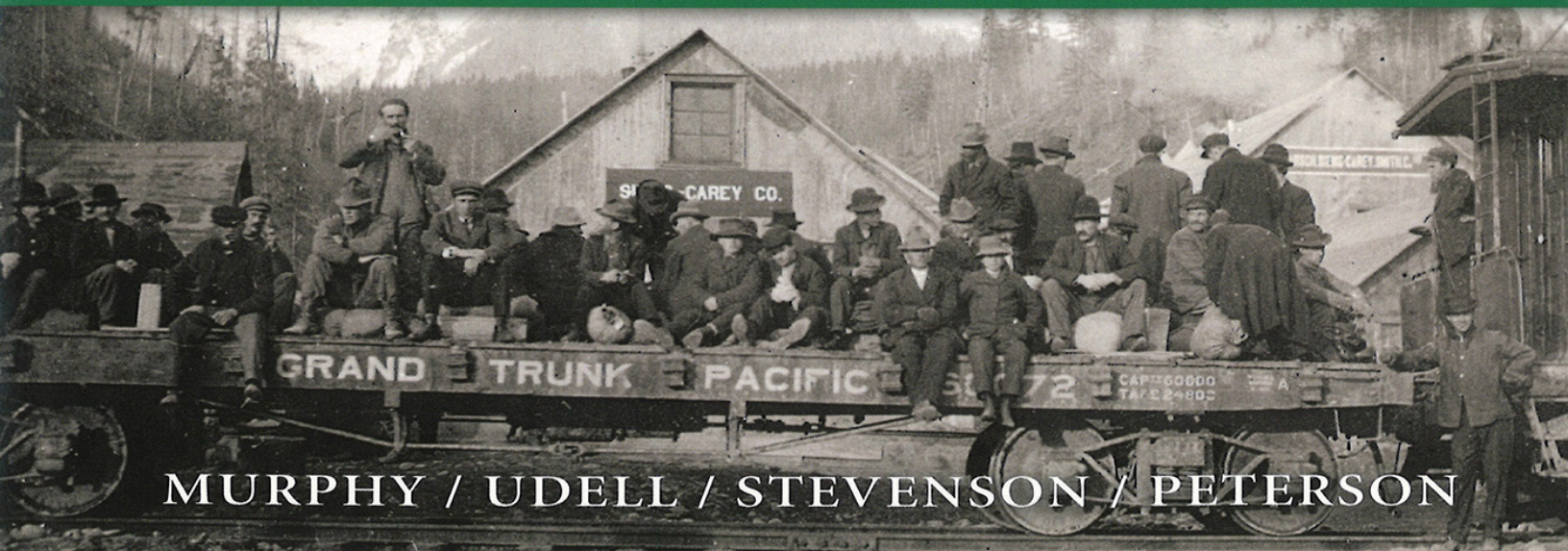




A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL



LAND, FORESTS AND PEOPLE IN THE
UPPER ATHABASCA REGION



MURPHY / UDELL / STEVENSON / PETERSON



BRIAN CARNELL

Witness Trees at Jasper

On the 4th of January 1811, David Thompson and his party of twelve trudged along the frozen Athabasca River past these Douglas-fir trees bringing their “8 Sleds loaded & 3 Horses [loaded] with Provisions, having 208 lbs [94 kilograms] of Pemmican, 35 lbs [16 kilograms] of Grease, 60 lbs [27 kilograms] of Flour & 80 lbs [36 kilograms] of half dried Meat & a heavy Horse Load of fresh Meat.” They were on their way past what voyageurs would later call La Montagne de la Grande Traverse, visible in the background (now Mt. Edith Cavell), swung left up to and along the Whirlpool River, over Athabasca Pass to the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. It was a hard road to travel. At their present age of about 290 years, these old veteran trees would have been almost 100 years of age when Thompson passed by, their thick bark protecting them from the frequent surface fires. They would have been around when the Shuswaps made their earlier visits from across the mountains and when the first Iroquois appeared before Thompson. Then, as they aged, they were there to be seen by the host of travellers with the fur brigades, free traders, explorers, missionaries, guides, outfitters and tourists, railway surveyors, construction gangs and the multitudes that followed when the

railway passed through a century later, and even more now with the paved highways.

**A Hard Road to Travel Land, Forests
and People in the Upper Athabasca
Region Peter J. Murphy**

with

Robert W. Udell, Robert E. Stevenson
and Thomas W. Peterson Revised 2026

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST HINTON, ALBERTA, CANADA FOREST HISTORY
SOCIETY DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, UNITED STATES FOREST HISTORY
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA ST. ALBERT, ALBERTA, CANADA

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Natural Resources Canada initiated and continues to support Canada's Model Forest Program

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Front cover: North Canoe, artist Frances Hopkins, 1869. Library and Archives Canada C-2771
Freighter team on the trail, ca. 1910. G.H. Herriot, Library and Archives Canada PA-23021
Railway workers in Yellowhead Pass, ca. 1914. British Columbia Archives D-00501

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This edition is dedicated to the memories of Peter J. Murphy, Robert E. Stevenson and Thomas W. Peterson.

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Foreword – I.S. MacLaren

When he wrote *Seven Rivers of Canada*, his memorable personal history of the nation, essayist and novelist Hugh MacLennan opined that the souls of Canadians lay with our rivers. MacLennan argued that when, in the age of railways, we left the rivers we lost something of our souls. In the farthest reaches of the western Prairie provinces, the upper Athabasca River still runs as an exception to this idea. A tributary of the epic Mackenzie River, the Athabasca flows over 1,200 kilometres (about as far as the Rhine), and none of that distance has suffered the humiliation of a dam. The Peace River, the other great tributary of the Mackenzie, was changed forever by the creation of Williston Lake behind Bennett Dam in 1967. Abraham Lake behind the Bighorn Dam altered the North Saskatchewan River in 1972. As early as 1910, the Southern Alberta Land Company was building Bassano Dam for irrigation projects that diverted the waters of the Bow River; it was one of fourteen irrigation or, in its upper reaches, hydro dams that have transformed the Bow forever. Across Athabasca Pass, the Columbia River has been reduced, writes Blaine Harden in *A River Lost*, to a series of puddles by an almost infinite number of dams. By contrast, the Athabasca remains the river it was over 40 years ago, when MacLennan could see that “it gives you a sense of the power and mastery of the system to which it belongs.” And that power and mastery, 10 times greater when the river is in flood but always fast and demanding a traveller’s or forder’s respect and caution, are the same today as they were 150 years ago when David Thompson became the first European North American to record seeing its upper reaches. The upper Athabasca received historical designation as a heritage waterway in 1989 as an acknowledgement of that free-flowing, ongoing history.

The pre-contact Native and post-contact non-Native history of the Athabasca River’s upper reaches tells a story of intimate relations between people and a region. From a principal transportation corridor for trade among Native groups on both sides of the Cordillera, the Athabasca and its tributaries, the Miette and the Whirlpool, evolved in different ways as waves

of resource exploitation and new forms of transportation came into existence over the course of 15 decades, moderating into resource management in the 1950s. That no one could resist its attributes as a corridor is best exemplified in the years 1915 and 1916, when not one but two railway lines operated in the valley between Hinton and Jasper; both stuck as close as possible to the river.

An undammed river and its valleys offer an apt subject for an uninterrupted history. Still, most histories of the upper Athabasca region pay more attention to the travellers through the region than to the people who stayed and settled in it. Treating the Athabasca corridor for its entire non-Native history, *A Hard Road to Travel* takes its readers through two parallel histories brought together as one. It tells the stories of not just the fur traders on the transcontinental route between Hudson Bay and the Pacific Ocean, nor just the tourists, alpinists, skiers, and campers making annual pilgrimages to the mountains, but also the miners and foresters, the freighters and surveyors, the railway builders and homesteaders, the guides and wardens (horses in tow), forest industrialists and their provincial and federal government counterparts, and the forests and wildlife of the Athabasca. Readers learn the history of the region not just for the portion that falls under national park designation and management, not just the West Fraser Forest Management Area between Jasper National Park and Edson, but from the Columbia Icefield and Athabasca Pass to as far downriver, in some discussions, as Fort Assiniboine, where the Grizzly Trail (Highway 33) crosses the Athabasca north and west of Edmonton.

Circumscribing a vast quantity and diversity of human and non-human history, Peter Murphy has brought a long career's experience of studying the region's forests to bear on his history. The role that fire prevention strategies played in the history of the management of Jasper National Park, Brazeau Forest, and Athabasca Forest contribute to the portrait that he draws, as do the individuals involved. He shows the impact on forests of the evolution of new concepts and strategies for their management, like "sustained yield," which appeared first in 1949, and the programs of aerial photography and forest inventories that had to be undertaken in order to develop it. Meanwhile, he shows how Frank Ruben, one of the region's preeminent

venture capitalists, wedded forestry and mining, and how the likes of Reg Loomis, Des Crossley, and others established forestry practices in the Hinton area in the 1950s that would serve as a model for both government and industry across the continent. How the hamlet of Hinton stole its pulp mill from the town of Edson is another story that unfolds in these pages. Some individuals did have a disproportionate effect on the region—one thinks of Canadian National Railways president Sir Henry Thornton ordering his caddy to fetch a saw in order to cut down an offending tree that had had the audacity to position itself between his golf ball and a green at the Jasper Park Lodge course—but, for the most part, the road that men and women followed was more or less the same hard one over which their fellows had sojourned and laboured.

Murphy's treatment is deftly and judiciously enhanced by Robert Stevenson's unparalleled expertise as an historian of photographic collections of the region's people and forests, and the benefits and insights of Bob Udell's highly acclaimed success as a manager of the region's forests. Generations of residents have learned that they must appreciate how to work in concert with the valley's resources in order to make a home of the region, a place where one's soul aligns with its environs. Hugh MacLennan might have identified a truth about Canadians living in spite of their surroundings in many other regions, but *A Hard Road to Travel* places on view impressive evidence that the character of the country and the souls of its residents are living in terms of one another in the upper Athabasca. Whether waterway, trail, railway, highway, or logging road, the road was hard won. This book does ample justice to the story of those who knew and know as much.

Preface

This story was inspired and shaped by the people of the Upper Athabasca region and their stories. During Peter Murphy's early days in Alberta as a forester, from 1954, many of the people with whom he worked remembered the difficult times of the 1920s, 1930s, war-time years, and post-war recovery. Their tales were both humorous and inspirational. As founding director of the provincial Forest Technology School, Peter had the opportunity to live in Hinton for 12 years (from 1960 to 1973), and here his love of the foothills and mountains was enriched by the stories of long-time residents. Too many to list here, they included forest rangers, park wardens, Aboriginals, sawmillers, guides and outfitters, trappers, coal miners, surveyors, and business people. Many rangers and wardens also attended the Forest Technology School, now Hinton Training Centre, for training in advanced forestry, wildlife and forest fire management techniques. Their anecdotes invariably included tales of the difficulty of getting around, combined with their love of the land and their struggles to look after it.

Bob Udell also knows the Hinton story intimately. Bob worked as a Hinton forester from 1966 to 1970 and then rejoined North Western Pulp & Power (now West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd.) in 1975 after a stint in Ontario. Among other accomplishments, he authored two of the management plans written for the Hinton forest. Impressed by the vision and influence of the pioneers, he initiated the project to record the company history and nurtured it to completion.

Bob Stevenson, another forester who retired after 33 years with federal and provincial governments, has observed forestry operations and research at Hinton since the 1960s, and is an avid historian. In particular, he rescued several collections of historic photographs and developed the major library of forestry photographs in Alberta. He catalogued the West Fraser photo collections and led selection of the historical photographs for this book.

Thomas Peterson was a resident of Jasper for more than 50 years and has lived in Hinton for the past 10 years. Many friends have shared Tom's

enthusiasm for searching for early historical records left by people who travelled through the mountains, many of which were used in writing this book. His favorite historical timeframe of *A Hard Road to Travel* is the 100-year period from 1810 to 1910, which includes from David Thompson's first discovery of the upper Athabasca River watershed to the first railroad construction activity and its changes to the land with bridges and roadbeds.

The catalyst for writing this book was preparation of a short background chapter for a book about the Hinton forestry operation, since published by Fifth House as *Learning from the Forest*. The intent of the chapter was to add historical context to the start of the pulpmill at Hinton in 1955. Since the earlier history could draw on a wealth of additional sources and many photographs, illustrations and maps, the chapter expanded to become a book. The resulting story, *A Hard Road to Travel*, conveys the relationships between people and the land in this magnificent setting of mountains, water and forests and includes a timeline to track the flow of events. As it transpired, it also anticipates the celebration of 200 years since David Thompson crossed Howse Pass and hundredth year since the founding of Jasper National Park.

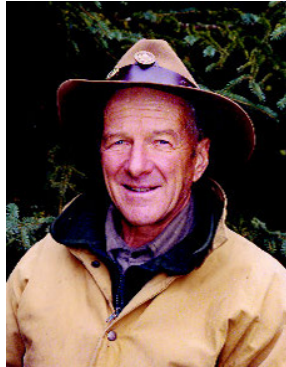
It follows that the primary sources of material were people, some of whom Peter Murphy had previously interviewed and others who were interviewed specifically for this project. As well, the book is flavoured with the memories and stories told by so many others. Most of these respondents shared personal photographs and papers. Archives were a rich source of both references and photographs. These included National Archives of Canada, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Hudson's Bay Company Archives located at the Manitoba Provincial Archives, Jasper-Yellowhead Historical Society, Glenbow Alberta Archives in Calgary, Whyte Museum and Archives in Banff, and the University of Alberta Archives. As well, the ad hoc archives at the Hinton Training Centre, West Fraser and Alberta Forest Service/Fish and Wildlife collections under the care of Robert E. Stevenson have been invaluable.

Books and papers consulted included personal journals as well as published histories and stories in district histories. The Special Collections Library at the University of Alberta holds many first editions from the early 1800s. Some of the more comprehensive histories drawn on included M.P.

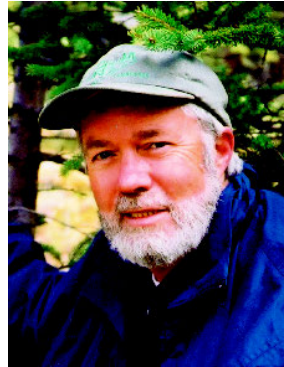
Bridgland and R. Douglas's (1917) *Description of & Guide to Jasper Park*, edited by E. Deville; Frederick Merk's (1968) *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*; J.G. MacGregor's (1962) *Pack Saddles to Tête Jaune Cache* and (1974) *Overland by the Yellowhead*; Esther Fraser's (1969) *The Canadian Rockies: Early Travel and Exploration*; and the impressive collection of stories by Hazel Hart and her team of volunteers in Hinton and published in 1980 as *History of Hinton*.



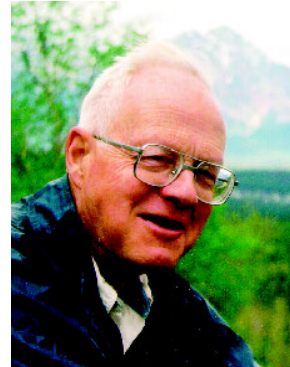
Peter Murphy



Bob Stevenson



Robert Udell



Tom Peterson

Acknowledgments

In this endeavour, the authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions and support of a host of individuals, all of whom shared our interest in “what went before.” Local historians, including Hazel Hart and Bob Hallam, provided references, maps and advice, and lent their enthusiasm to the project.

Jack Wright, retired chief forester of West Fraser’s Hinton operation, provided first-hand memory of events from 1956, helped to keep us on track with the pulpmill history. His personal interest led him to look for and map historic trails during his extensive field surveys. Other retired company employees helped with records and comments, notably Jim Clark through his memoirs and Stanton Hart through his reviews and details from his diaries and records. West Fraser’s forestry manager David Presslee, an early and enthusiastic supporter of the project, contributed his insights and dug out reference materials and maps in support of the initiative. Sadly, this contribution was cut short by his death in January 2000. Hugh Loughheed and Byron Vriend of West Fraser have also provided ongoing logistical and technical support in the development of this book.

During the late 1990s, ecologist Eric Higgs led a major University of Alberta project to study human impact in the Jasper area. Eric Higgs and his colleagues—historian I.S. MacLaren, librarian Sandy Campbell, and graduate student Jeanine Rhemtulla—were particularly forthcoming with their knowledge, including details about the history, trails, and changes in vegetation illustrated by repeat photography of the 1915 Bridgland panoramic surveys. Michel Abley, computer consultant at the University of Alberta, made panoramas of Bridgland’s images. Joan Udell compiled an illuminating map showing trails and waterways in the region in the 1880s, a valued and appreciated contribution. Staff at Foothills Model Forest provided invaluable support, Don Podlubny and Fran Hanington with logistics and advice, Julie Duval, with assistance from Christian Weik, Jerome Cranston and Melissa Pattison, and Sharon Meredith of West Fraser patiently prepared new and revised the many maps, which are a major feature of the book. We also

appreciate the collegial help of Mike Dillon and Rob Wallace of Jasper National Park and Cliff Henderson and Bruce Mayer of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development with histories of their respective agencies.

From Lac La Biche, which lay on the major initial fur brigade route, lawyer and avid historian Thomas Maccagno shared the authors' interest in this story. His suggestions about the many contributions of North West Company explorer David Thompson, the Columbia Express, importance of Portage La Biche, and sharing his references and maps are particularly appreciated. Robert Crossley, former Hinton resident now living at Lac La Biche, shared stories about his father, Des, and added recollections about life with the 55ers and Junior Forest Wardens.

A special thanks to all those who graciously permitted us to publish their paintings, sketches, and personal photographs. These included John Basney for his grandfather Robert Rylatt's painting of Athabasca Depot, Richard Biamonte, Richard Biblow and Glen Robson, Bob Bott, Brian Carnell, James Clark, Ross Cox IV for the portrait of his ancestor, Craig Corser and the Corser family, Howard Coneybeare for his pen and ink depiction of the First Arrivals, Robert Guest for his paintings: *Telephone Line along the Old Trail* and *Athabasca Lookout*, Stanton Hart, Jeff Henricks, the Philip Gimbarzewsky Collection through his family and friend Steven Ferdinand, Greg Horne, Charles Kay, Dennis Radcliffe, Amelia Spanach, Cliff White, Glen Crowe for his painting of the Aboriginal spring-burner, the Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art for Remington's *Courrier du Bois and the Savage*, the Stark Museum of Art for four of Paul Kane's paintings of himself, Fort Edmonton, Jasper House, and Boat Encampment, and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew for the sketch of Thomas Drummond and Jim Taylor of Parks Canada for the 1907 map of Jasper Forest Park. Jeannine Green, University of Alberta Library led us to Lett's 1910 photograph of John Moberly's ranch. Karen Byers and Glenda Cornforth at the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives were especially helpful in helping us to access their rich collections. We also appreciated access to the photo collections of Library and Archives Canada, Alberta Provincial Archives, University of Alberta Archives and Bridgland Collection, Alberta Land Surveyors Association, British Columbia Archives,

Edson Archives, Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Manitoba Provincial Archives, Glenbow Alberta Museum and Archives, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, the Hudson's Bay Company, West Fraser and Alberta Forest Protection Collections. To the many individuals who agreed to be interviewed to share their experiences and points of view, and to those who reviewed drafts of this text, the authors also say thank you.

The first draft was a lengthy compilation of stories and descriptions, a rich collection, but needing a comprehensive review and consolidation. Editor Fran Aitkens skillfully smoothed the path of the story with her perceptive suggestions. She also reminded us that women played a major role in this story, encouraging us to discover even more interesting people. Fran's contribution and enthusiasm for the project are much appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Throughout the writing process, author and colleague Bob Bott also reviewed drafts, suggested other leads and added his own prescient insights, all of which have been enriching. The book design was artistically laid out by John Luckhurst who brought the story to life, drawing on his own insights of the forest and outdoors from his mountaineering experiences, Toby Foord carefully crafted the maps to match the book design.

To those whose names we have inadvertently omitted in this acknowledgement, our apologies for the oversight.



Map 1: Foothills Model Forest and environs, with inset map of western Canada.
 FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Introduction

This book is about history, but it is more than a history book. It is a *forest history*, the story of a forever-changing forest that has evolved through continual disturbances by fire; it is a *forestry history* about how people have “managed” the forest in various ways since the end of the last ice age; above all, it is a history of people and the land and the changing relationships between people and forests as humans have attempted to survive and flourish, first within the forest, then despite it, and more recently, through seeking a balance for mutual sustainability.

Land and People

The upper Athabasca land comprises its varied geology, topography, waters and watersheds; its influence on climate and results of climatic forces; and its forests and trees, plants and animals. People have coexisted with the land for at least the last hundred centuries.

Events involving people have taken place over three broadly defined eras. The first era, the longest and least known, encompasses approximately 9,800 years without a written history during which various peoples passed through, settled for varying periods of time, or developed nomadic patterns of life within the broader landscape. The second era, the arrival of the European fur traders, began only about two hundred years ago in December 1810 with the arrival of explorer and North West Company surveyor David Thompson. Although Thompson was the first European in the region, the European influence had arrived much earlier on the eastern slopes of the continent through the introduction of trade goods, horses and devastating diseases. Thompson’s mapping of the Athabasca Pass to the Columbia River during his January 1811 crossing established this upper Athabasca River region as the main transcontinental travel route. The Athabasca Pass remained the primary artery for over 40 years, and then the Yellowhead Pass became paramount for another six decades until the Grand Trunk Railway was built. During this

time, more people passed through the country on the “hard road to travel” than stayed to settle in it.

In the third era, which began with the railway, travel became less and less arduous and movement of goods much easier. The resulting increase in numbers of people included those who stayed to farm, ranch, start businesses or work for others, and a steadily increasing number of visitors attracted by the country and its qualities. With more people, more commerce, and development of natural resources, the need for protection and management of the forests, wildlife and fisheries became evident. Thus began the struggle to balance resource use and conservation through appropriate management, at first effected through government agencies, such as the forest and park services. As the costs of providing these services increased, governments began to search for means to offset costs. One approach was to increase fees and introduce new fees, such as park entry or hunting and fishing licenses. In forestry, the combined costs of fire control, forest management, and forest regeneration became difficult to meet through government appropriations; the government tried another approach—developing partnerships with industry. The first successful venture of this type in Alberta was established at Hinton in 1955 based on the principle of “perpetual sustained yield.” The partnership represented an extension of centuries of human intervention with the workings of the forest, and was designed to perpetuate the forest to meet new needs of the people while continuing the tradition of living with the land.

Land Ownership

The land area that would become the province of Alberta first came under direct European influence in 1670 when the Saskatchewan River drainage became part of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Rupert’s Land. The northern drainage became part of Britain’s North Western Territories. After confederation of Canada in 1867, the new dominion purchased Rupert’s Land in 1870 and Britain added its North-Western Territory to the package. In 1905 Alberta was carved out of the combined North-West Territories and declared a province, but until 1930 the federal government kept control of the natural

resources, including the forests. Alberta took over control of its natural resources from the federal government on the first day of October 1930 through the Transfer of Resources Act. This final transfer of resources was a defining moment for Alberta, providing a land and resource base to manage and on which to build.



Map 2: West-central Alberta showing the major rivers, roads and communities.
FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

CHAPTER ONE

The Land and the Forest



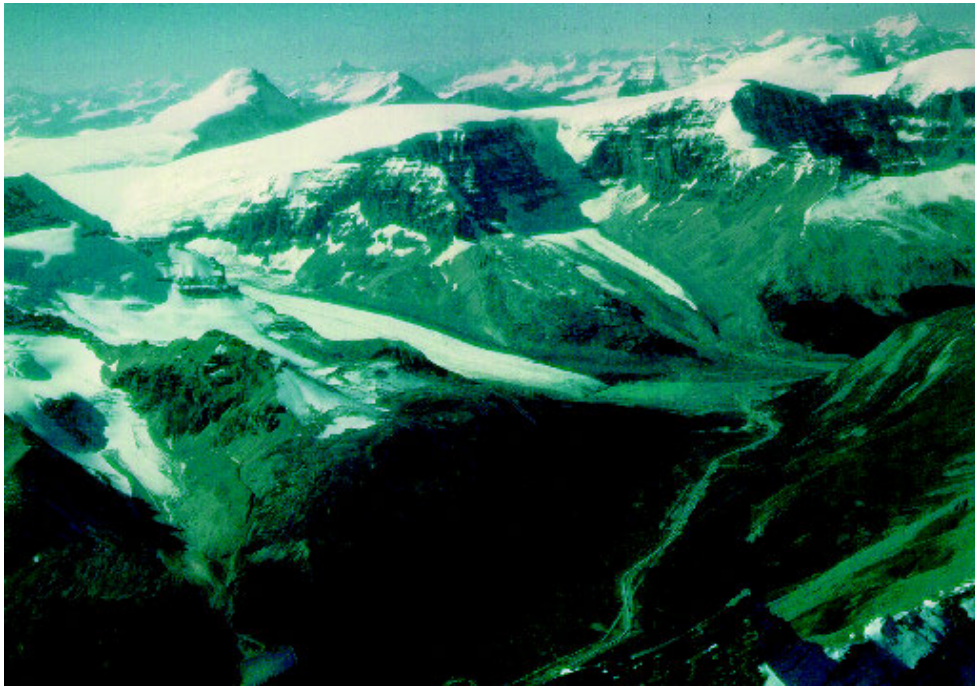
“A great number of mountain sheep had been driven down into the valleys by the intensity of the cold ... and the Indians brought them in every day, so that we fared most sumptuously.”

JAMES HECTOR, 1859 IN THE JASPER HOUSE AREA IN JANUARY

This history is set in west-central Alberta in the headwaters of the Athabasca River. Although it is part of the great Mackenzie River system, the Athabasca is a uniquely Alberta river. It rises among the icefields along the Continental Divide in Jasper National Park, gaining momentum from the Sunwapta, Whirlpool, Astoria, Miette, Maligne, Snaring, Rocky, Snake Indian, and Fiddle rivers in the park before it flows through a wide gap in the front range of the Rockies into Brûlé Lake on Jasper’s eastern boundary. It then becomes a swift-flowing but relatively calm river, growing with input from major tributaries such as the Berland, McLeod and Pembina as it flows northeasterly.

Once past the town of Athabasca it swings north, churning through the Grand Rapids and on to Fort McMurray where it picks up its last major tributary, the Clearwater. From there it runs almost due north to disperse into Lake Athabasca through the richly diverse wetlands of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. From Lake Athabasca, the combined waters flow north as the Slave River, leaving Alberta to enter Great Slave Lake, the head of the Mackenzie, which carries the waters north to the Arctic Ocean.

The name “Athabasca” is most commonly believed to be derived from a Cree name meaning “where there are reeds.” According to place-names historian, Aphrodite Karamitsanis,¹ this referred to the muddy delta of the river where it enters Lake Athabasca. The name has also been spelled “Athabaska,” and in 1790 was referred to as the “Great Arabuska.” In 1820 George Simpson noted that it was the “Athabasca or Elk River” when he entered it from Lac La Biche or Red Deer’s Lake.



Snow Dome on the Columbia Icefields. The Athabasca, Columbia and North Saskatchewan rivers all begin at this large field of ice and snow on the Continental Divide.

TOM PETERSON

This great waterway has served as an important travel route for Aboriginal people for thousands of years and, during the last 200 years, for explorers, missionaries, traders and settlers. This review focuses on the upper headwater

areas of the Athabasca, including Edson, Hinton, Jasper and passes to the west.

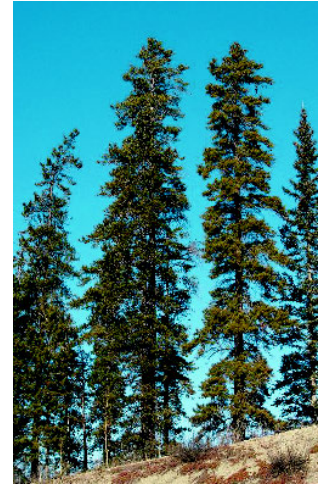
Landscape and Climate

Millions of years ago this land lay beneath a warm inland sea. Marine creatures thrived; coral reefs abounded, and layer upon layer of sediments accumulated on the seafloor. As the sediments became more deeply buried, they were compressed into limestone and sandstone, and some of the organic matter trapped in the sediments was converted into crude oil and natural gas that saturated the rocks. Later lifted above sea level, the land hosted forests and swamps, which in turn were buried to become shale and sandstone interspersed with rich seams of coal from the remains of terrestrial flora and fauna. The slow but inexorable movement of tectonic plates across the earth's surface eventually thrust this multi-layered “club sandwich” of rock and hydrocarbons sideways and upwards—the strata sliding and tilting and folding as they pushed against each other—to form the peaks and ridges of the Rockies and foothills. Wind, rain, snow and ice then ground away the jagged edges of the rocks, and the resulting sand, silt and gravel filled the valley bottoms.

The landscape of the upper Athabasca, including the area around Hinton, was carved into its present shape by grinding glaciers during the long, cold Pleistocene Epoch that lasted more than a million years, and then by rushing meltwater when a warm climate returned about 12,000 years ago at the dawn of the Holocene Epoch. During the Pleistocene, the mountains and foothills were buried under ice sheets several kilometres thick, most recently during the Wisconsin maximum that peaked about 18,000 years ago. Just six millennia after that maximum, a sharp increase in the sun's radiation triggered a dramatic warming period, the hypsithermal interval, 12,000 to 9,000 years before present (BP).

The last ice age was ending and the present Holocene Epoch was beginning. The two great ice sheets—the Cordilleran along the mountains and the extensive Laurentide that covered most of the northern continent—met in

this area. When they began to melt, an open corridor gradually extended from the south and plants began to return. Most plants seem to have arrived from the south where they had survived beyond the ice, but some may have spread from local unglaciated refugia such as one believed to have existed around Mountain Park in the Coal Branch area south of Hinton. Later there may have been some movement south from refugia in the Yukon area.²



Lodgepole pine.

The present landscape still shows the influence of glaciers. The end moraines east of Obed were left by the Athabasca valley glacier, long since retreated to the Columbia Icefields. Sinuous gravel eskers created the Emerson Lakes. The many gravel beds throughout the region were deposited by glacial meltwater. The lakes and water-carved cliffs in Switzer Park and the Sundance canyon were carved by meltwater runoff. An ice-dam east of Brûlé Lake may have caused the Athabasca to temporarily flow northeast through the Jarvis-Gregg Lake chain of lakes through Switzer Park and down the Wildhay River valley.

Detailed paleoenvironmental studies have not been completed for this region, but archaeologist Alwynne Beaudoin speculates that studies in other regions along the Rocky Mountains indicate when plants returned to this area.³ During the hypsithermal interval there was an initial phase of predominantly non-tree vegetation such as sedges and grasses, with some shrubs such as alder, willow and birch—as occurs today in alpine areas after glaciers retreat. This phase was followed by poplars and coniferous forests, primarily pine and spruce with some fir. The transition between these early phases seems to have occurred quite rapidly, the rate affected by climate and environmental factors such as soil development. Beaudoin also noted widespread evidence of a varied animal population, including large ungulates, by the beginning of the Holocene. For example, she estimated dates of 11,700 BP for poplar wood northeast of Grande Prairie and 9,730 BP for a beaver-chewed poplar to the east. A wapiti (elk) bone near Watino, in the Grande Prairie area, has been dated at about 9,075 BP. Several forest fire events were

also documented on a site that shows evidence of early human habitation at Saskatoon Mountain, west of Grande Prairie, suggesting recurrent prairie or brush fires, some perhaps set by humans.



Athabasca River Valley west of Hinton, front range of the Rockies.

DFB PHOTO, 1912, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION.



Athabasca River Valley looking south towards Jasper Lake, 1915. A landscape heavily influenced by fire.

M.P. BRIDGLAND, 1915. DIGITAL IMAGE ©2000, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA R629

Most of the major species in the region, including humans, seem to have arrived by about 10,000 years BP. The forests hosted moose, elk and beaver, while buffalo* roamed the grasslands along the rivers.

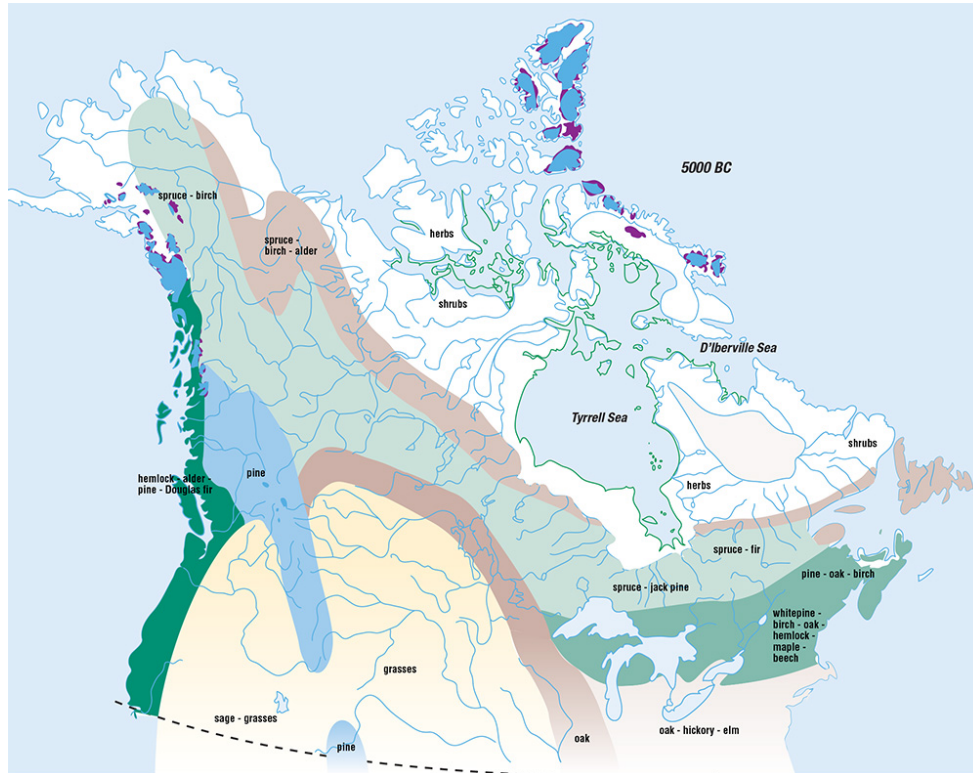
The main elements of local climate and hydrology have also been present for about 10,000 years. Prevailing westerly winds from the Pacific Ocean lose much of their moisture as they lift over British Columbia's mountain ranges, and dry winds often cascade down the eastern slopes. More than half of the area's annual precipitation typically falls as rain during June, July and August. Aside from the distant alpine glaciers and snowfields feeding rivers such as the Athabasca, the crucial water supply comes from summer rains and the

slow melting of snow lying in shaded and sheltered forest areas. Where snow falls in open areas, it melts or evaporates quickly under the combined effects of sun and wind. Torrents from cloudbursts or rapid melting can erode land and deposit silt in rivers, but are of little lasting benefit to soil moisture reserves. Water from slow-melting snow or a gentle steady rain percolates through the soil, nourishing plants and feeding clear mountain streams. Towering cumulus clouds are common from spring to fall, but they sometimes bring only lightning without rain.

* The more precise name of these animals is bison, as in their scientific name *Bison americanus*. However, the earliest references were to buffalo, a term that remains the one most commonly used.

Forests

The forests in the upper Athabasca region were well established by about 10,000 years ago. However, their nature and extent have varied through time, especially in response to climate fluctuations during early postglacial times. During the altithermal period, 9,100 to 5,000 BP, the climate was warmer than now. Sections of trees found in alpine bogs in Jasper Park show that trees grew at elevations up to a hundred metres higher on sites where they cannot now survive.⁴ Some of the dead fallen trees visible above the treeline at the Columbia Icefields are remnants of centuries-old forests that grew during that warm period. The northern limit of trees in the Northwest Territories has also fluctuated north and south in response to long-term climatic changes, but in the last century it has greatly extended northwards.



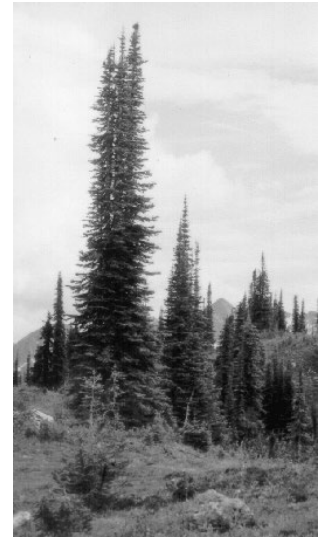
Map 3: Post-glacial vegetation about 7,000 BP (5,000 BC), around the time of the thermal maximum.

PLATE 4, VOLUME I, HISTORICAL ATLAS OF CANADA, EDITOR R. COLE HARRIS, CARTOGRAPHER/DESIGNER GEOFFREY J. MATTHEWS, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS 1987. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.

The Foothills Model Forest contains parts of five forest regions, defined primarily with increasing elevation: the Boreal Lower Foothills in the east; the Boreal Upper Foothills; the Subalpine along the mountains; the Alpine,⁵ a generally treeless region above the timberline; and the Montane in parts of the valley bottoms. The most common tree species in the first three regions are lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*),⁶ white spruce (*Picea glauca*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*).⁷ The hardwood species, including white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), are most abundant in the lower-elevation forests in the east. Conifers predominate in the western regions at higher elevations. As well, Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) appears in the western regions and may hybridize with white spruce. Other species include tamarack (*Larix laricina*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*), which are most often found on poorly drained sites. Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) are usually found as an understorey in

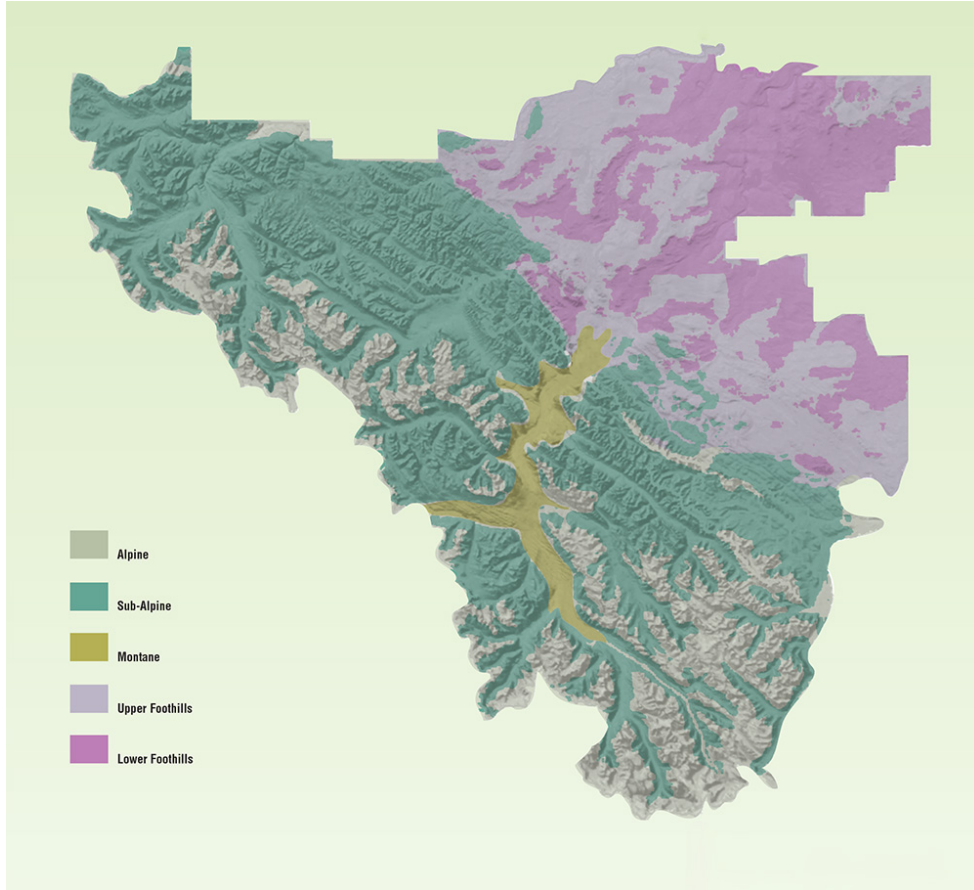
spruce stands, or as the dominant overstorey species in very old spruce/fir stands.

The fifth region, the Montane, is a distinctive one comprising a mix of closed and open forests and grasslands. It lies in the warmer and dryer Athabasca Valley in Jasper Park and extends several kilometres east of the Front Range of the Rockies. Montane conditions may also occur on some south-facing slopes. Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *glauca*) is found in stands and as open-grown trees, a few of which grew as far east as Hinton. The Montane region seems to have extended farther east and south about 7,000 years BP, during the warmer altithermal.



Subalpine fir.

The Rocky Mountains are a physical barrier to the migration of tree species except through several passes such as the Yellowhead. They also create a climatological barrier that results in a drier and cooler climate on the eastern slopes. A few trees native to British Columbia are found on the Alberta side (Douglas-fir is the most evident), but they do not occur north of the main Athabasca valley, and their range extends only about 30 kilometres east of the park boundary. Other migrants include western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), but they occur only in scattered locations close to the border.⁸



Map 4: Natural subregions in the Foothills Model Forest.
FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Wildlife

The upper Athabasca region supports a great variety of wildlife species by virtue of its varied topography, forest regions, and the diversity of forest age classes resulting from fires and logging. Inventories by West Fraser and Foothills Model Forest identified almost 300 vertebrate species present in the region.



Timberwolf.

It was the large mammals, megafauna or “big game” as they were commonly called, that were most noted by early European travellers, primarily because people depended on them for food while living off the land. Among the first explorers, Alexander Mackenzie saw elk and buffalo along the Peace River near Dunvegan on his epic voyage to the Pacific. On 10 May 1793 he noted in his

journal: “At half past six in the afternoon the young men landed, when they killed an elk and wounded a buffalo. In this spot we formed our encampment for the night.”⁹ He then rhapsodized about the country through which they had passed that day:

This magnificent theatre of nature has all the decorations which the trees and animals of the country can afford it: groves of poplars in every shape vary the scene; and their intervals are enlivened with vast herds of elks and buffaloes; the former choosing the steeps and uplands, and the latter preferring the plains. At this time the buffaloes were attended with their young ones who were frisking about them; and it appeared that the elks would soon exhibit the same enlivening circumstance.

Buffalo were still present in Jasper in January 1811 when David Thompson’s hunters killed two “good young Bulls” in the Jasper Lake area and noted signs of buffalo feeding near Prairie de la Vache, about 10 kilometres south of Jasper. His party had killed buffalo north of Boggy Hall on their way north to the Athabasca River, and took over 15 around Prairie Creek and Brûlé Lake in December 1810.¹⁰ Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, in 1824 recorded finding “many tracks of Buffalo” in the Jasper area, although he saw no animals.¹¹ Subsequent travellers through Jasper seem not to have recorded any sign of buffalo except out into the prairies. Botanist Thomas Drummond noted buffalo in the Smoky River valley as late as 1826. Paul Kane stopped near St. Albert in 1848 to sketch buffalo grazing. By the 1870s, the herds on the prairies had largely vanished.



Buffalo.

Elk were apparently not abundant in David Thompson’s time, although he recorded that the many defiles in the mountains and brooks up-river from Brûlé Lake “afford room & rude pasturage for a few Buffalo, Red Deer [elk] & a chance Moose.” James Hector of the Palliser expedition reported in 1859 on the Iroquois who had settled in the Smoky River valley 20 years before and who hunted buffalo, elk and sheep. Neither they nor others who followed recorded seeing any elk

in Jasper. James Hector raised an interesting question in his journal in 1859 while he was in the Jasper area:

When we compare the description given by Sir Alexander Mackenzie of the prairie country along Peace River, with its vast herds of buffalo and elks, when he passed in 1793, with the present northern limit of the large herds of these animals, at least three degrees of latitude further south, the change is very striking; and still more so if it is true, as the hunters say, that the disappearance of the large quantities of game has only taken place within the last 20 years.¹²

Ecologists Kay, Patton and White analyzed historical journals in 2000 for wildlife observations in the Canadian Rockies.¹³ They found that elk ranked a distant fifth in numbers observed, outranked by bighorn sheep, buffalo, moose and goat. They could not find a clear explanation, and the mystery persists. For example, although in 1917 Bridgland and Douglas¹⁴ said that no elk were present in Jasper Park, they commented that in the early days, the valley of the Athabasca from the junction of the Miette to its source was one of the best hunting grounds for elk in the Canadian Rockies: “In 1914 the Superintendent found in one trip to the south side of Mount Kerkeslin the heads and horns of over 100 elk, which seems to bear out that fact. With efficient protection elk will soon return to the park.” In fact, elk did not return until 88 elk from Yellowstone were released in Jasper in 1920.¹⁵ Frank Camp,¹⁶ retired park warden, reported that in 1928–29, 100 elk were shipped to Jasper by rail and were fed hay during the first two winters to encourage them to stay in the area. Within 12 years, he noted, there were over 1,000 elk in the valley. They have since dispersed widely, both within Jasper and in western Alberta generally.

Caribou

Caribou are found scattered at higher elevations through Jasper Park and the northern and westerly headwaters of the Berland and Smoky rivers. James Hector of the Palliser Expedition recorded seeing the tracks of nine “reindeer”

near their camp at Prairie de la Vache in February 1859, but they could not catch up to them to get a shot. Hector also mentioned that at the head of the Snake Indian River above the waterfalls there was a valley “at a very high level, and the woods they occupy are favourite haunts of large bands of caribou or mountain reindeer.”¹⁷ Caribou



also range in the head of the Berland River. Bridgland and Douglas¹⁸ noted that caribou were seldom seen in the lower valleys, a point that may help to explain why caribou were so infrequently mentioned by travellers. The major haunts they identified were Signal Mountain and, especially, the head of Portal Creek and the Tonquin Valley area. Both Jack Glen,¹⁹ a ranger at Entrance from 1920-1942, and Judd Groat,²⁰ guide and outfitter at Brûlé, reported seeing “hundreds” of caribou in their areas during the 1930s, but noted the start of their apparent decline as early as the 1940s. Jack Wright, retired chief forester of Weldwood’s Hinton operation, says that predator control programs begun in the 1950s and carried through into the late 1960s resulted in a resurgence of caribou populations to “hundreds.” However, caribou numbers are generally believed to have declined again because of factors such as predation, access, human disturbance, fires and logging.

Mountain Sheep

Mountain sheep were, and still are, common in Jasper. They were extensively hunted for food by early residents until Jasper became a park. Artist Paul Kane remarked on the number and utility of mountain sheep during the early winter of 1847:

A great number of mountain sheep had been driven down into the valleys by the intensity of the cold, which had set in this winter with unusual severity. I have counted as many as five large flocks of these animals grazing in different directions from the house at one time, and the Indians brought them in every day, so that we fared most

sumptuously. These sheep are those most commonly called the “bighorn.”

[21](#)

James Hector described how sheep were hunted around Jasper House in January 1859:

During the whole winter the hunters climbed the mountains in search of the big-horn sheep, and only rarely have to use snowshoes, although they generally carry a small strong-made pair to use in crossing drifts. The big-horn is very plentiful in this part of the mountains, and forms the principle food of the people here, who are often put to great straits, as it has to be hunted from day to day. There are two or three Iroquois hunters attached to the trading post, and they are sent off every morning before daybreak, and seldom return til late in the afternoon. Early in the morning the sheep descend the mountains to the “Salinas” or salt licks, and if the hunter can succeed in intercepting them in the woods before they regain the bald part of the mountains, they fall an easy prey, but otherwise, to get a shot at them involves a great deal of hard and often dangerous climbing. The hunters generally use dogs, which are beautifully trained to turn the sheep as they rush up the mountain to reach the most inaccessible precipices.[22](#)



Bighorn sheep on meadows in montane forest region, looking north down Jasper Lake. These and other grasslands were typically burned by Aboriginal and Métis people in the spring to keep them open.

CHARLES KAY

Hector also noted that sheep were caught in snares along trails leading to the salt licks. He estimated that several hundred bighorn sheep would be killed to accumulate provisions for winter at the post. The hunts Hector saw also included moose, which seemed to have been widely distributed by all accounts. Deer, mostly mule deer, and now increasing numbers of whitetails are present but were not often mentioned in early accounts. The presence of wolves may have constrained deer more to the parklands to the east. Mountain goats are also present on higher-elevation mountain topography, and a small group also inhabits the canyons along Pinto Creek about 50 kilometres northeast from the front ranges near the Wildhay River.

Furbearers and Carnivores

The larger carnivores are still present: grizzly and black bear, wolves, coyotes, mountain lion, lynx, and wolverine. Hector mentioned wolves in the Jasper area in 1859, noting that they had been killing horses belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company. He described how a hunter salted a freshly killed young mare with strychnine, which killed four wolves and five or six of a smaller species, probably coyotes, and a score of ravens. Poisoned baits



Trembling aspen.

also killed some of their dogs. Strychnine was in common use there, and predator control using baits such as this was common until the mid-1960s.

Trappers appreciated the other furbearers, especially beaver and marten, but also mink, fisher, otter, muskrats and squirrels.

An interesting legendary creature in the Jasper area was the mammoth. Thompson noted on 5 January 1811, as they approached the Whirlpool River, that the men believed that this valley was the haunt of the mammoth. None of his men could say they had seen one, nor even its tracks, but their belief was firm and not to be shaken. Two days later he described a track left in fresh snow that measured fourteen inches long and eight inches wide [35 and 20 cm]. He took it for a “large old grizzled Bear,” but “the Men and Indians would have it to be a young mammoth” and they “were in no humour to follow him.”

²³ On a return crossing of Athabasca Pass in October 1811, he again reported a similar huge track, which his hunters were sure was the mammoth. “I asked them if they were not curious to see it. They said that they were, but at a distance, the search for him might bring them so near that they could not get away.” ²⁴ They pointed to a mountain, at the top of which was a lake surrounded by coarse grasses and rushes and the animal fed there. Thompson commented that he could not believe that the mammoth exists, but the size of that bear track was also incredible. One of the Upper Cree men living around Jasper House in 1817 told Northwester Ross Cox, who was on his way east, that his grandfather had seen a mammoth. It was in a mountain pass where he was hunting and that upon “hearing its roar, which he compared to loud thunder, the sight almost left his eyes and his heart became as small as an infant’s.” ^{*25}

* It is interesting to conjecture how the Iroquois travelling with Thompson knew about the mammoth. Skeletal remains of a mammoth excavated in New York were described by Rembrandt Peale in an essay in 1801, and some thought such creatures could still exist in unexplored areas of North America. The Iroquois may have heard tales either of ancient hunts or

frozen specimens such as the ones later described in Yukon and Alaska.

Fish

The savory whitefish and trout that abounded in the lakes around Jasper were mentioned in several journals, and were especially appreciated by hungry travellers or those tired of pemmican. The rainbow trout in this area are the only native rainbows in Alberta; except for this one small region on the Athabasca and McLeod rivers, they were confined to the Pacific drainage. Some scientists think that an ice dam 10,000 years ago formed a temporary lake that spread across the Continental Divide in present-day Yellowhead Pass. When the ice melted, those fish on the eastern side populated the upper reaches of Alberta rivers. They probably could not survive much farther east because of the warmer summer water temperatures and hungry northern pike. The Alberta rainbows are smaller and darker than their western cousins.



Squirrel.



Marten.

Two other important fish are sought by predators and sportsmen: bull trout and Rocky Mountain whitefish. The bull trout has recently been proclaimed Alberta's provincial fish, but also has been identified as an endangered species. It is always hungry and feeds on almost anything, so is easily caught. As well as the low rate of growth in these cold waters, the females take six to eight years before they can spawn. Bull trout spawn in the fall and swim up the rivers and into smaller streams to mate and lay their eggs. Later they return to the larger rivers. They are amazing migrators: one bull trout tagged near Whitecourt was later caught in Jasper— about 300 kilometres upstream.

Rocky Mountain whitefish also spawn in the fall. They move up the rivers and streams during the summer and congregate in schools in the fall. Besides being a sport fish, they are an important food source for bull trout and other predators like mink, otters, kingfishers and osprey—and for the early fur traders in Jasper.

Forest Dynamics

The seemingly tranquil forest is actually a complex association of plants and animals representing many different species and ages, each with its own distinct characteristics. These associations exist in a state of constant change, responding to the forces of growth, death, disturbance, renewal and the struggle to survive. To understand the ecology of this landscape, it may be useful to highlight four important concepts:

- **Disturbance.** When an event or force such as fire, wind, snow, hail, flood, disease, insect infestation or human intervention alters the structure of a stand by killing some or all of the trees, the stage is set for new growth of the forest's plant communities, sometimes of different species.
- **Succession.** Because humans have shorter life spans than trees and often observe an individual forest stand only once, we tend to perceive forests as stable entities. In reality, forest communities are continually changing. After a disturbance, communities of plant species recolonize the site only to be replaced by other communities. For example, the site of a stand of spruce burned in a high-intensity fire could go through a succession from grass and forbs (non-grass herbaceous plants) to willow and poplars, finally seeding to spruce again. The process of colonization and replacement on a specific site is called *succession*; the full series from bare site to old forest is called a *sere*, and the arbitrarily defined stages of this process are called *seral stages*. One or more of these stages may be skipped on some sites.
- **Convergence.** Each type of disturbance leaves forest sites of a given type in a distinctly different state, but over time the structure and composition of the post-disturbance sites converge. The time period needed for convergence depends on the forest type and the nature and severity of disturbance. For example, lodgepole pine stands originating from fire and those originating from reforestation after harvest typically reach convergence after 30 to 50 years, depending on site characteristics and other environmental factors.
- **Ecotone or "edge."** An ecotone is a transition area of vegetation between two different plant communities, such as forest and grassland, or two different stages of forest succession. The edge area has some of the

characteristics of each bordering community and often contains species not found in either of the adjacent communities. The influence of the two bordering communities on each other is known as the “edge effect.” An edge area often has a higher density of organisms of some species and a greater number of species than either flanking community. Certain species require these transitional areas—year round, or at particular times of year—for activities such as courtship, nesting, or foraging for food. The frequent fire disturbances in the region, and more recent logging and other human disturbances, have created a lot of edge in the forests around Hinton. Two of these forces, succession and disturbance, warrant further comment.



Current harvest designs favour landscaped patterns approximating natural disturbances, such as fire, with irregular edges, standing trees and varying block sizes.

WEST FRASER COLLECTION

Succession and Ecosystem Persistence

The process of recolonization and growth is the most powerful and constant force in the ecosystem. This is what causes plant communities and their associated animal populations to persist; and it is the process by which woody material and other organic matter accumulate. Imagine—every living tree and

shrub adds a new layer of wood cells to its stem and branches under the bark every single growing season. As a result, stems or trunks grow larger in diameter and taller, and branches become more wide-spreading year by year. As well, the herbaceous plants grow anew each spring, adding their foliage to the mix, building up litter, cycling nutrients and adding organic matter to the soil. This growth persists until changed by decomposition, decay, feeding by insects or burning by fire or, in present times, removal by logging.

Several years ago, Tom Vinson, a guide and outfitter from Brûlé, found an interesting example of the forest persistence after major disturbance. On his grazing lease along Solomon Creek, he noticed some fallen trees protruding from the river bank at water level. What made these notable was that they were buried under a 5-metre-high bank of fine silty soil. The wood had been preserved virtually intact in an air-tight seal under the soil. He had the trees examined by an archaeology team from the Alberta Provincial Museum led by Dr. Alwynne Beaudoin. The wood, identified as spruce by the Forintek forest products laboratory in Vancouver, was carbon-dated at 4,200 years BP.

For perspective, at the time this forest was buried 4,200 years ago, Europe was still in the Stone Age, but the Bronze Age was spreading in the Near East. The Great Pyramid at Giza in Egypt had recently been built, but the Great Temples along the Nile and Stonehenge in England were started later, around 4,000 BP. In the mid-Americas, pottery-making and domestication of maize, potatoes and sweet potatoes had just begun. Yet to come were the rise and flowering of the Chinese dynasties and the Great Wall, the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman Empires, and evolution of the modern countries of Europe.

These buried trees are a reminder of the wonderful resilience of the ecosystem, its inherent ability to persist through disturbances, and its capability to store carbon.



Author Peter Murphy with buried spruce trunks that grew 4,200 years ago, discovered by Tom Vinson on Solomon Creek. They were preserved as solid wood, buried under 5 metres of soil until the bank was washed out by flooding.

PETER MURPHY

Disturbance and Forest Fires

Of all the natural disturbance forces listed, fire is by far the most profoundly influential. Other disturbances may cause local damage and insects may cause reduced growth and even mortality, but usually only to particular species. Fire is the one agent that can cause widespread mortality of all species as well as damaging or scarring surviving trees. It is clearly the most "disturbing" of the natural agents of change, and it is also an important component of ecosystem dynamics.

Fire is a natural part of ecosystem processes. The combination of an often-dry climate, lightning strikes and abundant fuel brought frequent fires throughout the 100 centuries of the modern forest. Depending on moisture, fuel and wind conditions, a fire might be contained to a small patch or might envelop millions of hectares. The forest does not burn uniformly; recent research indicates that a single 1,000-hectare fire event creates an average of 60 distinct burnt patches.²⁶ The 1880s-when smoke from widespread fires in

Western Canada darkened skies over London, England-typified the highly flammable fire cycles that probably occurred at least once a century during the preceding millennia. The first inventory of the Hinton forest in the 1950s indicated about one-third of the timber dated from regeneration after the fires of the 1880s and 1890s, one-third resulted from regeneration after more recent fires, and one-third originated before the 1880s. Such mixtures of old, middle-aged and young forest stands was probably common for most of the postglacial period.

Repeated visitations by fire, on varying scales of time and area, shaped the structure of the forest, and each species evolved with its own survival or renewal strategies. Most evident are the large patches of even-aged lodgepole pine. The sun-loving, fast-growing lodgepole is perfectly suited to this environment. Its seed-bearing cones are serotinous. When the cones mature they are sealed with a coat of resin that protects the seeds, but also prevents most of the cones from opening. Seeds may stay viable for up to 30 years. The resin bond is broken by the heat of fire or-if they are close to the ground-direct summer sunlight, releasing a profusion of seeds. Intense fires burn away the dry organic material (duff) on the forest floor, exposing the moisture-retaining mineral soil below, which makes an ideal seedbed. Sometimes the response is so prolific that more than a million lodgepole seedlings spring up on a single hectare and they crowd together in a dense, slow-growing thicket known as “dog hair.” In some instances, low-intensity fires merely thin the lodgepole and allow the surviving stems to flourish.



Big Brûlé, Assineau River, near Slave Lake in 1911, typical of extensive burns described by early foresters.

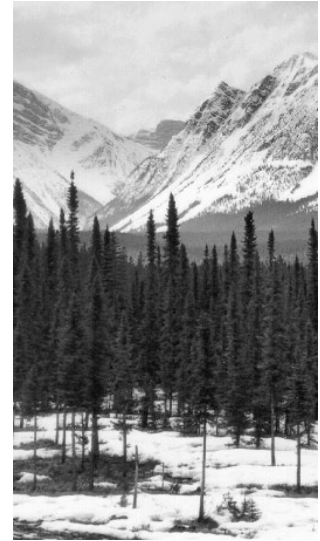
D. ROY CAMERON. DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

Black spruce, generally found on more poorly drained terrain, also has serotinous cones and regenerates vigorously after fire. Black spruce can also sprout from limbs buried on the forest floor, a process known as “layering.” In mixed conifer and hardwood stands, aspen and balsam poplar can regenerate from seed or sprout from buried roots and thrive in the sunlight.

Other species regenerate more slowly. White spruce and balsam fir, which lack the resin-protected serotinous cones, depend on wind to spread seeds from surviving trees. Birds, insects and small mammals eat most of the seeds, but at periodic intervals—once or twice in a dozen years—white spruce trees produce a super-abundance of cones, which may ensure their eventual propagation. The triggers for this periodic abundance are unclear, but are thought to be influenced by weather, insects (weevils) and disease (rust). Although slowest to recover after fire, white spruce eventually grows taller than the other species and lives longer, so it tends to dominate the older stands until replaced by balsam fir in very old (climax) stands.

At each stage, from blackened soil to old growth, the forest hosts a different community of flora and fauna. Elk favour the meadows during the first decades of regeneration, feasting on grasses, forbs (non-grass herbaceous

plants) and aspen shoots. Moose munch the tender shoots of willow and aspen. Caribou nibble ground-growing lichen and in deep snow feed on the arboreal lichen in mature conifer stands. Predators lurk in the vibrant “edge” areas between young and old stands. Woodpeckers nest in mature poplars affected by heartwood rot. Marten haunt the mature conifers to feed on squirrels. Small mammals scurry hither and yon. Insects pollinate plants and provide morsels for birds and fishes. The closer the focus, the more life becomes visible, and the more dynamic it seems.



Black spruce.

The extent of fire is clearly evident in photographs taken during the early 1900s and in descriptions by forest surveyors. For example, Dominion forester J.A. Doucet commented on fires north of Edson during his survey in 1913:

Here the Athabasca valley was, at one time, very well timbered with the best of lodgepole pine, spruce, birch and poplar. Repeated fires have swept over it in such a way that there are, at the present time, only a few remaining patches of the old stand. These are found scattered along its flats, and mostly at the entrance of streams.

The young growth, however, is generally abundant over the old brule (fire-killed timber), to which large and healthy patches of forest, 35 to 50 years old, give a certain value. But no one will ever know how many millions of dollars worth of national wealth, represented by the virgin forest, were turned into ashes by recurring forest fires and washed away with the best of the soil by the rapid current of the Athabasca River.²⁷

It has also been estimated that only about 1,760 square miles [456,000 hectares], or 23 per cent of the 7,330 square miles [1.9 million hectares] examined, have been free from fires during the last 100 years, and of these 1,760 square miles [456,000 hectares], only 250 could be considered as bearing a mature cover.²⁸



Dominion Forester J.A. Doucet and his forest survey crew on the Grande Prairie Trail north of Edson at the end of the season in 1913.

J.A. DOUCET. DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

T.W. Dwight, another Dominion forest surveyor (later to join the Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto), discussed the forest conditions of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve in 1913, part of which is now included in the westerly portions of the West Fraser forest management area. His remarks illustrate both the influence of fire and the resilience of the forest:

Second-Growth Stands (Resulting from Fires): These occupy three quarters of the forest area, and the timber is over ninety per cent pine, the remainder being mainly spruce or, in the foothills, poplar. The reasons for the dominance of pine over spruce are explained in the influence of fires. There does not seem to be any limit to the period during which fires have occurred. An extensive fire occurred in the Ghost River valley one hundred and eighty-three years ago [c. 1730], and the resulting stand is now being lumbered. Evidence of fires are found in still older stands and the general even-aged character of the forest indicates the extensive influence of past fires on the present conditions of the forest.

Within the past sixty years, fires have increased greatly in number, judging from the ages of most of the second-growth stands, which lie

below that age. An extensive fire occurred in the vicinity of the Sheep River forty-five years ago [c. 1868], and widespread fires have been periodical there during more recent times. The splendid reproduction of pine, even after severe fires, has been a boon to the forest, since practically all of the burned-over areas have seeded up to merchantable species instead of, as in many regions of Canada, coming to be occupied by comparatively worthless species. Under conditions unfavourable to reproduction, occupation of the burned areas by grass takes place; and that is the worst result that can come of a fire, or of repeated fires.²⁹

Dwight was referring to concerns about sustaining tree cover in his comment about “worst result.” Since these conifers require a seed source for regeneration, a repeat fire before young growth can produce seed-bearing cones, about 12 to 20 years of age, typically results in areas dominated by grass, broad-leaved plants and brush, perhaps with poplars or birch whose seeds may be carried long distances by wind.



Mixed stands in the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve, 1911, a result of repeated fires.

T.W. DWIGHT. DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

The open-stand conditions described by travellers through the upper Athabasca valley a century earlier also suggest the influence of fires. For

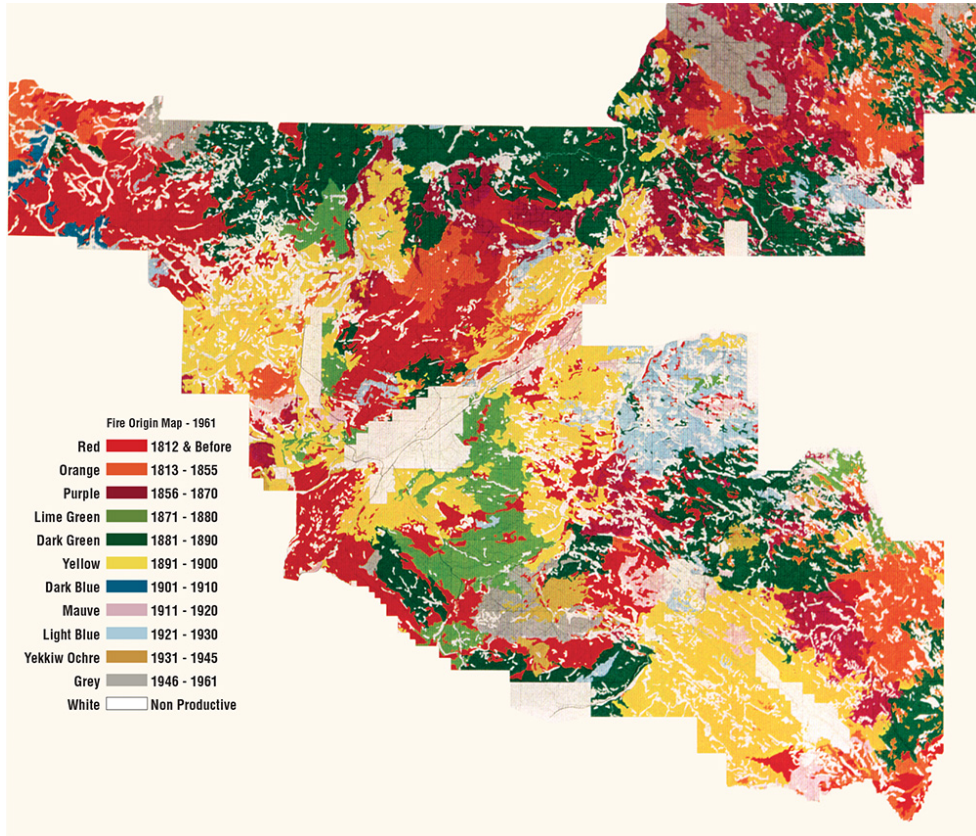
example, former American fur trader Ross Cox returning east from the Columbia in 1817, described the appearance of the Miette River valley west of the present town of Jasper: “The genial influence of a June sun relieved the wintry perspective of snow-clad mountains, and as it rose above their lofty summits, imparted a golden tinge to the green savannahs, the open woods and the innumerable rivulets.”³⁰ Hudson’s Bay Company fur trader Alexander Ross crossed Athabasca Pass on his way east in 1825 and wrote about the valley where the Whirlpool River entered the Athabasca. “On the east side [of the valley], the country at once opens into a wide and boundless prairie—the land of buffalo, and the hunter’s paradise.”³¹ In both cases, the open woods and prairie were undoubtedly maintained by fire. In the absence of fire, these have become in grown with shrubs and trees.

Recent fire-related studies are now showing how pervasive fire has been, how frequently it recurs and the complexity it introduces into forest ecosystems and approaches to sustainable forest management.

The first detailed study in this region was the age-classing project completed on Alberta’s first successful (1954) forest management area by company foresters in 1961. This three-year study was undertaken to determine dates of stand origin for forest management planning and to identify areas that would be suitable for early logging operations. What it also revealed, since most of the forests are of fire origin, was the recurrence of fires (see map 5). Fire scientist Charles Van Wagner³² used the resulting data in his classic 1978 paper, “Age-Class and the Fire Cycle.” He showed the average annual rate of burn (average percentage of total area burned annually) as of 1915 was 2 per cent, but by 1960 it had declined to 1.5 per cent, a result, at least in part he believed, of active fire control. More recent studies by landscape ecologist David Andison³³ indicate that in recent centuries an average of 1.1 per cent of the upper foothills forest and 1.5 per cent of the lower foothills forest burned annually. Some sites would be affected more frequently, others less often. The average annual rate of burn is now considerably less. On the West Fraser one-million-hectare Hinton forest, about 100,000 hectares have burned since 1955 or 0.2 per cent annually.

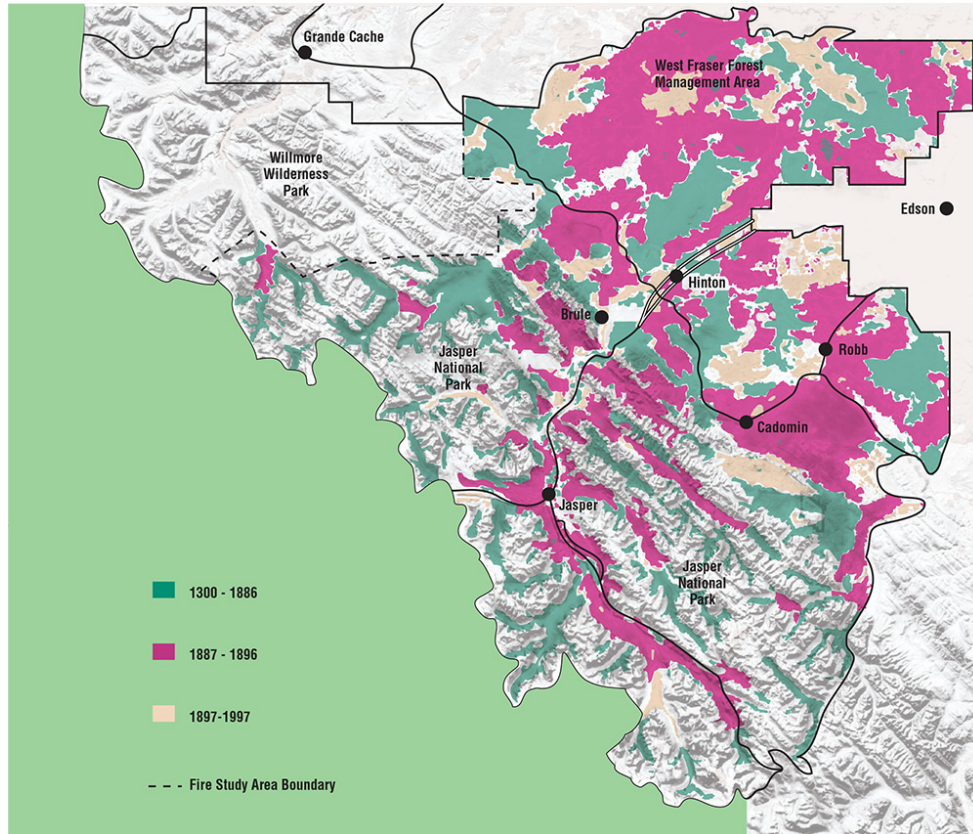
Two other aspects of fire occurrence are also interesting—the timing of burns on the landscape and the fire-free intervals at any specific point. The 1961 age-class map shows the dispersed nature of burns as approximated by tree ages, and the rates of burn are expressed by Van Wagner and Andison as yearly averages. However, the actual occurrence of fire seems to have been one of major surges of fire activity followed by periods of fires of smaller sizes. For example, David Andison³⁴ and Marie-Pierre Rogeau³⁵ did detailed studies to determine years of burn for the Foothills Model Forest. Their data show that in just a ten-year period, 1887 to 1896, during the decades of the legendary burns of the 1880s and 1890s, 36 per cent of the forests of Jasper National Park and the West Fraser forest management area burned, a nominal average annual rate of burn of 3.6 per cent. Since some of the evidence of these burns has been obliterated by more recent fires, as much as 40 per cent or more of the area may have been burned during those two decades.³⁶ It is difficult to imagine burned areas of this extent today. Of course, these burns have since regrown, and many have been logged.

The recurrence of fire on a single site is illustrated on a cutblock south of Robb.³⁷ The stand being logged in January 2001 had originated after a fire in 1896. Residual snags—standing dead trees—from the previous stand and an apparently even earlier one enabled speculation of the dates of those prehistoric fires, one as early as 1387. Fire scars on the snags allowed dating of other fires of lower intensity, as shown in the table.



Map 5: 1961 fire-origin map of the West Fraser forest management area, showing diverse age classes of the forests.

WEST FRASER



Map 6: Areas burned during the ten-year period of 1887-1896 compared to areas burned before and after on the West Fraser FMA and Jasper National Park areas of Foothills Model Forest.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Estimation of fire events in a forest stand derived from living trees and snags, Robb area, Weldwood forest management area.

Disturbance Event	Year
High-intensity fire, starts Tree 1 in new stand	1387
Low-intensity fire, scars Tree 1 from 1387	1595
High-intensity fire, kills Tree 1, starts Tree 2 in new stand	1690
Low-intensity fire, scars Tree 2 at age 18	1708
Second low-intensity fire, scars Tree 2 at age 50	1740
High-intensity fire, kills Tree 2, starts Tree 3 in new stand	1896
Low-intensity fire scars Tree 3 at age 12	1908
Logging fells Tree 3	2000

The challenge to forest managers now is to study the patterns, sizes, shapes and effects of fire for lessons by which to better plan for sustainable forest management. At the same time, it is important to maintain a fire control capability to reduce the chances of catastrophic disturbances. The current philosophy is that orderly forest harvesting may substitute for wildfire as the major disturbance. Fire and logging are not precisely the same in influence, but studies, research, trials and monitoring are helping to ensure that the results of human disturbance in the forest ecosystem produce conditions similar to those of fire and that the forests will continue to conserve their biological diversity.



Peter Murphy with “snag” of tree probably killed in the fire of 1896 that resulted in the origin of this lodgepole pine stand.

BOB UDELL, JANUARY 2001



Sections of trees (l to r) 3, 2 and 1, all showing scars from previous low-intensity fires. Tree 2 was killed by fire around 1896, tree 1 around 1690.

BOB BOTT

The Black Cat as an Icon

The legendary Black Cat north of Brûlé is a striking illustration of two of Nature's dynamic forces that have shaped the forests of this region: disturbance (forest fire) and succession (regrowth). Fittingly, the name "Brûlé" itself is the French word for "burned." It is also a term for a burned-over forest area.



The “Black Cat” (upper right) was starkly displayed on this hillside near Brûlé in this 1927 photo.

MR. MCKILLOP IN VISION OF AN ORDERED LAND BY J.G. MACGREGOR, 1981, WESTERN PRODUCER PRAIRIE BOOKS. (SEARCH FOR ORIGINAL SOURCE UNSUCCESSFUL)

The Black Cat is clearly outlined in the 1927 photograph.³⁸ The old forests in the body of the Cat originated after a forest fire around 1808, and the shape of the Cat was carved out by an extensive fire in 1896. Some other remnants of the 1808 forest also remain as patches of timber in the valley to the left of the Cat and in ragged stands on the hill.

How extensive was the forest that grew in 1808 and how many other fires have burned in the area in the meantime? This is difficult to determine, but evidence suggests the influence of at least 13 fires. Much of the evidence of any previous fires has been destroyed by the more recent ones. The story told by these fires is that the forests in this area have been shaped by many recurrent fires, ranging from small to large. Disturbance has been very much an inherent part of the ecosystem processes. Also inherent is the ability of the forest to renew itself and to grow.



In 2003, the profile of the “Black Cat” is slowly blending into the surrounding landscape.

BRIAN CARNELL

Fire history studies show that before the 1808 fire, at least four fires left older stands in this landscape dated at 1705, 1735, 1760 and 1795. Between 1808 when the “stand” was born and 1896 when the Cat was formed, at least six other fires burned in the area within the photographs—in 1830, 1840, 1860, 1869, 1880 and 1885.

Then, an extensive fire in 1936 burned through some of those regenerating forests and burned off the Cat’s tail and part of its head.

Another fire occurred in 1946. These burned areas are renewing themselves yet again, as the forests have done to sustain themselves over the last 10,000 years. As a result, the Black Cat today is difficult to distinguish.

Like its more famous cousin the Cheshire Cat of Alice in Wonderland, the Black Cat is slowly disappearing as a result of these natural forces—fires and regrowth—and will itself eventually vanish, except, perhaps, for the smile of those of us who remember it as it was.

First People on the Land

Humans were already present in North America before the end of the last Ice Age. There is evidence of human occupation in northern Yukon as early as 13,000 BP,³⁹ and possibly earlier. Initial population of the Hinton area was probably by migration from the south, along the foothills, following the reappearing prairie 10,000 to 12,000 years BP. Later migration from the north

may have followed one or both of two routes—a corridor east of the Rocky Mountains and the coastline of British Columbia when sea levels were much lower. Whatever route they took, the question, as phrased by Beaudoin and colleagues,⁴⁰ is: When would the landscape along either route have been capable of supporting humans with food, shelter and fuel wood while they travelled, especially substantial vegetation and large mammals?



The first people to visit the area saw a land recovering from extensive glaciation, depicted at the receding toe of the Athabasca Glacier below present-day Roche Miette.

© HOWARD CONYBEARE

Fire has not only shaped the landscape but has destroyed most signs of early human use. However, buried archaeological artifacts may eventually tell us more about the early peoples of the area. Evidence from a few campsite remains in the Athabasca Valley indicates an Aboriginal presence near the Snake Indian River west of Hinton as early as 10,000 to 11,000 years BP, but there is little to suggest permanent settlement. The valley then seems to have served more as a corridor for people hunting or just passing through.

Initially, people may have travelled north and south along the foothills, and there are reports from the eighteenth century of a trail parallel to the Front Ranges of the Rockies. In this region, however, the early establishment of coniferous forests would have made north–south travel difficult, reducing that “window of opportunity” to travel along the Eastern Slopes. This may have focussed migration patterns along the major east–west trending river valleys,⁴¹ as in recent times. Travel in those days was often a leisurely affair, and

a party might tarry for weeks, months or even years if the hunting, fishing and gathering opportunities were plentiful.



Looking northeast from an archaeological site occupied about 9,000 years ago. A mix of forests, meadows, grassy hillsides and water would support plants and wildlife for human use.

TOM PETERSON

Archaeological studies at Patricia Lake in Jasper National Park have found obsidian flakes from the Mount Edziza area of the Coast Range, nearly 1,000 kilometres to the west. They were brought at some time between 4,000 and 2,400 years BP during what is referred to as the Shuswap cultural horizon. This period was characterized by the use of semi-subterranean pit houses as winter residences. Results of excavations also suggest possible affiliation with the later Plateau cultural horizon 2,400 to 1,200 years BP. The area of influence of the Plateau culture is generally between the Coast Range and the Rockies.⁴²

Based on early European contacts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and on later linguistic mapping, the Hinton area was at the edge of the territories occupied by three distinct Aboriginal peoples: Athapascan language groups of the Dene in the boreal forest to the north and east, Algonkian language groups of the Stoneys to the south and east, and Salishan language groups of the Shuswaps to the west.⁴³ More specifically, the Sekani, Shuswap, Kootenay, Salish, Stoney and Cree seasonally hunted in the area, but are believed to have lived in areas such as the southern foothills and Peace

country.⁴⁴ The population density of the foothills before the arrival of Europeans may have been lower than other parts of North America, especially areas west of the Rockies.

The main cultural influence in this region over the last 300 years has been from the Plains people to the south. In the early 1800s, the Beaver Indians dominated the Alberta foothills between the Athabasca and Peace rivers, a few Shuswaps lived in the Jasper and Mount Robson areas⁴⁵ and Stoneys, or Assiniboines, prevailed to the south. At this time the Cree were increasing their presence in the west and were influential in this region.

