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nipika

*a story of
radium
hot
springs*

Minister of Supply and Services Canada 1978

Available by mail from

Printing and Publishing
Supply and Services Canada
Hull, Québec, Canada K1A 0S9

or through your bookseller.

Catalogue No. R63-154/1978

Canada: \$1.00

ISBN 0-660-01765-2

Other countries: \$1.25

Price subject to change without notice.



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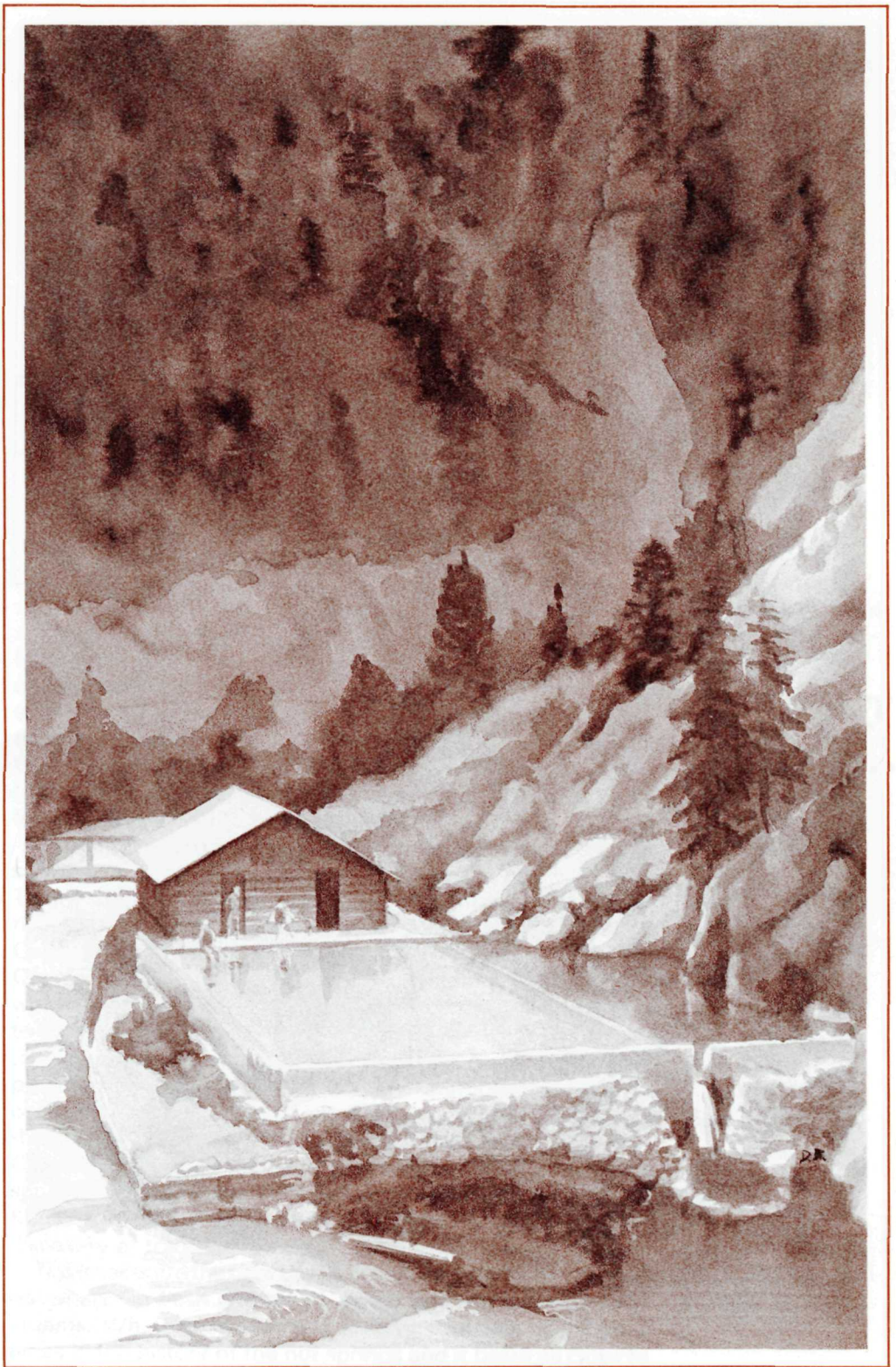
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Dianne Bersea*

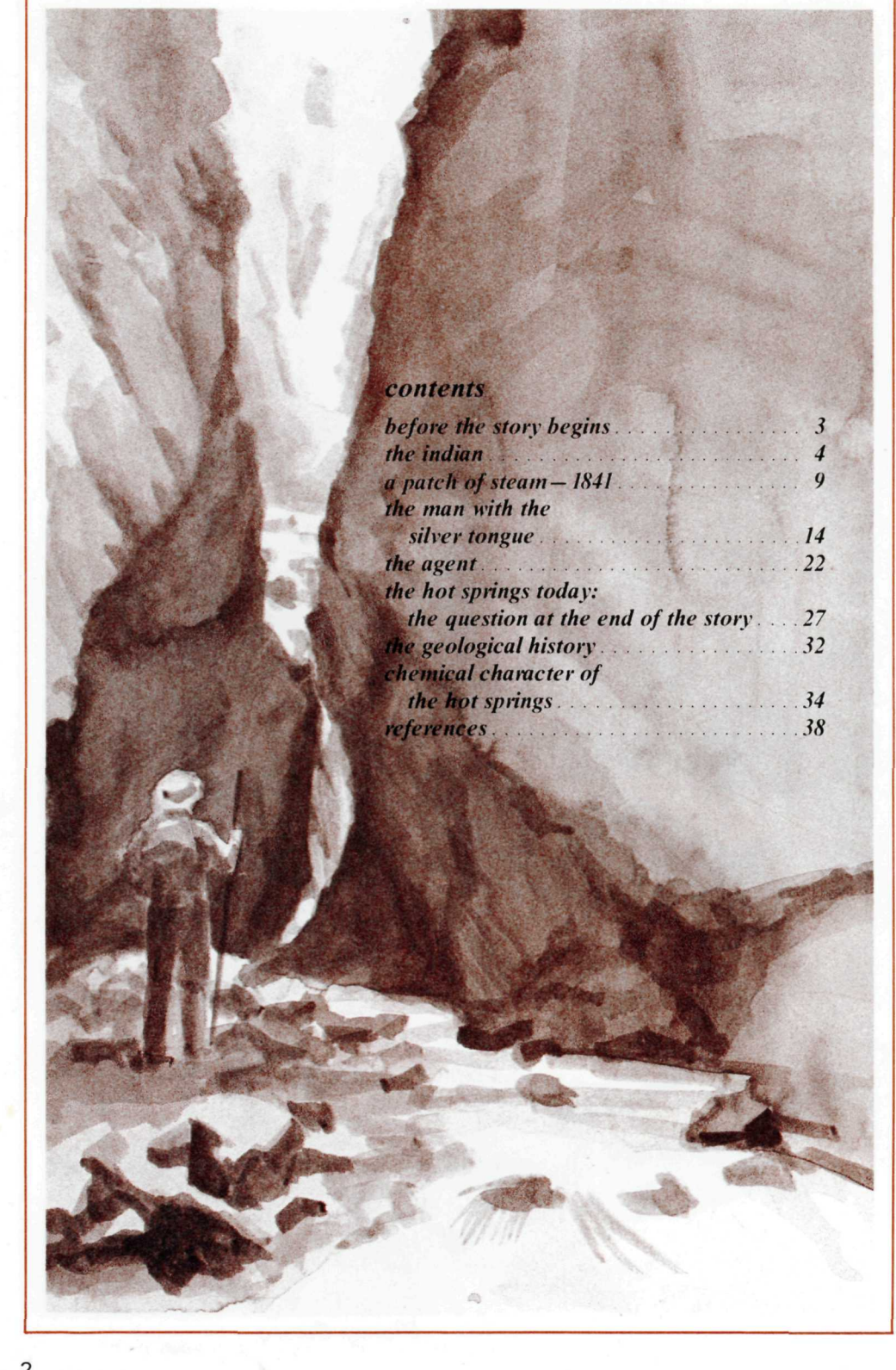


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The first pool was only big enough for one man, and he had to scoop it out of the gravel with his hands. Since then, the springs have been changed again and again, in the endless story of the landscape and the attitudes of the men who lived there. Yet that first man still lives in our imagination. For only the imagination can roll back through the facts and fuzz of time to that last handful of gravel, a moment before the plunge that turned all his world to hot water and skin.

The Indians were undoubtedly the first people to use the springs. The first white man to visit them was probably David Thompson, the famous map maker, but there is no record of this in his journals. Historically, this distinction goes to Sir George Simpson, governor of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company, who travelled through Sinclair Pass in 1841. A few weeks later James Sinclair followed the same route on his way to Oregon with a group of Red River settlers. By the late 1800s the Columbia Valley saw its first permanent settlers and more people began to use the springs. The first legally registered owner was Roland Stuart, an Englishman, who purchased them in 1890 and owned them until 1922. Stuart's agent in Canada was E. J. Scovil and partly through his efforts, the springs were expropriated for inclusion within the newly-formed Kootenay National Park in 1922. That was 11 years after the discovery of traces of radium in the springs.

These facts are the bare bones of history, but the real story is elsewhere: in flesh and blood, needs and wants, hopes and dreams. What follows here is a reconstruction of different times in the history of the hot springs and it bears as close to historical accuracy as available knowledge will allow.

