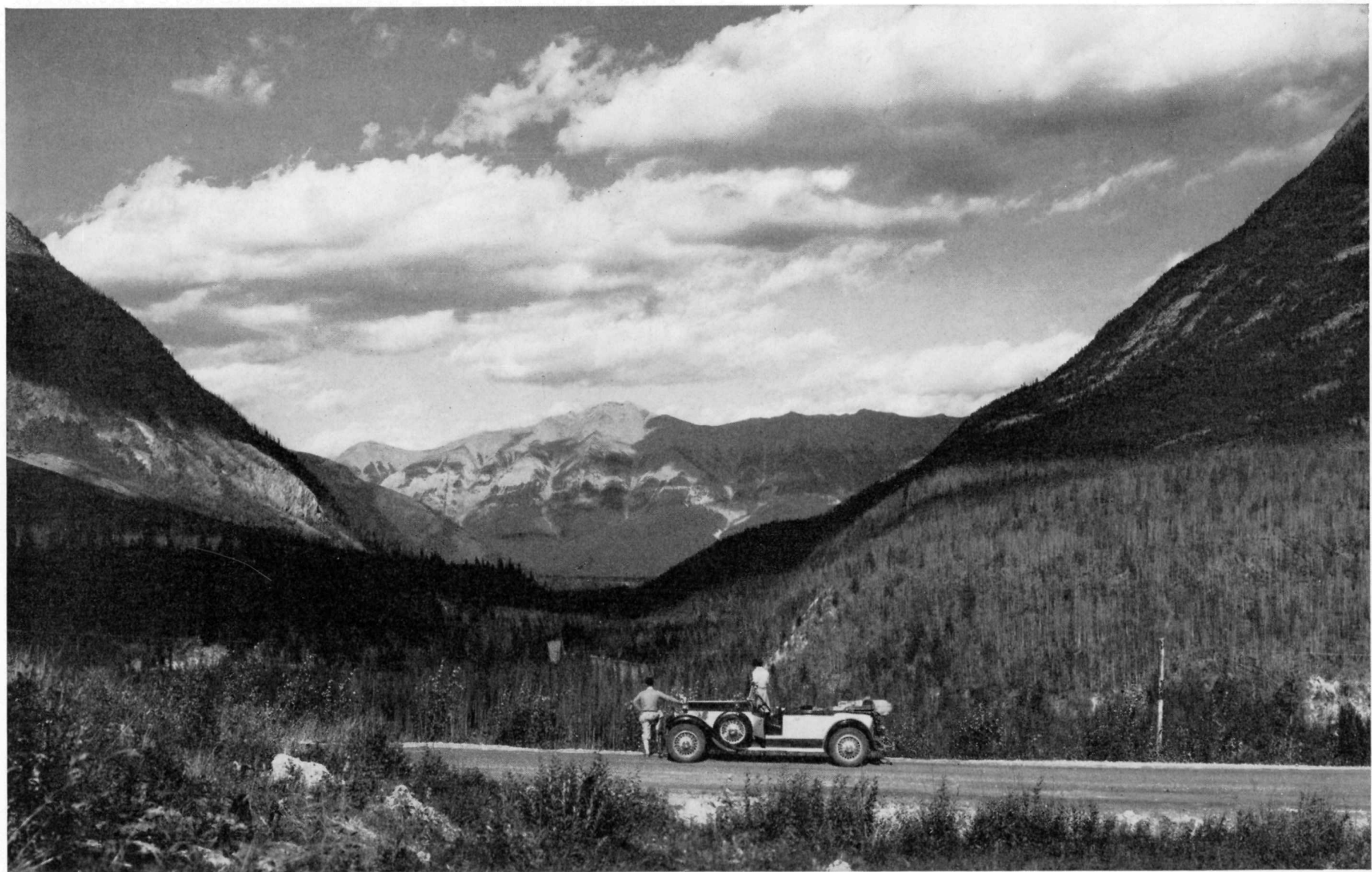


Maligne Lake from the Narrows. Maligne is one of the largest and most beautiful glacial-fed bodies of water in the Canadian Rockies. Jasper National Park, Alberta.