The Iroquois played a prominent role in the fur trade. An eastern tribe from the Ontario-Quebec area, they were among the first to develop a proficiency in the use of steel traps in the 1790s. Western tribes at that time used deadfalls or dug beaver out of their houses. The North West Company (NWC) brought Iroquois, also referred to as Nipissings or Algonquins, west to serve as canoemen and trappers. They served three-year contracts and many stayed on as “freemen” to trap and trade independently, often taking women as wives from local tribes such as the Cree.⁴⁶ They seem to have been present in this region at least by the late 1790s, certainly in the early 1800s. In 1810, David Thompson’s Iroquois guide Thomas led his party from the Brazeau River to the Athabasca and their camping area at Brûlé Lake. Thompson’s narrative⁴⁷ suggests that Thomas knew what to expect on the trail over Athabasca Pass and he led them up the Whirlpool River without hesitation. Thomas had either been there before or had learned about the route from fellow Iroquois. Pierre Bostonais, the fair-haired Iroquois trapper known as Tête Jaune or Yellowhead, was in the upper Fraser area early in the 1800s, and in 1859 Hector described camping with a group of four tents of Iroquois along the Athabasca River near the mouth of Oldman Creek. Hector explained that:

These Iroquois were originally trappers in the service of the [North West] Company, and on the junction of that company with the Hudson’s Bay Company, they turned “freemen,” as those are termed in the country who are not in the service of the Company, and have since tented about like Indians, trading the skins and furs they procure at Jasper House. There

are only thirty tents of them, and they all talk the Cree language besides their own, and have latterly intermarried a good deal with the Cree ... of Lac Ste. Anne's.⁴⁸

The Iroquois also dispersed to other areas. Hector remarked on Iroquois in the upper Smoky River Valley area where they were well established, hunting and growing vegetables. In some areas the success of the Iroquois rankled local tribes. As fur trader Daniel Harmon noted in his journal in 1818 on the occasion that an Iroquois and his family had been killed in New Caledonia:*

* New Caledonia was the British territory in central British Columbia, with trading posts at Fort St. James and Fort George (Prince George).

For several years past, Iroquois from Canada have been in the habit of coming into different parts of the North West country, to hunt the beaver, &c. The Natives of the country consider them as intruders ... they make great havock (sic) among the game ... which circumstances they knew to be displeasing to the Indians here, who have threatened to kill them, if they persisted in destroying the animals on their lands.



*This painting, *The Courier du Bois and the Savage*, by Frederic Remington ca. 1891, depicts the adoption by Europeans of Aboriginal customs and technology in support of exploration and trade.*

OIL (BLACK AND WHITE) ON CANVAS. COURTESY SID RICHARDSON COLLECTION OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Harmon concluded by expressing the hope that the “melancholy event” would “prevent any of the Iroquois from coming into this region again.” That antagonism seems not to have been evident in this region and many descendents of the original Iroquois remain.⁴⁹

James Hector of the Palliser expedition recorded a story about a tribe that at one time lived near the Snaring River, “dwelling in holes dug in the ground, and subsisting on animals which they captured with snares of green hide, in which manner they used to kill the big-horn, small deer and even moose.”⁵⁰

Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, a Belgian missionary, described the Snake Indians of Jasper. He believed that they had originated in British Columbia and migrated east to Jasper in search of food:

Many wandering families of the Carrier tribe and Ashiganés or Sock Indians of New Caledonia, compelled by hunger, have quitted their country, traversed the east of the mountains and now range the valleys of this region in quest of food. They nourish themselves with roots, and whatever they can catch; many of them have their teeth worn to the

gums by the earth and sand they swallow with their nourishment. The winter they fare well, for then the moose, elk and reindeer are plentiful.... By way of a dainty morsel, the Indians pluck out the eyes of fish with the end of their fingers and swallow them raw, likewise the tripe with their whole contents, without further ceremony than placing them an instant on the coals, from thence into the omnibus or general reservoir, without even undergoing the operation of the jaws.⁵¹

Father De Smet, who had travelled widely throughout the North American west, said that the name “Snake Indians” was derived from a southern U.S. tribe who lived in such extreme poverty that they burrowed in the ground like snakes and lived on roots. That tribe never lived in Canada, but he suggested that the name Snake Indian might have been a derogatory term for any “feeble” tribe.

Both James Hector and Alberta historian J.G. MacGregor⁵² described the massacre of the remnants of the Snake Indians who had lived in the country north of Jasper House, but were “treacherously exterminated by the Assineboines”⁵³ about 1840 near the mouth of the Snake Indian River (then the Assiniboine River). Some speculate that the proximity of the trading post would have seemed to offer some protection to the small group of about 37 from their traditional enemies, the Assiniboine or Stoneys—also in the area. The Snake Indians had been invited to a peace fest and all were killed except for 10 who escaped and three young women who were taken to Fort Assiniboine. A Métis named Bellerose enabled the women to escape and they headed back up the Athabasca River to the mouth of the Berland River. At that point, two of them built a raft, taking the fire-bag with them, and were never seen again. The third woman, believed named Secak, headed up the Berland River for about 45 kilometres and stopped to prepare for winter. Hers is a remarkable story of survival and adaptability. MacGregor passed on the story as told by trapper and packer James Shand Harvey who had lived in this region since 1907.⁵⁴ Missionary Father De Smet recorded a similar story about this event.

Berries were still to be had, and she managed to kill a few squirrels and with the sinews from their tails made snares for rabbits. Out of the rabbit skins she made herself a dress. She killed some porcupines and marmots too and dried their meat. She kindled a fire in the primitive way by revolving the point of one dry stick rapidly in a hole made in another. She gathered gum from poplars and collected a large pile of dry wood. By the time winter had set in she was ready for it, and lived at this spot 'til the following summer.⁵⁵

The woman stayed on in the Berland Lake area, between Pinto Creek and the Berland River. She was then in the country of the Iroquois whose domain lay along the Smoky River. She lived alone in the bush through two winters until an Iroquois hunter found signs of her activities. He located her camp at a cave with a large pile of firewood stacked nearby, hid until she returned, when he realized that she must be one of the three women who had escaped from the Assiniboines two years earlier. After a great struggle, he captured her and took her to his camp where his women were kind to her. After living with them for two years, she went to Jasper House where a factor hired her to help his wife. She later married a Shuswap. None of her own tribe remained; she was the sole survivor.

The Assiniboine River would be renamed to the Snake Indian River in commemoration of this tragic but oft-repeated event when warring tribes characterized much of the landscape of western North America. Areas in dispute and not controlled by one tribe or another, such as the upper Athabasca region, could prove extremely dangerous when itinerant hunters and gatherers from opposing tribes encountered each other therein.

First People and Fire

The first people were hunters and gatherers and moved to take advantage of seasonal opportunities for food. They depended largely on buffalo in the prairie, parkland, and montane areas, and moose in the forested areas. The moose was an important staple in this region, providing meat, clothing, footwear, coverings for lodges and boats and sinew for sewing. Hides were

smoke-tanned, and surplus meat was dried. The same traditions of hunting and gathering remain today. Finds of buffalo skulls and evidence of buffalo wallows in meadows indicate that buffalo were present or migratory along most of the river valleys. In the mountain region bighorn sheep were also a staple.

Fire made human life possible in these forests, for cooking and heat for year-round living. The ability to carry fire or fire-making materials was essential for survival. Recurrent forest fires, both natural and human-caused, also created the earlier plant succession stages and the mosaic of habitats necessary to sustain the plants and animals on which Aboriginal people depended, such as berries, birch for bark and syrup, willows and aspen for browse for the large herbivores, and deciduous species used by beaver for food and dam-building. The canoe represented a high state of forest-based technology: it was built entirely with native materials— framed with saplings or split wood, covered usually with birch bark, sewn with split spruce roots, and sealed with conifer pitch. Travellers' accounts describe how quickly the Aboriginal people could repair damaged canoes with spare materials they carried with them or found along the way. The lodgepole pine, a fire-origin species, was favoured for tepee poles and travois, and was traded with neighbouring tribes on the prairies. Most of these forest products were derived from the forest plant communities that developed after recent fires.

The frequent fire cycles also played a major role in Aboriginal life in this area. Although burned-over areas soon support a wealth of plants and animals, the immediate aftermath can be bleak and barren, another reason for people to keep moving, perhaps to return later when wildlife feasted on new growth.

Life in the northern forests was not always idyllic and starvation was a constant threat. In these regions, with such a continuity of fuels, fires could become very large. An excerpt from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post record at Fort Edmonton in 1812 illustrates the hardships frequently related to fire.

The Plains are, and have been these several Days past, burning in a most dreadful manner. Fires are raging in all Directions, and the sun obscured

with Smoke that covers the whole Country, and should the remarkable dry weather which has now continued so long, not change very soon, the plains must be burnt to such an Extent as to preclude all Hopes of our getting a large supply of dry provisions, for which appearances on our Arrival here were very flattering.⁵⁶

A later entry records that the Sarcees reported that from Fort Edmonton to the banks of the South Saskatchewan River not a buffalo bull could to be seen nor a bit of dry ground left unburned—a distance of about 450 kilometres, possibly embracing an area of 6.5 million hectares. The Hudson's Bay Company was forced to send men 80 kilometres away to find game for food that fall and winter. Very few hunters and trappers came to trade that year since the Aboriginal population had to move to unburned areas that still supported buffalo.

Judging by the later practices of Aboriginal people in nearby areas, the early peoples used their knowledge of fire and deliberately set fires to create and maintain habitat for favoured species such as buffalo, moose and bighorn sheep, to encourage growth of berries and other food plants, or to clear travel routes along streams and rivers. Undoubtedly wildfires were also accidentally ignited. In prairie or parkland areas, Aboriginal people also learned to set back-fires to protect themselves—fires started around their camps that would burn the fuels between them and an oncoming fire.

Explorer David Thompson perhaps reflected a European perspective when he commented in 1792 on the relationship between Aboriginal people and fire in northern Saskatchewan:

The Natives are frequently very careless in putting out the fires they make, and a high wind kindles it among the Pines always ready to catch fire; and [they] burn until stopped by some large swamp or lake; which makes many miles of the country appear very unsightly, and destroys many animals and birds especially the grouse, who do not appear to know how to save themselves, but all this devastation is nothing to the Indian, his country is large.⁵⁷

Thompson, with his European upbringing, perhaps misjudged what he observed. Colonel Sam Steele, who led the North West Mounted Police into western Canada, saw things differently in 1874 when he commented: “Indians ... willfully set the prairies on fire [in the autumn] so that the bison would come to their part of the country to get the rich green grass which would follow in the spring.”⁵⁸

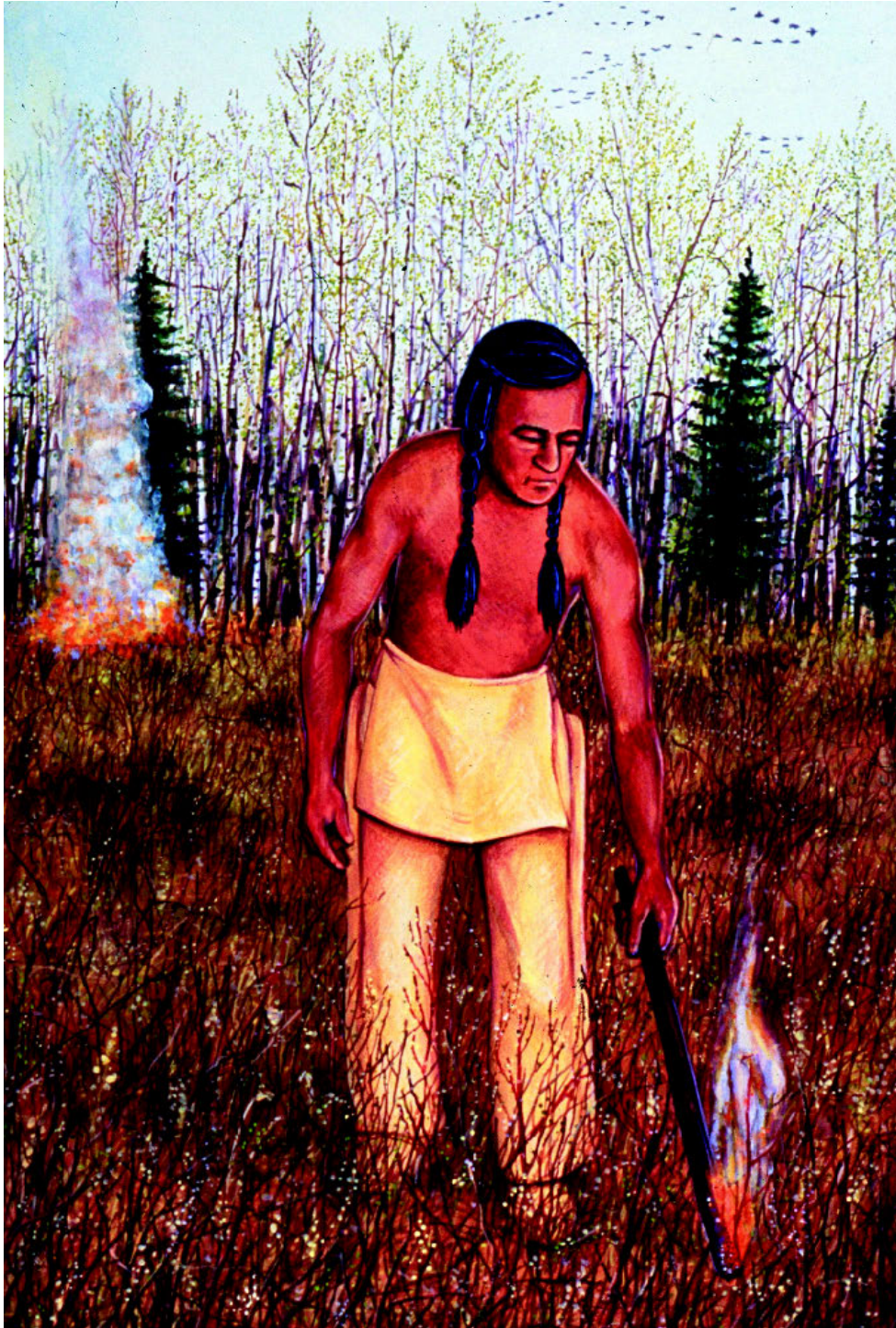
George M. Dawson,⁵⁹ geologist and botanist with the Geological Survey of Canada’s survey of the Peace River country in 1879–80, had a similar impression of the open country of the Grande Prairie region in 1880. He noted that the origin of the prairies in that area was sufficiently obvious, there could be no doubt that they had been produced and were maintained by frequent fires that prevented trees from establishing themselves. His report stated that the “fires were, of course, attributable to human agency, and it was probable that before the country was inhabited by the Indians it was everywhere forest-clad.” He also observed that the land was scored and rutted with old buffalo tracks and pitted with saucer-shaped buffalo wallows.

Louis Martel, a Beaver Indian in northwestern Alberta, conveyed a clear understanding about fire during an interview with Dr. Henry T. Lewis in 1975.

Fires had to be controlled. You couldn’t just start a fire anywhere, anytime. Fire can do a lot of harm or a lot of good. You have to know how to control it. It has been a long time since my father and my uncles used to burn each spring. But we were told to stop. The Mounties arrested some people.... The country has changed from what it used to be —brush and trees where there used to be lots of meadows, and not so many animals as before.⁶⁰

There is growing evidence that Aboriginal people significantly affected the landscapes through their use of fire, but their use appeared to be tempered by an understanding of the ecosystem, their place in it, and the need to constrain fires to the areas they wanted to burn. For example, they would burn stream and river margins for ease of travel, to provide grass for horses, encourage willows for moose and aspen for beaver, and open areas on which to camp,

and to stimulate berry production. They would also burn meadows to encourage grass and sedges, and would burn some stands of living trees to create sources of dry wood for campfires.⁶¹ In a 1980 interview, Edward Moberly, grandson of HBC trader Henry Moberly, described burning on the Henry House Flats east of Jasper in the early 1900s:



Aboriginal people used fire as a tool to manage vegetation for grazing, wildlife habitat and ease of travel.

BY GLENN CROWE, PARKS CANADA

[In] the spring that's the first thing everybody does is burn the meadows —well everyone goes and helps him—but burn when he wants to burn.

This way the meadow doesn't grow in—willows and things doesn't come in—it's always the same size and it's always clean.... they watch the wind very close—that's the main thing. Some of it, they have to do it when it is absolutely still—no wind to tackle that.— [They] start the fire in the east and it can't cross that burn. When the west wind blows—you start this way and it's all done.⁶²



Edward Moberly (second from left) was a sought-after mountain guide, seen here with his brother Frank (left), King Carol of Romania (right), Magda Lupesca and guide Harry Parkins after a 30-day hunt north of Jasper, 1935.

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Their burns were also family and cultural events; as Edward Moberly went on to explain:

When we burn the meadows, every child that is big enough to help control be on the job. What did we have to control the fire with?—a bunch of spruce boughs dipped in water. There was no other equipment to be had—but it worked—and if somebody has a big meadow that fire

might get away—everybody goes and helps there—even the kids. The kids them days were put to work early in life, so they be able to learn what they have to learn. Because they're going to use that way of life themselves. There's not too much shovels—I think each family might have one or two spades, that's all there was—maybe two picks in the outfit, for the whole outfit. So you have to figure out how you control, and the best I've seen beside the pump is spruce boughs—you know, maybe four, about so long [about a metre long]—for smaller kids shorter. They tied up where you hold them—dip them in water—and as the fire goes along, as long as the fire doesn't go too fast—[and] there's no wind—you can control like that—very neatly.⁶³

A similar technique had been used on the Prairies to save green forests from prairie fires and, at the same time, to maintain hay meadows. This description comes from a 1922 account by fur trader O-Ge-Mas-Es.

Old South-Wind was my first Indian friend in the Stony Creek country (now Melfort district [of Saskatchewan]) and not only selected my first location but also gave me much kind and sound advice, for to me it was a new country. His forefathers for generations back had made this district their hunting grounds and he pointed out to me with pride the fact that all the first growth timber was still standing untouched by fire. When I asked him what I should do in regard to this preservation of the green woods, which of course meant saving the fur, he said: “Just as soon as the snow goes off in the spring and the grass on the ridges is dry, put out your fires; the snow is still in the woods and no harm will result; then later on, as the hay swamps dry up and you have the ridges surrounding them burnt off, do the same to the hay.”⁶⁴



John Moberly and family, 1908, settled along the Athabasca River in present-day Jasper National Park in late 1890s, living on the land.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-3187-2

Given the importance of bighorn sheep as a vital food source in the Jasper area, it is not surprising that Edward Moberly also described an innovative use of prescribed fire to enhance hunting success. Referring to the Colin Range east of their home by Henry House Flats, he explained that in the spring they burned the lower and middle slopes on the “small benches” to encourage a succulent growth of grasses and forbs. In the fall they burned the meadows on the upper slopes where the sheep usually fed in winter. As a result the sheep would move to the lower slopes where they could be more easily hunted. Moberly also explained that the Elders told them that the sheep would sometimes develop a “sickness” that caused them to cough, lose weight and often die during the winter. They believed that burning the high ranges kept the sheep healthier. Their description fits the symptoms of sheep lungworm infestations, in which the alternate-host parasite is a small snail that deposits the lungworm eggs on the grass on which the sheep feed.



View easterly across Henry House Flats and the Athabasca River toward Mount Colin, 1915 photograph by Bridgland. The open nature of the forest is a result of the fires of the 1880s and 1890s and spring burning by Métis families. Edward Moberly’s “small benches” are to the left of the canyon.

M.P. BRIDGLAND, 1915. DIGITAL IMAGE ©2000, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA B459

Stephen Pyne, noted historian and fire ecologist, referring to Upper Paleolithic Europeans, explained what he believes to be a pervasive human influence on ecosystems through the use of fire: “Wherever climate allowed a sliver of dryness,” and wherever fire-adapted plant and animal assemblages existed, “humans could drive a wedge of fire to crack open the ecosystem and cook it into more palatable forms. Why would they not exploit fully the most indispensable element of their toolkit?” ⁶⁵

Some place names reflect open areas in the landscape. Maskuta Creek, previously called Prairie Creek means “meadow creek” in Cree,⁶⁶ Wildhay River indicates open grassy areas. It is likely that spring burning was done by Aboriginal people at times along most of the rivers and streams in this region. This included the Beaver and members of the eastern tribes of Iroquois, Nipissing and other peoples who came west

with the fur traders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those practices stopped around 1910 when the federal government took over management of the land. As Edward Moberly related:



Same view taken 84 years later, in 1999. More forest and fewer open areas are the legacy of decades of forest protection.

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[When the federal government were] going to take this area for Jasper National Park—they put the notices all over. Everybody to watch [out for] fire. No fire. Watch your campfire. Always put it out. Watch your smoke.... How do we know? Because Adam Joachim can read. He read them out for us—for the people—what it says. So, they follow the instructions right from the

beginning—otherwise you did wrong. Old Swift [Lewis Swift, former miner who homesteaded west of the Snaring River in Jasper Park in 1893]—he shot a squirrel on his own property, he got fined 50 bucks!⁶⁷

Dominion land surveyor Morrison P. Bridgland pioneered the use of panoramic photography as an adjunct to triangulation for preparing topographic maps. He worked along the Athabasca Valley from the eastern Jasper Park boundary to Jasper townsite in 1915, leaving a legacy of photographs. These places were re-photographed in 1999 by Jeanine Rhemtulla,⁶⁸ a graduate student at the University of Alberta, and Eric Higgs, professor in charge of a major project to study human impacts in the Montane region in Jasper. The two photographs show the appearance of the Athabasca Valley looking downriver from near the Jasper townsite towards the Colin Range. The early photo was taken just five years after the Moberly, Joachim and Findlay families were evicted from the park. The open nature of the forest clearly reflects the influence of fires. The 1999 photo shows how much the forest canopy has closed in response to effective fire control.

We will probably never know the actual extent of burning by Aboriginal people. Accounts suggest that their burning was mostly location-specific, such

as along watercourses and meadows, travel routes and camping areas—as effectively described by Henry Lewis and Teresa Ferguson⁶⁹ in their paper “Yards, Corridors and Mosaics: How to Burn a Boreal Forest.” The burns were usually planned for and conducted in spring when adjacent forests were still moist. Some burns undoubtedly spread farther than intended, but probably did not seriously affect their ways of life, given the apparent sparsity of population and vastness of the area. As Stephen Pyne explained in a review of “Indians, Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest”: “This essay ... reminds us ... that small numbers of fire-wielding people can exercise wide influence, that people move, that fire propagates. Humanity’s fiery reach far exceeds its grasp.”⁷⁰ In the same review, Pyne noted that the authors insisted that burning was systematic, utilitarian, and controlled. He agreed that much of it was that, but not all:

Burning also resulted from malice, play, war, accident [and] escapes.... Kindled prairies sometimes flared instead of burning out at night; spring fires that normally expired at wet treelines could continue during times of drought.... In effect, ignition became constant on the land. Remove that flame and the structure of even seldom-visited forests would look very different.⁷¹

Pyne also commented that “[fire] simply happens between people and land.” Although vegetation may be viewed “as ‘food resources,’ not as fuel,” Pyne noted that in his view fire should be tracked within a seasonal cycle of fuel availability as well as within a cycle of seasonal harvesting, and that the former made possible much of the latter.⁷²

Then, as now, humans in the Alberta foothills and mountain area may have set a considerable number of fires, most of which may have been on the open montane valley-bottom forests, but the greater overall area burned was most likely due to a combination of lightning and “escaped” fires during dry weather cycles with a continuity of fuels.

CHAPTER TWO

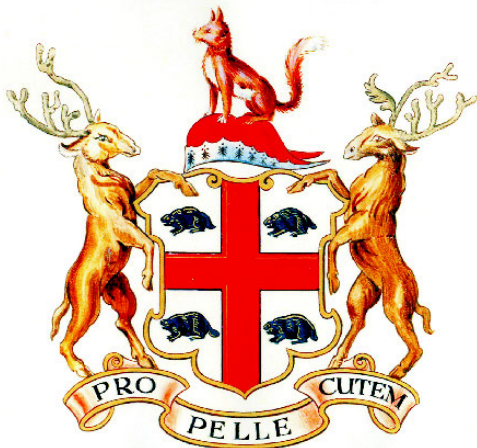
Early Explorers and the Athabasca Pass



“[Nothing] could induce me to spend the remainder of my life in a country, where so much hardship and privation had to be endured, beyond the bounds of civilization.”

EDWARD ERMATINGER, 1828 HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY COLUMBIA EXPRESS
BRIGADE LEADER AT THE END OF HIS TERM OF EMPLOYMENT.

Arrival of the Europeans in North America with firearms, horses, trading goods and diseases marked the beginning of major changes for the Aboriginal people. In fact, despite the implications, Aboriginal people made early exploration possible by acting as guides, interpreters, canoe men and packers, and showing how to live and travel in these northern lands. The renowned explorer Alexander Mackenzie wrote in 1793, as he was about to leave on his epic voyage to the Pacific, “Without the help of Indians, I have little hope of



The Hudson's Bay Company, founded in 1670, is Canada's oldest corporation. Its motto, roughly translated, is "A skin for a skin."

COURTESY OF HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

success.”¹ Early European fur traders quickly adopted Aboriginal skills and knowledge and typically travelled and lived in harmony with them. The Aboriginals were encouraged to trap furs, which was a natural extension of their hunting and gathering activities. The establishment of trading posts eventually brought European trade goods such as axes and guns, metal pots and needles, which were quickly adapted to enhancing Aboriginals' ways of life.

One of the major influences was the Hudson's Bay Company, formed in 1670 by the Royal Charter of King Charles II of England. The charter granted exclusive trading privileges in the territory of Rupert's Land, comprising all lands that drained into Hudson Bay. Trading and exploration, competition between the English and French and later between British and Americans, spurred the Hudson's Bay Company—and the rival North West Company formed in 1776—to penetrate steadily farther into the North American interior.

The first European to enter present-day Alberta may have been Henry Kelsey who was close to the eastern boundary in the Battle River Valley in 1690, exploring for the Hudson's Bay Company.² However, the first confirmed in Alberta was Anthony Henday in 1754, travelling with some Crees, also for the Hudson's Bay Company, to encourage distant tribes to trade. The party paddled up the Saskatchewan River, then moved west on foot across the prairies, finally reaching a hill believed to be located near Innisfail where he saw the Rocky Mountains.³ From there, Henday travelled north and may have wintered near present-day Edmonton.⁴ Next on the scene was Peter Pond in 1778. Pond crossed Methy Portage from Saskatchewan and came down the Clearwater River into northern Alberta, passing the site of Fort McMurray and on down the Athabasca to about 65 kilometres from Lake Athabasca,

where he built the first “white man’s house” in Alberta.⁵ This established the Athabasca River as an arterial waterway.

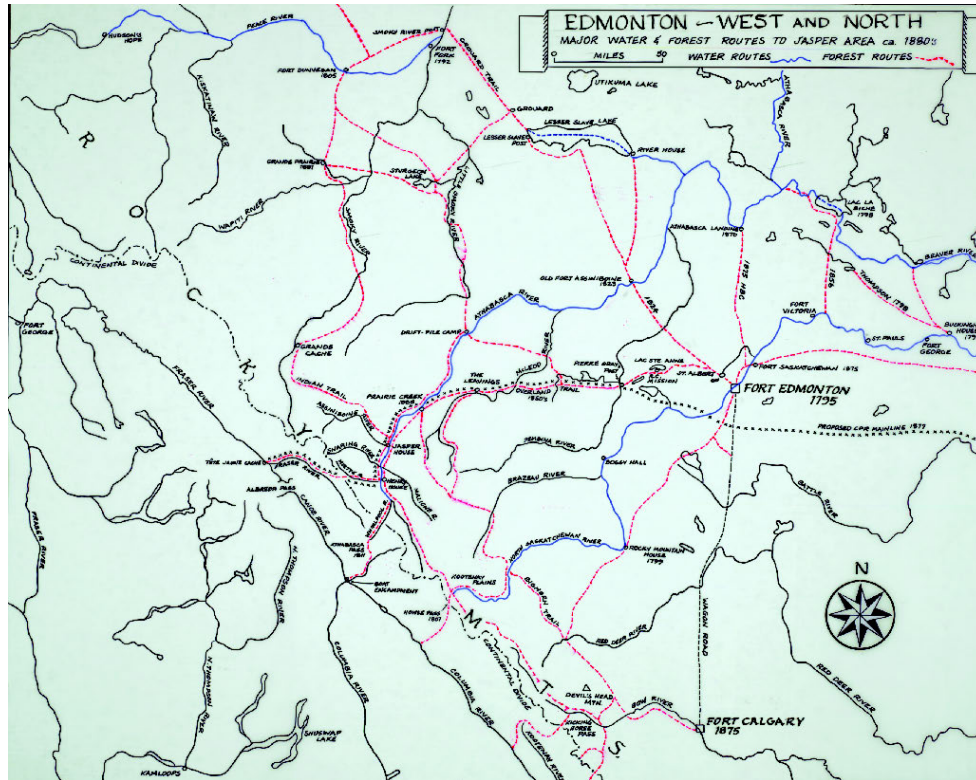
Archibald McLeod built Alberta’s second “house” three years later in 1781 at the forks of the Clearwater and Athabasca rivers where Fort McMurray now stands. Peter Pond thought that the river now called the Mackenzie flowed into the Pacific. His successor, Alexander Mackenzie, arranged to build the first Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca in 1788, and then in 1789 travelled down the river that would later bear his name to instead reach the Arctic Ocean. In October 1792, Mackenzie left Fort Chipewyan, wintered near the forks of the Peace and Smoky rivers, and next spring set out to reach the Pacific Ocean overland on 24 July 1793—the first European to do so north of Mexico.⁶

Settlement around Edmonton began in 1795 when the Hudson’s Bay Company and North West Company built the first of a series of fortified trading posts.⁷ In the meantime, other traders working up the Churchill and Beaver rivers were accessing Alberta. Angus Shaw built his Lac d’Orignal (Moose Lake) post near Bonnyville in 1789.



Map 7: Rupert's Land of the Hudson's Bay Company, comprising the land draining into Hudson Bay.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST



Map 8: Edmonton, West & North. Major water and forest routes to the Jasper area in the 1800s.

JOAN UDELL, 2002

David Thompson – The Great Mapmaker

Then David Thompson came on the scene. An explorer and mapper of travel and trade routes in northwestern North America, Thompson made major contributions to travel in Alberta as a result of his discoveries. Born in London, England, he was apprenticed to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1784 at the age of 14, posted first to Fort Churchill, and in 1785 to York Factory. He learned the art of northern travel and fur trading, helping to establish inland posts. In 1789, while recovering from a leg fractured in a sled accident, he also learned surveying and mapping from the Hudson's Bay Company's official surveyor, Philip Turnor. Armed with these new skills, in 1792 he was assigned to search for a more direct route between Hudson Bay and Lake Athabasca. Later, he became discouraged with the Company's insistence that he focus on trading over mapping, and he left the Hudson's Bay Company in 1797 to join the North West Company. He began by surveying and mapping their posts

and trade routes, largely in the Red River and Upper Mississippi and Missouri river basins.⁸⁻⁹



David Thompson with his sextant. No portraits of Thompson are known to exist; this depiction is by artist Charles William Jefferys.

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The North West Company gave Thompson the additional duties of Trader in 1799, but he continued to survey as time permitted and rose within the North West Company from clerk to partner over the next seven years.¹⁰ During this time he and his scouts explored the southern Rockies to the Highwood River, along the Bow River to the Front Range, and north to Brazeau Lake. His explorations were not the only ones going on, but his were of the greatest importance to Alberta. In the meantime, for example, Simon Fraser, another North West Company partner, built a fur trade post in 1805 at Hudson's Hope where the Parsnip and Finlay rivers join to form the Peace River in what is now British Columbia. In the United States, Meriwether

Lewis of the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804–1806 was exploring the first route to the Pacific within the United States.¹¹

In 1798 Thompson made the first of his major expeditions through Alberta and his first important discovery there. Working his way up the Beaver River, he crossed over the Portage La Biche to Red Deer's Lake (Lac La Biche) on 3 October 1798. This was the "Little Divide" on the northern height of land between the Churchill and Athabasca river basins. Shallow water on the upper Beaver River often required portages along the way, but the portage over the divide itself was only about 340 metres. Although this portage was first documented by David Thompson, historian Gregory Johnson¹² explained that judging by the number of artifacts along the route, it had been used in prehistoric times, adding that Thompson's guide, Laderoot, knew exactly where he was going that day.



Artist Paul Kane's painting of Fort Edmonton, as seen on his 1846 travels in Western Canada.

STARK MUSEUM OF ART, ORANGE, TEXAS 31.78/133, PWC 22

Thompson set up a trading post at Lac La Biche during the winter of 1798–99 on what soon became the major route to both the lower and upper Athabasca regions. In the spring of 1799 he travelled over 1,100 kilometres by horse and canoe with a small party that took them to Fort Augustus at the junction of the Sturgeon River with the North Saskatchewan, then northwesterly up the Sturgeon and across to the Pembina River. He then

canoed down the Pembina and Athabasca rivers, followed the Slave River to Lesser Slave Lake, putting it on his maps, then continued back down to Fort McMurray. He returned east by the Clearwater and Methy to Isle a la Crosse having extended knowledge of the Athabasca as far as the Pembina.¹³ It was there in 1799 that Thompson married Charlotte Small, daughter of a Scots fur trader and a Cree woman. Charlotte travelled extensively with Thompson along with their children as they arrived.

The upper Athabasca area remained remote. Distances were great and access was difficult. In 1800 it remained the last of the major east–west arterial routes yet to be explored and developed. At that time the main routes into northern Alberta were overland by horse from Fort Garry (Winnipeg) or by canoe up the Saskatchewan or over Methy Portage into the Clearwater and Athabasca rivers.

Thompson and the Athabasca Pass

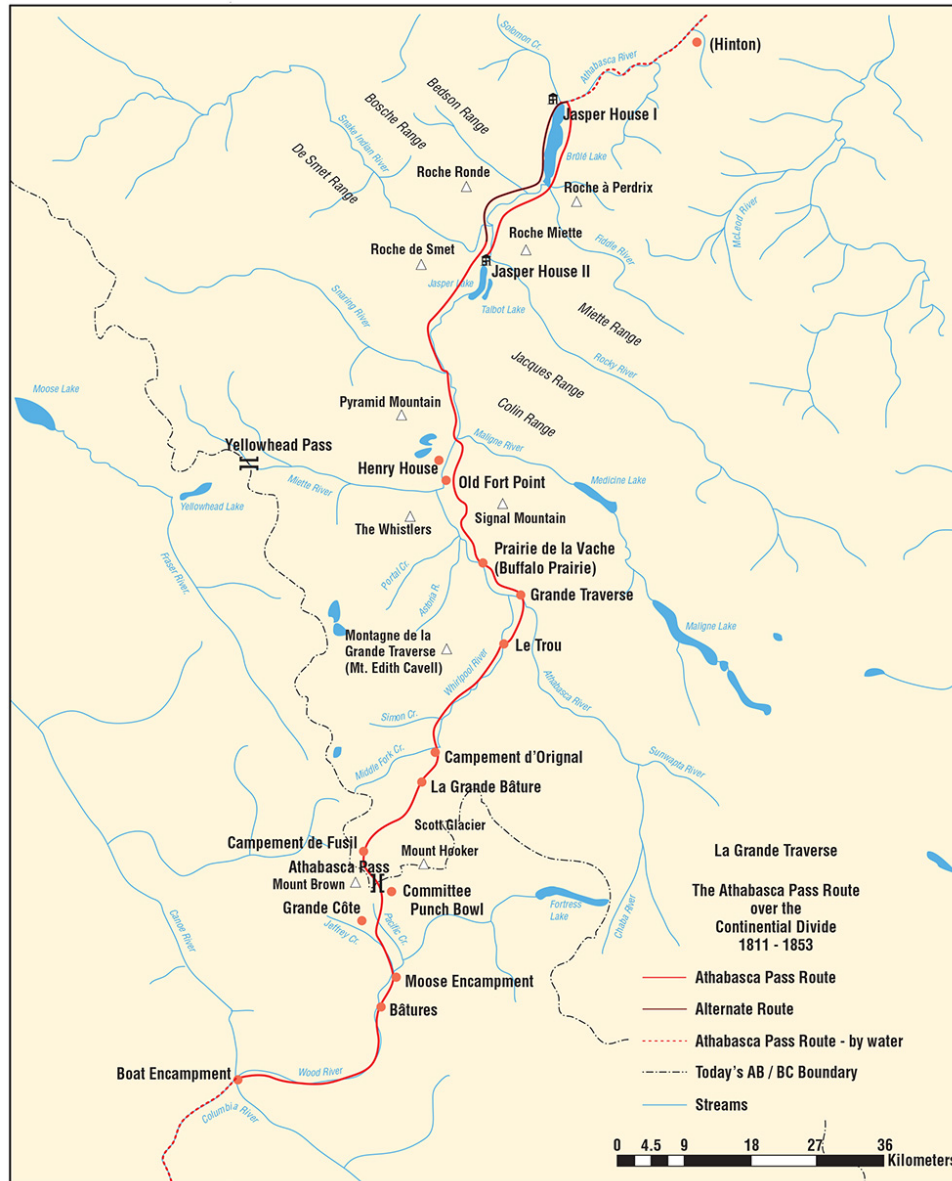
David Thompson is credited with “discovery” of the Athabasca Pass in 1811. He was at least the first European to pass through it, describe it and demonstrate its feasibility as a route to the Columbia River and Pacific Coast. It was a pivotal event. The establishment of this route initiated a steady flow of travellers along the Fort Edmonton–Athabasca route through Jasper to the Columbia—the first major step in “opening up” this region. Athabasca Pass lies at the head of the Whirlpool River, a major tributary of the upper Athabasca River, about 50 kilometres southwest of the forks. At 1,748 metres, it is more than 600 metres higher than the Yellowhead Pass to the north. As described by geographer William C. Wonders,¹⁴ the pass is located in a U-shaped trough valley. The tree line lies about a hundred metres above the valley bottom, which is characterized by widely spaced spruce, shrubs and alpine meadows.

In 1806 Thompson had undertaken to develop trade for the North West Company with the Kootenays across the mountains on the Kootenay and upper Columbia River areas on the Pacific slope. To do this, he continued to look for passes across the Rocky Mountains. In anticipation of Thompson’s

trading trip in 1807, the North West Company sent Jacques Raphael (Jaco) Finlay and a work party up the North Saskatchewan River in the spring of 1806 to find a way across the Continental Divide. The Finlay family and party camped on the Kootenay Plains, later finding their way up the Howse River and crossing through Howse Pass.* They cut a rough trail down the Blaeberry River on the Pacific side to the Columbia and built two canoes to leave for Thompson's use. Finlay also drew a map to show where he had been.¹⁵

* Hudson's Bay Company trader Joseph Howse led the first HBC brigade over the pass in 1809, two years after Thompson of the NWC had mapped it.

Thompson made his crossing through Howse Pass on Finlay's trail in 1807 to reach the Columbia, the first European to map it. This pass was a logical route, lying up Howse River¹⁶ near the head of the North Saskatchewan that flowed past the forts at Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House. The North West Company council endorsed this as their preferred route west to the Columbia River. However, in his quest to trade furs with the Kootenays, Thompson also supplied them with guns. The Peigans, who controlled the North Saskatchewan on the Alberta side, were outraged that he had armed their traditional enemies, whom they had long since driven across the Rockies. This set the stage for later hostilities. The years 1810–1812 were momentous ones, both for Thompson and for the future country of Canada. During this time he travelled extensively. To start with, in 1810 he had been trading and mapping in the Idaho area of the Upper Missouri River. He then returned in July to Rainy Lake, Ontario, near Lake Superior for the annual meeting of the North West Company Committee. There he was directed to explore the Columbia River to its mouth and extend trading opportunities; Thompson was also eager to map the river to its end. Rivalry with Jacob Astor's American Fur Company lent urgency to get there first.



Map 9: La Grande Traverse: The Athabasca Pass Route over the Continental Divide 1811-1853.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Thompson was therefore back on the Upper Saskatchewan past Rocky Mountain House in early September, prepared to cross Howse Pass with men and horses for his dash down the Columbia. However, the Peigans had camped in the valley in force and warned him not to travel that way again. Outnumbered and aggravated about their continual threats, Thompson turned back to reconsider his options. As he wrote:

After] much consultation, we fully perceived we had no further hopes of passing in safety by the defiles of the Saskatchewan River, and that we must now change our route to the defiles of the Athabasca River which would place us in safety, but would be attended with great inconvenience, fatigue, suffering and privation; but there was no alternative. ... On the 28th October we were now in all twenty-four Men; having furnished ourselves with leather Tents and dressed leather for shoes; we loaded our [24] Horses in proportion to their strength from 180 to 240 pounds [82 to 109 kg] weight each Horse, and arranged the Men, four to hunt and procure provisions, two men to clear a path thro' the woods, the other taking care of the horses, and other duties; with Thomas an Iroquois Indian as guide; our road lay over the high grounds within about thirty miles [48 km] of the Mountains. With occasional cutting away of few trees we should have made several miles a day, but the forests are so frequently burned and occasion so many windfalls, that the Horses make very slow progress, thus the dense forests are destroyed and meadows formed. We went eight miles [13 km] in six and a half hours, and put up, without any supper.¹⁷

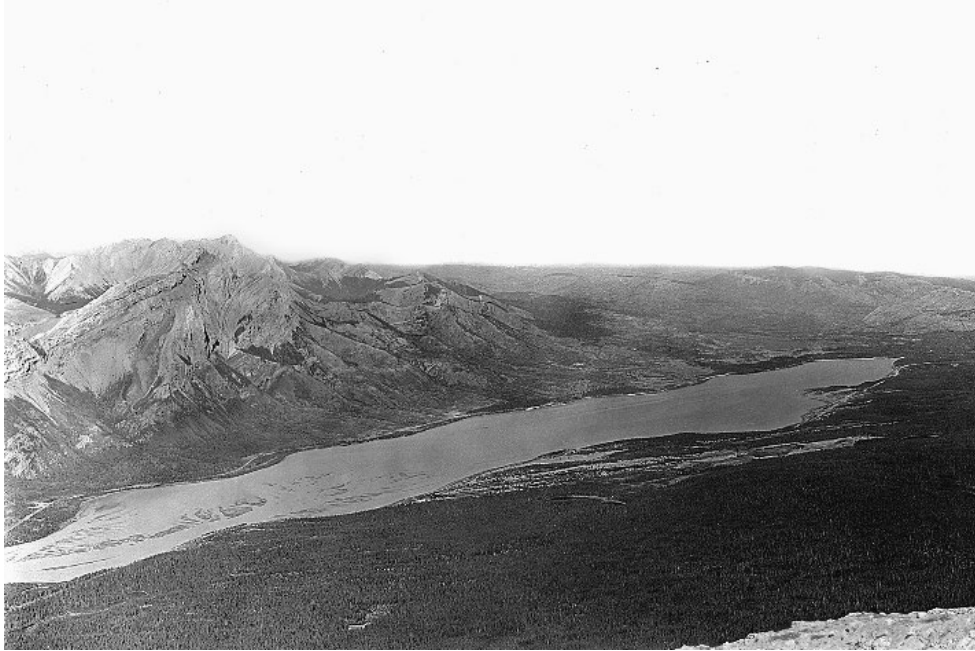
With his expectant wife Charlotte and four children likely left behind at Fort Augustus (Edmonton), Thompson and a party of 24 men, some with wives, assembled at Boggy Hall, near the mouth of the Brazeau River near present-day Drayton Valley. They were heading northwesterly through the bush to reach the Athabasca Valley, then to cross a pass near its headwaters. The trader at Rocky Mountain House, Alexander Henry, had referred to it as “a route by which a party of Nepisangués [Nipissings] and Freemen passed a few years ago.”¹⁸

After four weeks of arduous travel with few animals for food, they arrived at the Athabasca River, possibly near Obed Creek. There Bousé, one of their hunters, killed a bull buffalo that was “highly acceptable to us as we have nothing to eat.” About a week later, they left the river to rest their horses, many of which had “received many & severe Falls” on the rotten and slippery ice. Thompson described the blowing sand as they approached Brûlé Lake,

arriving at what appears to be the north end. Their Iroquois hunters took them to an old “Hut” which he described as “small & very dirty, besides being without Windows, badly situated & no Grass for the Horses.” On December 4th they travelled north about five miles [8 km] through “mostly clear fine Aspines & camped near a small Fountain of Water among Pines & Aspines, with plenty of Grass for the Horses.”¹⁹ They camped there for over three weeks from 4 to 29 December preparing for their trip across the mountains.

[Here] our Guide told me it was of no use at this late season to think of going any further with Horses ... but from this place prepare ourselves with Snow Shoes and Sleds to cross the Mountains; Accordingly the next day we began to make Log Huts to secure the Goods, and Provisions, and shelter ourselves from the cold and bad weather; the thermometer on our march had descended to -32 [-36°C] which is 64 [Fahrenheit] degrees below the freezing point.²⁰

It is interesting to conjecture where Thompson’s camp was located. Estimates vary from Brûlé Lake itself to the meadows of the Joachim Valley that runs from Solomon Creek to Jarvis Lake and which have long been used as camping and Sundance sites by Aborigines. The bearings and distances in Thompson’s notes on the way to the camp are not clear, except that they travelled eight kilometres northerly from the “Hut” to their camp. His notes on their way out indicate that they travelled back as far as the Hut on the same course (8 kilometres) on the 29th where they camped. Then on the 30th they reached the south end of the “Flats” (Brûlé Lake) after another 8 kilometres, where they turned to go southwesterly up the river.^{21,22}



M.P. Bridgland's view north along Brûlé Lake from Roche a Perdrix in 1915. The grades of the then-recently completed railway are visible along the lake shores: Grand Trunk Pacific on the east and Canadian Northern on the west. David Thompson camped somewhere around the far end of the lake for 25 days in December 1810 to make snowshoes and sleds and hunt a supply of buffalo meat.

M.P. BRIDGLAND, 1915. DIGITAL IMAGE ©2000, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA B718

The hunters searched the country for buffalo. They killed at least 15 in the area, one of which was a large bull that Thompson described as standing 1.8 metres tall at the shoulder and fat. Thompson deplored the gluttony of some of the crew, one of whom consumed 4½ kilograms a day.²³ When they left, they loaded the horses with 94 kilograms of pemmican and 16 kilograms of grease.

Those remaining in camp split wood for the sledges and made snowshoes. On 27 December, with temperatures continuing in the minus 35 degree Celsius range, he noted: "The Women and Iroquois cutting Line & netting Snow Shoes &c &c, but the Line for the Snow Shoes is very bad, from the awkwardness of the Women."²⁴ This is perhaps not surprising since they would likely have been working outside with freezing babiche. Thompson later commented that their snowshoes worked very well.

During this time, Thompson also caught up on his correspondence. One of his letters was to Alex Fraser, a fellow trader, in Montreal. This letter, dated 21 December 1810, at "Athabaska River, foot of the mountains," reveals his

character, the difficulties of travelling and living on his explorations, and his frustration about the delays imposed on him in his race with the Americans to reach the mouth of the Columbia River.

I intended to have paid you a visit at Montreal this last summer, but the critical situation of our affairs in the Columbia obliged me to return. The Americans, it seems, were as usual determined to be [first] before ... us in the Columbia in ship navigation. As the Peagans killed an officer and 8 soldiers out of a tribe of 12 ..., if this accident has not drove them back, they will probably get the start of me.²⁵

My canoes were also drove back by the Peagans, but no lives or property lost and I have changed our route from [Howse Pass] to the Athabasca River and am now preparing in this hard season to cross the mountains and gain my first post near the head of the Mississourie (sic), a march of about 34 days, and part of it over a dangerous country for war. I hope good Providence will take care of us and bring me safe back again.

If all goes well and it pleases good Providence to take care of me, I hope to see you and a civilized world in the autumn of 1812. I am getting tired of such constant hard journeys; for the last 20 months I have spent only bare two months under the shelter of a hut, all the rest has been in my tent, and there is little likelihood the next 12 months will be much otherwise. Your humble servant, David Thompson.

When they were ready to leave the camp near Brûlé Lake, Thompson left William Henry behind with the balance of their gear and trade goods and all but three or four of the horses. Where Henry camped is a mystery. It would seem logical that he stayed at their camp with its water and grass. However he may have relocated closer to the Pass, perhaps somewhere along the Athabasca between the Maligne and Miette rivers, an area within which was the future Henry's House. It is also uncertain how long he stayed there, for he would have had to return east to get the additional supplies Thompson requested. However, Henry appears to have been the first non-Aboriginal person to have stayed in the Jasper area during the winter.²⁶



Depiction of David Thompson ascending Athabasca Pass in January 1811 in a sketch by artist C. W. Jefferys.

PEN AND BLACK INK OVER PENCIL ON CARDBOARD. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA. C-070258

horses he retained were loaded with meat and pemmican.²⁷

There were 13 men in the party, the others having returned to Rocky Mountain House. They killed a mountain sheep and two young buffalo on the way up the valley, so stopped to prepare the meat to take along. It was -34 degrees Celsius when they set off again on 5 January 1811 with their eight sleds and the horses that would accompany them until the snow became too deep. At the end of the day on January 6th, they reached the Prairie de la Vache area, near present-day Jasper, where they turned the horses loose in the last of the grasslands. The horses evidently survived over winter, perhaps later tended by William Henry. The next day they came to a 35-centimetre track of what Thompson believed was that of a “large old grizzled Bear.” Towards the upper end of the valley before the pass, Thompson noted that “there is a strong belief that the haunt of the Mammoth, is about this defile.” He questioned several but none could say they had seen one, but their belief was firm. “I remarked to them, that such an enormous heavy animal must leave indelible marks of his feet, and his feeding. This they all acknowledged—all I could say did not shake their belief in his existence.”²⁸ When they came upon the track of a large grizzly bear, they were convinced that it was the mammoth.

Struggling up the Whirlpool River, they marched 16 kilometres on 8 January but only 6 kilometres the next day, when temperatures warmed up to

Thompson noted that their whole attention during that time had been turned to hunting and securing provisions and making snowshoes and sleds; on 30 December they commenced their journey to cross the mountains. With temperatures around -34 degrees Celsius, they proceeded up the Athabasca River, “sometimes on its shoals and ice, and at times through the woods of it’s banks.” Thompson allocated 32 kilograms per sled hauled by a single dog and 54 kilograms for those with two dogs. The three or four

minus 6 degrees Celsius and heavy wet snow fell. Then, on 10 January, the sixth day after leaving their camp by Brûlé Lake, as they approached the Pass itself, the snow stopped falling and he noted:

[The] view now before us was an ascent of deep snow, in all appearance to the height of land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it was to me a most exhilarating sight, but to my uneducated men a dreadful sight. They had no scientific object in view ... but the scene of desolation before us was dreadful, and I knew it, a heavy gale of wind much more a mountain storm would have buried us beneath it, but thank God the weather was fine.... When night came we had only wood to make a bottom, and on this to lay wherewith to make a small fire, which soon burnt out and in this exposed situation we passed the rest of the long night without a fire and part of my men had strong feelings of personal insecurity; on our right about one third of a mile [0.5 km] from us lay an enormous glacier.... My men were not at their ease, yet when night came they admired the brilliancy of the stars, and as one of them said, he thought he could almost touch them with his hand; as usual, when the fire was made I set off to examine the country before us, and found we had now to descend the west side of the mountains; I returned and found part of my men with a pole of twenty feet [6.1 m] in length boring the snow to find the bottom; I told them while we had good snowshoes it was no matter to us whether the snow was ten or one hundred feet [3 or 30 m] deep.²⁹



Athabasca Pass, aerial view on 10 July 1997, still with snow. This view south shows Pacific Creek leading away toward the Wood River Valley.

TOM PETERSON

Thompson and his party headed down Pacific and Jeffrey creeks to the Wood River that led to the Columbia River, which took them another week to reach through the deep snow. They set up camp at the junction of the Wood River with the Columbia and where the Canoe River entered from the north. They remained there for the rest of the winter, preparing for their exploration of the Columbia in the spring. This strategically located confluence of four valleys and three rivers became known as Boat Encampment. This later became the common meeting place for east- and west-bound brigades, who would exchange horses and boats. Parties sometimes waited a month or more to make the exchange if one of them was late. The site is now under water behind the Mica Dam.



1950s Aerial view of the Boat Encampment area, looking north up Canoe River. Wood River flows in from the right and the top of the Big Bend of the Columbia River loops up from the lower right and down on the lower left.

Annotations by Frank Swannell ca. 1950. This site is now submerged under Kinbasket Lake behind the Mica Dam.

RCAF PHOTO. BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES A-05428

By the time they reached the Columbia, most of his party had become so fatigued and fearful that, with desertion threatening, Thompson agreed most could return to the fort at Rocky Mountain House. It appeared that fatigue, the mammoth and seemingly bottomless snow were the most fearsome circumstances. Ten of the party went back over the Pass, leaving him with three reliable men, Rene Vallade, Pierre Pareil and Joseph Coté. Thompson sent all three back to William Henry's camp to get more supplies; they returned on the 17th of February with two sled loads. Thus, during the first two months of Thompson's discovery, the Pass had already been traversed four times. Thompson had also sent a letter with his men for William Henry to forward to Alexander Henry at Rocky Mountain House in which he requested that a load of supplies and trade goods be delivered to Boat Encampment to rendezvous in September 1811; Thompson obviously anticipated future trading opportunities.

Upon his arrival at the Columbia, Thompson wrote glowingly about the size of the trees, including the birch, which he described as a stately tree up to 15 feet [4.6 m] in girth. However, by the end of February he realized that his planned birch bark canoe was not possible to construct since “the birch rind was not even thick enough to make a dish,” such was the effect of the milder climate on that side of the mountains.

For their canoe they split thin boards of cedar, about 16 centimetres wide and built a canoe that was “equally light and much stronger than Birch Rind,” measuring 7.6 metres long and 1.25 metres wide. They sewed the boards together with split “pine” roots since they had no nails.³⁰ Thompson and his men were enjoying plenty of moose meat, the snow along the Columbia being so deep and wet that the animals sank in and could not move. However, he lamented that they wasted all the skins, “as we have no women to dress them.” They had 100 kilograms of the meat to take with them when they left on the 16 April 1811 to head up the Columbia River past the mouth of the Blaeberry to continue the journey south.³¹

Given the preparations he had to make, the difficulty in travelling and the distance yet to go, it is remarkable that he arrived at the Pacific as soon as 15 July 1811. To his surprise, they were met there by Duncan McDougall, a former Nor’Wester, but then in charge of John Jacob Astor’s American Fur Company—the “Americans” to whom he referred in his letter to Fraser, or “Astorians” as those company men were known.

John Jacob Astor of New York had formed his American Fur Company in 1808 intending to establish a fur trade monopoly. He moved aggressively to acquire trading posts and to expand his “empire.” In 1810 he recruited fur traders, including a number of North West Company men from Montreal. They had arrived on Astor’s ship the *Tonquin*, which had sailed from New York on 8 September 1810, arriving at the mouth of the Columbia on 22 March 1811 after a difficult journey. They commenced to build Fort Astoria—just four months before Thompson arrived. Eventually the North West



Coat of Arms for the North West Company with its motto, "Perseverance".
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-008711

Company took over Fort Astoria in a complex sequence of events that included the war of 1812 and loss of the Tonquin. McDougall sold Fort Astoria to the Nor'Westers in October 1813, who renamed it Fort George.³² However, Astor's influence was later recorded in two Jasper-area place names—Tonquin Valley and Astoria River.

David Thompson stayed at Astoria for only a week, leaving on 22 July 1811 to return upriver by way of Spokane House and Kettle Falls, where he promoted the NWC fur trade with tribes in the interior region of present day eastern Washington and Idaho. That fall he returned to Boat Encampment and thereby completed his survey of the Columbia River. Not finding the supply party, he “hung up” a letter, then poled his canoes 48 miles [77 km] up the Canoe River in case the men had taken the goods that way in error. Two men in a light canoe caught up to them at that point, having found the letter, to let him know that the supplies had since arrived. Thompson sent those supplies on south by canoe with nine men, then went east over the pass with William Henry who had brought the goods. Even in early October, the snow was so deep and the horses having such difficulty that “they had to pass the night up to their bellies in snow” and so discouraged that it was difficult to get them to walk steadily the next morning. However, the rest of the goods were delivered on the 13th and the horses sent back to winter on the east side of the pass. Thompson returned to the Columbia to continue his trading in the Interior region through Montana, Idaho and Washington.



Boat Encampment and the Rocky Mountains, painted by Henry James Warre in 1846.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-26348K

Thompson made one more crossing of Athabasca Pass in May 1812. After trading and mapping in the Columbia basin, he left Kettle Falls on 22 April with six canoes, each canoe with five men and 136 kilograms of gear, and 122 packs of furs which, at the nominal 90 pounds per pack [40 kg], amounted to loads of about five tonnes. They arrived at Boat Encampment on 5 May where Thompson left the men to prepare for crossing when the snow melted. On 8 May Thompson with three hunters reached the summit of Athabasca Pass on snowshoes and crossed over, observing that an avalanche covered one of their 1811 camping sites. This was Thompson's last journey across the Rockies. At the age of 42, he picked up his family on the way east through Rainy Lake for the annual meeting of the North West Company. Initially well off, he retired as a partner of the North West Company and moved his family to a farm in Terrebonne in Quebec in July.

Thompson generously lent much of his modest nest egg to others in need who—unlike his Aboriginal trading partners from earlier days—failed to repay him. Despite failing health he returned to work as a surveyor, participating in the survey of the Canada-US border in Eastern Canada in the late 1840s. He also worked on his journals and his now famous map that described an

astonishing 4 million square kilometres of previously unmapped country. Unable to sell his map or journals, impoverished and nearly blind, the great mapmaker died in February 1857. Charlotte died just three months later; they had 13 children.

Despite the delays on the Saskatchewan and Columbia and disappointment at Astoria, Thompson's mapping of Athabasca Pass and the Columbia was a significant event in itself. Although Athabasca Pass was a longer and more difficult route than Howse Pass, it was preferred because of the continued hostility of the Peigans. The Athabasca Pass remained the predominant route for about 40 years.³³ However, to give other credit where it is due, historian T.C.E. Elliott concluded in a footnote to Tyrrell's 1915 edition of Thompson's Narrative:³⁴ "It is clear from this text that both Athabasca Pass and the Canoe River region had been visited earlier than this [1807] by the guide, Thomas the Iroquois, and by other Nipissing and Iroquois Indians; but Thompson was the first white man to cross it."

Historian W.G.P. Allen noted that Thompson's link to Fort Astoria undoubtedly led to its later acquisition by the North West Company and established a British presence across the north from sea to sea. It was the first tenuous cross-country link for the future Canada and start of trade both from the east and west, firmly binding New Caledonia (British Columbia) to the rest of Canada.³⁵

Gabriel Franchère Travels East

After the sale of Fort Astoria, by then called Fort George, several of Astor's former clerks returned to their eastern homes overland by the Athabasca Pass through Jasper. Among these was Gabriel Franchère, one of the senior traders who had been selected by Astor to set up his Columbia post. A loyal Astorian, he refused to join the North West Company, but agreed to stay on long enough to enable him to travel with the North West Company brigade in the spring of 1814. His journals provide one of the earliest records of travel by brigade over Athabasca Pass.³⁶ As Franchère described, they "quitted" Fort George on the 4th of April in ten canoes, five each of bark and cedar, "carrying

each seven men as crew, and two passengers, in all ninety persons, and all well armed.” This flotilla was an aggregation of parties heading up to the various posts accessed through the drainage of the Columbia River.



Gabriel Franchère, Astorian fur trader, returned east over Athabasca Pass with the NWC brigade in the spring of 1814.

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES G-05742

Franchère’s party of 24 started up the Wood River from Boat Encampment on 12 May, each man carrying 23 kilograms plus his own provisions. The next day they forded the river many times, sometimes “with the water up to our necks.” On the 14th they began the steep climb up the Grand Côte through the high saddle then on up to the Pass. At first the snow was frozen hard, but even then

they had to rest every few minutes. After two or three hours “of unbelievable effort and fatigue” they reached the summit. Then the snow softened so they had to walk in the footsteps of those ahead of them, “to plunge our legs up to the knees in the holes they had made, so that it was as if we had put on and taken off, at every step, a very large pair of boots.”



Boat Encampment painted by Paul Kane in 1846.

STARK MUSEUM OF ART, ORANGE, TEXAS 31.78/99, WWC 100

On the 17 May Franchère reached “une vieille maison” or old house that he described as one that the North West Company had abandoned four or five years before.³⁷ The old post had been abandoned, but Franchère was rhapsodic about its setting. His location indicates that it was in the present-day Jasper–Jasper Park Lodge area, and his description suggests that the site was kept open by recurrent fires.

We all presently arrived at an old house which the traders of the N.W. Company had once constructed, but which had been abandoned for some four or five years. The site of this trading post is the most charming that can be imagined: suffice to say that it is built on the bank of the beautiful river Athabaska, and is surrounded by green and smiling prairies and superb woodlands. Pity there is nobody there to enjoy these rural beauties and to praise, while admiring them, the Author of Nature.³⁸

Franchère later detailed the choices available at “Rocher à Miette”:^{*} those with horses could ford around the rock and the others would have to climb over the high ridge, “a long and fatiguing route.”³⁹ Roche Miette is distinguished by its sheer cliff face and silhouette of an Indian Chief in repose. The mountain was most remarked upon for its high rock ridge that extended into the Athabasca River, forming an effective barrier to travel. Franchère described it as the rock “which dipped into the water.” It was possible to ford around the rock when the river was low, such as in early spring before snowmelt in the mountains and in late fall. However, during the spring and summer it was usually necessary to climb the approximately 500-metre-high ridge. The trail followed the crest of the slippery rock ridge that narrowed and dropped off steeply over a bare cliff, which caused many “disasters” to pack animals. It was later officially named “Disaster Point” by Surveyor-General Edouard Deville in recognition of the “disaster” in 1872 when CPR surveyor Sandford Fleming’s brandy flask was broken.⁴⁰ However, this or a similar name was probably in common usage by that time. The climb typically took an extra day’s travel.

* Miette’s Rock, named after a fur trade hunter named Miette who supposedly climbed it and sat on the edge of the cliff, smoking a pipe, with his feet hanging over the edge. Now called Roche Miette.

Continuing down the Athabasca, on 19 May 1814, the party reassembled at Rocky Mountain Fort, or “Jasper Haw’s House,” located at the north end of Brûlé Lake. Francois Decoigne was in charge of this post, built by the North West Company in 1813. Franchère explained that this post did not furnish many furs; the principal object in founding it was to make it a warehouse for those on the Columbia River or returning from it. Franchère noted that since Decoigne did not have enough food for the party, they “killed a dog on arrival, and towards evening one very emaciated horse.”⁴¹

Franchère recorded that about two o'clock on 25 May, some distance below Brûlé Lake, as they were rounding a point they saw a considerable rapid ahead. Two of their canoes hit the rocks, their "frail skiffs" overturned and one of them broke up. They all had to swim, two men drowned, Olivier Lapensee and André Belanger, and only with great difficulty were they able to save three men. They could find only Lapensee's body, which they "buried as decently" as they could and erected a cross with his name carved on it. Franchère named the place Lapensee, but it seems not to have registered. It was later known as Rapids du Mort. Alexander Ross, a Hudson's Bay Company man returning east in 1825, also had difficulty in the same rapids:

From Jasper's House, the river widens and becomes larger; the current strong, and rapids frequent. Their appearance admonished us to proceed with great caution; yet, with all our care we broke one of our canoes, and before we could get to shore our bark was half filled. Ten minutes delay, and we were again in the water; but had not gone far before a second disaster sent us ashore. At this place a wooden cross was stuck up in the edge of the woods, and on examining it, I found it marked the grave of one of the old Tonquin adventurers.... On it was cut, in still legible characters, "Olivè Lapensie, from Lachine, drowned here in May, 1814." ⁴²

The Rapids du Mort on the Athabasca River are near the mouth of the Oldman Creek, about 85 kilometres downstream from Brûlé Lake.

Other Travellers

Ross Cox, then with the North West Company, returned east through the Athabasca Pass and Jasper in the spring of 1817 leading another party of former Pacific Fur Company people. A combined party of 86 "souls" left on 16 April, the numbers reducing as groups left for various posts along the way. The Cox party that crossed the Pass appears to have comprised 14, including five "gentlemen" and nine "men." Two entries in his journal are particularly interesting. First is his description of Athabasca Pass from the summit in May:

[It] presented the wildest and most terrific appearance of desolation that can be well imagined. The sun shining on a range of stupendous glaciers, threw a chilling brightness over the chaotic mass of rocks, ice and snow, by which we were surrounded. Close to our encampment one gigantic mountain of a conical form towered majestically into the clouds far above the others, while at intervals the interest of the scene was heightened by the rumbling noise of a descending avalanche; which after being detached from its bed of centuries, increased in bulk in its headlong career downwards, until it burst with a frightful crash, more resembling the explosion of a magazine than the dispersion of a massive snow.



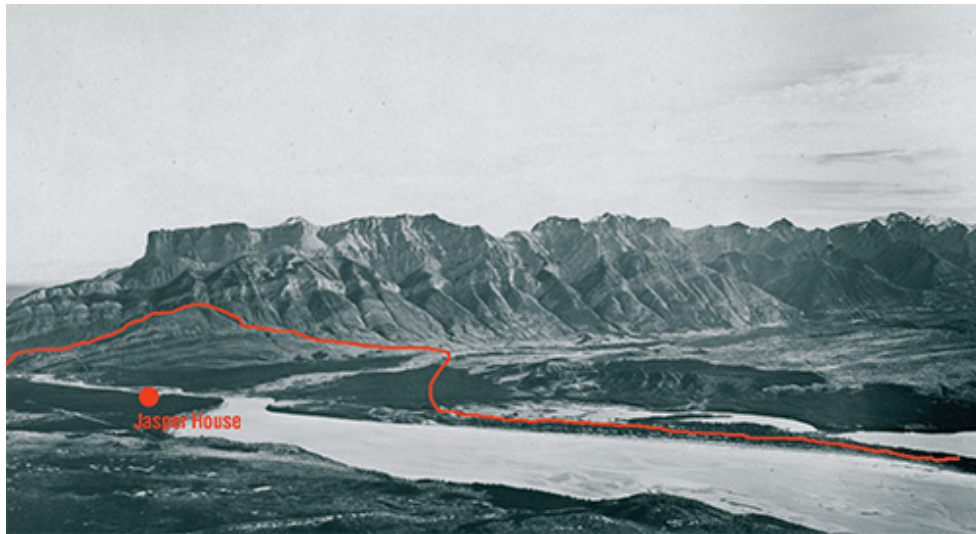
Ross Cox led a North West Company brigade east from Fort George in the spring of 1817.

COURTESY OF ROSS COX IV, GREAT-GRANDSON OF ROSS COX.

One of our rough-spun unsophisticated Canadians, after gazing upwards for some time in silent wonder, exclaimed with much vehemence, “I’ll take my oath, my dear friends, that God Almighty never made such a place!”⁴³

M.P. Bridgland and R. Douglas⁴⁴ summarized some of the place names that had by then been established northward along the descent from the Pass. They included the valley of the *Rivière de Trou* or Hole River, now the Whirlpool River. The name derived from a deep hole that gave travellers great difficulty at the *Traverse du Trou* that they had to cross during high water. *Campement de Fusil* or Gun Encampment was the first resting place on the way east. Later travellers recorded the *Grand Bâttures* named for its braided gravel flats, and then *Campement d’Orignal* or Moose Encampment— a place where men and horses later often met brigade parties by prearrangement. Next was the *Traverse* across the Athabasca, the location probably above the mouth of the Whirlpool, that was forded, often with difficulty and danger when the water was high. Downstream and on the west side was the landmark *Montagne de la Grande Traverse*, the mountain that identified the location of the Whirlpool River but which was officially named in 1916 Mount Edith Cavell. The route

continued on the east side of the Athabasca past the *Prairie de la Vache* or Buffalo Prairie to the Henry House area, which may have been located somewhere between the mouths of the Miette and Maligne rivers.



Approximate location of the trail over the northerly rock ridge of Roche Miette that became known as Disaster Point. Photo by M.P. Bridgland, 1915, from Mount Greenock.

M.P. BRIDGLAND, 1915. DIGITAL IMAGE © 2000, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA B512

Cox's second interesting comment regards the obstruction caused by Roche Miette. Cox and some of his party had to build a raft to get across the Maligne River, another difficult or "maligne" crossing. They continued down the east side to a place near Talbot Lake where their hunters had left the carcass of a buffalo for them. After eating and relaxing for a while they pressed on to the "Le Rocher de Miette, over which we had to pass."⁴⁵ At this point, Disaster Point, Cox described the difficult climb over the extremely steep trail, which took them three and a half hours to get over. Unlike Franchère three years earlier, Cox had no choice. He arrived later in the year and snowmelt caused the Athabasca River to rise too high to ford.

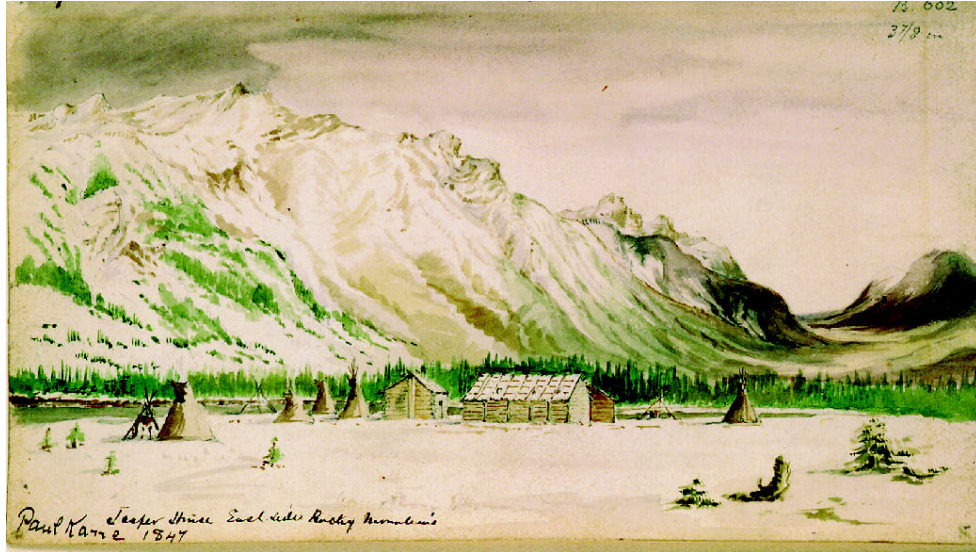
Archibald McDonald, in 1821 leading the first Hudson's Bay Company brigade east after the merger with North West Company, avoided the climb over Disaster Point by fording the river twice, above and below the ridge.⁴⁶

Alexander Ross also described the attractiveness of the area around the junction of the Athabasca and Miette rivers in 1825, in terms quite similar to Franchère's description of the Old Fort site and was perhaps a portent of the tourism traffic to follow in another century. Ross, travelling with hunters, was

probably describing Larocque's place, located just down-river of present-day Jasper.

On approaching this establishment, situated under the brow of the mountain ridge, we had anticipated a gloomy place; but the very reverse was the case. We advanced, from the water's edge, up an inclined plane, some two or three hundred yards [180 or 270 m] in length smooth as a bowling green, and skirted on each side by regular rows of trees and shrubs, the whole presenting the appearance of an avenue leading to some great man's castle, which had a very pleasing effect. Here, however, we found no lordly dwellings, but a neat little group of wood huts suited to the climate of the country, rendered comfortable and filled with cheerful and happy inmates; and what gave to the place a cheering aspect was the young grass forming a pleasing contrast to the snow-clad heights around. Here my old friend Joseph Felix Larocque, Esq.,^{*} an old Nor'Wester, and formerly of Columbia, was in charge.⁴⁷

* What became known as Larocque's Prairie is on Cottonwood Creek Flats east of the underpass.



Jasper House as depicted by Paul Kane in 1847 on his return east. This second Jasper House was built by HBC trader Michel Klyne in 1829.

STARK MUSEUM OF ART, ORANGE, TEXAS. 31.78/136, PWC 25

Jasper House

William Henry was the first European to winter in the Jasper area in 1810–11. The North West Company built what they called “Rocky Mountain House,” a trading post at the north end of Brûlé Lake in 1813. This or a replacement post at the mouth of Solomon Creek was called Jasper House⁴⁸ after Jasper Hawes who ran the post from 1814 to 1817.⁴⁹ The post was initially staffed with one interpreter, one horse keeper, two hunters and two engagés, or hired fur traders, one of whom was a young Indian.⁵⁰ Francois Decoigne and Dominik Caraconte, an Iroquois, followed Henry in 1814. Caraconte’s son Solomon is the one after whom Solomon Creek was named.⁵¹

Historian I. S. MacLaren explained that a post was needed near the Athabasca Pass “because brigades coming off the Pass needed to recuperate after the six- or seven-day portage. The post also kept a supply of horses so that, when snow levels were low enough to permit horse-travel, brigades could ride across the portage, or be met part way along it.”⁵² Boats were used at either end, cedar boats on the Columbia and canoes on the Athabasca. The post depended on hunters to provide meat for the post and travellers alike. The post also traded for furs with the Aboriginal people, who at this time

were mostly Iroquois living in the region and at the post, as the other tribes had moved away from the European newcomers.⁵³

George Simpson had moved Hudson's Bay Company trader Joseph Felix Larocque to the Jasper area where, in 1824, he built a new post closer to the Athabasca Pass. Larocque's post was near the present-day Highway 16 east junction into Jasper. Larocque had started with the fur trade at about age 14, joined the NWC in 1804, and was with John George McTavish in 1813 when the NWC took over Fort Astoria.⁵⁴ Michel Klyne operated the post until 1829, mainly as a horse depot. Klyne was born in Montreal between 1781 and 1783, son of a Hessian soldier. He started to work in the fur trade in 1798 and in 1803 joined NWC in the Athabasca region.⁵⁵ In 1829, Klyne built the new Jasper's House at the north end of Jasper Lake, about 23 kilometres southwesterly from its existing site on Brûlé Lake, and the original one was abandoned. The new location, near the mouth of the Stone* (Snake Indian) River, had access to extensive meadows to the north to support their horses. This river was later renamed the Snake Indian River to commemorate the massacre that occurred there around 1840.⁵⁶ Historian Tom Peterson thinks that the new location may have been chosen for its position at the strategic intersection of the Snake Indian and Rocky rivers with the Athabasca River. It was also around this time, in 1830, that the last, and best known, Fort Edmonton was built on the site of the future legislative grounds.

* Named Stone River on Thompson's map.

Klyne also cut a trail up the Maligne River and over Cataract Pass down what is now called the Cline River to the big plains of the Saskatchewan to trade with the Kootenays and Shuswaps—the area now known as Kootenay Plains.⁵⁷ Klyne stayed at Jasper House looking after up to 200 horses until he retired to Red River in 1835.⁵⁸ Colin Fraser followed him and stayed until 1850.

Michel Klyne had serious concerns about food supplies during the first fall at his new Jasper House in 1829. The canoes of the New Caledonia and Columbia brigades from the east with 28 men arrived on 18 October. They

were late and more than half of the supplies had been left at Fort Assiniboine. He remarked in his journal: “I am waiting for those canoes that I have no more fresh meat now I mos feed those people with Dried provision.”⁵⁹ He sent Apifrasis, one of his hunters, to guide the gentlemen from the Columbia Brigade. In the meantime, hunters had found few animals or fish to augment their stores. On 18 November his journal reports: “late in the evening Apifrasis arrived from the other end of the Columbia portage in Compy with an emerican Gentlemen who is on his way for St. Louis. [A]rrived also with Apifrasis four Columbia men. God Knows for not bien told of thos arrivals we will all starve.”

The American was Joshua Pilcher, an independent fur trader from St. Louis, who set out from there in the fall of 1827. After a succession of disasters, including losing some of their men and all their horses to hostile tribes, in August 1829 the HBC manager at Flathead Lake led him, destitute, to Fort Colvile on the Columbia. There he was given “most kind and hospitable” treatment.⁶⁰ Instead of returning through the United States, he accepted HBC permission to accompany the fall York Factory express east to find his way back to Council Bluffs from Red River. Pilcher left as part of a six-man brigade on 21 September 1829. They waited at Boat Encampment from 4 October to 2 November when the westbound brigade finally rode down on horses. They exchanged their boat for the horses and on 4 November Pilcher and four of the Columbia men followed Apifrasis up the Wood River. Three days later they crossed Athabasca Pass and descended into the wintry weather on the east side of the Mountains.

After two weeks at Jasper House, Pilcher’s party tried to reach Fort Edmonton overland but turned back after seven days as the path was impracticable for horses from snow and blowdown. On 17 December they travelled on snowshoes down the Athabasca River guided by Klyne (‘the old man’) to Fort Assiniboine in 16 days, and then 6 days on snowshoes to Fort Edmonton where he met John Rowand. On his eventual return to Council Bluffs, he wrote a report about the British presence in the Columbia that was



Beaver.

instrumental in convincing President Andrew Jackson to fight for sole U.S. control of the area.

The Columbia Express

Once David Thompson showed the feasibility of the Athabasca Pass route to the Pacific in 1811, the fur brigades soon took advantage of it, at least as early as the fall of 1811 when Thompson returned from the Columbia to pick up additional supplies from William Henry, and again in the spring of 1812 when he returned to go east with furs from the Columbia trade. The transcontinental “Express” brigades were intended primarily to carry Company packets, mail and passengers, although they sometimes accompanied the slower brigades carrying supplies west and bales of fur east as well. The Express initially linked to Rainy Lake and Lachine under the North West Company. However, after the 1821 amalgamation with the Hudson’s Bay Company, they ran from York Factory on Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Columbia River to communicate with the far-flung network of posts. The westbound journey became known as the Columbia Express, the eastbound was the York Factory Express. As Bridgland and Douglas commented,⁶¹ “Three and a half months from Hudson Bay to the Pacific coast was rapid travelling at the time and ‘express’ was an appropriate name.” Travel times typically varied between 90 and 105 days. The east–west brigade route connected at Norway House at the north end of Lake Winnipeg to the route up the Winnipeg River to Lake of the Woods then via the Great Lakes and on to the North West Company headquarters at Lachine.



The North Canoe, about six metres long, capable of carrying about 1,360 kilograms and three passengers, powered by about eight voyageurs. This “Bastard” variation was painted by artist Frances Hopkins in 1869.

