



CAMERON

FALLS

IN

WATERTON

LAKES

PARK

## THE NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA AS NATIONAL WILD LIFE SANCTUARIES

By Paul B. Riis

### History of Park Idea

A column of steam rising from a hot spring bubbling from the side of Sulphur Mountain, attracted the attention of a party of surveyors, who, on further inspection found other springs and a region quite unusual among the surpassing scenery of the Canadian Rockies. Indians before them knew of these springs and their curative properties, but they were still unknown to white men in 1860, when the Palliser expedition reported their existence. In 1880 another party of engineers, running lines for a right-of-way for the Canadian Pacific Railway through the same

mountain range, made further report of them. The springs naturally became the object of speculation and commercialism, and several claims were filed with the government, thereon, for the purpose of establishing health resorts.

The Dominion of Canada found itself confronted with a bad situation, since claimants were trying to enforce their rights of discovery at the point of guns. The government, right then and there, wisely decided to retire the springs and surrounding lands in public ownership and set the entire area aside as a national park, which has ever since been known as Banff National Park. This took place in 1885, fifty years ago. When the railway had been completed in 1887, a group of parliamentarians visited the springs. Their enthusiasm, after



viewing the unusual phenomenae and surrounding superlative scenery, was instrumental in introducing the first National Park Act in the House, where it met with little opposition, although there were those who felt that the setting aside of such an area for that purpose at that period somewhat far-fetched.

The first Minister, Sir John Macdonald, wisely expressed himself thus: "I do not suppose in any portion of the world there can be found a spot, taken altogether, which contains so many attractions and promises in as great a degree, of not only large pecuniary advantages to the Dominion, but much prestige to the whole country by attracting the population, not only on this continent but of Europe, to this place. There is beautiful scenery, there are the curative properties of the water, there is a genial climate, there is prairie sport and there is mountain sport; and I have no doubt that it will become a great watering place."

When the act became law, a policy was placed upon the records that made the choicest native landscapes of Canada resorts of recreation and health and inviolate reserves for the conservation of wild life; also to preserve, thereon, all natural resources of forest, field and stream and of water power. Banff National Park at the time was enlarged to 260 square miles, that the public might have full access to all of that matchless region. More land was added in 1902, until it contained 5,000 square miles, which, however, under the Forest Reserve Act of 1911, was reduced to 1,800 square miles; and again, later on, to complete the area as a game unit, it was enlarged to its present size of 2,585 square miles. Other areas around Lake Louise, the Selkirks and the Yoho district, were also retired in public ownership as national parks.

From time to time other choice sites were set aside, Jasper in the northern Canadian Rockies of Alberta; Waterton Lakes Park in southern Alberta, adjoining Glacier Park of the United States; Prince Albert Park with its unsurpassed lakes and rivers in northern Saskatchewan; Kootenay, a forested wilderness in the Selkirks; Mount Revelstoke in British Columbia; Riding Mountain in Manitoba; the Georgian Bay Island Park in Ontario and several animal preserves, bird sanctuaries and historic sites. Today, there are over 12,000 square miles of national parks in Canada, contained in eighteen units ranging in size from 4,200 square miles (Jasper) to 180 acres in the St. Lawrence Island Park.

### Regional Characteristics

The Dominion of Canada, inclusive of the Northwest Territory, has a combined land and water area of 3,684,723 square miles, which is approximately 3% greater than the area of continental United States and Alaska. Its present population is about ten million souls, less than one-twelfth of the population of the United States. Its lands are divisible into four general regions of distinct physiographic character:

1. The Appalachian region of the extreme southeast corner of the Dominion;
2. The Laurentian Plateau or Peneplain lowlands situated in the remainder of the eastern half;
3. The central plain;
4. The mountain region of the west.

The Appalachians of the northern extremity are parallel ranges of mountains pushed up from the southeast against the archæan or Laurentian area, whose plateau covers about one-



half of Canada. In geological language it constitutes the nucleus of the continent. The Peneplain (near-base level) consists of a much weathered surface of hard, crystalline rocks, much altered in its original outlines by glacial action. Attaining no great height, the surface is but lightly covered with fertile soil, a good forest land and productive of the many fine native conifers. The area is dotted with innumerable lakes and furrowed by many streams.

