HAY CAMP/EJERE K'ELNI KUE
WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA
A Social and Land-Use History
1922 - 2001
Hay Camp
A Social and Land Use History

Part One:
A Social History
by
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Patrick Carroll

Part Two:
Cultural Resource Assessment:
An Archaeological Inventory
by
David Hems

Parks Canada
Western Canada Service Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
2001

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Abstract/ Résumé


Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who made this report possible. Sandra Dolan conducted the oral history interviews, which were central to the project, and also reviewed files and provided ongoing information from Fort Smith. She was also instrumental in garnering support from the local community, and gathering background information and photographs, all of which was invaluable to completing the archaeological inventory. Her contribution to both the social history and the archaeological assessment was crucial.

The archaeological component of the project, being both multi-disciplinary in nature and dependant upon local support, has involved the work of numerous individuals. Laura Frank and Don Aubrey from Wood Buffalo National Park supplied the necessary logistical and administrative requirements, as well as on-going advice and support. This involved many long hours of work on their part, establishing the terms of reference; arranging for vehicles, accommodations, and contacts; and, most importantly, organizing the picnic held with past employees who worked at the Hay Camp.

Danielle Kucher not only assisted Sandra and Laura with gathering information, but also provided assistance with the archaeological inventory, working long days without complaint.

François Paulette and Fred Daniels provided support from Smith’s Landing First Nation. François was particularly helpful in providing some context to land use of the property prior to its use as a park administrative centre. Gord Masson, former Bison Operations Manager at Hay Camp, was extremely helpful. His sharp mind and extraordinary memory have helped place many elements of the operation into context. All inventory data was entered to the CRM database by Barry Greco of the Western Canada Service Centre. Patrick Carroll gathered archival information while conducting research in Ottawa. The survey of cultural features identified during the inventory was conducted by Maurice McCracken and Duane Jordan. Map production of the surveyed data was undertaken by Dennis McGonigal and Maurice McCracken.

We would like to thank the reviewers, whose feedback helped to ensure the accuracy of this report, and our editor, Renee Fossett, who also provided advice on the structure of the report and prepared an index. In addition to being a co-author, Patrick Carroll from the Western Canada Service Centre (Winnipeg) produced the layout and visuals for this report. All of these individuals have helped to produce a professional product which we are all proud to have had a hand in bringing to fruition.

We would like to dedicate the study to all the local elders and former Hay Camp employees and residents whose memories brought life and invaluable perspectives to the history of Hay Camp.
PROJECT PICTURES

Journalist Patti-Kay Hamilton (left) and Parks Canada archaeologist David Hems (right) speaking with Mary Heron at Hay Camp, June 2000.

Parks Canada archaeologist David Hems (left) and Parks Canada historian Robert Coutts (right) speaking with Philip Cheezie at Hay Camp, June 2000.

Meeting between Smith's Landing FN and Wood Buffalo NP: L to r, standing - Don Aubrey, Josie Weninger, Fred Daniels; L to r, seated - François Paulette, Laura Frank, Patrick Tourangeau. May, 2001.


Western Canada Service Centre Research Team. L to r: Patrick Carroll, Dennis McGonigal, Diane Payment, Maurice McCracken, David Hems. June 2001.

Meeting between Smith's Landing FN and Wood Buffalo NP: L to r, standing - Don Aubrey, Josie Weninger, Fred Daniels; L to r, seated - François Paulette, Laura Frank, Patrick Tourangeau. May, 2001.
FOREWORD

There is much to learn by carefully reading the landscape. Combined with the stories of those who lived and worked on the land, the landscape can tell us much about past events, and activities that reflect how we have arrived at the present. This place, referred to as Hay Camp, represents an important cultural landscape in the history of Wood Buffalo National Park.

Cultural landscapes can take many forms and are defined differently according to the eye of the beholder. When I refer to Hay Camp as a cultural landscape, I am referring to the place as a whole, including both its cultural and natural characteristics. This place has contributed to the economic, social, and political values and roles of the Park, with particular emphasis upon the continued protection and management of the sacred and free roaming bison. The rich values, experiences, and stories that are connected to Hay Camp provide a sense of place that might otherwise be lost if they are not documented and passed on to future generations. The area we refer to as Hay Camp reflects a unique expression in the evolution of Wood Buffalo National Park as we see and experience it today.

Visiting Hay Camp for the first time, some of these values are not evident to the naked eye. If one looks closer at the vast open meadows and acres of fireweed, a complex and unique story emerges which can only be told by those who have lived and worked at Hay Camp. From more recent history of children playing in the haystacks in the meadows, and week-long warden and fire patrols by horse and dog team, Hay Camp has provided an outlet, and reference point, for many day to day park operations that have varied from season to season, and from year to year.

Laura Frank
Cultural Resource Management Officer
South West NWT Field Unit
Wood Buffalo National Park
Fort Smith, N.W.T.
x
FOREWORD

All landscapes have a history, much the same as people exist within cultures, even tribes. There are distinct voices, languages that belong to particular areas. There are voices inside rocks, shallow washes, shifting skies; they are not silent. And there is movement, not always the violent motion of earthquake associated with the earth’s motion or the steady unseen swirl through the heavens, but other motion, subtle unseen, like breathing. A motion, a sound, that if you allow your inner workings to stop long enough, moves into places inside you that mirror a similar landscape; you too can see it, feel it, hear it, know it.

Joy Harjo and Stephen Strom, Secrets of the World

This quotation reminds one of a silent, and yet significant portion of history that is particular to this part of Wood Buffalo National Park: the pre-and post-Second World War management of bison in Canada’s largest national park. In the early year, Hay Camps was alternately a beach head, and park community and operations centre. It was also a place where many river-borne travellers from Fort Chipewyan in the south, or Smith’s Landing in the north, stopped for supplies, refreshment, or, in the winter, a rest for their dog team. During the 1970s and 1980s Hay Camp enjoyed other functions, such as fire management.

Today, what remains of this history is largely obscure save for a few bison corrals, which are visible beyond the trees as you come into Hay Camp. To find out what happened, and when, is an exercise in detection and sleuthing - not just on the ground at Hay Camp, but further afield in libraries and archives as far away as Ottawa. Fortunately, because a number of former residents and parks staff have retired to Fort Smith, it has been possible to obtain first-hand accounts of what life was like at Hay Camp. Many people experienced deprivation, anxiety, and isolation while living there. For many, the work never stopped, so they seldom had time to think of where they were, or how their family fared when they were on patrol in the park. Patrols by dog team could last for weeks in the heart of winter. In the gender hierarchy of the day, women seemed to bear the biggest burden: looking after children, feeding visitors, and much else besides. There were happy times as well. A childhood at Hay Camp, in retrospect from some of the accounts, was a carefree existence; at least until the spectre of school entered the picture, and one was sent to boarding school in Fort Chipewyan or Fort Smith.

Recapturing the past through a comprehensive project such as this report describes is a luxury compared with what is normally possible. Still, the result of this research is as important for the tourist or park visitor to Wood Buffalo National Park, as it is for Parks Canada itself, and the new owners of Hay Camp, Smith’s Landing First Nation. The significance of the history of Hay Camp rests on three foundations:

• its administrative role as one of two centres in Wood Buffalo National Park, along with Sweetgrass, which were developed for bison management and disease control.
• its historic role as a base for warden operations.
• its cultural role as a work site providing accommodations for a number of park employees and their families.
Looking at what has happened, or evolved in the park, brings one to the present, and the transition of Hay Camp from a site under the administration of Parks Canada, to a site under the ownership of Smith’s Landing First Nation. The 1999 selection and acceptance of the site for a future Indian Reserve marked the beginning of a two year process which has culminated in the present study. The impetus for the study was a minor, but compelling reference in the *Wood Buffalo National Park Treaty Land Entitlement Environmental Assessment* which states:

since this area represents an extremely important former administration centre related to bison research, as much documentation concerning the area as well as a map of the remaining foundations related to this area should be completed prior to excising the land.

The completed project report exceeds this remit in every respect. The specialist staff at the Western Canada Service Centre are to be commended for their efforts. The cooperation and support of Smith’s Landing was also invaluable. The results underline the important role of cultural resource management in all national parks, but especially at Wood Buffalo National Park, where the mix of aboriginal culture and history has been so rich, and the alternating pressures of development and conservation were so great during the period covered by this report.

It is to be hoped that more studies, like this, will be undertaken to enable more of the park’s interesting history to be shared by as wide an audience as is possible. I would like to extend a sincere thank you from the Parks Canada team in Fort Smith to everyone who had a hand in bringing this project to fruition.

Merci/Mahsi Cho

Donald Aubrey
Senior Policy Advisor - Cooperative Initiatives
Wood Buffalo National Park
Fort Smith, N.W.T.
FOREWORD

The Smith’s Landing First Nations, the Thebacha Dene Suline, a recognized First Nation as of May 6, 2000, have occupied the ?Ejere K’elni Kue (Hay Camp) since before recorded history. The unique feature of the Hay Camp Report is that it describes Hay Camp’s recent history, and the establishment of the camp, and the mandate given to Parks Canada on the management of the Prairie Buffalo and Woodland Buffalo. Sadly, at times during this history, First Nations were not included in the decisions affecting the management of Wood Buffalo National Park, and its buffalo. SLFN witnessed, at first hand, the creation of the park, and the Hay Camp abattoir site. The Hay Camp report gives valuable information and history on what life was like at Hay Camp during the study period, and the experiments that were carried out on the buffalo. The abattoir, that supported the needs of missions and Indians for the necessary buffalo meat diet, was also recognized by the SLFN during those years. It must be noted that many of our people worked, at one time or another, at the various stages during the establishment of the camp. We now know that the mistakes that were made at Hay Camp will not be repeated as a way of managing buffalo that are spiritually connected to our people’s history. SLFN now has an Indian Reserve at Hay Camp, and would like to preserve the history of this site by working with Parks Canada in interpreting the site for our people and site visitors. It is very reassuring that Parks Canada and the Smith’s Landing First Nation are willing to take these steps to work together in the management of our territory and park lands for generations yet unborn.

François Paulette
Chief Negotiator
SLFN 2000 Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement
Smith’s Landing First Nation
Thebathie
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Hay Camp project was initiated by Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) in May, 2000. The project developed in response to outstanding treaty land entitlement issues with Smith’s Landing First Nation. The band is a signatory to Treaty 8, which was signed on July 17, 1899, at Smith’s Landing. Although land selection was discussed in 1916, some of the relevant area was assigned to Wood Buffalo National Park when it was established in 1922 for the purpose of protecting the Wood bison. In 1997 negotiations began with Parks Canada to fulfill the Government of Canada’s outstanding obligations under Treaty 8 by defining the area that would become Indian Reserves administered under the Indian Act (Richards 1999:1). One of the sites selected for transfer was a 2.13 hectare area that includes Hay Camp.

Hay Camp, with its long association with park administration and its function as a centre for bison and fire management, has been recognized as having historic value. Historic value is assigned by Parks Canada to recognized cultural resources (Parks Canada 1994:120). The cultural resources at Hay Camp are valued not only for their physical or material properties but also for their associative and symbolic attributes. The physical remains of the site and its use over time are equally important. Hay Camp’s controversial role with regard to bison management, in particular the provision of bison meat in the north and to upscale southern markets in conjunction with Canada’s growing tourism industry, even suggests historic value at a more national level.

Treaty land entitlement at Hay Camp was not assessed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) because CEAA projects must be undertaken in connection with physical remains. Prior to initiating an environmental assessment for land entitlement, the last of the standing structures had already been removed from Hay Camp, thus eliminating the land trigger necessary for assessment. However, a strategic environmental assessment of the land disposition was conducted in 1999 under “The 1999 Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals” (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2000). Factors considered in this environmental assessment were possible impacts on natural and cultural heritage and socio-economic effects. This was in keeping with Parks Canada’s Cultural Resource Management Policy, which states that “When a proposed action on lands or waters administered by Parks Canada requires an environmental assessment, that assessment will include consideration and mitigation of the impacts of the proposed action on cultural resources” (Parks Canada 1994: 108).

One of the mitigation measures identified for both the demolition of the structures and the land deposition was to inventory and map the vestiges of the physical remains which had been under Parks Canada’s administration for close to 80 years. It was also determined that given the community context of Hay Camp and its local significance, it was necessary to document its social history. This was particularly important as there were still individuals in the surrounding communities who had spent a portion of their lives at Hay Camp. Recording the social and physical history of Hay Camp ensures its preservation for future generations. In addition, the new beneficiary, Smith’s Landing First Nation, can use this information to develop their own tools to protect and present this cultural resource.
The above context set the stage for the establishment of the project, and its primary objectives, which were:

1) to document and assess cultural resources at Hay Camp as part of Parks Canada’s environmental assessment requirements for the Treaty Land Entitlement; and

2) to provide a history of the development of Hay Camp that would be of mutual benefit to Smith’s Landing First Nation and Parks Canada.

In addition to these key objectives it is hoped that the Hay Camp Cultural Resource Assessment project will be used as a model for a similar cultural resource assessment at Sweetgrass in the south of the Park, which at one time was a centre for bison management similar to Hay Camp.

With these objectives in mind, David Hems, archaeologist, and Diane Payment, historian, at the Western Canada Service Centre (WCSC) in Winnipeg, with Dennis McGonigal and Maurice McCracken of Real Property Services, and in consultation with Laura Frank (Cultural Resource Management officer), and Don Aubrey (Co-operative Initiatives) at WBNP developed the methodology and refined the scope of the project. The approach was multi-disciplinary, involving input from archaeology, history, and heritage recording, and continuous consultation with Park staff. There was also on-going consultation with the local community, more specifically, the Smith’s Landing First Nation.

Thirteen people were formally interviewed about their life and work at Hay Camp and a few additional people, more informally, in relation to the site’s layout and structures. Ken East, who was Park Superintendent from 1983-90, provided a vivid written account of Hay Camp during his period of administration, as well as information on recent key functions such as fire management, which were otherwise not available in Park files. The research team felt it was particularly important to collect the accounts and perspectives of the numerous Dene and Métis employees who had worked at Hay Camp, and who had information not generally included in official records. The specific contributions of the women, or the ‘hidden half,’ whose roles were predominantly those of cooks and housewives at Hay Camp, were not forgotten. The scholarly work of anthropologist Patricia McCormack and historian Barry Potyondi provided important contextual information, in particular on local Aboriginal communities, bison management, and the complex Park history. A serious effort was made to identify and consult key information on Hay Camp in the Wood Buffalo National Park files and at the National Archives of Canada (NAC), but due to the volume of the records and time constraints, an exhaustive review of these files was not possible. The historical database also includes maps and photographs from the NAC, the Ernest Thompson Seton collection at the University of Alberta, and the Oblate Archives at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

In order to produce a narrative suitable for general staff and public distribution, particular emphasis was placed on a more popular and vivid writing style, incorporating the humorous anecdotes and stories of people interviewed. Care was taken to ensure that their voices were given equal recognition, although at times it was difficult to incorporate the oral and documentary sources into a single narrative. Due to the legislative and policy context springing from the treaty land entitlement, the project focuses specifically on Hay Camp, its use as an administrative and operational centre, and its key role in bison and fire management from 1922 to 1995. Interwoven
with these themes are the activities of the men and women who lived in or visited Hay Camp during its history. The report does not deal at length with the controversy regarding bison species, the relocation of the Wainwright herd, and resulting conservation issues and management strategies in the Park, which are the subject of continuing debate and are therefore best discussed in separate context.

The report may inadvertently contain errors and omissions despite the sincere efforts of the research team to respond to reviewers' comments. It is our hope that this study will form the basis for further research and inquiry into the, at times, controversial, but nevertheless rich and fascinating history of Hay Camp.
HAY CAMP: WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK (1922 - 1995)

PART I: A SOCIAL HISTORY
Voices from Hay Camp

When they [the government] took that Park over from the Natives, they said they only wanted it for the buffalo. Earl Gordon, Warden

At Hay Camp, ‘Athabasca’ arrived and left 40 bags of oats and 2 cases of axes with 2 units of rations, water buckets, 2 dozen shovels and 2 boxes Ham. Haying crew have been short of rations. Weather has been disagreeable for haying. Working on new cabin and hauling logs for stable. Geese going south. Peter Tompkins Warden’s diary, September, 25, 1925

Stuck in the bush ... half of my life was wasted at Hay Camp. Rosalie Mercredi Dempsey, 1920s-40s

To fill these vacancies, I have engaged four local men from [Fort] Chipewyan who were experienced in carpentering, bush work, trapping, fishing and transportation by dogs and canoe. They have proven acquisitions to the park staff. M. Dempsey, 1934.