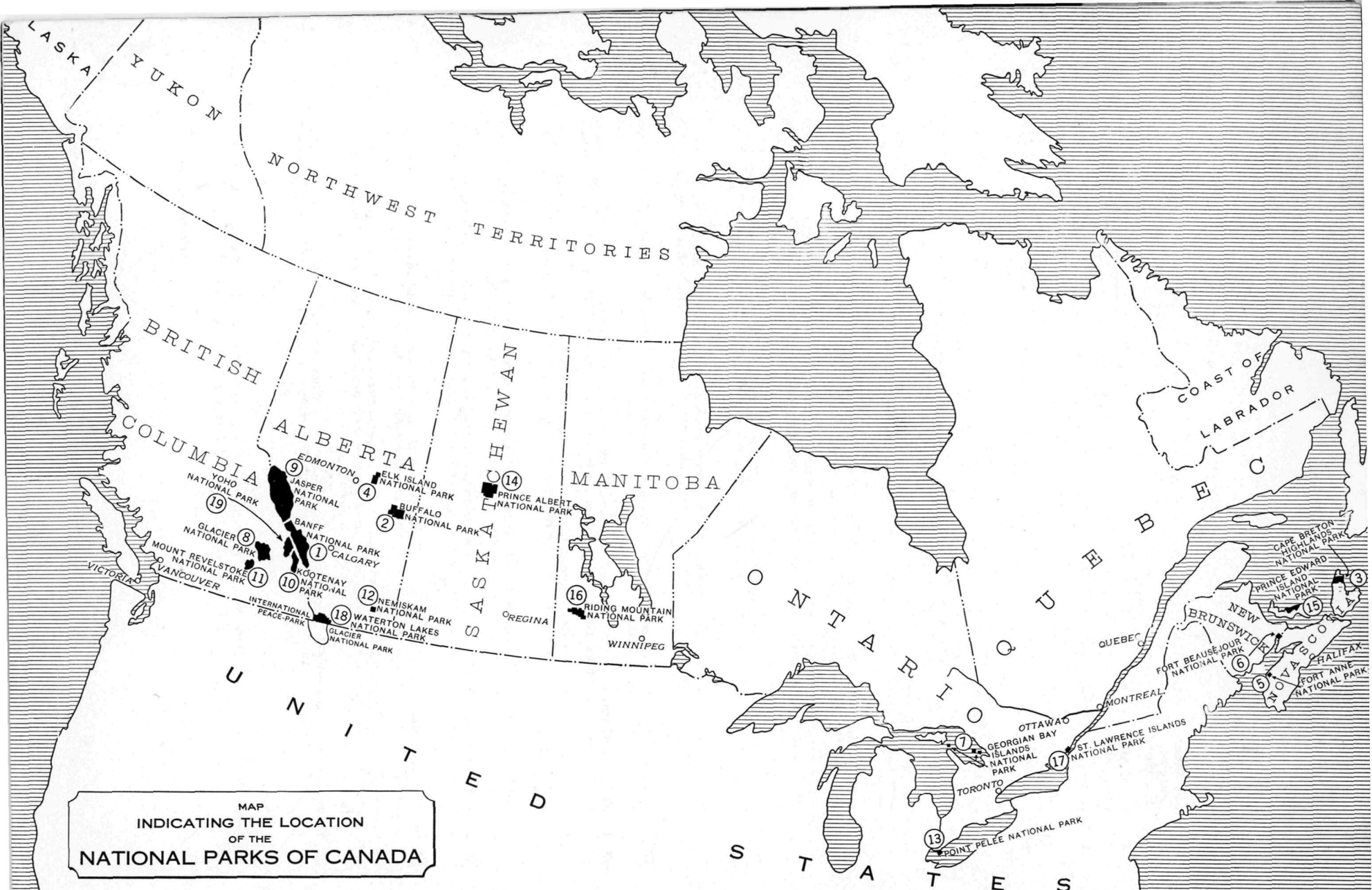


Looking south down Upper Waterton Lake to Mount Cleveland situated across the International Boundary. Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta.





Hawk Range from the Banff-Windermere Highway. Kootenay National Park, British Columbia.