The central plain, too, is most extensive, reaching from the Arctic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, of which but the northern portion lies within Canada. Substantially, the elevated bed of a carboniferous sea, this plain reaches a width of 800 miles at the International boundary and gradually narrows down northwards because of the westerly vanguard of the Laurentian Plateau. It becomes still more broken up by the out-runners and mass of the Rocky Mountains. Within it are three steppes, situated at three different elevations.

The fourth region, the mountain belt, also is of great size. It has its beginning in South America at the Tierra del Fuego, and ends at the most western point in Alaska. In the Dominion of Canada, the Cordilleran region reaches a breadth of about four-hundred miles and its greatest elevation is found in the Rocky Mountains of the southern part.

This wide diversification of land naturally produces a varied and interesting plant life, able to support great numbers of fauna. Notwithstanding its wealth of lakes and rivers and trackless forests, Canada has felt the need of protecting its transcending native landscapes and, with it, the native flora and fauna. One cannot help but commend the remarkable fore-

sight of our northern neighbors, who at the time, had little cause for worry for many years to come, over population density and its attending impact upon natural resources. Largely descendants from a country whose cultures are deeply rooted in modern history, Canadians are born statesmen with a very clear working knowledge of good husbandry. Apparently the experiences of their erstwhile homeland has made a profound impression upon their minds, that when opportunities offered in a virgin land, inexhaustible of natural resources as it may have seemed, they definitely and consistently, and at once, set themselves against repeating the mistakes of their forebears. Especially enlightening is their comprehensive approach for the protection of its wild life. Because of their unqualified thoroughness, wild life is increasing in its national parks. It is true that some of their big game animals at large have been depleted through the unavoidable inroads upon their natural range by agriculture, but timely steps have been taken in many instances to prevent annihilation of several species. The significance of this policy towards wild life futures is assuring, since it brings into active play and use immense areas of varied habitat, suitable for every type and form of North America's fauna.

#### National Parks as Builders of Good Citizenship

A painstaking completeness permeates the policies of the Canadian National Parks, revealing an unusually wide scope of public service. One may readily note the sound intelligence of the government, officially detailing to park administrators definite and important national functions. Then, too, there is the proverbial official courtesy, firm but gracious, entertaining the



tourist as a guest of honor, extending to him, directly, the hospitality of a great nation.

Canada's approach to its park problems also is comprehensively direct, resting upon solid fundamentals, not only dealing with the parks themselves, but embracing all interlocking interests without. They have an uncanny way of balancing cause against effect, as control factors. Outwardly, they seek to protect their scenic gems, that as an attraction they may continue to draw others to their shores. Spiritually, the finely sculptured mountains, placid glaciers, silvered lakes and flowered valleys are integral parts of an inspirational background, an opportunity in the moulding of character and the building of citizenship. The vast massive mountains are symbols of unbounded strength of the nation, the beauty of the country a stimulator, reflected in a happy people, morally clean, physically strong and mentally wholesome. Through its parks, Canada seeks to enrich the lives of its people, to translate their beauty and appeal into higher endowments to the end that it may depend more upon the fine qualities of her men and women than upon the richness and abundance of her natural resources.

Canada's National Parks, in proportion to her population, exceed those of any other country in the world. The sites chosen and to be chosen are diverse, regional in character and of its most outstanding type. Smaller areas, too, perpetuating her history or memorable events in the life of the nation, are set aside, as records of national growth. Appealing to the tourists from other lands to increase its own natural prosperity, Canada has made its parks more accessible with roads and trails, camp sites, shelters and the many other accommodations.

Thus, virgin territories have been opened up where each, according to his own mood, may contemplate its scenic beauty or choose his type of recreation, joining the two for his physical and spiritual refreshment. There is golf, motoring, bathing, mountain climbing, camping, trail riding, exploring, fishing in tumbling mountain streams and crystalline lakes; the invigorating breath and fragrance and deep mystery of conifer forests; the delightful serenity of secret valleys, entities and worlds apart; the wildly beautiful grandeur of the pristine wilderness, alive with the native forms of wild life and the pleasurable sense and exaltation of spirit that seems its spiritual complementary. Indescribably rich in physiographic expression, of an unequalled, wild and native beauty, the national parks reflect the sterling qualities, the national spirit of Canada.