It was a lot of fun in my younger days ... I worked on the fire crew from 1971 until it closed. Archie Antoine, 2000.

Playing jokes on each other all the time, that we did. Tony Evans, 2000.

I like a challenge and the job was a big challenge. Earl Gordon, 2000.

There is some question in my mind whether or not the type of warden that we have been getting are who we want at this Park to make patrols. I would prefer native or half-breed patrolmen such as we used to have exclusively. Wood Buffalo Park, n.a. 1949.

You know honestly, I didn’t care for that at all [the slaughters], but it was my job and I mean, what could I do? Lorne Lapp, 2000.

The abattoir crew, consisting almost entirely of treaty Indians and Métis worked very conscientiously throughout the program, with the result that we had a quick and an exceedingly efficient operation. B.E. Olson, 1966.

[Truck] Broke down last night - had to walk all night - we spent all night walking. First thing he [superintendent] said: You guys drinking? I said No! But we’re coming in for one. Tony Evans, 2000.

We had so little, so little in those days ... but the men could drive and go into town for meetings ... day hours at the office, evening hours at the ‘Pinecrest’ ... we were lucky if we went into town once a month. Mary McNeill Heron, 2000.
Aboriginal Peoples in the Region Since the 18th Century

Prior to European contact, the present-day Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) region was inhabited mainly by Beaver and Slavey (and perhaps other related) Athapaskan-speaking peoples. In the 18th century, however, there was an important shift in Aboriginal territories in consequence of the fur trade, which gradually brought the Chipewyan and Cree peoples to this region of the northern boreal forest. In 1715-16, Thanadelthur, a Chipewyan (Sayisi Dene) woman also known as “Slave Woman,” led a Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) sponsored expedition from York Factory on Hudson Bay to the Barren Lands of the northwest. Her skillful negotiations persuaded the Chipewyan Dene to enter into trade relations, largely as intermediaries or “middlemen,” with the HBC. In 1772 Samuel Hearne journeyed to the Slave River region for the HBC. He was followed, in 1778, by Montreal trader Peter Pond, who established a post on the Athabasca river near Lake Athabasca. Ten years later, Fort Chipewyan was built on Lake Athabasca. It became the hub of the northwestern fur trade for the North West Company (NWC) and, after the union of the two companies in 1821, for the HBC. The expansionist and exploitative activities of the NWC and HBC, between 1778 and 1821, resulted in a depletion of resources and conflict with and between Aboriginal peoples.

Early fur traders’ accounts report that hare, beaver, moose, caribou, bison, and fish were dietary mainstays of Aboriginal peoples in the Lake Athabasca-Slave River regions. There were large

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3For a detailed account of fur trade and exploration activities in the region see Barry Potyondi, “Wood Buffalo National Park: An Historical Overview and Source Study” (1979), 1-31.
seasonal gatherings of bands at various locations to hunt, fish, trap, and trade. The region encompassing the future government bison preserve was the homeland of the Dene and Woods Cree who argued that "from time immemorial they had been accustomed to hunt and trap over the area which was created as a sanctuary and that they had hunting lodges and shacks on this land of which they had intimate knowledge." The present-day Hay Camp site has not been investigated archaeologically but there is some suggestion of earlier Aboriginal use. Nora Dempsey Freund, who was interviewed for this project, remembers that her mother, Rosalie Mercredi Dempsey, was told "that the house [first warden house known as Dempsey house] was built over an Indian grave."^6

Fur trade and exploration also gave rise to the Métis, the 'New Nation of the Northwest.' Voyageurs such as François Beaulieu and Baptiste Le Camarade de Mandeville intermarried with the Cree and Dene of the Lake Athabasca - Slave River region, forging important trade networks. The Métis established a number of small settlement camps on the Slave, Salt, and Little Buffalo rivers. Families such as Tourangeau, Mercredi, and Lafferty played an important brokering role in the fur trade in the region, either as freemen or in the employ of the HBC.^7

In the 1880s, steamboat service revolutionized transportation on the Lower Slave River. The HBC put steamers at each end of the sixteen mile stretch of rapids between Smith's Landing (later Fort Fitzgerald) and Fort Smith, uniting the two waterways, and replacing the rough portage road along which Aboriginal freighters hauled supplies. This development brought newcomers and increased economic activity and competition to the region. By the 1890s, Eurocanadian (white) free traders such as Jim Hislop, George Elmore, and Colin Fraser were trading directly with Aboriginal peoples along the Slave River and its tributaries, between Fort Chipewyan and Smith's Landing.^8 Another trader, Herman Bowers, and his family lived at Poorfish Lake, a tributary of Ryan's Creek. These newcomers had intermarried with the local Cree and Chipewyan who lived in the area. The families included the Desjarlais, who lived at the junction of the La Butte and Slave rivers, and the Champagnes, who lived farther to the south near Ryan's Creek. Spirit, Martin, Gibot, Sepp, and


^7For detailed information on the Métis and the fur trade and other related activities, see Jennifer L. Bellman and Chris C. Hanks, "Northern Métis and the Fur Trade," in Picking up the Threads: Mètis History in the Mackenzie Basin (1998), 29-68.

^8For an interesting popular account of free traders who opposed the HBC in the Athabasca-Slave River district and their relations with local Aboriginal peoples, see Jordan Zinovich, Battling the Bay: The Turn of the Century Adventures of Fur Trader Ed Nagle (1992).
Arcand were other families who had seasonal camps or lived year-round in the area at the turn of the century.

The Fort Chipewyan - Smith’s Landing - Fort Smith water route was one of the routes used by prospectors heading towards the Klondike in 1897. Local Aboriginal peoples participated in mineral exploration around Great Slave Lake and witnessed the arrival of agricultural settlement in the northern Peace River district. These activities, on traditional hunting and trapping grounds, further altered the cultural landscape of the Lake Athabasca-Slave River region.

**Treaty Number 8 and Scrip, 1899-1900**

New economic developments, declining natural resources, and impending non-Aboriginal settlement in the Lake Athabasca-Great Slave Lake region convinced the Canadian government of the need to address the issues of Aboriginal land and harvesting rights. The Unorganized Territories Game Act of 1894 introduced restrictions on wood bison and musk-ox hunting. Although this legislation targeted sports hunters, the government also decided to restrict Aboriginal hunting of the threatened species. When the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) tried to enforce the legislation in 1897, it was evident many local people had not heard of it. On the Athabasca River, Inspector Jarvis met Piche, a Chipewyan [Metis] who, the previous year, had killed a wood bison in the Birch Mountains. At Smith’s Landing, the centre of buffalo country, Jarvis reported: “I found a party of hunters ... ready to start in search of buffalo. Amongst them was Suse Beaulieu, a well-known hunter. These people had never heard of a game law and were much surprised ... but willingly gave up their hunt when I explained to them the necessity of complying with this law.”

Jarvis and others also noted that local Aboriginal peoples were unhappy with the new restrictive legislation. The Federal government moved to legitimize its actions. Indians (term used in the historical context) had to be rendered peaceful through treaty so that the country could be safely opened up to settlement, trade, mining, and other such “purposes of Dominion.” It was also strategic for the government to deal with Métis claims, given the numbers and influence of Métis throughout the region. A Treaty and Scrip Commission was sent to the Upper Mackenzie drainage area to provide the groundwork for the expansion of the Canadian state by obtaining title to land and “control of the Indians.”

In 1899-1900 Treaty No. 8 was negotiated and signed between the government of Canada and the Indians (First Nations) of the Athabasca region. A parallel “Half-Breed Scrip Commission” issued

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10 The term Indian is used in this discussion in the historical context of the Indian Act. Included are the Cree, Chipewyan, Beaver, Slavey, and Yellowknife living in what are now northern Alberta, northwestern Saskatchewan, northeastern British Columbia, and in the Northwest Territories as far as the south shore of Great Slave Lake.
certificates to “Halfbreed” people today commonly known as Métis. The Treaty and Halfbreed Commission went to Fort Chipewyan and Smith’s Landing in 1899 and then on to Fort Resolution in 1900. Treaty was available to Métis who were “living like Indians,” while others were offered scrip although there were no clear boundaries between the two groups in the North. Both Indians and Métis were living in kinship-based seasonal communities in the bush and in the settlements. The clergy advised the Métis to take treaty to ensure their rights to land and resources. One of the bands that the Treaty and Scrip commissioners dealt with was founded by the Métis-Chipewyan patriarch François Beaulieu at Salt River, near present-day Fort Smith. Some members of the family took treaty while others took scrip.

It is evident today that there were many misunderstandings by each party involved, and that the agreements did not terminate Aboriginal title and rights. First Nations people were reluctant to sign the treaty because of their concern that government agents would interfere with their hunting rights. The treaty confirmed their rights to “hunt, trap and fish ... subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the country.” Although there were verbal assurances that they would not be deprived of these rights, these promises were not written into the treaty. The Métis who had taken scrip and were not confirmed in their hunting rights were also alarmed. Treaty and Scrip created two “types” of Aboriginal peoples: one group with annuities and rights to resources on unoccupied Crown lands and on reserved lands, and the other group with the same status as non-Aboriginal peoples. There were serious implications for traditional land use. Treaty Indians were legally entitled to hunt for food, but Métis had to follow game laws of a more general

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11 In the same context, ‘Halfbreed’ was a term in common usage in the 19th century to identify all people of mixed Aboriginal-European ancestry, although it is now considered pejorative, especially when used by outsiders. In the NWT there are Métis of French Canadian and Aboriginal ancestry, particularly in the southern portion. There are also people whose European origins were Scottish or Orcadian who did not identify with the historical Métis Canadiens and called themselves “Halfbreeds.”

12 Scrip was a certificate exchangeable for land or money. This system to “extinguish” Métis land rights was introduced by the federal government in Manitoba and subsequently in the Northwest Territories. The Treaty 8 Halfbreed Commissions offered negotiable land scrip to the value of $240. History repeated itself in the Athabasca when scrip dealers such as Dick Secord from Edmonton accompanied the commissions and proceeded to “buy” Métis scrip at reduced prices.

13 For a comprehensive discussion of the different interpretations of treaty and scrip by the government and Aboriginal peoples see Patricia A. McCormack, “Northern Métis and The Treaties and the Issuance of Scrip,” in Picking up the Threads: Métis History in the Mackenzie Basin (1998), 190-92. The First Nations view that they were signing peace treaties and not giving up land or resources was also confirmed by Justice Morrow in response to the application by Chief François Paulette et al in 1973, cited in above.

14 See articles of Treaty 8 cited in R. Fumoleau, As Long As This Land Shall Last (1975): 71-72. There is also evidence that in an effort to persuade the hunters to sign the treaty, people were told they would not be bound by the Game Act. See Jordan Zinovitch, citing Ed Nagle who was a witness to these negotiations, in Battling the Bay (1992), 178.
application. Treaty Indians were also restricted in various ways by the regulations of the Indian Act, and also bound by game laws.

The legal distinctions between treaty and non-treaty affected the framing of government policy, as illustrated in the case of Wood Buffalo National Park. Treaty Indians were allowed to hunt and trap within the Park in 1922 while Eurocanadian trappers were excluded. The status of Métis was unclear, although they had traditionally used the Park area. They were denied hunting rights in 1923. Subsequently, a number of Métis joined Cree bands in Fort Chipewyan and Chipewyan bands in Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith. There was local opposition to plans to enlarge the park in 1926, especially from people of the Fort Chipewyan region. An influential local trader, Colin Fraser, reported that “although opposed to the extension he will not object if the rights of treaty Indians, Half-Breeds and traders are not interfered with.” Local people sent a petition to Charles Stewart, the Superintendent-General of Indians Affairs, in which they claimed that “the Half-Breeds and Whites ... have well-founded and time-established rights.” The federal government eventually agreed with this position and the new regulations provided access to the annex (southern) portion of the park. All the people living there — Indian, Métis, and non-Aboriginal — were allowed to use the land in Wood Buffalo Park.

Canada Comes North: Government Policy and Ideology

In 1870, the new Canadian state purchased the Hudson’s Bay Company territories and acquired formal control of the Athabasca-Mackenzie region. By the late 1880s, the Canadian government was looking for rich hinterlands in the North. It sent geologists, surveyors, and other scientists to explore and map out the region and its natural resources. In its actions, the government of Canada was guided by a policy formulated by Prime Minister J. A. Macdonald in 1879. The main tenets of the National Policy were “purposes of Dominion,” or economic development for the benefit of the nation. The government wanted to provide a context for the eventual development of a southern-style economy, political system, and society in the North. This conflicted with Aboriginal concepts of self-government and “open” and “shared” land resource use. There were already concerns that traditional subsistence harvesting practices were being threatened by newcomers and profit-oriented trapping and hunting. The Canadian government gradually replaced the paternalistic fur trade regime with a new administrative framework to enforce legislation and regulations based on the principles of

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15One of these was Felix Beaulieu, whose father Pierre, had taken scrip in 1899. He claimed that he had hunted in the park area since he was thirteen, and without taking treaty, would have been banned from the park. He took treaty in order to continue hunting in the park, but would not otherwise have done so. NAC. RG85, Vol. 1213, file 400-2-3 pts. 1A. G.D. Murphy, Assistant District Agent to the Director of NWT & Yukon Branch, cited in McCormack. “Northern Métis and the Treaties.” 195 note 142.


individual land ownership, and regulated human access and resource harvesting. The first legislation
to affect the Athabasca region was The Unorganized Territories Game Act of 1894 which prohibited
the hunting of the endangered wood bison, and established a closed season for other animals. To enforce this legislation in the regulated frontier tradition, the government sent the NWMP to patrol the region in 1897. The police patrols depended on Aboriginal guides for information and direction. There is evidence of local resistance to police attempts to regulate Aboriginal activities. The second legislation and regulatory measure to control land use was the creation of Wood Buffalo Park in 1922.

An ambivalent government policy of protection and development guided the establishment of the first national park at Banff in 1885, and other parks that followed. Crown lands were to be set aside for potential development and regulated resource exploitation. A number of factors prompted the government to act upon an earlier proposal for the creation of a bison park preserve, which led to the establishment of Wood Buffalo Park. The factors included wildlife conservation and post-World War I developments such as the discovery of petroleum reserves in Norman Wells, increased hunting and "poaching" by non-Aboriginal peoples, American interest in northern lands, and the establishment of the federal government in the North. The preservation of the last few hundred "pure" wood bison in the world caught the imagination of the Canadian public at the time. A 1922 report identified two distinct bison ranges west of Slave River which needed protection: a northern range between the Nyarling and Little Buffalo rivers, and a southern range between the Little Buffalo, Salt, Slave, and Jackfish rivers. There had been general concern in Canada over the near

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Inspection Jarvis reported that people at Fort Fitzgerald were reluctant to act as guides, and interpreted this as evidence that they were still hunting and depleting bison resources. The Métis (Joseph) Beaulieu and two Dene, Kiza and Squirrel, were identified as the main offenders. Aboriginal peoples argued they had the right to harvest all animals for food and were conserving the specie which was being threatened by other factors such as non-Aboriginal poaching and wolves. See A. M. Jarvis, "Wood Buffalo in the Mackenzie District," Report of the RNWMP, Appendix N, Canada, Sessional Papers, 1907-08; and Theresa A. Ferguson, "The Jarvis Proof: Management of Bison Hunters and the Development of a Literary Tradition," in Patricia A. MacCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside, eds., Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference (1990), 299-304.

The first proposal was for the Caribou Mountains Park, west and south of the present-day Park in 1912.