*before
the story
begins...*



the indian

The buffalo hunt lasted over a month, longer than anyone in the tribe could remember. For the first week they had not been able to locate the herd. Every night during that time the medicine man had sung and chanted, drawing the animals closer to their camp. When at last the buffalo were found, it had taken another five days to drive them into the mud flats along the river. Once the bellowing buffalo were trapped in the mud, floundering like sinking ships, the slaughter went quickly. Some of the younger braves were not content to shoot their arrows from a safe distance. They rushed along the edge of the herd, sometimes even disappearing into the herd itself, driving their long knives into the throats of the helpless animals.

It had been more than a year since the Kootenai Indians had dared to venture onto the open plains. The plains beyond the mountains were the land of the Blackfoot, a fierce tribal enemy. But an uneasy truce had been established between the two tribes and once again the Kootenais could travel to the plains for the hunt. When they finally reached the plains and the buffalo were not in sight, they were even more uneasy. When the great hunt finally began, they were often reckless. Amelu was one of them.

At first the open spaces had made him nervous. He had not seen such distances before and there seemed no place to hide if they were attacked. But as soon as the buffalo were found, he soon forgot his fears. He was determined to be one of the first to kill a buffalo. He chased them for several miles until they reached the mud flats, but he was not fast enough. Others were there before him, and he watched them running into the herd, their shouts mixing with the mad bellows of the animals. One of the braves was too reckless and Amelu watched as a large bull with three arrows in his back lifted the brave high in

the air, one of the horns stuck through the man's groin. It happened quickly, and for a moment Amelu was not sure he had seen it at all. But they found the dead brave later, almost completely buried in the trampled, bloody mud. In his right hand, he still clenched his knife; in the left was a tuft of buffalo hair.

For several days after the hunt was over, Amelu worked with the rest of the Kootenais preparing their kills for the long journey back to the mountains. Almost everything was used: hides, bones, sinews, horns, as well as the meat. As soon as the work was finished, they followed the trails back into the mountains. In two places they crossed through high mountains where a layer of wet snow clung to the rocky ground. It reminded them all of the winter when there would be a fierce struggle to stay warm and fed. Perhaps this time they would have enough meat to last through the worst. Yet they knew they would have to make the difficult trip back to the plains before spring, and that trip would mean life or death to many members of the tribe.

On the fifth day into the mountains, after a journey along a valley and past the place where the water was orange, they reached a small blue lake full of jumping fish, and they knew they were almost home. Amelu knew all the things that were ahead: the red rock cliffs, the terrible canyon with its old stories of evil and death, and beyond that, the wide valley that was as flat in places as the plains themselves. But of all these things, none was more pleasing to Amelu than the kootemik, the place of hot water.

There were few pleasures in Amelu's world. He lived as his ancestors had lived for centuries, in a stone age that knew nothing of horses or guns, white men or whiskey. He was clothed in the hide of a deer, an animal that he understood and respected because, like all the animals in his world, its life was not much different from his own. He was a part of the earth like the deer, like the mountains and the rivers themselves. He did not know that farther to the south, a new breed of men with bearded faces had already begun to change his earth. They did not yet exist for him. And when they came, he would not understand their notions of sin and private property and they would shake their heads in wonder and call him a savage.

Amelu watched as his people moved past him down the trail that led over the top of the canyon. When they were gone, he turned down toward the creek. He touched the medicine bag at his side and remembered there was more to the springs than mere pleasure. Inside the bag were objects so precious that he would show them to no one, objects that were his source of strength against any adversary—tribal enemies, buffalo, even hunger. They represented a *nipika*, or spirit, that would protect him; but they were more than mere symbols, they were the essence of all that was important to him.

He was suddenly tired, now that he was alone. He was no longer the reckless young brave intent on winning honours. He remembered the brave the buffalo had pitched in the air, and a wave of fear that was long overdue swept through him like a cold, damp wind.

At the edge of the creek, he passed a hole where hot steam came out of the ground like a man's breath in winter. Beyond that were the springs themselves, coming up through the rocks as if there was a fire under the ground. Someone before him had scooped out the gravel and made a small pool. As he stepped naked into the water, he reached down and threw some of the loose gravel into the cold creek that flowed by the foot of the pool. There was barely enough room for one person, but he could remember a time when it had been big enough for several.

Above him, on the side of the mountains, a sheep stood watching. It had left the creek when the Indians approached. Amelu knew the sheep was there although he could not see it through the mist and steam. On another day, he would have followed the animal, perhaps as long as a day, and then he would have slain it with his weapons of bone and flint. And he would always have been careful to close the eyes of dead animal before butchering. He would ask the spirit of the sheep to forgive him for taking its life. He would know that although the sheep was dead, its spirit would never die. It would linger about and make certain that its former body was treated with the proper respect.

The water was as hot as the summer sun, and in one place, he would reach his arm down into the hole where it came bubbling up. And he could not touch the bottom. He did not know where it ended. He could feel the wet warmth sinking deeper and deeper into his bones. He remembered the first time he came to the springs as a small child. He had been afraid of the strange hot water, but he had shown his fears to no one. The old people had not been afraid and after a while he had joined them. They had laughed and been thankful for this water with its special powers to make them well again. In winter, the old people came here frequently, sometimes staying for several days until they were strong enough to walk and run like children again.

Later, when he was a young boy, he had come to the springs searching for his guardian nipika. For three days he had not eaten and only once each day did he drink from the creek. On the first night he was afraid the black bear would come for him and he did not know what to do. He wanted to return to the safe fires of the camp but he knew he would have to wait until he had seen the spirit. There were others in his tribe who had gone as long as five days without a vision, but he was not afraid of this. He knew he was ready. He had been strong and brave, and although he was still a boy, he was also ready to be a man.



On the fourth day, he neared the springs. He was tired and weak, but had not lost faith. He stopped in a place where there was no noise except the sound of the trees when they moved in the wind. When he listened he heard the spirit of the trees singing. He followed the song until he stood at the edge of the pool. The mist rose up in one great swirl. He did not look at the mist because he knew his guardian nipika was there. He shook with excitement, his hands clenching and opening, again and again. With one step, he was in the water, the hot mist wrapping around him like smoke, mist so thick and heavy it was like the water itself, and he felt the spirit go deep in his chest. His breath was no longer his own—that was gone forever, replaced by the thing that is the difference between life and death, flowers and stones. His head went below the water, down where the water came out the earth itself, he heard the spirit speak and it was a voice he had never heard before, a voice that was both inside and outside his head, like blood, like water. He heard the nipika tell him that now he was a man and that he would be protected all his life. And in that moment, as he broke through the surface and into the air again, Amelu was confident, as confident as any man needed to be.

It was time to leave the springs again. That night he celebrated the success of the hunt with the rest of the Kootenais. They feasted on the meat and began to cut the hides. In the night, when only the coyote and the owl were not sleeping, he remembered the voice of the spirit, the voice that was now his own. He knew there would be times when the spirit would speak to him again. He knew that when he returned to the springs again, they would not be changed. There would be no reason to change them, nor would there be a man brave enough to change the home of such a powerful spirit. That would last forever, as constant as the seasons themselves, as certain as the buffalo.



*a
patch of
steam—
1841*

The worst was over. They had left Fort Edmonton early that summer, one hundred and twenty souls bound for the mountains and the mouth of the Columbia River somewhere far to the south and west. They were mostly Red River Metis with a handful of white men from the Maritimes who had joined them at the last moment. It had taken them ten days to cross the worst of the mountains and find the rivers that would eventually lead them west to the Pacific. Now they camped along the shore of a lake where they had seen Indians fishing and they were all in good spirits.

All except James Sinclair, the man who had been instructed by the Hudson's Bay Company to lead them. As soon as the camp was set up, he slipped away on his own. He rode back to the trail that led over the canyon and back into the mountains. He hobbled his horse near the top and picked his way slowly down to the creek. He had seen the canyon from the top and now he wanted to see it from inside. He needed this time to be alone, to think things through. Some of the others had wanted to come with him and when he reached the shadow of the canyon, he almost wished he had let them.

These mountains were still very strange to him, mysterious and often frightening. He wondered if the canyon had a name. He knew Sir George Simpson, the governor of the Company, had passed this way not long before on his journey around the world. Perhaps he had named the canyon. He knew the Indians had a name for it but he could not remember what it was. If someone had asked him to name the place, he would have called it "The Place Where The Mountains Crack", or "The Place Where The Mountains Meet". He had wanted to camp near the canyon for the night, but Mackipicton, his Cree Indian guide, had urged him to go into the valley beyond. When Sinclair has asked why, Mackipicton had told him the canyon was an evil place, haunted by the restless spirits of the unfortunate dead. To camp there would undoubtedly mean bad fortune for everyone. Sinclair did not believe this; he was an educated man and although his own mother was part Cree, he had no such superstitions.

Yet he could understand Mackipicton's fears. The canyon was a dark, cold place, a crack in the earth that even the sunlight never reached. It was a place that ached still from some ancient violence. He had to struggle to keep his balance as he stepped carefully across the slippery rocks. Below him he could hear the waterfall. The route his group had taken over the top had certainly been easier. For a moment he wondered why he was doing this. He should be back in camp with his people but he needed to be alone. And he had wanted to look at the canyon and the hot springs a little farther ahead despite what Mackipicton had said.

He had met the Cree Indian guide at Fort Edmonton. That seemed like more than a few months ago now. Their meeting

had certainly been a stroke of good luck. Mackipictoon was a strong and determined Indian. His knowledge of the passes had been accurate enough; and for this alone, Sinclair was grateful. Besides, the Indian had plans that corresponded well with his own.

