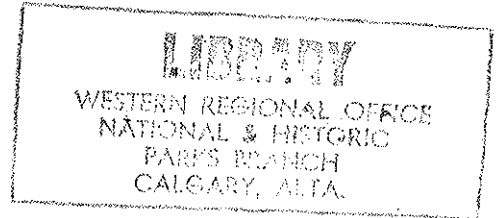


JAMES BERNARD HARKIN

A Brief Biographical Sketch



Few Canadians have exerted a greater influence on the conservation of wild life and the preservation of the environment than James Bernard Harkin. As Commissioner of National Parks from 1911 to 1936, Mr. Harkin transformed Canada's first national park at Banff, and a number of Dominion park reserves, into a cohesive, representative system of National Parks that served as a prototype for many conservation-minded nations to emulate. He developed for public use many outstanding scenic areas that previously were relatively unknown, influenced the establishment of new parks on a nation-wide scale, and established new standards for their preservation, control and management.

Mr. Harkin, known to his intimates as "Eunnie", had his first contact with the administration of Canada's National Parks early in the present century, during his service as private secretary to successive Ministers of the Interior. From 1887 to 1908, Rocky Mountains (Banff) park and the park reserves were administered from Ottawa by the Deputy Minister of the Interior, assisted by the Departmental Secretary and the Department's Law Clerk. Local administration was entrusted to a Park Superintendent at Banff, who also was responsible for the management of the park reserves at Yoho, Glacier, Waterton Lakes, Jasper and Elk Island.

In 1908, the Superintendent of Forestry at Ottawa was placed in charge of park administration, and the Park Superintendent at Banff, Howard Douglas, was promoted to the post of Commissioner of Parks at Edmonton. From this point he carried on the functions of a chief Superintendent of Parks, responsible for the management of the western parks and reserves under individual superintendents.

In 1911, Honourable Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, decided to improve park administration by legislation, and on May 19, 1911, obtained royal assent to the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act.

The most significant result of this legislation was the creation of a new branch in the Department of the Interior to administer the federal parks. For the next ten years it was known as the Dominion Parks Branch. Heading the new branch as Commissioner and directing its activities from Ottawa was Mr. Harkin. Field administration, with headquarters at Edmonton, remained in charge of Howard Douglas. Douglas was given the new title of Chief Superintendent, and in that capacity he was responsible for the resident park superintendents and their activities.

The circumstances of the new Commissioner's appointment are interesting. A native of Vankleek Hill, Ontario, Mr. Harkin received his education there and at Marquette, Michigan. He chose newspaper work as a vocation and commenced his career as a journalist at Montreal in 1892. The following year, he accepted employment with the Ottawa Journal, rising in a few years to the position of city editor, with membership in the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Late in 1901, P.D. Ross, editor and owner of The Journal, was approached by Honourable Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, for assistance in the recruitment of a 'political' secretary. Ross confessed that the only person having the necessary qualifications and background that he could recommend, was his city editor. Mr. Harkin was offered the position, accepted it, and was appointed to the public service of Canada on December 2, 1901. The Minister of the Interior also was the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and for several years Mr. Harkin was carried on the establishment of the Department of Indian Affairs as a first class clerk.

In February, 1904, he was confirmed by order in council as the Minister's Private Secretary, and on April 1, 1907, transferred to the staff of the Department of the Interior. On the resignation of Clifford Sifton as Minister of the Interior in 1905, Mr. Harkin was requested by Sifton's successor, Honourable Frank Oliver, to continue as his Private Secretary. This position Mr. Harkin filled until 1911.

In his capacity of Private Secretary, Mr. Harkin was involved in matters of administration and policy for which his Minister was responsible. In the early part of the twentieth century, these included administration of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, Dominion and other public lands, topographical surveys, forestry and immigration matters, Rocky Mountains Park and other park reserves, together with Indian Affairs. As Mr. Oliver's secretary, Mr. Harkin also was involved in the purchase of the Pablo herd of buffalo, which led to the successful experiment of saving from extinction, this magnificent game animal.

Prior to the enactment of the new park legislation in 1911, Mr. Harkin was informed by Mr. Oliver of the latter's intention to establish two new branches of the Department, one to administer the national park system, and the other to supervise federal water power matters. Given a choice of heading either of the two new bureaus, Mr. Harkin chose national parks. His appointment as Commissioner of Dominion Parks was confirmed by order in council on August 10, 1911, retroactive to April 1.