Explorer Samuel Hearne estimated a wood bison population of 150,000 at the time of contact in the 1770s, while in the 1890s government naturalist E.T. Seton argued that the number had been closer to 170,000. Numbers had decreased dramatically. Estimates of the number of bison varied from 150 in 1894 according to trophy hunter J. Caspar Whitney to 300 in 1897 according to NWMP Inspector Jarvis and 500 in 1907 according to E.T. Seton. See Janet Foster, Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada (1978), 104-109. The reasons for the rapid decrease are complex and open to debate. Disease, climatic conditions, wolf predators, and increased harvesting in conjunction with the fur trade are among many possible causes. See Theresa A. Ferguson, "Wood Bison and the Early Fur Trade." in Patricia A. McCormack and Geoffrey Ironside, eds. The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies (1993), 63-79.

Potyondi, "Wood Buffalo National Park." 82.
extinction of the plains bison in the 1880s, and, by the turn of the century, this concern extended to the wood bison herds in the Athabasca region. The Unorganized Territories Game Protection Act of 1894 was not regularly enforced until the NWMP were stationed at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Smith, in the wake of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897. Inspector Jarvis established bison patrols to determine the range and size of the herds, and whether or not the Act was protecting them sufficiently. The police advised the government that bison were almost extinct in the North and that food supplies of Aboriginal peoples were threatened. In 1911, bison administration was transferred from the NWMP to the Forestry Branch of the Department of the Interior, which stationed six “buffalo rangers” at Fort Smith. In 1921, bison administration was incorporated into the new Northwest and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior.

Wood Buffalo Park was created by Order-in-council P.C. 2498 on December 18, 1922, under the authority of The Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Acts. It specified that the new northern park would not be administered by the Dominion Parks Branch but by the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior. The new park included that part of the present park lying north of the Peace River located within Alberta and the Northwest Territories. In 1926 the park was enlarged to encompass the new range of immigrant Plains bison south of Peace River and around Lake Claire (see Map 1, Part I). The park remained under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior until 1930. From 1930 to 1964 it was administered by the Department of Indian [and Northern] Affairs. Wood Buffalo Park did not achieve national park status until 1964. Potyondi refers to this period as one of “dual allegiance,” as this was a time during which it was unclear whether the Park was being managed to achieve traditional park values or to contribute to the economic and social well-being of local, mostly Aboriginal, inhabitants.22

Map 1: General map of Wood Buffalo National Park showing the boundaries of the original park (1922), and the current boundaries including the annex (1926). (McCormack 1984)

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The Establishment of the Government Hay Camp

Hay Camps Along the Lower Slave River

Hay Camp was originally one of several personally-controlled or leased hay meadows and stopping-places along the Peace and Slave rivers. The Government Hay Camp was originally operated by a man called Russell and period literature refers to it as ‘Russell’s Hay Camp.’ (see Map 2, Part I). Oral and documentary accounts suggest that he was Jack Russell [or Jacques Roussel] who lived on the Slave River with his Métis family. He was described as “an enormous, fearless, brawling riverman; a capable scow-builder, bushman, and trapper. More importantly for independent fur traders like Jim Hislop and Ed Nagle, he was the first man to whom they were willing to entrust responsibility for their fur shipments to Edmonton.” By 1898 Russell had stopped working for Hislop and Nagle and had journeyed to the Klondike in search of gold. He is mentioned in Nagle’s journal again in 1902, at which time Russell appears to have returned to work in the Fort Smith area, although the exact location is not known. Jack Russell is noted in 1926 as still wandering the north in the company of Ed Nagle’s son, Ted.

The Ryan Brothers also operated a hay camp approximately twenty miles upstream or south, of Russell’s. Some documents have referred to a man named Wagonitz who may have been a partner of Russell, or a previous owner of the property. By about 1920 or earlier, John Wilf Johnson (also

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23 The HBC and the Roman Catholic missions at Salt River, Fort Smith, and Fort Fitzgerald cut hay at various places in the region. Individual traders also cut and sold hay at camps or stopping-places that provided food and lodgings to travellers and their horses. The hay meadows were traditionally managed by controlled burning.

24 The park warden’s patrol map prepared in 1923 by F.C. Bennett, Assistant Chief Warden at Wood Buffalo Park, shows routes, locations of Ranger’s cabins, and ‘Indian’ Trails. NAC. RG 85. Vol. 151. file: 420-2

25 Russell (or Roussel) and his wife Vitaline were from Faust, a Métis settlement on Lesser Slave Lake. There is no present-day local memory of Jack, but Vitaline lived at Fort Fitzgerald as a widow and was a midwife in the community. Morris Lafferty and Eline Larocque Yanik, personal communication to Sandra Dolan, January, 2001. It is possible Russell was one of the trappers and traders who was evicted from the new park in 1922-23.


27 They were Pat and Mickey Ryan who had the mail contract between Fort McMurray and Fort Smith in the 1920s and 1930s. A sketch of Pat Ryan by K. Shackleton in 1937 in the HBCA refers to Pat Ryan of Ryan Transportation at ‘The Halfways’ between Fort Smith and Fort Fitzgerald. The brothers had the franchise to carry all freight over the 16 mile portage between the two points. See Barbara Hunt ed., Rebels, Rascals and Royalty: The Colourful North of LACO Hunt (1983), 58. Current maps note a Ryan Island in the Slave river, just above the rapids at Fort Fitzgerald. The toponymy of this island is not known and may relate to the ‘Ryan Brothers’ and possibly to an alternate location for their camp.
known as Swede Johansen had a farm and trading post at Johnson’s Landing, eighteen miles south of present-day Hay Camp. He had cattle and grew crops and vegetables that he sold to rangers along the river and later at Hay Camp and Fort Chipewyan. His daughter, Mabel Johnson Heron, who grew up there in the 1930s and 1940s, remembers putting up the hay and performing other chores on the big farm.

Russell’s hay camp was a regular stopping place for groups travelling along the Slave River between Fort Fitzgerald and La Butte or even farther, to Fort Chipewyan or the Peace River. As early as 1923 the meadows around Russell’s Hay Camp were being cut to provide winter feed for the Park wardens’ horses. The cutting and stacking of hay was part of the regular work of the wardens, or “buffalo rangers,” although they were often assisted by local residents hired on a temporary basis for specific jobs. It was important that sufficient hay be put aside to feed the government horses throughout the winter.

In 1924, Warden Tompkins was given charge of the government horses, which were kept at the Hay Camp. According to the documents, it appears that the meadows were still operated by Russell, although the Parks Branch was given permission to cut and graze a portion of it, in exchange for the occasional favour. On his return from La Butte to Fort Smith in 1924, W.G. Cumming stopped at Russell’s hay camp but

Mr. Russell was not home. I did not take time to go out to the meadow and see the horses as I wanted to make Fort Smith that night. [Warden] Browning informed me the horses were in good shape … I understand Russell’s using the big black horse ‘Bob’ skidding logs out to saw on the east side of Slave River. He feeds the horse oats three times a day and the work is not hard. Personally I don’t think this will hurt the horse any, but of course Russell did not get any authority to work the horse.

A 1923 reference to Russell’s hay camp described the meadows being cut independently by Russell and by the wardens with the suggestion that “one of [the] Rangers visits this hay camp at intervals during the winter to see that the stock is being well fed, as the hay that the Russells have

28Swede Johansen, as his name suggests, was originally from Sweden. He had come to the United States as a stowaway at thirteen years of age and made his way to northern Canada. He was in his 40s when he married sixteen-year old Catherine Cooper in 1923 and “settled down.” According to the register of Holy Angels School at Fort Chipewyan, Catherine (c. 1906-c.1949), daughter of Francis or Jean-Baptiste Cooper and Philomène Gibot, came to the school as a boarder in 1915. Mabel Johnson, the oldest Johansen daughter, reported that her father originally farmed on the south side of the Slave River, but then moved to the north side because of too much water in the hay fields. After Catherine Johansen’s death, Swede Johansen continued to live there alone until the mid-1950s or later. He was 78 years old when he died in the late 1950s. Mabel Johnson Heron, interview by S. Dolan, January 29, 2001; Archives of Grey Nuns of Alberta (AGNAB), Register of School of Holy Angels, Fort Chipewyan, 1874-1974.

Map 2: Eastern portion of Wood Buffalo National Park of Canada showing many of the locations discussed in this report. Map prepared by P. Carroll, WCSC.
put up is very poor and I should judge insufficient to feed their stock this winter.” It appears that Russell was contracted to care for the government horses throughout the winter. The concern, in this instance, was that Russell might divide the feed between the government horses and his own stock.

It is not clear how much of a presence the park wardens maintained around Russell’s Hay Camp prior to 1924. The site had not yet been allocated as an administrative centre for Wood Buffalo Park, but it was the location of the stables for the warden’s horses. In 1924, Acting Chief Warden F.C. Bennett conducted a routine patrol of the warden’s facilities in Wood Buffalo Park and noted “Wardens Browning and Tompkins … putting up hay, cutting logs for cabins and stable” at Russell’s hay camp, “where our horses were wintered last year.” Before leaving, Bennett took the time to look “over the Russell buildings and placed a fair estimate on the same.”

The previous discussion regarding the grazing of horses in Russell’s meadows suggests that the land and associated buildings were owned and operated by Russell until 1924. A map in the National Archives of Canada showed a patrol cabin, Cabin no. 9, just south of the meadows. It is likely that this patrol cabin housed the resident warden prior to the purchase of Russell’s hay meadows by the federal government in 1924.

By the spring of 1925 the warden service had constructed a “house, stable and warehouse” at the Hay Camp. Completion of the buildings coincided with an administrative decision to establish Warden Headquarters at the hay camp, near the junction of the Slave and Hornaday rivers. As the Chief Park Warden, at the time, performed many of the same duties of the Park Superintendent, the decision to have him resident at Hay Camp meant it would become the administrative headquarters for Wood Buffalo Park.

**The Wainwright Herd, La Butte, and Buffalo Landing**

A request was made in 1923 that “all supplies for Peace Point and La Butte and [for] all rangers in between, on the Slave and Peace Rivers, should be landed at La Butte” and a warehouse built at

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32 Ibid.


35 In this instance, La Butte refers to the Ranger’s cabin located just south of the junction of Poplar Creek and on the west side of the Slave River. A map dating to 1922 notes a cabin belonging to ‘Danough’ just south of the patrol cabin. A collection of cabins on the east side of the Slave River, near the mouth of La Butte Creek, was also known locally as La Butte.
this point large enough to store the same.” The reason for this request was, in part, to save on the extra cost of freighting goods down to Fort Fitzgerald and then back upriver to La Butte. It was also made to accommodate the buffalo patrols, “as the Slave River from Fitzgerald up to the Jack Fish Creek on the Peace River is where we need [supplies], regarding the buffalo, more than any other part of the Park, as there is more travelling along this river and the Buffalo Range [is] close to the river bank from Fitzgerald to the Jack Fish Creek on the Peace River.”

There appear to have been two main travel corridors through Wood Buffalo Park in the early 1920s (see Map 3, Part I). One corridor was along the Slave River, while the second was a pack trail linking Fort Smith with Pine Lake and Peace Point. The two routes were joined by the Homaday River which drained into the Slave River just north of La Butte. Hay Camp was not yet represented on any map, except as Russell’s Hay Camp, and its only official function, prior to 1924, was as a hay meadow and central location for the care and housing of the wardens’ horses.

In the 1920s, the Canadian government decided to relocate a large herd of Plains Bison from a bison preserve in Wainwright, Alberta, because the Wainwright herd had outgrown the capacity of its range. Public opposition to slaughters led government officials to ship surplus bison to Wood Buffalo Park. The plan was opposed by biologists and some public servants who were concerned about interbreeding between the Wood and Plains Bison. The Wainwright herd had contracted tuberculosis from domestic cattle and there was concern over the possible spread of the disease from one bison herd to the other. Between 1925-1928, 6673 bison were shipped by barge via Waterways. Many died during transport and possibly also down river from the park. Fewer than 6000 were actually released on the west side of the Slave River. Although the process was complex and is still misunderstood, genetic evidence suggests the 6000 or so immigrant Plains Bison did interbreed with the estimated 1500 Wood Bison.

The decision to land the first shipment of Wainwright Bison at La Butte in 1925 was made because of the natural meadows west of the Slave River, and because La Butte was recognized as a central location for river-based activity. If the previously requested warehouse had been constructed, La Butte would have had the facilities necessary for unloading the bison as well as distributing supplies for future patrols. It was noted, though, by Warden Browning, who was consulted on suitable locations for landing bison, that “it is not likely [bison dropped at La Butte] will graze

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37 Ibid.

38 This same river is referred to as Salt Creek and Poplar River on early maps of the park.

Map 3: Map hand-drawn in 1923 by Assistant Chief Park Warden F.C. Bennett showing the routes followed for warden’s patrols in Wood Buffalo [National] Park. Note the location of ‘Russells Hay Camp’ north of Poplar Creek and La Butte. (RG 85 Vol. 151 file: 420-2 [1])
toward the north and if they start travelling and feeding towards the south they will undoubtedly follow along the bank of Darrough Creek. This route as you know will lead them into those feeding grounds which the Wood Buffalo feed on in the most severe winter weather." In light of his concern that the Wainwright Bison would encroach on the ‘emergency’ rations of the resident Wood Buffalo, Browning suggested landing the bison further north at the Hornaday River, and even landing some at Hay Camp, which he described as an “ideal place for a few shipments. We have horses there and could drive them right across the meadow without doing much damage to the hay.” His main concern was that the various shipments be scattered to ensure there would not be a shortage of natural food. Unfortunately, questions regarding the utility of La Butte became redundant when the first year’s shipment of bison wandered south out of the park, in search of winter feed. It was now imperative that an alternative landing be located before the 1926 shipments of Wainwright Bison were sent to the park.

Following the failure of the La Butte landing in the summer of 1925, attention focused on Browning’s preferred landings at the Hornaday River and north of the hay camp. Warden Mike Dempsey reported on the importance of landing the animals farther north, believing, as experience had shown, “if the Wainwright buffalo are put in these Salt Plains they will naturally turn East to the Slave River to water, or travel South towards Salt creek and Darrough creek then on to Murdock Creek. They might be driven across the plains to Salt River but it would be better to land them further North where they might be driven to Salt River in a shorter distance and also be in the vicinity of the summer feeding grounds of the Wood Buffalo.”

A topographical map, dating to about 1960, of the Wood Buffalo region notes a location named Buffalo Landing, on the Slave River, approximately 15 km north of Hay Camp, and south of the Caribou Islands. It is assumed this is where the majority of the remaining Wainwright Bison were unloaded. Studies of the bison, conducted in the 1950s through the 1970s, separated them into two distinct herds — a Hay Camp Herd and a Lake Claire Herd — with the Peace River functioning as a natural division between the two. The Hay Camp Herd was known to have a summer range in the northwest corner of the park, between the Little Buffalo River and the Salt River. Its winter range was closer to the Slave River, from north of Hay Camp south to the 30th Base Line. The general adaptation of the Plains bison to the northern portion of the park, as well as the relocation of the landing for the Wainwright Bison meant the dissolution of La Butte as anything more than a patrol cabin. It also led to increased recognition of the utility of Hay Camp, with its central proximity to the annual range of both the resident Wood Bison and immigrant Plains Bison, as an operations centre within Wood Buffalo Park.

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41Ibid.
Hay Camp: Operations Centre

Wood Buffalo Park was administered by the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior from 1922 to 1964. The first federal civil servants were sent to Fort Smith to regulate the staking of claims upon the discovery of oil at Norman Wells in 1921. The district agent for the Mackenzie district of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch at Fort Smith also became the first Park Superintendent in 1922 and the “Buffalo Rangers”, previously under the authority of the Department of Forestry, were restructured into a warden service with their headquarters at Hay Camp. While the general administration of the Park was carried out by the Superintendent at Fort Smith, Hay Camp served as an in-park operations and distribution centre from 1924 until the mid-1980s. Wardens stationed at Hay Camp were responsible for regularly providing up-to-date reports on activities within the park.