Mackipictoon had been away from the fort when Simpson had passed through. Simpson had needed an Indian to guide him through the mountains and had chosen a chief called Peechee. This had infuriated Mackipictoon who did not think that Peechee was a suitable guide for such a great man as the governor. It had not taken him long to approach Sinclair and convince him that he not only knew the way through the mountains, but a way that was superior to the route that Peechee had taken. Sinclair himself had strict orders to follow Simpson's route exactly, but he could not turn down the chance to be the first white man through a new pass. It was a small enough glory compared to that of Simpson's.

What did it mean, this journey across half a continent to a place that none of them had ever seen before—a place that could kill them. The Company had provided his people with many of the things they needed for the journey: horses, weapons, food, and a promise that when they arrived at the end, they would get land, sheep, oxen, seeds, everything that was required to make the Company farms successful. It was an offer that meant possible success and a great adventure even if they failed. But Sinclair knew there was more to this journey than mere agriculture.

If he was successful, it might mean that the future border between the Americans and the British would be the Columbia River where it emptied into the ocean. It was a political journey and these people were political pawns, caught between the two great continental powers. If they died in this mountain wilderness it would not matter; others would not be far behind. As their leader, Sinclair had to keep them alive. They looked to him for everything. The mixed blood that flowed in their veins flowed in his and for the Metis, that alone was enough of a guarantee. For a moment, as he came out of the canyon, that responsibility filled him with hatred for the Metis, for the Company and Simpson, for the mountains themselves. He swore and spat on the ground. It would have been so much different if he had been a Chief Factor in the Company as his father had been. The world would remember the name James Sinclair then. Who would remember him now—no one except his own wretched band and they would be grateful only until the journey was over. Already it was obvious to them that Mackipictoon was more valuable than himself.

He was not ashamed of these thoughts because he knew they were reasonable; he had not talked of these things to anyone for many weeks. There is not room for weakness when you are a leader of men. He longed for the familiar world of Fort



1890s

Garry again; he would even settle for Fort Edmonton with its squalid Indians camps and heaps of buffalo dung. He wanted time for himself, time for friends and pleasant conversation, and food that was cooked instead of dried and pounded.

Most of all, he wanted to be free from orders. He had disobeyed orders many times before in his life and often his reputation arrived in a place before he did. But that did not matter now: the mountains did not care who you were, or who you thought you should be. And for one brief moment, he wished he had never heard of them. How easy the trip would be if they did not exist.

Yet there was something here that he knew he would never forget. His first sight of the mountains had filled him with a thousand strange new feelings. Some of the others scarcely stopped for a second look. To Sinclair, the mountains were like the shining white tents of a race of giants. They were a challenge to the mind, something completely new and different. He had tried to imagine what they would look like before he actually saw them, but he had not been close. He had not expected them to be so huge and strangely shaped, each one as individual as the faces of men. At times, he almost felt assaulted by them, the way they altered this feelings and made him feel dwarfed and mortal: nothing he had ever seen could match them. By the time they had travelled as far as the place called the Devil's Head, he knew the mountains were also killers, passive and without malice, but killers nonetheless. For a while they had worried about attacks from the Blackfoot and Mackipictoon had kept them on as many of the hidden trails as possible. When that danger passed, there were still more mountains. Whatever else they were, they were at least beautiful. Everything changed when they reached the mountains: new trees, birds, countless bears and deer with black tails. And sometimes there were brief moments when the sunlight made him forget everything except the things he saw. It was another world. And up ahead, the hot springs, something else he had never expected.

He had heard a little about the springs from Mackipictoon before they actually reached them, but only enough to make him curious. As he approached the springs, he could see signs of use that he had not noticed before: a small ring of stones that had once been a fire, a few bones and beyond that a broken clay pot with strange designs that looked either like a fish or a sun. Other than that, it was no different from the wilderness that surrounded it on all sides. He could see the water where it gushed from the rocks. Obviously people had been here before; they had scooped out the gravel in front of the rocks to make a space for the hot water, but it was only a small place and not more than two feet deep.

He stripped off his clothes and stepped carefully into the water. He could feel the gravel moving up through his toes. Slowly he eased himself into the water. Mackipictoon had said this water could cure many ailments; perhaps they would relieve him of his nagging pessimism. He had never felt quite so discouraged before. All around him the mountains were quiet, and their silence seemed to be waiting for him, almost mocking him. He was a small thing in comparison; they were the final word.

He moved closer to the place where the water came up through the rocks. It was hot enough to be almost unbearable and he moved away again. Gradually he moved back to the source and held his hand so the bubbles passed through his fingers. He was surprised that the water came out with such a force. It was almost as strong as a prairie wind. Something must be pushing it up somewhere; perhaps the weight of the whole mountain was sitting on the water. It was even hotter than a bath. He could not remember the last time he had taken a hot bath. Several times along the way he had washed in the cold creeks, but only for a moment each time—the water was so cold it hurt. They had forded so many rivers and streams since they entered the mountains that cold water was something to be avoided. Some days their feet were never dry.

Slowly he felt himself relax. The water kept pushing against him. It wanted him to let go and drift, to give up and move with the water wherever the water went. It wanted him to forget the long journey past and the long journey still ahead. It wanted to get past his barrier of skin and into his flesh and blood. It wanted to dissolve him like a piece of clay, reduce him to nothingness and water. He leaned his back against a rock, and in a moment, he was asleep.

For the first time in a long while, he dreamt. Many things came and went in his dream, piling up and vanishing like clouds. The prairie dust, the wild herds of buffalo, his home on the prairies, his friends in Edinburgh University, all mixed together in his dream. Then he saw himself flying like a raven over the mountains. Below him he could see the valleys and peaks, and everywhere he looked there were passes through the moun-

tains. From that height the mountains seemed no larger than hills of the Red River country. They were no longer fearsome, and he noticed only that they were in long beautiful lines.

In one of the passes he saw a strange Indian who was dressed as an animal. On his head there was a small round scar and behind him were the bodies of hundreds of dead fish and buffalo. The Indian moved his arms upward and a kind of steaming fog rose out of the ground at his feet. He stood like that several seconds, staring ahead as if he was blind, then disappeared without a sound.

Sinclair awoke with a start. He shook his head, trying to remember where he was. All around him the rocks and water were still the same. He scrambled out to the dry ground. His clothes were still dirty, but now at least his body felt clean and strong again. The rest had done him good. Even the weather seemed milder. He was a practical man again and his mind turned back to the work ahead.

As he turned to leave, he suddenly felt that he was not alone. He wondered if someone had followed him after all, but he could see no one and he was sure that no one knew exactly where he had gone. He stopped to drink from the creek, lying on the bank and drinking from the surface of the water with his mouth. As he lifted his head he saw a patch of steam drifting upwards from the springs. For a moment it looked like a shape that he almost recognized and then it was gone, dissipating in the air, leaving him, gone forever. Suddenly he knew he had missed something, and in that moment, he knew he would come back again.





*the
man with
the silver
tongue*

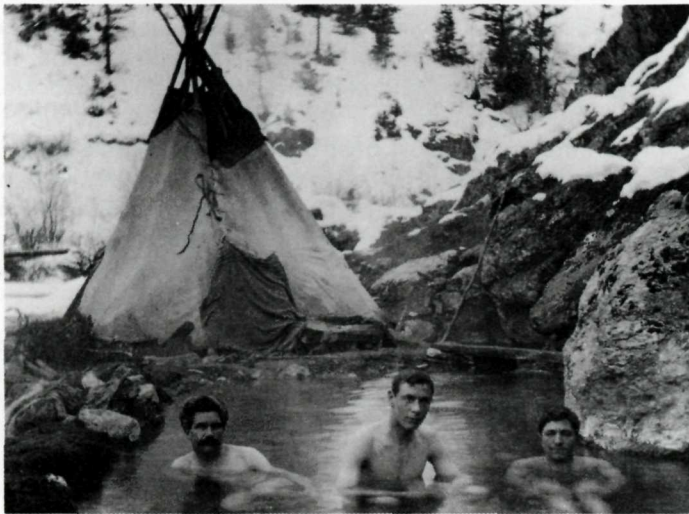
Roland Stuart was a country squire, a gentleman of some wealth and breeding. He was also a modern man, concerned with a certain amount of fame and a larger amount of fortune. Like many modern men, his motives were mixed and varied. Stuart himself was probably not aware that he was "making history"; few men seldom are. What we know of him depends heavily on other people's accounts and most of these are biased. Some saw him as an unscrupulous promoter. Others saw him as a man of integrity—a sophisticated patron of the arts. His residence in Victoria, Hatley Park, was well known for its elegance. His business dealings were sometimes reputed to be of a different, less graceful, character. History yields knowledge grudgingly; often what we find out is not what we want to know. Who was the real man?

When Stuart visited the springs in the late 1800s, they had changed little from the time of Sinclair's visit. Only some 40 years had passed since Sinclair had bathed in the pool, but the

world had changed in ways Sinclair could not possibly have imagined. In Stuart's world there was room for leisure and recreation as never before, particularly for those who were wealthy. This was something Stuart knew on the day he first saw the springs. He realized they had a great potential in a way that no one had quite realized before. With that knowledge something new entered the world of the springs: it was the spirit of exploitation and development on a large scale. It was the kind of spirit that was destined to become one of the chief hallmarks of modern man. Stuart was not the first man to feel this new wave, nor would he be the last. But he was, however, the first to see the springs in this new way. As he stood at the edge of the creek across from the springs, he imagined how they had to be changed to make them more attractive to visitors. He imagined how easily they could make him money.

On May 27, 1890, he became the first man to own the springs. He paid \$160 for a crown grant of 160 acres of land that included the springs. In addition to the land and the springs, he managed to secure the mineral rights to the water as well as the rights to the water power of the falls in Sinclair Canyon. It was on the mineral rights that Stuart based his initial hopes. He intended to bottle the water and sell it to the world. He planned to form a company based on all the possible futures of the springs. Stuart was a man of foresight, and it was the future he was selling, the chance to cash in now.

