

National Historic Parks news

New National Historic Park

The home of William R. Motherwell (1860-1943), founder of the first effective co-operative in Western Canada, the Territorial Grain Growers Association, has been acquired by the federal government for a national historic site. The National Historic Sites Service will work with the Federal Department of Agriculture and the Province of Saskatchewan to prepare the eight-acre homestead as a tribute to Motherwell's contribution to Canadian agriculture. The home is located near Abernethy, about 75 miles east of Regina.

The difficult task of relating in a nine-room house the story of a man who retired at 80 after three careers is expected to be completed by 1971, when it will be opened as a national historic park. A frame and stone building on the property, used by Motherwell as a barn, will house the agricultural exhibits.

W. R. Motherwell spent almost sixty years reasoning, persuading, and fighting, with considerable success, in the interest of the Canadian farmer. In the final phase of his lifelong crusade, as Minister of Agriculture in the Mackenzie King Government, 1921 to 1930, he introduced reforms which have had long-lasting effects on Canadian agriculture. The standardization and grading of agricultural products in co-operation with provincial authorities so they would be able to compete favourably on world markets, and offer the home consumer a degree of protection until then unknown, a research program which developed several varieties of rust-resistant wheat, and the establishment of restricted areas from which tubercular cattle were eliminated were all instituted during the time he was a member of the Cabinet.

Prior to becoming federal Minister of Agriculture, Motherwell had established a reputation for agricultural innovation and reform, first in his home district of Abernethy, and then as the Minister of Agriculture in the government of the new Province of Saskatchewan, created in 1905. He applied effectively the techniques of scientific agriculture learned as one of the first graduates of the Ontario College of Agriculture, Guelph.

In the provincial post which he held for 14 years, he instituted a program to instruct farmers in good farming practices and set up a municipal-provincial hail insurance plan. Another of his achievements was the establishment of co-operative associations which combined local ownership of farming equip-

ment and facilities with government participation in the processing and sale of produce. It was, however, his first occupation, that of a prairie farmer, which laid the ground work for the influence he was to have later in the province and throughout the country.

Motherwell was raised on a farm near Perth, Ontario. He was 22 years old when he arrived in the Abernethy district in 1882. For the next twenty years he experimented with different types of grain, and made many suggestions to his neighbours for the improvement of quality and quantity of their crops. He left fields fallow in the summer to keep moisture in the soil. To ensure against total financial loss in case of drought, he raised livestock purchased in the east, and never ceased to urge prairie farmers to diversify their farming operations.

Around the turn of the century, most farmers in the Abernethy area were settled and producing more crops than the transportation system could handle. Loading platforms were insufficient at the railroad shipping point in Indian Head, about 25 miles from Abernethy. Railroad agents did not always distribute cars on a first-come, first-served basis. Elevator companies often downgraded the product and deprived the farmer of a just price.

Late in 1901, W. R. Motherwell and his neighbour, Peter Dayman, who had for some time been concerned with improving shipping conditions, decided that they would call a meeting of farmers to discuss what action could be taken. They sent letters inviting farmers to a meeting in Indian Head, on December 18, 1901. Since the Premiers of Manitoba and the North West Territories were meeting in the town on the same day, Dayman and Motherwell knew there would be more farmers in Indian Head than usual. Seventy-five angry homesteaders came to the gathering, some of them threatening to take up arms against the railroad companies if conditions did not improve. Motherwell convinced them that constructive, concerted action would be more useful and suggested that as an association, or co-operative, they would have more influence. The farmers voted to create the Territorial Grain Growers Association and at its first meeting in February of the next year elected W. R. Motherwell as President.

The Association became the first farmers' co-operative to act successfully on behalf of its members. In 1902 there was a bumper crop

and, as a result, a shortage of freight cars. The 1902 amendments to the Manitoba Grain Act laid out specifications for railroad agents who kept the books for the shipments of grain. The CPR agent at Sintaluta (a few miles south of Indian Head) was not, according to the farmers, distributing railroad cars in the order they were applied for and was therefore contravening the Act. The Association asked the farmers to swear out affidavits and in the ensuing court case, the Association versus the Agent, the agent was found guilty and fined. The success of the Association in combatting the monopoly of the C.P.R. was encouraging, and farmers in other provinces began to organize themselves. The Manitoba Grain Growers Association was formed in 1903 and the United Farmers of Alberta in 1905.