Hay Camp was not an independent administrative centre answerable to a central Parks authority in Ottawa; the park would not receive that status until 1964. The frustration of Wood Buffalo Park to achieve autonomy from the Department of the Interior is evident in A.L. Cumming’s desire “to see the superintendent of [Wood Buffalo] park entirely free of any other duties and stationed at the Hay Camp with instructions to deal directly with Ottawa. Perhaps this suggestion may receive consideration at some later date.”

Following park establishment in 1922, a Chief Park Warden was appointed to oversee the work of the warden service from a headquarters stationed at Hay Camp. Potyondi states that the establishment of the warden’s headquarters was a response to a “question of local administration.” Local, in this instance, referred to the wardens’ work within the park and their developing relationship with the community of trappers who continued to work and live within the park’s boundaries, as well as with the herders and agriculturalists who lived along the Slave and Peace rivers. Relationships with these various groups were maintained by the wardens’ regular patrols.

A memorandum by Austin Cumming, dated February 1934, suggests that the gradual increase in responsibilities within the park was not addressed by the Superintendent and was, instead, added, inappropriately to the administrative responsibilities of the Chief Park Warden.

The park warden, although fairly competent in the capacity of foreman, is not capable of supervising the park year after year. The superintendent has not carried on any personal investigations for years and most of the improvements and expenditures in the past have been authorized on the recommendations of this foreman. I am of the opinion that the park superintendent or some senior official should spend from three to six

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4Barry Potyondi, “Wood Buffalo National Park,” 82.


months a year in the park on inspection work and in personal contact with the staff.46

Two years prior to Cumming's comment, J.D. Soper, in his draft report on the state of Wood Buffalo Park, referred to Hay Camp as being "virtually park headquarters"47 though not quite. Given the precision of most of Soper's observations, it is likely that he was commenting on the large degree of responsibility he felt was being inappropriately allocated to the wardens.

The Superintendent’s reliance on regular contact with the Chief Park Warden stationed at Hay Camp illustrated the fact that Hay Camp was intended to be a centre for park operations and the residence of the Chief Park Warden, but not an administrative centre for all park operations.48 It may have been a case of neglect and lack of direction by the superintendent, and isolation, which led to the Chief Park Warden acting independently in his capacity to carry out work within the park, thereby enacting and influencing decisions which were the responsibility of the superintendent in Fort Smith. Communications between Hay Camp, Fitzgerald, and Fort Smith were assisted by a telephone line, which also allowed the park to improve its response time to emergencies.

Over the next decade, especially during the war years, the question of proper authority was discussed while the infrastructure of trails and roads, which had been developed during the 1920s and 1930s, slowly fell into disrepair, and the activities of the Warden Service were sharply curtailed.

In 1945 a series of memoranda was distributed on the need to develop a policy and annual programme of work in order to "improve the Wood Buffalo Park communications to the point where it will be possible to carry out effective patrols and thereby improve the administration. Reports ... are to the effect that new roads and trails must be built and existing arteries of communication reopened and improved as early as practicable."49 As part of this reorganization, it was decided that the Supervising Warden should again be resident at Hay Camp. Whether or not the supervising warden was reinstated at Hay Camp, and why he moved from there in the first place, is not known.

One of the factors behind the decision to redevelop the park's administrative infrastructure was a letter written by J. D. Soper, in which he expressed shock at the "condition of some of the physical equipment of the Park Service." Quoting from Soper’s letter, H.F. Lewis wrote, "He [Soper] mentioned particularly that telephone lines are in very bad condition, that roads and trails are becoming so overgrown as to be impassable, and that cabins in places not usually seen by the public...

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48 The confusion surrounding the operation/administration function of Hay Camp may result from the public exposure given to the wardens' work with the bison and patrols. It may also stem from the fact that most of the seasonal labour was hired and employed at Hay Camp.

are in such a state of disrepair that they are almost falling down. As compared with conditions existing in 1934, when he was last in Wood Buffalo Park, great deterioration was evident."

In 1952, Hay Camp developed a new profile and importance within the administrative structure of the park. It was at this time that the decision was made to conduct the annual buffalo slaughter at a permanent abattoir situated at Hay Camp, and to sell the meat as a commercial product. The organizational impact of the slaughter being moved to Hay Camp upon the camp’s administrative function is considered negligible, as it is believed that the majority of the administrative decisions, beyond in-park maintenance of roads, trails, and communications, were actually made at Fort Smith. Following the closure of the abattoir in 1967 and increased access to the more remote regions of the park beginning in the late 1960s, Hay Camp gradually began to lose its importance as an operational headquarters. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it was used primarily as a fire base. The only serious impact upon the administrative responsibilities of Hay Camp came with the decision to close it in the late 1980s, and to relocate the Fire Fighting Centre to Pine Lake. By 1995 the Fire Base had been relocated at Pine Lake and Hay Camp had been abandoned.

During its time as an operations centre, Hay Camp provided a wide variety of important services to the general operations of Wood Buffalo National Park. It was the main residence for the park wardens, including the Chief Park Warden. Its stables housed the park’s horses, and its meadows provided feed for the horses, as well as 'emergency' feed for the bison. Veterinary supervision of the park’s dogs was another important activity at Hay Camp. Each fall the health of the dogs was checked and new teams created from among the healthy animals. The teams were turned over to the wardens for the winter patrol. In the spring, patrols from the northern portion of the park brought dogs back to Hay Camp, where they were housed until the ice out of the Slave River. The dogs were then transported by boat to the Dog Camp at Lake Mamawi, where they spent the summer.

Hay Camp was also a main distribution centre. Before the main trails had been upgraded to all-weather roads, and before the advent of air travel and freighting, the Slave River was the main transportation corridor in the region. Wood Buffalo Park ran its own steamer with docks at Hay Camp and Fort Smith. Supplies intended for patrol cabins in the park were usually dropped at Hay Camp and redistributed for use by the winter patrols. The supplies were transported to the warden’s cabins by steamer if the cabin was near the shore; otherwise, they were carried inland by pack horse. Excess goods and general stock were stored in the various warehouses at Hay Camp until needed.

Yet another essential function of Hay Camp was its use as a base for fire patrols. The earliest patrols were conducted by steamer or canoe, travelling along the Slave and Peace rivers, and incorporated into the seasonal distribution of goods from Hay Camp and the patrol cabins. When fire was spotted within the park, horses and fire-fighting supplies were shipped by steamer from Hay Camp to the nearest landing, and then moved inland to the fire’s location.

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Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

The facilities at Hay Camp also provided hospitality for anyone travelling by water, air, or land between Fort Chipewyan and Fort Smith. Nora Dempsey Freund remembers trappers, their dogs dressed with bells, stopping at Hay Camp on their way north with furs for Fitzgerald. One incident she recalls concerns a visit by Moise Nadary around Christmas.

My mother heard all these bells coming and she had a big pot of stuff cooking and Moise Nadary came in. Oh, he was cold and hungry. So, she cooked up a bunch of bacon and eggs for him. Oh! He ate like a horse! Everything she cooked, she says. After he finished, he says “My brother’s just behind me.” Oh, she never forgave him for that! He made sure he ate everything, she said. Yes, people used to go through there, coming back to Fitz.51

On at least one occasion Hay Camp provided emergency assistance and relief to strangers in a potentially tragic situation. The following story was told by Elsie Larocque Yanik, who lived at Hay Camp as a companion and nanny for Rosalie Dempsey in the winter of 1935.

One day, we were playing outside with the kids. It was a beautiful day and here was two white men, white in white overalls, coming through the bush towards us. I said “where they coming from?” They had force-landed somewhere on the plain in a field or something. The two, the pilot and somebody else, walked in with their white coveralls on. And they had passengers out there. How many I don’t remember. They came in and they said that they had force-landed and that they wanted to use a two-way radio to contact Fort Smith. Another plane came and picked up the passengers. But the two men stayed. The other plane had brought parts, so they fixed the plane and they took off and landed down by the river in front of the Dempseys. They were heading to Fort Smith so they picked up some mail Mr. Dempsey had and stuff Mrs. Dempsey was sending to Fort Smith.52

On both occasions, the camp’s function extended well beyond the immediate needs of the park, and gave the camp an identity within the local community. Hay Camp remained in contact with the neighbouring communities, although somewhat sporadically, and provided a sense of community for individuals living and travelling through the more remote parts of the country.

HAY CAMP SOCIETY AND ECONOMY FROM 1920s TO 1990s

Aboriginal Way of Life before “Government” Hay Camp

People living off the land along the Slave River at the turn of the 20th century were predominantly Cree, Chipewyan, and Métis. They pursued a seasonal mixed economy of subsistence hunting and


52Elsie Larocque Yanik, interview by S. Dolan, July 14, 2000, Tape 1, A.
fishing, supplemented by wage labour such as freighting, as well as trapping and trading with the
HBC or as freemen. They were divided into autonomous, localized bands, each composed of
interrelated families. Each band claimed control over a winter hunting and trapping territory,
although kinship ties between bands allowed access to other areas. Although most Métis lived in the
settlements, summers were spent “on the land.” Limits on land-use were subject only to local
considerations and not to restriction imposed by outsiders. Non-Aboriginal newcomers in the area
included some independent traders and trappers in the bush or at posts such as Fort Fitzgerald, Fort
Smith, and Fort Resolution. Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries, intent upon “christianizing
and civilizing” First Nations peoples, interfered little with traditional land use and harvesting
practices.53

Important developments in the first decades of the 20th century gradually altered this lifestyle.
Most notable was the change in the political economy of the North, especially after World War I. The
period saw the erosion of the old pre-capitalist fur trade mode of production and the expansion of
Western (Eurocanadian) capitalist development. Industrial capital began to invest directly in northern
enterprises, especially mining and oil. This period also witnessed the legitimization of Canadian
sovereignty and control in the North through the “extinguishment” of Aboriginal title to land by the
Treaty 8 and Scrip Commissions, and the growth of transportation and communication networks.
These developments resulted in what anthropologist Patricia McCormack has described as a period
of “underdevelopment” for Aboriginal peoples and their traditional resource base. They were forced
to cope with vigorous competition for diminishing traditional fur and food resources, while the
creation of Indian reserves, individual trapping areas, and the establishment of a park in the region
restricted access to bush resources.

The establishment of a government preserve, Wood Buffalo Park, is an example of imposed
change. Local people were only minimally involved in the process, although the Department of
Indian Affairs did speak out in defence of Aboriginal harvesting rights and traditional land use in the
area. The wildlife management regime of the 1920s, which controlled access though hunting and
trapping restrictions, created discontent among local First Nations and Métis. Ironically, the
government recruited local Aboriginal people familiar with the land for its work force. Wood Buffalo
National Park records indicate that most of the early buffalo rangers (subsequently called wardens),
seasonal patrolmen, and labourers were Aboriginal people, more specifically Métis.55 Oral history

53Mary McNeill Heron, interview by S. Dolan, June 12, 2000, Tape 1, Side B, referring to the 1920s and
1930s. Families went out berry and root picking. See also Patricia M. McCormack, “Government Comes to Fort
Chipewyan: Expansion of the State into the Heart of the Fur Trade Country,” Patricia A. McCormack and R.
Geoffrey Ironside, eds., Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion Bicentennial Conference (1990),
133-137.

54Patricia A. McCormack, “How the (North) West Was Won: Development and Underdevelopment in the

55See list of names in Appendix.
also confirms the often tenuous and paternalistic relationship between “outside” Department officials, or “bosses,” and the so-called “motley crew” of employees “in the field.”

**Wardens’ Work and Family Life: Memories of Hay Camp in the 1920s to 1940s**

Park employees based at Hay Camp were in a unique position, compared to other Parks, in terms of their duties and responsibilities. Wood Buffalo Park wardens were responsible for enforcing regulations in the territories outside park boundaries as well as within, and worked under different rules. Their main focus was to protect the wood bison, and to enforce hunting, trapping, fishing, and trading regulations. They often had to enforce these rules on their relatives or members of their own communities, which caused tension and resentment.

Early Aboriginal guides, such as the Beaulieus, were also often suspect, largely because of their rebellious character and assertion of their hunting rights. Full-time, or chief park wardens, were initially World War I veterans like Mike Dempsey, or men who came North to pursue a dream of adventure and opportunity, such as Billy McNeill. Both these men married into local Aboriginal communities. The early wardens at Hay Camp were paid $50.00 a month and also received winter rations. The salary was half that of a warden at Jasper and Waterton National Parks. Internal conflicts between employees at Hay Camp and other park cabins in the early days were probably fuelled by factors such as low pay, harsh living conditions, lack of direction, and prejudice. In 1923, for example, it was reported that “[Warden] Fowler’s chief occupation this winter appears to have been fishing for five pups and four large dogs ... he reported that it was impossible for him to do any patrol work as he could not leave the pups and that in any case he had not received any instructions as to what he was to do.”

One of the original wardens resigned while under suspicion of having killed a bison. Gradually pay and working conditions improved. More local people were hired as their bush knowledge, their ability to transport goods by dog-sled and canoe, and their building skills were recognized as assets to park operations. Among the local employees first hired by the park were Pierre Gladu in 1922, and Isidore Mercredi, one of the first Métis to be hired, in 1923. Other locally-hired wardens in the 1920s were Hugh McDermott,

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59Isidore Mercredi (1883-1966) was the son of Pierre and Marie Beaulieu and attended school at Holy Angels, Fort Chipewyan, from 1890-99. He was trained as a carpenter by the Oblate Brothers and worked at The Nativity (Fort Chipewyan) mission and others in the region. He and his wife, Eliza Tourangeau, had seven children, among them, René, born in 1915, a Métis elder in Fort Smith. Isidore is remembered as a hard-working but harsh man.
John Tourangeau, Peter Tompkins, and Gustave D’Aoust. Philip d’Arcy Arden, an English Canadian who married a Slavey woman, was a park warden and carpenter from 1924-33.60

William “Billy” McNeill, Chief Park Warden at Hay Camp from 1916 to c.1922, came from Labrador. His extraordinary life story was recounted by his daughter, Mary McNeill Heron, for this project. His parents had immigrated from Scotland to “Drunken Harbour,” Labrador and eventually settled in Makovik where Billy worked for the Grenfell mission. When the mission embarked on an experimental project to send reindeer to the Northwest Territories and breed them with the Barren land caribou, Billy and another early park ranger, John Broomfield, came north with the reindeer in 1911. It was a long and difficult train trip via Waterways, Alberta, then by barge to Fort Fitzgerald. They lost all the reindeer, eating the last one, “the most expensive steak in his life” at Fort Resolution.61 Billy was stationed at Pine Lake, Peace Point, and Hay Camp. His first wife, Marie Squirrel, died around 1919. About 1925 Billy married Eleonore Jérémie, Mary McNeill Heron’s mother.62 Mary grew up on the trap lines in the Fort Smith-Fort Fitzgerald area and spent a lot of her youth with her maternal grand-parents, who essentially raised her. Her account of this early period illustrates how the first wardens at Hay Camp intermarried with Aboriginal women and relied on kinship ties for social and economic support.

Mike Dempsey,63 Chief Park Warden at Hay Camp from 1925 to 1945, was a World War I veteran who came North to escape family problems. He married a local Métis woman, Rosalie Mercredi.64 Rosalie’s sister, Madeline,65 married Charlie Bird, who was a warden from about 1933 to 1942. Dempsey and his family lived at Hay Camp for almost twenty years. His work kept him away from home for long periods of time. His daughter, Nora Dempsey Freund, who was interviewed for this study, summed up Dempsey’s life. “He was never home ... he was like a stranger to us ... he’d come


62 Marie Squirrel was Slavey, the daughter of Chief Squirrel of Fort Providence. They had one son, Wilfrid. Eleonore Jérémie was Métis-Chipewyan, the daughter of Alexis Jérémie and Eleonore Cayen or “Marten Eyes” from the Fort Fitzgerald area.

63 Dempsey c. 1880-1955 was of Irish and French-Canadian ancestry. He first worked on the steamboats then as a trapper in the area.