At first he had been amused by the primitive efforts of the few settlers and miners who used the springs. But his amusement passed. People were coming to the springs despite the difficulties. Everything was, to his way of thinking, unimaginably rough. There was no road to the springs, and everyone who went there had to follow the pack trail "over the top" of the canyon. When they arrived at the springs, the only place to undress



1890s

was under a blanket held up by a pole. Of course, they brought their own blankets and most of them cared less about swim suits. But Stuart had not come to endure this frontier, he had come to change it. And that change would cost money. His goal was not only to get that money from other people, but to get them to cover his expenses as well. To him it was enough that he had conceived the original idea of development. He was certain he could accomplish this with his silver tongue. He had done it before.

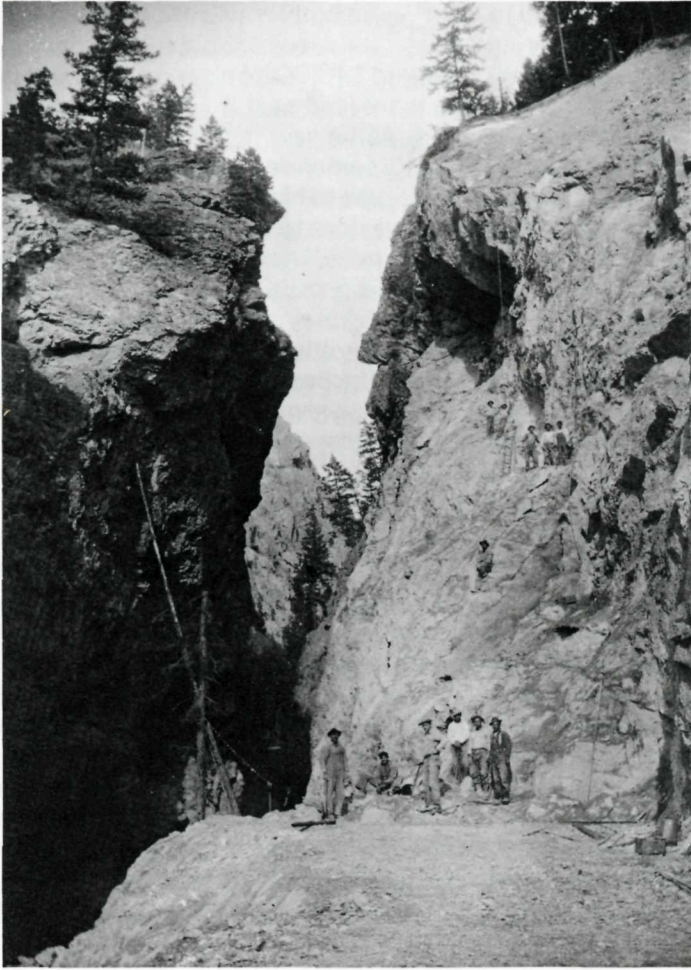
Stuart was not only shrewd, he was lucky. Two things fell his way that even he had not expected. The first was the discovery of radium in the springs, the second was an automobile accident that broke a man's neck.

The British medical journal, *Lancet*, after an analysis of the springs water in 1911, suggested that there was a good possibility of radioactivity in the water. A further analysis by McGill University in 1913 proved that the possibility was indeed true: the water showed more radium and radium emanations than were present at the famous springs at Bath, England. Suddenly, it was possible that the curative powers the Indians had talked about were true, and Stuart was elated. He had acquired a virtual fountain of health, one that could indeed be turned into a never ending fountain of wealth.

During this time, Stuart began to realize that not only were his springs of enormous therapeutic value, but that they were also valuable as a recreational area. A group of men whom he knew well were working toward the possibility of a road from Banff through the mountains to the Columbia Valley. Parsons, Haffner, Bruce, Wurtelle and others had a vision that the Columbia Valley could support a large fruit-growing industry similar to that of the Okanagan. But they needed a road out to the prairies in order to transport their products to market: the road was an economic necessity.

And it would be no ordinary road. It would be the first road through the barrier of the Continental Divide in Canada, the first phase of the Trans-Canada Highway through the Rockies. It would enable motorists to travel from Banff all the way to California and the Pacific Coast on the Great Circle Tour, a chain of tourist highways covering over 4,000 miles and tying together the chief national parks of the United States and Canada. The railroad had already pushed through the mountains, at the Kicking Horse and Crowsnest passes, but there were no roads. The Banff-Windermere Road would be the first.

And that road would pass right at the foot of Stuart's springs. This was not merely a matter of good luck on Stuart's part. The people who planned the road were his friends, practically his associates. There was little doubt what route the road would take; it would come over Sinclair Pass (and therefore pass by the springs) in order to cross the Stanford-Brisco Range before entering the Columbia Valley. Certainly there were other passes



Early 1900s—building the road through Sinclair Canyon

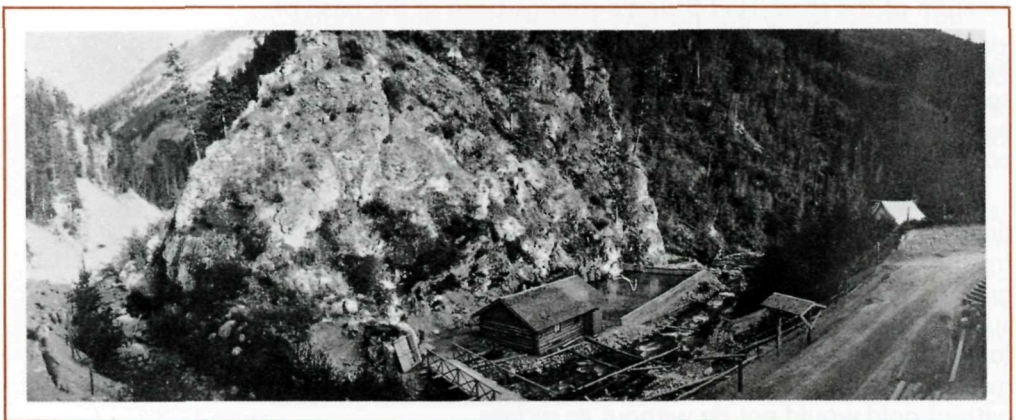
available—Luxor, Tegart, Pedly, these last two closer to Windermere than Sinclair—but the position of the hot springs and the fact that Stuart was their owner, undoubtedly influenced the location of the road. Had Stuart's springs been at the base of Luxor Pass, for example, the Banff-Windermere Road might have followed that route into the Columbia Valley. Had the springs been owned by someone other than Stuart, someone without Stuart's connections, the course of the road (and the course of history) might have been dramatically different.

Once again, Stuart had been at the right place at the right time. He foresaw a great many people coming to his springs from as far away as Europe and California. He dreamed of a great many people enjoying themselves at other facilities of his, such as the golf course he planned to build. What he did not foresee was the eventual involvement of the Dominion Government. The road past his springs that was to be the veritable path of gold would not be without its pitfalls.

Although the discovery of radium in the water and the possibility of the road to Banff were both excellent bonuses for the future of the springs, Stuart still required someone to back him financially. He had borrowed \$10,000 on a mortgage and this money was used to buy more land near the springs. But more money still was required. As he saw it, the springs could be sitting on pure gold but until someone invested enough money to mine it, it would be as useless to him as the rest of the mountains. In order to attract investors to his idea of the future, he created a company in 1913 called the Radium Natural Springs Syndicate Ltd. He published a prospectus called "Radium Hot Springs, British Columbia—A Fascinating Proposition". It was a beautiful document, printed with gold ink on expensive white paper. It stressed above all, the potential of the springs. It left no angle unexplored, covering every aspect of the springs from the crown grant, the discovery of radium, the road, the potential value of the Columbia Valley as a recreational area, complete with photographs and maps. Interspersed throughout the prospectus were testimonials from a number of influential people, including the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Stuart promoted his scheme in Montreal, Chicago, New York, London and other financial capitols of the world, and finally it caught the imagination of one man. St. John Harmsworth was a multi-millionaire, involved in the newspaper and magazine business and the owner of the mineral water business at Nimes, France. He was, of course, interested in the springs from a business point of view, but there was something else as well, something that went beyond business and wealth. He had broken his neck in a car accident and was paralyzed from the hips down. He wanted to test the curative powers of the springs on himself. Stuart was certain that the money would be forthcoming if the water did in fact help him.

It was difficult moving the crippled man to the springs. The journey across the continent had been strenuous. At first Harmsworth's attendants did not know how to get the man into the water, but at last someone had thought of the idea of a hammock.



Original bath house – 1911-1927

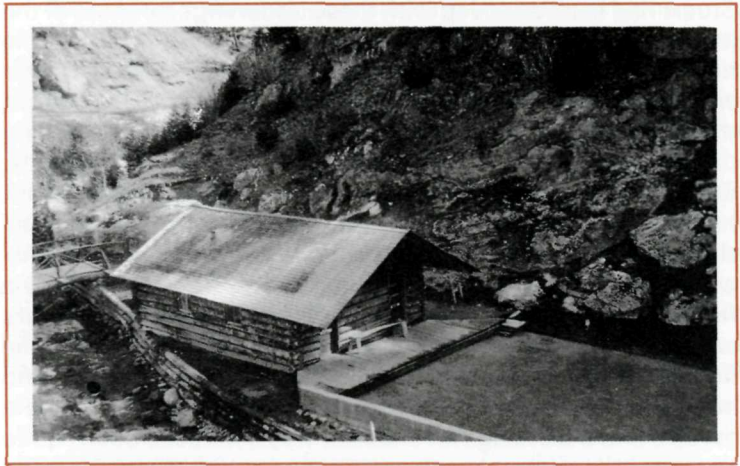
Stuart had been annoyed with these underlings for most of the journey because they had been suspicious of his motives. The hammock was suspended in the top few inches of the water where the temperature was the hottest. At first Stuart thought the whole idea was ridiculous. He felt that there was something untrustworthy and almost unethical in Harmsworth's actions. Surely the man could see the fantastic possibilities without having them personally verified. Stuart could not imagine himself slung across the water in such a vulnerable position. But Harmsworth was a determined man. He had only intended to stay a few weeks, but remained four months, spending many hours each day soaking in the springs. On the day in July when he first moved his feet, no one was happier than Harmsworth, and none more surprised than Stuart. For Harmsworth it was a miracle and a blessing; for Stuart it was a miracle, but of quite another kind. Harmsworth provided him with \$20,000 to go ahead with the proposal. The springs were about to change.