Mr. Harkin launched the new branch in September, 1911. A small staff was recruited from other divisions of the Department. The few with experience in park administration came from the Forestry Branch. Others from the Surveys Branch brought additional skills. Gradually a capable Head Office staff including technical personnel was built up.

and plans and policies formulated for the administration of a total area of about 4,000 square miles. Although Howard Douglas was retired from the position of Chief Superintendent in 1912, the office was maintained at Edmonton until 1917. A field engineering office was developed at Banff, from which major construction projects in the field were co-ordinated.

After taking office, the new Commissioner made a tour of Western Canada to inspect the areas which were under his control. From this trip Mr. Harkin was able to visualize the potentialities of the great unspoiled wilderness that had been dedicated as a pleasure ground for Canadians. Before leaving, he had little in the way to guide him, other than the reports of early park superintendents which recorded development previously undertaken. As described by one of his original staff, Mabel B. Williams, in her discerning book, "Guardians of the Wild,"

"There was little in the new office at Ottawa to serve for guide or inspiration. The files which had been transferred to the new organization were for the most part dreary compilations of correspondence concerning transfers of land in the townsites of Banff and Field, the collection of rates and telephone charges, complaints concerning dusty roads, and the absence of a garbage collection. There were few photographs and no books, with the exception of Government records and bulletins. Three thousand miles away from their inspiring reality, it was difficult to visualize these national parks, and far more difficult to realize to what manifold uses they might be put."

The new commissioner was soon aware of the need for an increased appropriation from Parliament for development work required to make the attractions of the national parks more easily accessible to visitors.

Mr. Harkin had taken charge of the parks at the beginning of what might be termed the "automobile age." He became a strong proponent of tourism, not only for the purpose of stimulating travel to the parks, but also to impress on the legislators in Parliament the urgent need for more money with which to improve and carry out his plans. Most visitor traffic to date had been transported by railway, but in 1911 the first road capable of carrying motor traffic from Calgary to Banff was completed. Mr. Harkin's early annual reports of the activities of his Branch stressed the value of tourist traffic in the United States and Europe, and called to attention the need for Canadians to share in the tourist dollar by emphasizing the advantages and attractions of national Parks. Later, in 1917, he advocated the creation of a national travel bureau, a step which eventually was taken by the Government of Canada in 1934 when the Canadian Travel Bureau was created.

In explaining the policy of the National Parks Branch, Mr. Harkin cited the need for quality in services made available to visitors. These included improved visitor accommodation, protection against extortion, and the provision of minor attractions to supplement natural features. The construction of first class roads and trails was advocated so that park attractions might be reached in comfort and in safety. He took action to control the prevailing dust nuisance, improved supervision of water supplies and sanitation, and instituted control of local transportation agencies including guides, drivers and charges. Steps also were taken to improve fire and game protection services, and reduce exploitation of the natural resources of the parks, particularly by the holders of timber licences granted in earlier days.

During his twenty-five year term of office, Mr. Harkin saw many of

his early objectives reached. Highway construction, which had been commenced prior to the first great war, was resumed in 1919 and the following year Banff was linked by motor road with Lake Louise. In 1923, Banff-Windermere Highway, the first automobile road to cross the central Canadian Rockies through Banff and Kootenay Parks, was completed. Construction of an early link in the Trans-Canada Highway from Lake Louise through Yoho Park to Golden in the Columbia River Valley, enabled motorists by 1927 to participate in a circle tour of 250 miles through the Rocky Mountains. An outstanding achievement was the completion of the spectacular Banff-Jasper or Icefields Highway in 1934.

As park highways were extended, the provision of adequate accommodation by private enterprise was encouraged. A chain of motor lodges developed by the Canadian Pacific Railway, was augmented by attractive cabin developments developed by other concessionnaires. The Canadian National Railways added Jasper Park Lodge in 1923 to the list of superb mountain hotels which had been developed by the Canadian Pacific in Banff and Yoho Parks. Visitors were encouraged to see the parks on horseback or afoot, and an extensive system of riding and hiking trails was made available. Early bathing establishments built at the hot springs in Banff and Kootenay Parks were supplanted by commodious pools and with attractive dressing rooms, and a new installation made at Miette Hot Springs in Jasper Park.

With larger appropriations and an increasing visitor use of the parks came expansion in the park establishment. Engineering requirements led to the development of a technical division headed by a chief engineer. In 1921, the town-planning office of the former Commission of Conservation was transferred to the National Parks Branch. This development resulted

in the acquisition of a town-planning and architectural service that was to benefit both the park service and those providing services in the parks.

