

## NATIONAL PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES

*The fourth of a series of radio talks given by the Honourable T. A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources, over the national network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, at 10.30 E.S.T., Monday evening, February 20, 1939.*

In my previous talks I have discussed our resources of mines and forests. Tonight I should like to tell you of our national parks, another of our natural resources, equally important, although perhaps in a less tangible sense.

The setting aside of special areas to be preserved as national parks is one of the comparatively recent developments in conservation. Comparatively recent because it was little more than 50 years ago that Canada set aside a mountain area surrounding hot springs at Banff, which subsequently became our first national park. The movement then begun has continued, until now we have nineteen national parks, located in eight provinces. These parks embrace a variety of scenery and recreational features as outstanding as may be found anywhere in the world.

One of the primary objectives of the national parks is to preserve certain areas in their natural conditions in so far as this is possible. This includes the preservation not only of forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, and other physical features, but of the native wild animal and bird life.

Canada was very fortunate in adopting a national parks policy early in the development of the western provinces. At that time the lands were still vested in the Federal Government, and the encroachment of settlement did not present any great problem. This explains why most of our national parks are located in Western Canada. Extension of the parks system in the eastern provinces has been confronted with difficulties arising from prior settlement, and the fact that the lands were not under the control of the Federal Government. Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made. There are now three national parks in Ontario, and recently the system has been extended to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Thus our chain of national parks now reaches from British Columbia to Nova Scotia. There are very few Canadians who cannot reach a national park in a day's drive with a motor car.

As I have said the national parks had their birth little more than 50 years ago at Banff, in what is now the Province of Alberta. The first reservation consisted of only 10 square miles, but it was subsequently extended, and Banff National Park today is considerably larger than the Province of Prince Edward Island. Immediately across the Great Divide, west of Banff, is Yoho National Park. "Yoho" is an Indian exclamation of wonder and delight, and the scenery well justifies the name. Among its beauty spots are Emerald Lake and Lake O'Hara, worthy rivals of the world-famous Lake Louise in Banff Park.

South of Yoho is Kootenay National Park, established to preserve the landscape on both sides of a section of the Banff-Windermere highway, the first motor road to be built across the central Rockies. This park contains the famous Radium Hot Springs. In the Selkirks, to the westward, are Glacier and Mount Revelstoke National Parks, the former of which



as yet can be reached only by railway. In the southwest corner of Alberta is Waterton Lakes National Park, one of the smallest but none the less beautiful of the national parks in the Rockies. It immediately adjoins Glacier National Park in the United States, and the two have been dedicated as an International Peace Park to commemorate the happy relationship that exists between our two countries.

To the north and adjoining Banff is Jasper, largest of all our national parks. In addition to its mountain scenery, Jasper is rich in historic associations. Through its valleys more than a century ago journeyed the fur-traders, missionaries, and explorers, who followed the Athabaska Trail on their way to the Pacific Coast. Jasper also has its hot springs, at Miette—among the hottest on the continent. By way of contrast, the park contains the largest glacier-fed bodies of water in the Canadian Rockies.

Eastward from the mountain parks lie others, possessing a different, but not less attractive, kind of beauty. Almost in the geographical centre of Saskatchewan is a region of rocks, woods, and waters, still rich with the memory of fur-trader and trapper, which has been set aside as Prince Albert National Park. It is a lace-work of lakes, rivers, and streams threading into an unspoiled wilderness. Southeasterly, in Manitoba, is Riding Mountain National Park, a well-timbered area with an altitude of more than 2,000 feet, easily accessible by rail and road and ranking as one of Canada's most important vacation centres. One of its chief attractions is Clear Lake, a beautiful body of water about 9 miles long. Its sandy, forest-sheltered beaches have become very popular with residents of the Prairie Provinces and the adjoining states to the south.

All national parks are game sanctuaries, where wild life is jealously protected, and where animals and birds are allowed to live in natural conditions free from the fear of man. A number of parks have been set aside especially for this purpose. Important among these is Buffalo Park, at Wainwright, Alberta, which has played a great part in preserving the buffalo from extinction. This park—a fenced area of nearly 200 square miles—now contains some three thousand buffalo, as well as substantial numbers of moose, deer, and elk. As a result of the success of this conservation measure, buffalo robes and buffalo coats are again articles of commerce within the reach of even the modest purse. Elk Island National Park, in Alberta, contains approximately one thousand buffalo, as well as herds of moose, deer, and elk. Originally established as an animal sanctuary, Elk Island National Park, because of its attractive water areas and landscapes, has in recent years become popular as one of our national tourist resorts. Another animal park has been established at Nemiskam, Alberta, principally to save a herd of prong-horned antelope from destruction.