Stuart spent the money, getting little done except a concrete pool and a bath house. He could have blamed this lack of accomplishments on the First World War, but it would not have been the whole truth. The money went, nevertheless, perhaps on the pleasures of life, the kind of things a gentleman requires. Perhaps things would have been different if the war had not interrupted. Stuart had left for England at the onset of the war, but not entirely for patriotic reasons. There was an excitement generated by the war that surpassed even that of making money. When he returned to the springs again, it was 1920. His company was virtually defunct and Harmsworth had severed his association with Stuart. He would have to attempt another company, with yet another prospectus, looking for capital again. It would mean Montreal, Chicago, New York, and London again.

Winter was approaching and Stuart was eager to leave. He did not want to spend the cold season in Canada. His agent in Golden, British Columbia, E. J. Scovil, could handle his affairs till spring. Stuart thought Scovil was a competent man, although perhaps a little uppity. Employees were no longer just employees; often they were bitter men, jealous of their employer's position and power. But Scovil's conscience, he was sure, would prevent him from doing anything deliberately detrimental.

In the last of the evening light that could find its way along the creek, Stuart came to survey his little kingdom. It was the first time in a long time that he had come this way alone. It was not that he was afraid of the lumberjacks who occasionally came to the springs; undoubtedly they were a rowdy, intolerant lot. But mostly Stuart enjoyed people, and the company of others.

The moon was rising, pale and full, when he reached the bath house. He seldom found time to swim in the pool anymore, but this did not bother him. Sometimes he felt there was something vaguely unclean about the water despite the constant



Original bath house — 1911-1927

flow. It was still so raw, so natural. There was even poison ivy growing just above the water on the rocks behind the pool. He had always been interested in the outdoors, hunting and fishing, but there were certain limits. Once he had seen some lumberjacks soaking out their alcohol after a heavy bout of drinking, and he could hardly imagine the springs were free from the particularly loathsome combination of liquor and sweat. He himself enjoyed Scotch whiskey, often mixing it with water from the springs in a drink he called the nectar of the gods, but prolonged drunkenness was another matter. He thought again of the south of France and the Caledonia Club in London. He thought of the fine things in life and wondered how long it would be before they reached this frontier. Everywhere there was still wilderness and rawness. Certainly he had been one of the first to expound on the beauty of the mountains, but that had passed, like summer itself. It was time to leave these things behind for a while.

He sat down in the shadow of the bath house, wondering what he would do next. He knew there were many possibilities still left. He hoped to interest John Day of Victoria in the springs. Day was in the beer bottling business and would likely be interested in bottling the springs water, providing the idea was presented properly. Stuart was thinking of this, and then again of France, when he noticed two shadows moving toward the pool along the south bank of the creek.

At first he thought they were sheep, or some other animals, but gradually he realized they were people. He had been told that the local people often came down to the pool in the night. He watched as they took off their clothes in the shadows. He was about to shout at the trespassers and scare them away, but something stopped him. He leaned back into the shadows to watch and when they came closer in the moonlight, he realized to his surprise that they were both Indians, and both young girls.

Obviously they had no idea he was watching or they wouldn't have undressed in front of a man. He was grateful for the shadows, for the girls were quite attractive, even graceful in an unusual way. For a moment, he was tempted to jump fully clothed into the pool and give them the fright of their lives. Instead he watched them, smiling to himself. They tried to make as little noise as possible. He wondered why they hadn't used the Si-Wash or Indian pool, but then he realized that it was mischief that had brought them here. After a few moments, they relaxed and began whispering to each other. Their language sounded like a strange flute-like music to his ears.

And then they were gone, slipping out of the water and back into the shadows of the night. Stuart was alone again.

The water in the pool was still again. It reflected the moon perfectly, but the man in the shadows did not see it. His eyes had turned inward again, this time searching his past as well as his future. But there were things in that future, as there are in any man's, that he could not foresee. He had seen marvels in his own time: the automobile, the airplane, a world war. Many people were amazed at these things of the new world; a new conscience was stirring and there were others who were concerned with the disappearance of the old. He walked to the edge of the pool and dipped his hand in the water. He was no longer thinking of France, or the possibilities, or even of money. He was thinking perhaps he had made a mistake. Before he could stop it, something in the back of his mind told him the springs had beaten him. He knew there was something about them—the Indian girls had known this—something that was even more fantastic than his most daring proposals. And he knew then that the springs were a challenge no man could hope to meet.



Building the Banff-Windermere Highway

the agent

It was past the time to close his office for the day and still he had not finished the letter. For the past few months, Earle Jennings Scovil had written many letters to the government—all in connection with the Sinclair Hot Springs, or as they were often called now, Radium Hot Springs. Since Stuart was still in England, Scovil was in charge, acting as Stuart's agent. Despite all his efforts, he felt he was accomplishing very little. Yet, when he thought back, in the last few years so many things had happened around him. He felt as if he was living in the middle of a whirlwind. Often it seemed a time too fast for any man. Perhaps that was what made it exciting; perhaps that was why so many others accomplished so much. The incredible Banff-Windermere Road, for example, the first road to cross the Continental Divide in Canada.

Scovil knew the men behind the original scheme to build a road from the Columbia Valley to Banff. He knew the whole story of their plans for growing fruit in the valley and the need for a road through to the prairies where the market was. Randolph Bruce had been one of those men, and he had convinced the British Columbia government to build the road as far as the Alberta boundary. From there, the road would be completed by the federal government since it would run through Rocky



Mountains Park to Banff. At that time, Scovil remembered, there was no thought of making the area surrounding the road into a national park. The involvement of the federal government ended at the B.C.-Alberta boundary. But by 1913 the money from British Columbia was almost gone and only 14 miles of the western section had been built. Over 50 miles were left to link up with the road coming in from Banff. When the First World War broke out and put an end to all the work, the road became a dream again.

But Scovil knew that values have a way of changing, shifting slowly and bringing new things to life. The war had done that. People were ready for a fresh start again and for some of them it was a time of heady idealism, moments when the future was not something far away and out of control but as close as the next second of life. For many of these people, and Scovil knew some of them too, the new world was not without its horrors. The passenger pigeon was extinct, the wild herds of buffalo were a thing of the past. The things they held most precious in their lives—the sight of wildness, a continuity with the past, the order of the natural world—these were openly threatened. What appeared as technological triumphs were often triumphs of destruction as well. Out of this new conscience came a concern for things beyond human needs: out of that concern the notion of national parks arose. This was something Scovil could not have imagined when he was a boy, this value that would change history. Without it, he knew the road could not have been built and the government would not be writing letters to him.

It all seemed so logical when he looked back at the story now. Bruce and his friends were not willing to give up their idea of the road when the B.C. government ran out of money. They decided to look elsewhere. The obvious choice was the federal government since they at least had completed their section of the road to the boundary. After negotiations between the two governments, the plan was settled. The federal government would construct the remaining incomplete section of the road in B.C. and the province, in turn, would grant the federal government a strip of land five miles wide on either side of the road. How simple it was! This area would be set aside as a national park, under the full jurisdiction of the federal government. Without the idea that certain areas should be set aside as parks, there would have been no road; without the road, there would have been no park. On April 21, 1920, Kootenay Dominion Park was officially declared, based on a highway that did not then exist. Scovil could not remember what he had been doing on that day, but he knew now that it was a memorable day for him. It was the beginning of the letter he was still writing, and he knew there would be many more to come.

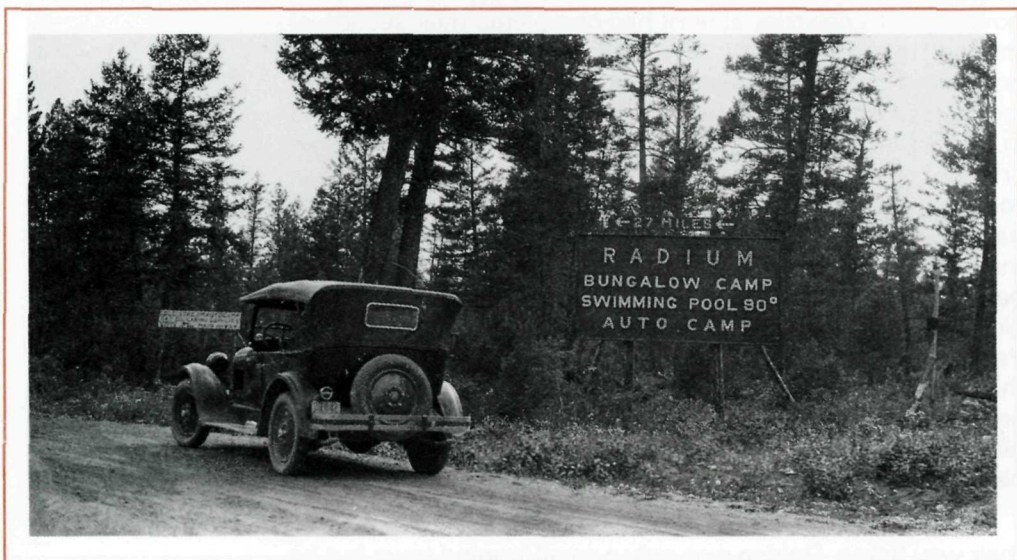
He watched from his window as the people walked past on their way home. Golden was only a small logging town but he

liked it. Perhaps there were better places in the world, he had even seen a few of them. But that did not concern him now. He had work to do. The government wanted to purchase the springs from Stuart and since he was Stuart's agent, they contacted him first. The land that Stuart owned fell within the boundaries of the new park. By definition, all lands within a national park had to be publicly owned. A park was a park. It could not be half a park, half private. He knew this was a high ideal, this setting aside of lands for everyone. He knew too, that its first major test would be Roland Stuart.