Commissioner Harkin was an ardent conservationist, having had an early association with the acquisition of the buffalo herds that were placed in Elk Island and Buffalo Parks. In 1914, he brought to the attention of the Minister, the plight of the prong-horned antelope which, although once prolific on the western prairies, was in danger of extinction. On his recommendation, three areas - two in southern Alberta and one in Saskatchewan - were reserved in 1916 for the protection of the species. Later in 1922, these areas were established as the Nemiskam, Wawaskesy, and Menissawok National Parks. Within these protected areas, the antelope flourished and re-populated adjacent areas. With the future of the species assured, the antelope parks later were abolished and the lands returned to the provinces concerned.

Canada's participation in 1916 with the United States in a treaty to protect migratory birds resulted in another expansion of the National Parks Branch. Administration of the Migratory Birds Convention Act passed by Parliament in 1917, was delegated to the Department of the Interior and entrusted to the Commissioner of Parks. Regulations were established under the Act in 1918, and following the appointment of an ornithologist, a wildlife section was created to administer them. From this modest beginning was developed the National Parks Wildlife Division, later to become the Canadian Wildlife Service. In April, 1966, it became a separate branch of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Later, in November, 1970, it was transferred to the Department of Fisheries and Forestry which, in 1971 became the nucleus of the Department of the Environment.

Another step taken to facilitate game protection in Canada was the formation in 1916 of an interdepartmental Advisory Board on Wild Life Protection. Composed of representatives of several federal government departments, including the commissioner of National Parks, the board functioned for nearly fifty years before it was dissolved. During its existence, the board served in an advisory capacity, and its influence led in 1918 to the establishment of Point Pelee National Park on what previously had been a Naval Reserve on Lake Erie.

The interest of Commissioner Harkin in historic sites and buildings in Canada led to the creation of yet another division of the National Parks Branch. A growing appreciation of the need for preserving and marking places of historic interest in Canada was sparked by the formation in 1907 of the Historic Landmarks Association of Canada. Its immediate object was to assist in preparations for the Tercentenary of Quebec in 1908. Its work however, was continued until 1922 when it became known as the Canadian Historical Association. Mr. Harkin had been a member of the association for some years, and had been active in having Canada's first national historic parks established - Fort Howe in New Brunswick in 1914, and Fort Anne in Nova Scotia in 1917. In March, 1919, he recommended to the Deputy Minister of the Interior that an honorary board, comprised of men known to be authorities on Canadian history, be created to advise the Department on the preservation of sites of national historic interest in Canada. The recommendation was approved by the Minister, Honourable Arthur Meighen. Following their appointment, the members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada held their first meeting in Ottawa on October 28, 1919. The board of seven members elected Brigadier General E.A. Cruikshank of Ottawa as Chairman. Commissioner Harkin served on the board for some

years, and his assistant, F.H.H. Williamson was the first secretary. The Board functioned in an advisory capacity, and the administrative work involved in acquiring, marking and preserving sites recommended by the Board was assumed by the National Parks Branch. From a small unit, the Historic Sites Division developed into the National Historic Parks and Sites Service, responsible for the administration of more than 20 historic parks and over 600 historic sites.

The need for suitable literature describing the physical attractions of the parks, their fauna and flora, was recognized shortly after the National Parks Branch was formed. This requirement was met in part by the production of pamphlets describing the Banff Museum, the Nakimu Caves, the geology, the glaciers and the game fish of the mountain parks. The first distinctive park publication, issued in 1914, by Commissioner Harkin, outlined the objectives and functions of the parks, and carried as an insert in its cover, a sprig of mountain heather. Another early publication, described the summer and winter attractions of Banff National Park. An effective campaign to educate the public in forest fire prevention also was undertaken.

Following the end of the first great war, increased appropriations permitted an expansion of educational and publicity activities. Commissioner Harkin obtained authority to establish a publicity division within the Branch under a director. The Parks Branch was one of the first agencies in the federal government to adopt motion pictures as a publicity medium. The division also maintained a large slide and photograph library, from which hundreds of prints were distributed annually. Special exhibits were prepared for display at world's fairs, expositions, and other exhibitions. Later, the Branch employed radio for the broadcasting of talks and information. At its zenith the

Publicity Division had a staff of 25, but following the creation of other government information agencies, including the National Film Board and the Canadian Government Travel Bureau, many of its former functions were turned over to the new organizations. Its remaining activities eventually were absorbed by the Departmental information division.