In 1905, when the Province was created, the Territorial Grain Growers Association became the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association and the latter eventually became the powerful organization of today, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

W. R. Motherwell retired from the House of Commons in 1940 and remarked at a picnic in his honour, "When a man drops out at 80, one can not say he is a quitter". The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended in May 1966 that he be declared an eminent Canadian for his energetic life-long service to Canadian agriculture. The Board also designated his homestead as a national historic site, because of its association with the man, but also because it is one of the few remaining examples of a cut-stone prairie homestead in Canada.



Teal Blue Look For National Historic Parks' Guides

This summer about one hundred guides in Canada's National Historic Parks will be wearing smart new uniforms of contemporary styling.

The guides, all university students, will shed their khaki clothing for teal blue uniforms of terylene and wool.

The women's costume is a simple, sleeveless, A-line dress, topped with a semi-fitted, hip-length jacket, and matching buttons. The men will wear blue, single-breasted, three-button, single-vent jackets with notched collar. Grey flannels will complete the uniform.

The guides work from May to the end of August. They are responsible for informing visitors about the theme of a particular site, for assisting the Superintendents in security, maintenance, and administration of the parks, and for providing first aid, and directions to visitors' services.



National Historic Sites Service Interest in Rideau Waterway

National Historic Sites Service representatives are playing an advisory role on the Canada-Ontario Rideau Canal Study Committee.

The Committee, which meets several times a year, held its first meeting in July 1966, to discuss the future of the 123-mile waterway which links Ottawa and Kingston. The study group is chaired by the Department of Transport (which operates the system) and made up of members of the Departments of Public Works, Forestry and Rural Development, and the Ontario Departments of Tourism, and Lands and Forests.

The committee was formed to study alternatives for the development of the Rideau Waterway as a major recreational area. The popularity of the waterway among pleasure boaters has in recent years resulted in traffic jams and a shortage of camping facilities and marinas along the route. In order to speed up the traffic the locks at Newboro and at Black Rapids have been electrified. What steps will be taken to improve facilities along the banks will depend on the study group's conclusions.

The entire Rideau system—47 masonry locks, several dams, blockhouses, lockmasters' residences—was named a national historic site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in October 1967. The Board also recommended that the whole system be made a national historic park. It is a unique historic site in that its locks (except for the two which have been electrified) still operate on the same principles as they did when built early in the 19th century.

The Rideau canal construction was a phenomenal engineering feat in its day. Under the direction of Royal Engineer, Colonel John By, it was built in six years, without access roads to haul heavy materials. Colonel By also had to depend on individual contractors along the way to complete projects in which few of them had ever had any experience. One of the most impressive structures, the dam at Jones Falls, was at the time of its completion in 1830 one of the three largest of its kind in the world.

Constructed between 1826 and 1832 as an alternate military route between Montreal and Kingston in case of an American invasion, it was never used for its original purpose. Ironically, today it connects with water routes of the eastern United States, the Richelieu River, the Hudson and Intercoastal route, and with

the Mississippi. Every summer, hundreds of American boaters peacefully invade Canada to make the scenic trip from Kingston to Ottawa.

The canal helped to open eastern Ontario for settlement and was used to transport building and railroad construction materials until roads made land transport more efficient.

The National Historic Sites Service has prepared an inventory and a documentary history of the Rideau Waterway which it has presented to the study committee. Since 1962, the Department of Transport has consulted the Service about the restoration of existing buildings and about designs for new buildings beside the locks. Recently the Service advised the Transport Department on the restoration of the blockhouses at Narrows and Newboro.

New Exhibit in Coteau-du-Lac National Historic Park, P.Q.

A new exhibit has been installed in this park, the site of a canal and its defence works bypassing a stretch of rapids between Lake St. Louis and Lake St. Francis in the St. Lawrence River. Coteau-du-Lac (28 miles up-river from Montreal) was, from 1780 to 1848, a necessary link between Montreal and Upper Canada for the transportation of goods and supplies.

Archaeologists, who began working during the summer of 1966, uncovered the foundations of three blockhouses, a powder magazine, storage sheds, and canal walls. After the historical features had been recorded, masons stabilized the ruins to prevent erosion.

Ten colourful, illustrated panels tell the story of the canal, which was built during the American Revolution to speed the passage of goods to British-held colonies. Fortifications

were built around the canal during the War of 1812, when Canada's security was once again threatened.

Artifacts found during the excavations, such as Indian bone and stone tools and hunting gear, in addition to material relating to the military and civilian occupation, are on display.

The centre will open in May 1969.