Scovil had sent two telegrams to Stuart notifying him of the intention of the park to purchase the springs. But there had been no answer. He was convinced that Stuart was holding out, and he even knew there were other people interested in buying the springs from Stuart for a price of \$18,000. Scovil was not certain what next to do. He felt that the springs must belong to the park, but he was not sure what his position with regard to Stuart should be. He did not trust the man, that was certain, but neither could he betray him.

Two days passed before Scovil could get back to his letter. During that time he learned of a new development that made him tear up his old letter completely. According to some of Scovil's friends in England, Stuart had launched another company, with another prospectus. It was a familiar story, and it was all Scovil needed to write the superintendent of Rocky Mountains Park in Banff. In part, his letter reads:

"Considering that Stuart has ignored the cables and also considering the new flotation and new prospectus, I am of the opinion that Stuart will not submit any figure to the federal government. I was told that \$250,000 was the price that Stuart would sell out the proposition. I consider at this stage



too much time is being lost and you are not getting anywhere, so to speak. I would recommend that a start be made immediately, in way of preliminary steps to expropriate the property, very likely to bring Stuart down to brass tacks. In any event, you will be enabled, in my opinion, to purchase the property or secure title thereto, *at a much lower figure* under expropriation than otherwise—here it is in a nutshell—KEEP THIS PHASE IN MIND—and go to it.”

Scovil was committed. Two days later he followed with another letter. “With reference to this new flotation—‘Kootenay Radium Natural Springs Limited’—there is no need to be scared of this on account of its appearance on paper—this is *not* the first flotation by any manner of means. Stuart had several flotations during the past 11 years. He can always redecorate the horse and run him again—as in the the new flotation. I have my doubts that this present flotation will amount to a great deal. Stuart will guzzle most the funds that come to hand by selling of stock. He is irresponsible when it comes to handling the Springs proposition on a business basis. He is simply in the road; and he is rehashing the scheme from time to time to tide him along; and who may fall from time to time, during these periods, is of no worry to him whatever—perish the thought—I KNOW OF WHOM I AM SPEAKING—Stuart *will not* negotiate with your government.

“The reference to present annual income of 4,000 pounds (for the springs) is, of course, fraudulent.

“It is in the general interests of the public that the springs proposition pass to the parks—and assuredly the public will back up the expropriation—as you know, public sentiment often directly or indirectly influences such matters when it comes to a showdown.”

How much effect this letter had on the final decision no one can be certain, but the expropriation procedure was started. Stuart, however, was not a man to back away from a fight, especially when he believed he was right.

In a document called “Statement of Facts in Connection with the Radium Springs and their Attempted Expropriation by the Dominion Government”, he accuses the federal government of “secret hurry and unlawful course”. It goes on to say that “someone must advance in the front of civilization to blaze the way, find things and prove that the country is either wealthy or barren, either to be opened up by transportation or let severely alone. Adverse circumstance have from time to time raised obstacles in (Stuart’s) way until, recently, the construction of the Banff-Windermere Road and a renewed freedom of access after the war to the sources of capital were opening a vista of renewed hope for (his) efforts. Just as (his) hopes and efforts were approaching fruition, this... was swept away by the encroaching activities of those concerned in the design of creating one of the most famous playing grounds and health resorts of the world.”



Gateway — 1923-1956

Perhaps this was the real motivation behind the park ideal. The document concludes that "it is impossible to avoid referring to the influence which was exercised by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Was the C.P.R. the real mover in the expropriation proceedings? It would appear that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company did expect to reap benefit when it is known that the Dominion Government have expropriated the property of one public company and leased the same to another."

We may never know the whole story. However, on April 3, 1922, just a little more than a year after Scovil wrote his letters, the park expropriated the property owned by Stuart. After settlement of claims, Stuart was awarded \$24,692 including interest. He immediately filed an appeal in the Supreme Court of Canada and was awarded an additional \$15,000 plus interest. This would seem to be a rather high figure considering he had originally purchased the springs for \$160. However, considering that many businessmen at the expropriation hearings valued the property at much higher figures, it was a bargain for the government. Scovil himself, acting as the government's own witness, valued the land at not less than \$500,000. From Stuart's point of view, this "bargain" could only be considered disheartening and unfair competition.

It was all over but the feelings of bitterness and success. A piece of land had been set aside that no man could own or claim as his own, except if he acknowledged that it belonged to every other citizen in Canada as well. It was a new idea. A year later, in 1923, the Banff-Windermere Road was completed and soon hundreds of people, Scovil among them, began to visit the springs. And like Scovil, some of them stayed long enough to wonder what they were, and what they would become.

The springs were now part of Kootenay National Park. No other organization, before or since, could have changed them more.

*the
hot springs
today:
the
question
at the end
of the
story*

If Amelu could move forward to the 20th Century, he would find himself surrounded by people. They would appear as strange to him as if they were beings from another world—which indeed they are. When he returned to his own century, his language would have no words to describe what he had seen. Of all the changes, one of the most lamentable would be the virtual disappearance of the hot springs. What were once natural phenomena, visible and tangible, he now sees enclosed in a large modern complex, a concrete playground devoid of any spiritual significance. If he asked us what had happened, our answer would have to start with the inclusion of the springs in the park, or even earlier with the first notion of national parks.

When J. B. Harkin, the first commissioner of national parks, took office, he was faced with a severe economic problem: how to get Parliament to advance his department the money it required. The answer was the tourist. Not only did tourists leave great amounts of money in countries they visited, but they took nothing from those countries when they left. Harkin discovered that the amount of money attracted to Canada by the fame of the Rockies was no less than \$50 million and that would likely increase each year. The justification for setting aside huge tracts of land as parks was the amount of money tourists would leave behind when they visited these unspoiled places. The government wanted people to visit their parks, and it was prepared to make certain areas of the parks as attractive as possible; in fact, the government realized the necessity of this attraction. Without it, there would be few visitors, and little money.

It was this thinking that prompted the park to lease out several lots around the springs in 1923. Within a very short time, several hotels and lodges were built. By 1927 a new bath house was built, and a year later, the pool was enlarged. People were coming to visit the springs, more and more each year.

They came on the Banff-Windermere Highway, a road that had been built without the help of huge modern belly-dumps or caterpillars. At times during the winter there was as much as four feet of snow on the passes and it took the teams of horses several days to reach the ends of construction. Supplies had to be transported from railheads that were 73 miles apart, at Castle Mountain in Alberta and Firlands (near Radium) in British Columbia. It was a road that required three timber bridges, over the Kootenay River, Hawk Creek, and the Vermilion River, this last one 140 feet long. In places the road was little more than a narrow gravel track, with scarcely enough room to pass. It was literally an avenue of trees and, in most places, a road without a view. One government publication at the time describes the road as being "practically free of fear". Driving in from Banff would take as long as several days, and there were numerous auto camps along the way to provide food, shelter, and gas. The cars themselves were equipped with vacuum tanks and often they would fail on passes where there was low