64 Rosalie was born in 1901 and died in 1998. She was a daughter of Joseph Mercredi (c.1870-1909) and Julienne Laviolette (1874-1936). Joseph Mercredi or Macardie, which, according to recent inquiry, was the original Breton name, was the son of Joseph and Charlotte Deschambeault. Julienne Laviolette was the daughter of Antoine and Madeleine Piché.

home and she [her mother] would cook tons and tons of hamburgers and bannock ... and he went on his trip with these bags of food.” One good memory was of the oranges he brought for them when he came home. Dempsey travelled by dog team to Fort Resolution, and by horse and wagon to the salt flats in the summer. His duties included stacking hay for the pack horses and going on patrol to different cabins. “He told me that one time he went from Hay Camp all the way to the mission farm [St. Bruno on the Salt River].” He continued working for Parks, in the office and on patrols, even after the family had moved to Fort Fitzgerald in the 1940s. Dempsey had no pension and had to take on other jobs to support his large family. Charlie Cooper and his family were at Hay Camp during the same period as the Dempseys. Charlie worked under Dempsey, looking after the horses, barns, and supplies for the rangers.

Charlie Bird was a Métis who worked as a seasonal warden, or buffalo ranger, “as they were called in those days.” According to his son, Joe, who also worked at Wood Buffalo, the family was stationed at Rocky Point. “There was a Park house and he [Charlie Bird] patrolled from there with a dog team in the summer and winter.” Charlie operated the park’s boat, Ranger, out of Hay Camp, where his family spent the summer in one of the bunkhouses. He also issued trapping and hunting licences. Because Charlie had no formal education, his wife, Madeline Mercredi “kept the books,” or fur accounts.

Rosalie and Madeline Mercredi had difficult times at Wood Buffalo Park in the 1920s to 1940s. The old saying “a woman’s work is never done” was never so true. The men worked hard but they travelled a lot, and had opportunities to go to town to “boozed it up” and socialize. Meanwhile, the women were often left at Hay Camp, where they had all the responsibility for child-rearing and frequently onerous household duties. Loneliness, isolation, and fear of the wolves and bison who roamed nearby were some of the problems they faced. Both Mercredi sisters had spent eight to ten years at boarding schools where they received a basic education and were taught household skills. They also knew how to hunt and trap in the bush. Rosalie’s work included “la potasse” (soap making), laundry, knitting and sewing the family’s clothes, and preparing food. The government provided employees and their families with winter rations of potatoes, carrots, “dry this and that,” butter, and slabs of bacon preserved in tar. Some household supplies and canned goods were purchased in Fort Smith or Fort Fitzgerald. Rosalie also kept a vegetable garden and grew lots of red

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66Ibid.


68Ibid.

69Their father died when they were young and their mother placed them in convent boarding schools. Rosalie went to school at Fort Vermilion and Madeline at Holy Angels in Fort Chipewyan. They vowed not to put their children in boarding schools, not because of the conditions but because they did not want to be separated from their children or deprive them of a home life. They did send their sons to boarding school for a few years however. Their mother Julienne Laviolette had been a boarder for thirteen years at Holy Angels school, leaving only to be married in 1892. AGNAB. Register of Holy Angels School, 1874-1974.
rhubarb. She made “piquette,” a homemade rice wine, which she never had a chance to sip, and remarked “I’m going to sit on my rice wine!” In the summer she went berry picking with her children and often received cases of blueberries from her sister, Madeline, who lived in Fort Chipewyan before coming to Wood Buffalo Park in the 1920s. Fresh meat came from the annual buffalo hunt as well as from hunting geese and caribou, and Rosalie supplemented the home diet with chickens and rabbits that she shot herself. Dried meat and bannock were staple foods for men on the road.

A few “modern” conveniences were available to the women, to lighten the load: a well with a pump in the kitchen, and another well, farther away from the house, where they kept “everything in a big bag, like the bacon and butter and all and it kept just like a fridge.” Rosalie also had a gas washing machine with a hand wringer, which was better than a washboard.

Both women home-schooled their children while they were at Hay Camp or lived in the Park. Since both sisters had spent their youth in a boarding school and had not experienced family life they tried to keep their children close by, at least for their first years of schooling, although the Mercredi boys were sent to school at Fort Chipewyan in the fall. Rosalie had particularly harsh memories of the ten or more years she spent at Hay Camp. Most of the time she spent on her own raising her ten children. She used to say to her children: “Half my life was wasted with Hay Camp ... what a mess [I] made of [my] life.” Visiting with family, friends, and anyone who came through en route to Fort Fitzgerald with furs, was one of her few pleasures. At Christmas time, people came on sleds with their dogs all decorated with tuppies [tapis]. “She would hear all these bells coming ... she enjoyed that, people coming in — somebody to talk to other than us darn kids!” There was also the odd boat trip to Fort Fitzgerald in the summer.

Elsie Larocque Yanik went to Hay Camp as a home helper to Rosalie in the winter of 1935, and has fond memories of her time there. Rosalie welcomed her warmly. “She was such a lovely woman. Never raised her voice or never was cranky ... so easy going.” Rosalie must have kept her sorrows to herself as her daughter reported that her mother had a sad life, one of sacrifice and

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70 Nora Dempsey Freund, interview by S. Dolan, June 20, 2000, Tape 1. Rosalie meant she was going to hide the wine so her family and guests couldn’t drink it all.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Born in 1917, Elsie, who described herself as “Métis through and through,” was the daughter of Henri Larocque from Winnipeg and Mary Flett from Fort Vermilion. Her mother died when she was eight and her father placed her at the convent school in Fort Smith. Like many other orphaned children, she had no family life in her youth.

abnegation. "She never got anything for herself ... she felt like she missed out on life, stuck in the bush ... just raising kids." In the late 1940s she finally said "I can't take it any more, I've got to get out of here [Hay Camp]" and the family moved to Fort Fitzgerald.

Nora Dempsey Freund recalled life at Hay Camp as exciting. She remembered the big white house with the large kitchen and an upstairs where the children could hide and play! Outdoors they chased the buffalo and wolves, and went “sliding down the hay stack, falling right among the buffalo.” They had ‘horse-dung’ fights with the Cooper children who were the only other family at the Camp. One of the games they played was “chiquette.” When Father Lafferty came he played string games with them. Elsie Larocque Yanik remembered horseback riding and snow fights, and how the Dempsey and Cooper children cried when she left, as they had so few playmates at Hay Camp. Joe Bird, who used to visit his cousins at Hay Camp, also had fond memories of riding horses, swimming, and fishing. He and the Dempsey boys even used to ride their bikes into Fort Smith in the early 1940s. It was quite an adventure for the teenagers. But Hay Camp was also a scary place and the Dempsey family believed it was haunted. Nora Dempsey Freund remembers that,

We used to hear noises ... she [my mother] would wake up at night and hear her scissors going like this (snipping noise). She could hear somebody chipping ice at the door ... ran downstairs, plied the door open - there was no ice! ... but ghosts ... we could hear these things at night ... and Mrs. Bird [aunt Madeline] and her kids told us that’s ghosts that are coming to get us ... and we were petrified!

Madeline stayed at Rocky Point from about 1933 to 1942, but visited her sister at Hay Camp and Fort Fitzgerald. Like Rosalie, she learned how to “make the most of things,” or “made our happiness.” Both women were widowed in the 1950s and had to move away from the park to get

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76 Nora Dempsey Freund, interview by S. Dolan, June 20, 2000, Tape 1.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., “You would dig a little hole in the ground and get a little stick and hit it with a longer stick to see how far you could get it.”

79 Father Napoléon Lafferty (also Laferté, 1896-1964) was one of two Métis Oblate priests from the Northwest Territories. He was born in Fort Rae, the son of Antoine Laferté and Madeleine Beaulieu. He was ordained in 1921 in St. Albert, Alberta. He was stationed at Fort Fitzgerald from 1930 to 1956, at Fort Smith in 1956-57 and at Fort Chipewyan from 1957 to 1961. He died in Montreal. He was described by Mary McNeill Heron as fun loving and happy-go-lucky.


81 Nora Dempsey Freund, interview by S. Dolan, June 20, 2000, Tape 1.
work as cooks and domestics. Rosalie found work at the hospital, and Madeline at the Mackenzie Hotel in Fort Smith.\textsuperscript{82}

Other local Métis patrolmen, wardens, and seasonal employees in the 1930s and 1940s were Jack Taylor; Tom Campbell; Robert, Walter, and Colin Wylie; Philip McKay; Lawrence Clarke; Jack Sutherland; Philip Bourque; Leonard Cardinal; Philippe Mandeville; Roderick and Freddy Fraser; and J.H. Camsell. Gabe Sepp,\textsuperscript{83} who worked at Hay Camp as a seasonal labourer in the late 1950s and 1960s, had long-standing roots in the area. He grew up at La Butte (Murdock Creek, on the Alberta side) and used to go to Hay Camp with his parents by dog team in the late 1930s. His childhood memories of Hay Camp are of dogs and horses at a place that was not easily accessible by the old wagon road. When he returned as a worker, he did a variety of jobs ranging from cutting rails for fencing to doing laundry! He had known poverty growing up as an orphan in Fort Fitzgerald, so he found living and working conditions at Hay Camp comparatively good: “It was good, as long as you were good ... and by that time the road was a lot better and we’d go to town every weekend.”\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{Work and Family Life at Hay Camp: Memories of the 1950s to 1980s}

There were important changes in life in the Park in the post-World War II period. The vigorous post-war development activities of the government’s Northern Administration Branch, which governed the Park, ushered in a period of resource exploitation, commercial enterprise, and agricultural activities that were often at odds with local views and needs. The viability of land-based mixed economies of Aboriginal peoples was increasingly challenged by government. Changes in Park policy also affected local hiring. Starting in the late 1950s, there was an increased emphasis on formal educational requirements for the warden service that excluded, or disadvantaged, many local people. Aboriginal people continued to be hired as seasonal patrolmen, carpenters, and labourers, and a few as full-time wardens, but by the 1960s, and especially after 1964, an increasing number of outsiders, or wardens from other parks, came to Wood Buffalo. Many park staff such as E.H. “Buck” Essex, Ken Cooper, Art Brown, Pete Ferguson, and Louis Reese were World War II veterans, and local

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\textsuperscript{82} According to their families, neither Mike Dempsey nor Charlie Bird received pensions from the Park for reasons that are not clear. Either they were seasonal or part-time employees or did not work long enough. Rosalie Dempsey finally got her husband’s war pension. In her memoirs, Madeline mentioned discrimination against Native wardens, who did not get the regular salary. According to Earl Gordon, “the government pulled that one on the Natives” (Interview by S. Dolan, Tape 2, Side A). It would withhold pay from seasonal or part-time employees to ensure that they showed up for work and then a few days before the end of the term, they would be laid off and not get their “bonus” and then be re-hired.

\textsuperscript{83} Born in 1931, his parents were Thomas Sepp (1890-1940) and Christine Nadary (1897-1940) whose families had lived and trapped in the area for a long time. Many of his brothers and sisters died in infancy and were reportedly buried at the old home site, now owned by Gabe Wandering Spirit. His mother’s family, the Nadarys, were from old La Butte on the east side of the Slave river, south Hay Camp. After the death of his parents he “was bounced around” or had no home, shifting for himself in the days before welfare. Interview by S. Dolan, June 17, 200, Tape 1.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
people who worked at the park during those years said the administration was militaristic. By 1969, when the transfer of the park to the National Parks Branch was completed, the philosophy of the Park had changed from one of 'game preservation' to 'wildlife management,' based on the belief that a balance could be struck between the natural world of parks, resource or recreational exploitation, and long-term preservation. The 1960s and 1970s also witnessed increased confrontation between Western-based scientific research and Aboriginal traditional knowledge over activities such as bison management and land use in the Park. Tensions among the staff at Hay Camp resulted.

Joe Bird, who had visited his Dempsey aunt, uncle, and cousins, and played at Hay Camp as a boy, returned to work there around 1947. At first he was an assistant, “doing all the log work” for the contractor hired to build the new Warden house. He also built the modern abattoir and pens. He recalled that Hay Camp “was full of activity in those days.” He became foreman in the 1950s.

Ignace Mercredi was a patrolman based at Hay Camp with his family from 1950 to around 1955. He travelled to various trappers’ cabins overland on a little tractor, or “muskeg buggy,” and used a bombardier in the winter. He was also involved in fire fighting and was present for the 1952 fire which came very close to Hay Camp. He and Auguste Tourangeau both worked on building maintenance. Mercredi’s daughter, Jane, mentioned other seasonal workers such as the Beaulieu brothers: Fred, Harry, Paul, and Arthur. The Beaulieu brothers were “real cowboys” from Fort Vermilion, who used to bring their horses to Hay Camp to help with the buffalo round-ups. Another patrolman, Len Heron, brought his family to Hay Camp each summer from 1953 to 1955. Heron’s wife, Mary, reported that his work involved a lot of travelling between Fort Chipewyan, Pine Lake, and Peace Point. His responsibilities included “a little bit of everything. [He] patrolled the roads, checking for poachers, and operated the Park speed boat.” Leonard Wylie was captain of the park boat, Beaver, at that time. Herman Peiper did administrative and patrol work at Hay Camp in the mid-1950s. Other men who were working at Hay Camp and living in the bunkhouses were: Clement

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58 Robert J. Burns, Guardians of the Wild, p. 353.

56 For example Aboriginal peoples generally opposed massive bison slaughters, were not concerned about the genetic purity of the bison, and challenged arguments about the dangers of tuberculosis, brucellosis and anthrax. This was mentioned in the interviews and discussed by Theresa Ferguson and Patricial McCormack in their work.


59 He was the son of Léon and Marie Rose Mercredi. His father went to university in Manitoba and became head of Finance in the NWT. His uncle, Isidore, had worked in the park in the early 1920s. Ignace was also Father Lafferty’s nephew and went to boarding school in Fort Chipewyan and Fort Providence. He and his wife Bernadette, also née Mercredi, were cousins. Many generations of Mercredis worked in the Park. Jane Mercredi Dragon [daughter of Ignace and Bernadette Mercredi], interview by S. Dolan, June 7, 2000, Tape 1.

60 Ibid.
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Decoigne, Archie Powder, A. Pilon, Philip Bourque, Philip Norwegian, and Chum Campbell. Mary Heron also remembered two Pentecostal ministers who lived in a small bunkhouse.

Like the women who had preceded her, Bernadette Mercredi, wife of Ignace, found life difficult at Hay Camp. From 1950 to about 1953, she lived year-round in the “Big [Warden] House.” It was lonely, particularly in the winter. The older Mercredi children were away at school in Fort Smith and came home only for some week-ends. Bernadette missed them. She did not like being alone and, although she was a big, strong woman, she was afraid of the buffalo. Her daughter Jane Rose recalled, “One time mom stayed in the house three days because there was a buffalo right by the door.” During the big Park fire of 1952, the family was evacuated from Hay Camp and had to live on one of the park’s boats, Beaver, at Fort Fitzgerald for a few weeks. Afterwards, Bella Cardinal came to live with Bernadette as “[she] was going crazy.”

Other women at Hay Camp were Lil Peiper and Dora Tourangeau. Lil Peiper, Herman’s wife, was a public health nurse and “a mother to everyone.” Dora Tourangeau worked as a cook during the slaughters, boarding with Philippe Mercredi and his wife, who were also at the Camp. Mary McNeill Heron and her family were there for about four months each summer, and provided friendship and companionship to Bernadette. Mary, who like Bernadette, had four children, lived in a small log house with no conveniences. She recalled, “We had so little, so little in those days.” She did daily laundry with the washboard, using water hauled from the river, and split and hauled her own wood.

The women felt isolated, especially during freeze-up and thaw, “stuck out there” with the men “gone all the time.” Even when they weren’t on patrol, the men could drive into town for meetings and to socialize: “day hours at the office, evening hours at the Pinecrest ... we [the women] were lucky if we went in to town once a month.” On one occasion in the summer, the men went to town, and after a week, still hadn’t returned with the groceries. Mary had only a can of sardines and two eggs left in her cupboard — no bread, and no milk for the baby. She got some bread from Dora at the cookhouse, but that was all. Bernadette sent her older boy, Willie Mercredi, who worked at the corral, to bring Mary and her children over for Sunday lunch.

Bernadette had her best china out, a white linen tablecloth ... a big pot in the middle of the table ... one soup bone and a can of corn niblets and enough flour to make a little

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92 Ibid.