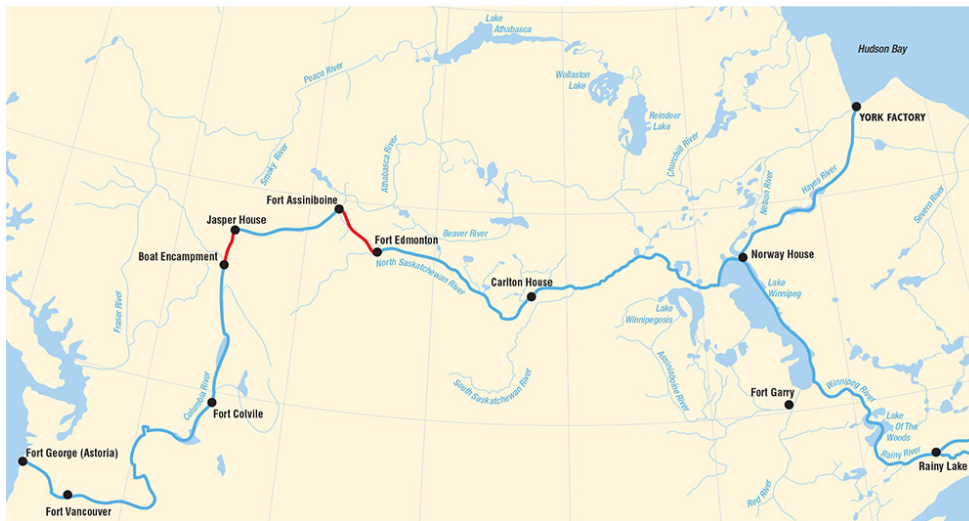
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The route from York Factory went up the Hayes River over to Norway House on Lake Winnipeg, then up the Saskatchewan to Cumberland House, just east of present-day The Pas. That was a junction point for the Churchill River and north, and the initial Express went north to connect to the Beaver River. That led to Thompson’s “Little Divide” to Lac La Biche that flowed into the Athabasca River. From there it was upstream to Jasper House or Henry House near today’s Jasper. Ahead lay the five to seven day overland trek across “La Grande Traverse,” the 130- to 140-kilometre overland crossing of the divide over the Athabasca Pass. At the summit the path started down Pacific Creek, then swung west over a high saddle and down the long steep slope called the “Grande Côte” into Jeffrey Creek, which flowed into the Wood River that in turn led to Boat Encampment on the Columbia, the waterway to the Pacific Ocean. As historian MacLaren described it: “The most dramatic and arduous stretch of the continental fur trade route from York Factory to the Pacific Ocean was *La Grande Traverse*, or Athabasca Portage, which took brigades between two great watersheds, the Athabasca’s and the Columbia’s, where the rivers came nearest one another without an intervening glacier.”⁶²

The north canoe, or *canot du nord*, was the main freighter canoe used by fur brigades in the west. It was a light graceful craft about 6 metres long and 1.2 to

1.8 metres wide. It had a shallow draft adapted to the rivers of the west, in contrast to the open water canoes used on the Great Lakes. The *canot du nord* was made of birch bark on a frame of spruce. The sheets of bark were sewn together with split spruce roots and the seams sealed with a mix of spruce gum and animal fat. They could typically carry about 1,360 kilograms, up to three passengers with provisions and trade goods, and were powered by eight or nine voyageurs. A lighter version of this design, the “express canoe” was usually used on the Express brigades.⁶³

The importance of the canoe was succinctly described by historian John Jennings In his book *The Canoe: A Living Tradition*: “In no other part of the world have water and the canoe had such a huge influence on both the original indigenous culture and the development of its history after European contact. Only in upper North America have indigenous craft been used by later European migrants to create a nation.”⁶⁴



Map 10: Route of the Express Brigades between York Factory on Hudson Bay and Fort George, later Fort Vancouver, on the Pacific. The over-water portion is blue; red shows the two major overland portages: the “road” connecting Fort Edmonton and Fort Assiniboine, and La Grande Traverse crossing Athabasca Pass linking Jasper House on the Athabasca River to Boat Encampment on the Columbia. The westbound journey was called the Columbia Express, eastbound the York Factory Express.

Father Francois N. Blanchet, a Jesuit priest going to the Oregon Country as a missionary, described the difficulties of a passenger on the north canoe during his 33-day trip from Lachine to St. Boniface, a distance of 3,760 kilometres with 488 hours of forced marches. He wrote: “The dangers and

hardships of this long canoe journey are well known. To spend days, and often nights—when these are favourable—in an uncomfortable position, to undergo the inclemency of seasons, the gusts of wind and the torrential rains; to run down the numberless rapids at the peril of one’s life, or to travel on foot through the forests, rocks and ponds of some of the portages; to camp out in damp cold places; to devour in haste a scanty meal badly prepared”⁶⁵ However, difficult as it was for the passengers, the voyageurs also had to paddle the whole time, load and unload the canoes, portage with packs of 80 kilograms or more, and set up camp.

There were typically two transcontinental brigades each year, one in each direction. Conditions on the Athabasca Pass determined the timing. The westbound Columbia Express left York Factory in July to get across the Pass at least by mid October to beat the deep snow. The eastbound York Factory Express left Fort George, later Fort Vancouver, in late March to cross the Pass on the snowpack before it got too soft; on foot if there was a crust or on snowshoes if not. However if there were additional brigades heading in either direction in spring or fall they would try to meet at Boat Encampment where travellers could exchange the horses for boats. As historian MacLaren explained: “Between Fort Edmonton on the prairies and Fort Colville (Colville, WA) downstream on the Columbia at Kettle Falls, Boat Encampment marked the rendezvous point for the two brigades.” He also noted that often a month or more was spent at Boat Encampment by a brigade waiting for the other to show up: “Deep snow in Athabasca Pass, the late arrival of the HBC’s ship at Fort Vancouver, or a host of either logistical or natural causes could account for such delays in a system dating from when work proceeded in terms, not in spite, of natural conditions.”⁶⁶

On the Grande Traverse over Athabasca Pass, the parties left their canoes at Jasper House and headed overland with horses kept there for that purpose. Horses could often go all the way to Boat Encampment during the summer and fall, but in the spring, when the snow got too deep for horses, travellers typically used snowshoes between the Wood River and the upper Whirlpool. They travelled on the Columbia River by boats of cedar-strip construction, as pioneered by Thompson. The crossing on the Athabasca River above the

Whirlpool was difficult in times of high water, which they tried to avoid by timing their arrival at that location. In high water the horses would have to swim. At those times, the brigade could arrange to have a canoe ready to ferry passengers across, but normally canoes were not taken above Jasper House. To meet eastbound brigades, horses would be taken up the Whirlpool from Jasper House as far as possible, often to *Campement d'Original*, or Moose Encampment, to wait for the parties as they descended from the summit.

It was a remarkable Express. Covering a distance of almost 3,500 kilometres, the brigades averaged 32 to 40 kilometres per day, including days spent at the various posts. It operated for almost 40 years compared to the much better known Pony Express that ran 2,900 kilometres between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, but lasted only two years from 1860 to 1861. The Hudson's Bay Express was longer in distance, more lasting in duration, and more physically demanding because it relied primarily on human muscle power.

Amalgamation of the Companies – Peace in the West

In 1821 the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company were merged by British Parliamentary order into a coalition under the Hudson's Bay Company name. This ended 45 years of intense rivalry between the two, including skirmishes, deaths and financial losses for both.⁶⁷ After amalgamation, George Simpson was named governor of the large Northern Department, and in 1826 he was made governor of the entire trading company in British North America with headquarters at Lachine, a position he held until his death in 1860.

Simpson, a skilled organizer and a hard-driving traveller, was born in Scotland in 1787 and came to North America with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820 at the age of 37.⁶⁸ By the spring of 1824, Simpson wanted to see the districts for himself. He and Fort Edmonton factor John Rowand left York Factory together for the west. John Rowand, son of a Montreal surgeon, was born in 1787 and joined NWC in 1804, aged 17. In 1808 he built a fort on the

site of present-day Edmonton and essentially remained there until he died in 1854, having risen in the HBC ranks to chief factor.⁶⁹

Simpson and Rowand split up at Cumberland House, Simpson taking the northerly Lac La Biche route, Rowand going up the Saskatchewan River. They planned to meet again at Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca River northwest of Edmonton. Simpson, renowned as a fast traveller, was chagrined to find that Rowand, even with canoes more heavily laden, had beaten him by four days. For Simpson, the water had been low in the Beaver River, causing them to walk more than paddle. The La Biche River was even lower than the Beaver, so Simpson had to walk the entire distance to the Athabasca River, noting that “most abominably dirty walking it was, the banks of the River having been recently overrun by Fire and while still smoking a light rain had fallen so we were up to our knee every step in Charcoal and ashes, and by the termination of each Days March as black as Sweeps.”⁷⁰ Rowand, on the other hand, had gone directly to Fort Edmonton by canoe, then rode overland by horse across the Pembina to Fort Assiniboine. He had to return to Edmonton after waiting four days, so left a note for Simpson, which added to Simpson’s discomfiture. Simpson then realized that the Express route could be improved by following Rowand’s example.



Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1826–1860.

WILLIAM NOTMAN PHOTO 1850–1860. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-44702

That fall Simpson decreed that the La Biche portage route be abandoned in favour of the Saskatchewan. Also that year Simpson hired Jacques Cardinal to cut a “road” between Fort Edmonton and Fort Assiniboine, the first road constructed in Alberta.⁷¹ Simpson explained that “I made an agreement [with Cardinal the Freeman] that he should in the course of this ensuing Winter and Spring get a Horse track or road cut from Fort Assiniboine to Edmonton House.”⁷² The “road,” from all accounts, was little more than a partially cleared pack trail, beset with muskegs, mires and blowdown trees. However, it was a defined trail, and Fort Edmonton stocked horses with which to travel the 160-

kilometre-long portage. Fort Assiniboine became the prime point of departure for both the Athabasca Pass and, for about 50 years, the Peace River country by way of Lesser Slave Lake. This established the upper Athabasca as the major trade route and Edmonton as an important depot on this route to the Coast.⁷³ At this time Fort Edmonton became the dominant Hudson's Bay Company centre in the western fur trade.



Fort Edmonton with York Boat and Red River Cart. Horetzky, 1871.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES GB NA-1408-4

The Express used this new route, but Lac La Biche remained an important post for access to the lower Peace River and Mackenzie River systems.⁷⁴ Then, that fall of 1824, Simpson, accompanied by Chief Trader James McMillan, made his own first overland trip west through the Athabasca Pass. In his paper, *The Toast at the Punch Bowl*, William Wonders describes the most notable features at the summit, three small tarns, “the central of these actually lies astride the Continental Divide, and it is this particular pond which rejoices in the name of the Committee’s Punch Bowl.”⁷⁵ (The “Committee” was the London Board of the Hudson’s Bay Company.) On 17 October 1824, Simpson gave the tarn its distinctive name, as related in his journal:

At the very top of the pass or height of Land is a small circular Lake or Basin of Water which empties itself in opposite directions and may be said to be the source of the Columbia & Athabasca Rivers as it bestows its favours on both these prodigious Streams, the former flowing into the Pacific ... and the latter after passing through Athabasca and Great Slave Lakes falling in the Frozen Ocean at about 69 North [latitude]. That this basin should send its Waters to each side of the Continent and give birth to two of the principle Rivers in North America is no less strange than true. Both the Dr. & myself having examined the currents flowing from it East & West and the circumstances appearing remarkable I thought it should be honoured by a distinguishing title and it was forthwith named the Committee’s Punch Bowl.⁷⁶

Simpson sounded exultant about the Athabasca Pass route when he reached Fort George and wrote on 7 November 1824:

We landed at Fort George ... having performed the Voyage from Hudson's Bay across the continent of America to the Northern Pacific Ocean in 84 days thereby gaining Twenty days on any Craft that ever preceded us. "By taking the Saskatchewan route however instead of the circuitous and tedious course we pursued I shall undertake next Season if necessary with Eight men to perform the voyage in not exceeding Two months ... by which means the Company Dispatches may in less than Four Months ... be at the most distant Establishment on the borders of the Pacific and through their medium the East India Company may communicate with China by North America in less than Six Months which I have no doubt will be found the shortest most direct and least expensive route that has yet been discovered."⁷⁷



Scott Glacier, which many early travellers described as a mountain of ice, is part of the Hooker Icefield near Athabasca Pass.

GREG HORNE, AUGUST 2002



*The Committee Punch Bowl at the summit of Athabasca Pass, named by George Simpson.
The middle pond drains into both the Arctic and the Pacific Oceans.
GREG HORNE, 2002*

The Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Vancouver in 1825, after Simpson's visit. Located on the north bank of the Columbia River north of the present city of Portland, Oregon, it became the major depot at the Pacific end of the Columbia Express. Simpson specified a site on the north bank of the Columbia, anticipating that the future boundary between British and American territory might run along the Columbia River.

On Simpson's return trip eastbound, on 25 April 1825, he noted in his journal: "At 6 a.m. got to the Committees Punch Bowl where the people had a Glass of Rum each and ourselves a little Wine & Water which was drunk to the Health of their Honors with three Cheers."⁷⁸ On this same journey Alexander Ross, who was one of the party, also remarked on the event:

This elevated pond is further dignified with the name of the Committee's Punch Bowl, in honour of which his Excellency treated us to a bottle of wine, as we had neither time nor convenience to make a bowl of punch, although a glass of it would have been very acceptable. It is a tribute always paid to this place.⁷⁹

George Simpson made several other decisions during and after his 1824-25 journeys to improve the efficiency of the express route between Fort Edmonton and the Columbia. He cancelled the route over Portage La Biche in favour of the overland portage between Fort Edmonton and Fort Assiniboine using the road cleared by Jacques Cardinal. Fort Edmonton was to become a major supply centre for food and horses; Fort Colvile was to fulfil a similar function for food and supplies on the Columbia. Jasper House was to provide horses for the overland trail to Boat Encampment, along with providing food and conducting a local trade for furs.

In 1829 George Simpson again returned east by way of the Columbia River from Fort Vancouver. He had gone up the Peace River in 1828 to look at his western posts, starting in New Caledonia and worked his way south.^{[80](#)}



Botanist Thomas Drummond spent the winter of 1825-26 in the Jasper area while David

Aemilius Simpson – Canada’s Johnny Appleseed

Naval Lieutenant Aemilius Simpson had been employed by the Hudson’s Bay Company as a hydrographer. A distant relative of George Simpson, Aemilius was heading to Fort Vancouver with a brigade in the fall of 1826. With his surveying background, he took readings to estimate elevations along the way. During his cross-country voyage he inadvertently carried with him the seeds of what were to be the first apple trees in the Pacific Northwest. At a formal dinner in England before his departure in 1825, a young woman admirer gathered some apple seeds left over from dessert and put them in his jacket pocket, saying: “Plant these when you reach your Northwest wilderness.” When Aemilius arrived in Fort Vancouver in November 1826, Factor Dr. John McLoughlin threw a formal dinner. Donning his formal jacket, Aemilius discovered the apple seeds in his pocket. The next spring, five seedlings were planted, marking the beginning of apple-raising there. A park was dedicated in 1984 to the lone 157-year-old survivor.⁸¹

Many other interesting people crossed Athabasca Pass or ventured into the Edson–Jasper area. Their journals describe the nature of the country and the hardships of travel, and their comments show similarities and differences in their impressions. Among them were two botanists, Thomas Drummond in 1825-26, and David Douglas in 1827, who travelled with Hudson’s Bay Company brigade leader Edward Ermatinger who led the eastbound York Factory Express.

Thomas Drummond – Botanist, 1825–26

Thomas Drummond, an adventurous botanist, was one of the first outsiders to explore the Jasper area.⁸² Drummond had been assistant naturalist to John Richardson on Sir John Franklin’s second expedition to the Mackenzie River area. In 1825, instead of the Arctic, he chose to study the flora of the Saskatchewan River and the Jasper area. Leaving Edmonton around the end of September 1825, he travelled with the Columbia Express to Fort Assiniboine.

While the express continued by canoe, he went with several others by horse to Jasper House, their trip taking 11 days. He hired Baptiste Berland to guide him and spent a long cold winter camping. The party moved from the Snake Indian River east to the Berland trying to escape the severe winter that saw an Iroquois woman in camp die during childbirth from the cold, and severe enough that most of the packhorses starved. Returning to Jasper House in April 1826, the eastbound Columbia Brigade found him on 6 May camping alone at Talbot Lake, sustaining himself on whitefish. He spent the summer travelling with Jacques Cardinal to Rock Lake and north to the Smoky River. In October 1826, he joined Aemilius Simpson's westbound brigade to Athabasca Pass, then returned to Edmonton with the brigade horses, arriving on November 22. While in the mountains, he compiled lists of 1500 plants and mosses, 150 birds and 300 mammals,⁸³ several new to science at the time. The name of this remarkable scientist lives on in the names of many plant species. The next year, he was followed by the more well-known botanist, David Douglas.

Edward Ermatinger and David Douglas

Edward Ermatinger was a trader with the Hudson's Bay Company. He played the flute and violin, skills that were much appreciated at the outposts. Born in 1797, he was apprenticed to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1818, initially for a five-year term, to "faithfully serve the Company as a clerk" at a starting salary of 20 pounds per year, rising to 50 pounds. After a second five-year term, Ermatinger left the Company in 1828. He had been requested to stay on, but stated, tellingly, "nothing could induce me to spend the remainder of my life in a country, where so much hardship and privation had to be endured, beyond the bounds of civilization."⁸⁴ As a capstone to his career, Ermatinger led three Express brigades between York Factory and Fort Vancouver during which he kept a daily journal that was later published.⁸⁵

On his first trip, Ermatinger left Fort Vancouver at 5:45 p.m. on 20 March 1827 with botanist David Douglas as a passenger. At that time the Columbia was a freeflowing river with many rapids, or chutes, and falls (most have since



*Edward Ermatinger, HBC
trader and Brigade leader,*

1818–1828.

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES G-08471

been dammed for hydropower). The party had to line or tow the canoe up these or portage around them, as well as fight the current as far as Boat Encampment.

On 12 April, after 24 days on the river, they arrived at Fort Colville at the Kettle Falls, the last of the Hudson's Bay Company outposts where they could replenish supplies. Fifteen days later they arrived at David Thompson's old camp at Boat Encampment. In his journal, Ermatinger noted that on 27 April they had left at 4:45 a.m. and arrived at Boat Encampment between 11 a.m. and noon:

The most part of the distance we made up the river this day the current was strong but smooth with several steep Rapids. The remainder of the day we occupied in preparing our baggage for the journey across the mountains. The paper trunk* (which is very heavy, say upwards of 70 pounds [37 kg] is to be carried by 3 men alternately together with their [provisions] and private baggage. Our other baggage is divided among the remaining four men.*⁸⁶

* The paper trunk contained Hudson's Bay Company papers such as dispatches, accounts and letters.

* Typical loads seem to have been about 40 kilograms, equivalent to the standard weight of a "piece" or bale of furs.

On 28 April they were arranging and strapping on their loads at 4 a.m., left some of their load "en cache" * for the return journey, and started out on foot. Ermatinger noted that they soon found the snow in the woods was knee deep, which caused them to put on their "pas d'ours," or bear-paw snowshoes.

He later noted that these snowshoes were too small and broke often, recommending that arrangements be made next time to build larger and stronger ones at Fort Colvile. It took them four days to reach the summit, then only three days to descend the Whirlpool to a point where Hudson's Bay Company "Canadians" met them with horses that took them to the Athabasca River. Then, a day's travel by canoe took them to Jasper House at the foot of Brûlé Lake.

* Caches were wooden platforms raised three metres or more above ground on smooth posts to keep goods and equipment safe from bears, wolves and wolverines.

With Ermatinger travelled David Douglas, the noted biologist after whom the Douglas-fir was named. Douglas was born in Scotland in 1799 and apprenticed to a gardener at age 11. In 1822 he was appointed as collector for the Horticultural Society of London for North America, starting in eastern Canada in 1823.⁸⁷ On his 1827 trip, he had been collecting extensively along the west coast and was returning east with his personal box of specimens and notes. He continued collecting as he travelled to York Factory and beyond. As Bridgland and Douglas noted in their *Guide to Jasper Park*: "Through Jasper Park, in the spring of 1827, there tramped with some 50 lbs. (23 kg) of seeds secured in an oil cloth on his back, which he would trust to no one else to carry, David Douglas, the Scottish botanist."⁸⁸



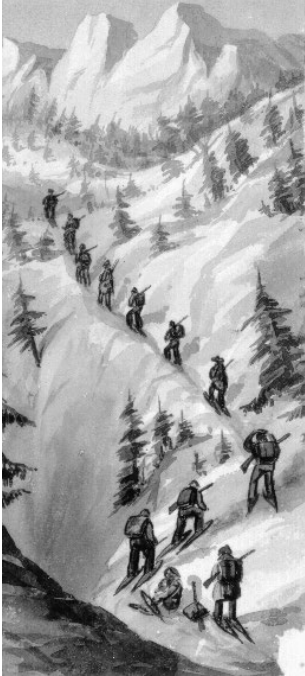
Botanist David Douglas returned east over Athabasca Pass in 1827 with the HBC brigade led by Edward Ermatinger, bringing with him his collection of plant materials from the West Coast..

Included in Douglas' journal was an insightful comment about Edward Ermatinger, an "agreeable young man," as he called the trader who regaled them around the campfires with tunes on the flute and violin. Of course, there was dancing. Douglas said of himself that "Dance he could not, but he endeavoured to please by jumping!" ⁸⁹

Douglas' description of the trip between Boat Encampment and Jasper House conveys the difficulty of the journey and also illustrates his unquenchable interest in the plants, animals and natural features that he observed along the way. His comments about the beauty of the Rocky Mountains also portended future tourism, and his estimated (greatly overestimated) heights of mounts Hooker and Brown instigated a long-standing search by mountain climbers to find the fabled peaks. In his journal, Douglas wrote about his departure from Boat Encampment:

On Saturday the 28th [April], having packed the whole of my journals in a tin box, and carrying a case of seeds and a shirt or two, tied up in a bundle, we commenced our march across the mountains in an easterly direction.

Sunday the 29th. After a sound and refreshing night's rest, we started at four this morning, proceeding for six miles [10 km] ... we made as many traverses or fordings of the [Wood] river, which was two and a half to three feet [76 to 90 cm] deep, clear, and with a powerful current. Though the breadth did not exceed twenty-five to fifty yards [23 to 45 m], the length of time passed in the water was considerable, for the feet cannot with safety be lifted from the bottom, as if once the water gets under the soles of the feet, which should be glided along to prevent this, over goes the whole person. In very powerful currents, it is necessary to pass in a body, and the one supporting the other, in an oblique direction. On coming out of the water and trotting along on the hoarfrost, we found it intensely cold, and all our clothing that was wet, immediately became cased with ice; still no inconvenience of any consequence was sustained.



Ascending the Rocky Mountains on return to Canada, watercolour by artist H. J. Warre, ca. 5 May 1846. The party is climbing the Grand Côte from the Wood River and Jeffery Creek to Athabasca Pass.

BY HENRY JAMES WARRE. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-27586

May 1st, Tuesday ... had the satisfaction at ten to reach the summit.... Being well rested by one o'clock, I set out with the view of ascending what seemed to be the highest peak on the North. Its height does not appear to be less than 16,000 or 17,000 feet [4,800–5,100 m] above the level of the sea.* After passing over the lower ridge, I came to about 1,200 feet [366 m] of by far the most difficult and fatiguing walking I ever experienced, and the utmost care was required to tread safely over the crust of snow.... This peak, the highest yet known in the Northern Continent of America, I felt a sincere pleasure in naming "Mount Brown," in honour of R. Brown, Esq., the illustrious Botanist. A little to the southward is one nearly of the same height ... I named "Mount Hooker," in honour of my early patron, the Professor of Botany in the University of Glasgow.

* Douglas' estimate of the elevations of mounts Brown and Hooker set off a series of determined explorations by mountain climbers over the next 70 years to try to relocate these record-setting mountains. His estimates were, in fact, too high by about 2,000 metres, as explained later.

Wednesday, the 2nd. Through three hundred yards [275 m] of gradually rising open low Pine-woods, we passed, and about the same distance of open ground took us to the basin of this mighty river—a small circular lake, twenty yards [18 m] in diameter, in the centre of the valley, with a small outlet on the West end, namely, the Wood River branch of the Columbia, and another at the East end, namely, one of the branches of the Athabasca, which must itself be considered one of the

tributaries of the Mackenzie River. This is not the only facet of two opposite streams flowing from the same lake. This, “*the Committee’s Punch Bowl*” is considered as being half-way, and we were quite glad to know that the more laborious and arduous part of our journey was accomplished.⁹⁰

Later that day, he met up with Jacques Cardinal who had brought eight horses for their party and offered Douglas room in his hut. Cardinal regretted having no spirits to offer him, but pointing to the stream, jocularly said: “There’s my barrel and it is always running!”⁹¹ The next day (3 May) they crossed the Athabasca and rode on to Henry House, a distance for the day of 55 kilometres. On 4 May they:

embarked at day-light in two fine light birch canoes, and went rapidly before the stream, the banks of which are low and woody, in some places narrow, in others widening into narrow lakes full of sand shoals. We stayed to breakfast on a small low island in the Upper [Jasper] Lake, where we had some mountain-sheep’s flesh, given us by Cardinal’s hunter. Continuing our route, we ... arrived at Jasper House at two p.m.⁹²

Ermatinger’s party, including Douglas, left Jasper’s House at the foot of Brûlé Lake on 5 May and arrived at Fort Assiniboine on 7 May at 8:00 p.m., taking only three days despite having been delayed by ice jams on the river. On the way they caught up to a Mr. McDougall and four men who had come from New Caledonia, now northern British Columbia, to take back a load of “leather” (tanned moose or caribou hides) through Leather Pass (now Yellowhead Pass) and down the Fraser River. Hides were scarce in New Caledonia at that time, so the Hudson’s Bay Company was sending them west.*

* Historian I. S. MacLaren noted that grease, important for pemmican, soap and candles, was also scarce, hence Grease Trail was another earlier

name for Yellowhead Pass. (Personal communication).

At Fort Assiniboine, they found that the post did not have provisions enough to furnish their men a meal, so Ermatinger sent men to Slave Lake to help J. Stuart bring supplies by boat. David Douglas went with the men and travelled with Stuart, getting back on 13 May. Stuart had been with the first party that crossed the Rockies by the Peace River, establishing Western Caledonia in 1805. Douglas was especially impressed with his knowledge of “plants and other departments in natural history.”⁹³ The Ermatinger brigade continued on to Edmonton the very next day, leaving at four in the afternoon. They arrived in Edmonton nine days later, David Douglas in eight.

The “road” to Fort Edmonton was not an easy one, having been laid out only two years earlier. The Ermatinger party had 56 horses and men and made six to eight kilometres through many “deep mires” that first short day, noting also that the horses were very poor and weak. Ermatinger’s journal entries for the remainder of the trip to Edmonton clearly illustrated the difficulties and their necessary habit of living off the land wherever possible. On the second day he recorded that the road was “very bad full of mires, the horses weak and one died, travelled 10 miles [16 km] and killed 2 geese and 2 ducks.” On the third day they covered only 21 kilometres: “Our road the whole of this day has been thro’ one continued mire— several horses too weak to come up with the rest, tho’ light. Two men return to bring them up but are unable.” They made a raft to cross the Paddle River on the fourth day, a task that took them three hours. Delayed by rain they made about 14 kilometres to camp at the Pembina River, noting that: “The road from Paddle River lies along the borders of small lakes, thro’ swamps and woods—the track thro’ the latter being in some cases extremely bad—much fallen wood and deep mires.”

On the fifth day they made three rafts to carry their supplies across the Pembina, swam the 20 horses, loaded them on the other side, and travelled about eight to ten kilometres to camp at Lac la Nonne. They set out a weir to catch fish. On the sixth day Ermatinger noted: “Our net last night yielded 60 carp and the weir 30 carp and pike—9 horses are returned to assist Mr. Stuart

in bringing forward his pieces. Afterwards 3 men sent off to clear the road ahead of fallen wood and also to make a weir at Berland's Lake [now Sandy Lake] to supply fish on our arrival."



The York boat. Of HBC design, it gradually replaced canoes for hauling freight and furs on the major rivers.

DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION. DFB 03795

On the seventh day, Sunday 20 May, they caught an equal quantity of fish. This day, with all the fish they could carry, they left with 13 loaded horses, making about 13 kilometres "thro' woods occasionally very bad road." One of the horses was unable to carry its load, so the men carried the packs. On the eighth day they were met with fresh horses from Edmonton, so were able to travel 32 kilometres to Sandy Lake, the route to which was "for the greater part bad in the extreme—thro' thick woods full of deep mires—thence the road takes thro' the plains and is pretty good." On the final day, Tuesday 22 May, in "fine warm weather" they left at 4 a.m., reaching the Sturgeon River about noon, then spending about five hours rafting their property across. They arrived at Edmonton at 7 p.m., having travelled about 40 kilometres that day and noting, yet again, "roads thro' the plains often bad thro' swamps and mires." ⁹⁴

In the meantime, David Douglas had become impatient. He had found the country boring. Of the Athabasca River from Jasper he commented that it "admits of no diversity; seeing one kilometre gave an idea of the whole." ⁹⁵ Around Fort Assiniboine he noted that the "uninteresting wretched country"

afforded him no new plants.⁹⁶ He was also concerned about how his box of seeds previously sent with fur trader Finan McDonald had fared and that they not fall into the hands of botanist Drummond. On Monday 21 May, at daylight at 4 a.m., Douglas left on foot with an “old Nipissing Indian” to walk the 79 kilometres to Fort Edmonton. He arrived at night, but was “kindly received” by Mr. Rowand who also had a dinner of moose steak prepared for him. He checked his seeds the next morning and found that only 18 papers had suffered, unfortunately including one of the finest plants in his collection.⁹⁷ However, he was grateful that greater damage had been avoided by the intervention of Drummond who had changed the papers at the request of Chief Factor Rowand.⁹⁸

On Wednesday 23 May, Ermatinger loaded six boats at Fort Edmonton. These were the clinker-built York boats made of planks cut by hand with whipsaws. Sending them on, Ermatinger loaded eight more boats on 25 May and left Edmonton the next morning—travelling 80 kilometres that first day. His journal notes that boats stopped on several occasions to hunt red deer (elk) and buffalo, dressing them out to take along.

Jacques Cardinal – Cardinal the Freeman

Jacques Cardinal and his family played an important role in the early history of the area. Jacques was “Cardinal the Freeman” who met Simpson in 1824 and in 1825 cut the trail from Fort Edmonton to Fort Assiniboine for him. He was in charge of the year-round care of the horses at Jasper and guided fur brigades across Athabasca Pass. He helped the David Douglas and Ermatinger party, among others. Cardinal later moved to the Brazeau country, and when he died was buried on the north branch of that river, which was renamed Cardinal River in his honour. Jacques Cardinal’s name is also remembered in the Jacques range, mountain, pass and lake in Jasper.⁹⁹ Jacques’ son André became a sought-after guide and was later put in charge of transporting goods at Jasper House.¹⁰⁰

Resolving the Canada–U.S. Border

In the meantime, political events were unfolding west of the Rockies. Britain claimed the lands north of the Columbia River. The United States claimed land up to latitude 54 degrees 40 minutes North (around Prince Rupert, B.C.). The Russians had staked their claim south to latitude 51 degrees, just north of Vancouver Island. The Russia-Britain dispute for access to the British lands lying east of the Russian claim was settled by treaty in 1825 that provided free navigation of streams that rose in British territory. However, in 1833 the Russians turned back the British ship *Dryad* from the Stikine River, creating a dispute that was not resolved for six years. George Simpson was involved in the negotiations in 1838 in St. Petersburg and a signatory of the agreement in Hamburg on 6 February 1839. The Hudson's Bay Company was granted a lease on all the Russian territory between latitude 50 degrees 40 minutes north and Cape Spencer (latitude 58 degrees 19 minutes, near Juneau, about 400 kilometres) that lay west of the British territory. In return, the Hudson's Bay Company was to pay an annual rent of 2,000 land-otter skins and supply the Russians with provisions at "reasonable rates."¹⁰¹ The HBC immediately organized a party to take possession of the leased area from Russia. It sent a party from York Factory in July 1839 with William Glen Rae, who was to take charge of the new area, and John McLaughlin Jr. They went west through Fort Edmonton, Jasper House and the Athabasca Pass to Fort Vancouver. The next year, as stated by Bridgland and Douglas, in 1840, the first annual payment of 2,000 land-otter skins was sent by brigade over the same route.¹⁰² The agreement lasted to 1865, two years before the sale of Alaska to the United States.¹⁰³

Possession of the Columbia River was disputed between the United States and Britain even as David Thompson found the U.S. Astorians had arrived four months before him in 1811. Forts at the mouth of the Columbia were variously owned by the NWC and Astorians, and conflicting claims led to a signed convention in 1818 that allowed the "Oregon Country" to be jointly used by citizens of both countries. However, growing pressures from both sides claiming the Columbia as the boundary, some U.S. interests claiming

their “Manifest Destiny” to latitude 54 degrees 40 minutes—led to threats of renewed hostilities. Indeed, in 1845 the British sent officers Henry James Warre and Mervin Vavasour west to assess the defensibility of the Oregon Country in case of war. They travelled as civilian sportsmen and artists with the spring HBC brigade led by factor Peter Skene Ogden who was returning west after a furlough. From Fort Edmonton, Ogden led them overland to the Kootenay by way of White Man Pass south of the Bow River. Warre and Vavasour detailed transportation and recommended defences, returning east with the HBC spring brigade in 1846, unaware of the treaty that would be signed before their return.

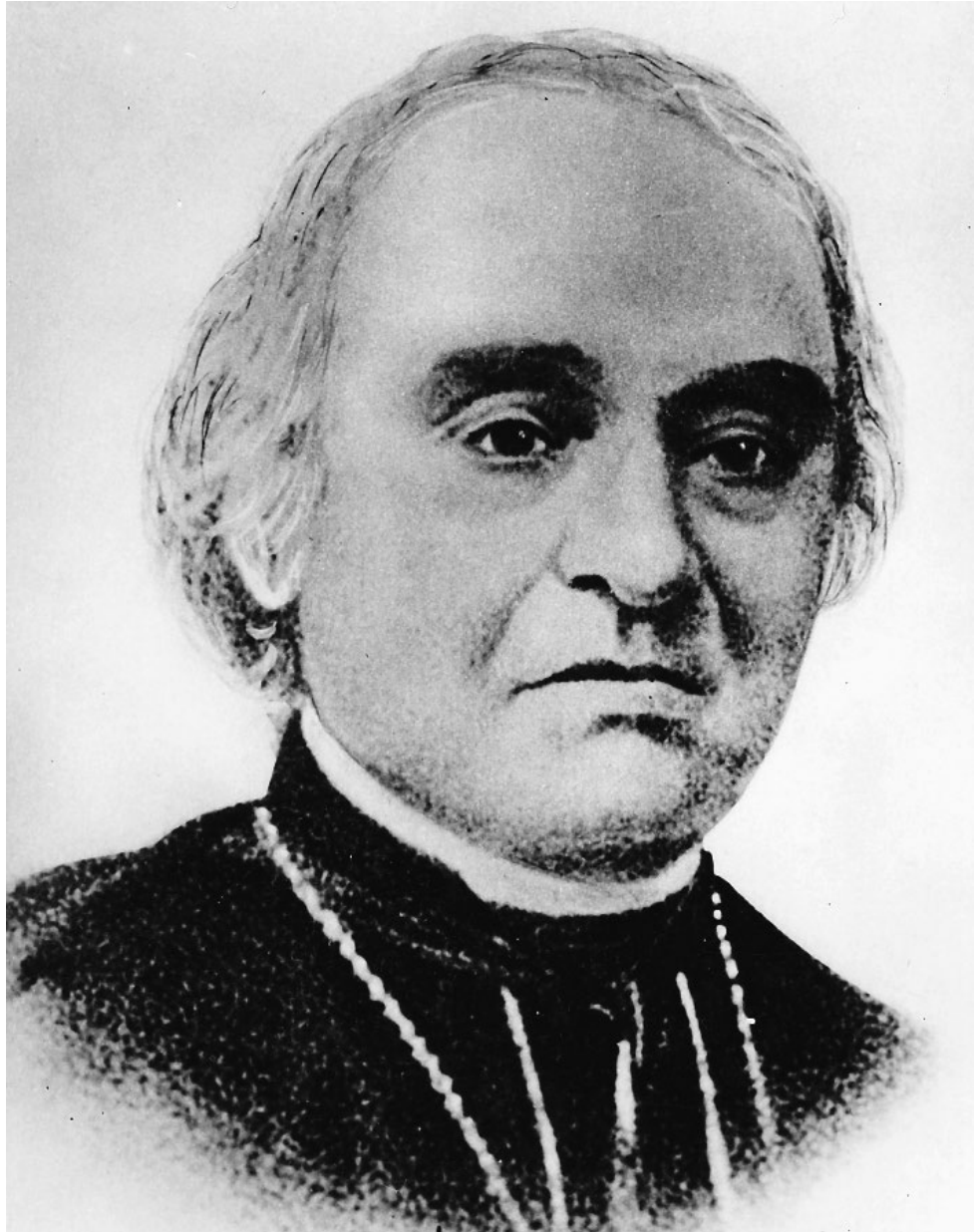
The ongoing dispute was finally resolved by the Oregon Treaty of 15 June 1846. The international border was extended west of the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean on the forty-ninth parallel, then looped south through the Strait of Juan de Fuca to leave Vancouver Island entirely in British territory. On the mainland, Britain was left with New Caledonia, renamed British Columbia in 1858 when legislation made it a British colony. The treaty provided for continued free and open passage for the Hudson’s Bay Company to the Pacific on the Columbia River and its portages. David Thompson was bitterly disappointed at the exclusion of the lands north of the Columbia, as he had argued long and passionately for their inclusion in British Territory.

In the meantime, traffic continued over the Athabasca Pass, largely without serious injury. However, disaster had struck J.E. Harriott, chief trader at Stuart Lake in the New Caledonia district in 1830. He was on his way to York Factory with the brigade in that spring, travelling with his Métis wife, Margaret Pruden, and their infant daughter. On the east side of the Athabasca Pass, Margaret disappeared. The party stopped to search but found no trace of her. Legend has it that she fell into a gorge on the Whirlpool River somewhere between Scott Camp and Kane Meadows. The Aboriginal wife of one of the traders managed to keep the infant alive to Edmonton House where they had milk cows. The rest of the party continued on to York Factory. The baby, Margaret Harriott was raised by her grandmother and grew up to marry John Rowand’s eldest son. ¹⁰⁴

Early Missionaries – Fathers Blanchet and Demers

François Blanchet and Modeste Demers were born into farming families along the lower St. Lawrence River in Quebec.^{105, 106} Both bright students, they were accepted at the seminary in Quebec. Blanchet was ordained in 1819 and distinguished himself during the cholera epidemic in Montreal in the early 1830s. Demers was ordained in 1837 and moved to St. Boniface where he became proficient in Aboriginal languages. In the meantime, families in the fur trading post in the Oregon Country at the mouth of the Columbia and along the west coast had been pleading for a church presence, and in 1838 Father Blanchet was appointed vicargeneral for the new post; Father Demers was to be his assistant. With permission of the Hudson's Bay Company governors, they were to travel with the Columbia Brigade.

Blanchet left Lachine with the Montreal Brigade in May, arriving at St. Boniface five weeks later. During the next five weeks in St. Boniface, Blanchet and Demers assisted with the ministries and accompanied the annual Métis buffalo hunt, which involved 800 to 900 Red River carts and wagons. They recorded a graphic description of the camp, the strategy of the hunt, its dangers, and the drudgery of skinning, butchering and preparing the meat. Blanchet and Demers left St. Boniface on 10 July 1838 with the brigade of north canoes led by Chief Factor John Rowand. The priests were jammed into spaces after the baggage had been loaded. Additional people and supplies were added to the brigade at Norway House. The brigade was a particularly large one, totalling more than 60 men, women and children. Many of them were Hudson's Bay Company recruits and their families going to posts in the Columbia region. Among the passengers were botanists Peter Banks and Robert Wallace with his future bride Maria, daughter of Sir George Simpson. Stopping at major forts for religious services, the brigade reached Fort Edmonton two months later on 6 September.

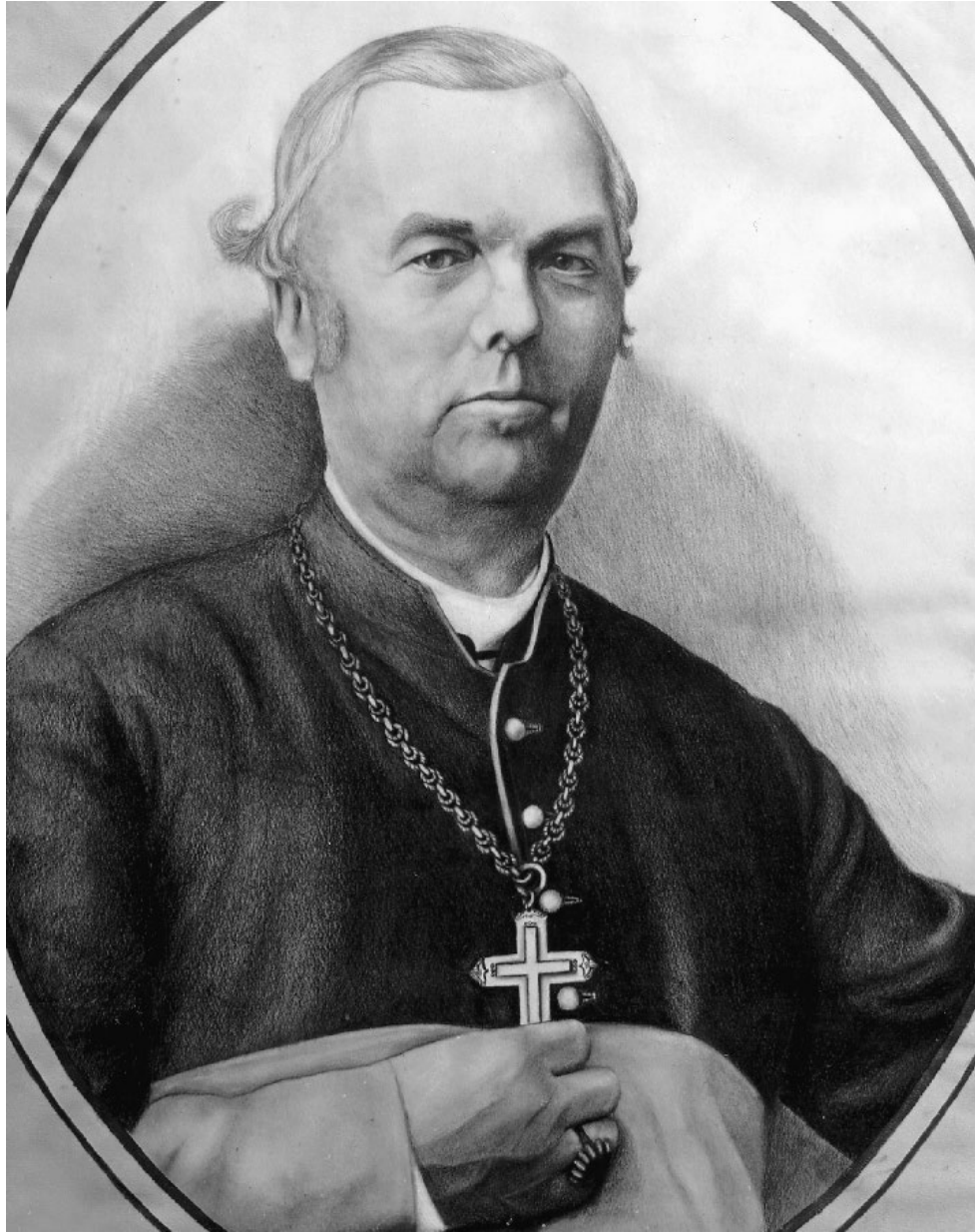


Father François Blanchet ca. 1846

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES GB NA-1886-1

With the support of Chief Factor John Rowand, Blanchet and Demers conducted baptisms and services in the region over the next three weeks and, with Rowand's permission, married Robert Wallace and Maria. Since Rowand was now at his home post, trader John Tod took over the brigade to the Columbia. On 26 September they left by horse overland to Fort Assiniboine, then travelled again by canoe for the seven-day journey to Jasper House, arriving 2 October.¹⁹⁷ There they stayed a week with postmaster Colin Fraser

and his family, baptizing 32 children in the area, including three of Fraser's. In the meantime Fraser had to organize a round-up of wild horses since he did not have enough at the post to carry such a large brigade across the pass. It took several days to round up and drive them into a corral. Since time was short, the wild horses were simply roped, haltered and packed. Despite the added tribulations of chasing and re-packing the unbroken pack horses and the need to build rafts for the river crossings, they reached the summit on 9 October.



*Father Modeste Demers, with Blanchet, were the first missionaries to the Columbia.
Blanchet and Demers travelled west with the HBC Brigade in 1838.*

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES H-04536

Blanchet and Demers described the trip by horse from Jasper House across the pass to Boat Encampment as the hardest part of the journey, with the unruly horses, rough terrain and swift water. The Athabasca was flowing fast at the ford upriver from the mouth of the Whirlpool River, but two canoes had been brought from Jasper House with “skilled Iroquois oarsmen” to ferry the passengers. They also had great difficulty crossing Whirlpool River itself, swimming the horses in the high and fast-flowing water where they crossed it

at the “Hole,” some clinging to their horses tails.^{108,109} On 9 October they reached the summit, camping on the spot, observing the spectacular setting and “marvelled at the creative power of God.... What place more sublime, what altar more fitting,” and so at 3 a.m. the next morning Blanchet and Demers offered mass at the summit.¹¹⁰ Three days later they reached Boat Encampment where mass was offered for the first time on mainland British Columbia. Unfortunately, one of the heavily laden boats capsized in the Dalles des Morts rapids below the Big Bend of the Columbia and 14 people drowned, including George Simpson’s daughter Maria and her botanist husband Robert Wallace and botanist Peter Banks. Trader Archie McDonald called the tragedy “one of the most appalling calamities we have experienced on the Columbia.”¹¹¹ Blanchet and Demers were in one of the lead boats and later conducted burial services for the three bodies that were recovered. They ultimately arrived safely at Fort Vancouver and established a successful ministry on the west coast.



John Rowand, ca. 1847, a highly successful, albeit controversial, HBC trader. Rowand arrived in Fort Edmonton in 1804 and spent 30 years in the fur trade.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-1747-1

Father Pierre-Jean De Smet and His Crash Diet

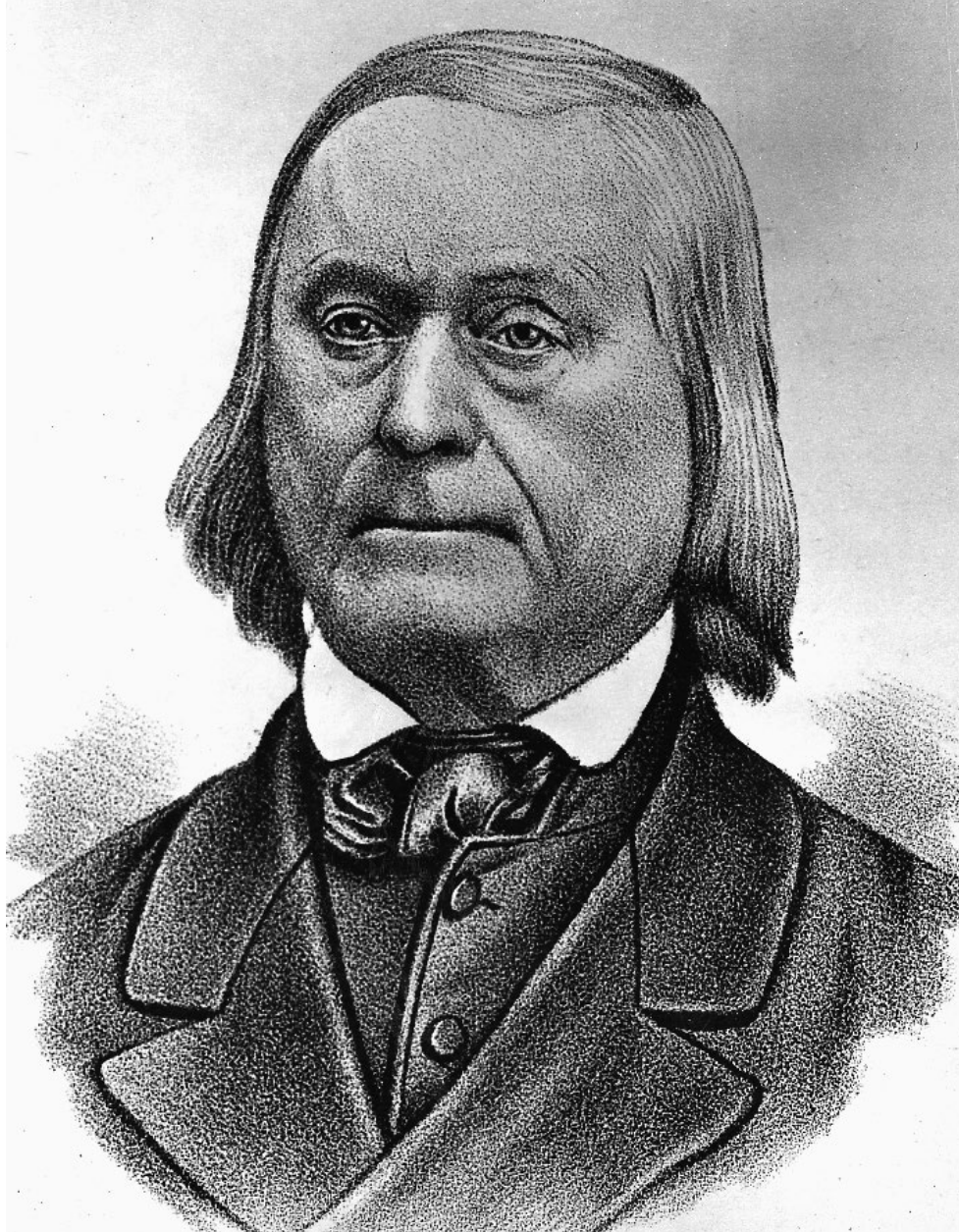
Father Pierre-Jean De Smet was the most-travelled missionary in North America. Based in St. Louis, Missouri, he ranged to the west coast and into the northern prairies and mountains. In 1845 he travelled north from Montana as far as Fort Edmonton, or Fort Augustus as it was then called, to try to meet the Blackfeet to end their war with the Kootenay, but did not find them. At Fort Edmonton he heard about the Athabasca Pass and decided to return to the west that way. As De Smet later explained, Factor John Rowand had

concerns about his weight and tried to talk him out of it, but De Smet insisted on trying. He even undertook a 30-day fast to lose some extra weight. De Smet and Rowand developed a high regard and respect for each other during his three-month stay.¹¹²

Despite his weight, De Smet must have been in good physical condition to have travelled as extensively as he did. Besides his determination, he seems to have been good-humoured and unpretentious, as evidenced in his letters. For example, he wrote a caution to anyone travelling by horse through the forested foothills:

At the entrance of each thick forest, one should render himself as slender, as short and as contracted as possible, imitating the different evolutions in all encounters of an intoxicated cavalier, but with skill and presence of mind. I mean to say, he should know how to balance himself ... cling to the saddle and every form, to avoid the numerous branches that intercept his passage, ever ready to tear him to pieces, and flay his face and hands. Notwithstanding these precautions, it is rare to escape without paying tribute in some manner to the ungracious forest.

I one day found myself in a singular and critical position: in attempting to pass under a tree that inclined across the path, I perceived a small branch in the form of a hook, which threatened me. The first impulse was to extend myself upon the neck of my horse. Unavailing precaution! It caught me by the collar of my surtout, the horse still continuing his pace. Behold me suspended in the air ... struggling like a fish at the end of a hook. Several respectable pieces of my coat floated, in all probability, a long time in the forest, as an undeniable proof of my having paid toll in passing through it. A crushed and torn hat, an eye black and blue ... two deep scratches on the cheek, would, in a civilized country, have given my the appearance rather of a bully issuing from the Black Forest, than of a missionary.¹¹³



Rev. Pierre-Jean De Smet, Jesuit missionary, travelled from Montana by horse to try to make peace between the Blackfeet and Kootenay. From Fort Edmonton he returned to the Columbia over Athabasca Pass, first fasting to lose weight for the journey in 1846. Sketch 1885.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-568-1

When De Smet arrived in late December 1845, Fort Edmonton sheltered about 80 people, including women and children. He was impressed by their large garden and fields of potatoes and wheat, and the icehouse containing 30,000 whitefish, each weighing about two kilograms, and 500 buffaloes. He

also recorded that carts full of waterfowl were sent to the fort in season and that eggs were picked up in the thousands in the marshes.

During his visit, De Smet conducted baptisms and services, also visiting the two-year-old mission at Lac Ste. Anne. On 12 March 1846, he left Fort Edmonton accompanied by three Métis travelling with three dog sleighs; one drawn by four dogs was reserved for him. They reached Fort Assiniboine on the third day and reached Jasper House in nine more days. De Smet spent 26 days in the vicinity, initially with Colin Fraser. However, De Smet's popularity drew visitors from a wide area and led to 44 baptisms, including Mrs. Fraser and four more of their children. As there was a shortage of food in the Jasper House area, Fraser proposed that they should accompany him and his family to the Lake of the Islands where they could subsist partly on fish. As the distance was not great, they accepted the invitation and set out with 54 people and 20 dogs. They lived well; the game killed by their hunters during the 26-day stay included: "12 moose deer, two reindeer, 30 large mountain sheep or bighorn, two porcupines, 210 hares, one beaver, two muskrats, 24 bustards, 115 ducks, 21 pheasants, one snipe, one eagle, one owl; and add to this from 30 to 50 fine white-fish every day and 20 trout."¹⁴⁴ Historian J.G. MacGregor suggested that "Lake of the Islands" might have been Jarvis Lake, which would have been readily accessible through the Joachim Valley from Solomon Creek.¹⁴⁵

Before De Smet left, his "new children in Christ" begged leave to honour him. "Each one discharged his musket in the direction of the highest mountain, a large rock jutting out in the form of a sugar loaf, and with three loud hurrahs gave it my name."^{146*} On 25 April, De Smet left Colin Fraser and his family, accompanied for 16 kilometres by an escort of all the men in the camp. In six days they had reached the Grande Bâtures and pitched their tents to wait for the eastbound York Factory Express. In a letter to his Monseigneur, dated 6 May, De Smet remarked, "every day, and often every hour, the noise of ten avalanches descending at once breaks upon the ear; on every side we see them precipitated with a frightful rapidity," adding that they make a terrific noise that resounds through these quiet solitudes like distant thunder. He also remarked on a "new object of surprise and admiration; an immense mountain

of pure ice, 1,500 feet [458 m] high, enclosed between two enormous rocks. So great is the transparency of this beautiful ice, that we can easily distinguish objects in it to a depth of more than six feet [two m].”¹¹⁷

* Historian J.G. MacGregor suggests that the description better fits Pyramid Mountain, although Roche de Smet lies about 20 kilometres north along the river.

Towards evening on 6 May, De Smet watched two men approach from the west on snowshoes, the forerunners of the York Factory Express. The two men were old friends, British Lieutenants Henry James Warre and Mervin Vavasour, returning from their spy mission to Oregon Territory. They had met De Smet in the Pend Oreille area of present day northern Idaho; Warre noted that De Smet was “the most intelligent man I have met with in the Country & with fewer prejudices.”¹¹⁸ On this 6 May meeting, Warre and Vavasour had struck out across the pass on snowshoes ahead of the brigade, were exhausted and hungry from their exertions through the deep snow, and were delighted at meeting their old friend De Smet, who revived them by sharing his pemmican. Leading the York Factory Express was Francis (Frank) Ermatinger of the Hudson’s Bay Company, younger brother of Edward Ermatinger. Captain Warre made a sketch of their meeting and took with him De Smet’s letters for the United States and Europe.*

* By the time Warre and Vavasour reached Red River to write their final reports they were unaware that the Oregon Boundary Treaty was being signed at that moment. The agreed-upon boundary extended the 49th parallel to Georgia Strait, then dipped south to leave Vancouver Island entirely in Canada.

The next day De Smet and his crew set off on snowshoes: “For myself, I had to try the snowshoes for the first time in my life; by means of these I had to ascend those frightful ramparts, the barriers of snow which separate the Atlantic world from the Pacific Ocean and the waters of the Arctic.” ^{119*} In this same letter to his Monseigneur dated 11 May 1846, De Smet recalled Factor John Rowand’s concern about his weight. Rowand had told him that “it was absolutely impossible for me to accomplish the journey [over Athabasca Pass], on account of my corpulency, and they wished to dissuade me from attempting it. However, I thought I could remedy the inconvenience of my surplus weight by a vigorous fast of thirty days, which I cheerfully underwent. I found myself much lighter indeed, and started off somewhat encouraged, over snow sixteen feet [4.9 m] deep.” ¹²⁰

* While the southern Rocky Mountains separate the Atlantic and Pacific drainages, the Athabasca Pass is on the Arctic-Pacific divide.



Lieutenants Henry James Warre and Mervin Vavasour meeting Rev. Pierre Jean De Smet on the east side of Athabasca Pass, 6 May 1846. Warre and Vavasour were returning from a scouting expedition on the lower Columbia for the British Army.

He could not tell the number of “summersets” (summersaults) he had, commenting that he was continually embarrassed by his snowshoes or entangled in a tree. When he fell, he said, he spread his arms before him, as natural, became half buried and then had to get assistance to get up. “Woe to the man who happens to have a heavy body or to make a false step. I say this from experience; for many times I found myself twenty or thirty feet [6 to 9 m] from the point of my departure— happy indeed if, in that fall, I did not violently strike my head against the trunk of some great tree.” ¹²¹ They travelled an impressive 50 kilometres that first day. On the fourth day they arrived at Boat Encampment. On the way his men created a lobster* in his honour. He recorded that from the continual wading on the way down he lost his toenails. However, at their first dinner at Boat Encampment he wrote: “We found ourselves snugly seated and stretched out around the kettles and roasts, laughing and joking about the summersets on the mountains and the accidents on the Portage. I need not tell you that they describe me as the most clumsy and awkward traveller in the band.” ¹²²

* A living conifer trimmed of its branches partway up the trunk to give it a distinctive shape recognizable at a distance. Lobsticks were traditionally made to honour an individual or event, or to serve as a marker.

Artist Paul Kane Travels the North-West

One of the most notable travellers to cross Athabasca Pass at this time was artist Paul Kane. Born in Ireland in 1810 he emigrated to Canada with his family when he was 12 and became an artist. In 1845, inspired by a display of artist George Caitlin’s paintings of American Indians, he determined to travel to the Canadian NorthWest. With the sponsorship of George Simpson he was able to travel with the Hudson’s Bay Company brigades to the Columbia.¹²³ He made two trips through the Athabasca Pass, travelling from Fort Edmonton to Boat Encampment on his way to the Columbia in the fall of 1846, and

returning in the fall and early winter of 1847. His observations also reflect the challenges of travelling through that country. Kane arrived at Fort Edmonton overland from Fort Garry on 26 September 1846, and that same day made a sketch of an intense prairie fire burning across the country on the south side of the river through which they had travelled only that morning.

Under the leadership of Mr. McGillivray, the party left with 16 men and 65 horses for the overland trip to Fort Assiniboine. In his journal, Kane explained that a large supply of provisions was required since Fort Edmonton was the last post at which supplies could be obtained. He remarked on the abundance of buffalo around Fort Edmonton and painted a group of buffalo grazing nearby as they camped on the Sturgeon River that first day. It took them five days to reach Fort Assiniboine over the road that “became almost impassable, being wet and swampy; and the horses often stuck fast, and threw off their loads in their struggles to extricate themselves from the mire.”¹²⁴ On 11 October they loaded themselves into two boats, one loaded with the packs of otter skins for the rent of west coast trapping rights to the Russians. Again, it was tough going up the Athabasca River. The water was swift but low and “we had almost continually to drag the boat onwards with a line, the men waist deep in the water.”¹²⁵ It was late in the season and during a snowstorm, one of the boats, carrying 40 packs of valuable otter furs for Russia, turned back. Kane’s party struggled on in the other boat for 23 days to Brûlé Lake where they were stopped by low water and high winds. On the way, Kane observed that “this is the most monotonous river that I have ever met with in my travels.”¹²⁶

In the meantime, their guide, Colin Fraser, had gone ahead with a lighter boat and returned from Jasper’s House with several horses so Kane rode on ahead, noting that they had “forded the river four times, dangerously crowded with drift ice borne down by a rapid current, sometimes coming over the saddle.” He was cheered at Jasper House by a blazing fire and ate well over two kilograms of mountain sheep, “which I certainly then thought far more delicious than any domestic animal.” He noted that the post was kept up only for the purpose of supplying horses to parties crossing the mountains. He was certainly not impressed with Jasper House, commenting that:



Paul Kane, Self Portrait, ca. 1847. Kane crossed Athabasca Pass going west in 1846 and returned east in 1847.

STARK MUSEUM OF ART, ORANGE, TEXAS. 31.78/197, WOP 27

[It consists] of only three miserable log huts. The dwelling-house is composed of two rooms, of about 14 or 15 feet [4.3 or 4.6 m] square each. One of them is used by all comers and goers: Indians, voyageurs, and traders, men, women and children being huddled together indiscriminately; the other room being devoted to the exclusive occupation of Colin [Fraser] and his family, consisting of a Cree squaw and nine interesting half-breed children.¹²⁷

Kane started overland to Athabasca Pass on 5 November with a cavalcade of 13 loaded horses. However, anticipating that they would not be able to get horses across the mountains in the deep snow, he had one of the resident Shuswap Indians make him a pair of snowshoes. By the fifth day, as the snow began to deepen and their progress slowed, they decided that McGillivray and a guide would go ahead to try to reach the party waiting for them at Boat Encampment, lest the boats leave before they arrived. On the next day the snow became too deep for horses, so they made packs that each man could carry, sending everything else back with the horses. Kane described how they camped in the deep snow:

Five or six logs of green timber, from 18 to 20 feet [5.5 to 6.1 m] long, are laid down close together, in parallel lines, so as to form a platform. The fire of dry wood is then kindled on it, and pine branches are spread on each side, on which the party, wrapped in their blankets, lie down with their feet towards the fire. The parallel logs rarely burn through in one night.¹²⁸

On the eighth day out from Jasper's House, they reached the height of land and camped at the edge of the frozen Committee Punch Bowl. After the first day of sliding and rolling down the steep slopes in the snow, Kane remarked on how they had to ford the Wood River 17 times the first day and 37 times the second. They got to Boat Encampment at 5 p.m. on 15 November, having travelled 41 days from Fort Edmonton. They were welcomed with a fire and a hot meal by the waiting boatmen. They had been waiting for 39 days and had planned to leave the next day when McGillivray and the guide appeared, just in time to have them wait for the rest of the party.

Kane returned east the next fall after a year of exploration and painting along the Pacific coast. This time, 56 horses were waiting for them at Boat Encampment, brought west with the furs for the Hudson's Bay Company lease with Russia. It had taken nine days for the horse brigade to cross over from Jasper's House. On 31 October 1847, the Hudson's Bay Company party left

Boat Encampment with 15 horses loaded, the rest running loose. Kane noted that this was:

about the worst road I had ever travelled, it being cut up by so many horses having passed it a short time previously. My horse stuck in a mud hole until he sank up to his head, and it was with the greatest difficulty that one of the men and myself extricated him alive. What with the horses sticking in the mud, the packs falling off, the shouting to the animals in Cree, and swearing at them in French, there being no oaths in the Indian languages, I never passed such a busy, tiresome, noisy and disagreeable day in my life. ¹²⁹



Jasper House II as it appeared on 15 January 1872, photographed by Charles Horetzky, a member of Sandford Fleming's survey team.

CHARLES HORETZKY. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PA-9173

Crossing over the Divide on the third day, Kane's "long beard became one solid mass of ice." Later, he recalled that his beard, "the growth of nearly two years, gave me great trouble, as it became heavy with ice from the freezing of my breath; even my nostrils became stopped up, and I was forced to breathe through my mouth." ¹³⁰ The party found the Athabasca River in flood and forded it in a heavy snowstorm, so Kane had his pack containing his sketches

carried on the shoulders of one of the men riding across to keep it out of the water. They reached Jasper House on the seventh day and “soon forgot our trouble over a good piece of mountain sheep, which is really delicious, even when not seasoned by such hardships as we had undergone.”¹³¹

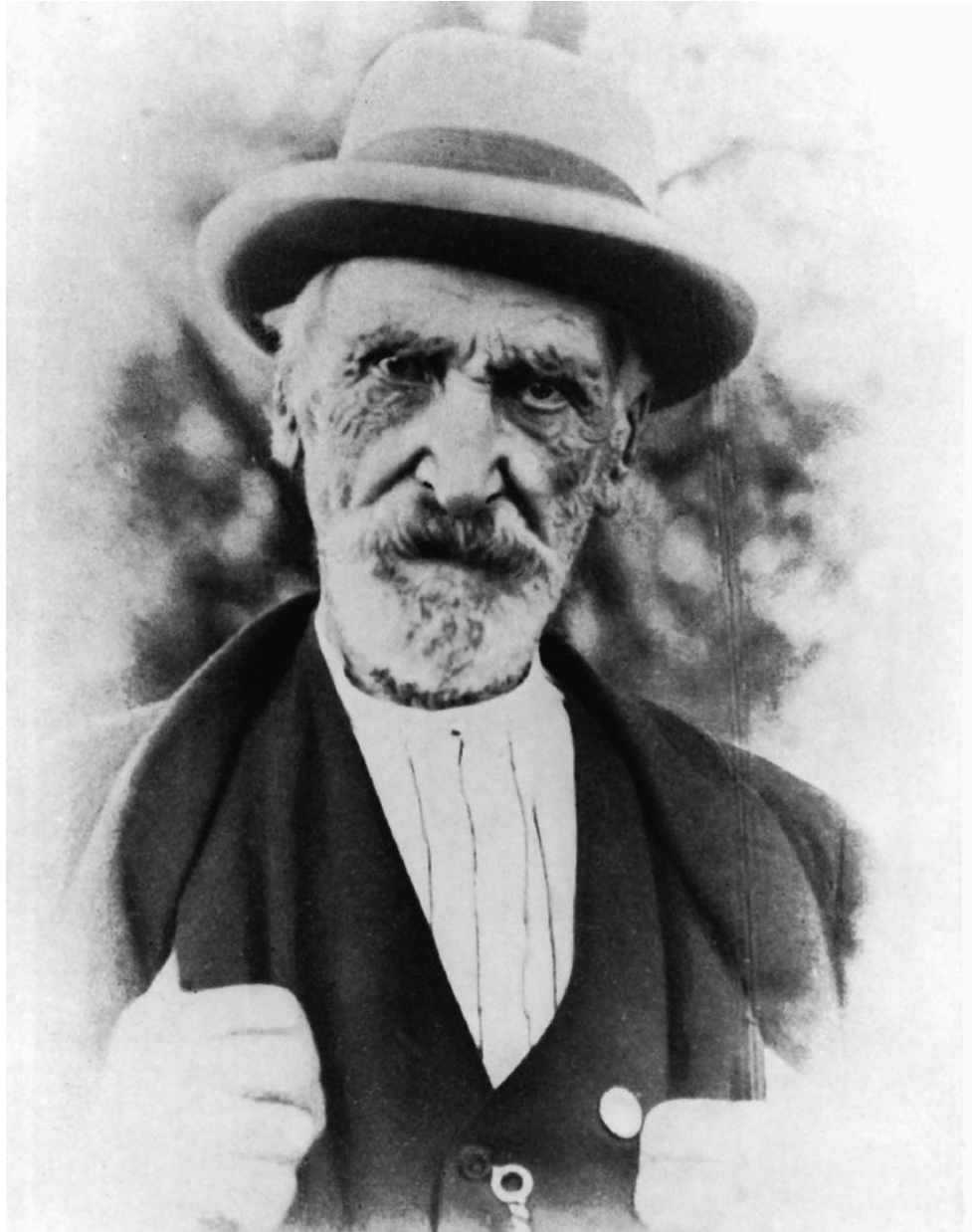
However, Kane was eager to leave the area lest he “should have been obliged to spend a most dreary winter in the wretched accommodation which Jasper’s House afforded.”¹³² After two weeks to rest and make snowshoes, Kane left with two men and two dogs, one of which chewed through his line one night and headed back. It took them 15 days travelling along the river to reach Fort Assiniboine. His journal recorded the prevalence of the cold, deep snow, ice jams on the river over which they had to wrestle the toboggans, open rapids around which they had to detour through heavy bush, wet frozen feet from the overflow, “mal de raquette”^{*} that caused them great pain, and a shortage of food by the end of the trip. They had travelled 560 kilometres in the 15 days, a remarkable average of 37 kilometres per day. They were welcomed at Fort Assiniboine with a feed of fresh whitefish of which Kane ate four averaging around 3 kilograms each. Here they rested two days to allow their feet to recover, then four days to Fort Edmonton, where Kane spent the winter. The journey back from Boat Encampment had taken 36 days, five days fewer than the westbound trip.

* Literally, French for “snowshoe sickness.” It is a painful condition caused by walking on snowshoes, usually wearing moccasins, in which the ball of the foot takes most of the weight.

Henry John Moberly and His Family Legacy

It was difficult to eke out a living at this time in the remote Athabasca Valley. Although a few free traders and trappers lived in the area, most travellers were just passing through—perhaps stopping to trade furs—but few stayed to build homes and settle. Jasper House became run down and was abandoned in 1854, as no one wanted to stay in that harsh and lonely place. But the post and

access to it changed in 1858 when Henry John (Harry) Moberly was named HBC trader for the Hudson's Bay Company at Jasper House. Born in 1835 in Ontario, Moberly was engaged at 18 by Sir George Simpson effective 1 June 1853. During his time with the Hudson's Bay Company, Moberly visited virtually every post in the Company territory. In 1855 he was appointed to take charge of a summer hunting party at Jasper House. He left Edmonton House for Fort Assiniboine with 25 to 30 ponies, then continued on by boat with seven men and his interpreter. At Brûlé Lake he met the Iroquois hunters who were camped there waiting for them. They "pitched off" in various directions to hunt, Moberly going with a group to the Smoky River. They killed more than 70 moose besides many bighorn, caribou and mountain goats. Having spent a summer there, he believed that the Iroquois would return to Jasper House if it were re-established. He also believed that the privation suffered at Jasper House was due to mismanagement or mishap, and later observed that while he remained in charge of Jasper House, they never knew a shortage of meat. So, in 1858 he offered to return to the area to re-establish the abandoned post. Edmonton chief factor W.J. Christie "gladly accepted" his offer.⁴³³



Henry John (Harry) Moberly built the overland trail from Fort Edmonton at age 23 when he became the HBC trader at Jasper House II in 1858. Photo in July 1926.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-789-112

The established route to Jasper at that time was to pack the “outfit” with horses from Fort Edmonton to Fort Assiniboine, then take it up-river by boat. Since there was no boat at Fort Assiniboine in 1858, Moberly decided to make an overland route from Fort Edmonton. At age 23, he left Edmonton on 20 October with 37 packhorses and a party of two engaged servants, four Aboriginal youths, and two Iroquois hunters with their wives and families. He noted that they had a good trail to Lac Ste. Anne and an Indian trail to Island

Lake, but “from there on we had to make our way through woods and muskegs, and a nice time of it we had.” They arrived at Jasper House 15 November, almost four weeks later, “after many a struggle and plenty of hard work.”¹³⁴ In the process they established the first overland trail, which then became the major route west. It was a long and very difficult trail, especially between break-up and freeze up, since so much of it passed over soft ground.



Suzanne Karakonte Moberly, wife of Henry John Moberly and mother of their two boys, Ewan and John Moberly. She stayed in Jasper to raise her two boys when Henry John left in 1861. She was the matriarch and elder of the extended Moberly families that were removed from the Park in 1909-10. Photo year estimated as 1875 when Susanne was around 50.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LENA OUELLET, SUZANNE'S GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER.

That Moberly made his pioneering journey in only four weeks is testimony to his skills and those of the seasoned members of his party, the stamina of their horses, and possibly the help of a drier fall. Moberly remarked later that the railway ran practically over the same trail.¹³⁵ There is a question about what route the Moberly's Trail followed between Medicine Lodge and the Hinton

area to cross the divide between the McLeod and Athabasca valleys. The railway went west past Obed Lake into the Athabasca drainage. The Cache Percotte Trail stayed along the McLeod River southwesterly for about 20 kilometres past “The Leavings,” then west over the divide to come out between present-day Hinton and Pedley. This was evidently a well-travelled route as well.

In 1861, Henry Moberly married Suzanne Karakonte. Suzanne’s father, Louis Dekarra/Karakonte, guided James Hector in 1859. Suzanne had a daughter when she met Henry John and they had two sons together, Ewan and John.¹³⁶ This was the start of the extended Moberly-related families who settled and farmed in the Jasper area. When they and other families were evicted in 1910, after the area was made a national park in 1907, Ewan and John and their families moved to Grande Cache and Prairie Creek, respectively.¹³⁷

Henry John Moberly resigned from the Hudson’s Bay Company on 1 June 1861 and left Jasper House. Lena Ouellet, great granddaughter of Henry John and Suzanne, and family historian, explained that Henry John and Suzanne travelled to Lac Ste. Anne where they were married in October 1861. Suzanne refused to leave her home area with Henry John, so he left and she overwintered at Lac Ste. Anne to return to Jasper House in 1862 with her daughter and two boys to raise them there herself. She soon after had another son, Alex McAuley,¹³⁸ who became a noted guide and outfitter. He was murdered by a prospector in 1899 near Tête Jaune Cache.¹³⁹

Lena Ouellet recalled a story that her mother often told their family about when Henry John left Suzanne and the boys. Henry John told Suzanne that he had authorized the Hudson’s Bay store in Fort Edmonton to provide her with anything she requested on their yearly supply trip to Fort Edmonton. At that time the Jasper area families would make an annual journey to Fort Edmonton to get supplies. They rode horses to their traditional meeting place at Lac Ste. Anne in June to stay awhile at the Mission to meet other families and participate in the Pilgrimage when it began in 1889. At the end of July they went on to Fort Edmonton and then returned home in time for berry picking and the fall hunts. Suzanne did not want to have Henry John take her sons from her to send them to be educated in the east or even in England, as was



Suzanne Karakonte Moberly's gravesite is located at the Ewan Moberly Homestead historic site in Jasper National Park.

BRIAN CARNELL

often done in those days. She did not want to risk losing them so she did not ask for anything. However, when the boys turned the age for Church Communion, Suzanne relented and asked for two little suits for that important occasion. She asked for nothing else, living self-sufficiently off the land, hunting, trapping, gathering, and gardening.¹⁴⁰ She passed away in 1905 at about the age of 81. Her grave is located on the home-site of her son Ewan.¹⁴¹

Henry John later rejoined the HBC to run the post at Fraser Lake in British Columbia. He served the Company until his retirement in 1894. He homesteaded in the Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, area where he died in 1931.

Grey Nuns Arrive at Lac Ste. Anne

Roman Catholic missions also brought a cultural influence to the region. In 1858, Father Albert Lacombe arranged for three Grey Nuns from Montreal to assist his mission at Lac Ste. Anne. Sisters Emery (Zoe Leblanc, 31 years old), Adèle Lamy, aged 23, and Alphonse (Marie Jacques, aged 22 years) left their Mother House on 19 September 1858. They travelled on the canoe route and arrived in St. Boniface 33 days later. Here they stayed for nine months to acclimatize and learn about the country, people and customs from their sisters.¹⁴² Led by Father Rémas, they left St. Boniface overland on 3 August 1859 and three months later, as historian J.G. MacGregor described, “a small train of carts drew up to the fort [Fort Edmonton]—twelve horses, six carts, and a wild dog. And stiff and bruised from their long trip from Fort Garry,

three Grey Nuns stepped down.”¹⁴³ Father Drouin, OMI described the vicissitudes of the trip: “Through sloughs, muskegs, creeks and rivers they cross; over interminable plains they plod along in the Red River carts, always pestered by flies and mosquitoes, particularly when they retire for a much-needed sleep under their tent, once the simple evening meal has been despatched and prayers said.”¹⁴⁴

The nuns shortly went on to the Lac Ste. Anne mission where they taught, nursed, worked in the garden and generally assisted in administering to spiritual needs. These three nuns were the first white, formally educated women to come to the area. They brought to five the number of women of European descent in Alberta, following Marie Lagimodière, married to a Hudson’s Bay Company trader, and a young Scottish bride, Mrs. Robert Campbell, who went to Fort Chipewyan that spring.¹⁴⁵

The move to Lac Ste. Anne was timely, as it soon became a major stopping place on the overland trail, already linked by a short spur to the trail from Fort Edmonton to Fort Assiniboine. The mission was near the end of the better section of the trail, so westbound travellers were given a good send-off on the hard road, while those eastbound were welcomed and restored. In 1867, Father Lacombe sent the first of his annual brigades of freighting carts to Fort Garry for his mission supplies for the region. As many as 300 carts made one trip per season carrying trade goods and furs.¹⁴⁶

The Palliser Expedition and James Hector

Questions in the British Parliament in 1857 about the future of the Hudson’s Bay Company lands led to the Palliser Expedition to the western prairies in 1857–60. John Palliser, instigator and leader of the expedition, was a sportsman and adventurer who had spent 11 months in the western United States in 1847–48 hunting buffalo, among other species. Palliser was accompanied by geologist, physician and naturalist Dr. James Hector and several other scientists. The expedition was charged with many tasks, including gathering information about the Hudson’s Bay Company territories, assessing the potential of the country for agriculture and scouting for possible

railway passes through the mountains.¹⁴⁷ In January 1859, just two months after Moberly and his party settled in at Jasper House, James Hector travelled from Fort Edmonton to Jasper House to scout the Athabasca and Yellowhead passes.



*Sir James Hector, n.d.,
explored the Jasper area in
January, 1859.*

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND
ARCHIVES NA-659-62

Hector's journey is described by Irene Spry in her account of the Palliser Expedition.¹⁴⁸ According to Spry, Hector set out on 12 January 1859 with “three trains of dogs. Each sled carried about 350 lbs. [160 kg]—their bedding, instruments and other gear, and pemmican for twenty-eight days.” On the first day, on a hard track, they covered 40 kilometres in four and a half hours. Chief Factor Christie, who had accompanied them for the first part of the journey, realized that he had forgotten a letter he wished to have Hector take to Jasper House. As Hector described:

He at once sent back his clerk, Mr. Sinclair, to the fort with his dogs, although that gentleman had just driven them the 25 miles [40 km] out to this place. Sinclair got back to the fort before midnight, and sent back a man with the same dogs, who arrived with the letter for us before we were up in the morning, the dogs having thus run 75 miles [120 km] in a good deal under the 24 hours.¹⁴⁹

However, during the rest of the trip across to Fort Assiniboine and up the ice on the Athabasca River, they had to break trail for the dogs in deep snow and only averaged about 29 kilometres a day. On the morning of the last day of their trip to Jasper House, Hector's party was camped on a high bank of the river from which Hector noted they had a splendid view of the mountains—a change from the view-less travel through dense forests. They determined that they had to cover the last 64 kilometres in one day. Strong winds and windblown sand on the open ice made travel difficult, slowing their progress considerably. It was quite dark when they reached the Disaster Point spur of

Roche Miette, which forced them back to the river. Hector described the arduous way they got across the Athabasca:

After searching for a crossing place in the dark without success, we took for the most shallow place we could find, where the river was very rapid, and without taking the harness off the dogs, unfastened them from the sleds, and pitching them into the water, pelted them with pieces of ice, so they swam for the other side of the river. We then got off the edge of the ice ourselves, and found the water took us above the waist, and getting the sleds, loads and all, on our shoulders, waded through the rapid, which was about 100 yards [90 m] wide, and so reached the left bank. The wind, which had changed at sunset to N.E., was bitterly cold, so that the plunge into the water felt rather warm at first, but on re-emerging we at once stiffened into a mass of ice, for, as I found half an hour afterwards, the thermometer stood at minus 15 degrees [minus 26 degrees Celsius]. In this state we again tackled the dogs, that were frozen into a lump with their harness, and after a run of two miles [3 km] through the woods, we reached Jasper House at 10 p.m.¹⁵⁰

Hector spent 18 days exploring the Jasper area. Travelling with Chief Factor Henry Moberly, he described the landforms, geology and natural history. He took meteorological observations, several sets of readings for latitude and longitude, and estimated the elevation by measuring the temperature of boiling water, the technique used by David Thompson. With Moberly's assistance, he measured a baseline across the valley from which he determined distances to various peaks by cross bearings. To assess the lay of the land for possible railway locations, he climbed a shoulder of Roche Miette to describe the lower valley. Then, on 10 February 1859 he left Jasper House to explore up the Athabasca valley with an Iroquois guide named Tekarra. On the 12th they crossed a high ridge beyond the Maligne River, probably above Old Fort Point. "From this point I had a fine view up the Caledonian Valley which is to all appearance wide and level, and runs without interruption for at

least 30 or 40 miles [48 or 64 km]. It used to take six days to travel from this point to Fraser River, at a point where boats could ascend to.”¹⁵¹

Hector was describing the Miette River valley, the route through the Yellowhead Pass, an observation that later contributed to Sandford Fleming’s choice of this route for the first trans-Canada railway. The next day Hector rode up to the mouth of the Whirlpool River. His guide Tekarra was suffering badly from an inflamed foot, so he was not able to guide Hector up the Whirlpool itself, but Hector:



The Athabasca River just below Disaster Point where James Hector probably crossed at night with dogs in January 1859 at -26° Celsius.