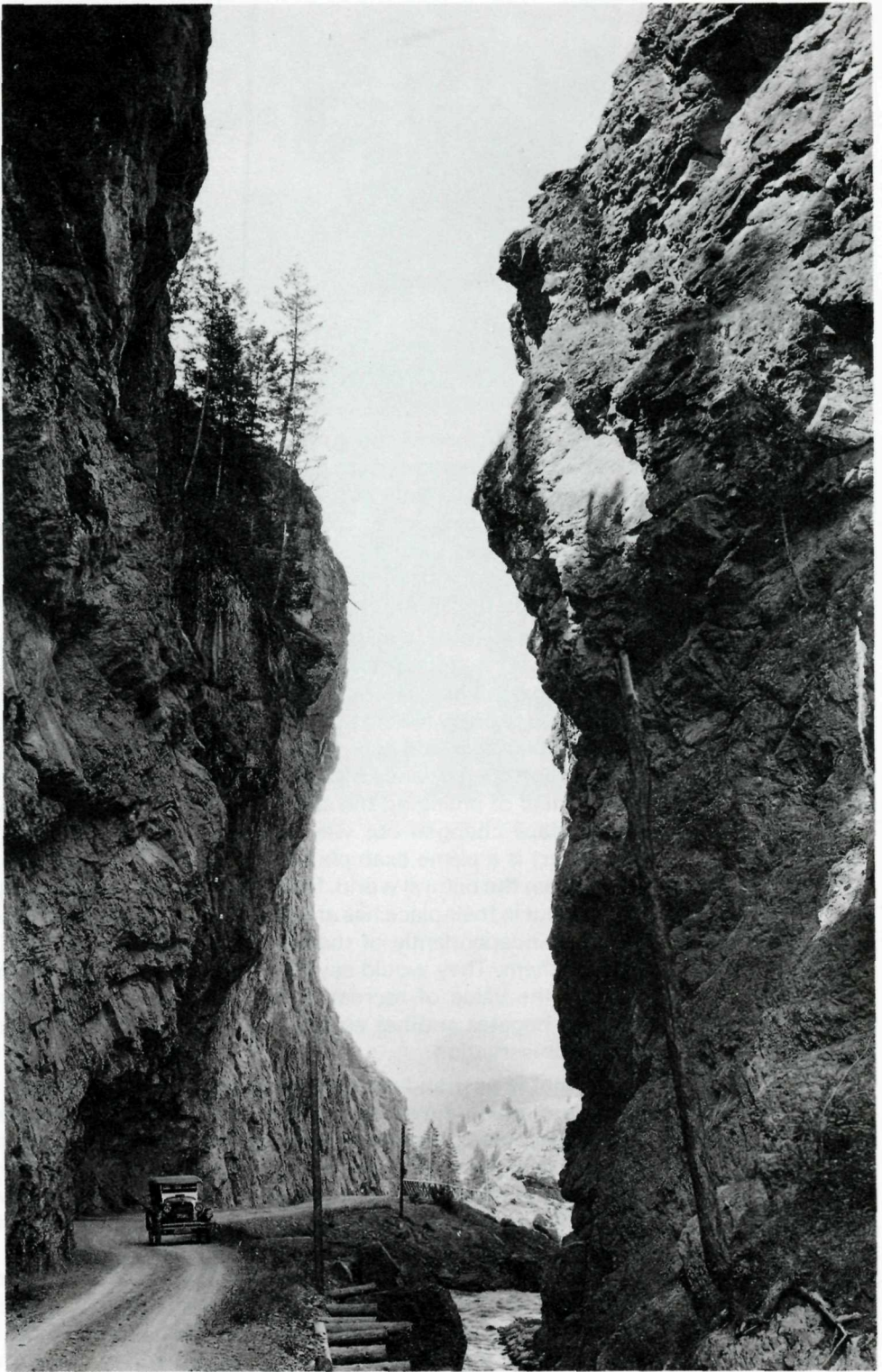
*Building the
Banff-Windermere Highway*

atmosphere pressure because of high elevation.

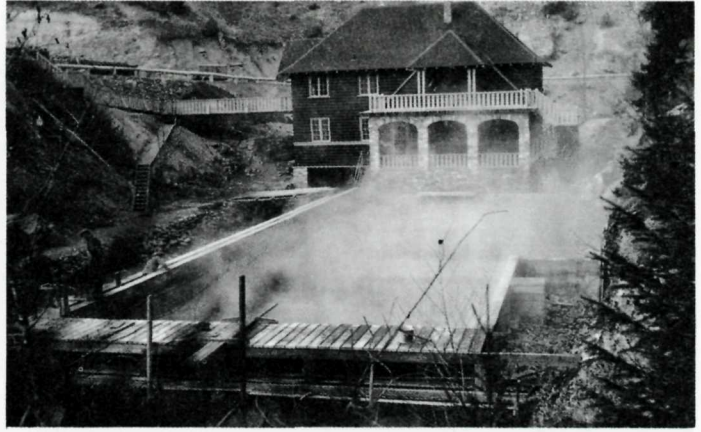
But Harkin's original idea was indeed working: the park was becoming an attraction, particularly the hot springs. It was a centre of recreation and enjoyment as well as revenue. There was little thought of preservation at this time because there were not sufficient numbers of visitors to cause any harm.

Up until 1948, Amelu might still have recognized the springs. But in that year the bath house burned to the ground and within two years the main essentials of the Aquacourt as we see it today were completed. The springs had reached the point where they were almost too attractive, and when the old bath house was gone, the sheer number of visitors demanded a larger facility. Amelu would have no knowledge of these factors. He would have no concept of population growth and recreational pressures; no idea of money, motorized society or summer holidays. And even if these things could be explained to him, explained so clearly that he would realize the changes in the springs were the inevitable corollary of changes throughout the world, he would still feel bewildered, even deprived. He would eventually ask the question: "Is this right?". The answers would not always be the same.

Of course, the single most important factor responsible for this change was undoubtedly the increase in the numbers of people wanting to use the hot springs. The government had been more than successful in its campaign to bring people to the park, but in this case the visitors congregated only in the small area around the springs. Obviously the springs as Amelu knew them could not accommodate all these people. The problem of sanitation would be beyond technology. The line-ups would be so long and tedious, the small pool so crowded and quarrelsome that when you finally reached the springs, there would be little enjoyment. In 1948, a decision was made that became a turning



Sinclair Canyon — 1920s



Bath house—1927-1948

point in the history of the springs: improve and enlarge the facilities in keeping with Harkin's original plan to attract people to the park, a plan that was made over 30 years before under totally different circumstances. Today's Aquacourt is the result and, for the most part, it can handle the demand. Behind its development is the basic premise that every Canadian has the right to enjoy the springs as his natural heritage.

But there are others who not only question this premise but insist that it is no longer valid. They would say that it is better for 50 people to experience the springs as Amelu did, than for a thousand to enjoy them as they exist now. The experience for these 50 people would be a richer, more significant event than the combined experience of the thousand. They would argue that instead of changing the springs to suit our demands, we should have changed our way of using them. To them, the Aquacourt is a prime example of how we have divorced ourselves from the natural world. Not only have the springs disappeared, but in their place has arisen a modern micro-world that operates independently of the springs themselves, almost in spite of them. They would say that the pendulum has swung too far: the value of recreation has developed to the point where it negates another equally important ideal of all parks, that of preservation.

But that is past and no amount of arguing will change the Aquacourt back to Amelu's pool. Nor is that necessarily desirable. The Aquacourt is a reflection of our own time as much as Amelu's pool was a reflection of his. It was a serious and honest attempt to do what men thought was right, an attempt to give the taxpayers what they wanted. It is the final result of one line of thinking, and it is one answer to Amelu's question: "Is it right?". If he could leave us with a final thought, it would probably not be this provoking question, but rather a plea to remember this was once his pool, the place of his nipika. A plea to remember there is more to the hot springs than the water.

Or perhaps he would turn to us and ask "what will happen when there are so many people that even the Aquacourt is too small?" and more importantly, "who will decide?". Once again, only our imaginations can tell us that. But this time there is a difference; this time the future we imagine just might be the future we get.



Opening of the Aquacourt—1951

the geological history

The springs existed for a long time even before their first use by men. They have their own history written on the rocks. In order to understand their story, in order to understand why they are indeed hot, we must travel back to a time when the mountains around the hot springs did not yet exist and the entire area was in fact submerged under what is now called the Pacific Ocean.

Millions of years ago, the rivers flowing off the western edge of the continent into the Pacific Ocean, carried great amounts of sediment. This sediment settled to the bottom in layers. Gradually it was compressed and solidified into rocks such as sandstone and shale. At the same time, millions of tiny sea creatures died and accumulated on the bottom as well. The skeletons of these creatures were composed of calcium carbonate and when these solidified, they formed limestone. In other places the calcium carbonate was precipitated out of the sea water by organisms or chemical means. Each of these layers had its own characteristic thickness and density and is called sedimentary rock because of its origin as sediment. It is out of these rocks that the mountains of Kootenay National Park are formed.

The force required to push them up into mountains thousands of feet above sea level must have been tremendous; in fact, it was the force of a moving continent. For about the last five hundred million years the North American continent has been drifting slowly westward. As it moved, it bumped into the huge mass of sedimentary rock and lifted it up, in the same way the rocks pile up in front of a bulldozer. What was once the flat crust under the ocean was now being pushed by the continent, in the same way you can wrinkle a fat rug with your foot.

As the pressure from the moving continent continued, the wrinkles became both bigger and higher. The layers of rock became more and more vertical. Finally a point was reached where the weight of the crust could no longer be pushed any higher. Yet the push continued nonetheless. The result was inevitable: the crust cracked along a line of weakness, or fault, sometimes to the depth of several miles. When this happened, one chunk of the crust would slide up over another chunk and the successive layers of rock would no longer be continuous. The area around one of these faults is called a shatter zone because the rock in the fault area is shattered when one block grinds against another.

The red cliffs just east of the hot springs are an example of what happens along a fault. Because of the tremendous heat generated by friction when two blocks of the earth's crust slide against each other, the iron in the rocks is oxidized. The red colour is the result of that oxidation. Of course, what we see today has been subjected to a very long period of erosion and weathering (as well as further oxidation) and appears quite different than did the original fault. Once this faulting had

taken place, the stage was set for the appearance of the hot springs.

Normal rain water filters down into the earth's crust continuously. Since the temperature rises one degree Fahrenheit every sixty feet we go down into the earth, the water must percolate down at least 7920 feet (or 1½ miles) below the surface in order to come in contact with rock that is hot enough to turn it to steam. As this steam is forced to rise, it condenses back to water, and like water everywhere, it follows the path of least resistance. In the case of Radium Hot Springs, the easiest path is through the shatter zone where the rock is broken up. It rises higher and higher through this zone until it reaches an area of impermeable shale. It follows along this boundary until it breaks through the surface as the hot springs.

It is hard to imagine that the hot springs would not exist today if certain events had not occurred millions of years ago, in a past so distant it is almost timeless. But all things, ourselves included, are a product of that past. Without it, we would understand nothing at all.

chemical character of the hot springs

The water in most hot springs contains various dissolved salts and gases. On reaching the surface, the gases are liberated to the air and the salts are precipitated near the outlets, forming calcareous (limy) deposits and siliceous sinters. Algae or microscopic plants abound in most hot springs and often give the waters a beautiful milky, sapphire blue or deep emerald green colour. Most of the deposits associated with the hot springs in Canada's Rocky Mountain national parks including Miette in Jasper, Radium in Kootenay and Upper and Cave in Banff are of a limy nature and contain some sulphates, yellowish-white sulphur, and reddish-brown and greenish-blue algae.