93 Mary McNeill Heron, interview by S. Dolan. June 12, 2000. Tape 1. Mary had four children in a small one bedroom cabin. One of those children was Josie Heron Weninger. Superintendent at Wood Buffalo National Park from 1992 to 1997, and 1999 to the present, and a third generation Park employee.

94 This is reiterated many times by Mary McNeill Heron and by Bernadette Mercredi’s daughter, Jane Mercredi Dragon, in their interviews.

round of bannock. She said: "Well we can still eat! I cooked Sunday dinner." 96

Someone came back from Fort Smith in a cab, and Bernadette grabbed the cab saying, "We’re going into town." They all piled into the cab and on the way to town met their husbands, who were at Mae Casawell’s “stopping-place,” having forgotten about the groceries. The families continued on into town anyway to visit in-laws and do some shopping, and returned home to Hay Camp the next day. The two women were resourceful and assertive when their families’ well-being was at stake. Their sense of humour helped them make it through those difficult times. The “party” telephone line connecting the houses also helped by letting the women stay in touch.

During the 1950s, more people lived at Hay Camp, especially during the summer and fall. “It was just like one big family.” 97 The main social activity was visiting in the evenings, to play cards and games such as “Donkey” or the Button game, or listen to the Beaulieu brothers, who played guitar and sang. The women did a lot of knitting. Jane (Mercredi) Dragon recalled picking rhubarb for Dora at the cook house to make pies, which she then shared with the children. Because she and her sister came to Hay Camp only on week-ends, Jane felt her time there was like a holiday and she did not mind the bush. She enjoyed visiting Mary, and playing with and babysitting her children.

Travellers and visitors were always welcome. Father Lafferty, from Fort Fitzgerald, visited trappers in the area and came to Hay Camp to say Mass. An important annual event was the July 1st celebration in Fort Smith when the Mercredi family went to town for games and races.

John Malfair, 98 a Métis from Saskatchewan, came to Wood Buffalo as patrolman in 1956, and was Chief Park Warden from 1959 to 1962. Other wardens during the 1960s were Lorne Lapp, Ken Cooper, Bill Nelson, Earl Gordon, and Gord Masson.

Earl Gordon 99 came North in 1956. His first job was as cook and carpenter at Peace Point, but he soon became involved in other operations. As a “greenhorn” from the farm he had to prove himself. His chance came on a trip from Peace Point to Fort Smith when he and some buddies drove three old “Willies” jeeps. “We had to winch ... we literally had to cut our way around slough and holes and it took us all night ... two of them broke down and we got there in one ... a hundred miles ... I could hardly walk when I got out of the vehicle and I was so cold ... it was an awful trip.” 100

The following

98Ibid.

99Ibid., Tape 1, Side B.

98He was from St-Louis Saskatchewan, just north of Batoche. His great grand-father Jean-Baptiste Boucher fought with the Métis at Batoche in the 1885 Resistance.

99Born in 1935 in the Lac La Biche area, he was the son of Alexander Gordon and Victoria Reid, who was of Scottish and Cree ancestry. He left home at 18 to work on the oil rigs in Alberta and Saskatchewan and contracted tuberculosis. He was in the sanatorium in Calgary and then was told to get “outdoors work,” so he went to Fort Smith.

100Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan, June, 2000, Tape 1, Side A.
week he was sent to Hay Camp to repair the parks’ motor boat, Beaver, and celebrated his 21st birthday there. Other workers there at the time included Lawrence Benoit from Fort Chipewyan, and Johnny Bonnetrouge, a road grader from Fort Providence. They spent one month working on the boat, then Earl worked as a skipper with Len Heron, hauling freight for a few summers. Henry Fortier and “Cigar” Mercredi also worked on the Beaver. Earl said he proved himself a good pilot when he drove the boat over a sandbar and beat Heron’s record on the trip from Sweetgrass to Hay Camp. “I tied the tug on the front of the boat and I washed all the sand out of the sandbar with the prop! I cut a trench through in about an hour and the whole barge on the other side of the sand bar and hooked onto it and pulled in to camp,”101 to Warden Ken Cooper’s surprise. He then took a crash course in mushing at Fort Chipewyan. He was given an old team for the winter to make a trip to Embarras Portage. After repeatedly struggling with the dogs he was forced to buy a good team from Old Burdinsky. “Imagine a warden buying his own dogs!”

By 1961 Earl had proven his abilities as a warden and was appointed Technical Officer in charge of Bison Management (warden) at Hay Camp. He worked with Bill Nelson (Sonfrere), Gordie Masson, Gabe Sepp, and J.J. and Archie Antoine from Fort Chipewyan,102 Joe Bird, Joe Bourque, “Bubbles” Macdonald and others from Public Works were also there in the 1960s, doing carpentry work and building the new abattoir. Earl Gordon liked the challenge of his job but found it very stressful. The small number of trappers in the area during the 1960s meant there was no need for patrols out of Hay Camp. Earl was the warden in charge of all the activities at the camp: supplies, construction, and bison management. The latter became a particular sore point. “I think a lot of the stuff with Buffalo Management was never studied or well thought out ... nobody consulted with me or discussed things,” yet he was supposed to be in charge. He felt “Hay Camp was a big failure ... the corrals were in the wrong places ... and not good for the bison ... feeding them hay in the winter made them lazy and dependent ... also subject to a lot of stress with the sirens and choppers.”103 He was particularly concerned by an order to go and shoot buffalo suspected of carrying anthrax in 1963: “The pilot took me out to Spruce Island ... I had an elephant gun .... and had to shoot buffalo that were brought there ... I shot eighty-five head and left them lying there ... it was a hush-hush secret ... I couldn’t sleep for several nights after that, I was all shook up.”104 He claimed that he and a number of Aboriginal employees were uncomfortable with the bison testing and experimental

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101 Ibid.
102 John James (J.J.) Antoine, interview by S. Dolan, June 14, 2000, Tape 1, A; Archie Antoine, interview by S. Dolan, June 14, 2000, Tape 1, A; Gabe Sepp, interview by S. Dolan, June 17, 2000, June 17, 2000, Tape 1, A. All worked on building maintenance and the slaughter operations.
103 Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan, June, 2000, Tape 2, Side B.
104 Ibid., Tape 1, Side B.
slaughteries and wanted the animals left alone. Earl Gordon also objected to the expense of the slaughter program. He felt that the big abattoir, new machine shop, and storage buildings were a waste of money as they were "only used for three years...about a month a year...and it must have cost...millions."

Earl was also involved in the wolf control program. "We poisoned a lot of wolves ... our [park] philosophy was that if we're managing the buffalo we don't need the wolves to manage them for us you know, because they take anything. That's a myth that they just take." He reported that living conditions were bad at the old Hay Camp; the drinking water was silty, the food was bad, and there were no showers for the workers. According to Gordon, "They had those big open bunkhouses with thirty people in them, with no partitions or anything, no privacy." Conditions at the new camp were better, although the doctors were put in the modern staff quarters while the seasonal work crews were housed in the old, cramped bunk houses. To improve the boring diet, Earl raised chickens in the old power house. His chickens eventually became the object of pranks when staff stole them at night for barbecue parties! Once someone put eggs in each nest to make him believe that his chickens were good layers. "I came to the house and I was going to make breakfast and I started cracking these eggs and they wouldn't crack. Eh! They were boiled eggs! The guys from the camp put boiled eggs in each nest!" Philip Norwegian also recalled hunting the chickens with slingshots.

Jokes and tricks were favourites pastimes. On one occasion, Earl and Gord Masson took a dead bear and sat it on the seat in the outhouse and then lay in the bush to wait for the first "victim": "Adolphe Mercredi ... backed in ... all you could see was this streak heading for the bunkhouse, he thought it was alive and us guys we were laying in the bush ... laughing." The crew was quite a wild bunch of young men and anyone who was different was the butt of jokes. "The Natives just killed themselves laughing" at one of the electricians, an old German fellow, who used to wear a

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105 Testimonies from others varied. Some said it was a job that needed to be done and they needed to work. Some said they only did the work and were not told why. Another reaction was that it was kind of fun, especially for young men who may have seen this as somewhat of a sport, although all objected to "cornering" animals or seeing them suffer.

106 Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan. Tape 2. Side B.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid., Tape 2. Side A.

110 Norwegian was born in 1935 at Rabbitskin River, 25 miles east of Fort Simpson. His parents were Joseph and Elisabeth Bouvier. His father was Gwich'in and his mother was a Métis from Fort Providence. He worked at Hay Camp for two seasons in 1955-56 and again around 1965.

111 Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan. Tape 2. Side B.
nightgown and cap to bed and doused himself with talcum powder.”

They also laughed when Valmore Plamondon, who worked at the fire tower, unknowingly told dirty jokes to visiting priests and then promptly left for Fort Smith so he could go to confession.

Other pranks were not funny, even cruel in retrospect. Philip Norwegian, who worked at Hay Camp as a cook and general labourer in 1955-56, told of hitting a bear on the head with an axe at the kitchen dump to scare him away. Another time he and his buddies climbed the fire tower and chased off a Sandhill crane and her two chicks, killing one of the chicks in the chase. They had to dispose of the body in a hurry as they could have been fired for that. Earl Gordon, who seemed to relish jokes, once forged a letter to a whining seasonal employee, saying that he would be laid off early and lose his bonus: “Fred [Bower] and I were just putting on the act ... I wrote this letter up on the typewriter with the Northern Affairs letterhead with Ken Hawkins’ signature ... his boss ... Ed [Duhl] started screaming ... that son of a so-and-so ... I said, you know something ... I typed that letter and he started to cry, he was so happy!... You know it was a pretty dirty trick to pull on him. I thought he was going to have a heart attack ... hit me.”

Their pranks could also have got them fired. Philip Norwegian spoke of playing cowboy with slingshots, shooting at each other at night, and breaking some windows. Herman Peiper got angry and fired Tony Evans and Ernest Lafferty, whom he disliked.

For all their bravado, many of the wardens and staff believed that former cook “Chum” Campbell’s ghost haunted the old log cook house at Hay Camp. According to Earl Gordon “Johnny Bonnetrouge, Archie Powder and I ... we heard a weird rumbling noise up in the attic from one end to the other and back ... very eerie ... didn’t get much sleep ... Archie said every time a stranger comes in I put him in the kitchen to sleep because he won’t stay there very long ... they’re out of there in a big shot because old man Campbell died there and his ghost is still there.” It may have been a mink or some other wild animal in the cellar, but the noise persisted, and strangely enough the old cook house was the only building that wasn’t damaged by the 1963 flood.

Earl Gordon was a practical man who was suspicious of formal authority, especially government bureaucrats who had no concept of fieldwork. He resented “business suits in the bush,” who came to inspect the work at Hay Camp, but never consulted him or others who were supposed to be responsible for Bison Management. He felt like a scapegoat for carrying out activities, such as bison roundups and shootings, while the bosses smiled and avoided the heat, making sure not to leave a paper trail of their controversial orders. However, he got along well with his colleagues; they were

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112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., Tape 3. Side A.
115 Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan, Tape 2. Side A.
like a fraternity. Ken Cooper, a good navigator who "knew his stars," and Gord Masson "who was good with Natives," earned his respect. Philip Norwegian expressed similar feelings towards Dora Tourangeau who worked as a cook at the camp. "She was quite a woman to work with ... no messing around ... tried to straighten me up ... had to work with her."117 Bill Nelson, an educated Métis who could type and was a good book-keeper, was looked down upon by Earl Gordon, Lome Lapp, and others because he was not a bushman. "Poor Bill ... he just wanted to be in his uniform and never get dirty ... he'd get lost in the bush and never visit the trappers on his patrols ... we called him the dipstick kid ... but he was sure interesting to talk to."118 There is probably another side to this story, but for those who did not conform, or were "not one of the boys," life could be difficult at Hay Camp.

There was prejudice against Aboriginal people, or "Native guys," who were mostly from Fort Chipewyan, such as the Simpsons, the Antoines, and the Stewarts. The discrimination was not always overt, but staff from the outside looked down on them because they did not have a formal education or because they spoke their own language to each other. Local employees were required to walk to their work camp, and when they were driven into town, it was always in the open cab in the back. When they were hired in 1955, Philip Norwegian and John Simpson were told it would take them four hours to walk from Fort Fitzgerald to Hay Camp, but "It took us ten hours with no food, no water, just a big bag of mail...and the next morning we were put to work."119 Herman Peiper was in charge at Hay Camp, "a mean old guy who used Natives," although his wife was "a real nice lady."120 Laco Hunt was another boss. Pretentious, he would put on his voice of authority in a strong British accent.121 Some of the wardens did not welcome Aboriginal employees or guides in their quarters, or would have them stay overnight in the kitchen, an old unheated bunkhouse, or even the barn. Men like Earl Gordon were sensitive about their status within Parks, and resentful of how they were treated by the "white bosses."

In 1963, Earl applied for the position of Chief Park Warden at Wood Buffalo and came sixth across Canada in the competition. "They were going to keep this list for two years but when my name came up they abolished the list and picked a guy from Riding Mountain ... I appealed ... well that was the wrong thing to do as far as the Superintendent thought ... it was his decision to hire somebody else ... If I had known better, I would have made it rough for those guys."122

120 Ibid.
121 Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan, July, 2000. Tape 1, Side A. Hunt was the Regional Indian Affairs administrator in Fort Smith in the 1950s and 60s. See his autobiography, Rebels, Rascals and Royalty: The Colourful North of Laco Hunt (1983).
One of the other wardens told him that it was probably better that he didn’t get the job as his kids would have to go to school with Indian kids in Fort Smith. Earl replied: “What seems to be wrong with that, because I’m part Indian [Metis].”  

He also said in his interview that he and others often got cast-offs, like the old mushing dogs, the old Dodge pick-up, and the old uniforms. The Chief Warden even asked him for his new mountain-climbing boots. “After three years ... I said you can have them ... I’m not going to be climbing any mountains anyway ... the only thing they never took from me was my soul!”

There were also some positive experiences. Philip Norwegian mentioned that Chief Warden E.H. Essex sent him, Charles Kennedy, Frederick Beaulieu, and George Mandeville for training in Calgary.

One of the main duties of wardens on patrol was to visit trappers at their camps to pass on and gather information and news, and sometimes to settle disputes. By the 1960s there were very few trappers working around Hay Camp. One of the reasons for the decrease in trappers was the requirement to register trap lines. Local hunters and trappers such as “Schal” [Charles] Marten, Patrice Gibot, Gabe Wandering Spirit, Snowbird, and old Burdinsky, were an independent group who had a long tradition of resistance to park regulations, and resentment towards the wardens. They did not always welcome wardens who came to check them out, and at times refused to talk to them or help them out. Once a trapper’s confidence was gained, however, he was helpful and would share anything he had. The relationship varied according to personalities and circumstances. According to Earl Gordon, there was an unwritten rule “not to pinch anybody - if you did catch somebody doing something, more likely you would help them butcher because it’s not illegal and they need help.”

Some wardens also helped the trappers avoid exploitative traders.

Although Earl Gordon was particularly harsh in his criticism of Parks policies and administration at Hay Camp, he acknowledged the invaluable contribution made by Aboriginal employees, especially people from Fort Chipewyan. He described them as good people, hard-working, and independent of the government, “not like the Indians further south.”

However, he claimed that the closing of the sawmill, the decline of commercial fishing and trapping, and government intervention

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
126 According to Earl Gordon there were about four hundred trappers in the park at one time. Interview by S. Dolan. Tape 2. Side B.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid., Tape, 3, Side A. His comments reflect his lack of awareness of government controls that produced dependency in the south.
subsequently changed their living conditions and attitudes. “We all got along well ... actually, I think
we abused them a bit with the living conditions out there [at Hay Camp].”

The Antoine brothers worked at Hay Camp until the 1980s and remember those years as “a lot of
fun ... I always liked it by the [Slave] river.” Madeleine Vermillion, a cook for the fire crew at the
camp until its closure, was known as the “the matriarch of Hay Camp.” The presence of local
Aboriginal people has been one of the few enduring links between past and present at Hay Camp
throughout the years.

