

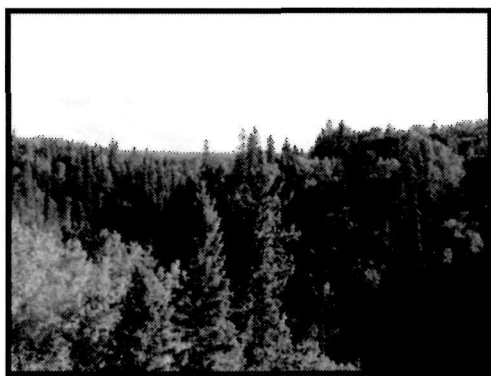


# OVERVIEW

## RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

*"The Parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment...and shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of the future generations." National Parks Act, 1930.*

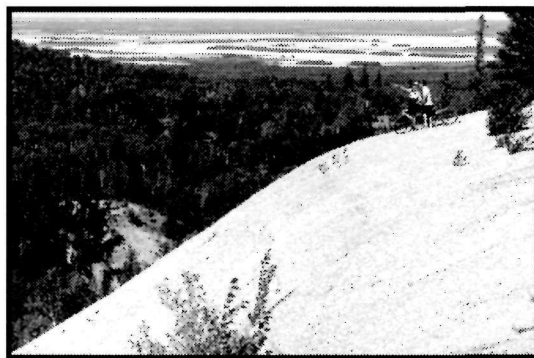
A proposal that a national park be established in eastern Manitoba was under consideration as early as 1919. The area near Whiteshell River was proposed but the implementation lay dormant for several years. In 1927, Dr. E.D.R Bissett, Member of Parliament for Springfield, had received written assurance from the National Park Service that a recommendation to create a park in eastern Manitoba would commence. Not everyone favoured the prospect of a National Park in the Whiteshell area. City, town councils and rural municipalities were urging the establishment of a national park. Those who had supported the Whiteshell River site now supported the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve. The Forest Reserve was more accessible in the highway system, more centrally located and had one of the largest elk herds in Canada. Therefore, it was preferred over the Whiteshell area.



After many months of deliberation and input from the public, it was decided that both the Whiteshell River site in Eastern Manitoba and the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve in Western Manitoba would become national parks. The Manitoba government advised that there would only be one national park in Manitoba. An assessment was

done on both areas and it was decided that the Riding Mountain site was favoured over the Whiteshell area. It was recommended that a summer recreation area be created taking in an area of 180 kms surrounding Clear Lake. Again towns and municipalities rejected this proposal and recommended that entire Riding Mountain Forest Reserve become the national park. It was looked at as being: "an island of wilderness surrounded by a sea of farmland." In 1929, the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve was set aside as a national park and on July 26, 1933, Riding Mountain National Park was officially opened.

To the Native people, the forests, prairies, and lakes of Riding Mountain were favourite hunting and fishing ground. Two hundred years ago, the Cree were in possession of the highlands while their allies, the Assiniboines, roamed the prairies in pursuit of the bison. These people followed the retreat of the bison herds to the west and were replaced by the Ojibway, who still live in the area today.



**Aussi disponible en Français.**



Between 1731 and 1749 Pierre de la Verendrye and his sons explored and traded on the plains around Riding Mountain. A post was established on Lake Dauphin in 1741 and soon the Hudson's Bay Company followed suit. By 1800's, the mountain was surrounded by posts and a rich harvest of furs flowed outward to distant European countries. Resulting from 150 years of exploitation, the populations of fur bearers were greatly reduced. Species such as the otter, marten, fisher and wolverine disappeared completely.



Since riding was the easiest means of exploring the rugged highland in search of furs and game, the original name of Fort Dauphin Hill was changed to Riding Mountain, which is still used today. Among the first settlers were Robert Campbell and his son Glen Lyon, who cleared the Strathclair Trail.

After Canadian Pacific Rail reached Brandon in 1881, settlers from Eastern Canada, Europe and the U.S.A. established themselves on the plains around Riding Mountain. These settlements used the highland as a source of timber for building, railroads, firewood, and wild meat to supplement their food supply. The need for conservation of our natural resources was recognized in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The highland was withdrawn from settlement and made a forest reserve. At this time, the area was still noted for its hunting.

It was under the forest service that the system of issuing permits to lease land and build cottages was initiated in 1925. Prior to that time, only hunters'

campes existed for short periods on the shore of Clear Lake. A hunting camp existed near what is now referred to as Deep Bay (formerly known as Seaplane Bay and previous to that Montague Bay, named after a doctor from Minnedosa). After 1912, George Clark and his wife from Newdale camped on the shores of Clear Lake and for years this area was officially known as Clark's Beach. Some of the first campers to the area were the Gusdal, Lee and Hanson families of Erickson.



On May 30, 1930, the Forest Reserve became Riding Mountain National Park and at the official dedication on July 26, 1933, a bronze plaque on the cairn on the main beach was erected to commemorate the event. It reads:

"This Tablet commemorates the official opening of Riding Mountain National Park, an area dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education, and enjoyment."