The quality of the waters in these hot springs is similar, and all contain about the same small amounts of dissolved salts. The principal salts present are calcium sulphate, magnesium sulphate (Epsom salt), sodium sulphate (Glauber's salt) and calcium bicarbonate, all are more or less beneficial when taken internally. The principal gases are nitrogen, carbon dioxide, argon, helium, and radon. Hydrogen sulphide is also present in the springs in Banff and Jasper.

For example, the large chlorinated pool of the Aquacourt in Kootenay National Park contains the following components according to chemical analysis of a sample:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Parts per million</u>
Sulphate	302
Calcium	135
Bicarbonate	100.8
Silica	31.8
Magnesium	31.6
Sodium	18.4
<u>Component</u>	<u>Parts per million</u>
Chloride	0.17
Fluoride	0.37
Nitrate	0.6
Alumina and Iron Oxide	3.6

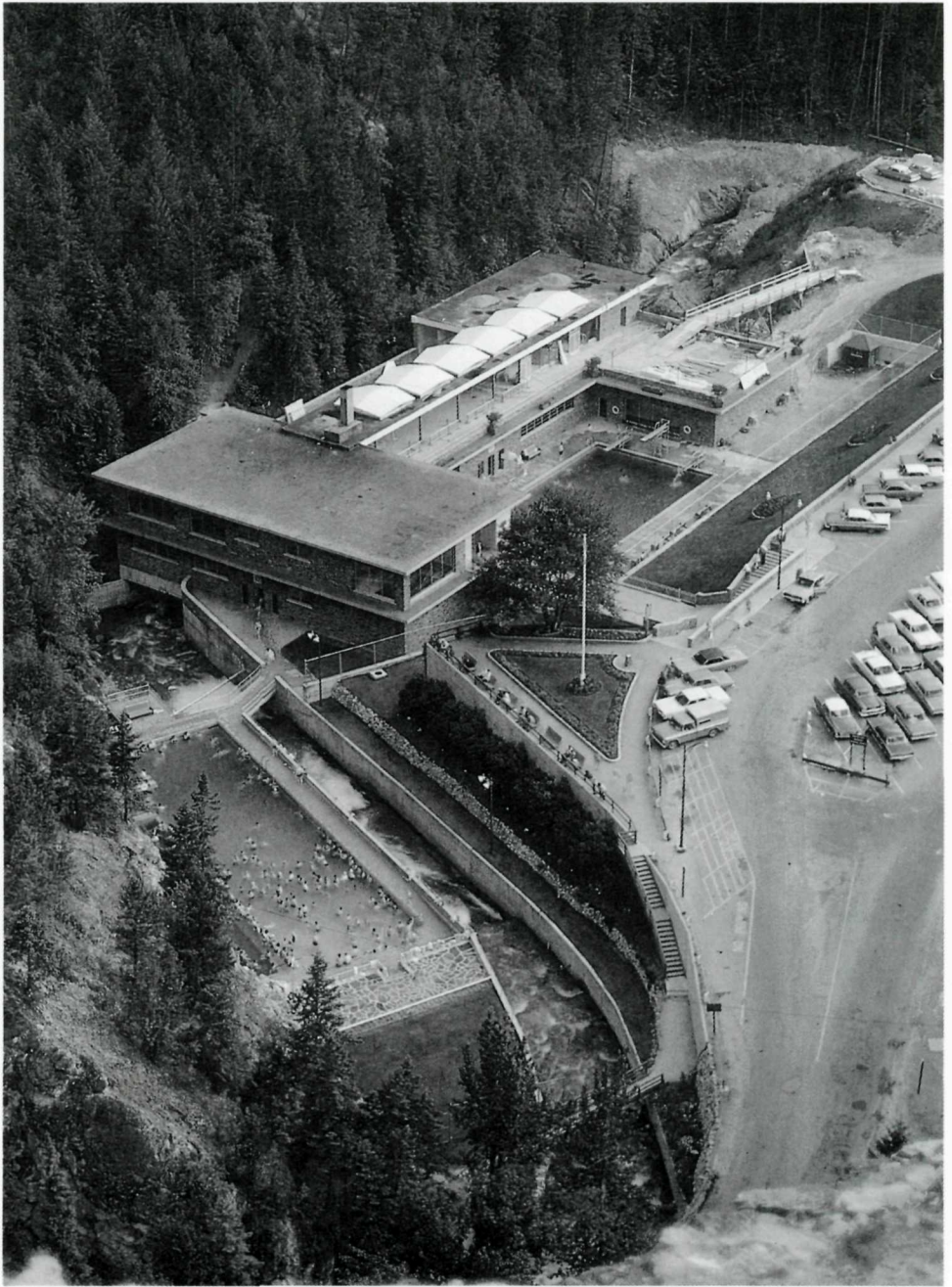
The total dissolved solids are calculated at 707.6 parts per million.

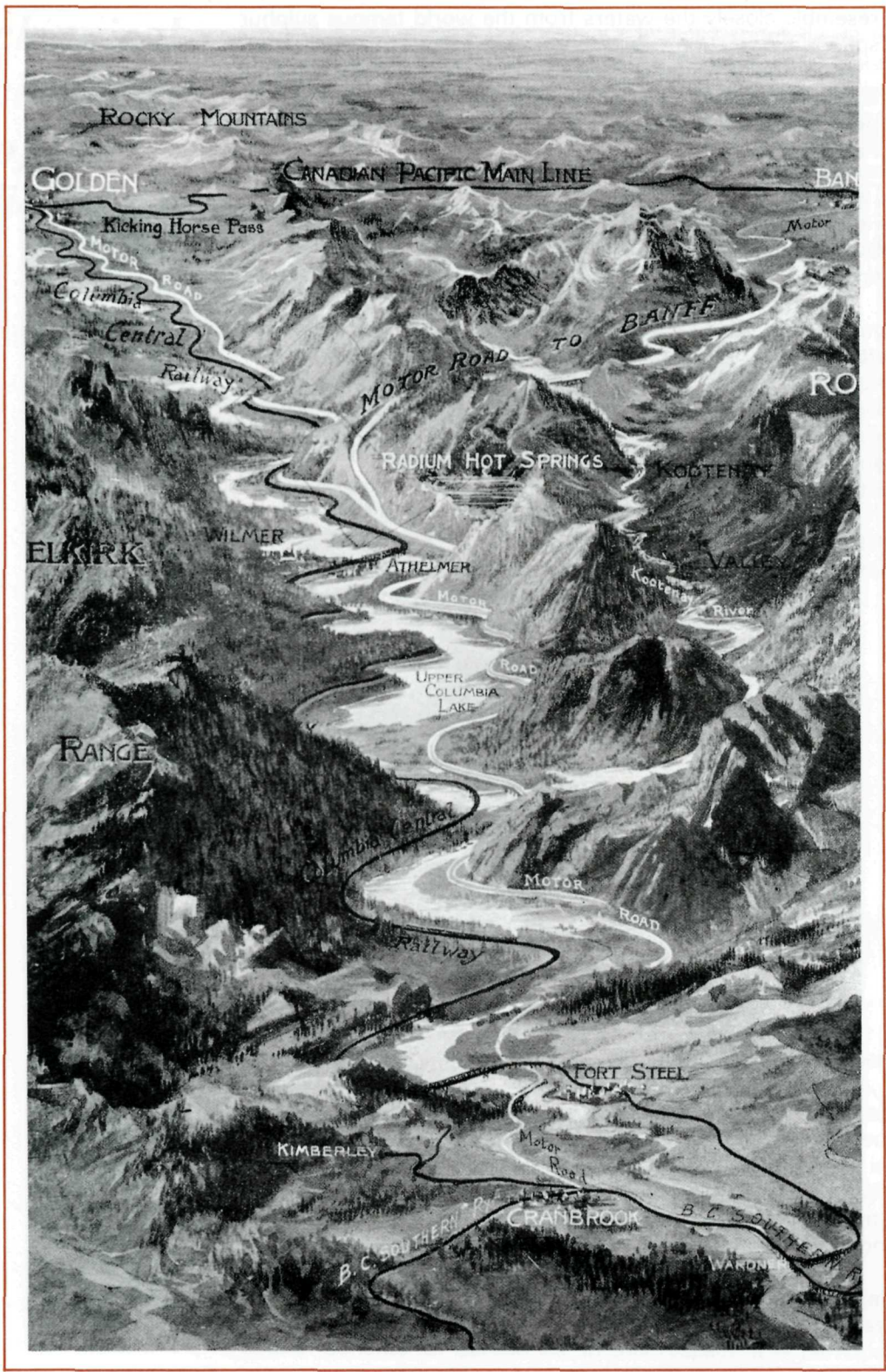
All of these hot springs are more or less radioactive, those at Banff being a little more so than the springs in the other two parks. The amount of radioactivity is quite harmless and is much less than that emanating from an ordinary watch dial. The radioactivity results mainly from minute traces of radium dissolved in the waters and of radon, a gaseous emanation derived from the disintegration of radium.

Much has been written about the therapeutic and medicinal value of mineral waters and each spring is reputed to possess special benefits for certain ills. In this respect, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the waters in these springs in Canada

resemble closely the waters from the world famous sulphur springs at Bath, England, and other well-known European spas.

At Kootenay National Park, the temperature of the hot pool is 40 degrees Celsius (103 degrees Fahrenheit) and the temperature of the cool pool is 27 degrees Celsius (80 degrees Fahrenheit).





—from the prospectus of Roland Stuart—1913

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