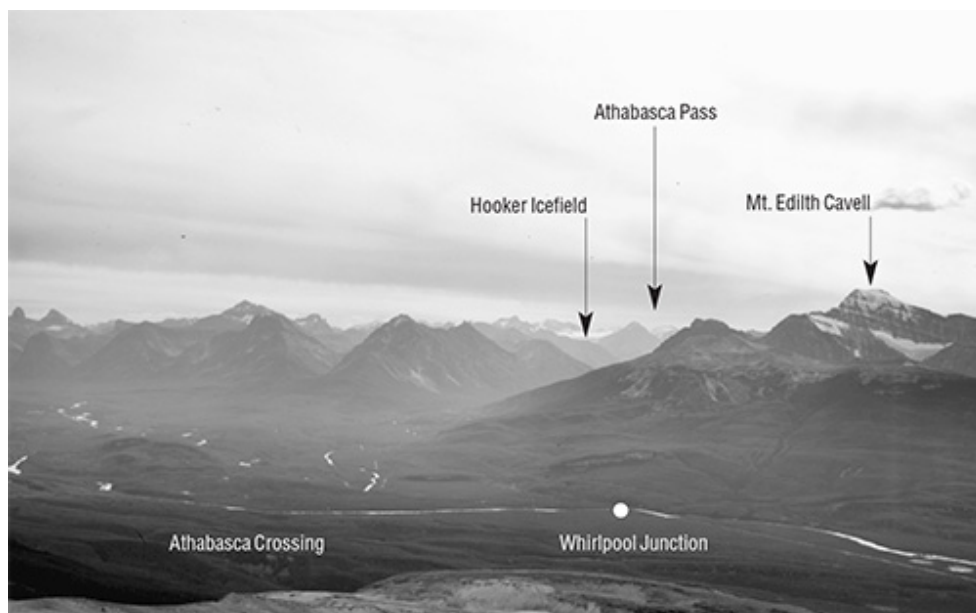
TOM PETERSON

[ascended] a mountain opposite the valley of the Whirlpool River, and had a fine view up it towards the Boat Encampment. Having been directed by Tekarra, I easily recognized Mount Brown and Mount Hooker, which are much like the mountains towards the source of the North Saskatchewan. They seemed distant 30 miles [48 km] to the [south by west].¹⁵²

Hector also commented on the food supply problem at Jasper House that had led to closure of the post before Moberly offered to take it over, and

described Moberly's successful strategy:

It is a very anxious task to provide for the little community at Jasper House, as they only arrive there in the beginning of November from Edmonton, by a fatiguing journey with pack-horses through the woods, which last fall occupied nineteen days. From the time of their arrival they require to live on 'til next spring from hand to mouth. In order to save the game around the fort until the depth of winter, Moberly had abandoned it on his first arrival, and for two months they all lived in a camp about 20 miles [32 km] up the valley, at a place where there are big-horn sheep. Until a few years ago this trading post was not altogether abandoned during the summer, but the person in charge made a hunting tour for several months to accumulate provisions for next winter's support, and during these trips as many as 30 to 40 moose deer would be killed and several hundred big-horn sheep. In addition he always returned in time to secure a stock of fish before the frost set in and closed the mountain lakes, which abound in "whitefish" and trout.¹⁵³



View up the Whirlpool River in 1915, much as James Hector may have seen it when he climbed up this ridge in 1859 to assess the route.

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On 19 February 1859, Hector left to return to Fort Edmonton, this time directly overland on foot from Brûlé Lake. He had dispatched two of his men with dogs to Fort Edmonton on 7 February, asking them to request Chief Factor Christie to send a man with dogs to wait for them at the mission at Lac Ste. Anne.* Tekarra expected that it would take 12 days to reach Edmonton, but thought that as they would see plenty of rabbits and perhaps large game, they need not carry more than a few days' provisions. They travelled with three dogs and an old sled that he intended to take as far as the trail would permit. At the end of only the second day they had to leave the sled. Packing some of the load on the two strongest dogs they carried the remainder on their own backs. Their provisions consisted of only about eight kilograms of pemmican, one kilogram of flour and a little tea and sugar. Hector carried his papers, books and sextants with him. As it turned out, they found very little game. By the seventh day the pemmican was finished. Fortunately, on the ninth day they shot a moose, feeding on it for the rest of the day and spending the tenth day eating as well. On the eleventh day, the first of March, they started off "refreshed" and reached the western shore of Lac Ste. Anne on the evening of the fourteenth day. On the last day, 5 March, starting at daylight,

* Hector gave Christie's name to a mountain up the Athabasca River. He also named a Mount Moberly, but that name seems not to have been registered.

[we] reached the mission station of Lac Ste. Anne's and were kindly welcomed by the priests. They had heard from my men, who had got back safely to Edmonton in twelve days from Jasper House, that I intended to return direct through the woods: and as the priests knew from the half-breed hunters of the scarcity of game this year in that direction, they had great fears for my safety.¹⁵⁴

However, the dogs he had requested were there so they took advantage of the hospitality at the mission until night. Then Hector with Erasmus the driver left about 10:00 p.m., "and having a good track and fresh dogs we ran

the remaining 80 kilometres of the journey to Edmonton in ten hours, arriving there to breakfast in the morning.”¹⁵⁵ Despite the difficulties, Hector, travelling on foot as far as Lac Ste. Anne, took only 15 days to return to Fort Edmonton—five days quicker than the more heavily laden up-river trip of 20 days. Winter travel with dogs was clearly faster than during the summer with horses, but was not without hazards.

In his journal, Hector explained the organization and timing of the Express brigades that were in place in 1859, reflecting refinements made by the Hudson’s Bay Company and the relative ease in crossing Athabasca Pass, since it represented the major obstacle on this transcontinental route.

In March, when the snow had acquired a crust, the express, with letters and accounts, started from Edmonton and continued on to the Boat Encampment, to which place, by the time they arrived, owing to the earlier spring on the west side of the mountain, the brigade of boats had ascended from Vancouver. The mail from the western department was then exchanged, and taken back to Edmonton, and thence to Norway House, along with the Jasper House furs.

The second time of communication was in autumn, after the Saskatchewan brigade returned to Edmonton in the beginning of September, upon which the officers and men bound for the western department, taking with them the subsidy of otter skins the company annually paid to the Russian Government for the rent of the N.W. coast, crossed the portage to Fort Assiniboine, then ascended the Athabasca in boats to Jasper House, with pack-horses reached the Boat Encampment, and then descended the Columbia to Vancouver, where they arrived generally about the 1st of November. The journey from York Factory on Hudson’s Bay to the Pacific coast by this route generally occupied three and a half months, and involved an amount of hardship and toil that cannot be appreciated by those who have not seen boat travelling in these territories.¹⁵⁶

Southesk – The First Tourist

The first real “tourist” in the region was surely James Carnegie, ninth Earl of Southesk. He was educated at Edinburgh Academy and the military college at Sandhurst. He served in the Grenadier Guards but retired in 1849 at the age of 22 when he inherited his title on the death of his father. Southesk devoted himself to building up his estate and indulging his interest in collecting fine guns and hunting with horses and dogs. At the suggestion of—and with the assistance of—an influential Hudson’s Bay Company official, he decided to see some of Rupert’s Land for himself, to “travel in some part of the world where good sport could be met with among the larger animals, and where at the same time I might recruit my health by an active open-air life in a healthy climate.”¹⁵⁷

Southesk sailed from Liverpool for New York on 15 April 1859, bringing with him his “own man,” Duncan Robertson, one of his gamekeepers from Scotland. Sir George Simpson welcomed them at the Hudson’s Bay Company headquarters in Lachine. Simpson was renowned for making the annual trip to Fort Garry by canoe on the voyageur route up the Ottawa and across the Great Lakes. This time Simpson invited Southesk to travel with him by train to St. Paul, Minnesota. Met there by a Hudson’s Bay Company scout, they rode 20 days to the post at Fort Garry where Sir George Simpson and the party were welcomed by the firing of cannons. Once in Fort Garry it took them two weeks to get organized. Simpson arranged for six men to accompany Southesk, including John McKay as head man, and assigned his own personal canoe man Thomas Arawakenha, called Toma, an Iroquois. Toma and Robertson acted as the Earl’s special attendants. As Southesk described, they had “a very considerable amount of property of every sort and kind—horses and vehicles, weapons, provisions, and stores.” These included “biscuits, jam, and eggs, and dried tongues in plenty to keep us in food ‘til we got fresh meat in the buffalo country.” Also included was “an immense” 40-kilogram roll of coarse twist tobacco. They had a four-wheel wagon and three new two-wheel Red River carts, “all filled to the brim with various sorts of baggage” that included “my

India-rubber bath.” Southesk also brought his collection of Shakespeare’s works and many other classics for his evening reading.¹⁵⁸



The Earl of Southesk, an early “tourist,” travelled in 1859 with guides arranged by the Hudson’s Bay Company, stopping at their posts across the west.
T.R. WILLIAMS. GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-1355-1

It took Southesk’s party 27 days to reach Fort Edmonton where they traded their Red River carts for packhorses. They had to leave a lot of material behind, but Southesk’s diary suggests that he took his bathtub with him so he could “bathe.” They left on 17 August and reached the mission at Lac St. Anne on the third day. Guide André Cardinal led the way and went with them as far as the Embarras River. Before they arrived at Lac St. Anne, they met Henry Moberly returning from his recently re-established Jasper’s House. Moberly explained that there was no game in the Jasper area. He advised Southesk not to waste time going to Jasper’s House, but instead to head south up the McLeod River, advice that he followed. At the mission, Southesk enjoyed the food, their library and hospitality, but was off again the next day on the difficult route.

Southesk was the first traveller on Moberly's road who recorded his experiences, but his comments were repeated by successive travellers, until the railway was constructed 50 years later. As his journal records, after leaving the mission:

The whole of the day our road was extremely bad, running through dense woods, chiefly of poplar brush with a few firs, and often through deep morasses filled with fallen timber. It was one incessant struggle. There was no longer a road wide enough for carts, only a narrow foot track, and the horses had to force their way through the brush, which tore everything to pieces.¹⁵⁹

Several days later, west of the Pembina River, he wrote:

We had hard fighting to get through the brush, which was chiefly poplar intermixed with young firs, with a few larger ones here and there. No woollen clothes, but the stoutest, can stand against these horrible thickets, full of sharp ends of broken branches of dead fir-trees concealed among the unyielding foliage of the young poplars. Fortunately ... the leather hunting-shirt ... was very comfortable, as well as a complete protection against the hardened spikes that met one at every turn.¹⁶⁰

And again, the next day he commented:

This has been a most fatiguing day. In many parts the track was barely wide enough for a loaded animal to pass between the trees, and it was generally so soft and deep, from the effects of former traffic on such wet and sponge-like soil, that the horses were forever trying to escape from the treacherous boggy ditch in which they found themselves. Leaping to one or other side of the trench, they endeavoured to make their way along the firmer margin; but there was seldom much room there, so after a struggle that displaced or scattered their packs, down they inevitably plunged, and continued their floundering in the mire. [By] the end of the

day my knees were one mass of bruises, from cannoning off the fir stems.¹⁶¹

Then on 27 August, 10 days after leaving Fort Edmonton, and after another difficult morning, he exclaimed about “one solitary gleam of consolation” that enlivened that weary day—an unexpected far-distant view of two grand peaks of the Rocky Mountains. He rhapsodized:

[For] a moment I was quite overwhelmed. Then one of those strange tides of emotion that transcend both control and analysis, rushed through me from head to foot, —I trembled all over, —my limbs lost their strength, I could hardly sit on my horse. But ... I felt myself ready for any labours that might bring me nearer to so splendid a goal.¹⁶²



Red River carts were the primary cargo haulers on the prairies in the 1800s. Sketch by William G.R. Hind travelling with the Overlanders in 1862.

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Later that day, riding forward as usual with “old Antoine,” the guide, he arrived at the brow of a hill overlooking the Embarras River: “A glorious sight opened upon my view—the Rocky Mountain Range, stretching along the

horizon far as the eye could reach.” He described the river, pine-covered hills, the foothills, and the mountains with ridges, ravines and masses of snow, his “feelings almost too deep for utterance.”¹⁶³ He was so impressed that he stopped to make a sketch. Successive travellers echoed these sentiments—the mountain scenery was certainly compelling.

Travelling up the Embarras River was difficult enough, then came the steep climb out of the McLeod over Cardinal Divide, west down into the Rocky River and over the divide into the Medicine Tent River at the present-day Cairn Pass. It had taken them 16 days from Fort Edmonton—difficult travelling, but good time—perhaps through a combination of drier conditions in late fall and the services of experienced men. They spent over a week in that area, exploring, building a rock cairn on Cairn Mountain, but especially hunting for fresh meat. On the way, Southesk had described the variety of wild meat they had eaten, including beaver, marmot, porcupine, partridge and moose. On 25 August he noted, “As a matter of curiosity I had a hind-leg of the skunk for breakfast. It tasted like sucking-pig; very white, soft, and fat, but there was a suspicion of skunkiness about it that prevented me from finishing the plateful.”¹⁶⁴

However, the major focus during their stay in the Cairn Pass area was mountain sheep. They shot at least 37 of them during six days of hunting, 12 on the last day. Although they dried and smoked most of the meat to take with them, that was the last good hunting they found on the rest of their journey up the Brazeau, across to the North Saskatchewan, over Bow Summit and down the Bow to near Canmore. By that time they were nearly destitute, but fortunately met a group of Stoney Indians with whom they could trade for food enough to carry them on their way back to Fort Edmonton. They left the Cairn Pass area on 4 September and reached Fort Edmonton on 14 October, hunting as they could on the way.

Two days after arriving back at Fort Edmonton, Southesk described an incident on Sunday, 16 October that highlighted a distinct cultural difference:

A ridiculous thing happened this morning. I was in the act of washing myself in my India-rubber bath, when suddenly the door flew open, and

two splendidly dressed Indians walked into the room as if the whole place belonged to them, but on seeing me they stopped and stared with all their might. We stared at one another for a moment, then a radiant smile came over their faces, and there was a general laugh, after which I continued my sponging, to their evident wonder and amazement. What they thought of the ceremony I never happened to find out.¹⁶⁵

The men were envoys from the Blackfeet sent to announce the arrival of the tribe to pay their annual fall visit to the fort.

Southesk's name was given to a river and lake, and his guide Toma is fittingly commemorated on a mountain along the upper Cardinal River. Historian L.G. Thomas, in his introduction to the 1969 edition of Southesk's book, called Southesk a penetrating observer who went to a good deal of trouble to produce his book. He added that Sandford Fleming, engineer-in-chief for the CPR railway survey, put Southesk's book in the hands of his surveyors.¹⁶⁶

The End of an Era – the Death of George Simpson

During this time a number of changes were taking place. Jasper House had been a difficult location to live in year-round, so after Henry Moberly left in 1861, there was no incumbent trader. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 gave the southern Columbia to the United States. Around 1848, access to the west coast was enhanced by a land crossing on the Isthmus of Panama, although some who made the trip said “never again.” Transport of passengers, goods and mail to the west coast was further enhanced after construction of the Panama railroad in 1848–55, certainly more appealing than the gruelling overland route.¹⁶⁷ The Hudson's Bay Company reorganized its trade routes and, by 1860, brigade traffic over the Athabasca Pass ended, the route fell into disuse, and Jasper House was ultimately abandoned. As trail historian Stephen Bown summed it up:¹⁶⁸ “Amazingly, this cruel stretch of turf that linked the Columbia to the Athabasca River systems, not safe for horses or humans, became the main transportation route across the Rockies” for over 40 years. Its national significance was highlighted by historian MacLaren: “Canada could

never have extended from sea to sea if a canoe route across northern North America had not been opened, and Boat Encampment marks the place on the Columbia River that could be reached by six days of portaging from the eastern slopes of the Rockies.” ¹⁶⁹

An era closed with the death of Sir George Simpson in 1860. Historian J.G. MacGregor observed that 40 years earlier, when Simpson had first set foot in Canada, the fur trade was in a chaotic condition, with two great companies battling each other to the brink of bankruptcy. With the amalgamation of the Hudson’s Bay and North West companies, the Hudson’s Bay Company area covered nearly half the continent. Under Simpson’s guidance, the fur trade settled into an orderly and profitable pattern, and the Hudson’s Bay Company name became synonymous with greatness, order and law. Despite the loss of Oregon and Washington, Simpson had regrouped his forces and carried on a most successful business all over Rupert’s Land. Simpson was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1841. MacGregor concluded: “Among the men we look upon as builders of Canada, Sir George Simpson ranks high.” ¹⁷⁰

CHAPTER THREE

The Yellowhead Pass and Connectors



... we had found the way to [the Mcleod River] “a hard road to travel,” as the Canadians who preceded Milton and Cheadle evidently had also. The Chief came upon their testimony chalked with red keil on a large spruce tree.... Only the following words ... could be made out: ... a hard road to travel.”

GEORGE M. GRANT RECORDING FOR SIR SANFORD FLEMING, 1872 EXAMINING THE PROPOSED ROUTE FOR THE CPR

Travellers on the Yellowhead

Although the Athabasca Pass route fell into disuse, by 1860 travel through the Yellowhead Pass to the north of it had begun. Despite its own hazards of soft ground and treacherous rivers, it was lower, at 1,133 metres, and led to both the North Thompson and Fraser River routes to the interior of British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean.

The Yellowhead Pass lies about 25 kilometres west of Jasper at the head of the Miette River. The Fraser River drains the western slope; about 80 kilometres west, after flowing through Moose Lake, it falls into the Rocky Mountain Trench at Tête Jaune Cache. The Trench is a long valley system that lies west of the Rocky Mountains, extending from south of the U.S. border into the Yukon. At Tête Jaune Cache, westbound travellers had two options. They could head northwesterly along the Fraser River that loops out of the Trench to flow past Prince George, then south and west to the Pacific Ocean at Vancouver. Or they could head southwest of Tête Jaune Cache to reach the head of the North Thompson River that flows through Kamloops, about 340 kilometres distant.

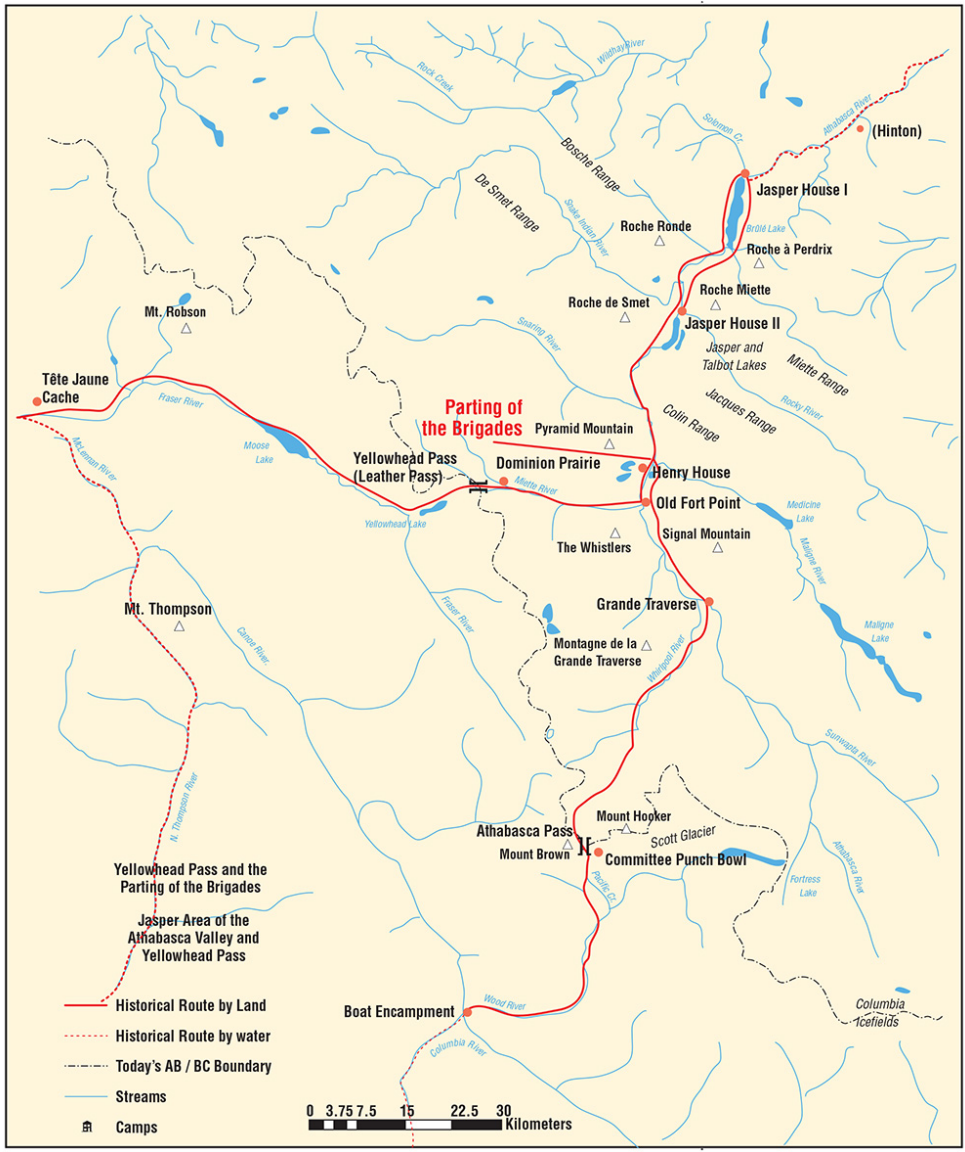


View westerly up the Miette River across its junction with the Athabasca River above Jasper, the route to the Yellowhead Pass. Photo by M.P. Bridgland from Mount Tekarra in 1915. Clearings show the location of the recently completed Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and site for the future town of Jasper.

M.P. BRIDGLAND, 1915. DIGITAL IMAGE ©2000, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA B 247-30

The Yellowhead Pass must have been used by prehistoric travellers, as evidenced by obsidian flakes from Mount Edziza found at the archaeology dig at Jasper. The so-called Snake Indians of Jasper most likely travelled through this pass in more recent times. However, it does not seem to have seen extensive use because of its remoteness and difficulty of movement. Travel was slow on land through the heavily forested valleys interspersed with mires or

muskegs, and was hazardous by water on the turbulent rivers. One of the earliest historic references to the pass concerned the legendary blond Iroquois trapper and hunter Pierre Bostonais who lived in the region around 1800, nicknamed “Tête Jaune” or “Yellow-Head,” and whose Tête Jaune Cache became a landmark at the western end on the Fraser River. According to Ermatinger and White,¹ “Bastonnais” was applied by the Indians of Quebec to citizens of the United States; literally, “Boston-man.” Perhaps Pierre had American roots.



Map 11: Yellowhead Pass and the Parting of the Brigades: Jasper Area of the Athabasca Valley.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

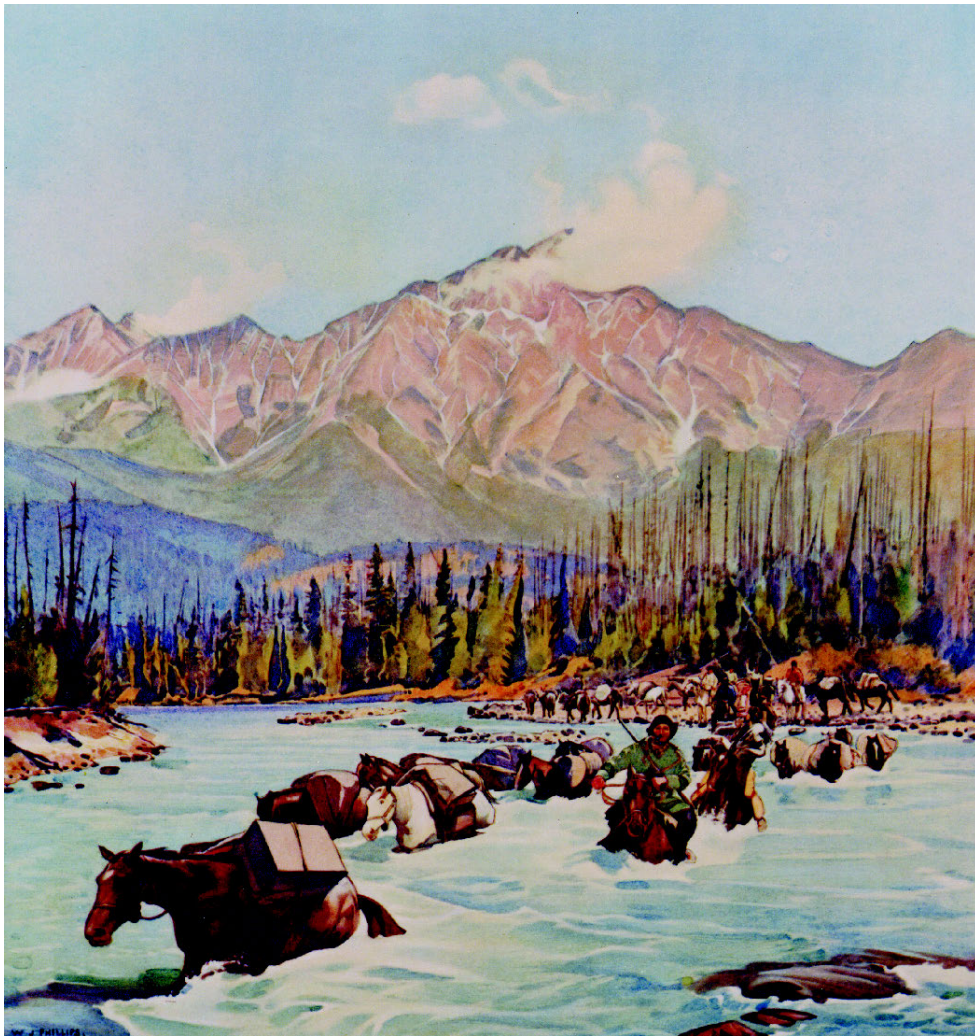
George Simpson was concerned about the difficulty of supplying the New Caledonia area, then serviced through the Peace River Pass to the north or by packhorse from Kamloops and Fort Okanogan on the Columbia to the south. In 1825, after his return journey east over Athabasca Pass with Hudson's Bay Company Chief Trader James McMillan, Simpson ordered McMillan to return to the Yellowhead that fall to explore it as a possible substitute route to New Caledonia. McMillan engaged Tête Jaune as a guide, left Jasper House 18 October and completed the trip across the mountains in six days.² He recommended that this pass be used to transport leather and people to New Caledonia, the central and highland plateau area of north-central British Columbia and noted that "with very little trouble horses will pass their loads with ease even at present it is not so bad as the Columbia Portage."³ Perhaps McMillan experienced relatively dry conditions during the fall of 1825, but this remark was an understatement of the difficulties, as subsequent travellers found.⁴

The HBC first used Yellowhead Pass in the fall of 1826. Led by Hudson's Bay Company traders MacGillivray and MacDougal, a pack train with 500 moose and elk hides, along with parchment, pack strings, sinews and babiche, left from the Henry House area around the mouth of the Miette River on 10 October destined for New Caledonia.⁵ They had travelled west with the Columbia Brigade to that point. Aemilius Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Company hydrographer who was going on to Fort Vancouver with James McMillan and the Columbia Brigade described the separation and Parting of the Brigades: "the luggage and the horses having been sent across the [Athabasca] river to Henry's plain we wished our friends McGillivray & McDougal & the rest of the Brigade for New Caledonia, a farewell & commenced our journey across the Portage."⁶

As Bridgland and Douglas explained about the Yellowhead Pass in their 1917 guide to Jasper Park:

The Yellowhead Pass, with the development of New Caledonia, became, from its low altitude, of great value as a means of transport for the heavy loads of dressed leather necessary for making tents, moccasins, bags and

pack cords for the carrying service west of the mountains where moose and deer, and consequently leather supplies, were scarce. It was, indeed, long known as the Leather Pass, though the Peace River Pass was first used for this traffic and appears to have been again used largely in preference to the Yellowhead Pass as the trade grew. The merits of the Yellowhead Pass only received proper recognition with the coming of the railways.⁷



The Parting of the Brigades, 1826, (Yellowhead Pass) by Walter J. Phillips RCA. The artist's depiction of the Columbia Brigade parting from the New Caledonia Brigade near Henry House below Pyramid Mountain, as described by Aemelius Simpson.

HBC 1938 CALENDAR, HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES P-402

Prospectors travelling west during the first Cariboo gold rush spurred use of the Yellowhead Pass in 1858. A party of four gold seekers returned east in

1860 by this route with a pile of \$1,600⁸ (about \$30,000 in 2004 dollars).

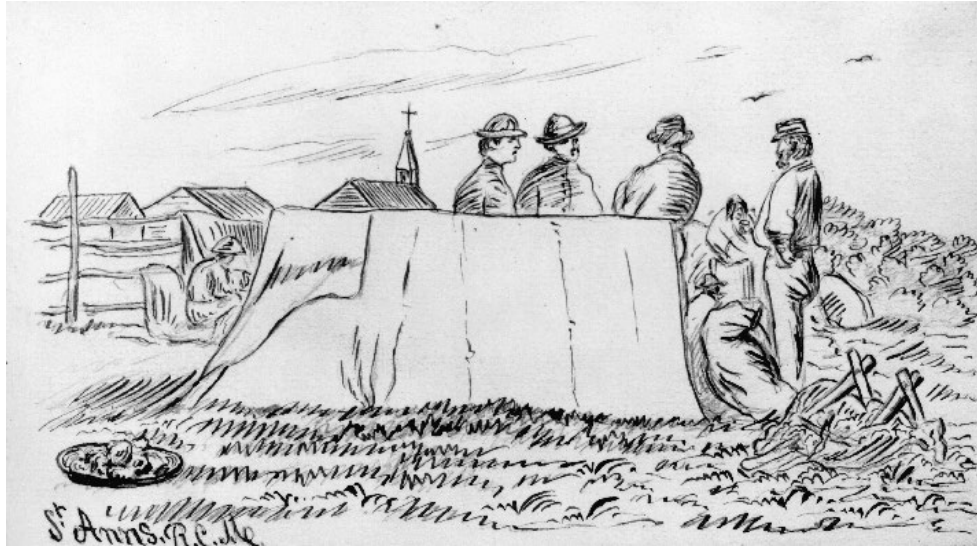
Tête Jaune, or Pierre Bostonais, did not live to celebrate that his name was later attached to the pass. He and his brother Baptiste were killed in 1827 by local Indians in New Caledonia as punishment for hunting on their lands.⁹

James McMillan played an important role with Simpson in the reorganization of the Columbia Department and went on in 1827 to build Fort Langley at the mouth of the Fraser River and to serve as chief factor.¹⁰

The Overlanders

The “Overlanders” undertook the first major expedition through the Yellowhead Pass in 1862. They were heading for the gold fields in the Cariboo and chose this northern overland route because it was cheaper than the fare by sea and avoided the still-dangerous Aboriginal tribes along the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers. Gathering at Fort Garry, they set out in two parties. The one led by brothers Thomas and Robert McMicking got away on 2 June. Their group comprised about 150 men, women and children travelling with 97 carts and a herd of cows. Among this group were the Schubert family—Augustus and Catherine (who was pregnant) and their three children. They reached Edmonton House around the end of July.

Several of the party decided to stay in the Edmonton area.¹¹ The rest traded their carts for packhorses, reprovisioned, and hired André Cardinal, the experienced guide who had guided the Southesk expedition. Cardinal agreed to take them as far as Tête Jaune Cache on the Fraser River west of Mount Robson. On the way, they stopped at Lac Ste. Anne where Father Lacombe and the three Grey Nuns welcomed them before they headed into the mires to and along the McLeod River.



The Mission at Lac Ste Anne was the last stopping place for fresh supplies before the difficult trek to Jasper. The Overlanders stopped here in August 1862.

THE OVERLANDERS AT LAC STE. ANNE BY WILLIAM G.R. HIND. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-33840

As they entered the mountains, they voted to climb Disaster Point rather than risk crossing the river twice. It was a gruelling climb for them all—women, children, horses and livestock—and a “knee-destroying” descent. One horse lost its footing at the summit, rolled over 40 metres down the slope and stopped against a tree less than a metre from the edge of the cliff, from where they were able to rescue it.¹² Many travellers noted that it took a full and exhausting day just to get over the ridge and to find a way across the swift-flowing Rocky River.



Rocky Mountains, painted by William Hind travelling with the Overlanders in August 1862. It appears to be a representation of the Boule Range west of Brûlé. Despite the difficulties, travellers marvelled at the sight of the mountains.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS BY WILLIAM G.R. HIND. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-9590

The Overlander party finally reached Tête Jaune Cache, averaging only 16 kilometres a day. They had used up more of their food than anticipated, creating great hardships later.¹³ The party split up at Tête Jaune Cache, a smaller group choosing to raft down the Fraser River. Four of them drowned in the rapids of the upper canyon.¹⁴

Thirty-two of the group, including the Schubert family, headed south over the low pass to the North Thompson River. André Cardinal was persuaded to take them as far as the junction of the Albreda with the North Thompson, which was new territory for him. He then returned home. The most difficult part of the journey for the Overlanders lay ahead.

By 22 September, 17 days from Tête Jaune Cache, they and their 100 head of livestock had made only about 95 kilometres through the heavy forest and soft ground. Concerned about being trapped by winter, they turned most of their horses loose, slaughtered the cattle and dried the meat. Making dugout canoes and rafts, they determined to try the unknown river. Unfortunately, the North Thompson develops turbulent rapids, and then narrows through the “Little Hell’s Gate” where cliffs confine the channel to 16 or 17 metres wide. Two men were drowned, supplies were lost, and the rest struggled up over the long portages. Six gruelling weeks from Tête Jaune Cache they finally arrived

in Kamloops. Catherine Schubert delivered a baby girl the very next day—the first white child born in Kamloops.⁴⁵

Milton and Cheadle

The experiences of the Overlanders may have deterred some, but another expedition was already setting out. William Charles de Meuron Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, or Viscount Milton, and his physician, Walter Butler Cheadle (Milton and Cheadle in references), were the next tourists in northern Alberta, following some of Southesk's footsteps, but they pressed on through the Yellowhead Pass and down the North Thompson and Fraser rivers to Vancouver. The account of their journey, *The North-West Passage by Land*, published in 1865, makes interesting reading.

In 1862, Milton and Cheadle, then 23 and 27 years old, sailed from England to Montreal and into the Great Lakes, travelled by train from Chicago to the St. Paul area, then by canoe and steamer north on the Red River to Fort Garry (Winnipeg). By the time they arrived and got equipped it was too late to try crossing the mountains, so they spent the winter near Fort Carlton (near present-day Prince Albert, Saskatchewan) with a buffalo hunter, Baptiste Supernat. They built a log hut and survived by hunting buffalo and trading with local Aboriginal people. At Fort Pitt they hired an Assiniboine guide, Louis Battenotte—The Assiniboine, as they called him. The Assiniboine had only one hand, “the left one having been shattered by the bursting of a gun, which left but two fingers,”⁴⁶ but they found him as useful and expert as if he were unmaimed. It was Louis Battenotte who made their journey possible. They arrived at Fort Edmonton in the spring of 1863.

Milton and Cheadle described the post at Edmonton as the most important one in the Saskatchewan district, Mr. Hardisty the factor having charge of all the minor posts. They were impressed with the facilities that had been developed since its construction in 1830:

It boasts of a windmill, a blacksmith's forge and carpenters shop. The boats required for the annual voyage to York Factory ... are built and mended here; carts, sleighs, and harness made, and all appliances

required for the Company's traffic between the different posts. Wheat grows luxuriantly, and potatoes and other roots flourish.... There are about thirty families living in the Fort, engaged in the service of the Company, and a large body of hunters are constantly employed in supplying the establishment with meat.⁴⁷

Milton and Cheadle also mentioned the small settlement of St. Albert to the north, established around Father Lacombe's mission. They eagerly joined a hunt for five grizzly bears that had just killed a mare, but the bears could not be found.



l-r: Mrs. Battenotte, Louis Battenotte (The Assiniboine), Dr. Cheadle, Lord Milton, and Battenotte's son Baptiste at the end of their journey to the Pacific. Louis Battenotte, virtually "single-handedly," brought them through safely.

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES A-00601

Milton and Cheadle left Fort Edmonton on 3 June 1863 in a "motley company" of seven persons, including Louis Battenotte, his wife (Mrs. Assiniboine) and their son Baptiste, along with the hunter Baptiste who later abandoned them near the McLeod River, and a dysfunctional "Mr. O'B," an Englishman at Fort Edmonton who begged to be taken along. They had 12 horses, six carried packs that included 90 kilograms of flour and four 40-kilogram bags of pemmican—plus tea, salt and tobacco—the only luxuries they allowed themselves. Hardisty and others had "tried earnestly to dissuade" them from crossing Leather Pass (Yellowhead), their explanation providing a descriptive encapsulation of the difficulties ahead:

[The] rivers would be at their height, swollen by the melting of the mountain snows. They assured us that many of the streams were fierce and rocky torrents, exceedingly dangerous to cross, except when low in the autumn, and that the country on the west of the mountains, as far as it was known, was a region rugged and inhospitable, everywhere covered with impenetrable forest; and even if we descended the Fraser, instead of attempting to reach the Cariboo, we should find that river full of rapids and whirlpools, which had often proved fatal to the most expert canoe men. This Pass, known by the several names of the Leather, Jasper House, Cowdung Lake, and Yellow Head Pass, had been formerly used by the voyageurs of the Hudson's Bay Company as a portage from the Athabasca to the Fraser, but had long ago been abandoned on account of the numerous casualties which attended the navigation of the latter river.¹⁸

They also talked to guide André Cardinal, who had guided Southesk and the Overlanders, but decided in the end to adhere to their original design to follow the Overlanders' trail as far as it seemed desirable, then "trust to the sagacity" of their men. Shortly after they left Lac Ste. Anne, they also found that the road "led us immediately into the densest forest, where the ground was boggy and rotten, thickly covered with fallen timber. The horses sank in up to their girths, and every few yards [metres] were obliged to jump over the obstruction in the path."¹⁹ After crossing the Pembina they noted: "The only sound ground was on the low narrow ridges which separated the wider shallow valleys. These latter are occupied by 'muskegs,' or level swamps, the surface of which is covered with a mossy crust five or six inches [13 or 15 cm] in thickness, while a thick growth of pines and the fallen timber add to the difficulties of the road. No one but a Hudson's Bay voyageur would dream of taking horses into such a region."²⁰

Then came the really hard part. After crossing the McLeod, they noted that the road became worse than any they had yet encountered. Further up the McLeod they stopped for lunch and built a large smoky "smudge" fire to give some relief from the "bull-dogs" and other flies that were plaguing both travellers and horses—starting a forest fire. It took strenuous efforts to keep

the fire from burning their supplies, but they prevailed, quickly repacked the horses and headed west. They could still see the fire burning brightly behind them the next day.

Despite the travails, they also experienced an uplift from their first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains: “The prospect was a glorious one, and most exhilarating to us.” Later, climbing over the high ridge at Disaster Point at the base of Roche Miette, despite their struggles they recorded: “even the woman and the boy cried out ‘Aiwarkaken!’ with delight and admiration at the magnificent scenery around.”²¹ To top off the exhilaration, they shot a mountain goat kid and feasted on fresh meat for the first time since leaving Fort Edmonton three weeks before.



William Hind's 1862 sketch of an Overlander coaxing an ox over Disaster Point. Jasper House can be seen lower right of sketch and Pyramid Mountain is featured beyond the end of Jasper Lake.

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES PDP00407

The party had spent a day across from Jasper House building a raft to cross the Athabasca when a hunter from the post showed them a ford where they could cross without unpacking. Mr. Macaulay, factor at Jasper House, invited them to a meal of trout, but explained that their hunt had not been successful and he could not replenish their stock. Milton and Cheadle pressed on through Yellowhead Pass. Their description of the difficult journey down the

North Thompson reflected those of previous accounts. It took them 12 weeks from Jasper House to reach Kamloops. In this case it seemed that it was The Assiniboine—Louis Battenotte—who, literally single-handedly, brought them through. Although Battenotte was not commemorated, Mounts Milton and Cheadle at the upper end of the North Thompson carry the names of the two adventurers.



The Jasper House site is still visible from the trail over Disaster Point in 2002.

BOB UDELL

Just the next year, a party following the same trail had a totally different experience. Organizers of the Grand Trunk Pacific considered a telegraph service into the west even before the railway was constructed. Discussions led to employing Dr. John Rae, the arctic explorer who had discovered in 1854 the first tangible evidence of the missing Franklin expedition. Rae returned from England in 1864 to St. Paul, from where he took a cavalcade of carts to Fort Garry.²² On the way he estimated materials that would be needed for a telegraph line, including poles and wire. His party left Fort Garry 25 June 1864 and arrived in Fort Edmonton 28 July, locating a possible route. From Lac Ste. Anne they switched from carts to packhorses for the sinuous trail that wound around obstacles, never cleared through them. They stayed on the east side of

the Athabasca, getting around Disaster Point without climbing, and up the Miette River to Tête Jaune Cache, having gone over 400 miles in less than a month. Rae's most difficult stretch was along the Miette with its tight valley and fallen timber. His main concern was how to protect a telegraph line from fires and fallen timber, for which he did not have an immediate answer, but he spoke favourably about the prospect for building a telegraph line. However, GTP abandoned the project. Historian William Barr described Rae as a traveller sans pareil so that this journey went in a straightforward manner, without dramatic accidents or incidents. Barr concluded by noting that the contrast between Rae's "apparently effortless progress and the histrionics of Cheadle's account of his trip with Viscount Milton along basically the same route" could scarcely be greater.

Smallpox Camp

In 1870, when the smallpox epidemic swept through the Aboriginal populations on the Prairies, it also reached up into the Jasper area. When a few of the Iroquois became ill, several families decided to move to the mission at Lac Ste. Anne for help. By the time they got to the present Hinton area, many of them were too ill to travel. Some went ahead to reach the mission, only one made it. In the meantime, the disease had run its course, many died and the survivors returned to Jasper. The creek where they camped was named Cache Picotte (now Cache Percotte), or Smallpox Camp.

Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories

About this time, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald led a discussion of possible confederation of the eastern colonies of Canada. This came to be on 1 July 1867 through the British North America Act (BNA Act) by which the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Upper and Lower Canada became provinces in the new Dominion of Canada. To complete Macdonald's vision of a Dominion extending from sea to sea, he had to persuade British Columbia to join Canada, and to acquire Rupert's Land, those lands draining into Hudson Bay, and the NorthWestern Territory, comprising the lands

northwest of Rupert's Land including the Mackenzie River valley and Yukon. Negotiations with the British government and the Hudson's Bay Company resulted in the British Parliament passing Rupert's Land Act in 1868, under which transfer of title to Canada would occur. Further discussions about the amount of compensation delayed implementation of the transfer until 1870, when the area became the North-West Territories, administered by Canada under a new Department of the Interior.²³ The area that was to become Alberta thereby became part of Canada. The purchase agreement with the Hudson's Bay Company included a payment of 300,000 pounds sterling (then equivalent to \$1,460,000, or about \$27.3 million in 2004 dollars), a grant of 18,000 hectares around its trading posts, and the right to claim up to 5 per cent of the fertile area. Ultimately 2.8 million hectares passed into ownership of the Hudson's Bay Company.²⁴

The colony of British Columbia joined Confederation on 20 July 1871. One of the inducements was that a trans-Canada railway would be constructed to link it to the eastern provinces, an undertaking that took 14 years to bring about.

Selwyn's Geological Survey

Although it was a challenging journey to the Jasper region from Edmonton, Jasper was even more difficult to reach from the west. In 1871, geologist Alfred R.C. Selwyn had an unfortunate trip. As described by Muriel Dunford in *North River*, Selwyn made the earliest geological survey through the North Thompson River valley in 1871, bringing with him his assistant and two photographers who took the first pictures of that area. The whole expedition found horrendous difficulties with "the obstructions encountered in penetrating the dense and pathless forest and jungle which prevail almost unbroken, except by swamps and rivers, for more than 150 miles [240 km] on the line of route travelled from Kamloops to the Leather Pass in the Rocky Mountains."²⁵

Selwyn started from Kamloops on 19 August 1871 with 7 men and 15 horses carrying 1,630 kilograms. It was far too late for the extensive exploration he

had planned all the way to Jasper House with a trip back through the Cariboo. A railway survey crew had preceded him, but his expectations about the ease of travel were not met. By the time the survey crew had gone 24 kilometres from Kamloops, they had already lost a horse and packs in the North Thompson River.

Through a combination of heavy timber, steep rocky ridges above bluffs along the river, and hazardous river crossings, Selwyn's party lost time, horses and supplies. The weather turned cold, rainy and foggy, adding to their miseries, and feed for the horses was sparse. The burned forests with thick regeneration seemed almost impenetrable and the "monstrous devils club" and mosquitoes made life miserable. Selwyn had planned to rendezvous with the railway survey crew near present-day Valemount, but the crew was not there, and by that time the pack animals had gone as far as they could. Sending most of the remaining horses back to Kamloops, railway packer McLennan, Selwyn, and photographer Baltzly and a few guides set out on what they hoped would be a quick trip to Leather Pass and back. After five days of pushing their tired horses through heavy rainstorms they had only reached Moose Lake. They decided to give up before they found themselves snowed in. As they turned back, the steady rain turned to snow. Of the 150 horses and mules of the combined McLennan-Selwyn companies, only 26 got back to Kamloops—a shocking total of 124 casualties. "Many died on the outward journey from cold, hunger or overwork in travelling over a country ... almost impassable, the majority, however, were either abandoned or perished in the snowstorms which were almost continuous on the home journey." ²⁶

Sir Sandford Fleming and the Railway Survey

In March and April 1871, the federal government debated a resolution to incorporate British Columbia in Confederation, set up a Canadian Pacific Survey to explore routes to the west coast and appointed Sandford Fleming (later known as the father of Standard Time) as Engineer-in-Chief. Fleming dispatched 21 survey parties throughout the west, including one led by Walter

Moberly who left Vancouver for the Columbia River on 20 July, the same day that British Columbia was formally admitted to Confederation.²⁷



Railway survey party members Frank Fleming, Sandford Fleming, Dr. George M. Grant and Dr. Arthur Moren, dressed as for their transcontinental trip in 1872.

WILLIAM JAMES TOPLEY. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-8695

Sandford Fleming left Halifax 1 July 1872 to begin his personal journey to the Pacific to assess the best route for the new railway. His travels were well documented by his secretary, Rev. George M. Grant. Of particular interest is the trip from Fort Edmonton to Yellowhead Pass. They were a hard-travelling group, arriving at Jasper's House "exactly fifteen days after leaving Edmonton, two of them days of rest and a third lost by the obstruction of the Athabasca."²⁸ This was a remarkable pace, an average of 32 kilometres per travelling day (they stayed in camp every Sunday, the day of rest). This was achieved despite the perennially difficult stretch between Lac Ste. Anne and the McLeod River, and past it to the area around present-day Hinton. There were two major difficulties: fallen trees and "morasses, some of black muck, and others of a tenacious clay."²⁹ Grant described the wording written on a blaze near the McLeod left by some "Canadians" passing through in August 1862 that ended by stating that it was "**a hard road to travel.**"³⁰ Based on the date, it is reasonable to suggest that it was carved by an Overlander Expedition member.

Fleming's party typically travelled in three "spells" each day: the first, after rising at 4 a.m. for a cup of tea, leaving at first light to go about 24 kilometres before breakfast, another 24 kilometres or so before lunch, then about 16 kilometres until dark when they stopped for dinner and camp. Their objective

on the prairies was to cover 64 kilometres a day. On this leg of their journey, they agreed that with eight horses to pack and unpack at each stop, they could have “only one halt and two spells per day,” but their days usually extended from daylight to sunset. For example, along the McLeod River, Grant wrote:

Our first “spell” was the hardest work of the journey, so far, with the least to show for it. We made about five miles [8 km], and it took as many hours to make the distance. The road followed the upward course of the McLeod, crossing the necks of land formed by the doublings of the river. These so-called “portages” were the worst part of the road, though it was all so bad that it is invidious to make comparisons. The country was either bog or barren—both bad—for the whole had recently been burned over, and every wind had blown down its share of the burnt trees. There was no regular trail. Each successive party that travelled this way seemed to have tried to make a new one in vain efforts to escape the difficulties.³¹

Grant reported an impressive rescue: “one pack-horse sank so hopelessly deep into a hole, that he had to be unpacked and lifted out, Beaupre hoisting by the tail with a mighty hoist—for the man had the strength of a giant.”³²

However, although noting that they had lost a day by the obstruction of the Athabasca River, probably at Disaster Point where Fleming’s brandy flask was broken, Grant added: “It is hardly fair to speak of it as lost, however, for there was no point at which the delay of a day was so little unacceptable to us. The mountains of the Jasper valley would have repaid us for a week’s detention” —a comment presaging the lure of Jasper and Conan Doyle’s “Athabaska Trail” as a future tourism destination.

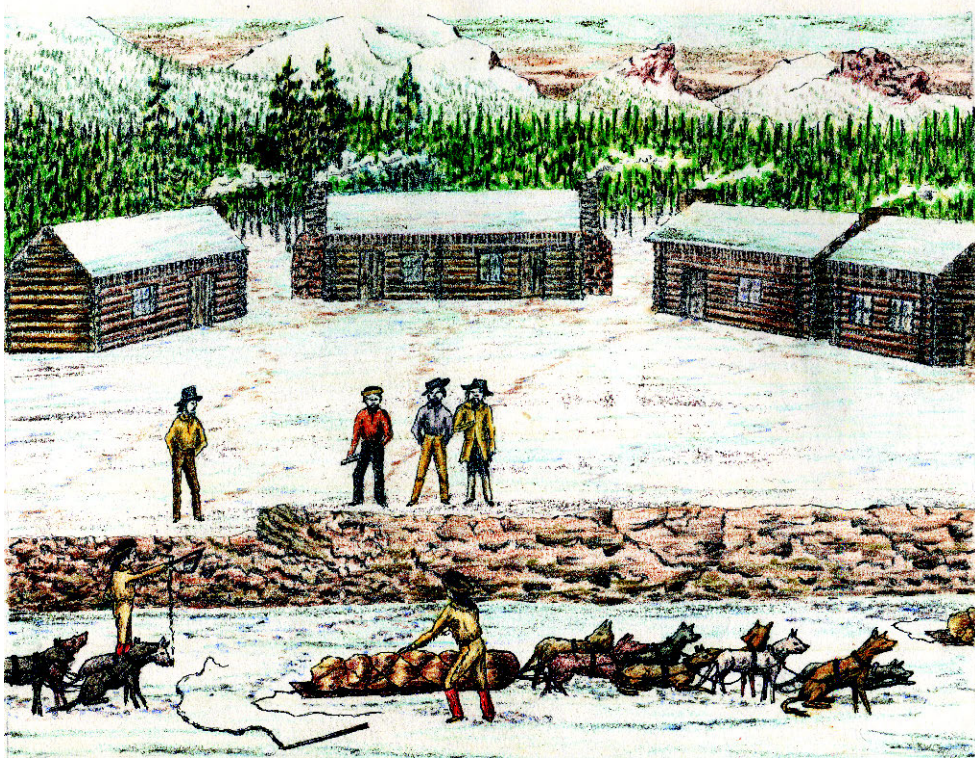
Probably the last major expedition through Athabasca Pass was that directed by Canadian Pacific Survey district engineer Walter Moberly, brother of Henry John Moberly, the fur trader. Walter Moberly had been involved as a civil engineer in the 1862 construction of the Yale–Cariboo wagon road in British Columbia, and was later assistant surveyor general. In June 1871 chief engineer Sandford Fleming had appointed Moberly as one of three district engineers for the British Columbia portion of the line. Moberly was in charge

of the western district through the Rockies. Following Fleming's instructions in March 1872, he organized a survey of the proposed route from Shuswap Lake to Edmonton by way of Eagle and Howse passes. However, in early April, the Dominion government decided instead to survey a route through the "Yellow Head Pass."³³ The change was disruptive since Moberly had already arranged for supplies to be taken to Howse Pass and his crews were already in the field. Although he did not agree with the change, he did his utmost to comply.



Walter Moberly (in arm chair) with a team of railway surveyors.

WEIR ALBUM, ALBERTA LAND SURVEYORS' ASSOCIATION



Athabasca Depot, 1873, by R.M. Rylatt. Walter Moberly's CPR railway survey depot was located across from the Maligne River near Jasper.

FROM SURVEYING THE CANADIAN PACIFIC: MEMOIRS OF A RAILROAD PIONEER. R.M. RYLATT. UNIVERSITY OF UTAH PRESS, 1991. COURTESY OF JOHN BASNEY.

Moberly redirected one survey party to Kamloops and on to the North Thompson and equipped another party to follow to the Yellowhead Pass by that route to improve the trail. He also arranged for additional supplies to be forwarded from Walla Walla (now in Washington) by pack trains to the Columbia Depot near the Howse Pass junction. In the meantime he proposed to go to Howse Pass himself to redirect that party to move their camp and supplies to the Columbia Depot so they could pack everything over Athabasca Pass. The plan was to create a depot in the Henry House area in Jasper where they could connect with the Yellowhead Pass route. This arrangement was to ensure that supplies would be on hand at his proposed Athabasca Depot so his crews could start work immediately in spring 1873 to complete the survey east towards Edmonton. He then left Victoria to direct the move of his party and supplies from the Columbia Depot to Boat Encampment, a distance of about 140 kilometres. As Moberly noted with understatement, “this was an undertaking of much difficulty”³⁴ because for about 160 kilometres above and

below Boat Encampment, the Columbia River was impassable for boats due to high water, rapids and canyons, and difficult overland travel through thick forests and brush, wind-fallen timber, and marshy ground. Except for a short boat haul down Kinbasket Lake, the river was too rough to use, so his party cut rough trails for the pack trains of horses and mules with 145-kilogram loads, relaying their 10,000 kilograms of supplies.



The temporary log depot at Ross Cox Creek near the head of the Whirlpool River constructed by party chief Hall in R.M. Rylatt's crew in October 1872. 1994 photo with Don Beers.

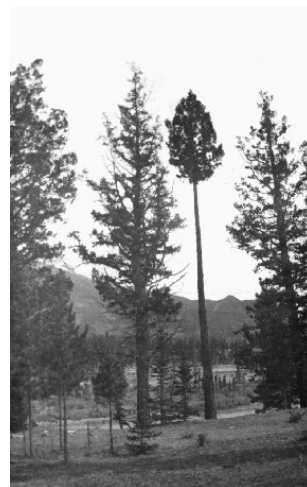
TOM PETERSON

R.M. Rylatt, a former British Army supply officer, was recruited by Moberly, who had met him in the Royal Engineers, to be in charge of supplies and equipment for the Howse Pass party. In his journal, Rylatt noted that Moberly arrived in camp on 15 June 1872 and, despite strenuous efforts, by 28 September the party had only progressed as far as Boat Encampment and started to cut trail up to Athabasca Pass. In the meantime, Moberly had been alternating between this party and Yellowhead Pass, directing the surveying in the north and encouraging the supply trains in the south.³⁵ Moberly directed Athabasca Depot to be constructed at a site about 6 kilometres below the mouth of Miette River on the left bank of the Athabasca, “selected principally on account of the convenience of timber for building purposes and firewood,

and also from the shelter afforded by a neighbouring high bench from the northerly and southerly winds which blow with great force almost continually in the Jasper valley.”³⁶ Rylatt reported 60 centimetres of snow on the pass on 18 October, which, combined with lack of feed, was greatly reducing their ability to move supplies. Moberly directed party chief Hall to build a temporary depot near what is now Ross Cox Creek, about 18 kilometres north of the pass and 56 kilometres from Athabasca Depot. He wanted the supplies safely stored on the east side of the pass so there would be a downhill grade for dog sleighs to bring them the rest of the way later that winter.

Rylatt reported that the requested seven dog teams from Fort Edmonton arrived at the Athabasca Depot on 4 January 1873. They were powerful six- and eight-dog teams capable of hauling 200-kilogram loads and making a round trip to the Whirlpool Depot in two days.³⁷ Moberly reported that the Yellowhead survey had been completed as far east as Fiddle River by 2 January 1873 and that a supply depot had been established there as well. He concluded by commenting that during that time the temperatures had ranged from -29 to -34 degrees Celsius and:

The continual gales of wind in the Jasper and Athabasca valleys were very piercing, in which the members of the party have encountered no ordinary hardships, and during the whole of which time they have scarcely lost a single day's work. I have much pleasure in stating that they have severally performed in an energetic and orderly manner their various duties, and thus enabled me to bring the work of the season to a satisfactory termination.³⁸



The “Moberly Lobstick” tree, created in 1872 to commemorate the meeting between railway surveyors Sandford Fleming and Walter Moberly. Photo taken in 1935.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES PA 18-54



The Moberly Lobstick tree in 2004.

BRIAN CARNELL

Working east from Fiddle River, Moberly surveyed and staked a route as far as the McLeod River, meeting the survey crews from Edmonton. Shortly thereafter, he left Fleming's employ. The legendary Lobstick Tree along the river at Jasper, which is still standing as a decaying snag, is said to have been created by a local Métis to mark the meeting between Sandford Fleming and Walter Moberly in 1872. By 1877, Fleming's line west from Edmonton to the Yellowhead Pass was fully staked for railway construction. Surveyor Marcus Smith became acting engineer-in-chief when Sandford Fleming was on extended sick leave in England. He began with the CPR survey in 1872 and took charge of the British Columbia surveys in 1873. In the summer of 1877 Smith travelled by train and steamboat to Winnipeg then overland to Edmonton to see that part of the route himself. He left Edmonton on 22 August with eight men and a train of 30 mules and four or five horses that a Mr Brown took to bring back some of the clothing and supplies at Athabasca Depot that he intended to sell in Edmonton. Smith commented that Moberly had put up three good buildings at the Athabasca Depot, "not far from the spot where the old Henry House stood."³⁹ He also reported that that they found Thomas John Trapp, hired to look after the depot during the winter of

1876-77, all right and that there was a large quantity of supplies in storage—over 25,000 pounds (11,350 kilograms) and found later that the depot at Tête Jaune Cache had 20,000 pounds (9,000 kilograms) that was to be returned to Kamloops by pack train. Smith went on through Kamloops to Vancouver, by horse to Clearwater on the North Thompson where we boarded a steamboat. His comments about the trail from Edmonton to Tête Jaune Cache indicated that the going was generally easier than reported by Grant except for the perennial muskegs and extensive areas where trees had blown down across the trail by windstorms since the survey.

However, the first transcontinental line was not built on that grade. The new prime minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald, “unloaded” the railway to what became the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in October 1880. The CPR decided on the Kicking Horse route through Calgary instead, and the Yellowhead was abandoned. No grading was done on the Yellowhead at that time. The supplies at Athabasca Depot were later sold and outfitter Dan Noyes brought them by barge to Fort Assiniboine and by packhorse to Edmonton.⁴⁰ The CPR line to the Pacific through Kicking Horse Pass was completed in 1885.

The more southern location was chosen, in part, to keep the line closer to the U.S. border to offset the threat of American branch lines extending north to drain Canadian business from the CPR. However, another reason for the switch may have been revealed in Horetzky’s report of 1874.⁴¹ Charles Horetzky, a Hudson’s Bay Company employee at Fort Garry, was hired in 1871 to take part on the CPR survey, partly for his skill as a photographer. Horetzky organized Fleming’s overland expedition and accompanied him as far as Edmonton.⁴² Fleming then asked Horetzky and botanist Dr. Macoun to explore a possible Peace River route that could go along the north shore of Lesser Slave Lake to the Peace River, through Pine Pass and southwesterly to the end of Bute Inlet on the Pacific coast, about 200 kilometres north of Vancouver. In his summary report, in which he clearly advocated the Peace River route, Horetzky included a long quotation from an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* of 24 October 1873 that referred to “the unsuitability of the section of

country east of the Rocky Mountains crossed by [the Yellowhead] line for settlement.” The article stated that:

From the crossing of the South Saskatchewan to that of the northern Branch of the same river, at the White Mud Creek, above Edmonton, three hundred and fifty miles [560 km] of country are crossed, ninetenths of which is a treeless prairie, exposed to the fury of the cold northern blasts, rough and broken in many places, where good fresh water, excepting in the vicinity of the rivers, is extremely scarce; salt and brackish lakes are of frequent occurrence, and very much frequented by the nomadic tribes of the plains.

Crossing the North Saskatchewan, we now leave the open plain country, and enter a vast swampy region, which, with the exception of some few dry ridges, extends to the Athabasca River. As a matter of course, this tract of country, which the line intersects for a distance of some one hundred and seventy miles [270 km], is wet, cold, and quite unsuitable for settlement.⁴³

Perhaps the decision to go through Calgary was based in part on a “none of the above” choice between the Yellowhead and Pine passes. The upper Athabasca region was to remain remote for at least another 25 years, until new railways followed Fleming’s original route west through the Yellowhead.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, in 1875 the first steamboat on the North Saskatchewan River, the *Northcote*, arrived in Edmonton. This was a major advance in transportation of both people and freight, confirming Edmonton as a major distribution centre. That same year, the Hudson’s Bay Company established the new Athabasca Trail by cutting a wagon trail from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing. This 160-kilometre portage was an important one for the next 40 years until railways began to serve the north and Peace River country.⁴⁵ The steamboat service also signalled the phasing out of the Red River cart brigades that had been so important in bringing supplies from Fort Garry, and the road to Athabasca brought to an end the importance of Fort Assiniboine.

The Henderson Family's Trek from the West

In *North River*, Muriel Dunford reported a successful family expedition from the west, up the North Thompson and through the Yellowhead to Edmonton in 1880. The Henderson family had decided to move from their homestead near New Westminster to settle in Alberta. Travelling to Yale by steamer and to Kamloops by wagon, they decided to carry on by themselves with their horses overland up the North Thompson. Their 11-member group consisted of Tom and Margaret Henderson, their six children ranging in age from 8 months to 13 years, Tom's brother Bill and two other men. Margaret Henderson was the first white woman to cross the Yellowhead from the west. As Dunford described it:

Riding out of Kamloops in June, the cavalcade had to contend not only with the usual early summer high water, but also with exceptionally bad flooding. Their horses had to swim the wide, fast-flowing North Thompson where the east-side trail petered out above the junction with the Clearwater, and then continued up the high, steep bank on the west side. The Hendersons had the lonely valley all to themselves, without roadhouse or settler or passing traveller in case they needed help. The parents' steady spunk brought all the party to their destination late in October, cold and hungry, but safe.⁴⁶



Henderson's Round Barn, now at Fort Edmonton. The Henderson family trekked east up the North Thompson and Yellowhead Pass in 1880. The trip from Kamloops to Edmonton took six months.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA J.646

Ada Law, the Henderson's granddaughter, narrated their story in the *South Edmonton Saga*, 1984. Her account of their approach to the Yellowhead Pass illustrated one of the many incidents:

[T]he lead horse and rider were swept downstream in a mountain torrent. The rider managed to scramble to safety, but the horse, together with the supplies it carried, were lost. Among the supplies were all of their remaining matches, so that before reaching Tête Jaune Cache they had nothing with which to light a fire. They managed to keep from starving by eating oatmeal soaked in water, and whatever wild berries they could find. They were both weak and hungry. The children remembered rolling pebbles around in their mouths to keep their mouth from becoming too dry. At Tête Jaune Cache, the cache was high in a tree and was intact. The entire party rested here for several days to regain their strength before continuing on their journey, which took them through the Yellowhead Pass to the present site of Jasper. They arrived in St. Albert on October 20, 16 weeks after starting out on their perilous trek.⁴⁷

Their journey ended with another complication:

The family camped on the river below the mission and were quite unprepared for Edmonton's cold weather. During the night, four inches [10 cm] of snow fell on the tent, leaving the family freezing in scanty clothing and the children without shoes. The Sisters of the mission visited them, took them in, and cared for them until a place was found for them to stay throughout the winter. This place, near Stony Plain, was a large room that they shared with a team of horses. A blanket was hung between them and the animals. They had to melt snow to water the horses as well as for their own use.

The Hendersons homesteaded near Edmonton and became contributing members of the community. They kept the first honeybees and the first Jersey cows in the district. As the herd of cows prospered, they built their famous Round Barn, now in Fort Edmonton Park. Each cow's stall faced the central feeding station, while manure was thrown out an opening behind each stall.⁴⁸

Archie MacDonald Travels West

Another epic journey in 1907 illustrates that the North Thompson route remained very much a "hard road" despite the trickle of travellers over the 45 years since the Overlanders struggled through. As described by Dunford in *North River*,⁴⁹ Archie MacDonald was variously a logger, prospector, prairie farmer, cowboy and railway construction worker. At age 68 and lame, he decided to seek his ultimate dream of ranching in the mountains, choosing the Cariboo as his destination. In April 1907 he left Daysland, Alberta, with three sons aged 17, 15 and 14. Travelling on horseback on the rough trail past Lac Ste. Anne and through the Yellowhead Pass, they too, turned south across the Canoe River and Albreda Valley to the North Thompson. "Like various predecessors on that route, they found the bush of the upper part almost impenetrable. At Stillwater Flats, flooded and hot, swamps sucked at the horses and mosquitoes sucked at the riders."⁵⁰ Their big coach horse dropped dead near Clearwater, not having shown any signs of distress. Wolves cleaned

up the carcass as they camped nearby. South of Clearwater, the MacDonalds headed west up to the Cariboo plateau, found their dream site near Lac Des Roches and settled there. It had taken them five months to make the journey.

In 1914, just seven years after the MacDonalds struggled through, the Canadian Northern Railway was constructed through Yellowhead Pass and down the North Thompson to Kamloops and Vancouver, forever changing access to the region and setting the stage for future road building.

Banff Becomes Canada's First National Park

In 1883 when the CPR arrived in Banff, Frank McCabe and the brothers William* and Tom McCardell rediscovered the hot springs of the Cave and Basin—a prized commodity of the day.⁵¹ People believed that the springs had natural healing properties and were willing to pay to bathe in them. The three discoverers tried but failed to obtain a lease for the site. The government of Canada resolved the issue in 1885 by reserving the 2,600-hectare area surrounding them as the Hot Springs Reserve “for sanitary purposes,” in essence starting what was to become Canada’s national park system. In 1887 the Rocky Mountains Park Act confirmed the reservation and expanded the area to formally designate it as a national park, later to be named Banff. This legislation was modelled on the 1872 U.S. law establishing Yellowstone Park, the first national park in North America. The Canadian act was an important precedent for the creation of Jasper National Park 20 years later. The federal government wanted to attract business for its railway and a national park would motivate people to come and use the hot springs and enjoy the scenic wilderness. The leaders of the day realized that to attract tourists, preserving or even enhancing the natural integrity of the park would be important.⁵²

* William McCardell’s son Bill became a Dominion Forest Ranger in Alberta on the Brazeau Forest. He transferred to the Alberta Forest Service in 1930, later working in the Forest Surveys Branch

in Edmonton. During the First World War he became a pilot, and flying remained his avocation.

Gregg and Swift Homesteads

In the meantime, in the upper Athabasca valley, traffic on the rough trail from Edmonton continued to flow as traders and settlers moved west. In 1888, Jack Gregg, a prospector and trapper from Montana, settled on Prairie Creek (now Maskuta Creek), west of present-day Hinton, and set up a trading post. He sold the store in 1909 to railway contractors, but kept his ranch.

Lewis Swift, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1854, moved to Calgary in 1888, and discovered the Jasper area in 1890, travelling west from Lac Ste. Anne with the Moberlys. After spending two years in the Okanagan, Swift returned to Jasper in 1893 and moved into the abandoned Jasper House buildings. After two years of trading, hunting and trapping in the region, he settled on a creek west of the Snaring River under the Palisades, east of Jasper, where he built a cabin. Swift married Suzette Chalifoux in 1897. They had six children, two of whom died as infants. Together they developed the farm and traded with the local Métis families. They cleared land for an irrigated garden and planted wheat and barley, raised horses and cattle. Lewis built a small grist mill driven by stream water and built his own furniture. “Swift’s Place,” before the coming of the railways, was a landmark for travellers who were always sure of hospitality, a helping hand or, in times of need, a share of his limited stores.⁵³⁻⁵⁴



The Swift family homestead near Jasper around 1910. Mr. and Mrs. Swift (Lewis at extreme right and Suzette extreme left) with their children and some of their staff.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES PA 46-61



Swift's water-powered grist mill on his homestead, 1909.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES PA 44-23

Inspector Snyder's Reconnaissance 1897 – Still a Hard Road

Inspector Arthur Edward Snyder of the North West Mounted Police made the first North West Mounted Police patrol into the future Hinton–Jasper area in the summer of 1897, travelling with two constables and a packer and seven packhorses. This was part of a three-month 2,200-kilometre loop that took them from Edmonton to Jasper House, Dunvegan, Fort St. John, Peace River, Slave Lake and Fort Assiniboine. Once they left the mission at Lac Ste. Anne, they generally followed the 1873 CPR Survey Trail that Walter Moberly had laid out 25 years before. Like many who went before, they encountered the extensive deep muskegs and areas of fallen timber on old burns. An added hazard for the horses was the treacherous rotting corduroy that caught the horse's feet and legs. In just over two weeks they reached the Athabasca River by the Cache Percotte Trail from the McLeod River. Snyder was not impressed with the country:

The territory from the watershed between the McLeod River and the Athabasca, and a long distance north and west to Henry House, is quite deserted by the Indians during the past year or two, that district being burnt and the game driven out. I never saw so bleak and barren a wilderness, the streams being barren of fish and not a sign of fur or feather among the stumps of what had once been a fine forest.⁵⁵

This desolate appearance was likely a result of the extensive burns of the 1880s and 90s. Snyder's party made a quick visit to Jasper House and returned to head north to Sturgeon Lake.

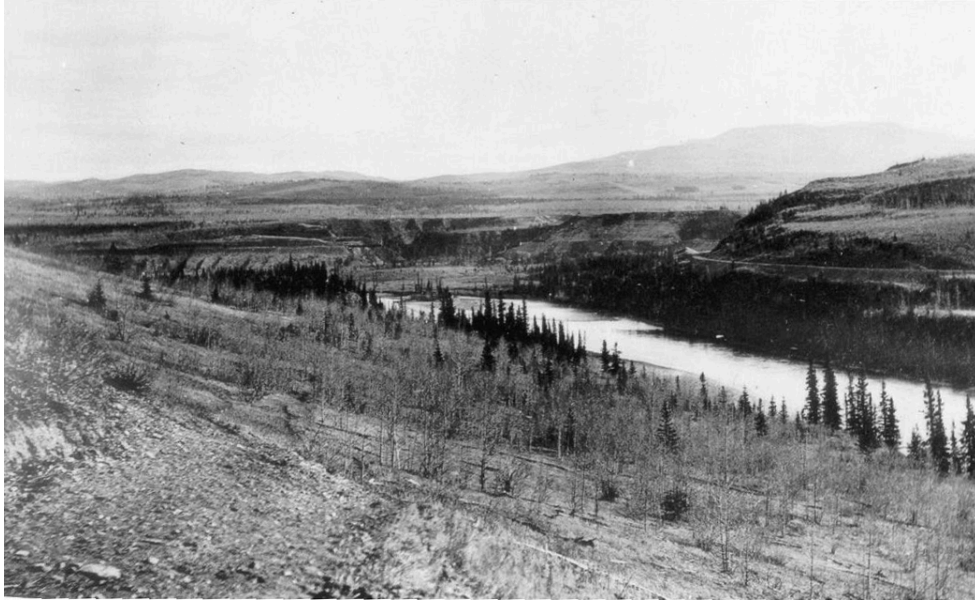
Geologist James McEvoy in 1898 led another Geological Survey party from Edmonton to Brûlé Lake, then westward through the Yellowhead Pass to Tête Jaune Cache to further describe the route and the form and geological structure of the neighbouring mountains. From Tête Jaune Cache he explored the head of the Canoe River, then headed back to the Athabasca and south up Jacques Creek to check the heads of the Brazeau and Pembina rivers and coal

outcrops on the McLeod. He also noted the extensive burns, especially as fallen timber impeded their travels.⁵⁶

Edward Moberly

Edward Moberly, grandson of Henry John Moberly, was raised on the family farm in Jasper until the family left the park in 1910. Edward later recalled their annual trading and supply run to Lac Ste. Anne that also went along the difficult trail. His memories clearly illustrate the travel times still required in the early 1900s.

We went down [to Lac Ste Anne]—it's a long trip because some places on the lower side of Obed Hills—lots of muskeg there [and] along [by] Edson ... and if it's a wet summer, it's kind of tough. The trail was not cut like they are now or like the forestry had them, just enough that you can get by. Coming back, well there was McLeod River [and] Pembina River to cross. So if they happened to be high you had to swim your horses and raft the stuff across, otherwise your sugar and things will get wet... so they tried to bring it home as sound as they can make it. I don't blame them ... far away to go [and then] back again. ... Like I said, if it is a wet summer [with] high rivers [and] muskegs are soft, [it] sometimes takes three months. ... See, ... they get down to Lac Ste. Anne—my father and my uncle Ewan—they hire a team of horses and a wagon and haul their fur to Edmonton where they'd get more, and buy stuff there where it's a bit cheaper too, ... and then from there they packed [with pack horses].⁵⁷



The Crossing on the Athabasca River at the mouth of Prairie Creek near Entrance, the start of the trail north to The Smoky River and Grande Prairie, 1911. This view from the north bank shows the GTP railway grade on the right.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-472-7

Edwin Thomeus

Edwin Thomeus, a Swede, emigrated to the Magnolia area west of Evansburg in 1905 and later homesteaded and raised a family there. His lively and descriptive letters have been translated and published. In 1906, he reflected on the overland trail to the west:

You can believe that the landscape is beautiful here. We camp along the old "Yellowhead Trail" that stretches from Edmonton past Lac Ste. Anne on to the Rocky Mountains and on to the Pacific Ocean in B.C. It is cut through the forests wide enough for a wagon to travel along although at times we must carry our load across marshy areas and sometimes it takes four horses to drag the empty wagons along through the mire or up very steep hills. Sometime we ran poles in the wheels, it rides like a sleigh. At a couple of places we had to bind the load with ropes and loop the end around a tree to keep the whole load from tipping over. You may well believe that this is hard work at times.

We are camping now along the Lobstick River where the Trail makes a crossing. When one is up on the height above the camp, one can see the Trail winding through the trees to the West. Just think for 800 miles [1,300 km] through wilderness, mountains, and in B.C. through some of the heaviest forested areas in North America continent.... Just think this little hard-tramped trail that winds its way through the grass has been travelled by Indians for centuries. Over the same have Hudson's Bay fur buyers and Jesuit missionaries travelled when they were the only white people in the land.

Joe Larson, A. Brandt and an older Swede named Gus Jansson left for the Yellowhead Pass in the Rocky [Mountains] on Thursday with two pack ponies. I helped them cross the ford on the Pembina River. They have 220 miles [355 km] to travel to the Pass from here.⁵⁸

Dominion Land Surveys

The Dominion Land Survey system was developed in the early 1870s to survey the Prairies for settlement. The basic unit of land was the section, a parcel of land one mile square [1.605 square kilometres], containing 640 acres [about 260 hectares]. It was divided into quarter sections of 160 acres [65 hectares] each, the basic homestead allotment. Sections were laid out in a grid of townships, each a square six miles by six miles [9.65 km], the sections numbered from 1 to 36. To maintain survey control (to realign the columns of townships and to prevent creeping errors), more precisely located north–south meridians were surveyed, the precision checked by frequent star shots. The meridians were laid out along every 4 degrees of longitude. Alberta's eastern boundary is on the fourth meridian at 110 degrees west; the fifth meridian runs through Stony Plain. Equally precise baselines were surveyed on east–west latitudes, every four townships, or 24 miles [38.6 km] apart. Any parcel of land could therefore be pinpointed by the section, township, range and meridian. With settlers beginning to trickle into the Peace River country, Arthur St. Cyr, DLS (Dominion Land Surveyor) was sent out in 1904 to establish and survey the sixth meridian (118 degrees west longitude). The meridian lies about 75

kilometres east of Grande Prairie, and runs through Jasper Lake, passing about 2 kilometres west of Disaster Point and 5 kilometres due east of Jasper.

Alberta was declared a province in 1905, with its capital in Edmonton. Alberta's boundaries included parts of four of the former North-West Territories districts: Alberta, Athabasca, Assiniboia and Saskatchewan. In the same year, the Calgary and Edmonton Railway was completed as a branch railway north from Calgary, ending at Strathcona, the community that had sprung up across from Edmonton on the south side of the river. With two trains per week initially, the 300-kilometre trip took about 12 hours. This connection to Calgary enhanced both trade and settlement.

Alberta historian J.G. MacGregor described the winter of 1906–07 as one of the most severe in recorded history, followed by a rainy spring.⁵⁹ Perhaps the award for persistence on the “hard road to travel” should go to Dominion Land Surveyor A.H. Hawkins. Hawkins left Edmonton 7 June 1907 to travel to the upper tributaries of Wolf Creek to extend the thirteenth base line west. It was to run to the south of present-day Edson and on through Jasper Park. The going was so difficult, “unpacking and pulling horses through mud-holes”⁶⁰ an hourly occurrence, that it took three months before he could even start to survey at the end of the baseline at Wolf Creek. Once he got going, Hawkins' line extended south of the future coalmining town of Pocahontas and skirted the foot of Roche Miette near Disaster Point. Across the Athabasca, in the spring of 1908, he intersected St. Cyr's sixth meridian near the Jasper House of Colin Fraser's time. In the meantime surveyor Tommy Thompson was working west of the Pembina River surveying the fourteenth baseline. James Shand Harvey, a recently arrived Scot, was hired as scout and axeman. Although around Obed Lake they experienced the coldest August storm with about half a metre of snow, Shand Harvey loved the country and remained there in the Jasper–Entrance area for the rest of his life.⁶¹



Dominion Land Surveyor Morrison P. Bridgland, chief guide, third from left ca. 1907, with (l-r) Swiss guide Edouard Feuz, H.G. Wheeler, assistant guide, and Gottfried Feuz, Swiss guide. The guides were in charge of climbing at an Alpine Club camp at Yoho, B.C. Bridgland pioneered the use of panoramic photographs in topographic surveys in western Alberta.

WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, CAJ 1907/PG 168

In June 1915, Dominion Land Surveyor M.P. Bridgland, a pioneer of photographic surveying, and a founding member of the Alpine Club of Canada, was working in the Jasper area. Conventional surveys are difficult in mountainous terrain, and Bridgland was conducting a photo-based topographic survey of the Athabasca Valley from the east boundary of Jasper National Park to the Jasper townsite area. With his five-man crew, comprising an assistant, two packers and two cooks, he established 92 survey stations located on mountain tops and high ridges and took 735 glass-plate photographs with a large-format camera, along with precise azimuth triangulation readings, all in just four months. He prepared himself in the

spring by hiking and climbing, often carrying his children on his shoulders. On his return in the fall that year, Bridgland prepared a detailed topographic map that covered 2,300 square kilometres, almost a quarter of the park area. His photos remain as an invaluable record of the early landscape and vegetation of the mountain park.