Among Mr. Harkin's notable achievements during his 25-year term as Commissioner of National Parks were the completion of the Banff-Windermere Highway Agreement in 1919, the agreements made with the four western provinces of Canada under the National Resources Acts of 1930, and the enactment of the National Parks Act on May 30, 1930. The 1919 agreement with British Columbia, not only led to the creation of Kootenay National Park, but facilitated the administration of National Parks in that province by confirming legislative jurisdiction of the Federal Government in several important fields.

The enactment of the National Parks Act climaxed the prolonged efforts of Commissioner Harkin to have the parks removed from the jurisdiction of the Dominion Forests Reserves and Parks Act and placed under the authority of a separate act. The task of developing suitable legislation consumed a period of 10 years. It involved lengthy discussions with the four western provinces, and culminated in the completion of resources agreements by the Minister of the Interior with the respective provincial premiers. These agreements not only confirmed as national parks the areas listed in schedules to the Resources Acts, but confirmed the legislative jurisdiction of the federal government within the parks, and the rights to the natural resources within their outer boundaries.

Mr. Harkin's public service as Commissioner of National Parks

terminated rather abruptly in December, 1936. The amalgamation of four Federal Government departments, Interior, Mines, Immigration and Colonization, and Indian Affairs, produced repercussions. As Prime Minister King had pointed out in introducing the necessary legislation in Parliament, the measure on approval eliminated the need for three deputy ministers and three assistant deputy ministers. The appointment of the senior deputy minister of the disappearing departments as head of the new Department of Mines and Resources left a surplus of senior officers for selection as Directors to head the five new branches of the Department. Faced with the prospect of reporting to the Minister through a Director responsible not only for national parks but for the administration of public lands, forestry matters, and Canada's northland, Mr. Harkin declined the post of Controller, National Parks Bureau, and accepted retirement at the age of 61.

During his post-retirement years, Mr. Harkin was active in community life. A member of International Rotary, he served as a director and headed several committees in the Ottawa Rotary Club. He also devoted considerable time and effort to the activities of the Canadian Boy Scouts Association, in which he served as a member of the National Executive until 1946. He was the recipient of the Silver Wolf, the highest award conferred by the Scouts Association. Mr. Harkin died in Ottawa on January 27, 1955, three days short of his eightieth birthday.

Mr. Harkin was married to Jean McCuaig of Ottawa. They had no children. He had an even disposition, strong convictions, and reached decisions after careful deliberation. An ardent golfer, he also derived much pleasure from reading. Having an innovative nature, he carefully recorded his thoughts, proposals and plans for park development on cards for future discussions with his staff. A review of these cards, which still remain in park records, disclose his wide knowledge and broad

conception of Canada's needs in the field of conservation, history and public recreation. He was held in great esteem by members of his staff and his administrative methods engendered a remarkable devotion to national park ideals.

Mr. Harkin's public service is commemorated by Mount Harkin, a 9800-foot peak in Kootenay National Park which overlooks the Banff-Windermere Highway. In 1958, the National Parks Service of Canada erected a more tangible memorial in the grounds of the Administration Building in Banff National Park. The inscription on a bronze tablet, mounted on a large field-stone boulder, reads:

JAMES BERNARD HARKIN

COMMISSIONER OF NATIONAL PARKS, 1911-1936

EDITOR, PUBLIC SERVANT, CONSERVATIONIST AND HUMANITARIAN
HE REORGANIZED THE ADMINISTRATION OF OUR NATIONAL PARKS AND
GUIDED THEIR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE CRITICAL FORMATIVE
YEARS. THROUGH HIS VISION, INTEGRITY, AND DEVOTED SERVICE,
THESE SPLENDID AREAS NOW SPAN CANADA - DEDICATED TO HER
PEOPLE FOR THEIR BENEFIT, EDUCATION AND ENJOYMENT.

Mr. Harkin's most enduring monument, however is the ever-expanding system of National Parks in Canada, which now extends westerly from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and southerly from the Arctic Islands to the International Boundary. Complementing the National Parks are a chain of National Historic Parks and hundreds of National Historic Sites which have been suitably marked. In numbers, diversity of attractions and scope of conservation, Canada's National Parks now probably exceed the late Mr. Harkin's fondest dreams.

Ottawa, Ontario,
October 31, 1972,
W.F. Lothian.