#### Administration

The National Parks Branch, Department of the Interior, Dominion of Canada, has broad powers. The special Act of Parliament, known as the National Park Act, places the administrative control under the Commissioner of National Parks. It also separates all parks from under the operation of any other Act. Hence, its regulations are drawn specifically to coordinate every undertaking within the parks and provide its own enforcement group.

National Parks can be reserved only by Act of Parliament. The present policy is not to establish National Parks, unless the Province concerned is prepared to provide a clear title to the area. In general, the standard followed in determining the quality of an area for park establishment is that embracing outstanding scenery, or that peculiarly typical of a Province, and



possessing recreational and faunal characteristics.

All services are operated by the National Park Service. Land in the established townsites may be leased for a definite period of years, and outside townsite licenses may be granted only for the purposes of entertainment of persons visiting the parks. Revenue is derived from the sale of transient and resident motor licenses, camping permits, the furnishing of public utilities, such as electric light, telephones, water, etc., and from licenses paid by the public engaged in commercial enterprise.

The present magnificent National Parks System is the result of consistent growth under its policies. It had a small but promising beginning and was operated first as a side issue with other governmental services; first under the general direction of the Law Clerk of the Department of the Interior, and later under the Forest Service. Prior to 1911, when the parks were reserved by an act of Parliament, a field officer bore the title of commissioner of parks, which was abolished, and in its place the title of chief superintendent was used, the title of commissioner being transferred to the head of the new Service at Ottawa. This office, ever since 1911, has been continuously and with great credit held by the present incumbent, Commissioner J. B. Harkin, an outstanding and honored authority on all matters pertaining to his office. He has been in the enviable position to follow through on his policies and plans, and build up an organization and develop his parks under the severe test of time. The National Parks of Canada are a monument to vision, wisdom and courage.

Associated in his work with Commissioner Harkin are a number of

technical control groups, all specialists in their own profession and lines.

The engineering division has charge of the construction of roads, trails, bridges, water and sewage services, power development, telephone lines, camp sites, recreational grounds, buildings, and public baths.

The landscape and architectural divisions cooperate very closely. Coordination of effort is assured through both services operating under the control of the commissioner.

The land and legal division has charge of leases, supervision of buildings, drafting of acts and regulations, direction of criminal procedure, supervision of public health, contracts and privileges.

The forest protection division's functions are educational, experimental and administrative. It drafts protective regulations, organizes warden patrol systems, engages in the construction of trails, cabins, telephone lines, provides up-to-date fire-fighting equipment, supervises timber cutting, thinning of stands, brushing, removal of dead wood and fire hazards, investigates best means of fire fighting by use of wireless phones, telegraphs, airplanes, gas bombs, portable engines, smoke screens, etc. This division is also in charge of directing campaigns to arouse public interest in the proper use and care of fires in the forest, in placing fire warnings on match boxes, tents, axes, cartridges and other articles in common use by campers and park tourists. It also works closely with railroad companies to place notices on time tables, menu cards, folders, in observation cars, engineers' cabs, hotel guest rooms, telephone directories, lounges, clubs and public buildings.

The publicity and education division devotes itself to educate the



public to the value of the National Parks from an esthetic, educational and recreational standpoint with a view of encouraging tourists through means of the radio, pamphlets, reports, magazines, newspaper articles, lectures, loan of slides, moving pictures, prepared lectures, enlarged photos and half-tone cuts.

The historic site division, while still in its earlier stages, seeks to preserve such sites as are valuable from a national standpoint, or are of historic values and pre-historic interest, or which memorialize first events in national development, birth of Canadian industries, first landings, first railways, routes of exploration, and other outstanding achievements. An advisory historic board, composed of eminent Canadian historians, guide the destinies of this division and serve without remuneration.

#### Wild Life Protection Division

All scenic parks are game reserves and absolute wild life sanctuaries, with the one exception of Point Pelee Park, in Ontario, where a restricted amount of game bird shooting is permitted.

The National Parks Branch has been put in charge of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and the responsibility for police work transferred to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, assuring the high efficiency of control, proverbial with that world-famous body of peace officers. The National Parks Service also has charge of the protection of bird sanctuaries and of game in the Northwest Territories and all wild life matters throughout the Dominion, in so far as they are of Federal concern.

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