Eighty-four years later, in 1999, Jeanine Rhemtulla, a University of Alberta graduate student, climbed the same peaks, located Bridgland's photo points and, using the same sized camera, repeated his photo series showing the same perspectives, recording the change in vegetation and human influence in the intervening period.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Road North Towards Jasper



“ ... we felt disillusioned. If this was the Punch Bowl, where were the giant mountains Brown and Hooker?” ... after six weeks of toil and anxiety, after three summers of effort and we did not even raise a cheer. Mount Brown and Mount Hooker were frauds, and we were disgusted at having been humbugged by them.”

ARTHUR P. COLEMAN, 1893 AFTER FINALLY REACHING THE COMMITTEE PUNCH BOWL IN A SEARCH FOR MOUNTS BROWN AND HOOKER.

The Icefields Parkway is a spectacular and popular route between Lake Louise and Jasper. It runs through the most westerly system of valleys in the Alberta Rockies east of the Continental Divide. In sequence from the south, the system includes the head of the Bow River to Bow Pass, the Mistaya River north to the Saskatchewan Crossing, the North Saskatchewan River to Sunwapta Pass, and the Sunwapta River joining the Athabasca River to flow

past the town of Jasper. Before the road was punched through in the 1930s, the area was lightly travelled by guides and outfitters, tourists, mountain climbers and boundary surveyors. The country could be more easily accessed in most cases through east-flowing river valleys such as the Red Deer, North Saskatchewan and Brazeau.

The first through traffic, largely from south to north, was driven in part by mountain climbers trying to find the legendary tall peaks of Mounts Brown and Hooker described by David Douglas in 1827. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was completed to Banff in 1883 and in 1884 it passed through Laggan (now Lake Louise) and also Kicking Horse Pass. Laggan then became a logical starting point for trips north into Banff and Jasper national parks. This route to Jasper was also a hard one, not only for the distance involved, but also for the rugged country. The Sunwapta River, the main valley connecting Sunwapta Pass to the Athabasca Valley, presented two major obstacles. The tongue of the Athabasca Glacier extended across the valley and, with the gluey soft glacial silt surrounding it, was treacherous to cross. Just below that was the impassable Sunwapta Canyon.

Tom Wilson, who had packed supplies for construction of the CPR in 1882, stayed on in the area to start an outfitting business in Banff. He attracted such notable guides as Bill Peyto and Jimmy Simpson.^{1*} These men explored the Rocky Mountains in this region, identifying and blazing trails still in use today, some of them now roads.

* Simpson built the distinctive eight-sided log Num-Ti-Jah Lodge (Stoney for pine marten) at Bow Lake in 1923. Peyto Lake at the Bow Pass is named after Bill Peyto.

Arthur P. Coleman's Disappointment

Arthur Philemon Coleman, geologist, professor, founding member of the Alpine Club of Canada, mountaineer and artist, initiated several trips to western Canada and explored the Rocky Mountains between the Bow and

Athabasca rivers.² Raised in Ontario, he determined to become a geologist and obtained bachelors and masters degrees in Canada. While doing fieldwork in Europe for his doctorate degree at Breslau, Germany, he developed a love for the mountains. In 1882, at age 30, he was appointed professor of natural history at Victoria University, which later became part of the University of Toronto. His academic positions left him with summers free to pursue his interests in geology and mountaineering.

In the springs of 1884 and 1885, as the CPR was nearing completion, he visited Laggan, now Lake Louise, Golden and the Selkirks. His experiences hooked him on the Rocky Mountain region.

In the meantime Coleman saw an atlas showing Mounts Brown and Hooker standing on either side of Athabasca Pass, with heights estimated at 5,180 metres. As he later remarked, “A high mountain is always seductive, but a mountain with a mystery is doubly so.”³ On the map it also appeared that one had only to canoe about 110 kilometres down the Columbia from Beavermouth on the CPR, then follow the old portage trail up the Wood River to Athabasca Pass. In 1888 he and a colleague, Frank Stover, set out from Beavermouth on 10 July in a light Peterborough canoe, despite warnings that the canoe was too light for the Columbia—and it was. Coleman later concluded that “the canoe was not the most desirable conveyance to Athabasca Pass.”⁴ But his determination persisted. He philosophized that “if the camel is the ‘ship of the desert,’ the cayuse should be the ‘canoe of the mountains’.”⁵



Map 12: Early trails into the Athabasca Valley from the South around 1900.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Four years later, in 1892, Coleman and his brother Lucius left from Lucius' ranch near Morley. They rode north from Morley along the front range to the Brazeau River and up the valley to Brazeau Lake. Crossing over Poboktan Pass* took them down Poboktan Creek to the Sunwapta River* below the canyons. They thought this river was the Athabasca. Then about 25 kilometres downstream, they came to another river they thought must be the Whirlpool, but it was actually the Athabasca. Following it up to and along the Chaba River for about 20 kilometres, they came to Fortress Lake, which they initially took to be the Punch Bowl. "Our hearts fairly stood still at the sight, for surely this must be the Committee's Punch Bowl on Athabasca Pass, and the tall snowy peak behind the glacier to the south must be Mount Hooker. It was one of the great moments of a lifetime!" 6

* Poboktan: Stoney for "owl," named by Coleman on that trip in 1892. (Karmitsanis 1991).

* Sunwapta: Stoney for “turbulent river,” also named by Coleman in 1892 (Karmitsanis 1991). Noting that they were not sure which stream this was, they decided to keep the Stoney name Sunwapta.



Arthur P. Coleman at the founding meeting of the Alpine Club of Canada in 1906. (l-r back row) unidentified; Jack Otto, outfitter; A.O. Wheeler, president; Tom Wilson, advisory board; S.H. Mitchell, assistant secretary; R.E. Campbell, outfitter. (l-r front row) Dan Campbell, outfitter; M.P. Bridgland DLS, surveyor and guide; unidentified; Rev. J.C. Heidman, Calgary, vice-president; A.P. Coleman, vice president.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-673-20

After several days' rafting to the end of the lake and climbing other mountains, they reluctantly concluded that this was too large to be the Committee Punch Bowl and that the fabled mountains Brown and Hooker were not there.⁷

The following year, Arthur and Lucius Coleman and Louis Stewart left Morley on 8 July 1893, this time without guides, but accompanied by accomplished horseman Frank Sibbald, a rancher from Morley who also spoke Cree and Stoney. This time they packed a folding canvas boat to avoid having to build rafts on the larger rivers and possibly to cruise around the Committee Punch Bowl. The boat, about 1.4 metres wide when packed, was hard to pack and kept catching on trees—but they appreciated having it because the rivers were especially high that year. Chief Jonas and his family accompanied the party during the earlier part of their journey and Chief Jonas drew a map to show the trail and a pass to the Sunwapta River. This information shortened the trip and they named the pass and creek after Jonas for his help.



Mount Brown and the Committee Punch Bowl. Botanist David Douglas named Mount Brown in 1827, stated that he climbed it and reported its height at between 4,800 and 5,100 metres, which spurred mountaineers to search for it and its companion, Mount Hooker, the legendary giants; his estimates were about 2,000 metres too high.

J. MUNROE THORINGTON. WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, V622/PA86-219

Travel down the Sunwapta and Athabasca was difficult and slow, and they missed the Whirlpool valley during their prolonged scrambles to find a trail through the thickets on the east side. Finally hitting more open country, they came to the Athabasca River and wondered if the valley to the west might be the Whirlpool. They crossed with the boat, swimming the horses, and found tracks that they later learned were those of Lewis Swift who had arrived that same year, 1893 (the Coleman party also left tracks that mystified Swift). After struggling up the Miette River for a day—for that was the valley they had seen—the direction of the valley and the clear non-glacial water convinced them it

was the Miette, so they returned and recrossed the Athabasca. Travelling along the bank Stewart noted a change in the colour of the water on the other side and soon spotted the Whirlpool entering the river. Following blazes, they found the ford and for the third time ferried across the Athabasca in full flood.

Riding through timber to their second camp on the Whirlpool, a sharp sapling stuck into the flank of Arthur's horse, breaking off and driving deeper as he thrashed around. In the process, Arthur was smashed into a tree, severely wrenching his knee. The next morning he found it impossible to walk without the aid of two sticks and realized he would not be able to climb Mount Brown when they finally got there.

On the morning of the fifth day after leaving the Athabasca, Coleman's party rode with great anticipation to the pass at the head of the valley. About an hour after lunch they arrived at a small pool less than 180 metres long and realized that this was the Committee Punch Bowl and that they were on the Great Divide, but "we felt no enthusiasm. Instead we felt disillusioned. If this was the Punch Bowl, where were the giant mountains Brown and Hooker?" Seeing only "commonplace mountains," Coleman dolefully noted that their glacier rope and ice equipment would not be needed. As he wrote later, "We had reached our point after six weeks of toil and anxiety, after three summers of effort and we did not even raise a cheer. Mount Brown and Mount Hooker were frauds, and we were disgusted at having been humbugged by them."⁸

To add to his chagrin, the Punch Bowl was so small they did not even unpack the canvas boat. Coleman's only solace was that he had injured his knee so badly that he could not have climbed anyhow, "for there was no glory to be got in climbing Mount Brown." On the other hand, Coleman had shown, for the first time, that those peaks were not giants after all.⁹

Walter Wilcox Finds a Pass

Walter Wilcox, a mountain climber from Washington, D.C., with guides Tom Lusk and Fred Stephens, made the first recorded trip from Banff to the Athabasca River in 1896 along the route of the present-day Icefields Parkway.

Like the others, he could not find the legendary peaks.¹⁰ On this trip they were the first Europeans to discover Sunwapta Pass. Fred Stephens found a way past the toe of the Athabasca Glacier but they were blocked by the canyon on the Sunwapta. They came back to cross over a high grassy pass to the east of what is now known as Mount Wilcox that connected to the lower Sunwapta down Tangle Creek. This pass was also named after him—Wilcox Pass.¹¹

Norman Collie Resolves the Mystery of Mounts Brown and Hooker

In 1898, Herman Wooley and Norman Collie, British climbers, failed to reach Athabasca Pass, but along the way climbed Mount Athabasca, becoming the first Europeans to see the expanse of the Columbia Icefields. Despite their apparent failure, it was Collie who later offered an explanation for the mystery of Mounts Brown and Hooker. The story, as Ben Gadd related in *Handbook of the Rockies*, ended back in England:

[When] chemistry professor Collie read David Douglas' journal carefully [he] discovered a discrepancy. How could Douglas have climbed a 5,000-metre peak from a 1,700-metre-high pass in only five hours, as he stated? A fit mountaineer would have taken at least ten hours to climb the 3,300 metres—probably more, considering the altitude. Douglas must have been incorrect. He was right. Mt. Brown's elevation was later determined to be 2,799 metres, that of Mt. Hooker, 3,286 metres. Neither is particularly high for a continental-divide peak.¹²



View from the ascent to Wilcox Pass showing the tongue of Athabasca Glacier, 1 August 1934. The trail up Wilcox Pass, to the right, avoided the obstacles of the Athabasca Glacier and Sunwapta Canyon, enabling travel north to the Athabasca.

W.J. OLIVER, 1934. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PA-804247

The reason for Douglas' inaccurate estimate has long been debated among mountaineers and remains a mystery. Historian Don Beers¹³ suggests that Aemilius Simpson's erroneous estimate of the elevation of Athabasca Pass in 1826 at 3,050 metres was passed on to David Douglas before his trip east in May 1827. Simpson had lost his barometer and was estimating elevations by calculating how far he had travelled above the sea, not the most accurate method. By the time he reached the Jasper area, he was about 1,650 metres too high. For example, he recorded the total elevation of Roche Miette at 3,960 metres, 1,645 metres too high. But his estimate that the peak was 1,150 metres above the river was only 164 metres low. If Douglas had used the actual elevation of the Pass, since established at 1,740 metres, his estimate for Mount Hooker above the Pass of 1,826 metres would have been only 180 metres too high.

In July 1901, mountaineer Stanley Washburn, with Fred Stevens of Banff as guide, came into Wilcox Pass from the south. Their group was desperately short of food because much of their supplies had been soaked when a packhorse decided to take a dip in the river. They finally spotted some sheep

and managed to kill five for food, but on retrieving them from the mountainside, Mr. Washburn sprained his ankle so badly that they decided to return to Laggan. Washburn was back again in 1909, this time from the Brazeau valley, coming into Wilcox Pass from Nigel Pass, but it must have been a late spring as in one place they had to shovel their way through 240 to 300 centimetres of snow. This time they continued on over the pass to the north and camped in the timber.¹⁴

E.J. Hart, in *The Early Outfitters and Guides of Banff and Jasper*,¹⁵ reported that Jasper was accessed from Banff, rather than Laggan, for the first time in 1904 when the seven-man Moore/Husey party guided by Jim Brewster travelled north from Banff over Wilcox Pass and on down the Sunwapta and Athabasca rivers to the mouth of the Miette River, the general area in which William Henry and Larocque had stayed. There Brewster set up camp and they settled in for two months of hunting and exploring. Their route had traversed much of the present-day Icefields Parkway.

Mary Schäffer and Maligne Lake

Mary Schäffer became well known for her explorations of the Rockies during the early 1900s. The daughter of a wealthy Quaker family in Pennsylvania, she became interested in nature and the West through travels with her family. She met Dr. Charles Schäffer, a practicing physician and ardent botanist, during a visit to the recently opened CPR Glacier House in Roger's Pass in 1889. They shared an interest in nature and the mountains and were married soon after. In 1891 they took the first of 12 annual visits to the Rockies along the CPR line to study and collect native plants, which she began to paint with her artistic skills. She met Sir James Hector (of the Palliser expedition) at Glacier House in 1903 and was entranced by his descriptions of his travels through the Rockies. This added to her resolve to see more of the country.

Unfortunately, in December 1903 Charles died suddenly; her mother had passed away just a few months before and her father a month later. Reorganizing her life, she resolved to complete Charles' book of plants in his memory. She enlisted the help of Stewardson Brown, curator of the herbarium

at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and *Alpine Flora of the Canadian Rocky Mountains* was published under Brown's name in 1907. To complete the collections and paintings Mary returned to the Banff-Yoho area in 1904 and 1905, where she also learned to enjoy camping and riding horses, assisted by guide Billy Warren.¹⁶

In 1906 Mary began a three-year series of trips north to explore the Canadian Rockies, each time leaving from Laggan, guided by Billy Warren,^{*} along with other guides and outfitters. The first year they had reached as far north as Wilcox Pass when early fall snowstorms forced them to return. In 1907 they crossed Wilcox Pass to the Sunwapta River, then visited Fortress Lake and travelled up the Athabasca River towards Mount Columbia. It was on this trip that they crossed over Wilcox Pass and struggled down the creek that led west to the Sunwapta. The descent was steep and so full of brush and windfall Mary noted: "A good size morning's work on the right side of that stream next day inspired us to christen it Tangle Creek."¹⁷

* Mary and Billy Warren married in 1915 and lived in Banff.

Perhaps Mary's best-known trip in the Jasper area is the 1908 expedition that rediscovered Chaba Imne, Beaver Lake in the Stoney language, now called Maligne Lake. On the 1907 trip, Mary had met Samson Beaver, his wife, Leah, and daughter Louise. The Beavers were Stoney Indians living on the Kootenay Plains of the Upper Saskatchewan with whom she formed a particular friendship. Mary asked Samson about the fabled Chaba Imne and, learning that Samson had been there as a youth, asked him to draw a map. Having determined that the lake was real, she resolved to see it for herself the next year.

The spring of 1908 was late; the party was held up with snow and then slowed by boggy passes. After difficult trips across recent burns in the Poboktan valley, they started through the heavy timber of the upper Maligne valley. After 24 kilometres of tough going, they began to despair about finding

the lake. They had difficulty making sense of Samson's map, although in retrospect it was a reasonable representation. Guide Sid Unwin took off from camp one day on foot determined to find the lake—returning over eight hours later to announce that he had found it. The next day, after two more hours of riding through the timber, they arrived on the shore. Mary wrote, "Lake Louise is a pearl, Lake Maligne is a whole string of pearls."

[18](#)



Mary Schäffer riding trails in the Rockies, early 1900s.

MARY SCHÄFFER COLLECTION. WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, V527-PS-150



Samson and Leah Beaver and their daughter. Their names live on in the Samson and Leah Peaks overlooking Maligne Lake, named by Mary Schäffer in 1908. Schäffer's party found the legendary "Great Beaver Lake" by following a map sketched for her by Samson Beaver in 1907.

MARY SCHÄFFER COLLECTION. WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, V527-PS-5

The party built a raft and worked their way southeast towards what they thought was the end of the lake. Again, Mary wrote, "As we were rounding what we supposed to be our debarking point, there burst upon us that which, all in our little company agreed, was the finest view any of us had ever beheld in the Rockies."¹⁹ They had reached the narrows, which they named Samson's Narrows. They also gave commemorative names to Mount Unwin, Mount

Warren, Mount Mary Vaux,^{*} and to two crags on the east side of the lake: Samson and Leah Peaks.

* Named for one of Mary Schäffer's travelling companions who had a particular interest in glaciers.

They then tried to reach the Athabasca River by following the Maligne River north, but after five days they turned back, finding the heavy timber too difficult. They backtracked to Poboktan Creek and down the Sunwapta and Athabasca where they were made welcome at Lewis and Suzette Swift's homestead. The Swifts were sufficiently settled at that point to provide fresh milk, eggs and new potatoes, a welcome change from dried foods. Mary decided they should see Mount Robson and Tête Jaune Cache before returning. Heading up the Miette River, they found the trail as difficult as others had described: "From the day we struck the Valley of the Miette, we realized what the trails were. We had never seen a really bad one before."²⁰ She explained that although the route had been much used by trappers, prospectors and surveyors, no one had done any clearing, which, along with steep grades and soft ground, made going difficult. However, they reached their destination and returned to Laggan from Jasper along a route generally followed now by the Icefields Parkway.

Not only was Mary Schäffer the first non-Aboriginal woman to see Maligne Lake, she also defied conventions of the day by leading these expeditions independently as a woman, and riding astride in "men's" clothing. However, she impressed those she met along the way with her grace, hospitality and determination. Janice Beck noted:

Her health had never been good, and by 1907 her youth had long passed. But her spirit was indomitable. Even when the muskeg-covered terrain, the abundance of fallen timber, the swarms of mosquitoes and the seemingly ever-present rain combined to make travelling excruciatingly

difficult, Mary kept her head held high. There was nowhere else she would rather have been.²¹

On their 1907 trip in the Wilcox Pass area, Mary and her outfitter Billy Warren met the A.P. Coleman party, which this time included Lucius Coleman and Rev. George Kinney, on their way north to Mount Robson. The Coleman party had been delayed that morning when a horse went missing and had to be left behind. They met on the trail south of the Sunwapta Pass, but in the snowstorm and melee of horses they did not have a chance to speak. However, that evening after the Coleman party had made camp, they were pleased to see Mary and Billy Warren ride in leading their missing horse. Coleman later remarked:

It was a delightful surprise to have a charming woman ride in out of the snow in the midst of the Rockies and join us in our lunch of bannock, bacon and tea; and we got some very useful hints for the future from our guests, for Warren is an experienced and resourceful man who knows most of the mountain trails that can be reached from Laggan.²²

Author Rudyard Kipling also saw Mary Schäffer on the trail near Emerald Lake and later at the hotel on 12 October 1907 as she was returning from her northern explorations. His comments to his friend at Syracuse University are as revealing about the Kiplings of the day as they are about Mary Schäffer:

As we drove along the narrow hill-road a piebald pack-pony with a china-blue eye came round a bend, followed by two women, black haired, bare-headed, wearing beadwork squaw-jackets and riding straddle. A string of pack-ponies trotted through the pines behind them. "Indians on the move?" said I, "how characteristic!"

As the women jolted by, one of them very slightly turned her eyes, and they were, past any doubt, the comprehending equal eyes of the civilized white woman which moved in that berry-brown face. The effect of that very twentieth-century eye ... was indescribable. I asked no questions till the man who was driving us said: "That's Mrs. Schaefer of

Montreal and Miss Jones of New York. They've been out for three months camping in the mountains. I reckon they've come in before the snow falls." Then the queer cavalcade passed out of sight among the pine trees.

This evening just before the train left I saw in the hotel drawing room a gaunt angular but superbly dressed flat-fronted old maid of a woman who looked as if she'd run from a mouse and she looked at me—same civilized glance—and I saw it was Mrs. Schaeffer of Montreal. Funny thing! In the woods she looked natural, even to some extent alluring—but at the hotel I felt I could have lived alone with her on a desert island for centuries. This is curious. Refer the case to Dr. Jameson who I have heard understands females. It appears that those women and many others come out and camp in the mountains year after year. I saw the tiny streak of a pony-trail (like a cobweb against the bare side of a landslip) down which they had come and I shuddered!²³

The Alfords and Camp Parker

Seventeen years later, in September 1924, Ethelwyn Octavia Doble Alford rode with her husband, forest ranger B.P. (Bertie) Alford, up the North Saskatchewan River valley from Nordegg into the Camp Parker-Nigel Pass area that Mary Schäffer had explored on her way over Sunwapta Pass.²⁴ At this time the head of the North Saskatchewan was part of the Clearwater Forest and the Dominion Forestry Branch had established a ranger station at Nordegg. Ethelwyn celebrated her 52nd birthday on Nigel Creek and, although she was severely arthritic, she rode with Bertie for three months that summer and fall. Her first trip was a 27-day patrol to the west, during which she described meeting pioneering photographic surveyor M.P. Bridgland and visiting his party in camp.



The Trail North to Grande Prairie – the historic Aboriginal route to the Peace River country. Telephone Line Along the Old Trail

BY ROBERT GUEST, 1991. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

In August the Alfords packed supplies to the head of the North Saskatchewan to build a cabin at Camp Parker, on Nigel Creek. They left on 4 August with a disgruntled helper and 10 horses packing 73 to 90 kilograms each. On the fifth day out they were invited to dinner by outfitter Mr. Boyse who had a party of 18 Americans, mostly young women from New York,

Philadelphia and Chicago, including a doctor and lawyer. Boyse had 42 horses and five workers. They were camped on the Kootenay Plains of the Upper Saskatchewan near where Mary Schäffer had met the Beaver family.

It took the Alford's 14 gruelling days to reach the Nigel Creek site. The trail was ill-defined and they spent many days crossing and recrossing the river to find a way past gorges—each time Mrs. Alford dried their wet packs and tried to salvage soaked food. She, like De Smet, detested the forested portions: “and such a trail—narrow, up and down, the boughs and bushes scraping your face, knocking the stirrups off your feet, stubbing your ankles, while guarding your face on the



Nigel Creek, looking north from Camp Parker.
PETER MURPHY

left side, something on the right side would whack you in the face.” However, her spirits were always lifted by the “glorious inspiring views,” and even “boggy places with the brightest emerald grass growing and around the edges amber pine and spruces on the mountains looking up the valley into the shade cast by the mountains.”²⁵ Once at Nigel Creek, work on the cabin took 10 days, during which she cooked and collected plant specimens. A party of outfitters on their way back to Banff from Jasper stopped to visit. The Alford's return trip to Nordegg took just six days, with a stop one evening at Dominion Surveyor M.P. Bridgland's camp.

Bridgland gave them a heavy box of exposed glass photographic plates, which he valued at \$300.00 (about \$ 3,500 in 2004 dollars), to be sent to Ottawa by train from Nordegg.

Fifteen years later, a rough road led up the North Saskatchewan from Saskatchewan Crossing and over the Sunwapta Pass to Jasper, part of the future Icefields Parkway.

Trails to the North: The Hinton–Grande Prairie Trail

The trail between present-day Hinton and Grande Prairie, as described by Robert Guest in *Trail North*, was “the best-known trail from west-central Alberta to the Peace River country. It was an important route long before there were any roads.”²⁶ Guest also says that Alexander Mackenzie in his journal referred to a great trail that ran south, parallel to the mountains. It may have run on high ground from the Peace River to the Grande Prairie area and on to present-day Entrance, then connected with the (later-named) Bighorn Trail, south of Hinton, to the Bighorn area on the North Saskatchewan. The section from Entrance north to Grande Cache* was later commonly referred to as the Lower Trail. North from there to Grande Prairie, it became the Nose Mountain Trail. The Entrance–Hinton area would have been a major junction of the east–west and north–south trail systems. The Hinton–Grande Prairie Trail was not heavily used except by local people and for a brief period after the railway arrived when settlers used it to reach the Peace River country.

* Grande Cache was named after a large load of furs that trader Ignace Giasson had to leave en cache on a return trip from British Columbia along the Smoky River around 1820 (Karamitsanis 1991); he had too many furs for the travel conditions.

CHAPTER FIVE

Railways, Roads and Development



“The mighty voice of Canada will ever call to me. I shall hear the roar of rivers where the rapids foam and tear, I shall smell the virgin upland with its balsam-laden air, And shall dream that I am riding down the winding woody vale, With the packer and the packhorse on the Athabaska Trail.”

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, 1914 TOURIST AND AUTHOR OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

The Railways Bring Change

In the meantime, other events were taking place that would bring major changes, both in travel times and in economic development. The primary event was the announcement in 1902 by Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier that, under authority of the National Transcontinental Railway Act, the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) railway would be the second railway to cross

Canada.⁴ The GTP reached Edmonton in 1909, soon after Alberta became a province, and was completed to Prince Rupert in 1914. Meanwhile, another railway—the Canadian Northern Railway—started construction on a line parallel to the GTP as far as Tête Jaune Cache heading for Vancouver. It arrived in Edmonton in 1905, passed through the Hinton area in 1913, and was completed and opened in 1915.

During this time, two other significant events took place. First, Alberta was made a province in 1905, along with Saskatchewan. However, in these two new provinces, unlike in the others, the federal government retained the natural resources, which included the Dominion Lands and the minerals and forests. This situation persisted for 25 years until the 1930 Transfer of Resources. In the meantime, it was a frequent source of federal-provincial friction and gave rise to an early wave of “western alienation” from the central government. Second, on 14 September 1907, as the railway line was running west, an area of 12,950 square kilometres was set aside as “Jasper Forest Park.” *

* Canada Order in Council P.C. 1907-1323, 14 September 1907.



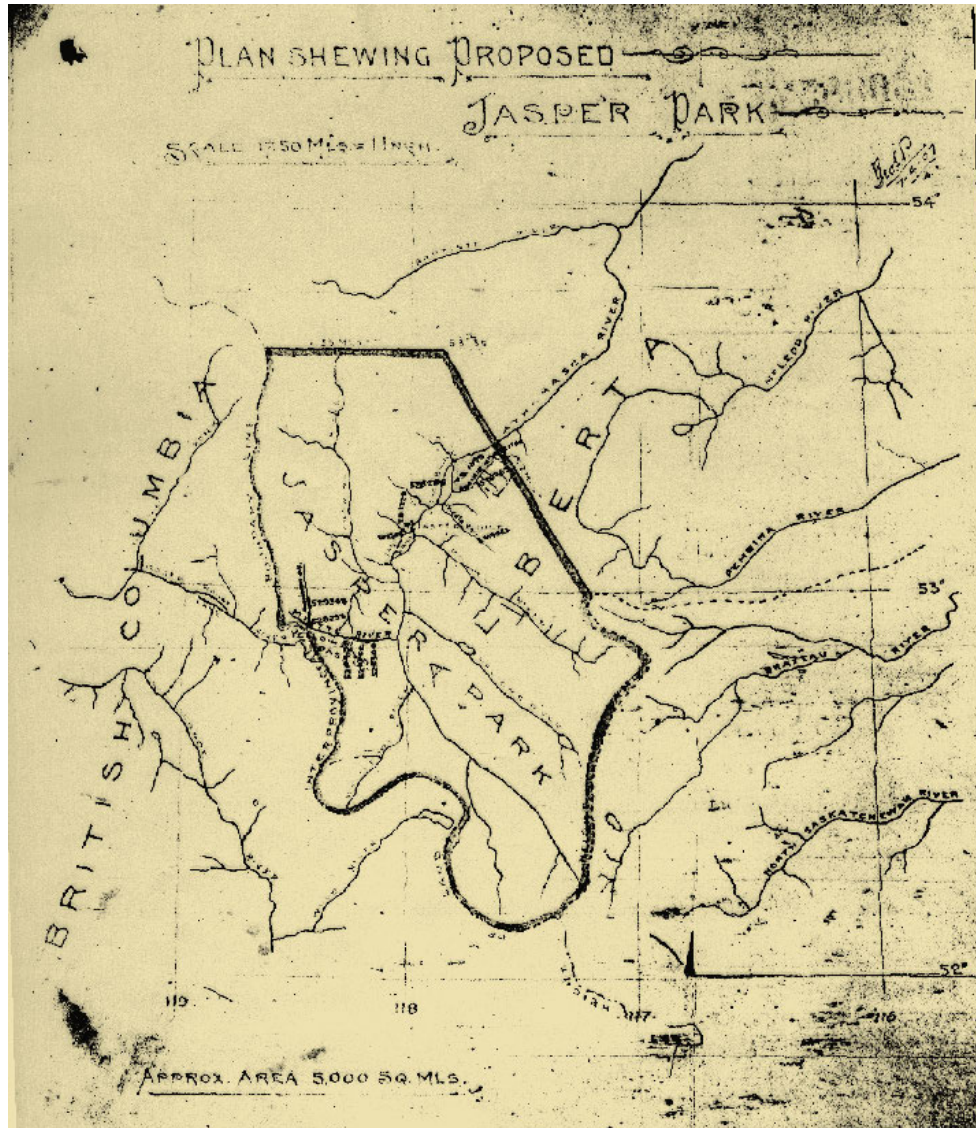
Pack train at the east boundary of Jasper National Park in 1921, then near north end of Brûlé Lake. The trail is on the abandoned Grand Trunk Pacific railway line.

MCDERMID STUDIO. GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-6-6741

The railways triggered a construction boom, and local industries such as freighting, tie hacking,* sawmilling and coal mining began to develop. The major economic stimulus was provided between 1907 and 1913 as the two railway lines extended west from Edmonton. Supply depots were set up at distribution points and places where major construction camps would be needed—such as the Pembina Crossing, Wolf Creek, Big Eddy west of Edson, where a long trestle was needed, and Prairie Creek west of Hinton, where a high-level bridge had to be constructed across its deep valley. Wolf Creek, for example, became a thriving community at the end of steel as the bridge was being built.

* Railway ties were first made by “hacking” two sides of a log flat with a scoring axe and broad axe.

Rumours said Wolf Creek would be the divisional point, and speculators bought much surrounding land. These rumours diverted attention away from GTP’s real intention, construction of the Edson yards 13 kilometres to the west.² Small sawmills were set up at some of these locations to make lumber for buildings. This initial forest industry was very modest and quite local.



Map 13: Jasper Forest Park 1907-1911.

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

Staking for coal leases southwest of Edson began in 1906 and the GTP arrived in Edson in 1910. Edson was named in 1911 after Edson J. Chamberlain, a vice-president and general manager of the GTP Railway. Historian Marguerite Ahlf explained that the community had been known as Heatherwood for about a year, but that a petition to the Postmaster General, strongly endorsed by officials of the GTP, requested the change to Edson.³

While the main line was extending west, two other initiatives began. One was the start of the railway to Mercoal, Luscar and Mountain Park—later known as the Coal Branch line. The second initiative was construction of

overland trails to access the Peace River Country from the new railway. At that time the route to the Peace was from Edmonton by trail to Athabasca Landing, then by boat or barge up the Athabasca, Lesser Slave River and Lesser Slave Lake to Grouard. Trails from Grouard led north to Peace River and west to Sturgeon Lake and Grande Prairie.



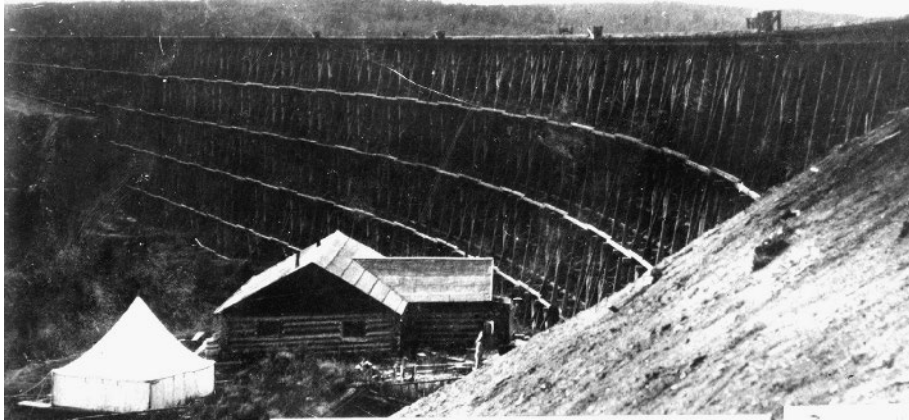
Freighter team on the trail, hauling from the end of steel at Prairie Creek to Jasper Park, ca. 1910.

G.H. HERRIOT. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PA-23021

With rail service to Edson in 1910, the government authorized clearing of two new “trails” to access the Grande Prairie and Peace River country. The Grande Prairie trail started from Edson and the Medicine Lodge trail started from the Medicine Lodge railway station, about 35 kilometres west of Edson. Both headed north and joined at the Athabasca River crossing at Rafferty Flats, according to retired chief forester Jack Wright who had seen the site. From there the single trail followed the Little Smoky River to Sturgeon Lake, greatly shortening the distance to the Peace from Edmonton. The trails were cleared wide enough for wagons and sleighs. They were difficult to travel in summer over soft ground and challenging river crossings, but easier during freeze-up with ice-paved trails and frozen river crossings. The section starting at Edson was less friendly, but was initiated by Edson merchants to favour their community. The trails were used regularly for about six years until rail service reached the Peace River country in 1916.⁴

Edwin Thomeus, a Swedish settler at Magnolia, writing in 1906 described the activity generated by railway surveys in his district:

It is quite lively on the Trail at this time. Almost every day a pack train passes. It could be a party of railway surveyors, prospectors or searchers for mineral ores, coming back after a summers work. From time to time a band of Indians are returning to Lac Ste. Anne to pick up provisions for the winter, which they will be spending out on the trap line. They will be returning before winter comes.



The Big Eddy Trestle across the Sundance Creek Valley along the McLeod River, ca. 1912. This 365-metre structure was a formidable challenge for builders of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway. A major construction camp was built here, the building in the foreground is the hospital.

EDSON ARCHIVES



Canadian Northern Railway construction east of Hinton ca. 1912-13, below the Obed Hills looking westerly. The railway construction tent camp is along the river.

MR. GRAHAM, JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 2003.02.01.01

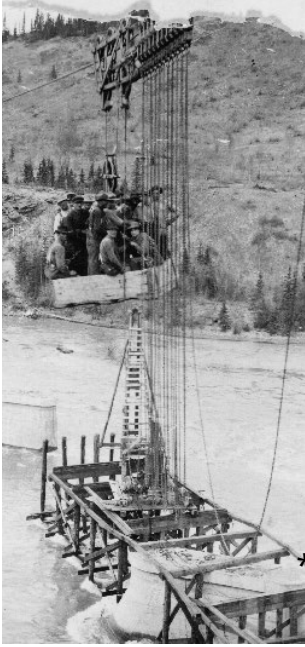
Four different companies are out surveying in the areas for building a railway through the Yellowhead Pass. There are 450 men—engineers,

helpers, packers, in these companies with over 1,000 pack ponies that are working between the Pembina and the Yellowhead. That's what the Hudson's Bay man was telling us at Lac Ste. Anne.... They pay now 12c a pound (about 5.5 cents per kilogram, \$1.16 per kilogram in 2004 dollars) for packing from Lac Ste. Anne to the Yellowhead Pass—240 miles [385 km]—a 12 day journey. If one had 10 pack ponies one could clear \$200 a month [\$4,250 in 2004 dollars]. Maybe next year! Pack ponies are not easy to buy here, they say if you go 50 miles [80 km] east of Edmonton you could buy them at \$25 to \$35 [\$530 to \$740 in 2004 dollars].

It is quite exciting just now down on the shore of the river for a pack of over 25 horses are being driven into the water. There is quite a clatter for every horse has a small bell. The horses are kicking and neighing while the riders are urging them onward with their whips. The pack ponies are driven ahead of the mule skimmers—big burly chaps. These men are usually half breeds or Frenchmen. They are quite picturesque in their yellow moose hide clothing with their decorated wide brimmed hats, wide belts with revolver, shell holders, and remarkable saddles. The pack ponies are in good shape at this time of the year.⁵

The railway grade was built largely by human and animal power—camps of about 120 each were set up at about six mile intervals. The ditches and grades would be dug by hand and horses or mules with scrapers. High points and rock ridges would be blasted. Once the grade was built the track-layer followed. This was an enormous structure run by an engine at the back which carried the rails.⁶ The rails were fed from the flat car in the middle through large beams at the front of the machine and then lowered onto the ties. Once the rails had been spaced and spiked down, the track-layer moved forward to lay the next set of rails. About 2.5 kilometres could be laid in a 10-hour day.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway reached Hinton* in 1910 and Fitzhugh (now Jasper) in 1911, and the line was extended through to the Yellowhead on its way to Prince Rupert by the end of that year.⁷ The prime contractors for the construction—Foley, Welch and Stewart—organized an army of men and equipment with remarkable efficiency and logistical support to speed the



Constructing the steel Canadian Northern Railway bridge over the Athabasca River at Entrance, 1913. The bridge is now part of Highway 40 North to Grande Cache and Grande Prairie.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-179-6

construction of this railroad through very challenging terrain. The trip from Edmonton to Jasper now took just 9 or 10 hours. As Bridgland and Douglas commented in their guide to Jasper National Park, “What a contrast to that pioneer journey, in 1810, of David Thompson struggling dauntlessly along with a despondent following, in the depth of winter, 6 or 8 miles [10 or 13 km] a day, reducing the loads of his dogs, and abandoning even his tent that he might make any progress at all.”⁸

* Named after William Pitman Hinton, President and General Manager of the GTP Coast Steamship Company (Karmitsanis 1991).

The Canadian Northern Railway line ran between the GTP line and the river past Hinton in 1913. It also crossed Prairie Creek below the GTP, but then headed north across the Athabasca River on a new steel bridge to what they believed would become the gateway to Jasper National Park, but which later became a major bridge on Highway 40 north. The first station east of what was in 1915 the boundary of Jasper National Park, west of Hinton, was named Entrance.⁹ The Canadian Northern Railway stayed on the north and west sides of the Athabasca, along which railway operators Mackenzie and Mann established the coal mine at Brûlé in 1912.¹⁰



The arrival of the GTP remarkably increased the mobility of people. Railway workers at “Summit City” on Yellowhead Pass, ca. 1914.

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES D-00501



Lifting steel from the abandoned railway line near Red Pass intended for the First World War effort, ca. 1917.

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Unfortunately, there was not enough traffic to support two railways, and both the GTP and Canadian Northern became insolvent. Adding to the GTP difficulties was the loss of president Charles W. Hays who went down with the *Titanic* in 1912. The Canadian government intervened; the lines were consolidated in 1917. Some of the duplicate track was torn up to be sent to Europe (but never was) for the war effort during the 1914–18 war. The railways were amalgamated as the Canadian National Railway System in 1922.*

* We express appreciation to railway historian Les Kozma who provided several corrections to the

original railway text.



Jack Otto packing his boat sections in to Maligne Lake over Shovel Pass in 1911 to be used by Mary Schäffer to survey the lake.

MARY SCHÄFFER COLLECTION, WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, V527 PS-131

Jasper Park and Early Tourist Activities

Creation of Jasper Forest Park in 1907 stimulated interest in tourism even before the railway arrived. Many people journeyed north from the Banff-Lake Louise area over Wilcox Pass to get around Sunwapta Canyon. Among these travellers was Mary Schäffer who had rediscovered Maligne Lake in 1908. In 1911 she returned to Jasper and Maligne Lake, this time from Edmonton by train. It was a rough slow ride along the recently laid rails. At Edson she persuaded the crew to let her ride in the caboose instead of the crowded colonist car. At the end of the line—then at Hinton—Jasper guide and outfitter Jack Otto met her and took her by wagon to the nearby construction camp at Prairie Creek. Her guides on this trip, Sid Unwin and Jack Otto, had set up their own camp, and the party travelled to Jasper the next day on horseback. Mary remarked on the numbers of people travelling both east and west, pioneers packing their own outfits. The sight of their struggle filled Mary with pity and admiration, particularly for the women whom she considered the true pioneers, the true sufferers.¹⁴ They were invited to dinner at the Jasper Park Collieries at Pochahontas and then crossed the Athabasca River on the new ferry at Disaster Point. On this trip to Maligne Lake, Jack Otto packed his two-part collapsible boat to help with the survey work that Mary had agreed to undertake. Mary and her party christened it the HMS *Chaba II*. They ran into deep snow on the pass beyond Signal Mountain. Having left their snow shovel behind, Jack carved two on the spot to get them through, giving the name to Shovel Pass.



Ferry crossing just north of Disaster Point in 1911. The new Grand Trunk Pacific railway grade runs along the river's edge. Looking east, the ferry is crossing towards the photographer. Highway 16 now runs on the old grade.

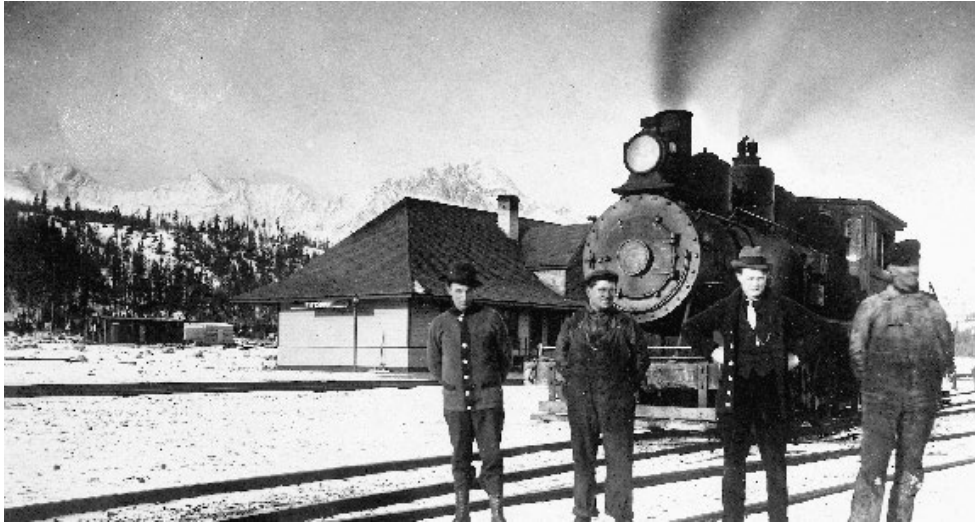
MARY SCHÄFFER COLLECTION. WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, BANFF, NA-71-1163

During the ride from Prairie Creek along the wagon road past Swift's Ranch Mary noticed a woman with her young daughter stoically riding on top of the load in one of the west-bound wagons, which caused her to reflect on "all the other women who had given up life and home to follow the fortunes of their husbands into a new land where hardship stalked at their heels, disappointment, death perhaps. But so it has been since our ancestors first touched this continent, and it has been the women who were the true pioneers, the women who suffered. One of the vastest continents of the world has been meekly and silently conquered by women and, even at this late date, few men know it." ¹²

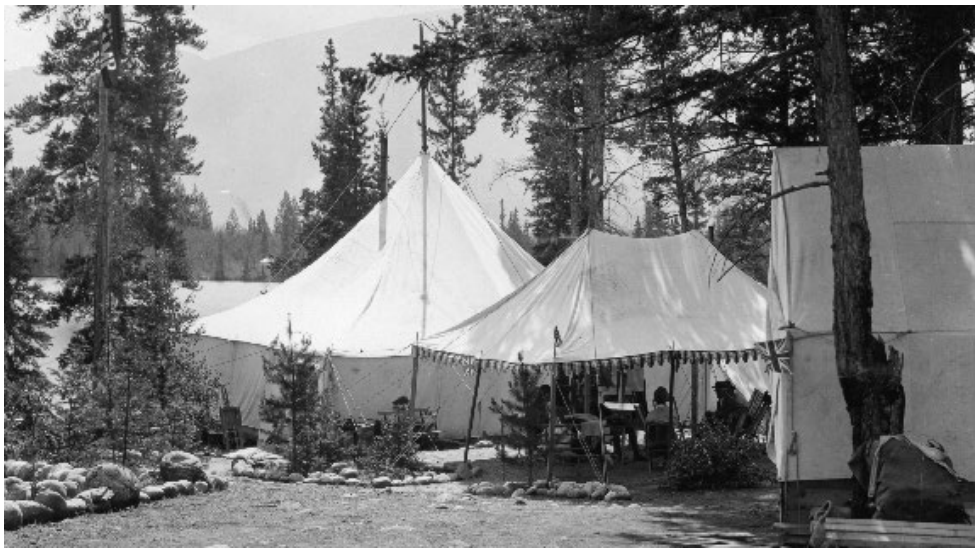
In *No Ordinary Woman*, author J.S. Beck noted that "saddened as Mary Schäffer was by the advances of civilization into her summer playground, the new developments strengthened her awareness of how precious her previous adventures had been—and how much she had learned from them." ¹³ The railroad, tourism developments, and people had arrived.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway opened to passengers in April 1912, creating a need for visitor accommodation. The townsite of Jasper was surveyed in 1913 to serve the tourist traffic with enticing rustic-looking shops and hotels that would remind the visitor of a quaint European-style mountain village.¹⁴ The GTP acquired the Jasper Raven Totem Pole in 1919, carved by

Haida from Queen Charlotte Islands. It was erected on the station grounds in 1920.¹⁵ Although not an artifact of the park area, it is a tribute to the Coast tribes that either visited or traded into the Jasper area in earlier times



The GTP Fitzhugh Station ca. 1912. The station was officially renamed Jasper in 1913.
JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 10-28



Tent City on Lac Beauvert, ca. 1915. In 1922 it was purchased and became the site of Jasper Park Lodge. Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives.
JYMA PA 21-4

According to historian W.F. Lothian, the Grand Trunk Pacific had grandiose plans for hotel developments—one around Jasper townsite and another at the mouth of the Fiddle River, just 13 kilometres from Miette Hot Springs.¹⁶ A site for the latter was surveyed in 1909, but financial difficulties intervened. The plans were abandoned when the rail lines were consolidated

in 1917 and the line across the Fiddle River was abandoned. Lewis Swift and GTP president Hays prepared a subdivision plan for Swift's property to be called *Swiftholm*. It comprised about 500 residential building lots to be sold at prices ranging from \$150 to \$500 per lot (about \$2,700 to \$8,900 in 2004 dollars). However, the loss of Hays on the *Titanic* and the ensuing financial problems ended that proposal, too.

Hotel Development and Improved Access Spark a Tourist Boom

The first tourist accommodation near Jasper was provided in 1915 by Robert Kenneth, president of Edmonton Tent and Mattress Company. Kenneth leased a small area on Lac Beauvert for a tent camp. "Tent City," an instant success, was taken over by Jack Brewster in 1919, and by 1922 the new Canadian National Railway Company had acquired Brewster's lease and built a number of cabins at what became Jasper Park Lodge. The road from the Athabasca River bridge to the Jasper Park Lodge was paved in 1927 with oil sands shipped by train from Waterways (Fort McMurray) in an early attempt to find practical uses for the sands.¹⁷ By 1929, the main lodge and cabins could accommodate over 600 guests at the Jasper Park Lodge.¹⁸ It was a magnificent log structure, but it caught fire and burned in 1952. It was quickly replaced by much of the present structure.

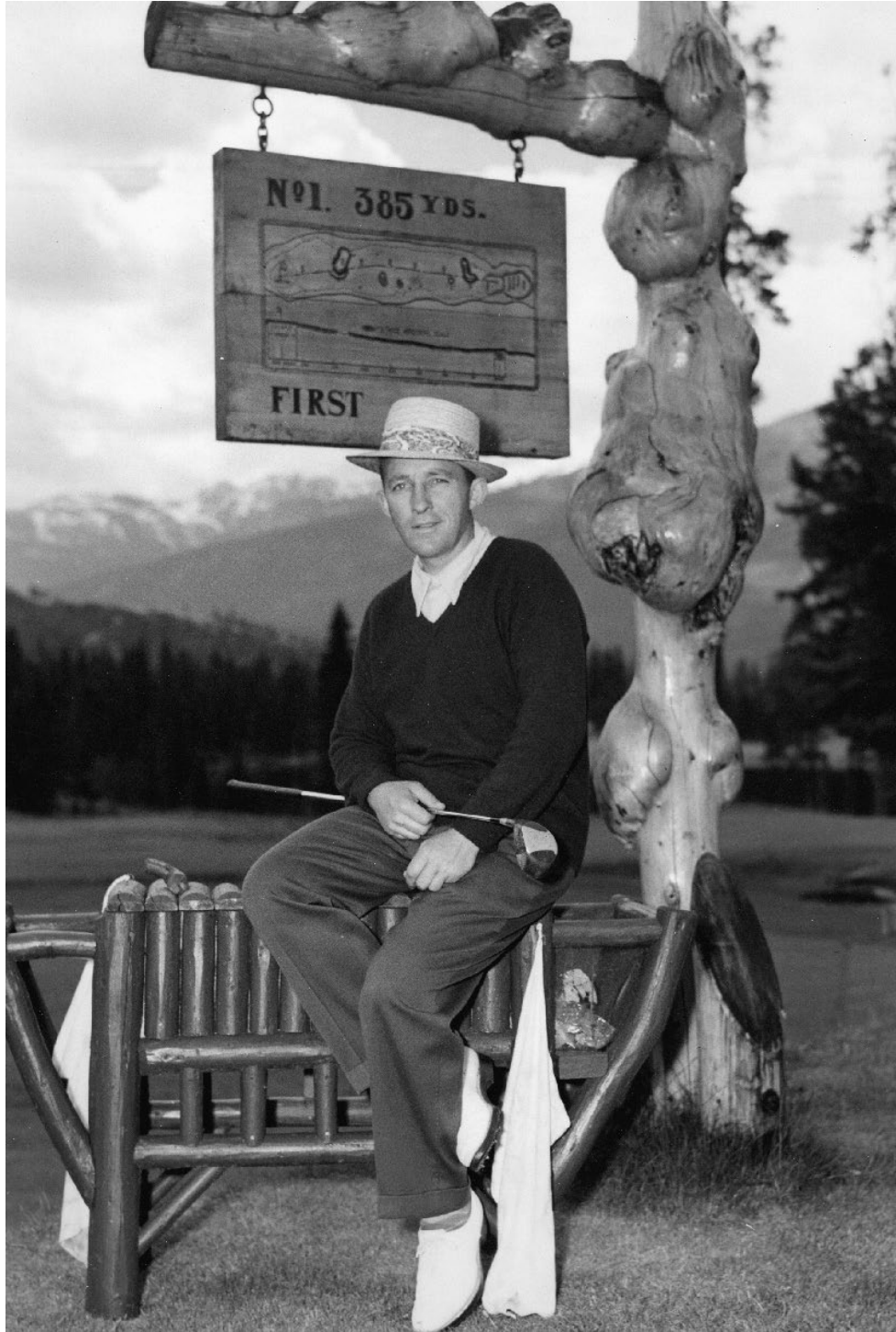
Early hotel development in Jasper began in 1921. Bungalow camp construction both in Jasper and along park highways later provided additional accommodation for park visitors. The first major campground, located at Cottonwood Creek east of Jasper, opened in 1927. Additional campsites were made available at Patricia Lake in 1933 and at Miette Hot Springs in 1934. The tremendous increase in vehicle traffic in the 1950s led to development of a chain of campgrounds along the main park highways, many of which have since been closed.

Jasper Park Lodge became synonymous with Jasper National Park in its scenic setting on Lac Beauvert. It was designed to attract the wealthy. The golf course was started by the park in 1922, but when the CNR took it over, they

renovated and greatly expanded it. In 1924 they brought in 40 railway carloads of topsoil from a farm they purchased near Stony Plain for the purpose of supplying soil. The new course was opened on 17 July 1925 by the Earl of Bemersyde, Sir Douglas Haig.* Other famous visitors included crooner Bing Crosby, who won the Totem Pole Trophy in 1947, author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who visited Tent City in 1914 and the Lodge in 1923, and their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who stayed at the Outlook Cabin during their cross-Canada tour in 1939.¹⁹

* A famous First World War British general, after whom a prominent glacier in Kananaskis is named.

The Country Beyond, filmed in 1927, was the first of many motion pictures to use the allure of Jasper as a backdrop. A notable one was *The Emperor Waltz* in 1946 starring Bing Crosby and Joan Fontaine. It was during that time that Crosby discovered the Jasper golf course, to which he was a frequent visitor. Perhaps one of the most prominent movies filmed here was *River of No Return* (1954) featuring Marilyn Monroe and Robert Mitchum. The theme was fittingly based on travel on a difficult river.²⁰ The raft scene was filmed on the Snake Indian River as it curved around a cliff on its way out of the mountains into the Athabasca valley. This was close to the site of the massacre of the Snake Indians about 115 years earlier. Charlie Matheson, former park warden, provided horses for the movie.



Bing Crosby at Jasper Park Lodge, 1946. Taken during filming of the movie Emperor Waltz also starring Joan Fontaine. Crosby frequently returned to Jasper to golf.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 99.45.136.5

As historian W.F. Lothian has remarked, during the early period of its development, Jasper Park depended entirely on its railway for transportation

from the outside world.²¹ Initial development outside the townsite was limited to construction of trails and secondary roads that provided access to Pyramid Lake and Maligne Canyon by carriage from Jasper and to Miette Hot Springs by saddle horse from the railway at Pocahontas. The construction of motor roads accelerated after the end of the First World War and scenic roads to Maligne Canyon, Mount Edith Cavell and a few of the nearby lakes were in use by 1924. A road to the eastern boundary of the park, later part of the highway from Edmonton, was begun in 1923. It was built on sections of abandoned railway grade and was completed in 1928. However, motorists had to wait until 1931 for the province to complete its section before travel to and from Edmonton was possible. Improvements to the main park highways took place between 1948 and 1954. Highway 16 east of Jasper Park was reconstructed in 1955, and extensive relocation within the park followed in the early 1960s.

The operation of horse liveryes was a major business in early years and saddle ponies are still a familiar sight on park trails. Sport fishing, largely for trout species, attracted thousands of anglers and the opening of the Medicine-Maligne Lake system by road and trail in 1932 attracted widespread interest. Northern pike were native to Talbot Lake and Rocky Mountain whitefish could be caught in the main rivers. Eastern brook trout fingerlings were introduced to Maligne Lake in 1928, the start of an extensive stocking program in the park that later drew on stock produced at the park's fish hatchery constructed on the lower Maligne River. The Maligne River Anglers Club was later formed, membership open only to anglers who caught a brook trout weighing a pound (454 grams) or more in the river between Medicine and Maligne lakes, using only a light fly rod and an artificial fly with single hook.

Ewan Moberly, son of Chief Factor Henry Moberly, is credited with discovering the Miette Hot Springs during a sheep hunt at the head of Fiddle Creek in the early 1900s. When the railway arrived in Pocahontas and the coal mine opened, miners cut logs to build a dam on the creek to hold the warm waters. The first pool was built in 1919.²² The Hot Springs were made more attractive to visitors in 1937 by the construction of a bathing establishment in the narrow valley of Sulphur Creek, tributary of Fiddle River. A motor road

from Jasper to the springs was built in 1933, and was widened and improved in 1960,²³ and improved again in the 1970s.

Year-round public use of the park was encouraged by the development of winter sports. Skating and curling started in the early 1920s in the town. Skiing extended winter sports outside of town and into the backcountry, previously the winter domain of wardens with snowshoes and dog sleds. Although a few wardens and residents used cross country skis during the 1920s, skiing opportunities in Jasper were highlighted in January 1930 when Swiss-born Jasper photographer Joe Weiss and a group of local skiers made the first ski trip to Banff. Their party, including park warden Frank Burstrom along with Vern and Doug Jeffrey and Peter Withers, left on the first of January. Travelling over the Sunwapta Pass route, they arrived in Banff on the 15th.²⁴



Forestry pack train leaving Jasper in 1911. Because it was initially created as Jasper Forest Park, forest surveys were first conducted by Dominion Forestry Branch staff.

C.H. MORSE. DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION



Park Warden Charlie Matheson with pack dog at his Brazeau Lake Warden Cabin in the 1920s

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 54/13

Then, in early April 1931 Joe Weiss and Erling Strom in a group of seven skiers from Banff, the United States, and Norway launched an expedition to the Columbia Icefields. As told by Erling Strom,²⁵ a Norwegian who developed the lodge at Mount Assiniboine in Banff, they arranged to stay with warden Charlie Matheson at his cabin on Brazeau Lake, about 96 kilometres south of Jasper. That would enable them to travel with lighter packs. Their second stop on the way in was at the warden cabin on Maligne Lake, almost 50 kilometres south of Jasper. On arrival, one of the party broke a ski. Joe Weiss thought of Frank Burstrom, his Norwegian friend and park warden in Jasper. They were able to contact him using the single-wire tree-line warden phone in the cabin. Reluctantly, and only after much persuasion, Frank agreed to ski out after finishing work at 5 p.m. and trade skis so the party could continue. He arrived about 11 p.m. on that moonlit night and after a quick meal he excused himself, saying he had to get right back. After taping the broken ski, he went home, having travelled an impressive 100 kilometres during the night. They later learned that he was getting married at 10 o'clock the next morning! Strom's party spent two weeks on the trail, visiting Camp Parker on the way to Snow Dome on the Icefields, travelling 400 kilometres on skis. On their return, Joe



Joe Weiss about 1928. A Swiss-born skier and photographer, Weiss led a local group on a 15-day ski trek to Banff — a first.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 23-9

Weiss explored the Tonquin Valley for a week at the suggestion of the park superintendent who thought it might be suitable for a backcountry ski lodge. The Lovat Scouts set up a training base in the Tonquin in 1944. The area has since become a popular backcountry destination.

Downhill runs were cleared on Whistler's Mountain in 1937. The initial development was undertaken by a local club that installed lifts and built a shelter. Marmot Basin was named by Joe Weiss who advocated its development for years. It lay just 10 kilometres southwest of Jasper and was initially accessed by skiers who trekked in using climbing skins to take advantage of the deep powder snow in the open alpine setting. The first trail to the basin was cut in the 1930s. In 1961 Toby Rainer took over a snowcat operation, carrying skiers to Marmot Basin and installing a 700-metre rope tow. Active development of the area began in 1964.²⁶

Resources in the Park

Not only was tourism promoted in the early parks, but also the extraction of natural resources. As Michael Den Otter explained in his study of adaptive management in the region the federal government viewed parks as possible sources of economic gain as long as it did not interfere with the visitor experience.²⁸ The mountains were rich in coal, limestone, and timber. The first mines to extract coal were established in the east end of the park at Pocahontas in 1910 in advance of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway line and at Brûlé in 1912 on the Canadian Northern railway line. Limestone quarrying 6 kilometres east of Fitzhugh began in 1911, logging in the Whirlpool Valley for railway ties began in 1919. There was a strong feeling among park employees that these activities were acceptable and, with the logging, even potentially useful for wildlife by opening up forest-enclosed habitats. Some dissenters felt that parks should be about preservation and not economic gain, “but public

pressure and therefore political considerations had made it impossible for these idealists to put their ideas into practice.”²⁹ It appears that “these idealists” did not represent the views of the majority of people at the time.

Alberta–British Columbia Boundary Survey

During this time, the Alberta-British Columbia boundary survey along the Continental Divide was making its way north, with work in the Jasper area in 1917 to 1920.

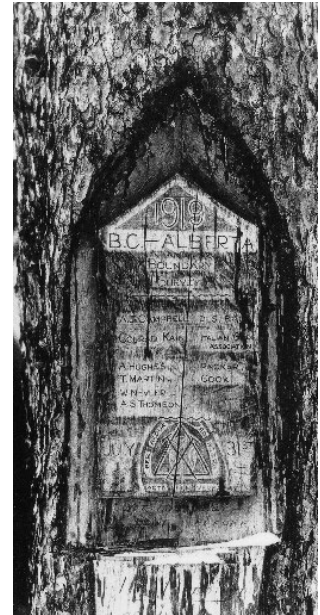
Surveyors included Morrison P. Bridgland who surveyed further south after his ground-breaking topographic survey using panoramic photography in 1915. In the Jasper area, Arthur O. Wheeler was the surveyor in charge. The survey crews had to be moved and supplied by

packhorses, and the going was as difficult for them as it always had been, with snowfalls and rain, high water in the rivers, boggy ground, steep slopes, brush and windfall.

For example, Alan S. (Spike) Thomson, then assistant to Wheeler, kept a diary. His entry for 8 August 1917 says

that they moved camp over the high Wilcox Pass down Tangle Creek to Sunwapta River flats. Up at 5:30, they reached their campground in late evening “after a strenuous day.” He summarized their circuitous route trying to find their way down, noting they travelled 15¾ miles [25 km]: “Not bad for a difficult day.”³⁰

It was Spike Thomson who on 31 July 1919 carved the distinctive blaze at Camp Parker, located south of Nigel Pass near the head of the North Saskatchewan River. In his diary, Thomson noted: “I busied myself on a tree tablet near the site of the cook tent—names of the party—with decoration to the tablet.”³¹



Surveyor Spike Thomson's Alberta-B.C. 1919 boundary survey blaze at Camp Parker.
TOM PETERSON

Automobiles Arrive in Jasper

The first car to make it from Edmonton to Jasper was driven by Charles Neimeyer, sponsored by the Edmonton Automobile and Good Roads Association. Neimeyer and his mechanic Frank Silverthorne left Edmonton 17 June 1922 and reached Entwistle at the end of the first day. The rest of the trip took longer—pushing through mud holes and muskegs and bouncing along abandoned railway grades. They carried planks to help cross burned-out trestles and bridges, and drove backwards and pushed on the steep banks. They got to Jasper in six days, arriving 23 June. Despite the difficulties, the feasibility of road access had been demonstrated, and further developments served to make travelling easier and to decrease travelling times.³²

Neimeyer and Silverthorne then set out to cross the Yellowhead Pass, heading for Kamloops and Victoria. Before they reached Kamloops on 30 June, a competing team, George Gordon and J. Sims, caught up to them. Gordon and Sims had left Edmonton about a week later, but were able to take advantage of the “improvements” the first team had made. They then raced to Victoria, arriving together on 4 July. They were all awarded gold medals.³³

The spirit of these earlier times is reflected in a poem by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the famous detective character, Sherlock Holmes, and one of the most popular authors of his time. In the preface to the poem, Doyle noted that when he visited Jasper Park in 1914, its rugged beauty and grandeur inspired him to write *The Athabaska Trail*, a poem that has found its niche as a permanent contribution to English literature. The packer to whom he referred was his guide, Closson Otto. During this visit he also laid the cornerstone for the Union Church in Jasper. “The mighty voice of Canada,” as Sir Arthur wrote, had a distinct appeal to him, and he and Lady Doyle visited Jasper Park again in 1923.

The Athabaska Trail

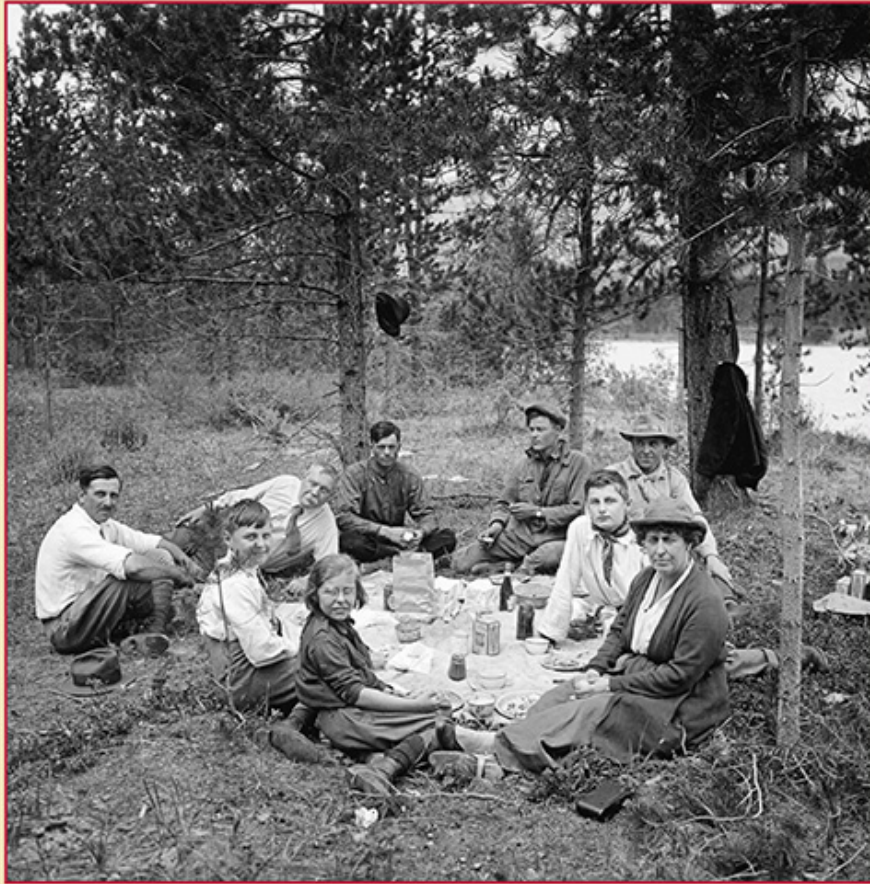
By Arthur Conan Doyle, Jasper Park, Alta., June 18, 1914

My life is gliding downwards; it speeds swifter to the day

When it shoots the last dark canyon to the plains of Far-away.

But while its stream is running through the years that are to be,
The mighty voice of Canada will ever call to me.
I shall hear the roar of rivers where the rapids foam and tear,
I shall smell the virgin upland with its balsam-laden air,
And shall dream that I am riding down the winding woody vale,
With the packer and the packhorse on the Athabaska Trail.
I have passed the warden cities at the Eastern water-gate,
Where the hero and the martyr laid the corner-stone of State,
The habitant, Coureur-de-bois and hardy voyageur.
Where lives a breed more at need to venture or endure?
I have seen the gorge at Erie where the roaring waters run,
I have crossed the Inland Ocean, lying golden in the sun.
But the last and best and sweetest is the ride by hill and dale,
With the packer and the packhorse on the Athabaska Trail.
I'll dream again of fields of grain that stretch from sky to sky,
And the little prairie hamlets where the cars go roaring by,
Wooden hamlets as I saw them - noble cities still to be
To girdle stately Canada with gems from sea to sea.
Mother of a mighty manhood, Land of glamour and of hope,
From the eastward sea-swept Islands to the sunny Western slope,
Ever more my heart is with you, ever more till life shall fail,
I'll be out with pack and packer on the Athabaska Trail.

COPY COURTESY OF VERN TRUXLER WHO RECEIVED A HAND-WRITTEN COPY FROM MRS. CUNNINGHAM, WIDOW OF CLOSSON OTTO. ALSO PRINTED IN BRIDGLAND AND DOUGLAS, 1917.²⁷



*Picnic in Jasper with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of Sherlock Holmes, 1923, taken near Otto's Cache with the Athabasca River in background. The group included, (l-r back row) unidentified, Arthur Conan Doyle (reclining), Ray Scott and Bob LeStrange packers, Closson Otto (with hat). (front row) Doyle children Adrian, Jean and Denis, and Lady Jean Conan Doyle. Arthur Conan Doyle wrote *The Athabaska Trail* in 1914 with guide Closson Otto in mind.*

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 33-31

It took many years to raise money and to convince the government to improve the road through the Yellowhead Pass. The provincial highway to Evansburg was mostly without gravel in 1923, and impassable in wet weather. The next 112-kilometre stretch to Edson was practically nonexistent, but the old railway grade to the west was a little better. It took a while before much traffic followed those first cars. In 1926, the first year records were kept at the eastern park gate, six cars were logged, 10 in 1927, 93 in 1930, and 188 in 1932.³⁴ By 1931 there was a passable road to the east gate. Inside the park, the road was gravelled to Jasper so the last 50 kilometres to the town were much better.

Further improvement took much longer. The first all-weather Highway 16 West was not completed until 1951, and there was no paved highway west of Jasper until the Yellowhead Highway was opened in 1970 (15 August official opening).³⁵



First car west through Jasper to Vancouver in 1922, driven by Charles Neimeyer with Frank Silverthorne. They travelled on abandoned railway grades.

GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES NA-2336-7

The other significant road in the region is the Icefields Parkway, running between Jasper and Lake Louise, which opened as a narrow track in 1939. Construction on the road was started during the 1930s under an unemployment relief program. This was an extremely arduous undertaking as the road travelled through steep, rugged, high-elevation terrain. Roadwork began in 1930, but it took until 1938 to reach the Athabasca Glacier and another two years to connect to the road being built from Lake Louise. The two road crews met in 1940 where Nigel Creek emerges from the canyon below the falls to join the North Saskatchewan River. Life in the work camps was very rough and parks staff apparently had no sympathy for the workmen. Workers were forced to stay onsite and were not allowed trips into town without written permission from their supervisors. With the new roads in the 1950s came a proliferation of hotels and services that provided the less-hardy traveller an opportunity to visit the park. Tourism increased dramatically through this period with visitation rates typically rising more than 10 per cent per year.³⁶

Secret at Patricia Lake

The Jasper area was still sufficiently remote in 1943 that Patricia Lake was chosen as the site for a unique trial during the Second World War. At that time, Allied shipping losses to U-boats in the mid-Atlantic beyond the range of aircraft support were very high. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was convinced that it was possible to construct a floating landing strip of ice, kept frozen with cooling pipes, that could be located in the danger zone. Such a mass would be resistant to enemy attacks, low cost and easy to repair. A trial, called Project Habbakuk, was set up at Patricia Lake to test the idea. A structure 18.3 by 9.1 by 5.9 metres was built with a wood frame and filled with ice from the lake. Cooling pipes kept it frozen through the summer of 1943. However, other tests proved that a hull 10.7-metres thick would be needed to withstand attack, and the projected cost for a full-scale ship was over \$100 million (\$1.2 billion in 2004 dollars). By this time aircraft with longer flying ranges were operational, and the project was shelved. The cooling mechanism in the trial was salvaged and the hull was sunk. It has since been declared an underwater monument and is visited by divers.³⁷



Project Habbakuk on Patricia Lake, 1943, a secret project to build a prototype “unsinkable” ship of ice for the Battle of the Atlantic.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 84.32.148

Lovat Scouts

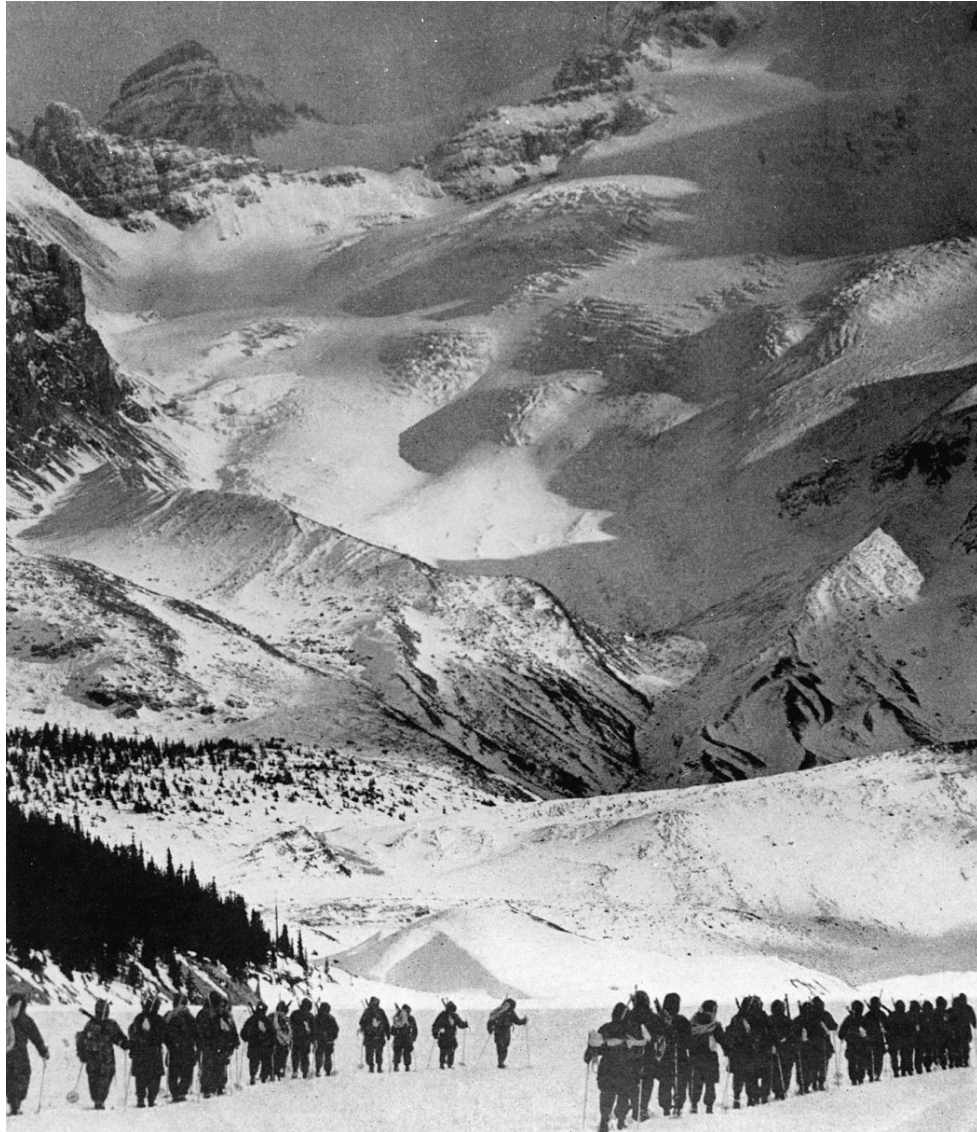
The Lovat Scouts were another wartime group based in Jasper during the winter of 1943–44, this time to take advantage of the difficult terrain. A select group of 600 Scots Highlanders were sent for winter training in travel on skis, camping and mountain climbing. They were joined by officers and instructors from the Canadian Army. The training was in anticipation that these skills would be needed for the invasion of Europe through Norway or other cold-weather countries.³⁸ An advance party arrived in December 1943 and the main body arrived in January 1944 for their three-month program. The Scouts were put up in the old Jasper Park Lodge and within the community. Their training culminated with a trek to the summit of the Columbia Icefields. One group was caught in an avalanche on Nigel Peak; one man died and about 50 were injured. The Scouts left in March and took part in heavy fighting through the

mountains of Italy. One of the men, believed to be Sidney Scroggie, wrote a poem ending with the lines:

The anger of the gunfire, will vanish in our mind,
The terror and the anguish be forever left behind.
But the lovely Tonquin Valley shall never, never fade,
Nor the sun that shone in Snowbowl on the track our passing made.
And we will ever aye remember how only yesterday
It was wartime in the Rockies, the Rockies far away.³⁹

Internment Camps

The remoteness of Jasper during the First World War made it a logical location for an internment camp. In early 1916 a new 14-building camp was established on a parcel of low-lying ground between the railway station and the Athabasca River. Two hundred Austrians were turned over to industry as labourers by August that same year.⁴⁰ Internment camps were also established in Jasper in 1941 for conscientious objectors who worked on the road from Maligne Canyon to Medicine Lake, and in 1942 for Japanese internees who helped to build the road to Blue River. The location of these camps also reflected the still-remote nature of Jasper at that time.⁴¹



Lovat Scouts training in Jasper National Park, ca. 1944. This regiment was being trained for high mountain warfare in Europe.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 25-31



Internment camp in Jasper National Park during World War I, located near Old Fort Point, ca. 1916.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 18-58

Guiding, Outfitting and Hunting

Many guides and outfitters in the region offered trail rides and fishing and hunting in season. Most of the forest was covered by trapping areas, and residents also fished and hunted. These businesses gained momentum when the railway arrived. Visitors were keen to visit the backcountry for a variety of reasons: viewing the points of interest, photography, mountain climbing, fishing and, outside the park, hunting. Several ranches were homesteaded in the Athabasca Valley besides Swift's in Jasper. These ranches included Jack Gregg's Bar 88 on Prairie Creek in 1894; former Dominion forester Stan Clark's Entrance Ranch in 1919, later purchased by Harry Davison in 1928 and his Athabasca Ranch in 1940, also purchased by Davison; Charlie and Mona Matheson's Circle M in 1940; and Pat and Pearl Brewster's P-B Ranch, now the Black Cat Ranch owned by the Haywards. Harry King's ranch and John James' ranch, later owned respectively by Bob Doran and Vic Webb, were both bought by Bob Ruben, son of Frank Ruben and partner in the Athabasca Valley Development Corporation for the Hinton Valley townsite. The Milner

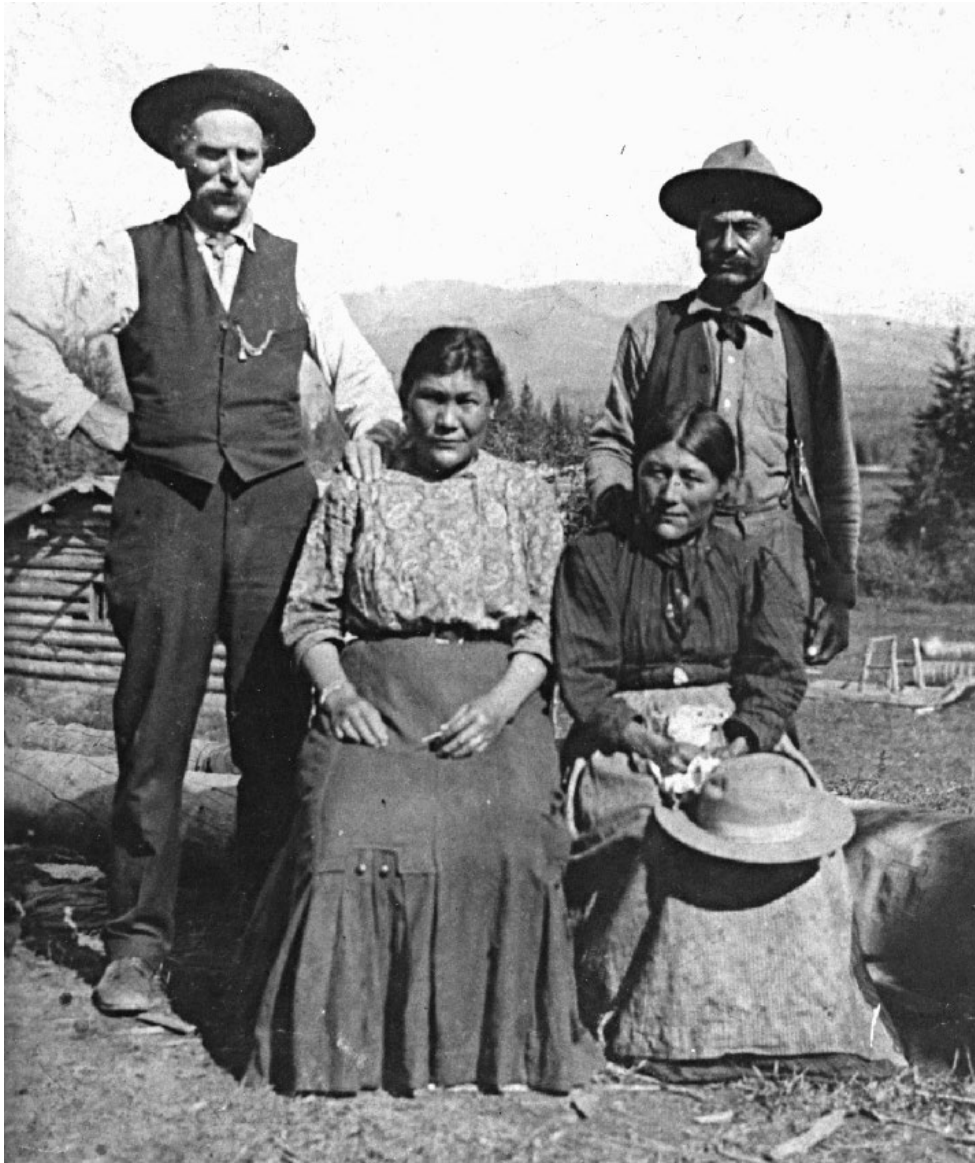
ranch to the east was passed on to Mary Thorson who married Abe Reimer; after Mary and Abe died, part of their land was willed to the Town of Hinton and was later developed as a sports area, Mary Reimer Park. John Hart and Chauncey Hunt also settled nearby.