MAP  
INDICATING THE LOCATION  
OF THE  
NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA

# THE NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA

(Nineteen in number, with a total area of 12,403 square miles)

1. **Banff, Alberta.**—Mountain playground, typical example of Central Rockies. Massive ranges, ice-fields and glaciers. Contains famous resorts, Banff and Lake Louise. Winter sports centre. Big game sanctuary. Established 1885; area, 2,585 square miles.
2. **Buffalo, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure near Wainwright. Home of national buffalo herd numbering 3,000 head; also moose, deer, wapiti, yak and hybrids. Established 1908; area, 197.5 square miles.
3. **Cape Breton Highlands, Nova Scotia.**—Typical example of rugged coast-line of Cape Breton Island with mountain background. Remarkable seascapes visible from motor road. Established 1936; area, approximately 390 square miles.
4. **Elk Island, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure containing 1,000 buffalo, also moose, deer and wapiti. Recreational area. Established 1911; area, 51.2 square miles.
5. **Fort Anne, Nova Scotia.**—National Historic Park at Annapolis Royal. Site of early Acadian settlement of Port Royal. Historical Museum. Established 1917; area, 31 acres.
6. **Fort Beauséjour, New Brunswick.**—National Historic Park near Sackville. Site of French fort erected prior to 1755. Historical Museum. Established 1926; area, 59 acres.
7. **Georgian Bay Islands, Ontario.**—Thirty islands in Georgian Bay, including Beausoleil. Recreational area. Unique limestone formations and caves on Flowerpot Island. Established 1929; area, 5.37 square miles.
8. **Glacier, British Columbia.**—Superb example of Selkirk Mountain region. Snowcapped peaks, glaciers, luxuriant forests, alpine flora, and subterranean caves. Established 1886; area, 521 square miles.
9. **Jasper, Alberta.**—Immense mountain wilderness of majestic peaks, broad valleys and beautiful coloured lakes on eastern slope of Rockies. Big game sanctuary and alpine playground. Established 1907; area, 4,200 square miles.
10. **Kootenay, British Columbia.**—Mountain park enclosing Vermilion-Sinclair section of Banff-Windermere Highway. Deep canyons, remarkable valleys, hot mineral springs. Established 1920; area, 587 square miles.
11. **Mount Revelstoke, British Columbia.**—Alpine plateau formed by summit of Mt. Revelstoke on western slope of Selkirk Mountains. Reached by spectacular motor highway. Established 1914; area, 100 square miles.
12. **Nemiskam, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure containing more than 300 pronghorned antelope. Established 1922; area, 8.5 square miles.
13. **Point Pelee, Ontario.**—Most southerly mainland point in Canada. Recreational area with remarkable beaches and unique flora. Resting place for migratory birds. Established 1918; area, 6.04 square miles.
14. **Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.**—Forested lakeland of northwestern Canada. Remarkable water highway system. Interesting fauna. Summer resort and recreational area. Established 1927; area, 1,869 square miles.
15. **Prince Edward Island.**—Coast-line strip twenty-five miles in length on north shore of Prince Edward Island. Recreational area with fine beaches. Established 1937; area, approximately 7 square miles.
16. **Riding Mountain, Manitoba.**—Rolling woodland, with crystal lakes, on summit of Manitoba escarpment. Big game sanctuary. Summer resort and recreational area. Established 1929; area, 1,148 square miles.
17. **St. Lawrence Islands, Ontario.**—Mainland reservation and thirteen islands among the "Thousand Islands" of St. Lawrence River. Recreational areas. Established 1914; area, 185.6 acres.
18. **Waterton Lakes, Alberta.**—Canadian section, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Mountain playground of unusual charm on east slope of Rockies. Fine motor drives and trails. Varied flora and fauna. Established 1895; area, 220 square miles.
19. **Yoho, British Columbia.**—Rugged scenery on west slope of Rockies. Famed Yoho Valley with numerous waterfalls. Kicking Horse Valley. Emerald and O'Hara Lakes. Established 1886; area, 507 square miles.

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*Additional information concerning the National Parks of Canada may be obtained from the National Parks Bureau, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, Canada.*

*(Printed in Canada)*