There are three national parks in Ontario. The most westerly comprises a group of thirty islands in the famed Georgian Bay region. South, on Lake Erie, is Point Pelee Park. Triangular in shape it extends into the lake for several miles and forms the most southerly extension of the Dominion. Because of its location it is also one of the outstanding bird sanctuaries in the Dominion. The third park is in the Thousand Islands region, where a number of islands have been reserved for public use. Although comparatively small in area these parks are of great value in providing vacation and camping grounds within easy distance of large centres of populations.



The new national park in Prince Edward Island extends for 25 miles along the northern shore of the island. It embraces an expanse of sea-coast and sand dunes backed by forested and agricultural areas of much pastoral charm. It is interesting to note that the water along this coast has a notably higher temperature in summer than at Atlantic beaches hundreds of miles farther south. These conditions combine to give promise that this park will become one of the important summer watering-places of the continent.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park is situated in one of the most picturesque sections of Nova Scotia. Its attractive sea beaches and rugged coast-line, with high bluffs and valleys opening to the sea, provide some of the finest scenery on the Atlantic Coast. Historically, this area is the oldest part of Canada, as it was in Cape Breton that John Cabot first touched Canadian soil, in 1497. Nearly 400 square miles in extent, the park has been scarcely touched by the hand of man except for the fishing villages, which lend an especial charm to its coast. Almost encircled by the famed Cabot Trail, it is in many ways one of the most attractive of your national park properties.

I have used the words "your national park properties" as I would like to impress upon you that the national parks belong to *you*. They are *your* property, held in trust and administered for you by the Federal Government. Not only are they yours, but they are to be preserved for the benefit of your children and all the generations that come after them. Naturally, the parks occupy a foremost place among the tourist attractions of the country, and are of great economic value in relation to the travel industry. Yet, after all, that is only incidental to their real purpose, which is to preserve for all time different areas of the country fresh as they came from the hand of the Creator, and unspoiled by commercialism. Most of the parks are provided with good motor roads, but the real appeal of the parks is not to those who would view them from an automobile. The wilderness has for many people an irresistible appeal, unequalled by any other attraction. It is here the national parks stand supreme. In their endless variety they offer something to everyone—whether it be the fragrance of forests, the mystery of unbeaten paths, the friendship of living wild creatures, the silence of great spaces, or the measured beat of the sea.

There are, however, other elements in the national fabric that are not physical, but which must be conserved if our national spirit is to have the strength and vigour that come only from being deep-rooted in the achievements of the past. We as a people have every reason to be proud of our history. To a young nation that is absorbing a large population unaware of the history and outlook of their adopted country, the value of an occasional backward glance can hardly be over-estimated. We all realize the value of the memories of a well-ordered home in maintaining moral and ethical standards. What is true of the individual is equally true of nations. It is essential then, that the deeds of valour with which our history abounds, and the more peaceful extension of civilization and Christianity into new frontiers, be passed on to future generations. Canada has, through its National Parks Bureau, advised by an honorary body of historians, undertaken the task of marking and preserving sites of historic importance throughout the Dominion.

Most of the historic sites are in the older provinces. The claims of more than a thousand sites have been considered by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board since its inception. Of these, more than three hundred



have been judged to be of sufficient national importance to warrant their being suitably marked and maintained. In outstanding instances, such as Fort Anne, in Nova Scotia, and Fort Beausejour, in New Brunswick, the sites have been given the status of national parks.

The Province of Quebec, having been in many respects the cradle of Canada, naturally takes a prominent place in the historic records of the country. Some seventy sites in that province have been marked with commemorative memorials. Outstanding among these may be mentioned the spot in Gaspé near where Jacques Cartier landed in 1534; the monument and tablet to Madeleine de Vercheres, the 14-year old girl, who in 1692 took command of a post and defended it successfully for 8 days against a war-party of Iroquois; and Fort Chambly, originally built in 1665, and rebuilt in 1709, upon which considerable restoration work has been carried out.

The sites now marked and preserved dot the Dominion from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and northward as far as Hudson Bay. At some of our historic sites, museums have been established which are of much interest to visitors and of great value to historians.

In her national parks and historic sites Canada has a rich heritage of beauty and tradition. They are inseparably bound up with our spiritual, educational, and recreational life—spiritual, because they embrace areas that are in reality nature's cathedrals; educational, because of the unlimited opportunities to study the rocks, flowers, birds, and other wild life; and recreational, because in them all forms of outdoor recreation may be had under ideal conditions.

In the stress of our modern civilization the need for outdoor recreation is steadily increasing. Our forefathers busy at work carving a home out of the shadows of the deep forest had little leisure time. But as rich fields followed deep forests and industry prospered, small towns grew into great cities. Modern life, with its attendant complexities, has caused frayed nerves. We are not as yet keyed to this modern pace. From time to time it is necessary for us to get back to nature and replenish our physical and mental energies.

Quite apart from their commercial value in stimulating tourist travel, the national parks are, therefore, playing an important part in building up a healthy and virile nation. Because of this dual character they must be regarded as among the greatest of our natural assets.

OTTAWA, February 20, 1939.