Most of these families also guided and outfitted hunters and tourists. These included Fred and Jack Brewster, Stan Clark, Red Creighton, Louis Delorme, Tom and Judd Groat, the Hargreaves brothers Frank, Dick, George and Ray, Jack Hargreaves, Ludwig Hoff, Arthur Hughes, Henry Joachim, Mike Kelley, Stan Kitchen, Carl Luger, Frank, Dave and Ed Moberly, Rufe Neighbour, Albert Norris the “Mayor of Muskeg,” Curly Philips, Felix Plante, Tom Vinson, and Alex Wylie.⁴²

The Otto brothers of Jasper—Jack, Closson and Bruce—were widely known and respected as guides and outfitters. Among their clients were authors Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and James Oliver Curwood, Mary Schäffer, and surveyor A.O. Wheeler who named Otto Pass and Otto Creek in Yoho National Park in recognition of the brothers’ services. The Ottos were also leading businessmen, running a tie logging camp, building a store and dance hall, constructing the first garage in Jasper and operating a fleet of touring cars.⁴³

In 1927 the Harragin sisters, Agnes and Mona, came from the Okanagan to work at Fred Brewster’s tent camp on Medicine Lake.⁴⁴ Situated at the end of the narrow road, it became a lunch stop and transfer point for tourists going to Maligne Lake by horse. The Harragin sisters showed their proficiency in working with horses and learned to pack and throw the diamond hitch. After some controversy about hiring women—but with encouragement from Mrs. Brewster—Agnes and Mona became the first women to be licensed guides in Jasper National Park and wore their brass badges with pride. They worked independently, sharing a string of 35 horses, doing their own wrangling, packing and guiding. They looked after the Jasper-Maligne Lake “circle trip” that took visitors on horseback from the end of the road at Medicine Lake to Maligne Lake for a boat ride, then up to camp at the Shovel Pass on top of the Maligne Range. The next day visitors rode north along the ridgeline and back to Jasper.⁴⁵ Agnes and Mona were popular and effective guides. They would

point out Samson Peak at Maligne Lake, saying that the next peak to the south was named after his wife. Invariably guests replied “Delilah?”, and the guides could explain that the peaks were named for Samson Beaver and his wife Leah, who had befriended Mary Schäffer and sketched a map of the location of the lake.



Jack and Mary Gregg (left) with John and Marie Moberly (parents of Edward Moberly), ca. 1910, taken at Gregg's Bar-88 Ranch west of John Moberly's place.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LENA OUELLET



Guides at Medicine Lake ready to leave on a pack trip through Brazeau, Southesk, Mountain Park and back to Jasper along the Rocky River in September 1928. From left: Charlie Matheson, Gwen Pickford, Charles A. Golden, Agnes Harragin and Mona Harragin. Agnes and Mona were the first women certified as guides in Jasper National Park.
JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 990.01.12

In 1930 Agnes Harragin married Mark Truxler who had been working out of Jasper since 1923 on trail work, also guiding and packing for Fred Brewster.⁴⁶ Agnes and Mark lived in Jasper, moving to Entrance and Hinton when Mark ran the East Gate of Jasper National Park. They had two children—Vernon became a timber cruiser for North Western Pulp & Power in 1955, and Jacqueline married Bill Hanington, an Alberta forest ranger at Muskeg and Cabin Creek. In January 1957, Bill became a cruiser for North Western Pulp & Power. Mona married Charlie Matheson, also a park warden, and moved to their Circle M Ranch on Drystone Creek near the east gate of Jasper Park. During her many explorations, Agnes found a magnificent Douglas-fir at

the base of a high ridge on the Fiddle River. At 99 centimetres diameter and almost 35 metres high, it is the largest Douglas-fir at the northeastern limits of its range in North America.

Hunting was a major attraction, especially for mountain sheep, mountain goat and caribou. Although hunting was not permitted in Jasper National Park, local guides and outfitters used Jasper as a base from which clients were taken north, south or east for three-month hunting trips. Among notable clients were Bing Crosby and King Carol of Romania. Guests were well looked after, but fastidiousness was evidently not an acceptable trait. Jack Glen, forest ranger at Entrance from 1920–1945, recalled one incident involving a local guide:

We found the camp about a mile [1.6 km] away, with a party of three, an elderly hunter from the U.S., horse wrangler and a combined guide and cook. They made us very welcome and we were invited to stay for supper. It made a pleasant break for us as it was very comfortable in the tent with a roaring fire in the stove. They had bagged a moose so far and the hunter said if they got a fair sized ram he would be satisfied. Shortly after supper our host excused himself saying that he was a bit weary and was getting too old to climb mountains. After he had gone to his tent the guide told us he was rather eccentric about his food and after each meal washed and scalded his own dishes. His plate was a double-decker affair, the idea of this being that the food could be kept hot by filling the lower compartment with hot water. Now Charlie (the guide) took quite a fancy to this plate and ate his breakfast off it unknown to the old man who did not get up very early. “Of course I washed it,” he said, “but it is not always scalded and I don’t use a fresh tea towel every time either.”⁴⁷

Trapping was also a widespread activity, especially during the hard times of the 1930s and when fur prices were high in the 1940s, many of the guides and outfitters trapped in season. Billy Magee arrived in the country around 1932. He later helped transport some elk to the Switzer Provincial Park area and also became the predator control officer. “Montana Pete” (Jedidiah

Leatham), from Utah, settled in the Brûlé area. Another full-time resident was Roy Mockler whose cabin was on the Berland River. His cabin was easily located by the redolent odours of ripening baits and, with a twinkle in his eye, he would serve guests “weasel piss,” which may not have been a euphemism.

In the mid-1940s, beaver populations were low and fur prices high, so beaver ranching looked like a promising idea to returning veterans. Two such ventures were started in 1946 within a few miles of each other along Jarvis Creek in what is now part of Switzer Provincial Park. Stan and Frances Knapp took a lease east of Graveyard Lake with partner Trevor Harwood. They built concrete pens for the beaver and a cabin for themselves and their two-year-old son Thor. Stan was born in England and at age 18 hired on with the Hudson’s Bay Company. He worked as a trader and trapper at Frobisher Bay for eight years. He earned enough to support his mother in England and to enable him to attend the Ontario College of Art where he studied and worked with Arthur Lismer and A.Y. Jackson of Group of Seven fame. He joined the Air Force in 1939, training to be a navigator, and in 1944 starting the first Search and Rescue Schools out of Edmonton and Jasper. Returning to the Entrance-Jarvis Lake area to start ranching beaver was a natural move.

Army veteran Allan Innes-Taylor from Edson had the same idea and set up his pens a few miles upstream from the Knapps. His pens were also concrete and the remains are still visible. He was encouraged in this project by Francis (Lt.-Col. ret.) Hanington, an Army friend who had also been stationed in Edson. The idea was to breed beaver in captivity in the style of the many successful fox and mink farms in northern Alberta at the time. The beaver were to be provided by the Alberta government’s Fish & Wildlife Branch as “matched pairs,” or beaver that had already paired since they usually mate for life. Unfortunately, many of the beaver seemed not to have been matched. As a result of that and the confined conditions in which they were kept, breeding success was very low. As well, providing suitable aspen bark feed was an overwhelming task, and the projects were abandoned by 1949.

Colonel Hanington, a civil engineer, became local magistrate in the Hinton and District Court. He and his wife Yvonne lived at Entrance until 1969 when they moved to Edmonton. Of their four children, Jacqueline

married Harry Collinge, then resident manager of North Western Pulp & Power, and Bill became a ranger with the Alberta Forest Service, marrying Jacqueline Truxler before joining the Forestry Department at North Western Pulp & Power in 1957. Thor Knapp became a forester and head of the Forest Technology program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

Railway Ties and Lumber

Edwin Thomeus, the Swedish homesteader, commented on the remarkable changes brought about by the arrival of the railway in Magnolia in 1908:

Last winter there was no town there, only a poor settler had his cabin, but the Grand Trunk decided to build its railway through there and have bought half of his land and the neighbouring quarter section and sell lots in what will be my nearest town. I have often wandered through the area with my gun, and even slept over night under a spruce tree but I never dreamed that there would be a town built there right in the wilderness. I was there a week ago with a few bags of potatoes and found a large sawmill in full operation, four large stores, a hotel run by a Norwegian, a barbershop, a pool hall, and a number of houses under construction and fifty to sixty tents. The demand for boards was so great that men stood in line at the sawmill and picked up the boards as soon as they were sawn.⁴⁸

This instant demand for railway ties, timbers and building materials generated by railway construction resulted in forest products enterprises all along the line.

The railways usually contracted freighting, construction and ties. The major contractor was Foley, Welch and Stewart, all working partners who were experienced with railway building. They subcontracted with local tie operators who obtained short-term timber permits or bid on longer-term timber berths from Dominion government timber agents. Operators set up tie camps, usually employing local people who needed off-farm winter income. Retired logger Fred Wild described how ties were “hacked” in the early days.⁴⁹ Only pine was used since it held the spikes best. Trees were felled with axe and

crosscut saw, then hewed flat on two sides with a broad axe. A “number one tie” was eight feet (92.44 m) long and had to be 18 centimetres thick and 23 centimetres wide, with at least 18 centimetres of hewed “face.” A tie hacker hewed the entire tree to the minimum diameter, then bucked it into tie lengths and piled them in the bush. Lumberman Dick Corser of Edson explained that tie hackers were expected to cut an average of 40 ties a day.⁵⁰ Ties were hauled to a railway siding by sleigh, and any remaining bark was peeled with a drawknife.



A sleigh-load of railway ties from Radcliffe and Evans sawmill, winter of 1945-46. Dennis Radcliffe is seated on the end of the load.

COURTESY OF DENNIS RADCLIFFE

The ties were loaded onto railway cars by hand. A tie packer, wearing heavy leather shoulder pads, usually carried one tie at a time up a plank ramp into the car where he stacked it. Some men could pack two ties at a time—green ties weighed over 45 kilograms. Tie packers were paid one-and-a-half cents per tie (about 28 cents in 2005 dollars). A packer could load 400 to 500 hewn ties a day. A railway tie inspector examined each piece, assigning a grade or “culling” it outright if it had rot, too much bark, or too narrow a face. Sometimes the railway took the culls, but still did not pay for them. The work required a low investment in tools and, although the pay was low, it did represent much needed cash in hand.⁵¹ Especially during the cash-short 1930s,

tie hacking was an opportunity open to many individuals unable to invest in equipment. As Dick Corser explained:

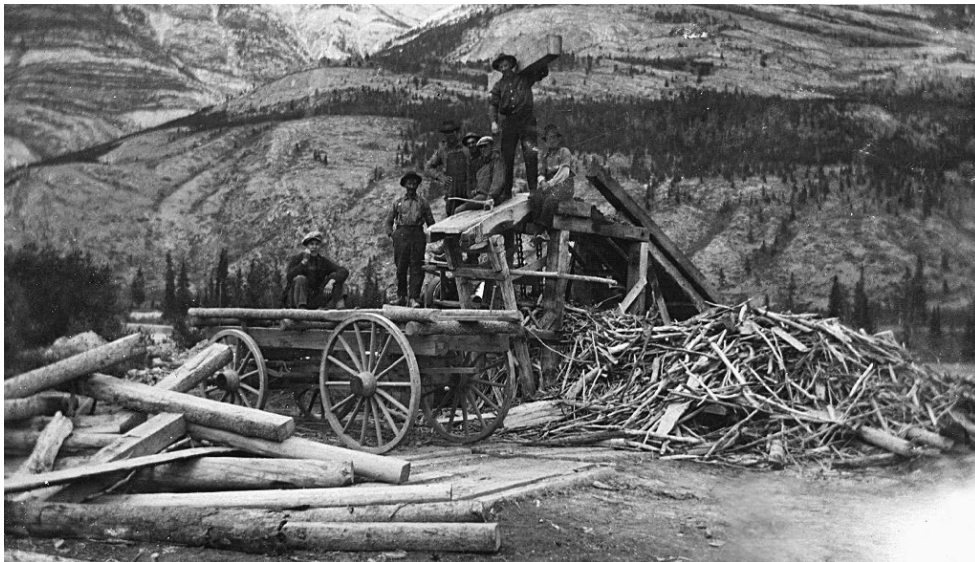
My dad once remarked to me that the tie hackers made more sense than the sawmill, because you could take twenty-five tie hackers, each producing forty ties a day, and you could have a thousand ties. But when you had a sawmill out there, you had a larger crew cutting logs and whatever else, and you had a thousand ties but you had a mill besides. So all you needed was twenty-five axes, and the men didn't cost anything really, you hired them, and they should produce as much as a sawmill with all that capital and equipment.⁵²



Jack Otto, left, and Bruce Otto on wagon, Closson Otto with foot on wheel hub and unidentified associate in Jasper ca. 1915. The Otto brothers were respected guides and outfitters and leading businessmen in Jasper from 1907.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 997.07.263.02

In 1919 a large tie operation was authorized on the Whirlpool River in Jasper National Park for the railway. The Otto brothers were the leading contractors, setting up a camp about 8 kilometres up the Whirlpool. Ties were hacked or sawn in the bush then driven on the Whirlpool and Athabasca rivers to a holding boom that spanned the river near Henry House Flats, about 10 kilometres east of Jasper, where the present-day aircraft landing strip is located. At that point, a jackladder or powered inclined conveyor belt brought the ties from the river to the top of the flats where they could be loaded onto a wagon for the short haul to the railway siding. There may also have been another holding boom around the mouth of the Maligne River. The first tie drive was during an especially heavy spring runoff. The ties are said to have hit the booms, broken them and kept on going, as someone said, “all the way to the Arctic Ocean!” Original holding booms, some more than 13 metres long with heavy anchor chains to link the logs, can be found along old river channels at the head of Jasper Lake.⁵³ Logging in the Whirlpool area ended in 1927 when ties from other, more-accessible, areas could be produced at lower cost. From the 1940s on, most ties were sawn in tie mills. However, since the rough surface made the ties more subject to decay, most were treated at a creosoting plant.



Top end of the jackladder at Henry House Flats, ca. 1920, south of the present landing strip. Railway ties from the Whirlpool River were collected in a boom on the Athabasca River and raised to the flats with the jackladder and then loaded on wagons.

ART ADAMS, JASPER, ZITA (ZIP) LONG ALBUM, JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 000.54.16-152

Another major demand for forest products began when the coal mines opened. Mine props, lagging for walls and ceilings in the mine, and mine railway ties were also obtained locally. Coal miners said that dry or fire-killed timber was preferred for mine timbers because they would crack audibly under stress, warning of possible collapse. Although never proven, it was suspected that forest fires that started near mining operations were intentionally set to ensure a supply of fire-killed timber. The late silviculturist David Presslee said that the McCardle Creek burn of 1934 was extensively logged of its fire-killed timber for the mines. He observed that the logging after the fire apparently thinned the dense regeneration, resulting in a stand with well-spaced and rapid-growing trees similar to current well-spaced reforested stands.

The Spanach Family



Amelia and Robert Spanach on their wedding day in Mercoal in 1941 when she was 15. They developed successful sawmilling and construction businesses, which she continued to run after his death in 1949 at age 23 with two small children.

COURTESY OF AMELIA SPANACH

Amelia and Bob Spanach exemplified the entrepreneurial spirit of the early logging families. Amelia Spanach was raised at Mercoal on the Coal Branch.⁵⁴ Amelia's father, George Pankovich, had emigrated from Yugoslavia in 1927 and found work as a coal miner at Mercoal. Five years later, in 1932, he had saved enough money to send for his wife Mary and daughter Amelia. The family lived in a converted log chicken coop, bought a cow and chickens, and grew a large garden. During those depression years George worked part time as he could in the mine and cut mine props and hewed ties by hand, eventually creating his own business. Robert (Bob) Spanach arrived in Canada in 1936 during the Depression, worked his way across Canada travelling by boxcar, and found work at the Luscar mine. When the mine needed timbers and ties, Bob started to cut them after hours, working both jobs until he could buy a horse, then left the mine to start a sawmill and later contracting for the Mountain Park mine

and the railway. Running out of timber around Luscar, Bob drove to Mercoal one day to search for more. His truck broke down and he went to the store where the only phone was located. While waiting for his call to go through, he noticed Amelia who happened in at the same time. He arranged to meet her, was persistent and they were married about a year later—he was 29, she was not quite 16. Amelia and Bob became a team as his business expanded to include a new sawmill outside of Mercoal at Steeper, a boarding house and café, community hall and theatre, General Motors dealership and garage, as well as strip mining and road grading. Amelia ran the home and raised their two children, looking after the business correspondence, deliveries and feeding workers.

In October 1949, Bob died in a sawmill accident. He left no will and had run his business largely out of his head. Amelia was hit with multiple setbacks. With no will, the public trustee froze their bank account for six years on behalf of their children, forcing her to borrow to “buy out” her children’s shares. Despite the goodwill and reputation she and Bob had established, no bank would make a loan to a 23-year-old woman, but she was determined to continue the businesses. Finally, with the encouragement of their bookkeeper and lawyer, Canadian Collieries loaned the \$10,000 (about \$87,000 in 2004 dollars) that she needed—but in return set a minimum price for her lumber and ties. The theatre burned down two weeks after the funeral. Amelia had to sell her dealership to her bookkeeper because General Motors would not let her keep it. In 1956 her sawmill burned down, and the Gregg River fire burned two camps and most of her timber. She bought a new sawmill to take advantage of the instant supply of fire-killed timber for the mines, but the mines closed shortly after. In 1959 she traded her bulldozers in on new machines and other equipment for a strip mine in Coal Valley, but her prime contractor lost the bid two weeks later. She then switched to road and oilfield construction and later moved to Edmonton with her Spanach Construction operation. Her son George played football for the Edmonton Eskimos and now runs the still-successful business.

Sawmilling Operations

Types of sawmills changed in response to the introduction of new power sources and transportation. At first, small local sawmills were run by a belt from a steam tractor, and logs were skidded to them by horse for short distances from the surrounding bush. Larger mills, which were the major lumber producers from the 1880s to the mid-1920s, were run by stationary steam engines, often fuelled by sawmill waste. They were typically located on rivers so logs could be driven for long distances by water. Logging could only be done in winter, but logs could be stockpiled and delivered all spring and summer, so the mills could run almost year-round. Some large mills extended their operating lives by hauling logs long distances by tractor trains on iced roads.



Robert Spanach's first sawmill at Kaydee on the Coal Branch ca. 1937, Robert standing with mill crew and their wives on a picnic day.

COURTESY OF AMELIA SPANACH

Then in the mid-1930s, when portable gasoline engines became available, it was cheaper to take small sawmills into the bush where logs could be skidded or hauled short distances, and the mills moved as the logging area was extended. Rough lumber was hauled to sidings or planer mills, leaving the “waste” in the woods. These operations were usually only possible in the winter, providing only seasonal employment. Logging roads extended local access to a certain extent, but most operators used winter roads that were too

soft for travel after spring break-up. This type of mill predominated in 1955 when construction on the pulp mill began at Hinton.



The Corser family were among the early loggers and sawmillers, cutting ties and timber for the railway and lumber for settlers. In the mid-1930s they bought a Lynn tractor to haul sleigh trains of logs to their central steam-powered sawmill, ca. 1935.

CORSER COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA ARCHIVES 83-13-39. COURTESY OF CRAIG CORSER



The Radcliffe and Evans sawmill on Mumm Creek, north of Hinton in 1950, typical of the “portable” sawmills of the time.

COURTESY OF DENNIS RADCLIFFE

The lumber industry flourished in the Brûlé area from about 1941 to 1957, particularly in response to wartime demands.⁵⁵ Timber was drawn from the

Brûlé area, Solomon Creek, Wild Hay River, Mumm Creek and Berland River. The Brûlé Lumber Company was the largest, involving various partners, including the two founders Jack McDougall of Etter-McDougall Lumber at Winfield, Alberta, and George Stady who had McDougall's backing and for whom he had worked. R.G. Radcliffe and Phil Evans went into partnership in 1945, later taking over the Brûlé Lumber Company and selling it to the Garneau brothers in 1956. Albert and Emile Garneau arrived in Brûlé in 1941 and ran their own sawmill until 1956 when they purchased the Brûlé Lumber Company. German prisoners of war were used to assist in the sawmilling business in 1944 and 1945. Fifty prisoners arrived in May 1944 from an Edson work camp, and 75 from Lethbridge. Brûlé Lumber paid three dollars a day (\$35 in 2004 dollars) to the Canadian government for each prisoner, provided food and lodging, and gave a 50-cent-a-day (\$5.80 in 2004 dollars) chit for purchase of supplies. One of the prisoners later returned to live in Brûlé.

River-driving of logs was tried in the area at least twice. The washed-out remains of a check dam on the Embarras River dates from a river drive in the early 1900s. High water on the first drive caused the boom at the mill to break and the winter season's logs were lost down the river. The operation was later bought by the Corser brothers.

Former ranger Neil Gilliat described another log-drive trial, this one on the Wild Hay River in the early 1950s:

[The] Brule Lumber Company had tried to use the Wildhay River to float logs to the mill. This scheme would save thousands of dollars in transportation and skidding costs. The logs were piled on the river ice to await the spring thaw. Once the ice melted, the logs would float downstream to the mill. A boom constructed of chains and large logs had been strung out across the river at the mill. The boom, theoretically, would stop the logs, allowing them to be pulled out of the river into the mill yard. But the boom, not highly successful the first year had allowed an unknown quantity of logs to make its way to the Arctic.

The next year the company constructed a much stronger and more substantial boom. The logs would not be allowed to escape again.

Wayward logs were naturally a big concern for the Forest Service, which desired to avoid waste from a conservationist standpoint. Further, government royalties were paid on the amount of lumber processed so the loss of logs was also a loss of revenue. It was therefore with deep interest that everyone observed the log drive for the second year.

Unfortunately, what works in Quebec and Ontario does not necessarily work in the Alberta foothills. Spring came as usual to find millions of board feet* in logs piled on the river ice upstream from the mill. The ice began to move and a few of the logs started to show up by the mill. A very optimistic feeling spread through the operation. Then the temperature rose rapidly and the spring run-off quickly turned the river into a raging watercourse. Large ice floes mixed with hundreds of frozen logs. The logs floated very low and sometimes under the ice-cold water, making the boom ineffectual. The logs and ice piled up under the boom, then lifted it high in the air before it broke from the tremendous pressure. Boom went the boom and thousands of logs charged downstream to join the previous year's harvest in the great white north.... The famous river drives of Eastern Canada were never to become part of the Western logging scene.^{56**}

* A traditional measure of wood volume in logs, the board foot represented a board 12 inches square and 1 inch thick (30.5 cm square by 2.54 cm thick). Volumes were expressed in thousands of board feet, equivalent to 2.36 cubic metres.

** Some successful log drives supported sawmills in Alberta from about 1885 to 1925. However, there were also some major floods that caused holding booms to break with resulting loss of logs. By the 1950s, the bulldozer, road building technology and logging trucks had improved to

the point that it was much more efficient to haul logs over land to mills.

Hazel Hart, in *History of Hinton*,⁵⁷ says that the lumber industry flourished until 1957 when the economic balance shifted to pulpwood. Forester Jack Wright recalls that several Licensed Timber Berths (LTBs) were still active into the 1960s. The pulpwood lease with the government allowed existing operators to continue until their licences expired, but as Wright noted, much of their timber was better suited for pulp because of decay and excessive shake (separated rings), or cracks in the wood. Four independent operators—Erith Tie, Svedberg, Kennedy, and Terris—continued to operate on the pulpmill's area, the last closing in the mid-1980s. They operated as Sale Units, whereby North Western Pulp & Power did the planning and acquired the approvals under its licence, and the operators continued to operate their sawmills, selling the pulpwood to the mill at Hinton.

The Corser family operation made a particularly successful transition. Two Corser brothers started their family business near Carrot Creek in 1925 with a tie hacking contract, moving to Erith in the 1940s and establishing the Erith Tie Company. That led successively to sawmilling for ties and lumber, then to contracting for a company camp, and pioneering scarification for the new pulp company. The sale of most of their quota operations, or provincial timber harvesting rights, in the late 1980s led to the development of a major sawmill complex—Sundance Forest Industries Ltd. at Edson. As Dick Corser, son of one of the founding brothers commented in a 1994 interview:

I achieved what I had wanted to do ... that is to build a major forest operation to look after the Edson community of labourers, as well as to look after the timber within the area. ... I did see the transition of fixed sawmills to portable sawmills, to the mechanization of logging from horse and hand work to nowadays where you really don't touch a log or a tree. ... I can remember people telling me you'll never be able to replace the fallers. You will never be able to replace the tie peelers—it couldn't be done. They are all replaced now.... It's just that the whole process is

changed. You could see it coming, and you had to ride the leading edge of the wave, or you were following it.⁵⁸

Mines and Wells

Claim staking for coal began in 1906 when Mary Gregg, wife of Jack Gregg, and co-owner with him of the Bar 88 Ranch on Prairie Creek, led prospectors to the first coal “find” in what was to become known as the Coal Branch.⁵⁹ The Grand Trunk Pacific railway, upon arrival in Edson in 1910, started a branch line to the southwest to support the development of coal mines to serve the railroad’s critical needs. The CoalSpur and Lovett mines opened in 1910. The Coal Branch line was completed in 1913 and other mines soon flourished. These included Mountain Park and Cadomin in 1917, Oliphant-Munson at Mile 40* in 1918 and Luscar in 1921. The Coal Branch line split into two branches at Coalspur. Mines and towns served by the Main and Sterco-Foothills lines eventually included Robb, Bryan, Coalspur, Sterco, Coal Valley, Lakeside, Foothills and Lovett. The Mountain Park branch line included Mercoal, Cadomin, Luscar, and K-D Collieries, as well as Mountain Park itself.

* Locations were often described by the distance on trail, road or railway from a starting point. Mile 40 would have been located about 64 kilometres from the Coal Branch junction on the then GTP main line.



Coal mine and community at Pocahontas, ca. 1920. The mine was developed about two years before the GTP arrived so local coal would be available for the locomotives. The mine closed in 1921.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES H-259

These mines supported a community of communities. They were separated from each other by a lack of roads, but were all linked by the railway and horse trails. Although they thought of themselves as part of the Coal Branch, each town had its own pride and community spirit. Sports competition among them was keen, and teams and supporters would travel by train for events. Coal production peaked in 1928–1929 and by the 1930s, 14 different mines were operating in the Coal Branch. However, the decline in demand for coal started in the early 1940s and, according to Jack Wright, by 1958 all the underground coal mining operations had ceased. Mercoal was the last of the old mines to close, although Jack Wright recalls that Mike Vitally was still mining a small amount of coal at Coalspur in the 1960s.

Further west, a coal mine opened at Brûlé in 1912, which was then inside the Jasper National Park boundary. This mine, which became the Blue Diamond Coal Mine in 1920, produced as much as 1,630 tonnes a day, but closed in 1928 when the quality declined. As part of Blue Diamond's search for other coal seams, the company hauled a steam engine and drill up the Wildhay River to Carson and Thoreau creeks with horses one winter. Guide and

outfitter Judd Groat recalled that a shaft was opened to get coal samples, but the quality was not good enough to warrant opening a new mine.⁶⁰ The remains of the steam engine rest near the Eaglesnest Cabin in what is now the Willmore Wilderness Park.



Blue Diamond Mine tibble at Brûlé, ca. 1921-24. This mine was located on the Canadian Northern Railway line on the west side of Brûlé Lake.

EDGAR SPURGEON, GLENBOW ALBERTA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES, NA-1679-37

The Bedson Coal Mine further west also had a short life. Some of the houses at Brûlé were moved to Edmonton and the rest of the buildings were salvaged in 1942 for the war effort. The Pocahontas Mine, also in Jasper National Park, became a major centre. Prospectors Fred Villeneuve and Alfred Lamoreux filed claims in 1908. They formed a team of Canadian and U.S. investors who started work on the mine three years before the railway was due to arrive. As a consequence they had coal available to load as soon as trains got there. Their coal was particularly suitable for locomotives. A community grew up around the mine—it had a doctor, which Jasper did not, so it served as a regional health clinic. Jasper people came by train or the Bedbug Flyer (speeder). Once the lines were consolidated, a spur line was kept open to Pocahontas from Snaring, but it closed in 1921 when the best of the coal had been mined and the mine itself became uneconomic.⁶¹ The grade later to become part of Highway 16. Many of the Pocahontas buildings were moved to Hinton after the Hinton Collieries opened in 1928.⁶² The Hinton Mine closed in 1941 due to declining markets. Bill, Cliff, and Harold Woodley opened two

mines along the Robb Road and on Coal Creek in 1945, but they also eventually closed because of market decline. Hubert Schnur opened a mine on the Robb Road in 1950 that closed about five years later.⁶³



When the Grand Trunk Pacific line was closed between Entrance and Jasper, a spur line was kept open between Jasper and Pocahontas. The Bedbug Flyer (speeder) was used for passengers and baggage. The photo was taken in the Henry House Flats area near Swift's farm ca. 1918.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA 997.07.31.03



Ralph James Ranch at Pocahontas, supplied milk to the community.

ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION RES 05-0496. ALBERTA PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES A 1391

One more extractive enterprise—oil and gas—should be mentioned. Imperial Oil’s “discovery well” at Leduc in 1947 is recognized as a catalytic event that generated keen interest and led to extensive exploration and development throughout Alberta, including previously inaccessible forest areas. The first major test in this region was Imperial Oil’s pilot well at Muskeg in 1949 that provided road access north of Entrance for the first time. Subsequent activity was to have a great impact on the future Hinton forest management area. Although Jasper National Park was off-limits to drilling, the Trans-Mountain Oil Pipeline from Edmonton to Vancouver signalled the start of other linear disturbances through the park; this pipeline was built in 1952–53 and is still operating today. Pumping stations were located at Bickerdike, west of Edson, and in Jasper, on part of Swift’s old ranch.⁶⁴ The convenience and price of oil as a fuel and natural gas for heat also contributed to the demise of the coal mines and their communities on the Coal Branch.

Ready for a Change

The timing of the coal mine closures was such that many of the laid-off workers could move to Hinton to find work connected with a new pulp mill development. In 1950, Hinton was a community of about 300 people; Edson and Jasper both had populations of about 1,000, both being railway and government centres. All were served by the CNR railway line and by an all-weather gravel road from Edmonton. Roy Woodley told Hazel Hart around 1980 that he had seen three booms in Hinton and that “This is one time the boom is here to stay.”⁶⁵ He had seen the first boom in Hinton in 1912 when the railway arrived and residents of the Prairie Creek camp moved in when that camp closed. That boom collapsed after the railways went broke and were amalgamated. The second boom came with opening of the Hinton Collieries in 1928. The population grew to about 1,000 only to drop to 200 when the collieries closed in 1941. This third time, Woodley was confident that the pulp mill would provide a more stable base for the community.

The sawmills and tie operations were important in their day. They provided essential materials for the railways and for buildings on the farms

and communities that developed with them. They also provided important wages to support local economies. The sawmill operators were pioneers, developing access and supporting businesses in the communities they served. There were many such operations in this area.

However, there was also concern about the sustainability of these sawmills, given their need for—and the limited quantities available of—straight, large-diameter, small-branched spruce or pine timber with high-quality logs free from rot, cracks or shake. There was also a desire to use the many forests of younger, smaller trees, and the extensive forests of smaller pine (a result of frequent fires) that were not suitable for lumber or ties. Many saw diversification into wood pulp as the way to more effectively utilize the forest for wood products, while at the same time contributing to the economy and, ecologically, replacing fire as the major forest ecosystem disturbance. Pulp operations could also provide more stable year-round employment. Many people therefore welcomed the advent of the pulp mill operation.

CHAPTER SIX

Forest Protection and Management to 1955



“The Governor-in-Council may – for the preservation of forest trees on the crests and slopes of the Rocky Mountains and for the proper maintenance – of water in the rivers and streams – reserve from sale ... and may set aside ... such lands for a forest park, or forest parks, as he deems expedient.”

DOMINION LANDS ACT IN 1884 1884 AMENDMENT THAT ENABLED PARKS AND FOREST RESERVES

The improved access west to Jasper resulted in many changes in use of the region. Changes began with David Thompson’s discovery journey in January 1811 during which he mapped the route over Athabasca Pass that would become the trans-Canada highway of its day. For about 40 years, people, mail,

goods and furs moved west and east through Jasper over the Athabasca Pass with the fur brigades and expeditions. Traffic of settlers and surveyors over the Yellowhead Pass started to grow, and use of the Athabasca Pass declined as the Hudson's Bay Company reorganized its trade routes. When the Canadian Pacific Railway through Calgary and Banff was completed in 1885, Kicking Horse Pass immediately became the primary trans-Canada route.

Construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and its completion to Jasper in 1912 had a major effect on the region. It enabled settlement to extend west from the prairies, stimulated lumbering and encouraged tourism.

The railway meant that instead of struggling to pass through on the terrible trails, people came to visit, hunt and fish, or to stay and start businesses to serve the new and varied activities. The railway also led to resource-based industries, initially coal mining and forest industry, and more recently crude oil and natural gas. The focus of human activity changed from getting across the country to staying to use and manage the natural resources. As University of Alberta professor and historian I. S. MacLaren eloquently stated in 1999:

In the case of the Canadian dominion, sublime geography served as both the obstacle to and, once matched by technology in the form of railways, the symbol of nation-making aspirations. History and geography have thus conspired powerfully; consequently the mountain parks have transcended regional identity to become national, and with their designation in 1984 as a World Heritage Site, ... global.⁴

The increased focus on protection and management as a balance to economic development of resources for tourism and resource-based industries initiated formation of new parks and forestry agencies and major conservation programs. In this region, forest reserves on which to focus fire control and logging regulation came about almost simultaneously with establishment of Jasper National Park. In both parks and forest reserves, management emphasized fire protection, but the policies gradually diverged with respect to

land use and resource extraction in accord with their different perceived mandates.

“Management” implies deliberate human intervention into ecosystem processes to achieve predetermined objectives. Interventions could consist of logging and fighting forest fires, or controlling predator numbers and culling large elk herds. This section describes how management programs on parks and reserves evolved, how they diverged, and how they have become similar in objectives if not in application.

Forest Reserves and National Park Policies

Forest Regulation and Protection to 1899

When Britain and France claimed lands along the east coast of North America starting in the 1600s, they especially valued the pine and oak for use by their navies, and reserved much of the timber in the name of the Crown. In 1721 Britain extended its “Broad Arrow” policy to its North American colonies—the Broad Arrow blaze reserved the best pines for the Royal Navy. This policy became one of the irritants that led to the American Revolution, but in Canada it represented a precedent that reserved forests for the Crown and later for governments. The major demand for naval timber ended after Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815, and the regulations were changed. In Canada, regulations passed in 1826 made it possible for citizens to buy Crown timber that was deemed “not fit and proper” for the Royal Navy. Timber could be bought under precedent-setting conditions that conferred only the timber-cutting rights; the forest lands remained in Crown ownership. Cutting rights went to the highest bidder and leases could be renewed if conditions were met. A new Crown Timber Act in 1849 replaced the 1826 regulations, but confirmed the general conditions. Forestry historian Kenneth Johnstone commented that this act “would prove a landmark in Canadian forest legislation, providing the basis for nearly all subsequent laws and regulations in Canada governing the issue of timber licenses.”²

The British North America Act of 1867 that established the Dominion of Canada set another major precedent. In the division of rights, it stated that each province had the right to “the Management and Sale of the Public Lands belonging to the Province and of the Timber and Wood thereon.” At this point the federal government was removed from direct responsibility for managing forested lands. However, acquisition of the Hudson’s Bay Company Lands (Rupert’s Land) in 1870 gave the federal government responsibility for forests on the immense land area of the North-West Territories, which included the part that would become Alberta.

At the time of Confederation, the timber industry was well established in the east. The white pine lumber trade would continue for another 30 years before switching to spruce and other species when accessible pine ran out. Large sawmills were making lumber for Canadian markets and for export to the United States. Smaller specialty wood products plants also abounded, since wood was such a widely used raw material. A pulp and paper industry based on wood fibre began in Quebec in 1864. On the west coast, a sawmilling industry already existed when British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871, and the first pulp and paper mill was built at Alberni on Vancouver Island in 1894.³

In the North-West Territories, which included present-day Alberta, use of the forest for timber was light before the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) arrived in 1883. Pit-saws, in which boards were sawn by two men using a long vertical saw, produced lumber for the few buildings and for the wooden York boats and barges used to move trade goods, supplies and furs on the northern waterways. Probably the greatest demands were for fuel wood for cooking and to provide heat during the long winters, building logs for homes and barns, and fence posts and rails. The first water-powered sawmill in Alberta was built at the mission at Lac la Biche in 1871. An early commercial mill, built west of Pincher Creek by the federal Indian Agency in 1878, was intended to provide



*Sawing lumber on a
whipsaw frame.*

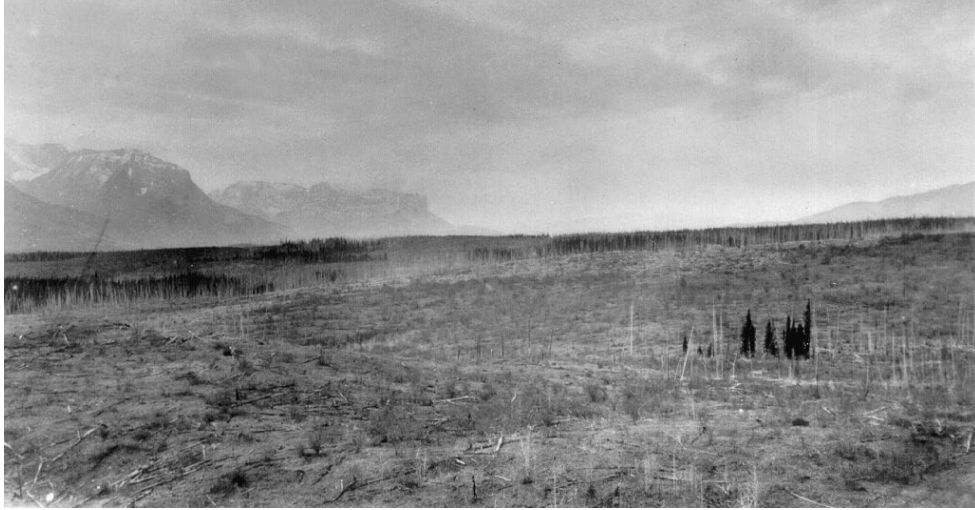
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ALBERTA OB 1984

building materials for Aboriginals and to train them in lumbering. It was a water-powered mill that also served as a gristmill.

Construction of the CPR created strong demands for railway ties, bridge timbers and locomotive fuel. It also spurred building booms in communities along the line. The Department of the Interior appointed Crown timber agents in Calgary in 1881 and Edmonton in 1883. Their function was primarily to process applications for timber berths and to collect dues from trees cut on Crown land. The Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company built Alberta's first large sawmill in Calgary in 1885. They logged along the Bow River as far as Castle Junction and up the Spray River in Banff National Park, and up the Kananaskis and Ghost rivers, driving logs to their mill on rivers until the late 1920s. However, well before the railway reached Edmonton, the Hudson's Bay Company and Hardisty & Co., owned by HBC factor Richard Hardisty, started steam-powered sawmills that by 1884 were each sawing over 400,000 board feet a year. Boat-builder and businessman John Walter whipsawed boards for his boats when he started in 1875 and built his first sawmill in 1893.

Early travellers marvelled at the features of this new country, but forest fires were alien to them, and their perception of burns was invariably in terms of destruction, devastation, darkness and danger. Evidence suggests that fires were an important part of the western boreal forest ecosystem, but in the European mind, fires were bad, something to be prevented if possible. The prevailing attitude was reflected in the wording of the first fire legislation passed in 1832 by the Council of Assiniboia in Fort Garry, Lord Selkirk's Red River Settlement, which was established in 1811:

The great injury done to the Woods of the Settlement by fire and the serious danger and loss occasioned annually by that devouring element, arising from the willfulness of some ill-disposed persons, and the negligence of others, render it absolutely necessary, for the protection of lives and property, that salutary regulation should be formed with a view to check this evil, and that severe pains and penalties should be inflicted on all persons who may violate such.⁴



Opposite page above: Area burned west of Hinton, looking west towards Roche Miette, 1911.
DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION DFB 03939



Opposite page below: Repeat photograph in July 1997 shows re-growth on the burned area.
WEST FRASER COLLECTION

Canada's capital was at the doorstep of the white pine industry in the 1800s and in the spring huge rafts of white pine square timbers floated down the Ottawa River enroute to Quebec City to be loaded on ships and then on to Europe. Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald wrote his friend and premier of Ontario, J. Sandfield Macdonald, in 1871, in an often-cited letter, expressing concern about the "immense masses of timber passing my windows every morning."⁵ It took 28 years before his political rival Sir Wilfrid Laurier established a forest conservation agency, the forerunner of the Canadian

Forest Service, but Macdonald's letter marked the start of a growing concern for forest conservation among lumbermen, politicians and scientists. Canada's first forestry magazine (predecessor of today's *Canadian Forest Industries*) was published in 1880. J.H. Morgan was appointed by Macdonald as a one-man commission in 1883 to "examine into and make a preliminary report on the subject of the protection of the forests of the Dominion." In his sweeping report printed in 1886, Morgan concluded:



Early visitors were appalled at the extent of fires and their aftermath in the west. Rangers Greenwood and Rantz on speeder, Brazeau Forest, 1913.

DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION DFB 05701

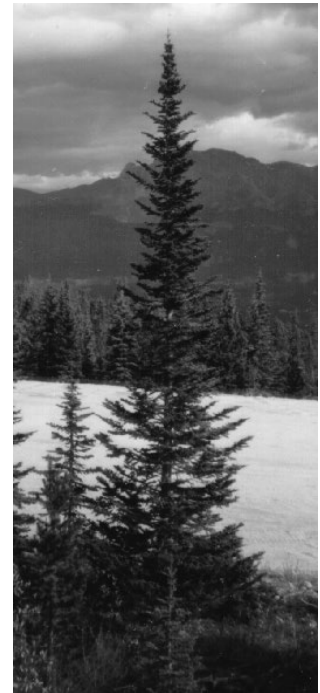
Enough has been shown to make it evident that it is the duty of our Government to adopt measures, immediately, to arrest further destruction of our remaining forests ... and to replant, where practicable, the high lands which were formerly covered with forest trees, and also to devise or adopt some plan or system of forest plantations for the great stepped region of the North West.

The Government of the Dominion should, without loss of time, appoint a Forest Commission, to cooperate with a similar Commission from every Province in the Dominion, to deal with this all-important

question of the protection of our old forests and the production of new forests.⁶

Morgan also commented on four other points, aspects of which would remain unresolved for another 25 to 70 years: not knowing the extent and nature of the forest resources, undesirable consequences of uncontrolled cutting and fires, the need for organizing a system of forest management, and the importance of forestry schools for training qualified staff.

A growing chorus of voices joined the call for protection and management of forests. In Alberta, one of the catalysts was concern about sustaining water supplies. This was especially the case on the short-grass prairies of southern Alberta where irrigation had resulted in greatly increased productivity. William Pearce, inspector of mines in Calgary in the 1880s, was also responsible for irrigation. He argued strongly that to ensure water flow from the east slopes of the Rockies, it was essential to protect the forests. As a result of these and other representations, Prime Minister Macdonald introduced an amendment to the Dominion Lands Act in 1884 that stated:



Engelmann spruce.

The Governor-in-Council may, from time to time, for the preservation of forest trees on the crests and slopes of the Rocky Mountains and for the proper maintenance throughout the year of the volume of water in the rivers and streams which have their sources in such mountains and trees in the North-West Territories, reserve from sale ... and may define the limits or boundaries of such reserves; and may set aside and appropriate such lands for a forest park, or forest parks, as he deems expedient ...⁷

This amendment enabled creation of the forest reserves, may also have facilitated the initial Hot Springs Reserve in Banff in 1885, the event that led

to the national parks system, and provided authority for setting aside Jasper Forest Park in 1907.

Under the Dominion Forestry Branch 1899 to 1930

The stage was therefore set for the formation of a forestry agency within the federal government. On 24 July 1899, the Laurier government passed an order-in-council* to create the post of chief inspector of timber and forestry in the Department of the Interior to be responsible for forests on Dominion lands. On 15 August, Elihu Stewart was appointed as Canada's first director of forestry. This step concluded almost 30 years of discussion and growing concern about forest conservation.

* A government executive order approved by the Queen's representative upon recommendation of executive council or Cabinet.

Other key steps in this era included establishment of the Canadian Forestry Association in 1900 and creation of Canada's first faculty of forestry at the University of Toronto in 1906. The first National Forestry Congress, chaired by Prime Minister Laurier, was held in Ottawa in 1906.

The Dominion Forestry Branch's approach to its immense task was first to identify those forests of especial value for watershed protection and wood supply, and to designate them as forest reserves. These areas would receive the focus of protection and management. The remaining forest areas were divided into fire ranging districts in which fire control was the major focus, but on which staffing levels were much lower than on the reserves.



Elihu Stewart: Canada's first chief forester (appointed 1899) and founder of the Canadian Forestry Association in 1900. Photo ca. 1910.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PA 175927

The nature of the challenge was reflected in comments by A.E. Rau who surveyed the forest resources of “the great basins at the head of the McCleod (sic) and Athabasca Rivers” in the fall of 1908:

[T]here is only one possible way of making the country valuable for forestry purposes, and that is to check, by some system to be determined, a sweep of the fires that have denuded this country, and, by giving protection to the young trees to build up in time a valuable industry. It sounds rather derogatory to the present forestry system ... to state that not ten per cent of the so-called forested areas on the eastern slope are in timber today. My belief is that this figure may be put at four per cent and then be excessive.

As far as systems for patrolling this district are concerned, they may be dismissed in a few words. There are none. The question, therefore, is how best to cover this country with a system of patrols that will be adequate to protect the young timber. The country is so huge and the money available for this service so ridiculously small in comparison with the area to be covered that an adequate system seems almost impossible

to devise. The system I would suggest, if it could be carried into effect, would be purely one of prevention.⁸

A primary concern of the Dominion Forestry Branch was the potential for increased forest fires as new railway lines were surveyed and built. There had been major fires in the Bow River valley while the CPR line was being developed— arguably a result of that activity or because of the extended fire hazard along the Rockies during that period. However, when the Grand Trunk Pacific railway was extended west of Edmonton through the upper Athabasca and Yellowhead Pass, the recently formed Dominion Forestry Branch was in place. In his 1908 annual report, Superintendent of Forestry R.H. Campbell reported that the construction caused a “special danger to be apprehended in that district.”⁹ He was satisfied with the cooperation of the company but noted that the danger is “probably greater, however, from the number of people preceding and following railway construction and from the clearing of land for settlement.”

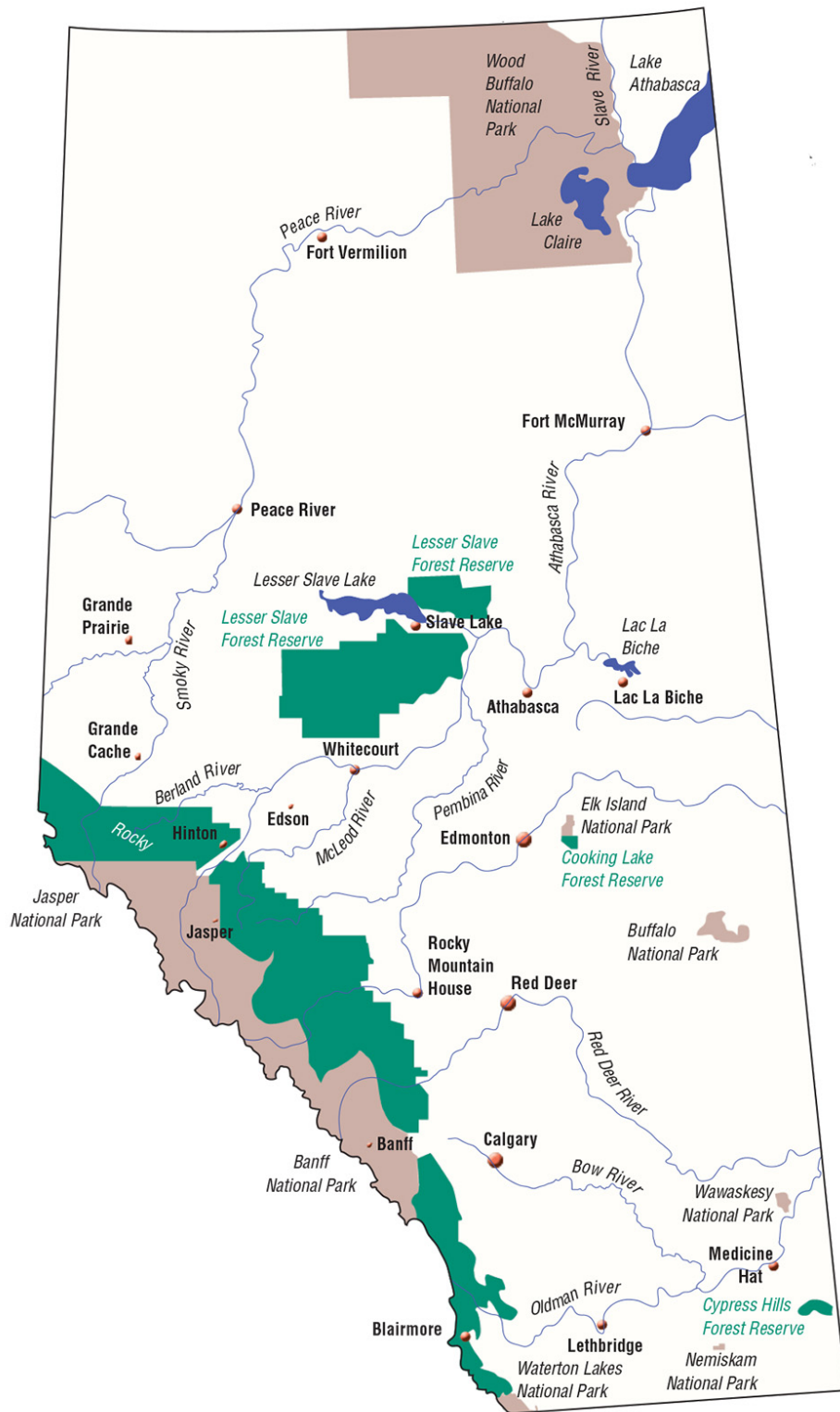
Ernest Finlayson, Dominion Forestry Branch inspector of fire ranging, praised the cooperation of the Canadian Northern Railway, which had instituted a patrol of one man for every 16 kilometres of line west of the Pembina River beyond Edmonton.¹⁰ However, Finlayson remarked that the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company was very “dilatatory” and, in fact, did not comply with the order of the chief fire inspector at all. The outcome of this attention seems to have been successful. Gerald Tande, a graduate student at the University of Alberta, conducted a detailed survey of fire history in the Jasper area and found no evidence of increased burning during the railway-building years.¹¹ Perhaps their efforts, along with favourable weather conditions, kept the rights-of-way remarkably free of wildfires.



*Ranger McDonald,
Dominion forest ranger, on
an improvised fire lookout
near Coalspur on the
Brazeau Forest, 1912.*
DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA
FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION DFB
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Forest Reserves and Timber Harvesting Rights

The first forest reserves were set up by orders-in-council under the Dominion Lands Act, most of them confirmed in the 1906 federal Forest Reserves Act. In Alberta, initial reserves included Cooking Lake, Cypress Hills, Forest Park (Waterton), Lake Louise Forest Park, and Sand Park (Bow River). The 1911 Forest Reserves and Parks Act included the largest of the forest reserves in the system—the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve. It comprised five Forests along the foothills and mountains north from the border of Waterton Lakes National Park. The two new northern forests were the Brazeau and Athabasca, which included much of the area of the present West Fraser forest management area as well as Jasper National Park.



Map 14: Forest Reserves and National Parks in Alberta in 1929.
 ALBERTA SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

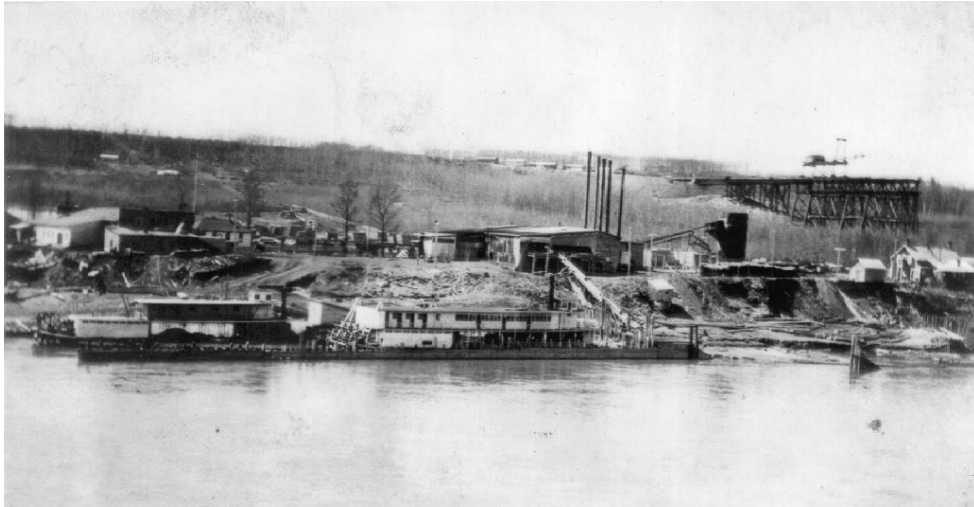
The primary arguments for setting up forest reserves were well defined by Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, in 1911: “The primary object is to conserve the sources of water supply by the protection and production, or reproduction, of timber or wood around the sources of the water supply ... to reproduce the timber growth for the benefit of the dwellers on the prairies surrounding these areas.”¹²

Timber harvesting rights on Crown lands were sold primarily through timber berths, which were blocks of forested land on which the timber was judged suitable for logging. They were advertised and cutting rights were granted to the highest bidder, usually by sealed tender. Rights were typically issued for 20 years, often renewable. The basic rate of dues payable to the Crown varied from 5 to 10 per cent of the selling price of rough lumber, but was higher when there was active bidding.

On the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve to the south, extensive areas of timber berths had already been issued in the 1880s to supply the sawmills that were cutting timber for railways and communities in southern Alberta. As A.E. Rau commented in 1908, “These berths cover all the available timber and considerable country, besides, which is today not covered by merchantable timber.”¹³

By 1909, the Department of the Interior had surveyed several potential timber berths along the McLeod River, and one on the Athabasca, in anticipation of the railway. Their locations as of July 1909 are shown in (map 15). Most of them were along the McLeod on what would later become the Coal Branch, but one large block was located east of Brûlé Lake between the Athabasca River and Prairie (Maskuta) Creek. The timber along the McLeod and other rivers supported many sawmills until the 1960s, as well as providing props and timbers for the many underground coal mines. For a time, a rail spur ran up the McLeod River from Hargwen, on the main Canadian National Railway line east of Obed Lake, to Anderson’s mill to the south. The timber east of Brûlé Lake seems not to have been logged to any great extent. It was an extensive stand of spruce, but the wood quality for sawlogs was poor because of cracks, shake (or ring separation), and rot in the wood. However, the timber looked good from a distance and, interestingly, was included in the

first proposal for a pulpwood lease in 1949. It later became the site of Camp 1, the first North Western Pulp & Power logging camp. The timber produced a superior quality of pulp and was sought after for making photographic papers.

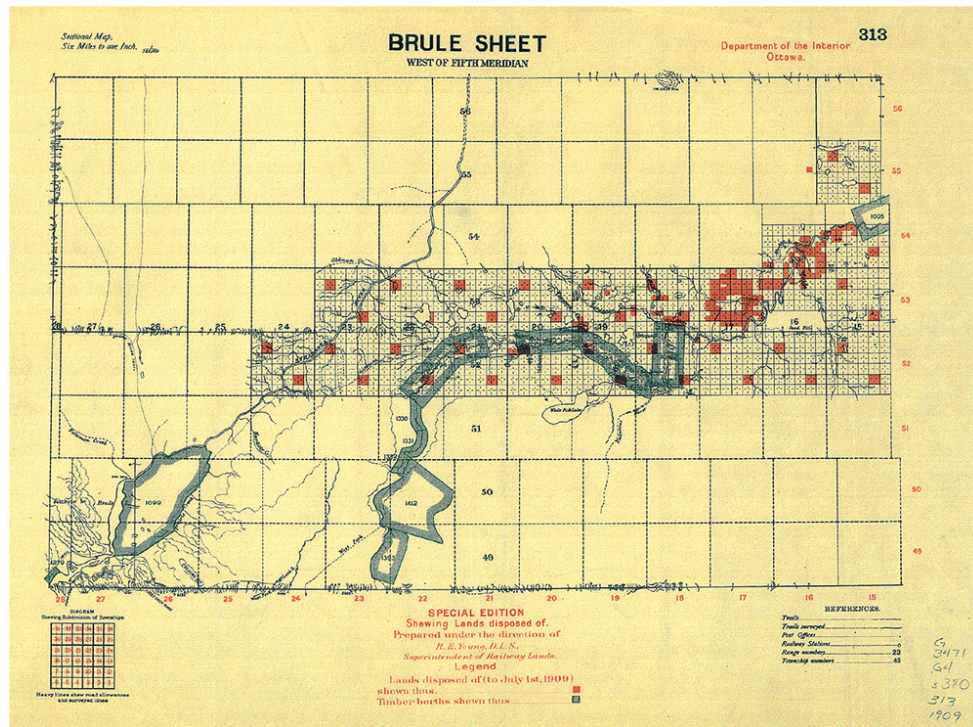


John Walter sawmill in Edmonton in 1910. The High Level bridge under construction in background. Sawmilling started in Edmonton as early as 1880. Walter whipsawed boards for his boats from 1875 and built his first sawmill in 1893.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA A-9844

Harvesting on timber berths was limited to larger trees under a diameter-limit system—usually, minimum stump diameters of 36 centimetres for spruce and 30 centimetres for pine. Marking of individual trees for cutting, with a marking axe and Dominion Forestry Branch stamp, was preferred on the smaller forest reserves on the prairies, but a shortage of staff precluded that on large berths. The philosophy of the partial cut was to remove older trees (presumably the bigger ones), leaving smaller trees to grow faster, to maintain cover on the watersheds, and to establish natural regeneration. Under the diameter-limit system, too often the cuts resulted in high-grading operations that took only the best trees. It was assumed that nature would regenerate the forests, but the resulting site conditions with heavy organic debris and little exposed mineral soil usually prevented seedlings from successfully establishing themselves. Further, as Dominion forester T.W. Dwight^{L4} explained in 1913, inappropriate diameter limits in spruce resulted in the removal of too many trees, and the few residual trees that were intended to provide seed typically blew down. Although there had been trial plantings of conifer seedlings on

southern Alberta forest reserves during the 1920s, forest planting did not become an established forest practice in Alberta until the late 1950s.



Map 15: Timber berths in the Hinton area as of July 1909.
WEST FRASER COLLECTION

The practice of silviculture—the growing and tending of trees, as we know it today—had not yet been developed in Alberta. The intention was to encourage forest regeneration after logging, but it was approached passively and there was often a long delay before the forest re-established itself. Foresters were also concerned about the effect on future forests of taking only the largest, and perhaps genetically superior, trees.

The concept of multiple-use, or multi-purpose use, of forest lands was clearly recognized by the Dominion Forestry Branch, although not stated in that way. There was a belief that “protected” or well-managed forests would support wildlife and provide many other benefits to many people. It was an article of faith. Besides the initial concern about watersheds, recreational use and grazing were also encouraged, although in large measure with fire protection in mind.¹⁵ As Abraham Knechtel, a Dominion forester who later became head of Canada’s national parks, stated in 1910:

[Our] legislators ... are well aware that forests feed springs, prevent floods, hinder erosion, shelter from storms, give health and recreation, protect game and fish, and give the country aesthetic features. However, the Dominion Forest Reserve policy has for its motto, “Seek ye first the production of wood and its right use—and all these other things will be added unto it.” ¹⁶



Waste and damage in early timber berth operations in the Rocky Mountain foothills around 1921.

DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION DFB 14178

National Parks and Dominion Forest Reserves, 1907 to 1930

The upper Athabasca region became part of the North-West Territories after Rupert’s Land was acquired (1870) and became the responsibility of the federal Department of the Interior. All lands were therefore in public ownership, held by the federal government. Dominion land agents were based in Edmonton after 1872 and were responsible for granting homesteads and collecting fees. A Crown timber agent was located in Edmonton in 1883, largely to oversee timber berths and collect timber dues.

The initial land reservation for Banff in 1885 led to a separate parks administration in the Department of the Interior, and in 1899 the Dominion

Forestry Branch was established in the same department. Both agencies were close and, for a short time between 1906 and 1911, were combined under one administration. In the Hinton–Jasper region, the Jasper Forest Park of 1907 represented the first designated Dominion land area. The Dominion Forestry Branch established its presence after 1911 when the new Forest Reserves and Parks Act confirmed Jasper as a Dominion Park and also defined the area of an extended Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve.

Athabasca and Brazeau Forests

Two additional forests were added to the north end of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve, both lying east of Jasper and temporarily including parts of the previously designated Jasper Forest Park. The Brazeau Forest was bounded on the south by the Brazeau River, which was the north boundary of the Clearwater Forest, and on the north by the height of land between the Athabasca and McLeod rivers, just south of Hinton. The Athabasca Forest extended north to include the headwaters of the Smoky River. Headquarters of the Brazeau Forest was located at Coalspur on the Coal Branch railway line; Athabasca Forest at Entrance.

The forests were divided into ranger districts, each of which had one or more rangers in residence. Ranger stations were ultimately established at Edson, Lovett, Cadomin, Mountain Park, Hinton, Entrance, Brûlé, Rock Lake, Hay River, Moberly, Cabin Creek and Muskeg. To provide access, a network of trails and stopover cabins was constructed, especially during the early 1920s. These included the Bighorn Trail south to the Nordegg area, Mountain Trail to the northwest, and Lower Trail to Grande Cache. Some of these trails were improved historical trails used by Aboriginals; others were constructed by rangers as needed for patrol and fire access.



The community of Entrance on the Canadian Northern Railway, ca. 1916. The log building is headquarters of the Athabasca Forest.

MARK TRUXLER COLLECTION: COURTESY OF JACKIE HANINGTON

Forest fires were seen as an “evil” in both parks and reserves; fire control was the major focus of activity in both. With a network of trails and stopover cabins, rangers on patrol warned travellers, loggers and rail crews about fires and were able to take action on fires as they were found. The introduction of portable gasoline-powered pumps and a crude single-wire telephone system in the 1920s greatly improved the rangers’ fire-fighting effectiveness. Rangers were expected to be on patrol for most of each month during the fire season; they were allowed two days a month at home to send reports and get fresh supplies.



Map 16: Brazeau and Athabasca Forests at the north end of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve and present-day Jasper National Park—showing patrol cabin locations.
FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Jack Glen, a ranger at Entrance from 1920 to 1945, described building the cabin at Mile 58 on the Mountain Trail west of Rock Lake in the mid-1920s. The first year, he and his assistant camped at the Mile 58 site and cut and skidded the logs for the new cabin, leaving them to dry ready for them to work. The next year, on patrol in late summer, the importance of having shelter was brought home. It was a lovely morning when we broke camp to return to Mile 58 but I figured a storm was not far off. Around noon we had our first warning with a vivid flash of lightning and a peal of thunder. First came the hail, then a downpour of rain that turned to snow. A cold wind sprang up and I was chilled to the bone. I dismounted and led my saddle horse for the rest of the journey, and it was lucky for all of us that I did. Tom and Bill had ridden all the way and when we got to Mile 58 they were almost frozen and could do nothing to help themselves. I dug out the dry wood and

kindling that I had cached and soon we had a good fire going. Next morning we left for Entrance where Bill and I loaded up with cement and rubberoid for the roof. We were joined by another forest ranger from the Brûlé district, Tom Coggins, as it takes at least three men to build a cabin.



The first ranger station in Hinton was a skid-shack, 1913. Athabasca Forest Supervisor Stan Clark in doorway was a University of Toronto forester.

DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION DFB/RES 070718

First we made forms to pour the cement into. As it would take too much packing of cement for a solid wall, we had to be content with concrete blocks. The gravel was also a problem as we had to pack it quite a long way. Tom and Bill hewed the logs on the inside of the building while I made the dove-tail corners and fitted the logs. One round a day was the best I could do and when I had eleven rounds built it was high enough with an eight and a half foot [2.6 metre] wall.

For the floor we sawed each log through the centre, notched them down and staggered them, thus making a very solid floor. We put the roof on in a hurry and sawed out the opening for the door and hung it. This was all the time we could spare on the cabin that season as Bill was to go on to the Berland district to trap in the winter months and he was anxious to get away.¹⁷

They had set up a frame for a two-man whipsaw to cut the lumber needed for the door, windows and roof, sawing it all by hand on the site. The chainsaw did not arrive in Alberta until the 1940s, and it was not widely used until the mid-1950s.



Built by Forest Ranger Jack Glen, the Mile 58 (Summit) forestry patrol cabin was typical of the cabins along the mountain trails.

1937 PHOTO, JACK GLEN COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION



The Athabasca Lookout was built in 1921, the first in this area. Artist Robert Guest spent many years on this and other lookouts to the north.

COURTESY OF ROBERT GUEST

During the First World War, an advance in telephone technology produced the single-line ground-return phone line. It required only a single line of galvanized wire strung through insulators and suspended from trees or poles. Hundreds of kilometres of telephone line were strung between ranger stations. Phone links also made it reasonable to build lookouts from which to detect fires and report their locations. The first lookout in this region was the Athabasca lookout just west of Hinton, constructed in 1921. Rangers cleared a horse trail and carried lumber in with packhorses. Fred Hendrickson was the first lookout man. Jack Glen proudly commented: “Whenever Fred reported a fire to me he gave such a good description of the location that I never had the slightest difficulty finding it. It was said of Fred that if a man lit his pipe in the Athabasca Valley within his range of vision, he would see the first puff of smoke.” ¹⁸

In 1913 Stanley Clark, a new forestry graduate of the University of Toronto, became the first superintendent of the Athabasca Forest, later taking over the Brazeau Forest. Clark left the Dominion Forestry Branch in 1919, soon

after returning from wartime service. He obtained a homestead for the Entrance Ranch and went into business as a rancher, dairy farmer, guide and outfitter. He was followed as supervisor by D.M. McKenzie, W.W. Badgley and T.C. Burrows respectively, who managed the Athabasca Forest until 1930.

Expanding Access

Access to the area north of the Athabasca River was severely limited before the railway came through in 1911 because of the difficulty of crossing the Athabasca River. People could cross by rowboat if the river was not too turbulent, and two fords could be crossed by horse, but during times of high water, horses had to swim, and it was frequently too swift even for that. The Athabasca's flow in spring flood is 10 times greater than its mid-winter low.

The high-level railway bridge west of Prairie Creek made the entire north country much more accessible, and a major ranger station was set up at the old Entrance near the Canadian Northern railway station. Some time after the lines were consolidated in 1916, the bridge was marked for demolition. As Glen described:

The Canadian National Railway engineers went into conference and decided to switch the track from one side of the Athabasca over to the abandoned Grand Trunk Pacific on the other side. The reason for the change was that the numerous high wooden trestles on this section were becoming dangerous and the cost of maintaining them was prohibitive. Filling in could not be considered either. This was bad news for us as we were utterly dependent on the railway. The Jasper highway had not reached that far as yet and besides it would be four miles [6 kilometres] away and we had no connecting road.

Our bridge was to be dismantled which meant we would be completely isolated unless the Department of Public Works would be prevailed on to give us a ferry. However, Mr. Harry Davison, a multi-millionaire who owned a dude ranch on our side of the river, solved the problem by purchasing the bridge. The new proprietor of the general store, Tom Monaghan, commenced building a store across the river so

that meant we just had to have some sort of road out there. Nothing could be done about it, though, until the steel was pulled, about two years later.¹⁹

Local people with help from “forestry” (Dominion Forestry Branch) laid planks across the timbers for horses and vehicles; later a railing was added to create an illusion of safety from the long drop into the river. The province also placed a game-checking station at the east end since all traffic to the north had to pass right by it.

The bridge remains today as part of Highway 40 to Grande Cache and Grande Prairie. In 1949 Imperial Oil punched a rough road north of Entrance to Muskeg to drill a test well. The grade essentially followed the historical Indian or “Lower” forestry pack trail. This had an immediate impact, as Neil Gilliat, a retired forest ranger and later forest superintendent at Edson, recalled:

One of the greatest changes occurring to the Forestry was in the area of transportation, the effects of which could be seen on the Lower trail. Just a couple of years earlier the trip took four or five days of horse riding to travel one way. The trail was now a road, a poor one maybe, but in good weather a person could drive from beginning to end and return on the same day. The three ranger districts along the trail now had a jeep or pickup truck sitting in the corral, and horses out in the pastures getting fat.

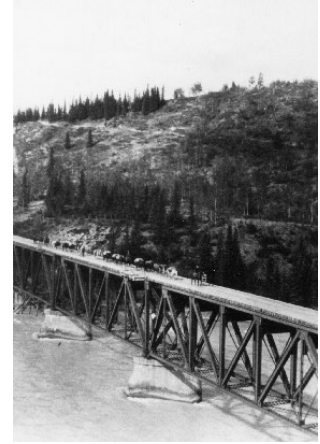
The weather still had much say about the state of travel, for a rain could turn the road into a sea of mud. Still, the rangers now lived in comparative civilization. The Forest Service had purchased a Caterpillar tractor and was into a program of building passable access roads from the Lower trail to the lookouts. The grades were somewhat primitive and a winch was necessary to negotiate many of the grades and to ford the rivers.²⁰

Ranger Districts Consolidated

The new road also opened up the area to logging for the local sawmills, as well as hunting, fishing and recreation. When the road was improved to an all-weather standard in the 1960s, the Forest Service consolidated the smaller ranger districts into just four centralized ranger stations located at Grande Cache, Hinton, Robb and Edson.

A story about Forest Ranger John Currat describes the similarity of work of a DFB forest ranger with that of the Jasper National Park warden service and both their dependence on and love for their horses. John was raised on a small farm in Switzerland and loved the mountains, forests and animals. In the 1940s he was appointed district ranger at the Moberly Ranger Station, a one-room log cabin located one- or two-days' ride north of Entrance, depending on how heavily the packhorses were loaded. The cabin was located on a lush meadow along Moberly Creek and the district included forests, foothills and mountains.

Rangers were required to have at least two horses—one to ride and one to pack. John had a fine eye for horses and once he got started, raised his own. The result was that his herd grew and thrived on the Moberly meadows. He had to spend extra time to put up hay, and worked long days to do it. The forest superintendent urged him to sell some of his horses to keep the numbers down—but this was something John could not do. Each and every horse was a friend and an individual he knew by name and habit.



Pack string crossing the Athabasca River on the old Canadian Northern Railway bridge in the early 1940s, before "safety" railings were installed. The bridge was much more convenient than swimming the horses across the river. This may have been Felix Plante, noted guide and outfitter.
GORDON WATT COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION



Rangers were expected to put up their own hay for the horses. Ranger Smith is packing his hay to the ranger station by horse from Chase's Flats along the Berland River, 1940s.

FRED TEITGE COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

One day, two wardens rode in from Jasper. They explained that they needed additional horses for their backcountry patrols and, knowing of John's reputation for raising fine horses, hoped he would sell some. Although assuring John that they would be well looked after and that they would be working and living in the same kind of mountain country, John said no—that he could not bear to part with any. In the meantime, John had yet again been told to get rid of some of his herd; and he began to think about two horses in particular who always gave him a hard time. They were just plain ornery—difficult to round up from the meadow, hard to catch in the corral, always jumpy when being packed, invariably bucking off their packs once the string got lined out on the trail, and spent the rest of the time brushing their packs against trees or banging into them to loosen up the ropes. At the end of the day at the patrol cabin when hobbled and turned loose to graze, they usually hid in the bush or headed back on the trail so it meant getting up very early to find them and bring them back. They were decidedly aggravating.

When the wardens returned a month or so later to try again, John reluctantly allowed himself to be talked into selling two horses—that problem pair. Even so, he had tears in his eyes as he watched them being led away. Then, about a month later, the wardens got word to John that those horses had broken loose on patrol when they took the hobbles off, and vanished. John said he had “gladness” in his heart when he got the news because he knew that his horses would be coming home! They showed up at the corral a few days later. John welcomed them back with oats then got in touch with the wardens to say that he was sending back their cheque, the horses were staying where they belonged.

Despite the railway lines up the Coal Branch, the mining and logging activity, and influx of hunters, fishermen and campers, the backcountry was still remote and hazardous. On 31 August 1946, Ben Knutson, the lookout or smoke spotter at Grave Flats fire lookout east of Mountain Park overlooking the Cardinal River valley, failed to respond to the scheduled daily call among lookouts and ranger stations. Although forest ranger Angus Crawford and others led several wide-ranging search parties, no sign of Ben was ever found. Eventually Ben’s two dogs turned up, still carrying the remains of their packs.²¹

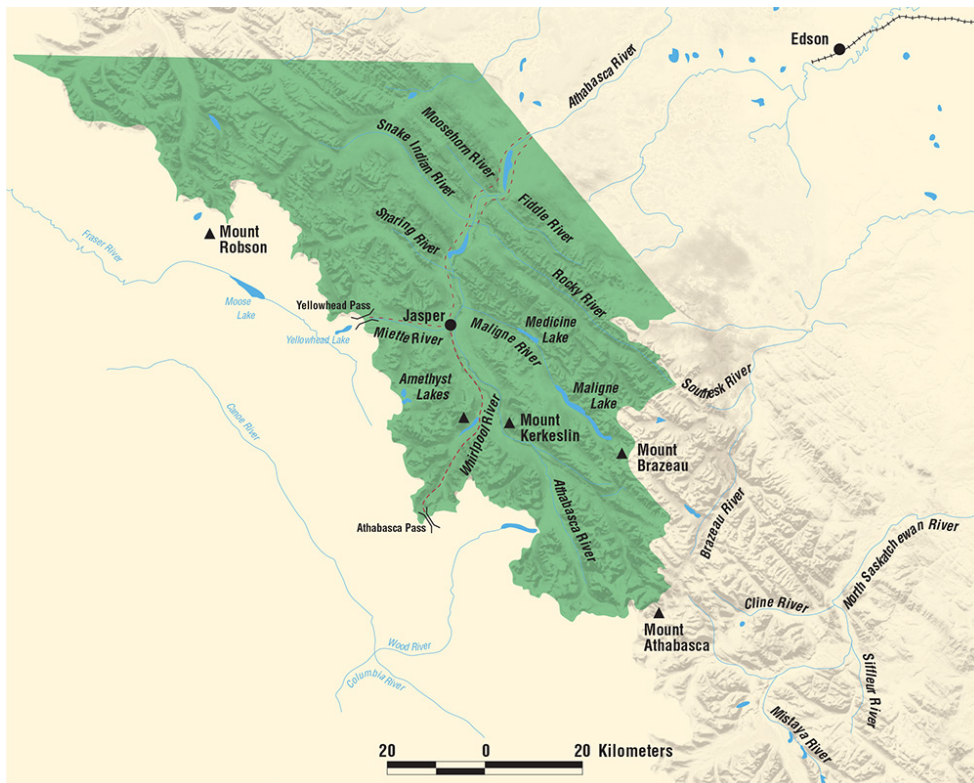
These early rangers were hired primarily for their skills in woodsmanship and ability to handle horses. They had to know how to read and write, but did not require training in forestry; there were no courses available so they learned what they needed to know as they worked with other staff. They did remarkable work, applying their capabilities to the tasks of building trails and cabins, patrolling, fighting fires, cruising timber and inspecting logging operations.

Jasper National Park –

Changing Borders, Changing Priorities

Jasper National Park historian Fergus Lothian,²² in his history of Canada’s national parks, described how, on 14 September 1907, the Government of Canada set aside the Jasper Forest Park, an area of 12,950 square kilometres

through which the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway line would run (maps 13 and 17). The area included the headwaters of the Athabasca River, and Lothian credits Frank Oliver, Edmonton member of parliament and Minister of the Interior, with the inspiration to do this. The bill to establish the park was prepared by the superintendent of forestry, R.H. Campbell. Because of a potential conflict about land allocations with the recently created province of Alberta, they decided to create the park by order-in-council under authority of the Dominion Lands Act—using Macdonald’s 1884 amendment that enabled setting lands aside “for the preservation of forest trees on the crests and slopes of the Rocky Mountains.” The name “Athabasca” was considered for the new park, but was discarded in favour of “Jasper” after the historic Jasper House managed by Jasper Hawes in 1817.



Map 17: Jasper Park 1909 to 1910. Boundary in revised order in council of 1909 puts north boundary on north of township 52 east to the 6th meridian, thence S 40° E to the Cardinal Divide, thence westerly up the ridge to the height of land between the Athabasca and North Saskatchewan river basins.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

The potential conflict with Alberta about land allocations evidently disappeared or was resolved by 1911 when the Dominion Forest Reserves and

Parks Act was approved. This act confirmed Jasper as a Dominion park, although the land area had been reduced to a ribbon only 16 kilometres on each side of the railway line—an area of only 2,590 square kilometres (map 18). This reduction provoked strong opposition, including an observation by park commissioner J.B. Harkin that “the park is so narrow that it is only a joke as far as utility for game protection is concerned.”²³ By 1914 the boundaries were largely restored to include 11,396 square kilometres (map 19). An additional 2,538 square kilometres south of Sunwapta Pass and including parts of the Columbia Icefields were added in 1927 (map 20). This move was protested by outfitters and packers in Banff who saw this southern area as their “home” territory, and the premier of Alberta also objected in view of negotiations under way to transfer its natural resources to the province—but the addition was confirmed in 1929. A final adjustment was made in 1930 upon the Transfer of Resources. The north boundary of Jasper National Park was adjusted to follow topographic features, land east of the front range was removed, the Cline watershed was excluded, and the park area south of Sunwapta Pass, including Camp Parker and the Upper Saskatchewan, was added to Banff National Park. The final area of Jasper National Park was 10,878 square kilometres (map 21).



Map 18: Jasper Park 1911-1913. The park is reduced to a narrow strip lying within 10 miles (16 kilometres) on each side of the GTP Railway, but still extending east to a point where the GTP line crosses the north border of Township 50. Two railway lines ran through the park between 1913 and 1916, they were consolidated into what became the CNR.