BISON MANAGEMENT: 1924 - 1968

Bison Management in WBNP can be divided into three periods. In the first three decades of the
park’s existence, about 1922-50, bison management was limited to protecting the animals from
Aboriginal subsistence hunters and others living in or using the park. Bison were considered an
exploitable resource, but the emphasis was on conservation rather than generating wealth. It has been
argued that some conservation management strategies, such as the suppression of traditional
Aboriginal burning and the reduction of wolf populations, carried out during this period may have
hindered bison conservation. The second period, from 1950 to 1964, was one of intense
manipulation and exploitation of bison herds. Policy emphasized harvesting of bison for meat
production and commercial profit, as well for disease control. It was a response to the needs of
northern development as seen by southern administrators, scientists, and politicians rather than by
local people who believed that the bison had been protected for so many years in order to meet their
needs. The latest period of bison management began between 1964 and 1969 when Wood Buffalo
Park came under the administration of the National Parks Branch (now Parks Canada). The wildlife
management policy of Parks Canada is essentially one of non-interference, allowing natural processes
to proceed unhindered. But Hay Camp, as the centre of Bison Management activities in the Park for
the first two periods, was the setting for the exploitative and commercial phase.

Bison management became a responsibility at Hay Camp after 1924 when it was decided to make
the camp operational headquarters for Wood Buffalo Park. For the next twenty years, bison
management at Hay Camp consisted mostly of regular patrols into the park in an attempt to maintain
a census of the animals’ health and numbers. The annual mobile slaughter of bison, initiated in 1929,
was conducted under the supervision of park wardens, but was not a major part of daily activities at

129Ibid.

June 14, 2000. Both men are seasonal fire-fighters at Wood Buffalo National Park, who have worked at the Park
since the 1950s.


Hay Camp until the construction of the first abattoir in 1952. Brother Sareault and staff from Fort Chipewyan were involved in the early seasonal small-scale bison hunts from 1927 to 1943, and provided horse teams and sleighs to transport the meat. An average of twelve bison per year were harvested in the 1930s. The meat was distributed to the schools at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution, as well as to the region’s destitute by the local Indian Agent. The approach was conservative and conservationist; the number of bison harvested was proportional to the success of fishing on Lake Athabasca. Brother Sareault recalled that Mr Dempsey, who supervised the hunts, was careful to ensure that only old bulls were taken. The number of bison harvested increased to a yearly average of 28 or more in the early 1940s, but some were infected with tuberculosis and the meat had to be discarded.

In 1951 it was decided that the annual bison slaughter should be approached as a potentially viable commercial venture. It was quickly recognized that the procedures for slaughtering and meat handling employed in the field kills could be ‘severely criticized’ and therefore “it is now the intention of this department to improve these conditions and adhere to the standards of slaughtering and meat handling as approved by the Veterinary Director General’s Branch of the Department of Agriculture.” The old procedure was described as follows:

(a) The slaughter was generally and of necessity carried out in sub-zero temperatures.

(b) The animals were hunted and shot where located by a native party under the direction of our Chief Warden.

(c) The animals were skinned and butchered where they fell by untrained natives and the post mortem examinations were carried out by a veterinarian of the Health of Animal’s Branch. This operation was more often than not carried out in waning light or during darkness, aided only by artificial light.

(d) The meat from the butchered animals was then taken by truck, dog team or other conveyance to a temporary cache or directly to the distribution point by Indian Affairs Branch or Mission employees.

(e) There have been no sanitary standards employed throughout this operation.

An assessment of the slaughtering procedure led to the conclusion that:

In carrying out a slaughtering operation in an area such as wood Buffalo Park, the butchering and meat inspection quarters, the cooling quarters, the boning quarters, the

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134 NAC, RG85 v.157 f.472-3 [3], Appendix A: Outline of Future Operating Procedures in Connection with the Slaughtering of Buffalo in Wood Buffalo Park, August 22, 1951.

135 Ibid.
lighting and hot water facilities and the messing and living accommodation will have to be of a portable nature. This can be accomplished through the employment of suitably constructed cabooses on skids or sleighs which can be moved from one slaughtering point to another as a tractor train operation.\textsuperscript{136}

Plans were produced for the construction of six portable cabooses (killing and meat inspection, meat cooling, meat boning, lighting and water heating, messing, sleeping), the Department of Agriculture appointed a veterinarian to oversee the slaughter, and a certified food inspection stamp numbered 61A was issued to Wood Buffalo Park. By the fall of 1951, preparations were underway for the winter slaughter of 1951-1952. “Through the use of the above facilities and having a qualified veterinarian on the slaughter for meat inspection purposes, it will be [possible for] this Administration to turn out a boned meat product which has been certified for human consumption.”\textsuperscript{137} A bombardier and sleigh, on loan to the park from the Department of Indian Affairs, were used for the first time in 1951 for transporting meat from the kill site to the portable abattoir.

The first supposedly permanent abattoir was constructed at the Hay Camp in 1952, for use in the 1952-1953 winter slaughter. It was probably actually the “portable slaughtering unit” still in use at Hay Camp in 1954.\textsuperscript{138}

Several changes occurred in the slaughter procedure as a result of the move to Hay Camp. Beginning in 1952, all labour for the slaughter was provided for by the park. While local people were still employed in various positions,\textsuperscript{139} no outside organizations were involved in the slaughter. Although they had participated in the killing and distribution of meat since the first slaughter in 1929, the local Missions and the Indian Affairs Department were now being asked to purchase buffalo meat from the park. This was also the first time the bison were herded into a system of corrals and wing

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{139}Superintendent B.E. Olson wrote to the Regional Director in October 1966 stating that “the abattoir crew, consisting almost entirely of treaty Indians and metis worked very conscientiously throughout the program, with the result that we had a quick and an exceedingly efficient operation.” NAC, RG 84 A-2-a v. 2239 f.WB299.

A suggested improvement in the slaughtering and meat handling methods prior to the construction of the portable abattoir was “the training of a native crew which will be available each year during the slaughtering period. In this connection, Mr. MacDougall, manager of Canada Packers at Edmonton has agreed, if we make a request in writing, to make available the services of one of his most experienced knife men for the training of a native crew during the buffalo slaughter, this winter. Verbal arrangements have also been made with Canada Packers to sell us at their purchase price the units of equipment each of the natives under training will require, such as skinning and cutting knives, sharpening steel, scabbard, meat handling hook and steel mesh gloves.” NAC, RG85 v.157 f.472-3 [3]. Appendix A: Outline of Future Operating Procedures in Connection with the Slaughtering of Buffalo in Wood Buffalo Park, dated August 22, 1951.
fences prior to being slaughtered. A bombardier was used to drive the animals, although "it was concluded that herding could not be carried out by bombardier alone - an aircraft was considered essential." Barry Potyondi adds, "They had also cleared a one-mile field on which an aircraft was used to herd the animals into the corrals, while snowmobiles acted as 'herders' on the flanks."

The movement of the slaughter to Hay Camp marked a major shift in Wood Buffalo Park’s Bison Management Plan. The number of animals slaughtered increased dramatically during the 1950s. Ten animals were killed in the first slaughter in 1929. The number gradually increased to around 60 in 1950, nearly doubled in 1952 to 114, and doubled again in 1953, to 245 animals. In 1954, the number settled down to around 275. The increase in killings was due to two factors: animals recently found to be infected with tuberculosis had to be culled; and, at the same time, the park was faced with a developing market demand for meat. In 1954 three separate markets were identified: a ‘northern’ market, a ‘northern retail’ market, and an ‘outside’ market. The ‘northern’ and ‘northern retail’ markets were comprised primarily of the northern communities and organizations — local Missions, the Department of Indian Affairs, various Hudson’s Bay Company and other northern retailers — some of whom had originally received meat and bison by-products from the annual slaughter. The main retailing development occurred in 1953 when Burns Meats was asked to handle the distribution and sale of the bison meat. In return, Burns provided a butcher, Mr. D. Van Dyke, to oversee the slaughter and to train local crews in proper butchering procedures. There was also a man from Texas who came to train them and remarked "you Native guys are the best skinners."

The annual slaughter usually took place in January, although the bison were often herded into the corrals at least a month before. Hay was cut in the fall and stockpiled to feed the corralled bison until the slaughter was complete. In 1954 the corral was described as a "small holding corral, enclosing about five acres ... built inside the large corral." In 1954 bison were generally killed by a single gun shot to the head, by hunters transported about the corral on snowmobiles.

By 1955, the annual slaughter had outgrown the limited facilities at the Hay Camp abattoir. It was noted that the "major problem at the Hay Camp is the sewage system. It is essential that a system be installed which will supply adequate sewage for an annual slaughter of five-hundred bison. The present installation consists of a huge pit directly under the killing floor." Other problems were noted and it was recognized that a great deal of work was needed to bring Hay Camp up to the standards of the Department of Agriculture. On top of this, it was believed that the local herds had been over-utilized. The Park was faced with the costs of upgrading the existing facilities or

141 Potyondi, “Dual Allegiance.”
constructing something new. The decision was made to construct a modern abattoir at Sweetgrass, in the Lake Claire region.

No slaughter was undertaken in 1956-57 during the construction of the Lake Claire Abattoir at Sweetgrass Landing. The first slaughter at Sweetgrass occurred in the winter of 1957-1958. Annual slaughters and the tuberculosis testing program were conducted there until 1960, although for several seasons the number of bison slaughtered was limited, or the entire program abandoned, due to severe flooding.

In 1960, flooding at Sweetgrass led the Superintendent to give “full consideration to the possibility of diverting the operation from Sweetgrass to Hay Camp. However, at Hay Camp there are no testing facilities, the corrals require extensive repairs, the old portable abattoir is beyond use and as it now stands it is condemned; no sharp freeze or storage facilities are available. There [are] other aspects which eliminated any programme at Hay Camp until the new abattoir now under construction becomes operational.”14

The absence of an alternate location when flooding hampered the slaughter at Sweetgrass prompted the park’s decision to construct a new abattoir, situated well above the flood line, at Hay Camp.

Plans for the second abattoir at Hay Camp were presented and rough excavations completed by the end of 1960. Unfortunately, flooding was as pervasive at Hay Camp in the early 1960s as it was at Sweetgrass, and although the new abattoir was to be constructed on high ground, “the killing corral adjacent to the Hay Camp station between the Warden’s residence and the present site of the abattoir is low, and during the summer the Slave River twice overflowed its banks into this area which absolutely precluded any sturdy fence construction.”146

Construction of the corrals and testing facilities at Hay Camp was nearly completed by the end of 1962. The facilities included a main holding corral approximately five miles in circumference; four small corrals to trap and hold animals for seventy-two hours during T.B. testing; one small holding corral with a chute and twenty individual stalls, at the end of which was a squeeze pen for testing, branding, vaccinating, ear-tagging, and taking blood samples; and one killing corral.

Despite all the expenditure and time consuming work, the annual bison slaughter at Hay Camp had to be abandoned. As a 1962 departmental memorandum explained, flooding in itself was less of a problem than was the inability of the contractors to complete the construction work.

In the late summer it was becoming increasingly apparent that a fall program of herding, testing and slaughter would not be possible at Hay Camp. The construction of corral and testing facilities was delayed and hindered because of high water levels. It was impossible to build reliable corral fences during the summer on any low-lying land.


but in the hope that these areas would dry up, we concentrated our effort on high
ground and fencing was completed on approximately seventy percent of the area to be
enclosed. Construction of testing facilities, which involved the small holding corrals
and individual stalls, was well advanced. Water levels only recently started to recede
and the completion of this project cannot be achieved this year."

Returning to the Sweetgrass facilities was not an option as flooding and high water at that location
was “worse than that experienced in the 1959 season. ... Again it is impossible to conduct a normal
roundup, testing and slaughter program at Sweetgrass.” Instead, a small field kill was planned to
maintain the bison management program and to fill market requests for bison meat.

Hay Camp flooded again in 1963 but not severely enough to interfere with a regular slaughter and
testing program. The main impact of the flood was that the “majority of the old log buildings, that
portion of the old camp, were destroyed.” By 1964 most of the buildings at the old Hay Camp that
had survived the flood had been moved to the new location. All that remained was a “house (cold in
winter), the old condemned makeshift abattoir and the first Wood Buffalo National Park log building
(said to have been built in 1921).”

Many local residents employed in the slaughter seem to have viewed the experience as a ‘job.’
“We did not know much, all we did was work there ... I needed a job, that’s all.”
Most of the local seasonal labourers hired for the slaughters were carefree young men in their twenties. “When you are
young,” one of them said, “you are not too concerned about the treatment of buffalo ... it was kind
of funny, actually.” Most of the workers cut rails and posts for fencing, or were involved in
building the corrals and manning the gates. The Antoine brothers worked at the “dirty jobs” as
skinners in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Others, such as Tony Evans, Frank Laviolette, and Lorne
Lapp, hauled carcasses and buried them. In their interviews they expressed a certain degree of anger
at the lack of consideration shown by Park administrators for uselessly injured animals. The general

147 NAC, RG 84, Vol. 2239 file: WB299, Memorandum to C.L. Merrill, “Herding, Testing and Slaughter

148 Ibid.

three of 1963 flood damage at the ‘old’ Hay Camp, two of buildings with river ice around them, and one of a muddy
road. They all have ‘Hay Camp’ written on the back. The letter notes, “The Hay Camp was also flooded and the
majority of the old log buildings, that portion of the old camp, were destroyed. We are at present obtaining a report
as to which buildings can be salvaged at Hay Camp and will advise you further.”


151 Archie Antoine and John James (J.J.) Antoine, interviews by S. Dolan, June 14, 2000; Gabe Sepp,

mistreatment of bison apparently occurred as the number of animals being slaughtered increased and the slaughtering process grew in complexity. The various testing programs for brucellosis, tuberculosis, and especially anthrax caused some anger and confusion among locals, but everyone, including Earl Gordon who was the Park Warden in the late 1960s, felt powerless.

Anthrax-infected animals were first seen at Hook Lake in 1962. In 1964, the disease was noted in bison at Hay Camp and Lake One. In response to the threat, a decision was made to herd the Park bison from the Hook Lake/Grand Detour area for inoculation and slaughter at Hay Camp. A local resident provided the following, horrific description of this drive.

Helicopters were used in the drive and cats were used to build the road 100 miles from Hook Lake to the Fox Holes. The buffalo were driven down this road with the helicopters until they couldn’t run any more. Hundreds died along the way. Their hoofs split from running on the frozen ground; they froze their lungs; broke their legs and were literally driven into the ground. Many people in Fort Smith saw buffalo staggering along with blood pouring out of their frozen mouths, to fall along the way. There were cow buffalo lying all along the road, dead, some with calves sticking half way out of them. Estimates vary considerably as to how many died on this drive ... maybe 300, maybe 600 ... but not very many ever made it to Hay Camp.**

Tony Evans, who participated in the round-up, corroborated the description. “Yes, I remember those little calves falling out and trying to get up and the mother stopping for them ... the bison trampling each other ... the ones at the bottom suffocating in the corrals.”

J.J. Antoine recalled that there was not enough food, or water for the bison, who were full of bugs, and dying all over the place. The remains were trucked to the burial pit by cat and covered with lime." Earl Gordon maintained that the bison that were killed during the anthrax program at Hay Camp in 1963 were suspected of carrying the spore but may not have been infected. It was one of a series of incidents and upper management decisions which caused resentment among local employees who were involved in the decision-making process.

After this, control measures other than the inoculation program initiated in the spring of 1965 and continued until 1968 were limited to searching for dead bison within the park and disposing of the

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153See in particular, interviews with Earl Gordon, Lorne Lapp, Archie Antoine and Tony Evans by S. Dolan.


155Tony Evans, interview by S. Dolan, July 17, 2000, Tape 1, Side B. His parents were Dora Lepine and Philip Evans from Fort Chipewyan.

infected bodies by burial or burning. In 1966 all unmarketed animal parts — including hides, hoofs, and horns — were trucked to a common disposal pit, along with the remains of infected animals, to avoid the risk of anthrax spreading into the surrounding cattle country.\(^{157}\)

The 1967 “Expo” slaughters caused particular consternation among local observers. The bison were corralled at Sweetgrass and trucked sixty-five miles to Hay Camp over rough roads and across the Peace River. This was the first experiment in mass transport of bison. Young calves, two to five years old were harvested — “choice buffalo for choice people”\(^{158}\) — for sale at Expo 67, the World’s Fair in Montreal. One hundred and sixty-two bison were killed at the first slaughter in October, 1966, and 339 in January, 1967, for a total of 123,412 pounds of meat.