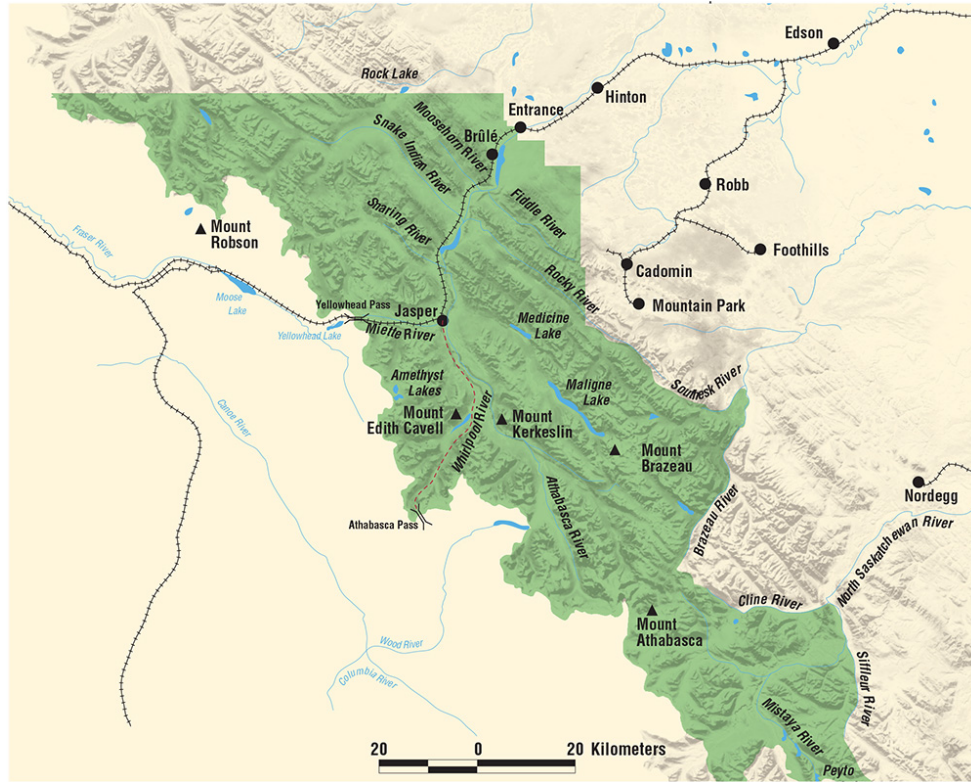
FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

After an inspection in 1909 by R.H. Campbell, superintendent of forestry at Ottawa, and Howard Douglas, commissioner of parks in Edmonton, administration of Jasper Park was initiated. John W. McLaggan was appointed in December 1909 as acting superintendent, and Colonel Maynard Rogers was appointed in 1913 as the first permanent park superintendent. Rogers' headquarters were in the newly surveyed Jasper townsite. The station had been named Fitzhugh in 1911 after Earl Hopkins Fitzhugh, a Grand Trunk Pacific vice-president. The community was renamed Jasper in 1913 when the townsite survey had been completed, and the railway followed suit with the station name.²⁴ Three early policy decisions had both immediate and long-term implications: expulsion of private land holders from the park, establishment of a fire control organization, and “management” of wildlife.



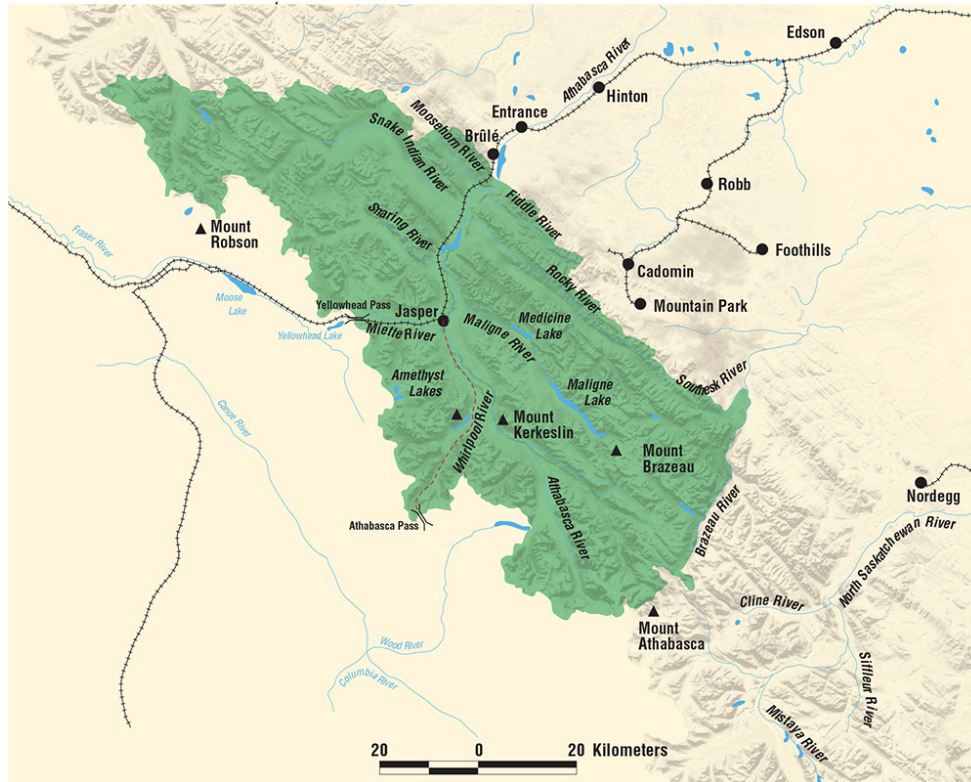
Map 19: Jasper Park 1914-1926. Original park area largely restored and extended north to include Township 51, lands added east of the front range and lands draining south and east into the Brazeau and Southesk River, which became part of the new boundary.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST



Map 20: Jasper Park 1927-1929. Park area extended south to include the Upper North Saskatchewan River basin and Mistaya River bordered on the east by the Cline and Siffleur Rivers.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST



Map 21: Jasper National Park with changes of 1929 and 1930. North and east boundaries changed to largely follow heights of land, excluding Brûlé Lake area. Head of North Saskatchewan and Mistaya River areas transferred to Banff National Park except for the Cline and Siffleur watersheds that were designated as provincial lands.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Removal of Aboriginal Residents from the Park, 1910

Once the park was established, the federal government and park officials undertook to remove people who were living in the park, viewed at the time as “squatters” who would detract from the pristine image that the government had created for Jasper Park.²⁵ Most were Métis families of Iroquois and European descent who had arrived in the early fur trading days.²⁶ In 1909, the records showed seven farms operating in the upper Athabasca valley, owned by John and Marie Moberly; Ewan and Madeleine Moberly; William Moberly; Adolphus Moberly; Adam and Fresnine Joachim; Isadore Findlay; and Lewis and Suzette Swift. These families and others, described by MacGregor as “the natives of the Jasper valley, the self-reliant mixture of Métis, Cree, Stoney and Iroquois—the Cardinals, Karacontés [Kwaragkwantes], Callihoos, Plantes, Gauthiers, Finlays and the Moberlys”²⁷ and Joachims, lived off the land by

hunting, fishing, gathering, raising garden crops, and growing oats and hay for their cows and horses.²⁸ Some of the cleared areas created by these settlers are still visible in photos taken five years later by surveyor M.P. Bridgland.



The John Moberly family home site in July 1910, soon after their departure. Photo by R.C.W. Lett, Colonization Agent for the Grand Trunk Pacific, whose horses can be seen swimming out on the far shore.

BRUCE PEEL SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARIES.



First Warden Station at Bedson, ca. 1916. Warden Jack Robson with neck yoke and water pails with unidentified man at the cabin.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JJMA JAS 993-37-11C

In 1909, Chief Forest Ranger in Edmonton J.W. McLaggan went to Jasper as government commissioner to appraise the settlers' buildings and negotiate a settlement for eviction.²⁹ The heads of the six Métis families accepted a cash payout and were told they could move anywhere they wanted, outside of the Jasper Park boundaries. In 1910 John Moberly moved to Prairie Creek. Isadore Findlay found his way to Shiningbank Lake about 40 kilometres northeast of Edson. Ewan, Adolphus, and William Moberly along with Adam Joachim chose Grande Cache. The descendants in Grande Cache had their land ownership questioned in the early 1960s. Fortunately, James Shand Harvey was able to write a statement that he was present at a meeting with McLaggan at the Gregg's on Prairie Creek in 1910 in which he heard those promises made.³⁰ Shand Harvey was born in 1880 on the Island of Mauritius, attended Eton, and was commissioned in the British army. He came to Canada in 1905 to see the country and stayed, working on the 14th Base Line Survey, and became a guide and outfitter, trapper and forest ranger. His home was at Entrance and he was the subject of historian J.G. MacGregor's book *Pack Saddles to Tête Jaune Cache*.

Only one family was able to secure their property inside the park when people were removed to adjacent lands. Homesteaders Lewis and Suzette Swift had built their farm about 9 kilometres north of the Jasper townsite under the Palisades. The government attempted to move them off this land, but Lewis Swift was able to argue his rights and obtained title to a quarter section on 18 September 1911. The Swifts had shown their determination in 1908 when GTP surveyors threatened to run the line through their house. They apparently held off the surveyors at gunpoint for three days until the line was moved.³¹ Park officials seemed eager to preserve a sanctuary for tourists, even at the expense of the rights of those living in the area.³² In 1926 the government offered to buy the Swifts' property for \$6,000 (about \$70,000 in 2004 dollars), which they refused. During the Depression, the government stalled on the Swifts' offer to sell so they sold to the A.C. Wilby family from England in 1935 for \$8,000 (about \$117,000 in 2004 dollars) and moved into Jasper. The Wilbys built a dude ranch, unfortunately destroying Swift's buildings in the process, but the venture was not successful. A few years later,

after Mr. Wilby died in 1947, the property was again offered to the government, this time for \$70,000 (about \$721,000 in 2004 dollars). Again, the government stalled, so in 1952 businessman Gordon Bried bought it to run as a tourist operation. The land was finally purchased by the federal government in 1962 for more than \$250,000 (\$1.7 million in 2004 dollars) and is now used by the National Parks and others as a training facility and meeting place.



Opposite page: James Shand Harvey at his home in "Old" Entrance on the north side of the Athabasca River, ca. 1960.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 34-4J

Construction of the railway had one additional impact. Lewis Swift was appointed by park superintendent J.W. McLaggan as the first game guardian in Jasper on 20 January 1910, with instructions to patrol Jasper Park to protect game and prevent fires. On 2 February he drove to Jasper House and "found Jasper House tore down, by indications found the Mr. Stevens party of Grand

Trunk surveyors had tore it down.”³³ Four days later Swift left by train for Edmonton and reported the incident to McLaggan. The surveyors evidently used the wood to make a raft to cross the river; such was the ignominious end of Jasper House.

Fire Control in the Park

One of the main reasons for creating the warden service was to fight forest fires that threatened the visitor experience and safety in the park.³⁴ In Jasper, park wardens patrolled the main travel routes by horse and vehicle, and by horse in warden districts in the backcountry. All fires were fought wherever they could be reached. Park officials were unaware that this sustained effort would, over time, leave a legacy of forests that had grown old beyond historical precedent and would present many challenges to today’s managers. In later policy documents, Parks Canada acknowledged that there had been a bias for enhancing tourism opportunities at the expense of ecological integrity.³⁵

The park was organized into warden districts, each under the responsibility of a warden. The initial focus was on prevention and control of forest fires and on wildlife management. Later, during the middle decades of the twentieth century, the focus was on tourist management and protection from damage by fire and people. Wardens were selected more for their ability and enthusiasm to work in the bush than for educational achievements. They did not generally perform research or help to guide policy directions by providing feedback to managers. Each warden patrolled his area looking for fires and poachers while also coming to the aid of lost hikers and climbers. Often the wardens became very possessive of their area after spending months living alone in remote warden cabins.³⁶ As one retired warden remarked, “We each became very attached to our particular region. That was your piece of land and you didn’t want anyone to mess it up. It got to the point that you didn’t like to see hikers or horses come into your part of the world.”³⁷

Wildlife Enhancement and Predator Control in the Park

Two game wardens started work patrolling the park for poachers and other illegal activity in 1910. Although some conservation measures were taken, such as preserving certain game species, the emphasis for management in these early years was clearly to attract tourists to the park. Colonel Rogers, the first permanent superintendent, apparently ran his post like an autocrat, forcing his view of the park on everyone.³⁸ In the style of many of his contemporaries, he enforced the park vision of the day by creating trails, roads, and new tourist accommodations. He also illustrated the prevailing philosophy of acting to enhance the quality of the park. For example in his annual report for 1914, he stated: “There is much room for us to improve the condition of aquatic life within the park, by a definite plan of wild rice planting, thus producing a favourite food for ducks, geese and swans.”³⁹

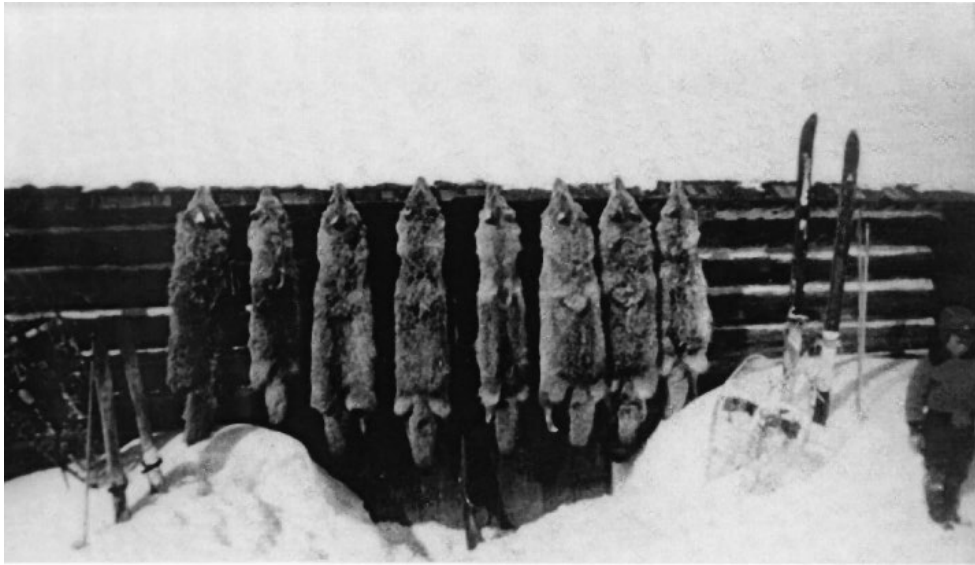
Rogers also set a more profound precedent with long-term implications by advocating a vigorous program of predator control:

Wolves—timber and coyote—are unfortunately increasing also, and I purpose in augmenting a definite policy of trying to lessen this evil. In this connection, I would suggest that our wardens be permitted to retain the bounty and also the hide of all wolves destroyed by them, as an extra inducement to persevere in trying to destroy them.⁴⁰

Although elk seem to have been present in the early 1800s, they had vanished some time before James Hector commented on their disappearance in 1859 during his inspection of the Jasper area. After the reintroduction of elk (1917) from Yellowstone National Park, the herds grew considerably in size, perhaps aided by predator control programs. Elk were particularly concentrated and visible in the semi-open montane valley, fulfilling one of the park objectives to ensure “viewable” wildlife. As a retired warden said:

The official policy in that time was to shoot all predators. The tourists wanted to see the Bambi deer beside the road and we were there to keep them safe. They used any excuse to thin the population of carnivores. Me

and a buddy shot eight grizzlies one year and we thought we were doing great.⁴¹



Furs from a winter of trapping displayed on a cabin wall.

FRANK JONES COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION.

Following this period, in the early 1960s, park managers began to show more concern for resource management and not just attracting tourists. However, resource management was still very different from today's practices that seek to maintain ecological integrity. Managers at that time were more concerned with reacting to problems that arose and used very different—and sometimes contradictory—methods to solve these predicaments. Predator control programs to exterminate large carnivores, for example, contributed to the instability of a system that had been greatly altered by elk reintroduction. This in turn led to other measures to rebalance the system. One Parks Canada employee said:

In the 1940s the elk numbers were getting huge, the population was up to 3,000. There was a rabies scare in the 1950s and wardens were out shooting and poisoning all large predators. By the '60s the elk were eating themselves out of house and home and were dying beside the road. We slaughtered elk straight through into the early '70s to the tune of 2,600 animals. We were always reacting to a change we made earlier. There was never any foresight into what consequences our actions would have.⁴²

Frank Camp, retired park warden, started in 1946 after serving in the Royal Canadian Navy. Son of park warden George Camp, Frank had been raised in Jasper and had travelled many of the park trails with his father. One of his early projects as a warden was to shoot grizzly bears in the backcountry where they had been breaking into cabins. He recalled that during the late 1940s,

wolves were on the increase and although not proven conclusively were considered a contributing factor in the decline of the sheep. This observation in part helped support the park's attitude toward wolves as an undesirable park resident. All wardens were encouraged to shoot, snare or poison all the wolves they could. Coyotes also came under this classification and often a warden's ability and effectiveness was measured by the number of pelts he brought to town each month. [The Devona] Warden was usually number one having the Devona district. Excellent winter range for game with open hillsides and grasslands gave him the advantage. One warden had Russian wolf hounds that could run down and kill coyotes on frozen lakes, another kept cougar hounds to tree cougars. On the Brazeau I was having some success with wolf snares. Frankly speaking the predators didn't have much chance of survival.⁴³

The focus on predator control in the park continued into the early 1970s. Then, both predator control and elk slaughter were discontinued in an attempt to try to restore natural processes. Another short-lived attempt to control elk populations in the 1970s involved driving them out of the park into the Camp 1 region of the Hinton forest management area where they could be hunted.



A herd of elk on the Pyramid Lake bench above Jasper. The elk, first reintroduced to the park in 1917, were shipped in by rail from the Yellowstone area and fed by the Jasper National Park wardens.

JASPER YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES JYMA PA 18-49

In the meantime, in the Brazeau and Athabasca forests to the east, trappers and hunters were encouraged to take predators, and the bounty for wolves was increased to \$10 in 1941 (about \$125 in 2004 dollars). Then, in the early 1950s, an extensive epidemic of rabies broke out in northern Alberta. To try to prevent its spread south into populated areas, the Alberta government hired trappers to conduct a major program of predator control along a designated line across the entire province. That was discontinued after a few years when evidence of rabies disappeared. However, Billy McGee, a trapper and predator control officer, was stationed at Entrance until the late 1960s to try to reduce predation on the large ungulates, including caribou, elk and moose. His efforts led to a build-up of caribou in the Berland and Smoky river areas in the 1960s. The concern about wildlife populations remains in forest reserves today, but interest is now directed to all species and to management of habitat as part of the overall approach to sustainable management.

Transfer of Resources and the Alberta Forest Service, 1930

Although Alberta became a province in 1905, it did not receive the rights to its natural resources until the Transfer of Resources Act of 1930. During those 25 years, the Dominion Forestry Branch of the Department of the Interior

protected the forests in Alberta and collected dues from timber sales. This arrangement, by which all lands were under federal control, also facilitated establishment of pre-1930 national parks, which, in addition to Banff (1885) and Jasper (1907), included Elk Island (1906), Waterton Lakes (1911) and Wood Buffalo (1922). The Transfer of Resources also facilitated a final adjustment of boundaries between the national parks, which were to stay under federal jurisdiction, and the forest reserves, which were to be transferred to the government of Alberta.



“Old” Entrance, 1923. Photo shows the Canadian Northern Railway water tank, the Woodley Brothers General Store and the community schoolhouse up the hill. A “new” Entrance grew on the south side of the river on the consolidated rail line on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway grade.”

ROY WOODLEY COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

Establishing the Alberta Forest Service

The Transfer of Resources to Alberta went into effect 1 October 1930. That fall, the province formed the Alberta Forest Service to assume responsibility for forests, and resolved to do as good a job as the Dominion Forestry Branch. Most of the Dominion Forestry Branch staff transferred to the new provincial service. Alberta’s first forest laws and regulations remained essentially the same as those of the Dominion Forestry Branch. Unfortunately, the hard times of the 1930s economic depression and drought years forced Alberta to cut back drastically on government services, including forest service staff. Alberta

was then a “have-not” province with very limited revenues. As Director of Forestry Ted Blefgen remarked in 1946, “During the depression years we were definitely informed that no money could be made available and during the war years the necessary labour could not be secured.”⁴⁴ As a result, the Alberta Forest Service focussed on forest protection and inspection of timber cutting areas. There was no opportunity yet to practice sustained-yield forest management, nor were staff trained in that discipline until 1949.

Before 1930, the community of present-day Entrance, on the south side of the Athabasca River, was the last station before the Jasper Park boundary, the area of which also included Brûlé and parts of the land east of Brûlé (map 20). As Blefgen explained in 1931:

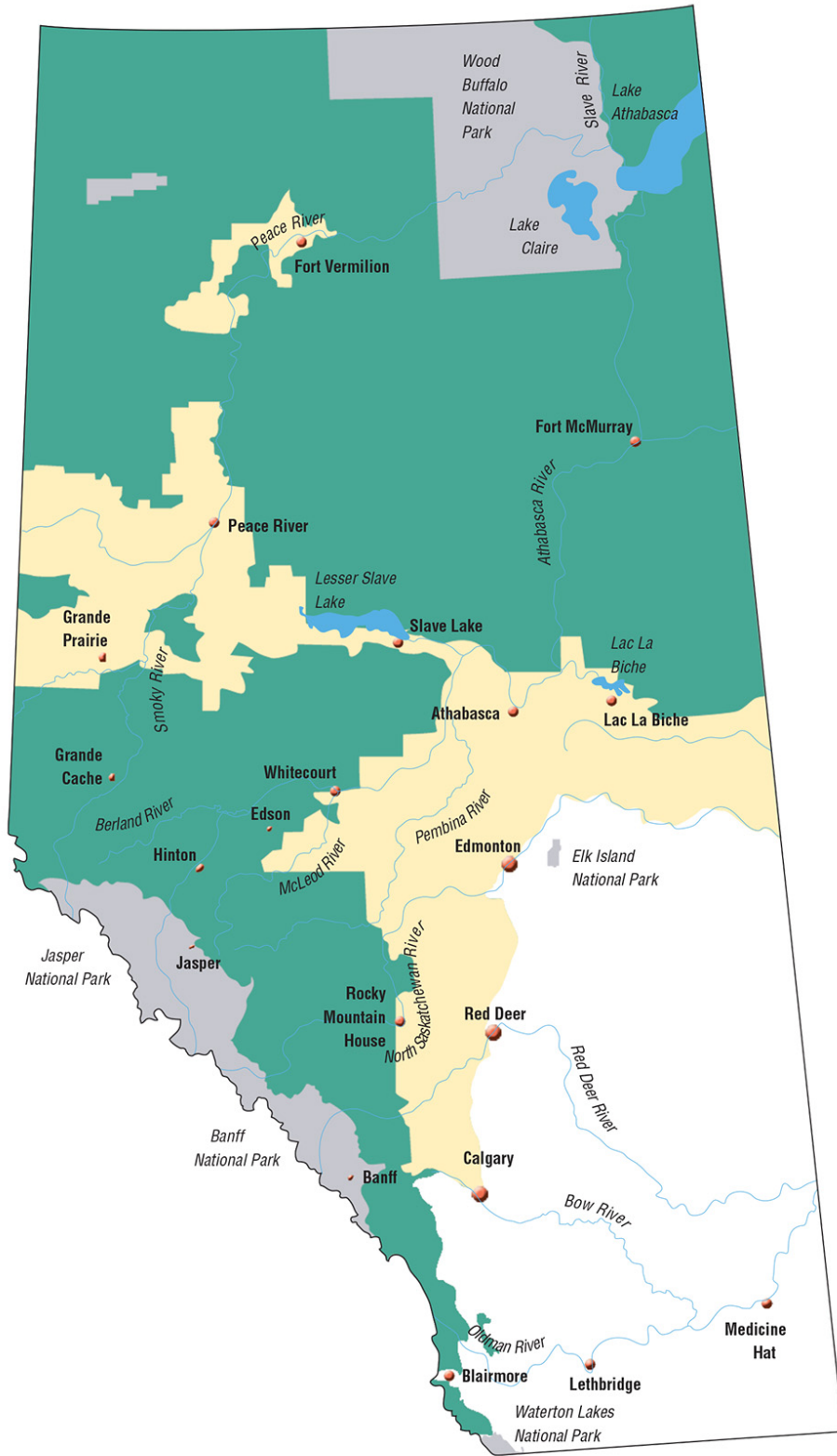
Some time before the transfer of resources ... a survey of the Banff and Jasper national parks was undertaken with a view to eliminating from the National Parks, those areas: 1) which were, or would likely become areas required for industrial development; 2) unsuitable for park purposes; or 3) for the purposes of establishing a more definite and more satisfactory boundary than had previously existed.⁴⁵

According to Blefgen, 3,534.87 square kilometres were added to the forest reserves and 2,128.24 square kilometres were added to the parks, particularly adding area from the Clearwater Forest to Banff National Park. His comments also referred to a “considerable area ... added to the Athabasca Forest in the vicinity of Brûlé, and to the Brazeau Forest northwest of Luscar.” The present area of Jasper National Park is 10,878 square kilometres, suggesting that its area had been reduced by 2,076 square kilometres as a result of this 1930 adjustment. Park boundaries before and after 1930 are illustrated in maps 20 and 21.



Alberta Forest Service rangers at the Rock Lake cabin on the Mountain Trail about 1940. (l-r) unidentified, Ted Hammer, and Jack Glen.

JACK GLEN COLLECTION, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION



Map 22: Green and Yellow areas as declared in 1948. The yellow was land judged to be potentially agricultural, the green to remain as forest.

As a result of financial difficulties during the Depression, Alberta Forest Service staff was greatly reduced, and most of the remaining positions became seasonal. The Brazeau and Athabasca forests were combined in 1932, and headquarters for the new Brazeau–Athabasca Forest was centralized at Coalspur with Fred Edgar as forest supervisor. When Eric Huestis was appointed supervisor of the Brazeau–Athabasca Forest in 1938, he discovered that to visit any part of the Athabasca region from Coalspur he had first to catch a train to Edson and then transfer to the train to Entrance—so he had the combined headquarters moved to Edson instead. Huestis was succeeded by A.G. Smith as Brazeau–Athabasca supervisor, and Donald Buck filled that position from 1941 to 1956.

Timber production in Alberta increased greatly between 1939 and 1945 in support of the war effort, and afterwards to meet post-war building demands. In his 1946 annual report, Huestis noted that in the first year of provincial control of resources, 1931–32, the cut amounted to 51 million board feet (120,000 cubic metres).⁴⁶ In 1940–41, it was 186 million fbm (438,600 cubic metres), and by 1945–46, it was 300 million fbm (almost 700,000 cubic metres).

The Forests Act of 1930 stated that all forest products must be manufactured within the province. This was intended to ensure that at least the primary manufacturing jobs stayed in Alberta. However, in response to wartime needs, an order-in-council was passed in 1944–45 granting permission to ship fire-killed pulpwood for manufacturing paper out of the province. In 1945, Blefgen stated that the opportunity was “now being taken advantage of. Large quantities of this class of material are being shipped to Ontario and pulp mills in the United States.”⁴⁷ The restriction to fire-killed wood was intended to encourage investments in Alberta-based mills that would use “green” wood.

Post-War Reconstruction and Land Use Zoning

In 1946 the Alberta Post War Reconstruction Committee made five recommendations about forestry: conduct a forest inventory, expand fire

prevention, start a long-term program of reforestation, inaugurate training programs for men already in the forestry service and people wishing to join it, and establish additional tree nurseries.⁴⁸ These points were remarkably similar to those made 60 years earlier by J.H. Morgan in 1886. There had been little response to pleas for additional funding for the Alberta Forest Service until after 1947 when Imperial Oil's major discovery well, Leduc No. 1, came in and petroleum revenues began to flow into the provincial treasury. But the Alberta forest area was large and still mostly inaccessible, and the resources to protect and develop it were few.

The years 1948 and 1949 were eventful ones for Alberta forestry, marking the start of a growing commitment to achieve sustained-yield forest management and the ability to achieve it. To rationalize settlement and provide a focus for forest protection and management, an order-in-council was passed on 9 January 1948 delineating lands potentially available for settlement (the Yellow Area)* from lands to be retained as forests (the Green Area), as shown in map 22. The White Area in the southeastern portion of the province was largely in private ownership. As well, a federal-provincial agreement provided a federal capital grant and shared-cost management for 14 years on the three southern foothills Forests*—Crowsnest, Bow River and Clearwater—through the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board.⁴⁹ These actions marked the beginning of modernization of the Alberta Forest Service and a clearer definition of its mandate. The major capital project on the Eastern Rockies was construction of the Forestry Trunk Road from Coleman to Nordegg, which began in 1949. The Alberta government later extended the road from Nordegg to Hinton. The final connection, the bridge over the Brazeau River, was formally opened in 1963.⁵⁰

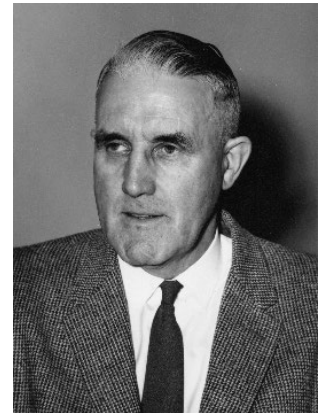
* The Yellow Area designation was later dropped as those lands were developed for agriculture and passed into private ownership, but the province continues to be divided between the Green Area (predominantly Crown land, mostly forested and managed for multiple use) and the White Area

(predominantly privately owned, mostly agricultural, residential and industrial).

* These three Forests include the watersheds of rivers that were and are regarded as crucial for Prairie water supplies. The more northerly forest areas feed north-flowing rivers through the boreal forests where water supplies were not given the same priority.

Eric Huestis and Reg Loomis – Forestry Pioneers

In 1948, Eric S. Huestis became Alberta's director of forestry upon the ill health of incumbent Ted Blefgen. Huestis was an Alberta forester who started work with the Dominion Forest Service in 1923 and moved to the newly formed Alberta Forest Service in 1930 when the natural resources were transferred to Alberta from the federal government. He studied forestry at the University of British Columbia and spent his working career in Alberta. His field experience took him to the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve, from the Crowsnest to Athabasca, and in the forest reserves of Cypress Hills and Lesser Slave. He moved to head office in Edmonton in 1939 as acting assistant director before taking over as director.

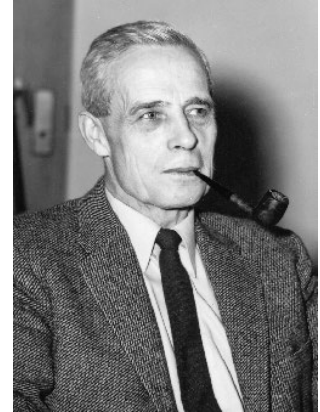


*Eric S. Huestis, 1970.
Huestis was Director of
Forestry (1948-1963) and
Deputy Minister until he
retired in 1966.*

ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION
COLLECTION

Huestis and Blefgen had worked closely to strengthen the forest service and to advance forestry practice. Besides Huestis' promotion in 1948, three significant events took place that year: a contract for aerial photography, mapping and forest inventory; the hiring of Reginald D. Loomis; and recruitment of eight new forestry graduates from the University of British Columbia. These actions helped to set Alberta firmly on the path of sustained-yield forestry.

Reg Loomis had been recruited to take charge of the new forest inventory and was strongly influential in developing a program of sustained-yield management. Loomis was raised on a farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec that also had a woodlot from which the family selectively cut lumber and fuel as needed. After obtaining a degree in forestry from the University of New Brunswick in 1930, he worked for government and industry in Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia, developing particular skills in interpreting forest conditions from aerial photographs. Looking back, Loomis said that he was appalled by the unsustainable forestry practices he saw in eastern Canada and brought that realization with him when he came to Alberta in 1949.⁵¹



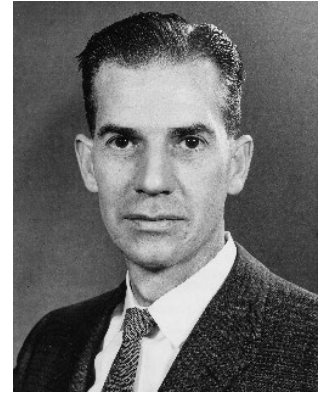
Reginald D. Loomis, head of forest management for the Alberta Forest Service in the 1960s, set high standards for forestry practices.

ALBERTA GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPH,
ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION
COLLECTION

Eric Huestis visited the University of British Columbia to speak to the graduating forestry class of 1949. As a result, eight foresters were recruited to come to Alberta. The eight graduating foresters added a major infusion of professional talent. Four of the new recruits became well-known foresters, each of whom contributed to forestry in the region. James D. Clark was posted to the Clearwater Forest. In 1955 he joined North Western Pulp & Power, later becoming woodlands manager. Owen Bradwell, a forest engineer, was first assigned to the Crowsnest Forest and Calgary with responsibilities for the new Forestry Trunk Road. He moved to North Western Pulp & Power in 1957 to work on the company road system and later served as mayor of Hinton in the 1960s. Charles Jackson was posted to the Edson Forest, then moved to Edmonton to work in forest management, and later collaborated with Reg Loomis to work out operating details for the Hinton forest management agreement, leading to the first Operating Ground Rules. Robert G. Steele started with forest inventory, and later became director of forestry, and then deputy minister.

Revised Forests Act 1949

A revised Forests Act was passed on 29 March 1949—the first major revision since the hastily written act of 1930. The new act reflected an Alberta flavour developed through the experiences and financial difficulties of the 1930s and 1940s and government resolve both to develop the provincial economy and to properly manage the forests. It included a far-sighted new clause that stated (Section 96) that the government may:



Deputy Minister Robert G.

(Bob) Steele, 1974.

ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION
COLLECTION

[enter] into an agreement, to be described as a forest management license ... for the management of public lands ... reserved for the sole use of the licensee for the purpose of growing continuously and perpetually successive crops of forest products to be harvested in approximately equal annual or periodic cuts adjusted to the sustained yield capacity of the lands.⁵²

The wording of the revision is interesting. Of significance is the term “sustained yield” —the first time it had been used in Alberta legislation. In his report for 1949, Huestis noted that the annual lumber cut had increased to 390 million fbm (920,000 cubic metres) in 1948, and commented that it was “quite evident that we are now over-cutting.” However, he had also observed that as a result of extensive forest fires in the past, there was much timber of a size too small for sawlogs and ties—commonly 30 centimetres diameter at breast height* and over for sawlogs and 25.7 centimetres for ties—but it would be suitable for pulp mills. Huestis reported that he had been approached by pulp and paper industries; in fact, he first referred to the possibility of a pulp or paper mill as early as 1946.⁵³

* Diameter measured at the standard height above ground of 1.3 metres (then 4.5 feet).

The revised Forests Act also reflected several other concerns. One concern was the net cost to the government for forestry. For example, as early as 1920, Dominion Forester R.H. Campbell reported that revenues received from the forests were as yet small compared to the cost of forest protection, regeneration and management, but he felt the expenditures were justified and that in time the forests would make financial returns similar to those of European forests. Since Alberta was still a “have-not” province, industry-generated revenues were clearly seen as important. Also evident was an interest in developing sustainable economic opportunities for rural communities. The concept was to negotiate timber harvesting rights as part of a package of shared rights and responsibilities. The investor would gain a sustainable timber supply and, in return, would assume the full costs of forest management, including forest inventory, roads, harvesting, site preparation and regeneration, payment of land rent and timber dues, and a share of the cost of forest protection. The government would gain revenues from dues and related economic activity, and would have oversight of the operations through detailed forest management plans submitted by industry for approval within 10-year intervals, supplemented by annual operating plans.

Alberta's First Forest Inventory

Until 1949 there had been no Alberta forest inventory, and therefore no basis on which to develop forest management plans. Huestis' concerns about over-cutting reflected both the limited areas of timber with the size and quality required for lumber and ties, and the lack of knowledge about the kind and extent of the forest as a whole. Huestis was pleased that he was able to get approval to contract with Photographic Surveys Corporation on 2 November 1949, to take aerial photography and prepare base maps of the Green Area of Alberta. The rationale he presented was based on post-1947 petroleum exploration needs. There was neither a complete set of aerial photographs for the province nor a set of base maps, both were in strong demand by oil companies. Huestis also secured approval to include a forest inventory for the southern half of the province in the contract. As Huestis explained in 1948 after the Green Area had been established:

Now that a definite reservation has been made of all the producing areas, ... it is necessary that we consider very carefully the proper handling of the timber resources ... so that we will have a perpetual yield for ourselves and those who come after ... to make a complete inventory of our forest resources. With this picture and an estimate of the annual increment, we will be able to determine the amount which should be cut each year, taking into consideration average losses through various factors such as fire, insects, etc.⁵⁴

The forest inventory was conducted through a combination of aerial photographs and on-the-ground measurements of tree and forest conditions—a process commonly referred to as timber cruising. In these early cruises, areas of forest stands, or areas of trees with similar characteristics, were identified on the aerial photographs and their boundaries transferred to forest cover maps. Cruisers then located those stands in the forest and systematically measured the trees on quarter-acre [0.10-hectare] plots. Measurements of tree diameters and heights enabled cruisers to calculate the volume of wood on the plot and to estimate the total volume in each of the forest cover types.

The Photographic Surveys contract was funded entirely through the Alberta Department of Lands and Forests, before the later federal-provincial agreements for forest inventories were established. It reflected Huestis' commitment to do proper forest management in Alberta. As Loomis later remarked:



Early Dominion forest inventory crew, 1913.
DOMINION FORESTRY BRANCH, ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

The inventory has shown that [spruce] has been over-exploited and there is a serious shortage to sustain indefinitely the present production. But on the other hand, the inventory has shown that [there is] a reasonably plentiful supply of both pines and poplars, the other two major species groups ... in Alberta. The reason for this unbalanced condition in utilization has been ... lack of extensive markets for the other species and sizes ... the preponderance of new softwood tree growth is more suited by size for pulpwood harvesting than for lumber.⁵⁵

Development of a Wood Pulp Industry

It was against this backdrop of the beginnings of technical sustained-yield forest management in Alberta that the wood pulp industry was developed in the early 1950s. The forests were in public ownership, administered by the Alberta Forest Service. Although local forest industries were important, there were concerns about their sustainability in light of utilization technology at

the time, and the lack of markets for the extensive post-fire forests not suitable for sawlogs and ties. With an increased focus on protection from fires, increased logging was also expected to become the primary disturbance in the forest, setting the stage for renewal of vigorous young forests. The province was aware of problems with industry and provincial forest management in other parts of Canada as a result of often short-sighted leasing arrangements and resolved to do better in Alberta. Although oil revenues were starting to increase, Alberta was still financially weak. Forest-based revenues had to be generated to help cover the costs of forest protection and management. A proposed new pulp mill was seen as a major step towards achieving forest management, while at the same time increasing forest-based revenues.

CHAPTER SEVEN

North Western Pulp & Power: From Concept to Construction, 1949–1955



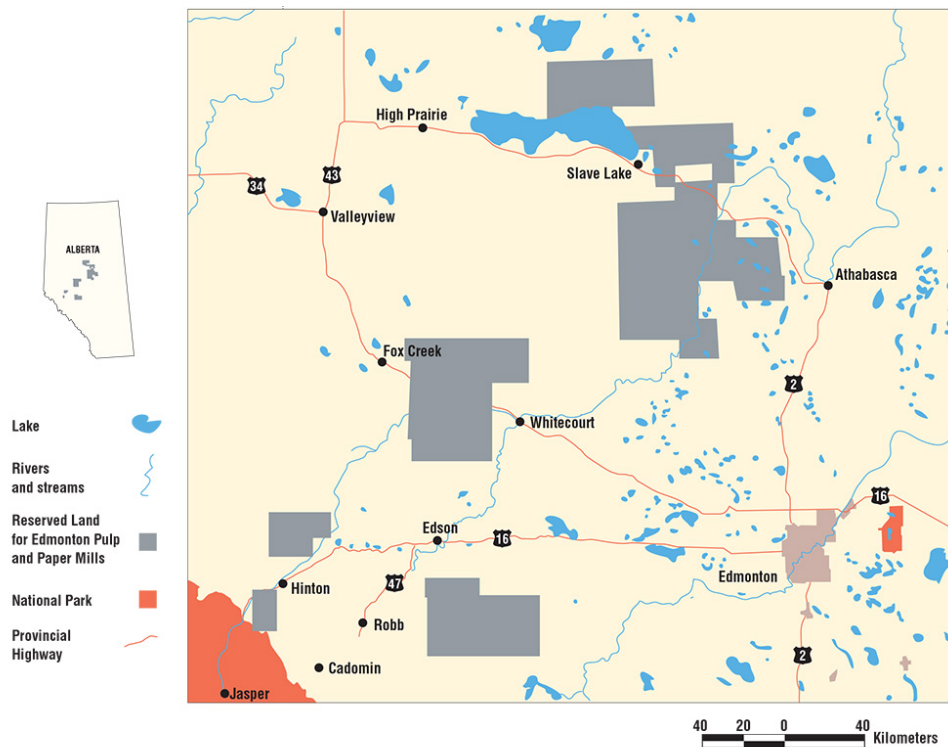
“I recall my first reconnaissance flight over the two million acres [810,000 hectares] of choice timberland below that I was committed to manage. I was not so much overwhelmed, although that certainly gave me pause, as [I was] awed by its magnitude --”

DESMOND CROSSLEY, 1984 REFLECTING ON HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE FOREST MANAGEMENT AREA IN 1955

The Forest Management Lease Concept – Early Interest

The revised Forests Act with its new provision for a “forest management license” was enacted on 29 March 1949. Combined with the Green Area order-in-council, the contract for the first complete aerial photography and

mapping of the province, and the start of the first forest inventory for Alberta, the stage was set for sustained-yield forest management and development of the Alberta wood pulp industry.



Map 23: Edmonton Pulp Mills: Swezey's 1949 pulpwood lease proposal.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

The first recorded pulpwood lease agreement was with Edmonton Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd., signed in December 1949. The lease described an area of about 388,500 hectares to supply 100,000 cords (240,000 cubic metres) per year for a 180- tonne-per-day newsprint, paper, and pulp mill to be built near Edmonton. The principals were listed in the annual report as R.O. Swezey of Montreal, L. Glenn Fasset of Minnesota, and William M. Owens of California. Swezey was a civil engineer and investment dealer in Quebec with experience in power projects, logging, forestry work and exploration. As president of Newman, Swezey and Co., he was involved in “extensive exploration, natural resources, throughout the hinterlands of Canada (coast to coast).”¹

The way the wood supply area for this first lease was described is interesting. Instead of a single area, Swezey selected six dispersed blocks: the 1909 timber berth area east of Brûlé Lake, the Obed area, Wolf Lake south of

Edson, and the Swan Hills-Whitecourt, Smith-Fawcett, and Marten Mountain areas north and east of Lesser Slave Lake (map 23). All blocks contained merchantable timber. Two of the blocks were on the present-day West Fraser forest management area at Hinton. From a total of 1.17 million hectares, Swezey would select 388,500 hectares—either from within any of these blocks or in combination with any intervening areas that were not otherwise allocated. In essence, it appeared to be an opportunity to select any area in that region west and north of Edmonton. The agreement stated that the mill would be located in the Edmonton area; all blocks were on or near railways, so he perhaps envisaged rail supply of wood. Despite the flexibility and apparent advantage provided by this agreement, Swezey was evidently unable to attract investors and the agreement was cancelled by ministerial order two years later on 19 November 1951.

Frank Ruben – Pulpmill Vision and the Search for Partners

This next phase of the story also started in 1949 when Frank E. Ruben first visited his newly purchased coal mine near Robb,* in the foothills country of the Coal Branch southwest of Edson. Ruben came to Alberta in 1936 from California where he had been active in the construction industry and had wildcatted for oil. For a decade he actively participated in the drilling, producing, and refining phases of Alberta's oil industry. In 1947, right after the discovery at Leduc, Ruben formed his flagship company, North Canadian Oils Ltd., and later New Pacific Coal and Oils Ltd.

When the Robb coal mine shut down and its assets were put up for tender in 1949, Ruben placed a bid and, to his surprise, was successful. When he examined his newly purchased property, he realized there was still an abundance of coal and his first desire was to find a viable market. To raise capital, he invited the Bronfman family of whiskey-distilling fame to invest in

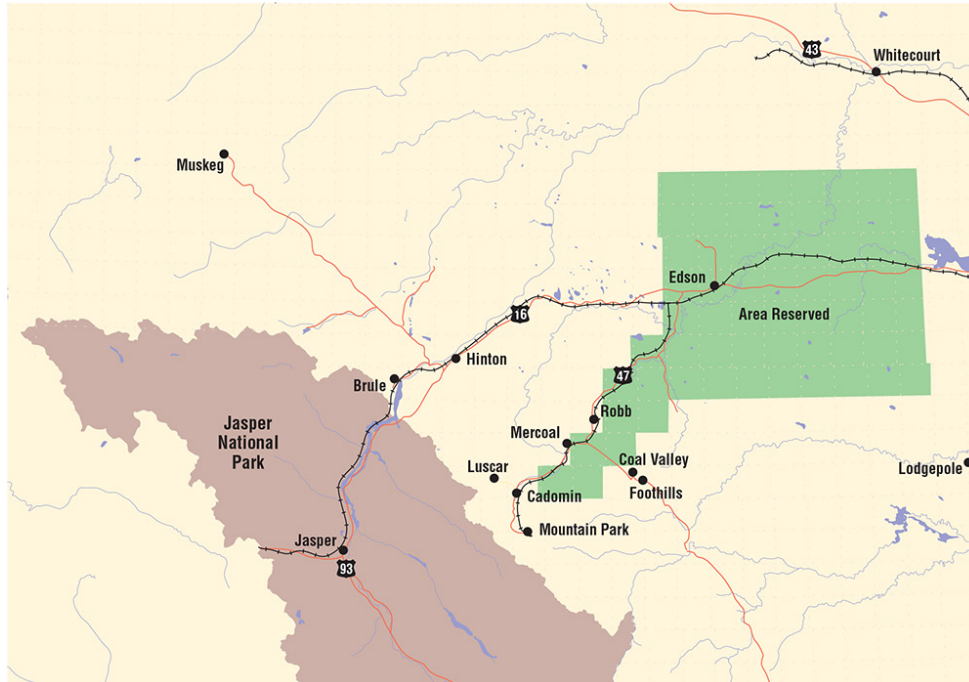


Frank E. Ruben, ca. 1980. Ruben identified the forestry development opportunity in 1951, registered North Western Pulp & Power, Ltd., and began a search for partners.

COURTESY OF THE RUBEN FAMILY

his newly formed company, Bryan Mountain Mining. His company secured a contract through Websters of Toronto, the largest coal distributor in Canada, as well as a lucrative contract with several American coal companies, and production began again. Then, when preferential freight rates were cancelled by the federal government in 1951, his losses started to mount. To salvage his investment, he had to create a local business of some kind that could use a lot of coal for power. He was impressed by the vast, seemingly untouched forest in the Edson-Robb region² and thought it an undeveloped asset that needed only money, cheap fuel and technical know-how to turn it into marketable products. He envisioned combining his coal for power generation with wood from the forests in the form of a pulp mill. With this in mind, he approached the Alberta provincial government in the persons of Nathan E. Tanner, then Minister of Lands and Forests, and his deputy John Harvie, who confirmed they were looking for groups willing and able to harvest and manage forests on a sustained-yield basis.³

* Originally named "Minehead," the name was changed in 1912, probably to honour "Baldy" Robb, prospector, rancher and freighter in the Coal Branch area. (Karamitsanis 1991)



Map 24: North Western Pulp and Power Ltd. Ruben's original 1951 pulpwood lease proposal, for a mill at Edson.
FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

On 23 May 1951, Ruben incorporated North Western Pulp & Power Ltd.—the name symbolic of his two major interests—wood pulp and coal power. Principals were listed as Frank E. Ruben, “Oil Operator of Los Angeles, California,” and Myrtle Aileen Egleston of Calgary as secretary. Two weeks later, on 8 June 1951, his negotiated agreement with the Alberta government for a pulpwood lease to support a mill at Edson was approved by order-in-council.* The first lease area rather pragmatically defined a rectangular block in which Edson lay at the centre (map 24). The initial area included a spur to the southwest up the Coal Branch, perhaps as a source of mine timbers and additional conifer pulpwood. However, the block also included land of potential agricultural value to the east of Edson and considerable aspen and balsam poplar. The initial area was a block of up to 518,000 hectares of forest land surrounding Edson to supply 180,000 cubic metres per year for a minimum 180 tonne-per-day mill.

* In this case, ordered by the lieutenant-governor by and with the advice of the executive council

(Cabinet) approving an agreement made between His Majesty the King in the right of the Province of Alberta and North Western Pulp & Power Ltd.

Edson was a logical first choice for Frank Ruben's mill. It lay at the junction of two railway lines. The Coal Branch line would serve to deliver his coal for energy from his mine at Robb and the CNR main line would provide other services and a link to markets. The agreement also made provision for land for the mill along the McLeod River northeast of Edson. Ruben was required to post a \$10,000 bond (about \$75,000 in 2004 dollars) that would be forfeited if construction did not begin by 1 May 1952.

With his 1951 agreement in hand, Frank Ruben and his partner, accountant Clive Reid, invested in studies and surveys to assess the timber and to try to determine the best processes and products.⁴ Among those with whom he discussed the project was Reg Loomis, head of the Forest Surveys Branch for the Alberta Forest Service. Maps and inventory data for that area had not yet been produced, but Loomis was skilled in the use of aerial photographs and mapping, and had begun to acquire a knowledge of the local forests and forestry. As Loomis later explained in an interview:

Ruben got somebody to lay out an area. I think that the thing was in effect before he came to me, knowing that I knew quite a bit about aerial photographs, and asked if I would look the area over and make a forest inventory without the maps. You see, at that time, there was no forest inventory done there. And there was nothing at all to indicate what could be provided in the way of wood for a pulp mill, at all....

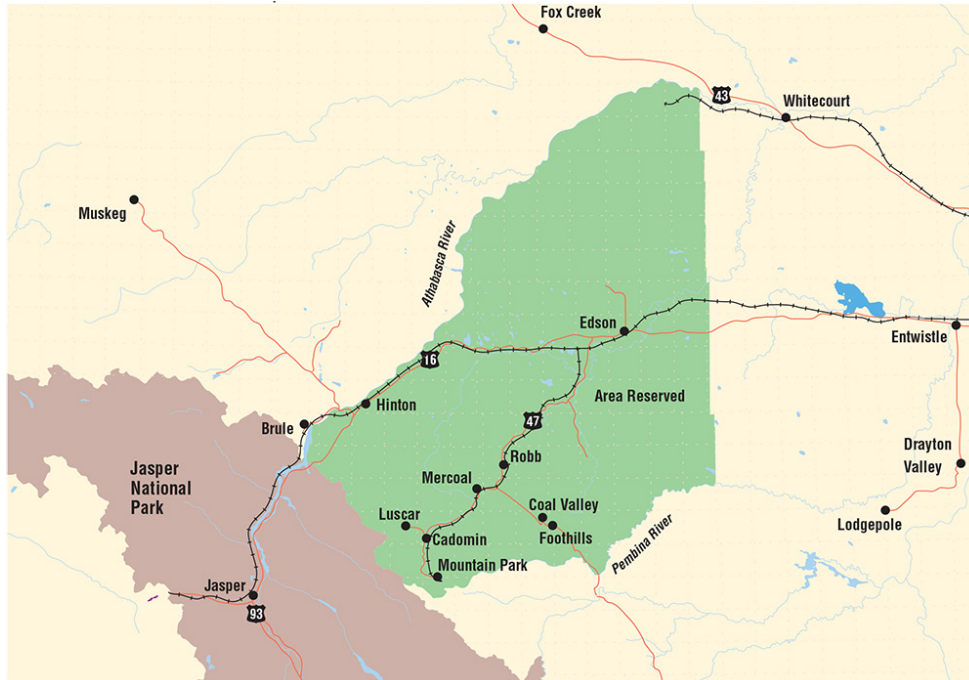
You see, the government made a bet with [Frank Ruben], that for \$10,000 [the deposit required for the lease] he couldn't get someone interested in establishing a pulp mill here. If he couldn't do it in a year, he lost the \$10,000.

He asked me if I would do it—make an inventory for him—using the aerial photographs. I had a method of gridding the photograph, spotting it, and interpreting those spots—that is, classify the forest type in those

spots. Percentage wise, you could work out a reasonable estimate, using the photographs and obtain scale from a small-scale map showing where the areas were—one could work out data that would be suitable. I said I'd do it if he would get the Minister to agree to have me do it on my own time.⁵

During this time Ruben had been actively searching for a partner for the pulp mill, starting with Canadian forest industries and extending into the United States—all without success. Most companies seemed to be secure with current wood supplies and saw Alberta as remote from markets and unproven with respect to its wood quality. It was more than two years before he was successful.⁶ However, he must have felt confident and proved his interest because the government of Alberta did not appropriate his deposit and gave him a new agreement in July 1952 with a considerably changed lease location, based on Loomis' assessment of the 1951 lease area: "When I looked over the map [Ruben] had, I found that the ... area for the lease ... [was] located too far east. In fact, it was very much in the poplar area, or predominantly poplar area of the province. So I moved it back west adjacent to the Jasper National Park."

⁷



Map 25: North Western Pulp and Power Ltd.: Ruben's 1952 and 1954 forest management area designed by Loomis with north, south and western boundaries bounded by rivers and heights of land.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Reg Loomis recognized that the mill would primarily need coniferous pulpwood, and he was also an advocate of using natural boundaries wherever possible. For his redesigned area for the 12 July 1952 agreement (map 25), he moved the lease area west to the mountains to include more of the coniferous forest, used the Athabasca and Pembina rivers as natural boundaries, and envisaged a generally downhill flow of wood east to the mill. The new lease comprised an area of about 984,200 hectares, within which 518,000 hectares were to be selected as a lease, with a total estimated volume of 154 million cubic metres.⁸

In the original 1951 agreement, the government agreed to reserve more than a section (one square mile or 259 hectares) of land along the McLeod River northeast of Edson as a site for the pulp mill. That offer was not repeated in the 1952 agreement, Ruben perhaps having determined that a better site was south of Edson. Ruben was evidently sufficiently confident in his proposal that he purchased six quarter sections of land (9389 hectares) near the old Tollerton railway station.

Ruben later obtained a further one-year extension on 15 October 1953 and continued to invest in timber and market surveys. That same year he consolidated his two interests—North Western Pulp & Power Ltd. and Bryan Mountain Coal Co. Ltd.—into the ownership of North Canadian Oils Ltd. In this deal, North Canadian acquired timber rights to one of the finest tracts of forest in Canada.

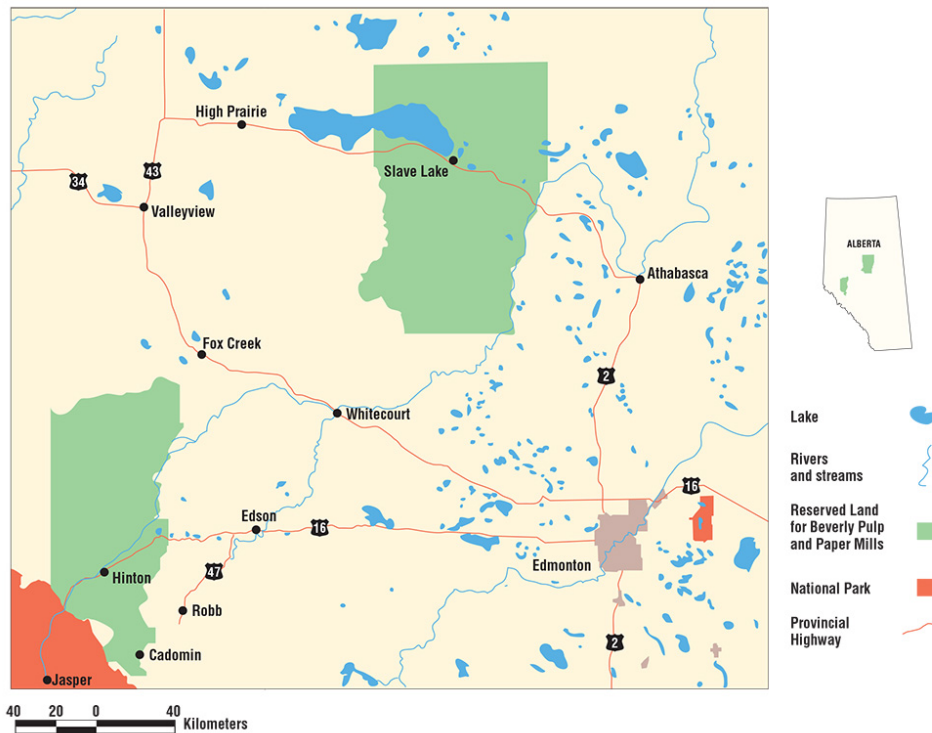
In the meantime, R.O. Swezey had come up with a second agreement, approved on 16 January 1952, for the Beverly Pulp and Paper Mills. It reserved timber in two blocks, located in the Lesser Slave Lake and Coal Branch–Berland areas (map 26). The reservation south of the Athabasca River around Hinton overlapped with the North Western Pulp & Power 12 July 1952 area. It is difficult to say whether this was due to a weakness in the land record system or reflected a philosophy of “first come, first served.” Whatever the reason, the Beverly lease was given a one-year extension to 16 January 1954 and expired, so Swezey was evidently unable to find backers. That cleared the area for the 14 September 1954 North Western Pulp & Power agreement.

North Western Pulp & Power and the St. Regis Connection

The long search for partners finally led Frank Ruben to New York for a meeting with Roy K. Ferguson, president of the St. Regis Paper Company—the first company to show interest in the proposal. Loomis reported that his earlier work served Ruben well: “[Ruben] took my book of data, with just the outline of the area—it was all on a small scale map of course—to New York, and he got St. Regis interested in the allowable cuts which I had worked out ... by ages, heights and so on. St. Regis signed the agreement with Ruben.”²

Ferguson was impressed and, as Stan Hart* later reported, St. Regis sent a seven-member team of their forestry staff to Edson 18 to 28 May 1954, under the direction of George Abel, technical director of St. Regis’ Southern Woodlands Division. St. Regis also contracted C.D. Schultz, a forest consulting firm from Vancouver, B.C., to do an independent evaluation, and the Schultz representative Robin Caesar was also there. Hart recalled:

* Stanton G.V. Hart, a forester with St. Regis, was selected to be on this initial assessment team. Stan moved to Hinton in 1955 to work with the woodlands group and became woodlands manager in 1962.



Map 26: Beverly Pulp Mills: Sweezy's pulpwood lease proposal 1952 with two separate blocks.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

After the “Alberta Project,” as St. Regis initially called it, was approved for further study, a fairly large group of St. Regis foresters was assembled and sent to Alberta in the spring of 1954. They came from Company operations in New Hampshire, New York, and Florida. George Abel from Florida headed up the crew. We made our base at the Sunset Motel in Edson. Telef Vaasjo flew in with a Bell 47B helicopter from Associated Helicopters in Edmonton and that was our main access to the woods.

We rented some rather beat-up Power Wagons and Jeeps too, from local people. Our objective was to check out the area in general,

particularly the accuracy of the stand-typing and volume estimates shown in the government cruise. It was really a very superficial look but it served the purpose at the time. [The “government cruise” was the estimate Loomis prepared for Ruben.]¹⁰

George Abel’s report of June 1954 was very positive. He noted that the present volume on the proposed area was over 35 million cords (84 million cubic metres)— or an adequate pulpwood supply for a 300-ton (272-tonne) daily capacity mill for the next century and a half, disregarding any forest growth in the meantime. Abel concluded his report with the comment, “The timber resources of this reserve offer a splendid opportunity for a sustained yield operation considerably expanded over that now contemplated.”¹¹

As a result, on 17 June 1954, St. Regis and North Canadian Oils jointly announced that plans had been finalized for financing and constructing a bleached kraft sulphate mill in Alberta. Their agreement stipulated that St. Regis and North Canadian Oils would each supply half the equity capital and that St. Regis would assume responsibility to direct the design and construction of the mill, undertake forest management responsibility, and sell its output through its sales organization. North Western Pulp & Power also signed an agreement with Bryan Mountain Coal to supply hard coal for the entire fuel requirements of the pulp mill for 15 years.¹²

A third revised pulpwood agreement, the one on which the construction commitment was based, was signed on 14 September 1954 by Frank E. Ruben on behalf of the partners. The directors on 31 December 1954 included Roy K. Ferguson; Edward P. Gay; William H. Versfelt; William R. Adams; Archibald Carswell and Hugh P. Griffith of Montreal; and Frank E. Ruben, Robert F. Ruben and George H. Allen, a barrister, of Calgary. The map area was the same as shown in the 1952 agreement—designed for a mill to be built in Edson (map 25).



The first St. Regis reconnaissance crew was sent out in 1954 to check on the forestry potential. Front row (l-r): John Miller, Frank LaDuc, George Abel, Bob Hyde. Back row (l-r): Stan Hart, Dyer Phillips, Knoll Van Cleave, pilot Telef Vaasjo.

COURTESY OF S.G.V. HART

The 1951 agreement had included a clause authorizing the company to cut timber “on a sustained yield basis.” In the 12 July 1952 agreement, that clause had been omitted, but was reinstated verbatim in the 14 September 1954 agreement. As Loomis later commented:

As I remember, Huestis then sent down the proposed agreement with Ruben to me to look over. And the thing that I noticed—very pronounced in the agreement—there was nothing at all about reforestation, or sustained yield, or anything of that nature at all. I managed to get in a paragraph or two that the agreement would state that they would have the cutting rights on a sustained yield basis—something to indicate that they would have to do a little more than just cut.—I think the agreement was sent back to Harvie [John Harvie, deputy minister], ... but the whole agreement was rewritten, and more emphasis placed on the agreement that this was based on the sustained yield basis.⁴³

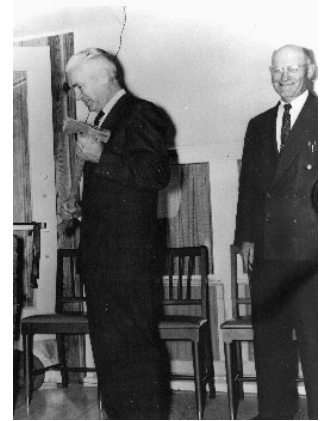
Changing the Location of the Mill and the Pulpwood Lease Area

Detailed planning for the project got under way in June 1954. Justin H. McCarthy, vice-president and chief engineer for St. Regis, was responsible for mill design and construction. He engaged the engineering firm H.A. Simons Ltd. of Vancouver and that company subsequently took over supervision of the mill construction. Tests at the Edson site later that fall showed that the ground was too unstable for the footings to support a mill of that size. Further, the water supply in the McLeod River would be inadequate for the mill—it would not yield a year-round supply of 135 million litres of water a day. To guarantee a year-round average, the newly-formed company would have to build a dam, at an estimated cost of \$4 million (about \$30 million in 2004 dollars), and buy all the land 10 miles (16 km) back from the water line. This killed all plans for the Edson site instantly, as it was considered financially inconceivable.¹⁴

The Tollerton properties purchased by Ruben in 1951 were later sold by the company. In 1961, one parcel went to the Town of Edson for a dollar and became part of the Norman Willmore Memorial Park.¹⁵ The remaining properties were sold in 1973.

Frank Ruben remembered travelling west on a previous visit and noting a small settlement where the road, river and railway came together. He, his son Robert Ruben, H.V. (Pete) Hart, general manager of St. Regis Northern Woodlands Division, and Justin McCarthy, St. Regis vice-president and chief engineer, drove west in a jeep on 25 January 1955. They wondered if Obed might be a possibility, but it was not. They then found that 80 kilometres west of Edson, the next location that combined water availability, suitable soil, and rail access, was at Hinton. They quickly launched studies to confirm its suitability—and decided to build the mill there instead.¹⁶

A third major problem was raised by the mill designers who preferred natural gas as a fuel rather than coal. Use of natural gas would avoid expensive



Norman Willmore, ca. 1960. Willmore, MLA for the Edson-Jasper region, was Minister of Lands and Forests from 1955 to 1965.
ALBERTA FOREST PROTECTION COLLECTION

coal-handling equipment and, perhaps more importantly, eliminate a potential coal-dust problem. Carbon passes unscathed through chemical pulping and bleaching processes and is always a hazard in making a high-brightness pulp. North Canadian Oils then took over the fuel contract from Bryan Mountain, extended the contract to 20 years to keep the price the same, and looked for an alternative natural gas supply. North Canadian found a suitable natural gas source at Wabamun and undertook to build a pipeline to serve Edson and Hinton, later extended to Jasper as well.

The 14 September 1954 agreement that formed the basis of the commitment by North Western Pulp & Power to construct the mill still showed Edson as the location for the mill, with the same lease area as in 1952. This agreement also referred to a Provisional Reserve Area that could be granted to the company if it committed to expansion of the mill by 1968—a 14-year period. The area shown on the map was presumably large enough to provide for the larger wood requirement for the mill, now proposed to be a minimum 270 tonnes per day. When the decision was made in early 1955 to move the mill location to Hinton, there must have been an understanding that the lease area could be redesigned to reflect the new location.



Stanton G.V. Hart with first North Western Pulp & Power vehicle, 1955. The bright red colour was selected to identify the new company. Hart later became woodlands manager.

COURTESY OF S.G.V. HART

During the period 21 October to 15 November 1954, Pete Hart, Dyer Phillips and Stan Hart made an additional trip to do further checks and to visit with the forest service and possible timber operators. They were then based at St. Regis Woodland Division offices in Deferiet, New York. They also spent some time visiting logging operations in various parts of the western United States and eastern Canada, looking at different logging systems that might be suitable to operations in Alberta.

Once the mill location was changed, it was essential to redesign the lease area. Again, Reg Loomis' expertise was enlisted and he developed a conceptual lease area outline based on a mill located at Hinton that was now expected to produce 360 tonnes per day. As Loomis later explained:

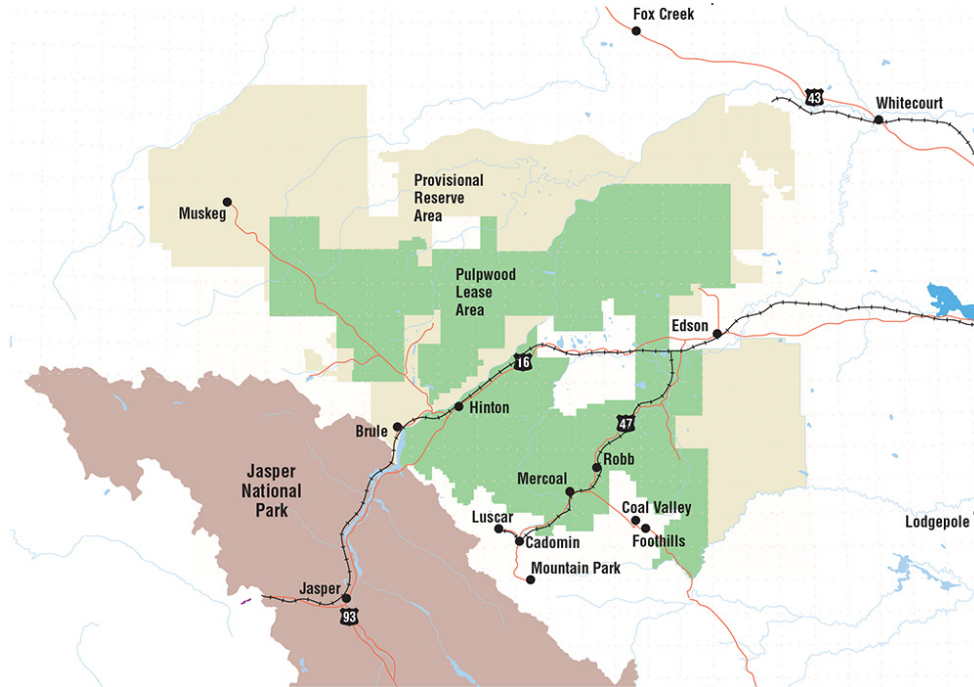
Then they decided to have [the mill] on the Athabasca, and [Frank Ruben] asked me if I'd do that [a lease area outline and inventory study for the new location]. So I said the same thing to him about getting the Minister to agree, and they did. I got \$500 [about \$3,700 in 2004 dollars]. And then Des Crossley told me that Pete Hart said that the company decided that they'd better have my inventory checked. They went to C.D. Schultz in B.C. and gave him \$25,000 [about \$187,000 in 2004 dollars] to check the job I did for \$500! They couldn't find anything wrong with it— not because I was that accurate, just because it would be almost impossible to check without a tremendous amount of fieldwork. So they actually gave him \$25,000 for nothing.¹⁷

In his reconfigured lease-area design for a mill at Hinton, Loomis dropped some southern areas and included major areas to the north so the mill at Hinton would be more centrally located within the forest lease area. The 777,000-hectare lease area was also increased to ensure a wood supply for the planned minimum 400-ton-per-day (363 tonne) mill. A provisional reserve of equal size was also identified for future expansion (map 27).

A St. Regis team of foresters, Dyer Phillips, Frank LaDuc, Bill Hamilton and Stan Hart, visited Alberta again from 8 March to 6 April 1955. The work this time focussed on the new areas north of the Athabasca suggested by

Loomis, checking on volumes and quality of timber, availability of existing roads, and possible sites for camps. As well, on 18 March 1955, they met in Edson with the area lumbermen and Norman Willmore, new Minister of Lands and Forests and MLA for Jasper–Edson, and Ivan Casey, the previous minister, to bring them up to date on developments. Others involved were Ivan Gingrich and Opie Hayes from the accounting department of the St. Regis mill in Tacoma, Washington, and Alex Smalley, an executive from St. Regis' personnel department in New York.¹⁸ Stan Hart recalled that he and Dyer Phillips made adjustments to the Loomis map based on their reconnaissance and consultation with Loomis before they presented their final selection and the final version to the government. Then, as Stan Hart wrote,

[On] April 5, 1955, Dyer Phillips and I, then both in the Woodlands Division of the St. Regis Paper Company, presented to Reg Loomis in Edmonton the maps and description of the area which we had, on behalf of the company, selected to be Alberta's first Forest Management Lease. This was the culmination of several months of cruising that had started in May of 1954.¹⁹



Map 27: North Western Pulp & Power Ltd.: Forest management area redesigned for a mill at Hinton, 1955.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

These maps formed the basis of an amendment to the agreement, dated 13 July 1955. The major change was that the area had been moved west and extended to the north, this time clearly centred on Hinton. Approval was given with the understanding that the Company could further refine the new boundary in response to a more detailed reconnaissance of the boundary areas, and other adjustments were made in 1956. The provisional reserve area was to be held for expansion until 1968. Another St. Regis team, H.V. Hart, Charlie St. Denis, Edward McMahon and Stan Hart, visited again 3 to 25 May 1955 to get the Webb's Bar-BQ Ranch cabins fixed up as temporary housing for woodlands staff, to buy office equipment and make contact with suppliers and government people. On 11 May 1955, they also met with Hinton residents Ray Fuller, Rod Gregg, Lloyd Begg and Vic Webb at the Athabasca Ranch to discuss school needs in Hinton.²⁰ The woodlands department was set up in May 1955, setting the stage for the resident forestry and woodlands operations, staff for which were already starting to arrive.

In the meantime, basic engineering work had been completed on the mill site and tenders were called for the construction camp, repair shops, main

office and warehouses. The ground was broken and construction started on 23 May 1955.²¹

The significance of this partnership of dedicated individuals is highlighted by the fact that during this same decade, four exploratory forest management agreements with the Alberta government had been signed, but none survived the proposal stage.*

* These included the Edmonton and Beverly pulp mills proposed by Sweezey in 1951 and 1952, Albertawest Forest Products Corporation for a pulp mill in Whitecourt in 1958, and Wildwood Pulp Products in 1960.

Getting Started at Hinton

To this point, the history of the renewable resources in this region had been one largely of exploitation. Timber was cut for buildings, boats, fuel, and later, for the railway. Wildlife was taken for fur and food, fish caught to feed people and dogs, and grasslands grazed and cut for hay to support a few cows and many hundreds of horses. The first attempts at management began in 1907–1912 when Jasper Forest Park and then the Brazeau and Athabasca forests were set up by the Dominion government. However, management was largely custodial, focussed on forest protection and regulation of limits on timber harvest, hunting, fishing and trapping. The only notable example of active forest management had been the historic practice of controlled burning by the Métis and Aboriginals to maintain grazing and habitats for certain wildlife.

By 1949 the Alberta government had begun the immense task of trying to develop sustained-yield forest management for the province as a whole, but the task had just begun with the forest inventory.

With the 1955 agreement, North Western Pulp & Power Ltd. had the opportunity to pioneer forest management on its specific 7,770-square-kilometre area in this region, complete with active programs for forest regeneration and planning for sustainability of other forest values. For both

the first team of company foresters led by Desmond I. Crossley, and for their provincial counterparts led by Eric Huestis and Reginald D. Loomis, the task would also be a hard road.

The arrival of the company forestry staff in May 1955 launched a new era of exploration and development in the spirit of the earlier pioneers, but this time focussing more specifically on the forest and its management to ensure sustainability. This was no simple task. As Dr. Fred Bunnell, wildlife professor at the University of British Columbia, noted: “Forest management isn’t rocket science—it is much more complex.”²² In this sense they were faced with problems similar to that of the fur traders—that of finding access to and knowledge about a vast area, but in far greater detail.

Pioneers in Sustained-Yield Forest Management

The forest management task was helped by the strong commitment among those involved from the beginning. The woodlands and forestry departments were officially established in May 1955 with the hiring of Gordon McNab as woodlands manager and Desmond Crossley as chief forester. Some of the original St. Regis foresters had stayed on, including Stan Hart, Frank LaDuc and John Miller. The group grew quickly with new hirings to add the expertise needed to get the forestry operations under way.

Gordon McNab had been with the Rhineland–St. Regis operation at Hornpayne, Ontario, where he was their woodlands manager.²³ His responsibility at Hinton was to begin the logging process that would supply wood to the mill. Adrien Provencher, another experienced St. Regis manager, took over the helm of the woodlands department two years later.

Stan Hart was a graduate forester from the University of Michigan just starting his career with the St. Regis Paper Company in its New Hampshire–Vermont Division. He was sent to Alberta in 1954 as a member of the forest survey teams looking at the proposed lease, and he stayed on in Hinton, later becoming woodlands manager. Frank LaDuc and John Miller were also St. Regis foresters with particular skills in inventory and management.

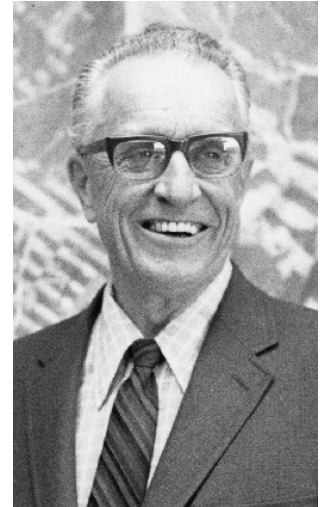
Desmond I. Crossley started as chief forester for North Western Pulp & Power on 1 May 1955. He was raised in a pioneering atmosphere—his family was one of the Barr Colony settlers in the Battleford area of Saskatchewan. His interest in the outdoors led him into forestry, and he graduated from the University of Toronto in 1935. His career at the Indian Head forest nursery in Saskatchewan was interrupted by wartime service in the Royal Canadian Air Force, after which he joined the Canadian Forest Service as a research scientist. Crossley developed a great reputation for his solid and innovative research in Alberta, particularly for his work on how spruce and pine regenerated and grew. He was asked by the St. Regis team investigating the proposal to write a brief describing how the forest could be managed to ensure regeneration. The quality of his work and his inherent professionalism earned him their offer to become the company's first chief forester. (Reg Loomis had previously been offered the chief forester's job, but decided to stay in government.) Crossley recognized that the position would enable him to advance his work from trials to an operational level. After receiving assurances of the company's commitment to sustained-yield management, he accepted.

The forestry staff began to arrive at Hinton in the fall of 1955. Those who survived the bitterly cold winter of 1955–56 became known as the “55ers.” The first to arrive was Tom Lewko. Lewko had been working for Frank Ruben at the Robb Coal Mine and was asked to consider transferring to the pulp company, where Ruben said there would be more opportunity. Lewko was hired as a woodlands clerk and became a valued member of the administration. Gordon McNab and Des Crossley were the next to arrive. Among the others were Jim Clark, hired as assistant chief forester, Ken Williams as a forester, Phil Gimbarzevsky as photogrammetrist, Bob Hallam as draftsman and map-maker and Vern Truxler, a local man, as timber cruiser. Also among the 55ers were several who started as cruisers, later moving on to more senior positions: Guy Dempsey, Oswald Hansen, Robin Huth and Bob MacKellar. They all played important roles in forestry and woodlands.

This initial group was given a strong endorsement and encouragement in the fall of 1955 during a visit by the president of St. Regis Paper Company,

William R. Adams. As recalled by Jim Clark, Adams announced “in a most gentlemanly fashion”:

Our Company has visited the Minister of Lands and Forests in Edmonton and the Premier of this province yesterday. We delivered a signed letter of understanding to the government obligating us to minimize the number of American employees on site at this mill. We intend to meet this obligation. This will be a company run by Canadians. You will work with some of our United States employees at this site for a short period during construction and start-up; these employees will return to their jobs in our U.S. plants and forests, some before and some just after mill start-up. They are here now or in the near future to help you with their knowledge and expertise. Many of you will replace them. Thank you for attending here.²⁴



Desmond I. Crossley, North Western Pulp & Power chief forester 1955-1975. A former research forester, Crossley set new high standards for forestry practice that became nationally acclaimed.
WEST FRASER COLLECTION

The Commitment to Stewardship

The strong commitment to forest management through sound forest practices had been established earlier among the provincial foresters involved, starting with Eric Huestis who made his feelings clear about perpetual sustained yield in the 1949 amendment to the Forests Act.

Reg Loomis was deeply committed to forest stewardship. He had been disheartened by the poor forestry practices he had seen while working for government and industry in eastern Canada. He resolved to do better if he ever had the chance. He got his opportunity in Alberta. His vision for forestry in Alberta was “to set up the whole province on a sustainable basis.”²⁵ Although the enabling legislation in the 1949 Forests Act referred to “growing continuously and perpetually successive crops of forest products,”²⁶ Loomis was concerned that the initial agreements were not sufficiently explicit. He therefore had the words “sustained yield management”²⁷ added to the 1954 Hinton agreement, and followed through with personal representations to

ensure they were honoured. Working closely with Loomis was Charles Jackson, the University of British Columbia graduate who had been posted to the Edson Forest by Huestis in 1949, then promoted in 1954 to Edmonton as the management forester.

Harold V. (Pete) Hart, general woodlands manager for the Northern Timberlands Division of St. Regis, was most directly involved with negotiating the lease agreement, assessing the value of the timberlands and coming up with an estimated wood cost to the mill. His son Stanton had been on the advance St. Regis forestry team. Interviewed in 1990, Loomis spoke highly about the Harts, saying that, compared to other corporate foresters, they were “more open to accepting sustained-yield forest management ... they seemed to be of a different calibre altogether.”²⁸ Stan Hart returned the compliment:



North Western Pulp & Power forestry staffers Owen Bradwell, Bill Hanington, John Miller and Jack Wright formed a barbershop quartet, “The Four Chords,” in 1957.

COURTESY OF JACK WRIGHT

Reg Loomis, Eric Huestis and Charlie Jackson [of the Alberta Forest Service] didn’t want to see repeated the type of “forest management” that had been traditionally practised in the east. St. Regis apparently went along with this and, in fact, embraced the concept wholeheartedly as the project progressed. I remember my father telling me many times that the

Alberta government forestry people with whom he was dealing seemed to want to do things “right” in the woods.²⁹

Des Crossley shared Loomis’s commitment to sustained-yield forestry. The position of chief forester enabled him to advance his previous work from research trials to a large-scale commercial operation. He often talked about his obsession to demonstrate that forests should and could be managed as a renewable resource without pillaging the land.³⁰

As Crossley later related, “Both Loomis and I were very concerned over the doleful status of professional forest management as it was being ‘practised’ in the Canadian provinces to the east, and were anxious to accept the challenge that had not been faced in the past. As fellow professionals, we had discussed this challenge in previous years and I have no doubt that we influenced one another as our philosophies matured.”³¹ Reg Loomis, interviewed in 1990, commented that Des Crossley was “very, very good” about cooperating with the Alberta Forest Service to ensure that the right things were done, and done correctly.³² With the approval of their respective superiors, Loomis and Crossley agreed on full company responsibility for regeneration, along with inventories and planning, as part of the commitment to sustained-yield forestry.



Early North Western Pulp & Power timber cruisers worked from tent camps in all weather conditions. l-r: Bob MacKellar Ken Casey and John Miller, foresters; Oswald Hansen, forest technician; James D. Clark, forester.

COURTESY OF JAMES D. CLARK

Woodlands Operations

While the company faced the formidable task of building the mill, it also had to immediately start the forest management planning process and get ready to start logging. The woodlands division, led by Gordon McNab, later Adrien Provencher and then Stan Hart, had the more focussed assignment. In consultation with the forestry department they agreed on logical locations for the first logging camps, Camps 1 and 2 located west of Hinton straddling Highway 16. Then they marked the cutting blocks, planned the camp and road locations, and started construction. With logging scheduled to start in January 1956, recruitment of the thousand or so loggers and horses began in the fall of 1955, training programs were set up and operations got under way. Mechanization in the woods was then in its infancy. Loggers worked in two-man teams. Trees were felled by hand, mostly with power saws, but a few still using Swede saws. Horses skidded the logs to a pile where the second logger bucked them into 100-inch (2.54-m) lengths and lifted them onto a standard

pile that would be 50 inches (1.27 m) high when finished. The wood was loaded with a tractor-mounted loader onto a variety of trucks, whatever could be recruited, to haul the wood to the mill. The company built its own road system to keep logging trucks off the public highway.



Logging was a labour-intensive job in the 1950s. Falling a tree with a chain saw.
WEST FRASER COLLECTION



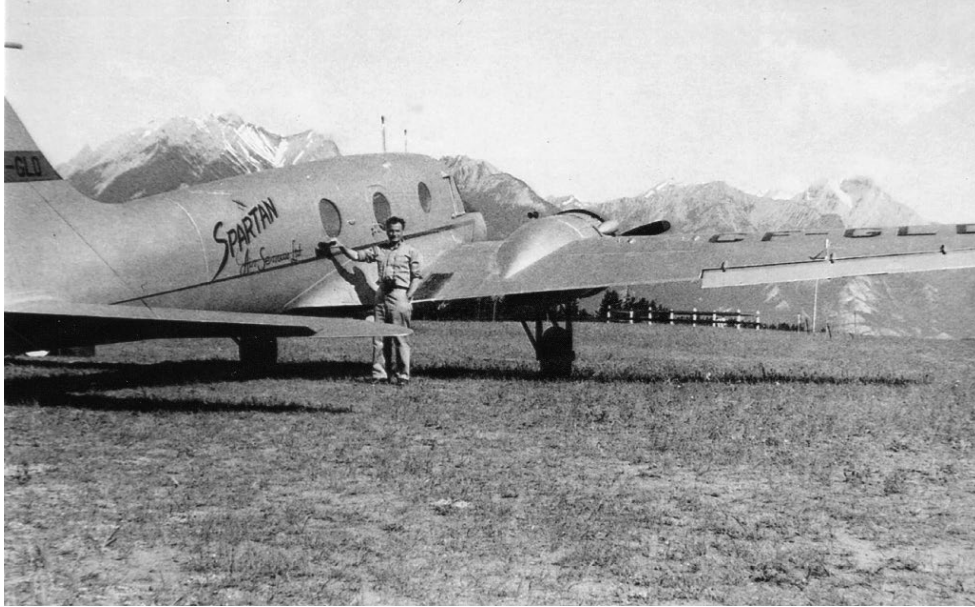
Hand piling 100-inch (2.54-m) pulpwood bolts.

WEST FRASER COLLECTION

Establishing a Forestry Program

The forestry department, led by Des Crossley, had the more encompassing and longer-term responsibility to develop the forest management plan. In a 1984 interview, Crossley reflected:

I recall my first reconnaissance flight over the two million acres [810,000 hectares] of choice timberland below that I was committed to manage. I was not so much overwhelmed, although that certainly gave me pause, as [I was] awed by its magnitude.... I cannot deny the concern over what I had got myself into, but that was transient. There was too much to do to waste time dwelling on it.³³



North Western Pulp & Power photogrammetrist Philip Gimbarzevsky was a pioneer in the use of aerial photography for mapping and site classification. He flew photo missions out of the Jasper airstrip in the 1950s.

PHILIP GIMBARZEVSKY, STEVE FERDINAND COLLECTION

The company forestry staff had several immediate needs: to lay out the immediate cutting areas, start a forest inventory, determine the forest's growth and yield, learn the specific treatments to ensure regeneration and, at the same time, gather the detail that was needed for the various plans. This was made more difficult by the scarcity of information about the forests combined with the pressure of time to begin logging. As Crossley remarked, "there was little to turn to in the way of applicable information in order to initiate the forest management program.... We were starting completely from scratch in developing the whole area." ³⁴ In the process, he set in motion a program of progressive and adaptive forest management wherein science and research would guide the design and implementation of forest management strategies on the Hinton forest. In this, a capable and innovative team of foresters and forest technicians assisted him.

Among Crossley's team and their provincial colleagues there was enough forestry knowledge and experience on which to make reasoned decisions. However, in recognition of the inherent uncertainties and scale, 8,100 square kilometres and a 100-year rotation, they applied the concept of adaptive management, which included both applied research and learning by doing.

This approach was later defined as they developed ground rules for forestry practice. The first formal ground rules in 1958 included a concept and description of adaptive management that predated the formal entry of the term in the forestry lexicon by almost 20 years:

The initial cutting system and variations thereof shall be on a trial basis. As many modifications of such cutting systems shall be adopted as possible in order, by experiment, to arrive at a system or systems best adapted to the silvicultural requirements of the species in question, the topography and the operational requirements inherent in economical timber extraction.³⁵

Crossley determined that both the lodgepole pine and white spruce stands were of fire origin and therefore even-aged, and their fire borders were readily recognizable from air photographs. Based on his classic research experiments and background, he was convinced that some form of clearcutting, combined with site preparation for natural seeding, would be most appropriate for the species most common on the Hinton forest—lodgepole pine and white spruce. This was radical thinking in 1950s Alberta, but Crossley's previous studies with the Canadian Forest Service and other supporting research suggested it was worth trying. Although Loomis had a contrary view, favouring some form of partial cutting, the two foresters agreed on an adaptive approach. Crossley had to prove his methods would work, and when they did not (as in the case of some spruce sites), he developed alternative approaches.

The available maps did not show enough detail for planning, so the company arranged to have a set of vertical aerial photographs taken of the area. The mapping unit prepared base maps from the photos, and also used the photographs to delineate major forest types. The company also decided to establish its own detailed forest inventory program. Initially, this was based on a network of 3,000 permanent sample plots established across the forest area, measured on a 10-year return cycle. Once harvested, a plot was re-established on the reforested stand to track and compare growth rates between the original forest and the regenerated stand replacing it. This system is still in

use, and is now the largest and most highly regarded single repository of information on the growth and yield of lodgepole pine in North America.

Forest Renewal

Logging has two important steps. The obvious one is to remove the trees from the site and deliver the wood to the mill. The other important step is to prepare the site for the new, regenerated forest. In this sense, logging is both the end and the beginning of forest stands, similar in many respects to the previous influence of fires. It is important to plan for both harvesting and renewal at the same time. One of the early profound decisions was that logging would be spread out over the entire forest management area as much as possible to try to balance the hauling distances as well as distribute the disturbances.

The second step is forest renewal—the process of establishing the new forest. Just as agriculture is the art and science of growing field crops, silviculture is the art and science of growing forests. It starts with designing the shape of the logging blocks. In the spirit of adaptive management, early logging blocks were designed to remove about half the timber over the first 10 years. A range of shapes and sizes of blocks was designed and tested to try to ensure site protection and seed dispersal.



Chief forester Des Crossley (right) describes the scarification drag system, to Canadian Forest Service scientist Bob Ackerman (centre) and AFS forester Charlie Jackson (left).

WEST FRASER COLLECTION

The follow-up treatment on logged areas was scarification to expose mineral soil so that seeds from cone-bearing slash or from adjacent trees could establish the new forest. If seed sources were lacking, seedlings were planted. In either case, the harvest area was treated to break down the slash to encourage decomposition, release nutrients, and reduce fire hazards. Little technology was available for site preparation, so Crossley and his silviculturists designed their own combination of front-mounted ploughs and spiked anchor-chain drags to prepare sites for natural regeneration or planting.

Forest Research and Alberta's First Detailed Forest Management Plan

With his strong background in research, Crossley encouraged many of his former Canadian Forest Service colleagues to bring their expertise to the Hinton forest and apply research to pressing questions of technical forest management such as silviculture, hydrology, and growth and yield. Meanwhile, he urged his own foresters to embark on what he described as “sore thumb research” —ad hoc experiments—to address their own challenges. Since then,

scores of research studies in all aspects of sustainable forest management have been pursued on the Hinton forest.

Soon after operations commenced, the company began to prepare Alberta's first detailed forest management plan for 1960, with several important principles:

1. To sustain, in perpetuity, an annual yield of coniferous pulpwood from the pulpwood lease area.
2. To provide a long-range, over-all cutting plan whereby pulpwood harvesting operations may proceed logically and systematically over the entire lease area during a single rotation.
3. To remove the over-mature timber as rapidly as possible.
4. To mould the present distorted age-class pattern into a more regular distribution of classes by 20-year age groups.

These principles have since been refined and augmented, but these fundamental concepts laid a solid basis on which to sustain the forest.

Hinton: A Town Transformed

Setting up the new mill and town at Hinton was a classic "greenfield" project. Virtually everything had to start from scratch, and everything had to be done at once. The immediate concerns included building the mill, bringing in utilities and services, building a community, planning for forest management, and starting to log to bring in the wood. Fortunately a lot of hard-working, creative and skilled people were brought in at the outset to get on with the job.



Mill construction, 1956, brought thousands of construction workers and suppliers to the Hinton area.

COURTESY OF S.G.V. HART

It is impressive, for example, that although the decision to move the mill site to Hinton was made only after the trip to Hinton in January 1955, field studies and engineering for the mill were completed in March, the building contracts were concluded and the ground broken and construction started by 23 May—a period of just over four months. This timeline predated today's extensive analysis, environmental impact assessments and public hearings that can span two or more years from concept to ground breaking.

Announcement of the mill project started a two-year boom of unprecedented proportions. Hinton had been only a hamlet, but grew quickly. As new staff arrived, they were immediately struck by the small size of the community and lack of amenities. Jim Clark was among the first foresters to arrive in 1955. He and his family arrived by train from Vancouver, getting off at the Entrance station since the one at Hinton was not yet in operation. On

the drive in, their driver, also a new company staffer, pointed out the existing features of Hinton: “The motel on the left is Johnson’s and the log building across the road on the right is the Catholic church of Hinton. The two-story old building on the right is Skogg’s grocery; the Bank is the little log cabin beside it; opens one day a week with the manager coming from Edson. That’s Ray Fuller’s Esso garage here on the right; he sells GM cars on order but has none here in stock. On the left is the unused CN railway station.” The other building of note was the Hinton Hotel and bar, a long-established “drinking hole”, as forest ranger Neil Gilliat described,³⁶ “If you wanted a seat in the pub you had to be there early.” The Saturday night line-ups at the door were legendary.

In the valley, the company arranged to build a thousand-man camp for employees and construction workers, and contracted Canada Catering to run it. Ray Ranger got a job as a meal checker in 1955 before hiring on with the company forestry department. He noted that at first they had “great big circus bell tents” right where the front lawns of the mill are now.³⁷ Robin Huth, former forest ranger and one of the first timber cruisers, also arrived shortly afterwards. In his book, *Outdoor Junkie*,³⁸ he remarked on this contrast between the old town and the boom-town atmosphere of the construction project.

The construction camp was newly built and winterized, but housing for the new forestry and woodlands staff, the 55ers, was provided in a collection of summer cabins on Webb’s old motel site purchased by the company. These were poorly insulated or heated, and the winter of 1956 proved particularly challenging to staff and their young families. As Jim Clark described,³⁹ to modernize the uninsulated cabins, the company installed two large propane tanks for the propane heaters, stoves and hot-water tanks. Water was piped in from a central well, drainage was run into a septic tank and electricity was provided from a diesel-powered generator on site that ran for 16 hours, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Unfortunately the winter of 1955–56 was one of the coldest, with temperatures as low as -30°F (-34°C) from late October. The morning of 17 February was sharply colder; the thermometer at the pump house near the river read -72°F (-58°C). The water and sewer lines froze, so the motel

dwellers had to arrange for water to be trucked in daily. The propane tanks solidified, so wood fires had to be built underneath them to gasify the propane so it would flow to the heaters. One man found his dentures frozen in the glass by his bed; another's boots were frozen to the floor in a puddle from a broken water line. But the 55ers survived, and went on to celebrate their early experiences in a series of annual reunions. Later staff arrivals were put up in Jasper and commuted.



First town office, Hinton, 1957.
PHILIP GIMBARZEWSKY, STEVE FERDINAND COLLECTION

At the height of construction in 1956, about 900 people worked on the mill site. That fall and winter, more than 1,000 additional people flooded into the area looking for seasonal logging work. Hundreds more signed on for permanent jobs in the mill and woodlands. Rival developers built housing and shopping centres in the Hill and Valley districts. Unwilling to have two municipalities just 5 kilometres apart, the provincial government incorporated the New Town of Hinton in 1957. “New Town” status was an arrangement whereby the province assisted newly established, or rapidly expanding, communities such as Hinton.⁴⁹

The company and its employees were intimately involved in creating the new community. For example, they realized that the pulp warehouse would not be needed until production began, so it was loaned as a huge classroom

while a new school was being built. School enrolment in Hinton soared from 58 in 1953 to 669 in 1957, and employees served on the school board and were active in school affairs.

They also served on the hospital board that lobbied for several years for a community hospital. The first 25-bed hospital was built in 1959 (later replaced by a 40-bed facility in 1980). Before the hospital opened, the company's clinic was the town's major medical facility. Employee volunteers and company-donated materials made possible the construction of facilities such as the recreation centre and swimming pool. The mill even provided water and sewage treatment for the community—still the only mill in Alberta to do so.⁴¹ The company's water treatment system was a far cry from taking water from the rivers or hand-dug wells, or having it delivered by sleigh or water truck that was so common in the past.

And so, the stage was set for the further developments, community services, and employment opportunities that were to follow over the next five decades.



Hinton Hotel c 1946, it was filled to overflowing in 1955.

COURTESY OF DENNIS RADCLIFFE

Reprise and Epilogue

The Hinton–Jasper region had been remote, both in distance from established-population centres and difficulty of travel to get there. It was a “hard road” to travel there—from any direction.

Heading west up the Athabasca River meant a long journey either through Lac La Biche or from Fort Assiniboine with its treacherous “road” from Edmonton, then contending with the rapids and the long upstream haul on the water. The overland route from Edmonton was even more challenging, with its endless mires, muskegs, fallen timber, biting insects and unpredictable river crossings.

From the west, travellers endured an arduous trip up the Columbia River against its swift current with portages around the many rapids and falls. The Wood River to Jeffrey Creek in its tight valley was cold, swift and had to be forded about 40 times before reaching Jeffrey Creek. Then came the steep climb through the heavy brush-filled timber up the Grande Côte and equally arduous climb up Pacific Creek to the Athabasca Pass. The trip down the Whirlpool to Jasper was not as difficult, but had risky crossings on the Whirlpool and Athabasca rivers.

Travellers choosing to go east through the Yellowhead (Leather) Pass had to decide between two difficult options. One was to go east up the Fraser River from Fort George (now Prince George) through the heavy timber or up its fast current and around its Grand Canyon that proved fatal to so many who tried the waterway. The alternative was to head north up the North Thompson from Kamloops through its rough, heavily timbered valley with no game or feed for horses. The Yellowhead Pass itself along the upper Fraser valley and down the Miette River to Jasper was also mostly timbered with many rocks and mires.

Once the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed to Banff in 1883, some tried reaching Jasper from the south, but early travelers usually ran out of food before they could make it through. Particularly difficult was the Columbia Icefields area, which involved bypassing the Athabasca Glacier and Sunwapta

Canyon by going over Wilcox Pass and the well-named Tangle Creek. There were trails of sorts south from the Peace River country, but except for Aboriginals and a few settlers after the railway reached Edson in 1910, there was not much need to use that route.

As a consequence of the inaccessibility of the region, travellers had to supplement their supplies with food from the land, not always successfully, but they kept pushing through. The availability of wildlife and fish for food greatly limited the numbers of people who could live in the region year-round. Some of the earliest agriculture developed around the Palisades area in Jasper when the Moberly, Joachim, Findlay and Swift families began to grow vegetables and barley and raise a few milk cows sometime after 1895. A few Iroquois were also growing vegetables in the Smoky River valley.

The next major change in access resulted from completion of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway to Jasper in 1912—a full century after David Thompson’s epic journey. Construction of the railway created tote roads as the grade was built, and the completed track marked the end of the “hard road.” Passengers could travel to Jasper by train from Edmonton in about nine hours, a marked contrast to Moberly’s one-to-three month round trip by horse, depending on the depth of the muskegs and mires in wet weather, high water in the river and creek crossings, and amount of blowdown through the burnt forests. Not only was the trip by rail shorter, but as Milton and Cheadle marvelled as they journeyed from Toronto through Chicago to the end of steel in 1862:

You go “on board,” turn in minus coat and boots, go quietly to sleep, and are awakened in the morning by the attendant ... in time to get out at your destination. You have had a good night’s rest, find your boots ready blackened, and washing apparatus at one end of the car, and have the satisfaction of getting over two hundred or three hundred miles [320 or 480 kilometres] of wearisome journey almost without knowing it.⁴²

Initial railway coach service to Jasper was very primitive, as Mary Schäffer found in 1911. The coaches were so crowded she arranged to ride in the

caboose. But sleeper cars soon followed on the Grand Trunk when the line was completed to Jasper the next year.

Sandford Fleming, surveyor for the proposed first trans-Canada railway, talked about his engineering profession in a speech in 1876, four years after his survey to the Pacific through Alberta in 1872. He explained that engineers (emphasis added):



Construction of the road between Jasper and Lake Louise in the 1930s involved rock blasting that went around the eastern edge of Sunwapta Canyon and made a firm grade past the end of the Athabasca Glacier to avoid the Wilcox Pass and Tangle Creek route, opening the way to through traffic for tourism.

PETER MURPHY



The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway cut through the bluff at the end of Disaster Point in 1911, eliminating that notable obstacle.

COURTESY OF R. BIAMONTE. H. ODEGARD. COSMO PICARIELLO COLLECTION



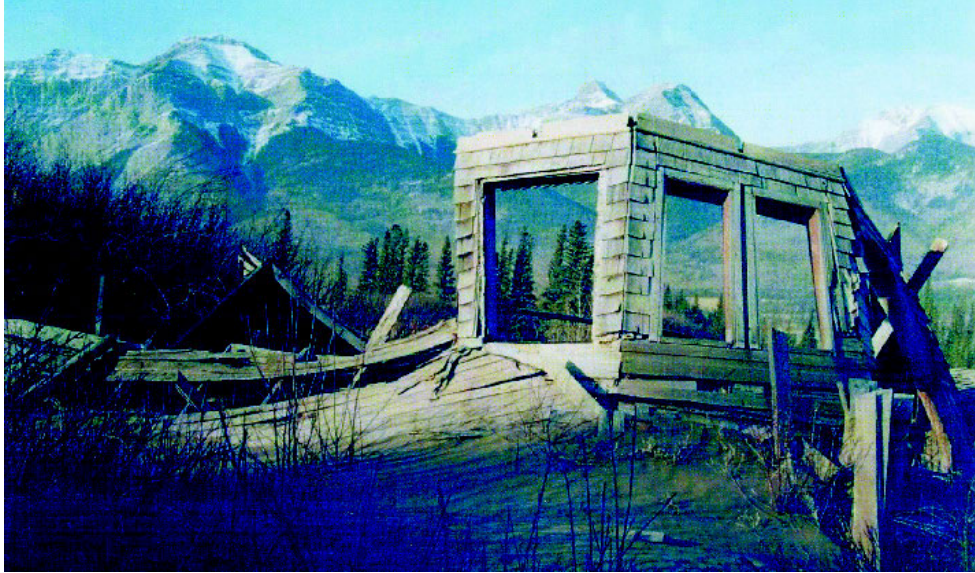
Train in the Canadian Northern Railway Station in Jasper, ca. 1916. The station was located south and west of the present town.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA, OBLATE COLLECTION OB-973

must plod on in a distinct sphere of their own, dealing less with words and more with deeds, less with men than with matter; nature in her wild state presents difficulties for them to overcome. It is the business of their life to do battle against these difficulties and **make smooth the path on which others are to tread.** It is their privilege to stand between these two great forces, capital and labour, and by acting justly at all times between the employer and employed, they may hope to command the respect of those above them equally with those under them.⁴³

It took 13 years after Fleming's survey before the first railway, the Canadian Pacific, was completed through Calgary, Banff and James Hector's Kicking Horse Pass, smoothing out that more southern route. It was almost 40 years before Fleming's proposed northern line was run through Yellowhead Pass.

Charles Neimeyer and Frank Silverthorne drove an Overland Four car from Edmonton to Jasper in six days in June 1922, the first car to do so. They pushed on to Kamloops and raced to Victoria. In one stroke, road traffic to Jasper was established as a possibility, and promotion of the Yellowhead as a second trans-Canada route began. It was not until the early 1930s that the road was improved enough to be feasible for the less adventurous, but it was a start, and represented the next major change in access.



The long-abandoned Grand Trunk Pacific's Park Gate railway station on the west side of Brûlé Lake is slowly disappearing under the drifting sand, 2003.

COURTESY OF JEFF HENRICKS

Paving of the road from Edmonton, now Highway 16, was completed in 1956. The road was eventually twinned as far as Hinton in the 1990s. In the process, new high-level bridges across the Pembina and McLeod rivers greatly reduced driving times. A north–south arterial highway through Hinton was gradually connected to the Forestry Trunk Road from Coleman, now Highway 40, which ended at Nordegg in the 1950s. North Western Pulp & Power's Robb Road was started in 1956 and was eventually connected to the Forestry Trunk Road to the south upon completion of the bridge over the Brazeau River in 1963. When the commuter highway to the Cardinal River coal mine at Luscar was built in 1969, it replaced the Robb Road as a southern link of Highway 40. The 1949 Oil Road to Muskeg was completely reconstructed after 1965 to service the new town of Grande Cache and its coal mine on the Smoky River, home of descendants of the Iroquois described by Hector. That road, now Highway 40 North, was later extended to Grande Prairie.

The mine at Grande Cache also required a new railway line to take the coal to market. The Alberta Resources Railway connected to the Canadian National near Brûlé in 1965 and was extended north. It runs along the west side of the Solomon Creek Valley for about eight kilometres, then swings northeast across the Solomon, passing through the possible area where

surveyor David Thompson camped 155 years earlier getting ready for his first crossing of Athabasca Pass to the Columbia. The Canadian National Railway is now so busy that the mainline track is being twinned, almost 100 years after the twin competing lines of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern were banking on the need for both.

With the transportation infrastructure, the extension of power and natural gas utilities and the revitalized towns of Edson, Hinton and Jasper in place, the stage was set for a wide-ranging array of economic activities. Initially dominated by the pulp mill and its forestry operations, many other businesses took advantage of the opportunities thus made available.

Jasper became a year-round centre of tourism after 1966 as the Marmot Basin ski area attracted winter and spring visitors. The Jasper Park Lodge changed to a full-year operation after Canadian Pacific Hotels and Resorts bought it from Canadian National in 1988. Many new motels and hotels were also built in Jasper. The Sky Tram up Whistler Mountain to one of Dominion Land Surveyor Bridgland's panoramic photo sites is a popular spring-to-fall operation. The Icefields Highway between Lake Louise and Jasper was upgraded in the 1960s, resulting in many more bus tours. The upgrades included major blasting along the Sunwapta Canyon, creating a spectacular viewpoint and relegating Wilcox Pass to a wilderness hike. Development pressures within the park reached such a state by the mid-1990s that the federal government imposed restrictions. This hastened the construction of more tourism facilities in Hinton to meet the needs of bus tours and Yellowhead highway traffic.

After the pulp mill at Hinton was completed, the town continued to grow as a supply and service centre. Opening of the coal mines starting in the 1960s—Luscar, Grande Cache and Obed—contributed to increased housing starts and new businesses, as did continued exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas in the area. Twinning of Highway 16 and improvements to the Yellowhead highway in British Columbia also added greatly to traffic flow and construction of highwayside services.



Aerial photograph of Hinton in 1950.
ALBERTA GOVERNMENT AIR PHOTO CENTRE



Aerial photograph of the same area in 2001.
WEST FRASER COLLECTION

The Alberta Forest Service opened the first stage of its newly constructed Forest Technology School in the fall of 1960. It served as a base for training forest rangers, fulfilling dreams of foresters from the days of the Dominion Forest Reserves. It was expanded in 1965 to accommodate a forest technology program in cooperation with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and also became a provincial centre for training and research in forest fire management. The school was located on a site that had been reserved for a ranger station. When the centre was expanded, additional land was obtained from the Town of Hinton in exchange for the former Alberta Forest Service horse pasture, which the town converted to a golf course. Reorganization of the ranger districts meant closing many of the original cabins, so families

could live in the larger communities with schools and other amenities. The Gregg River ranger cabin, about 25 kilometres south of Hinton, had been built by the Dominion Forestry Branch around 1917. The vacated building was adopted by Weldwood of Canada's Forest Resources department (now West Fraser)* and was restored and made the feature of a campsite, interpretive and recreation centre. The former Moberly Ranger Station, where John Currat lived with his horses about 30 kilometres north of Hinton, was taken down under his supervision and reassembled on the grounds of the Forest Technology School as part of its museum complex.

* Chronology of the names of the pulp mill: 1954, North Western Pulp & Power, Ltd.; 1978, St. Regis (Alberta) Co. Ltd.; 1985, Champion Forest Products (Alberta) Ltd.; 1988, Weldwood of Canada, Hinton Division; 2005, West Fraser Timber Mills. Ltd.

The town of Edson was given an initial boost by woods operations for the pulp mill. As a provincial government centre, it also expanded as populations increased throughout the region. Edson also benefited from the increased highway traffic, so much so that the highway was split through the community into two one-way arteries. Edson also grew as a service and supply centre for the local agricultural community—including farms and ranches located in the area Horetzky had, a century before, considered “quite unsuitable for successful settlement,” and on lands that lay within the original pulpwood lease centred on Edson. The major catalyst for growth at Edson was discovery of crude oil and natural gas and their related infrastructure of pipelines, gathering plants and transmission stations. The municipality developed North Western Pulp & Power's old Tollerton property on the McLeod River as the popular Norman Willmore Memorial Park.

Anticipating more roads in the area as a result of resource development, Minister of Lands and Forests Norman Willmore, MLA for Edson, arranged to have the northwestern portion of the old Athabasca Forest dedicated as Alberta's first roadless Wilderness Area in 1959. It was later renamed in his

memory as Willmore Wilderness Park. Here some of the “hard road” conditions and traditions of foot and horse travel are maintained.

The forested ecosystem has persisted during the almost 100 years since railway activity began and nearly 50 years since the start of the pulp mill. The forest has changed, certainly, some parts growing older as a result of more effective fire control, other parts growing younger stands as a consequence of logging and reforestation or more recent fires. These all contribute in some measure to maintaining ecosystem diversity. The industrial forest areas surrounding Hinton and the protected forest of Jasper National Park offer interesting contrasts in approach to management. Although the techniques are different, the philosophies of sustainability of forests and values are similar.

From the outset, North Western Pulp & Power foresters and the company committed themselves to three important policies: prompt regeneration of logged areas, distribution of harvesting over the entire area to maintain an even distribution of logging with a constant hauling distance, and incorporation of a multiple-use philosophy. These have been sustained—harvested areas are successfully regenerated and growing well, logging and its resulting younger age classes are well distributed, and a host of forest-based activities and values are available throughout the lease area.

The 1954 pulpwood lease agreement had also provided for a reserve area if the company chose to expand the mill. Although that opportunity was not taken up, the company negotiated a new agreement in 1988 with an enlarged forest management area that enabled both expansion of the pulp mill and construction of a new state-of-the-art sawmill. During this time, rapid advances in science and technology, and major changes in the social and economic climate played crucial roles in advancing and refining forestry practices.

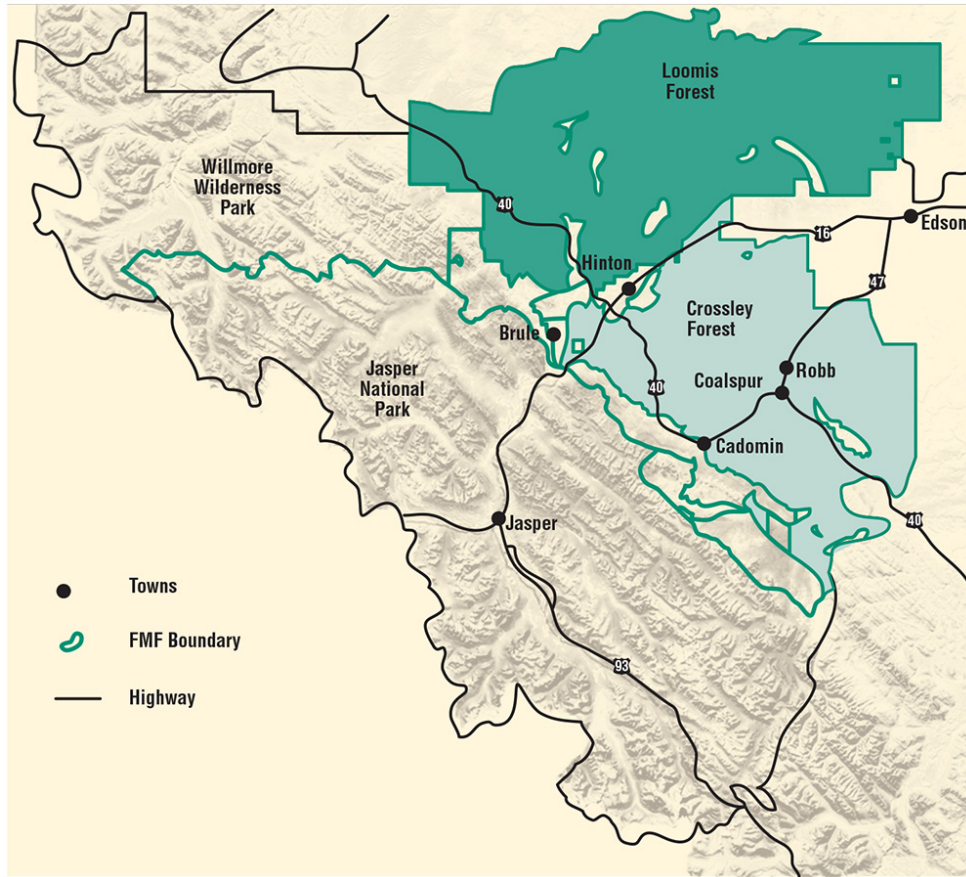
Chief forester at Hinton until his retirement in 1975, Des Crossley continued his professional and scientific contributions throughout his working career and right up to his death in 1986. He authored more than 40 papers and articles on silviculture and forest management. His government counterpart Reg Loomis also made major contributions to policy and science before and after his retirement in 1969. Both men received honorary degrees

for their achievements, Crossley from the University of Toronto in 1982 and Loomis from the University of Alberta in 1991. In recognition of the contribution of these two men to the forest management program at Hinton, the company forest was divided into two forest management units in 1997, the north half named in Loomis' honour, the south in Crossley's. They, too, made "smooth the path" for the foresters who followed, while adding their own refinements as they went along.

Meanwhile, following the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987, which advocated sustainable development, the company committed itself to achieve sustainable forest management for a broader range of values. To assist with this process, the company set up a public participation process for forest management planning, expanded the scope of its inventories, developed a number of innovative programs to enhance forest management, and worked towards achieving certification under the Canadian Standards Association sustainable forest management standard in 2000. Advances in forestry practices were achieved by monitoring the results of early practices. These were then modified in response to observations and research—in essence, taking an adaptive management approach.

In Jasper National Park, managers initially took a more custodial role in management. The forests were protected from human disturbance as much as possible by developing campgrounds and upgrading trails. Fires were fought as they occurred, with the result that forests grew older and some meadows began to shrink as trees and brush grew into them. There were very few disturbances to create new growth and younger age classes. This was recognized by the 1970s and experimental prescribed burning programs were introduced to test the effect of reintroducing fire to the ecosystem. Significant burns have since been conducted in selected areas. In the meantime, park staff conducted a range of surveys and studies to determine the distribution of plant communities, the nature of ecosystem processes, and results of human influences. These studies set the stage for a recently released proposal for active ecosystem restoration and management designed to maintain biodiversity while meeting the needs of the people. In 2001, Parks Canada did a prescribed burn on 110 hectares on the Henry House Flats, the area the

Moberly families used to burn before 1907—and Ed Moberly’s grandnephew and godson Rob Ouellet was a member of the park fire crew that did the job.



Map 28: Foothills Model Forest and West Fraser Forest Management Area with 1988 agreement boundary, showing Crossley and Loomis Forests dedicated in 1997 and other designated areas.

FOOTHILLS MODEL FOREST

Wildlife thrived in Jasper, including the mountain sheep population that maintained itself despite the long history of meat hunting during the fur trade era. The elk reintroduction was so successful that park wardens held annual culling operations every fall to reduce the size of the herds. By the 1960s predator control programs were stopped and wolves began to reappear in the Athabasca valley. However, elk congregated around the town and Jasper Park Lodge where wolves were reluctant to come, leading to increasing elk-people encounters, some of which were threatening to both wardens and visitors. In 2001 the Lodge and the park service reconfigured the fencing around the golf course to encourage wolves to kill more elk, an approach that seems to be working.

Unfortunately, highway and railway traffic in Jasper has resulted in mortality from collisions and, in some cases, fine examples of mountain sheep rams and bull elk have been taken by poachers, both inside and outside the park, but overall, wildlife populations seem to have stabilized. Mountain caribou remain vulnerable to predation and human disturbance. Although their numbers are difficult to trace because they are nomadic and elusive, some herds are holding their own, while others are in decline. The main direct cause of caribou decline is wolf predation. Human activity seems to affect the wolf-caribou balance, giving the wolves the upper hand.

Recent radio-collar and DNA research indicate that grizzly bear populations are reasonably healthy in the foothills immediately adjacent to the mountains, but decline rapidly further east. The two main sources of grizzly bear mortality in Alberta have been legal hunting, which is now closed, and illegal killing during the fall ungulate hunting season.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the 1961 Columbia River Treaty, signed by Canada and the United States, enabled construction of three dams in Canada. The Mica Dam, 150 kilometres upriver from Revelstoke, was completed in 1973 and flooded Boat Encampment under its impounded Kinbasket Lake. Other dams in Canada and the United States have also buried or changed the old route of the Hudson's Bay Express. However, while lamenting this loss of historical features, historian I. S. MacLaren also identified an incidental but lasting value of Jasper National Park, explaining:

What better way to preserve historical landscapes than by turning them into a national park? That was not one of the motives of park-makers in the late nineteenth century, but the creation of Jasper Forest Park on 14 September 1907, also as it happened, resulted in preserving the upper Athabasca River undammed ... [a]s well, the formation of the park preserved the historical traces of the eastern portion of *La Grande Traverse*. Sites of kekule-houses and the Valley of the Twisted Trees—evidence of the regular transmontane presence of Shuswap business travelers and their families—can still be identified, and they necessarily leave one pondering the lostness of storied places that, without knowing

it at the conscious level, Canada has already cashiered in the headlong pursuit of progress.⁴⁵

In 1992 Weldwood and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development were successful in competing for Model Forest designation under the Green Plan of the Canadian government. The objective was to conduct research on sustainable forest management and to use that research to improve forest practices within and beyond the model forest's boundaries. Jasper National Park joined the Foothills Model Forest in 1995, and Willmore Wilderness Park was added in 1997. Collaborative studies are under way on such diverse topics as wildlife, fisheries, watersheds, natural disturbance, technical forestry, social sciences including history, and climate change—all important considerations in sustainable forest management. Of particular note are two collaborative study teams focussing on grizzly bear and natural disturbance. The grizzly bear team is mapping habitats, tracking animals with real-time positioning collars, and supporting basic research in a range of studies for the species. This work is now expanding to the full range of grizzlies in Alberta. The natural disturbance team is researching the use and emulation of natural patterns and structure arising from disturbances, particularly forest fires, as the foundation for a new approach to forest management planning and operations. The partnership is already leading to a more comprehensive and scientifically based approach to management of each respective area, and to landscapes well beyond the borders of the model forest.

Many descendants of the pioneering families have chosen to stay in the region. Their names are common, although some are masked by marriage. Of those who have moved away, many return for reunions and visits and hold on to their memories. Local and district historical societies have preserved records and photographs and helped to rediscover places and events to keep those memories alive. Included among these pioneers are several of the 55ers, the initial forestry contingent who survived the hard winter of 1955–56 when pulp mill operation began at Hinton.

Present residents of the region have experienced their own “hard roads,” but have coped with the same spirit of determination, zeal, ingenuity, faith

and hard work. They should be able to identify with the people in this story.

This story is about people and the land. Access was the “hard road” they had to travel, along with the challenge of finding food and shelter. The hard road since then has been and continues to be the search for the “balances” to which Sandford Fleming referred—the inherent challenge of sustainability of the forested ecosystem, wildlife, water, beauty and the trees themselves—to find the balance in management to sustain the values of the land while sustaining the people who depend on those values. It is an ongoing process. As the noted conservationist Aldo Leopold commented, the most effective improvements in management have come with evolution, not revolution, and “experiment, not doctrine or philosophy, is the key ... [with] bold action, guided by as much wisdom as we can muster.”⁴⁶

This approach has served us well; it certainly holds promise for the future. As stated in the Canadian Council of Forest Minister’s *National Forest Strategy 1998-2003*: “Sustainable forest management is not so much a destination as it is a journey in which we must work together.”⁴⁷ That journey is well under way as we have built so much on the past. The pioneering spirit prevails as we adapt to emerging needs and strive to make the “hard road” easier to travel.

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Timeline

12,000 BP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Glaciers retreat; archaeological evidence suggests first people visit the area.
9,000 BP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post-glacial thermal maximum—treeline up to 100 m higher, montane forest region extends E and S of front range of the Rockies.
4,200 BP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spruce trees buried under 3 m of silt on Solomon Creek (preserved wood re-exposed in 1980s).
4,000–	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human use of Patricia Lake area: archaeological evidence 2,400 BP from the Shuswap cultural horizon, including obsidian flakes from Mt. Edziza in the Coast Range, 950 km west.
2,400–	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human use of Patricia Lake area: archaeological evidence 1,200 BP from the Plateau cultural horizon.
1265 AD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spruce seedling establishes in patch of forest ca. 1 km N. of Columbia Icefields (still alive in 2005, aged at 720+ years old).
1670	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• King Charles II grants charter to the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson Bay—the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC).
1719	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swan, a northern Alberta Cree, takes a sample of Athabasca tar sands to HBC.
1721	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Britain extends its “Broad Arrow” policy to North America, establishing a precedent of Crown or public ownership of forests.
ca. 1730	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alberta Indians acquire horses and guns.
1749	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First York boat built at York Factory for use by HBC on the Albany R.
1754	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anthony Henday first European to enter present-day Alberta.
1776	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fur traders in Montreal organize the North West Company (NWC) to coordinate independent traders and compete with HBC (fierce competition until amalgamated in 1821).
1778	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peter Pond crosses Methy Portage from Saskatchewan to site of present-day Ft. McMurray, builds first “white man’s house” in Alberta near Lake Athabasca.

1781	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archibald McLeod builds Alberta's second "house" near Ft. McMurray.
1784	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Thompson apprentices to HBC at age 14.
1788	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Mackenzie builds the first Ft. Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca.
1789	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mackenzie travels down river (later named Mackenzie) to the Arctic Ocean. • Angus Shaw builds Lac D'Original (Moose Lake) post near Bonnyville.
1792	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First fur trade post built on Saskatchewan R. in Alberta. • Alexander Mackenzie leaves Ft. Chipewyan early fall, winters near forks of Peace & Smoky rivers. • On west coast, Captain George Vancouver meets the Spaniard Bodega y Quadra off Point Grey.
1793	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Mackenzie reaches the Pacific Ocean overland 24 July—the first European to do so north of Mexico.
1795	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Edmonton House built. Settlement begins when HBC and NWC build the first of a series of fortified fur trading posts. • First York boat built at Ft. Edmonton, becomes an HBC boat-building centre. • Jasper Haws (Hawes), <i>voyageur</i> in Sorel in Lower Canada, engages in the fur trade "to: serve, obey and faithfully execute ..." as a canoe middleman.
1797	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Thompson leaves HBC and joins NWC.
1798	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Thompson describes the Little Divide, a short, low portage between the Churchill and Athabasca basins— from the Beaver R. to Lac La Biche.
1799	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Thompson travels down the Athabasca to site of Ft. McMurray, returns east up the Clearwater R. and across Methy Portage. • Rocky Mountain House built on the North Saskatchewan R. • David Thompson marries Charlotte Small.
ca. 1800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iroquois and Nipissings arrive in Jasper area by 1800.
1802	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWC and HBC move posts from the Sturgeon R. to sites within present-day Edmonton.
1804-1806	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis and Clark expedition—first to cross the United States Rockies to the Pacific—about 12 years after Alexander

Mackenzie's overland trip.

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1805 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ft. Dunvegan established on the Peace R.• Simon Fraser establishes NWC post at Hudson's Hope, where the Peace leaves the mountains. |
| 1806 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Thompson sent west to explore and establish posts for NWC.• 2 deserters from Simon Fraser's trip travel up the Peace R. cross Pine Pass between Jasper and Peace R.• NWC's Jacques Raphael (Jaco) Finlay crosses through Howse Pass from the upper North Saskatchewan to the Columbia, draws a simple map. |
| 1807 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Thompson surveys the route over Howse Pass and crosses to the Columbia R. with first load of trade goods. Establishes Kootenai House trading post. |
| 1808 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simon Fraser descends Fraser R. to the Pacific and confirms it is too dangerous for regular travel. |
| 1810 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piegans block David Thompson from Howse Pass because he traded guns with their enemies the Kootenays. Thompson goes north from Boggy Hall on the North Saskatchewan to the Athabasca and up to Brûlé Lake area.• Gabriel Franchère, employed by John Jacob Astor's American Fur Co., sails on the Tonquin from New York with the party that would found Ft. Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia R. |
| 1811 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• William Henry, first European to overwinter in the Jasper area 1810-11. Stays behind with horses and supplies when Thompson leaves.• 10 Jan., David Thompson is first European to cross Athabasca Pass.• Thompson and 3 men leave Boat Encampment 17 April heading south up the Columbia to the Kootenay.• John Jacob Astor's party lands in March and builds Ft. Astoria.• Thompson arrives at Ft. Astoria by canoe 15 July, just 4 months later.• Thompson meets Henry's men with horses and goods at Boat Encampment, thereby completing his mapping of the Columbia. He crosses Pass with horses & returns with rest of goods. 21 Oct. leaves with canoes for Spokane House area. |
| 1812 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thompson arrives at Boat Encampment 5 May with canoe brigade carrying 122 packs of fur at over 40 kilograms each in |

6 canoes. Crosses Pass to Henry's House. Returns east , picks up his family on the way, leaves NWC and works on his map.

- An extensive area of prairie and parkland nr. Ft. Edmonton burns as far south as the South Saskatchewan R.—about 450 km² in area.

1813	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NWC buys Ft. Astoria from Pacific Fur Co. in Oct., renamed Ft. George.• NWC builds Rocky Mountain House fall and winter 1813 at N. end of Brûlé Lake. Later called Jasper House after Jasper Hawes.
1814	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gabriel Franchère leaves Ft. George with a NWC brigade, reaching Boat Encampment 11 May and Henry House 17 May after a difficult crossing in deep snow.• Olivier Roy Lapensee & Andre Belanger drown in rapids below Brûlé Lake, now called Rapids du Mort.
1817	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ross Cox returns east through Jasper with a NWC brigade, crossing Athabasca Pass 31 May.
1819	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HBC establishes St. Mary's House at junction of Peace and Smoky rivers. In Dec. Ignace Giasson leads a party up the Smoky, including Pierre Bostonais (aka Tête Jaune or Yellow Head).
1820	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giasson spends the winter with Pierre Bostonais near present-day Grande Cache. They arrived back at St. Mary's in Oct. having cached their furs on the Smoky.
1820-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HBC's Mr Brown with Pierre Bostonais builds a post in the Grande Cache area as directed by Simpson.
1821	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HBC and NWC merge under the HBC name by Parliamentary decree, ending 45 years of intense rivalry.• George Simpson appointed governor of the Northern Department, and in 1826 governor of the entire North American operation. • Archibald McDonald leads first HBC brigade over Athabasca Pass after merger.
1822	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simpson closes Grande Cache, instructs Joseph Felix Larocque to take charge of Jasper's House.
1823	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Work travels west with the Peter Skene Ogden brigade over Athabasca Pass.

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- 1824
- George Simpson hires Jacques Cardinal the Freeman to cut the first “road” in Alberta from Edmonton to Ft. Assiniboine when he abandoned the Lac La Biche route in favour of the Saskatchewan. It was a primitive pack trail, but it was a defined route.
 - George Simpson crosses Athabasca Pass for the first time, accompanied by James McMillan. Toasts the Committee at the summit at the “Committee’s Punch Bowl.”
 - Joseph Felix Larocque builds winter house in fall at Cotton wood Creek.
 - HBC builds Ft. Vancouver on N. shore of Columbia R.
 - Michel Klyne in charge of Jasper House from ca. 1824 to retirement in 1835.
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- 1825
- Alexander Ross and Larocque return E. over Athabasca Pass with George Simpson.
 - Thomas Drummond, first botanist to visit Jasper area, overwinters at Larocque’s house, crosses Athabasca Pass and returns with Finan McDonald. Returns to Edmonton Dec. 1826.
 - James McMillan travels to Fraser R. with Pierre Bostonais and recommends that Pass, later called Leather then Yellowhead, be used to transport people and leather to New Caledonia, now British Columbia.
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- 1826
- Yellowhead Pass (then Leather Pass) first used by HBC to ship tanned moose and caribou hides to New Caledonia.
 - HBC hydrographer Aemilius Simpson first describes the Parting of the Brigades near mouth of Maligne R.—going to New Caledonia and the Columbia.
 - British colonial timber regulations in the eastern colonies enable purchase of Crown timber harvesting rights while timber lands remained with Crown—set lasting precedent still well established in Alberta and most of Canada.
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- 1827
- HBC clerk Edward Ermatinger leads the York Factory Express east over Athabasca Pass 2 May, 41 days after leaving Ft. Vancouver.
 - Botanist David Douglas snowshoes east over Athabasca Pass with Ermatinger and the York Factory Express.
 - Douglas names mountains Brown and Hooker—overestimating heights at 17,000 ft., caused great interest.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierre Bostonais and his brother Baptiste are killed by local Indians in New Caledonia as punishment for hunting on their lands.
1829	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasper House relocated 23 km SW to near mouth of Rocky R. and foot of Jasper Lake. • George Simpson returns east from Ft. Vancouver through Athabasca Pass after crossing west up the Peace R. to New Caledonia in 1828. • J.E. Harriott, stationed in New Caledonia, returns east over Athabasca Pass with his family. His wife Margaret disappears, believed she fell into Whirlpool gorge between Scott Camp and Kane Meadows. • Joshua Pilcher, destitute American fur trader, passes through to Jasper House with 4 men on 11 Nov. with a late Brigade from the Columbia.
1830	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last new Ft. Edmonton is built on the site of the future legislative grounds.
1835	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colin Fraser appointed postmaster at Jasper House.
1838	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First 2 missionaries in Alberta, Fathers F. Blanchet and M. Demers, visit Ft. Edmonton on their way to the Columbia over Athabasca Pass to establish a mission on the west coast. Baptize 32 children at Jasper House.
1839	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HBC signs lease with the Russian Company for trapping and trading rights for their North American claim from 54°40'N to Cape Spencer (near Juneau, over 400 km). Annual payment, 2,000 land-otter skins and provisions at moderate rates. • HBC sends a party to Stikine R. following this agreement. Some of the party went west through Jasper and Athabasca Pass with the Columbia Express.
1840	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HBC sends lease payment of 2,000 otter skins from York Factory by the Columbia Express. • A party of Assiniboines massacres most remaining members – about 24 - of the Snake Indian Tribe while the tribe camped near the mouth of the Snake Indian River (formerly Assiniboine River, renamed after the tragedy).
1841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Simpson knighted by Queen Victoria, becomes Sir George Simpson.

1843	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev. Father A. Thibault establishes Lac Ste. Anne mission. Became an important stop on the overland trail west to Jasper House in 1858.
1846	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgian missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet arrives in Jasper from Edmonton in the spring, spends 26 days during which he conducts 44 baptisms and 7 marriages before crossing Athabasca Pass to the Columbia. • De Smet meets eastbound Brigade on the Whirlpool—led by Frank Ermatinger, and Lt. H.J. Warre & Lt. M. Vavasour returning from Oregon. • Oregon Treaty of 15 June between Britain and U.S. settles the boundary dispute between British North America and the U.S. Treaty provides HBC free access to Columbia R. and portages. • Artist Paul Kane crosses Athabasca Pass with Brigade heading west in Nov. and returns east in fall 1847.
1848	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A land crossing on the Isthmus of Panama enhances access to the west coast, even more so after railroad constructed in 1848-55.
1853	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry John Moberly engaged by Sir George Simpson for the HBC. • One of the last Brigades over Athabasca Pass includes HBC's Henry A. Tuzo, a McGill gold-medal graduate.
1854	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HBC closes operations in Oregon, moves activity to Ft. Victoria on Vancouver Island. Regular brigades through Athabasca Pass end.
1855	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry John Moberly first visits Jasper area as head of HBC summer hunting party with Iroquois hunters.
1856	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold discovered near the junction of Thompson and Fraser rivers.
1857	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Thompson, impoverished, dies in Longueuil, Quebec, in Feb. age 87. His wife Charlotte dies in May.
1858	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry John Moberly becomes HBC trader at Jasper House. • Henry John Moberly leaves Edmonton 20 Oct. with 37 pack horses, arrives at Jasper House 15 Nov., the first recorded overland passage with horses. Becomes the major route, later general location of railways. • Earliest goldpanners reached Alberta.

1859

- James Hector, part of the Palliser Expedition, travels from Ft. Edmonton via Ft Assiniboine to Jasper House by dog team in Jan. to examine the country and possible passes.
- The Earl of Southesk leaves by horse from Ft. Edmonton, through Lac Ste. Anne, up the McLeod R., over Cardinal Divide and over Cairn Pass into the Brazeau on his way south to the Bow R.
- 3 Grey Nuns arrive in Alberta. Under protection of Father Rèmes, take 3 months by Red River cart from St. Boniface to Lac Ste. Anne.

1860

- Cariboo goldrush follows the 1850s discovery, generates additional traffic through Jasper and Yellowhead. 4 miners return east with a “pile” of gold worth \$1,600.
- Sir George Simpson dies—ending an era of the “Little Emperor” of the HBC.

1861

- Henry Moberly marries Suzanne Karakonte. Two sons, Ewan and John settle and farm in the Jasper area— start of the Moberly families in the region.
- Father Albert Lacombe starts the Mission at St. Albert. Becomes a stopping place on the overland route to Jasper.

1862

- The Overlanders follow the Moberly route to the Yellowhead corridor.
- A group struggling through the muskegs on the Moberly route leave a blaze in Aug. referring to the route as “a hard road to travel.” Reported by Fleming’s surveying expedition, they may have been Overlanders.

1863

- Lord Milton & Dr. W.B. Cheadle travel through the Yellowhead as “tourists.”

1864

- Dr. John Rae leads a party overland from Ft. Garry through Edmonton to Tête Jaune Cache to locate a route for a possible GTP telegraph line.

1867

- British North America Act (BNA) unites the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Upper and Lower Canada, 1 July.
 - BNA Act gives provinces the right to public lands and the timber and wood on them. This authority would not be given to Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan until 1930.
 - Father Lacombe starts the first annual organized brigade of freighting carts to Ft. Garry for his Mission supplies.
 - U.S. purchases Alaska from the Russians. Ends HBC lease.
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1869	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Red River Rebellion involving Louis Riel.
1870	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominion of Canada purchases Rupert's Land from HBC. The new area incorporated as North-west Territories. Alberta's land area officially becomes part of Canada. • Colony of British Columbia joins Confederation to become the 5th province. • Last Indian battles at Edmonton and Lethbridge. • Smallpox epidemic. Particularly decimating to Aborigines.
1870s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the west coast, 3 settlements on Burrard Inlet include first sawmills in B.C.
1871	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oblate Fathers at Lac La Biche build first powered sawmill in Alberta, using a small stream for water power and 12-ft. diameter waterwheel. • Selwyn travelling east from Kamloops on the North Thompson turns back at Moose Lake because of difficult travel.
1872	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandford Fleming, engineer-in-chief of the proposed transcontinental railway, travels through Ft. Edmonton & Lac St. Anne largely on the Henry John Moberly route to Jasper and through Yellowhead Pass. • Walter Moberly instructed to look at the Yellowhead Pass in 1872, and blazes a trail for the railway east through BC to the Athabasca to present-day Jasper. • Lobstick tree at Jasper believed created to mark Fleming & Moberly meeting. • Walter Moberly brings some survey supplies through Athabasca Pass in late fall after Sandford Fleming changes the proposed railway route from Howse Pass to Yellowhead. Party Chief Hall and R.M. Rylatt build temporary log depot at the mouth of Ross Cox Creek to protect supplies from snow. • Moberly builds Athabasca Depot across from the Maligne R. on the Athabasca and has all supplies brought by dog team in Jan. 1873.
1873	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Dominion land survey in Alberta. Surveyor W.S. Gare lays out the 300-acre reserve to which the HBC was entitled at Edmonton, also other sites.
1874	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) arrive in southern Alberta —build Ft. Macleod and arrive in Edmonton.
1875	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First steamboat, the Northcote, reaches Edmonton. Ends Red River cart brigades for long-distance hauling.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athabasca Trail from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing established by the HBC—161-km portage important for northern travel for the next 40 years.
1877	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcus Smith, acting engineer-in-chief of the Canadian Pacific Survey, leaves Edmonton 22 Aug. in an 8-man party with 30 mules and 4 or 5 horses on the overland trails left by the CP Survey crews.
1878	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First commercial sawmill in Alberta located west of Pincher Creek, water powered by Mill Creek. • First official post office at Edmonton.
1879	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffalo near extirpation. • Telegraph line extended into Edmonton from Calgary.
1880	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) route decided for Kicking Horse Pass, Yellowhead abandoned. Supplies at Athabasca Depot sold, outfitter Dan Noyes brings them by barge to Ft. Assiniboine and by pack horse to Edmonton. • Henderson family travels east from Kamloops to Edmonton through the Yellowhead Pass, taking 6 months.
1881	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominion Land Survey begins surveying several townships around Edmonton and Ft. Macleod, the only significant communities in Alberta at the time.
1882	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North-West Territories divided into four Districts, Alberta (southern area including Edmonton-Jasper region), Athabasca, Saskatchewan, and Assiniboia.
1883	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Crown timber agent is appointed in Edmonton to oversee timber berths and collect dues.
1884	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasper House abandoned for several years due to lack of trade.
1885	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last spike on the CPR links Canada from sea to sea. • Government of Canada proclaims the Hot Springs Reserve at Banff, generally taken to mark the beginning of Canada's national park system. • Northwest Rebellion led by Louis Riel. • First large steam-powered sawmill constructed by the Eau Claire and Bow R. Lumber Co. in Calgary.
1886	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of a 10-year period of extensive forest fires that burned over 36% of the treed area of Jasper National Park and West Fraser FMA, 1887-1896.

1887	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rocky Mountains Park Act of 1887 confirms and expands the area around Banff as Rocky Mountains Park, later to be named Banff.
1888	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jack Gregg homesteads on Prairie Creek, west of Hinton, & opens a trading post. North-West Territories Legislative Assembly established. Lewis Swift, travels west with the Moberlys, first sees the Rocky Mountains and Jasper region, moves on to the Okanagan area.
1891	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calgary and Edmonton Railway completed. Initially 2 trains per week each way, the 300-km trip took about 12 hours.
1892	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brothers Arthur and Quincy Coleman come to Sunwapta River from the Brazeau Valley using Poboktan Pass, accidentally find Fortress Lake—looking for legendary mountains Brown and Hooker. Edmonton incorporated as a Town.
1893	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Colemans finally reached Athabasca Pass. A.P. Coleman determines that Mounts Brown and Hooker were just “commonplace mountains.” Lewis Swift returns to Jasper from the west, lives for 2 years in abandoned Jasper House.
1895	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis Swift settled on what became the Palisades Ranch west of Snaring R. in Jasper, builds a cabin and develops a farm, trades with Moberly families.
1896	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest fire in the Brûlé area carves the famous “Black Cat.” Walter Wilcox, American climber, crosses into head of Sunwapta R. at south end of Jasper Park, starting from Laggan Station (now Lake Louise)—first European to do so, and first to cross Wilcox Pass.
1897	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Klondike gold rush starts, Ft. Assiniboine becomes important again as part of an overland route to Yukon. Inspector A.E. Snyder makes first NWMP patrol into the area in the fall.
1898	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James McEvoy leads geological survey party from Edmonton to Brûlé Lake then west through Yellowhead Pass to Tête Jaune Cache.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herman Wooley & Norman Collie climb Mt. Athabasca and see Columbia Icefields—first non-native viewers.
1899	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of the Dominion Forestry Branch (DFB)—Elihu Stewart appointed to be in charge in Ottawa, leads to organized fire control and first timber surveys. • Climber Norman Collie names Wilcox Pass and mountain.
1902	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Trunk Railway bids to build railway from Ontario to B.C., Transcontinental Railway Act passes.
1903	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barr colonists arrive in Battleford—D.I. Crossley's parents among them. • Settlers begin to trickle into Peace R. country.
1904	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur St. Cyr DLS starts survey of 6th meridian, south through Jasper N.P. • Edmonton incorporated as a city.
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta & Saskatchewan become provinces. • The federal government retains rights to natural resources. Forests remain under DFB management. • Canadian Northern Railway (CN) reaches Edmonton from the east. • Suzanne Karakonte Moberly dies 1 May. • James Shand Harvey arrives in Edmonton from Scotland. He will witness, participate in and describe many pivotal events in the Jasper-Hinton area when he moves there to stay in 1907
1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Gregg leads prospectors to first coal "find" in what would become the Coal Branch. • A.O. Wheeler DLS and avid climber founds the Alpine Club of Canada.
1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasper Forest Park founded on 14 Sept.; named for Jasper Hawes; 12,950 km². Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of Interior, instructs Sup. of Forestry to create a Bill to protect the area. Reservation made under Dominion Lands Act. • A.H. Hawkins DLS leaves Edmonton 7 June to survey 13th base line west from McLeod R., takes 3 months through muskegs. • Mary Schäffer crosses Wilcox Pass on her way to Fortress Lake—finds trail very difficult, names Tangle Creek. • Archie MacDonald travels with 3 sons by horse through Yellowhead Pass from Daysland to farm on the North Thompson.

1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.H. Hawkins extends 13th base line west; intersects St. Cyr's 6th meridian near Jasper House. • Mary Schäffer travels from Laggan to "discover" Maligne Lake, guided in part by Samson Beaver's map given to her in 1907. • A.E. Rau, DFB forester, surveys forest resources at the head of the McLeod and Athabasca rivers in the fall. • University of Alberta founded in Strathcona.
1909	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Gregg sells his store at Prairie Creek to railway contractors, but keeps ranch. • Rev. George Kinney travels through Jasper on way to Mount Robson to climb with Curly Phillips. They thought they had been successful, but missed the summit in swirling snow. • Timber berths established along McLeod R. and Athabasca immediately east of Brûlé Lake by Department of Interior. • Administration of Jasper Park begins. J.W. McLaggan appointed acting superintendent. • Last of the annual spring meadow burns by Jasper Métis families before they were evicted from the Park. • First Alberta aeroplane flight.
1910	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis Swift appointed as first game guardian in Jasper 3 Jan. • Lewis Swift reports Jasper House "tore down" by GTP surveyors to build a raft to cross the Athabasca R. • Six Métis families moved from Jasper National Park, including four Moberly families, Joachim and Findlay. Families settle in Prairie Creek, Grand Cache and Shiningbank areas. • GTP Railway arrives in Edson, railway construction camp set up on Prairie Creek at end of steel west of Hinton to construct a high-level bridge over the creek, 100 years after David Thompson. • Edson-Grande Prairie Trails from Medicine Lodge and Edson constructed north to meet at the Athabasca R. and continue on to Sturgeon Lake to provide access to the Peace R. country from the new GTP Railway. • GTP Railway starts construction of Coal Branch line to service coal mine developments. Coal Spur & Lovett mines opened. • Coal mine established at Pocahontas for the approaching GTP Railway in Jasper.
1911	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GTP Railway reaches Hinton and Jasper, crosses Yellowhead Pass in Nov. • Federal government passes the Forest Reserves and Parks Act.

- Jasper National Park boundaries reduced with passing of Forest Reserves and Parks Act to ribbons 16 km on each side of railway; Park area: 2,590 km².
- Two new forest reserves, Brazeau and Athabasca, established at the head of the Pembina and McLeod rivers, and Athabasca and Smoky rivers.
- Railway station at Jasper named after Earl Hopkins Fitzhugh, a GTP vice-president (later changed to Jasper).
- Lewis Swift obtains title to his land.
- Limestone quarrying begins in Jasper, 6 km east of Fitzhugh, hauled to cement plant at Marlboro.
- Mary Schäffer returns to survey Maligne Lake—with Jack Otto and Sid Unwin.

- 1912
- First passenger train arrives in Jasper in April.
 - Titanic sinks. Charles M. Hays, GTP president, is lost.
 - Coal mine established at Brûlé on the Canadian Northern Railway.
 - T.W. Dwight surveys forest conditions north of the Athabasca for DFB.

- 1913
- Jasper townsite surveyed and community and station renamed Jasper (from Fitzhugh).
 - Trail and carriage paths to Maligne and Pyramid lakes.
 - First permanent Jasper National Park superintendent, Col. S. Maynard Rogers.
 - J.A. Doucet, forester with DFB, surveys regional forests.
 - Canadian Northern Railway completed to Vancouver 4 October
 - The Coal Branch railway line completed.
 - Start of Alberta-B.C. border survey from U.S. border north.

- 1914
- Minister of Interior convinced Jasper National Park needs to be bigger: 11,396 km². Boundaries of Jasper National Park expanded again to include the Athabasca drainage.
 - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of Sherlock Holmes, visits Jasper.
 - Park superintendent Rogers advocates vigorous predator control. Program continues into early 1970s.
 - Start of First World War.

- 1915
- Robert Kenneth and Jack Brewster lease area on Lac Beauvert, establish "Tent City," launching Jasper as a tourist destination.
 - Prohibition declared in Alberta—repealed 1923.

1916

- M.P. Bridgland DLS conducts triangulation surveys from the front range west to Whistler Mountain, pioneering the use of panoramic photography.
- An internment camp built in Jasper NP between the railway station and Athabasca R.
- Stan Clark – a U of T forestry graduate – appointed first forest ranger at Hinton.
- Rail service introduced to Peace R. country, ending traffic on the Edson & Medicine Lodge trails.
- Financially failing GTP and CN (Canadian Northern) railways consolidated (renamed in 1922 as Canadian National).

1917

- Elk reintroduced to Banff from herds in the Yellowstone area.

1919

- First pool built at Miette Hot Springs, a log structure.
- Alberta-B.C. boundary survey crew camp at Camp Parker, blaze a tree on 6 Aug. and carve names of crew.
- Railway tie logging starts in Whirlpool Valley in Jasper— ties driven on the Whirlpool and Athabasca rivers to Henry House Prairie.
- GTP acquires the Jasper Raven Totem Pole, carved by Haida from Queen Charlotte Islands, erected on the station grounds in 1920.
- Stan Clark, former forest ranger, homesteads the Entrance Ranch.

1920

- 88 elk from Yellowstone released in Jasper.
- Jack Glen starts as forest ranger at Entrance, serves until 1942. Mountain Trails recalls his experiences.
- A major trail and cabin building period on the Brazeau and Athabasca Forests. Rangers focus on patrols by horse.
- First aircraft patrols by DFB at Morley, moved to High River in 1921-1930.

1921

- Pocahontas Mine closes, branch railway from Snaring R. abandoned.
- Athabasca lookout constructed by DFB on Athabasca Forest— first in the region.

1922

- First car from Edmonton to Jasper, Charles Neimeyer and Frank Silverthorne.
 - Canadian National Railway (CNR) created, combining GTP and CN Railway.
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1923	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road from Edmonton to the eastern boundary of Jasper Park from Jasper begun, completed 1928.
1924	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNR buys Tent City, starts new lodge. • Scenic roads built to Maligne Canyon, Mt. Edith Cavell and nearby lakes in Jasper.
1925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corser brothers begin a tie hacking contract in the Niton-Edson area, leading to sawmilling and contracting businesses. • Jasper Park Lodge golf course opened by Earl Sir Douglas Haig, Chief of British Forces in WWI.
1927	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,538 km² south of Sunwapta Pass added to Jasper National Park. • Cottonwood Creek campground opens—first major campground in Jasper. • Oil sand from Ft. McMurray area used to pave the road to Jasper Park Lodge. • The Country Beyond, first movie filmed in Jasper, many to follow.
1928	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 more elk shipped to Jasper by rail. • Agnes and Mona Harrigan move to Jasper from the Okanagan, first licensed female guides for horse trips in Jasper. • Peak coal production years 1928-29. • Blue Diamond coal mine in Brule closes as coal quality declines. • Hinton Collieries coal mine opened.
1929	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original Jasper Park Lodge and cabins completed—accommodate 600+ guests.
1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resources transferred from federal government to province of Alberta 1 Oct. Similar transfers made in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and railway lands in B.C. • Alberta Forest Service (AFS) created to manage forests previously under DFB. • Transfer Act includes adjustments to National Park boundaries, including Jasper. • National Parks Act. Current Jasper National Park boundaries established; 10,878 km². Area south of Sunwapta Pass transferred to Banff National Park. • Roadwork on Jasper-Lake Louise highway begins as unemployment relief program.

1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta completes the road east of Jasper Park Gate, completes road between Edmonton and Jasper. Improvements made 1948 to 1954. Henry John Moberly dies aged 97.
1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brazeau & Athabasca Forests combined, HQ at Coalspur, Fred Edgar as forest supervisor. • Billy Magee arrives in Entrance, later becomes predator control officer.
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road to Miette Hot Springs in Jasper built.
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campground at Miette Hot Springs opened.
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swift ranch property sold to A.C. Wilby.
1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive fires along the Eastern Slopes. Fire near Brûlé burns off Black Cat's tail and part of head.
1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a bathing structure at Miette Hot Springs. • Downhill runs cleared on Whistler's Mt. in Jasper to inaugurate downhill skiing. • Youth Forestry Training Program starts in Alberta with joint federal funding for employment, training and experience in forestry on Forest Reserves.
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric Huestis appointed supervisor of Brazeau- Athabasca—arranged transfer of HQ to Edson.
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Forestry Program establishes several youth work camps in Jasper to work on campgrounds and other projects. Program ends after declaration of War. • Jasper-Lake Louise highway opens—one lane—later becomes Icefields Parkway. New road blasted above Sunwapta Canyon, bypassing Wilcox Pass. Officially opened 15 June 1940. • King George VI and Queen Elizabeth stay at Outlook cabin in Jasper on their cross-Canada tour.
1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stan Clark acquires Athabasca Ranch; Charlie and Mona Matheson build on the Circle M Ranch by the East Gate. • Controlled slaughter of elk by park wardens to manage elk numbers in absence of predators. Program continues into the early 1970s.
1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brule Lumber Co. established, logs drawn from the Brûlé area by partners McDougall & Stady who had large sawmill at

Winfield.

- Albert & Emile Garneau establish a sawmill, purchasing the Brule Lumber Co. in 1956.

1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alberta order-in-council approves export of fire-killed timber—quantities of pulpwood shipped to Minnesota, especially from Lesser Slave and Lac La Biche areas.• German prisoners of war assist in logging and sawmilling at Brûlé.
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism in Jasper rises sharply after WWII.• Radcliffe & Evans take over Brule Lumber Co.
1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stanley Knapp & Allen Innis-Taylor construct beaver ranches at Graveyard Lake, north of Jarvis Lake.
1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leduc No. 1 Oil Well signals start of oil era.
1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forest lands in Alberta reserved from settlement by order-in-council, established as Green Area.
1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revised Alberta Forests Act enables long-term leases to support pulp mills.• Robert. O. Sweezey obtains first pulpwood lease agreement for Edmonton Pulp Mills Ltd; area includes a block east of Brûlé Lake. Could not find backers and agreement cancelled.• Imperial Oil drills a pilot well Muskeg #1 south of Grande Cache, constructing a road north of Entrance mostly on the old Aboriginal and forestry pack trail to Grand Cache, changing a way of life.• Eric Huestis becomes director of forestry.• Alberta begins inventory of provincial forests.• Eight graduating foresters from UBC employed by Alberta Forest Service, 2 later work for NWPP—Jim Clark and Owen Bradwell. One — Robert Steele — later becomes Deputy Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.
1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forestry trunk road from Coleman to Nordegg started around 1950 with Federal-Provincial funding under Eastern Rockies

Forest Conservation Board created in 1948. The final connection from Nordegg to Hinton completed in 1961.

- Decline in demand for coal begins.
- Inter-provincial pipeline completed to Ontario.

1950s

- Rabies control program in effect in Alberta, continued in Hinton area through Billy Magee, predator control officer at Entrance. Predator control programs still in effect in Jasper.

1951

- Frank Ruben, Alberta Oil and Coal businessman, incorporates North Western Pulp & Power Ltd. (NWPP), obtains a pulpwood lease agreement to support construction of a pulp mill at Edson.
- Good all-weather Highway 16 to Jasper completed.
- Increased traffic on all roads in Jasper leads to creation of campgrounds along main highways.
- Extensive rabies epidemic in northern Alberta leads to accelerated predator control programs to try to prevent its spread.

1952

- R.O. Sweezey obtains a new pulpwood lease agreement to support Beverly Pulp Mills Ltd., but also fails to find financial backing. Lease area includes blocks in Hinton region.
- Robert Ruben pays an additional deposit for an extended agreement for NWPP on a revised area drafted by R. Loomis—area lying west of Edson and between the Brazeau and Athabasca rivers.
- Original Jasper Park Lodge burns, but quickly replaced with present structure.
- Swift ranch property sold to Gordon Bried who expanded the guest operation. Government finally purchased the site in 1962 for \$277,850.
- Trans-Mountain Pipeline begun from Strathcona County through Jasper National Park and down the North Thompson R. to carry Alberta oil to Vancouver.

1953

- Trans Mountain Oil Pipe Line Co. from Edmonton to Vancouver completed 15 Oct.

1954

- Ruben meets Roy Ferguson, president of the St. Regis Paper Co., about a possible partnership. St. Regis sends a team of forestry staff to Edson in May to evaluate the area.
- St. Regis and North Canadian Oils announce a partnership agreement on 17 June to be called North Western Pulp &

Power Ltd.

- A revised forest management agreement signed 14 Sept. by government and both partners to construct a pulp mill at Edson.
- Soil and water surveys indicate the Edson site would not support a pulp mill.

1955	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hinton chosen as an alternative location in Jan. and all planning immediately shifted to that site for the pulp mill.• Robert Ruben, son of Frank Ruben, purchases Harry King's and John James' (Vic Webb) ranch for the Hinton valley townsite.• Woodlands Department set up in May—plans for forest management and logging get under way.• D.I. Crossley starts as chief forester 1 May.• Construction for the new mill starts at Hinton 23 May.• Survival Training School of RCAF moves to Jarvis Lake.
1956	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coal mining on the Coal Branch ceases as a result of reduced markets.• The last operating coal mine around Hinton on the Robb road operated by Hubert Schnur closes.• NWPP logging operations start at Camp One, followed by other camps.
1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First pulp produced by NWPP mill.
1958	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrance Provincial Park created, includes Jarvis Lake chain. Renamed Switzer Provincial Park in 1969.
1959	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilderness Provincial Park created—5,570 km²—later named Willmore Wilderness Park after Hon. Norman Willmore.

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Peter Murphy, professor emeritus at the University of Alberta, taught forest policy, forest fire management and served terms as Department Chair and Associate Dean of Forestry. As a 12-year resident of Hinton as head of the Forest Technology School between 1960 and 1973 he became imbued with the mountains, forests and history of the land, and history became his avocation. "Although I loved the mountain and forested country, it was the sense of history of people and the land that added the richness of time and brought it to life."

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Bob Udell knows the Hinton story well, having worked as an industry forester there for over 35 years. He authored two of the management plans written for the Hinton forest, and was President of the Foothills Model Forest for 13 years. Although retired he remains active with forest history as well as the development of forest policy in Alberta. Impressed by the vision and influence of the pioneers, and inspired by the history of the region, he initiated, participates in and oversees projects at the Model Forest to record company and regional histories.

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Robert Stevenson is a forester, retired from government in 1992 after 33 years of work throughout Alberta and the western N.W.T. During his varied career in natural resources management and administration he compiled and ensured protection for numerous historic photograph and map collections, portraying Alberta's forests, parks and wildlife. "Many of these photographs allowed me to help people better understand environmental change and challenges".

THOMAS W. PETERSON (1930 – 2021)

Thomas W. Peterson was born and raised in Jasper, Alberta and moved to Hinton in 1995 where he has continued to live his dreams of following the footsteps of people such as David Thompson. He has a great library of historical books and copies of early journals and enjoys "bringing to light the stories hidden in the shadows of the Canadian Rockies."

The Foothills Model Forest is a non-profit corporation founded in November 1992 as a unique industry-government partnership dedicated to providing practical solutions for stewardship and sustainability on Alberta forest lands. Located in west-central Alberta, it is based in the resource community of Hinton. It covers roughly 2.75 million hectares (27,500 square kilometres), and embodies Jasper National Park of Canada, the Willmore Wilderness Park, and the forest management area of Hinton Wood Products, a Division of West Fraser Mills Ltd. It also includes some provincial "crown forest management units" and the Hinton Training Centre's Cache Percotte Training Forest. Within its boundaries are three forest areas-boreal, montane, and sub-alpine-and many forest uses including timber, petroleum, and coal extraction; tourism; and recreation.

The Forest History Society, Inc. is a nonprofit educational institution that links the past to the future by identifying, collecting, preserving, interpreting, and disseminating information on the history of interactions between people, forests, and their related resources -- timber, water, soil, forage, fish and wildlife, recreation, and scenic or spiritual values. Through programs in research, publication, and education, the Society promotes and rewards scholarship in the fields of forest, conservation, and environmental history while reminding all of us about our important forest heritage. Located in Durham NC, FHS is affiliated with Duke University.



A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

People have co-existed with the land in the upper Athabasca for the last 10,000 years. Its geology, topography, waters, climate, forests, and wildlife have all had a significant effect on the relationship between people and the land.

The authors trace the changing relationships between people and forests as humans first travelled through the area, then stayed to struggle, survive and eventually flourish — first despite the forest, then in harmony with it. With extremes of temperature, drought and forest fires, deep snow, floods, muskegs and fallen timber it truly has been a hard road. Such a history must inform our present and future decision-making about resource use and sustainability.

“Treating the Athabasca corridor for its entire non-Native history, *A Hard Road to Travel* takes its readers through two parallel histories brought together as one. It tells the stories of not just the fur traders on the transcontinental route between Hudson Bay and the Pacific Ocean, nor just the tourists, alpinists, skiers, and campers making annual pilgrimages to the mountains, but also the miners and foresters, the freighters and surveyors, the railway builders and homesteaders, the guides and wardens (horses in tow), forest industrialists and their provincial and federal government counterparts, and the forests and wildlife of the Athabasca. ... Whether waterway, trail, railway, highway, or logging road, the road was hard won. This book does ample justice to the story of those who knew and know as much.”

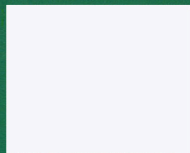
From the Foreword by I.S. MacLaren, author of *Mapper of Mountains*, professor of History and English, University of Alberta.

A wonderful example of the resilience of the forest and people – it clearly shows how people used lessons from the past to protect and perpetuate the forest as well as their futures. Highly readable, very informative and well illustrated with well-chosen maps and photographs. Congratulations to the authors on a first-class book.

T. M. (Mike) Apsey, C.M., author of *What's all this got to do with the price of 2 x 4s?*, Consultant, forest and trade policy.

Jasper National Park of Canada celebrates its 100th birthday in 2007, and *A Hard Road to Travel* is an important contribution to that celebration. This impressive and highly readable book sets forward the record - for the first time in one place - of Aboriginal peoples, the fur traders, natives, explorers, adventurers, entrepreneurs and agencies that have touched and shaped the colourful history of this World Heritage Park, one of Canada's best known national parks and part of the Canadian Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site.

Ron Hooper, superintendent of Jasper National Park



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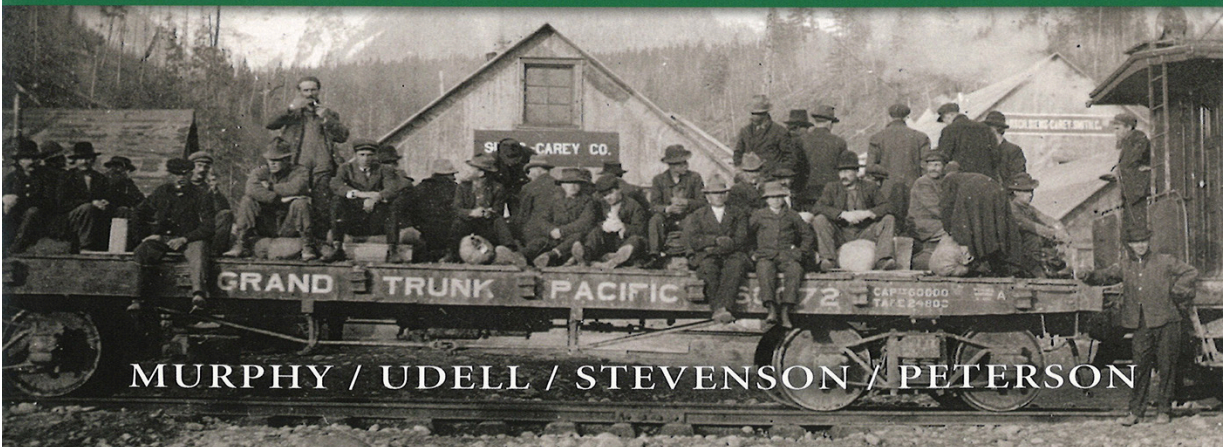
*By understanding our past,
we shape our future*



A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL



LAND, FORESTS AND PEOPLE IN THE
UPPER ATHABASCA REGION



MURPHY / UDELL / STEVENSON / PETERSON

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