Hay Camp continued to be plagued with efficiency problems. In 1967, “it was found that the walls and floors in the Quick Freezer room and Holding Freezer room do not have sufficient insulation to control the temperature when outside temperatures rise above 35 degrees Fahrenheit.”\(^{159}\)

The costs of maintaining the facility, due to a series of inefficiencies in the initial construction, continued to escalate. A report dated 1967 states,

> At long last - being compelled to fix the refrigeration system which never did work properly from the first day of service. Now it stands condemned by officers of the Health of Animals Branch, what should have been done properly four years ago. I am certain when this job is finally completed, annual maintenance costs will bear little or no relationship to the annually re-occurring costs in the past.\(^{160}\)

Continued flooding and a lack of maintenance at the Sweetgrass facilities meant the Lake Claire abattoir was not an alternative for the annual slaughter. Although the annual maintenance costs at Sweetgrass “were not normal but entirely due to severe floods which occurred four out of six years...damage was extensive in each year of flooding. These were considered in category as ‘Acts of God’. We have now literally abandoned hope of ever again conducting another slaughter at Sweetgrass Station.”\(^{161}\)

The compounded difficulties, encountered first at the Sweetgrass abattoir and later at Hay Camp, finally prompted Parks to suggest, in 1967, that “the time has come to look at the entire slaughte


\(^{158}\)Lorne Lapp, interview by S. Dolan, June 12, 2000. Tape 1, side B: WBNP files, Bison Management, Memos to Regional Director and Assistant Deputy Minister, Feb. 7, 1967, March 16, 1967. The specialty cuts — tenderloins, tongues, and hearts — went to Expo caterers, while the tougher cuts of meat were processed into sausages and sold to Indian Affairs and Welfare for distribution in the Territories.

\(^{160}\)Ibid.

\(^{161}\)Ibid.
question (abattoir, etc.) and reach a conclusion." By 1968 the bison slaughter program had ended, and by 1969 all abattoir facilities in the park were declared surplus. The Hay Camp corrals were used until 1977 as part of Wood Buffalo’s anthrax administration program, but the primary function of Hay Camp had changed to its use as a fire depot (see section 5.b).

Bison Management had been a failure, due in part to circumstances and events already discussed, but, according to local employees, it also failed as a result of bad management decisions. Earl Gordon believed both the camp’s location and its layout were wrong.

The corrals should have been twelve miles west where the migration paths were. Then we wouldn’t have had all this trouble rounding them up ... Spruce Islands, that’s the migration pattern for the buffalo that come from The Salt Flats ... You don’t try and chase buffalo downwind ... we never got any in the corral with the helicopter, they just wouldn’t go east.163

He maintained that Sweetgrass was the ideal location as it was on the bison migration route.

When Superintendent Ken East visited the site in 1983, only part of the abattoir was still standing. Half of the facility had been removed, and the remainder was being used for general storage, and a one-time travelling interpretive exhibit, which has disappeared. Also remaining was a very small, log warden’s cabin, a garage which housed two very large caterpillar generators, and an open implement shed.164

**IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES AT HAY CAMP**

**The Hay Meadows**

The hay meadows around Hay Camp were used to provide feed for the government’s horses, for an unknown period of time, prior to the establishment of Wood Buffalo Park in 1922. Use of the Salt Plains area by park wardens intensified in 1924, after the operations centre was moved to Hay Camp and a stable constructed for the park’s horses. J.D. Soper noted in 1933 that the meadow at Hay Camp was the one “from which the supply of park hay is harvested each year.”165

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An assessment of the meadows in 1924 described them as "possibly the best that can be found, suitable for our purposes. It is possible to put up at least one hundred tons of very good hay." An interesting note is that "it is understood from people who have wintered in this locality that the buffalo do not come to this hay meadow but are found in large numbers in some of the meadows immediately to the south in the winter." While this meant the meadow was a secure food source for the horses, it was also recognized as an alternate food source that could be made available to the bison. It was therefore proposed that "a quantity of hay be put in the meadows back of La Butte and have the warden in charge there observe during the winter [whether or not] the buffalo wintering in the vicinity take advantage of this fodder. By this method preparation for a severer winter may be made by cutting hay, stacking it and then fencing it." 

The first year’s shipment of Wainwright bison to La Butte in 1925 precipitated an increase in the fall hay harvest. Public concern for the incoming bison made the Parks Branch acutely aware of the animals’ health. In 1925 the Superintendent of the Park was instructed that "in order to avoid possible criticism owing to lack of provision to meet extra severe winter conditions ... [he should have hay] put up at selected locations to be used only under special emergency conditions.... As before stated the Deputy Minister feels that unless such provision is made the Department is liable to severe criticism if later any number of the introduced buffalo should die of starvation." 

In 1931, the annual budget for hay was "based on five tons per head of horses for the winter. There are fourteen horses in the park which calls for seventy tons for the winter. Then there is the hay to be baled for summer work which usually averages about twelve tons". In 1925, in anticipation of the buffalo needing winter feed, 125 tons of hay were cut and stacked. Seventy tons though, seems to have been a standard, even in the late 1950s when hay was being fed to corralled bison retained for tuberculosis testing.

Haying remained an important annual activity until the late 1940s, when the park started to cut back on the number of horses it maintained. The entire operation usually took from two to three weeks, depending on the weather. Two or more local men were hired to round out the crew on the condition that "if the weather is fine and the haying is completed in less time [than the one month

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166NAC, RG 85, Vol. 151 file: 420-2 [1a]. G.C. Murphy, Memorandum to J.A. McDougal, September 6, 1924.

167Ibid.

168Ibid.


contract], then the crew will be used for the balance of the month to clean around the buildings at the Hay Camp for fire protection.\footnote{\textit{NAC. RG 85 Vol. 1183 file: 351-2-20 v. 1, M. Meikle. Annual report on maintenance and construction.}}

Warden Taylor, with warden Ireland acting as cook, was in charge of the haying operations in the summer of 1930. The local labourers were John Streeter, Benjamin Heron, and James McDonald. In order to take advantage of the fine weather a second team of horses and a teamster, Kenneth McDonald, were hired from R. Wynn at Fitzgerald. On August 9, Ireland reported that

the two teamsters, J. Streeter and Kenneth McDonald, wished to advise me that they had not been paid for Sundays in July and if they were not receiving pay for feeding the horses on Sunday they would turn the horses loose on Saturday night and bring them in on Monday morning. The laborers at hay camp were receiving $3 per day which was a little more than teamsters are paid locally when hired by the month. They were advised that they would not receive any pay for Sunday and that if they did not wish to look after their horses at those wages it would [be] necessary to get other teamsters.\footnote{\textit{NAC. RG 85. Vol. 152 file: 420-2 [2], Report on haying operations, October 19, 1930.}}

Streeter and McDonald quit on the following Monday and were replaced by warden Hector McDonald and R. Baldwin.

By the end of the summer a total of 190 loads of hay (approximately eighty-five tons) were ‘put up’ from the meadows around Hay Camp with fifteen loads in the loft of the horse barn, one hundred and forty loads in three stacks near the corral, twenty-five loads in one stack in the West Meadow, and ten loads in one stack in West Meadow. Hay was also baled and shipped to locations around the park, including thirty bales to Fort Fitzgerald, forty-nine bales to the RC Mission, and forty to Thirtieth Base Line. Eighty-four bales were kept on hand at Hay Camp and seventy-one were put aside for future use by road and telephone crews. The annual cutting and stacking of hay at the Hay Camp was an integral part of park operations from the 1920s until the 1950s, as this was the era when horses were a primary source of transportation and manual labour. Hay was also used to feed bison corralled for slaughter during the late 1950s and 1960s.

**Experimental Farming and Gardening**

Some experimenting was done with various grasses and oats in order to maximize the benefit to the horses while reducing the costs of operating the meadows. In 1931, a separate patch of the large meadow was fenced in and seeded with Brome grass.\footnote{See map by J. Dewey Soper, in Part II: Archaeological Resources Report.} It turned out to be a success with “twelve loads having been taken from five acres this year at the first cutting. There is an additional ten acres
which will be fit for cutting next year.”

The brome grass, which had twice the nutrient value of wild hay, was considered an “excellent feed for the horses when working and [was] economical in bulk.”

The same year, one acre was seeded with ‘Alaska’ oats, with the expectation that if they did not ripen they could still be cut and used for green feed. At year’s end, Dempsey reported that the “oats were a complete failure, and are not worth cutting even for green feed.” He noted that this was the third unsuccessful attempt to grow oats at Hay Camp.

It might be expected that some gardening would also have been attempted at the old Hay Camp, especially during years when the wardens’ families shared the facilities. A few references to ‘gardening’ have been found. During an assessment of the effects of the 1963 flood at the Hay Camp site, Alex J. Reeve noted the “unusual” activities of warden Earl Gordon and patrolman/labourer Jim Stewart. “It was difficult to ascertain what they were doing while we were there but mention was made of a potato garden - potatoes are said to be so expensive that it is worth while to do this to supply for the buffalo slaughter and other crews.”

Mary McNeill Heron also remembers potatoes being cultivated by the cookhouse when she lived there in the mid-1950s.

Nora Dempsey Freund recalls that in the late 1940s, her mother, Rosalie Mercredi, the wife of Mike Dempsey, had a big flower and vegetable garden next to their house. Jane Dragon remembers rhubarb “all over the place” in the 1950s. “It was really red ones. I [had] never seen the real red ones ... that was the place where we used to see lots.” As a child she collected it for her mother to bake into pies. Earl and Anita Gordon also had a large garden at Hay Camp in the 1960s. Mrs. Gordon grew cabbages, carrots, and “everything that one could grow in southern Alberta. We had very good soil and a long growing season.”

Except for the park horses and dogs, animals were generally not kept at Hay Camp, although this did not stop the wardens from the occasional experiment in animal husbandry. For several years,


175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.


beginning around 1960, Earl Gordon kept chickens at Hay Camp, "I must have had close to a hundred, I guess. I just gave them to friends and that, people." His first attempt was around 1960.

I was really interested in getting some chickens for fresh eggs 'cause our eggs are always stale up north. They'd bring them on the barge and they'd be six months old sometimes. They'd be half rotten. There was a fellow in town that had a bunch of chickens he was getting rid of so I bought them and brought them out to Hay Camp. I made nests in the old power house, high above the ground on a roost. 'Cause I was raised on a farm, I knew how to do it. I made the nests out of straw and everything, and hay.

Earl ordered three hundred chicks from a hatchery in Edmonton and shared them with Noel McKay and Ray Wilfong. He picked a meat strain that was supposed to produce birds of about seven pounds weight. He got a brooder and feeders from Johnny Vogt, who had closed his egg growing operation in Fort Smith after someone had killed all his chickens. Earl fed the chickens government dog food "that was never being used. It was called Miracle Dog food, it was in about 100 lb bags and it was crushed grain and I thought I could put it to use to feed some chickens."  

Earl’s chickens were the object of many raids by staff, one involving Lorne Lapp.

Earl Gordon, at that time when he was stationed at Hay Camp, he had a chicken pen. He had thirty or forty chickens and one rooster. He had fresh eggs all the time. One night we were having a little do there at Hay Camp and somebody got the idea ‘Let’s have some barbecue chicken!’ Dr. Choquette and I went up to Earl Gordon’s chicken house. Earl was already sleeping, mind you it’s two - three o’clock in the morning. So I said, ‘We’ll sneak in there and get a couple of chickens.’ We just got into the door and this one rooster starts hollering. Dr. Choquette said ‘We gotta get rid of him!’ so he went up to him and grabbed him by the head and pulled the head off! And we went down there to barbecue. Next day Earl Gordon came by and asked ‘Any you guys know what happened to my rooster?’ And we’d forgot about all the feathers!

Fire Management

Little is known about early fire management activities at Hay Camp. In 1923 an official request was made from the Forestry Branch for closer co-operation between their fire rangers and the wardens in Wood Buffalo Park. O.S. Finnie, Director of the Parks Branch, told the District Agent at

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183 Ibid.

Fort Smith that the Wood Buffalo wardens would therefore “render any aid within their power and afford co-operation when called on by the above fire rangers.”

From the establishment of the warden service in Wood Buffalo Park, fire patrol was a regular part of the wardens’ duties. The earliest warden fire patrols were conducted by boat along the Slave and Peace rivers. Fire management was also dependent upon the efforts of local land users who were actively utilizing the more remote portions of the park. An outline of the proposed work plan for 1940 included “Fire patrol work … on the Peace River by one of the wardens” and a request to “maintain another warden at the Hay Camp during the summer to be available for fire patrol work between Fitzgerald and Rocky Point.” As a warden, Leonard Wylie spent several summers during the 1950s working on the Beaver, the supply ship operating out of Hay Camp. Wylie states, “what we were doing, beside the fire patrol we’d haul supplies to the warden stations, when the Hay Camp was the depot there … and that’s what I’d do all summer long, and also patrol at the same time. If there was any fire well they load the equipment on the barge and away I’d go wherever it was, cause there were no planes, you had to walk in to the fire from the river.”

An attempt to remedy the problems of access was made in 1945 when M. Meikle requested more pack horses to replace the large number of work horses then being kept at the Hay Camp. Meikle believed that the fighting of fires in the Wood Buffalo Park is made difficult because in some cases the fires are a considerable distance inland from the river and equipment cannot be packed to the fire unless horses are available. If a large lake is in the vicinity of the fire the equipment could be transported by aeroplane but such lakes are very few in numbers. It is therefore, recommended that suitable packsaddle horses be made available which could be moved by scow up or down the river to the nearest point from where they could be used to pack the equipment inland. It is not known if the desired horses were provided or not.

By 1953, advances in communications within the park and the advent of radiophones which could be operated from remote locations, facilitated the construction of fire towers. Wooden fire towers were constructed at Hay Camp and at Rocky Point during the summer of 1953. During the 1960s, Ernie and Rita Bourque lived in a staff cabin at the site. The seasonal crews at Hay Camp mentioned that climbing the fire tower was a favourite pastime.

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187 Ibid.


Following the closure of the abattoir in 1967, Hay Camp’s primary function became that of a fire base. Archie Antoine was part of the fire crew based at Hay Camp from 1971 until it closed. Throughout most of the 1980s, Hay Camp temporarily housed one or more of the five to seven initial attack fire crews when they were not required at a fire on Parks work projects. The initial attack strategy of the Park in those days depended on a series of nine fixed fire towers spread throughout the park. The towers were supplemented by “smoke patrols” in which a Cessna 185 on floats travelled a preset route during periods of high fire hazard, or after lightning storms crossed the Park. The initial attack crews were strategically stationed at various locations depending upon where the fire hazard was judged to be greatest — frequently Mile 99, along the highway to Hay River, at Pine Lake, or at Cherry Mountain, which was an old fire tower site. Transported by a large Bell 205 or 212 helicopter, the crews responded to smoke reports from the towers or the various smoke patrols. In 1980 or 1981, there were three fires which the crew could not contain. When the hazard wasn’t high, when work didn’t engage the crews elsewhere, or when crews were coming off a fire, they stayed at Hay Camp. In those days, it was considered important to keep the crews together and away from town (Fort Smith) so that they could not go back and forth each evening.

In 1988 a proposal was made to mothball the fire tower at Hay Camp for at least one year on a ‘pilot’ project basis to determine operating impact. The Superintendent reported: “We have utilized this facility very, very little in the past two or three years and I cannot believe that it is cost effective.” By 1992, the development of a more centralized, modern fire base at Pine Lake, and increased air traffic along the Slave River corridor provided the same coverage as the Hay Camp tower. In the early 1990s, the Park fire-fighting philosophy advocated much smaller crews positioned with smaller helicopters for faster response. Positioning in more central locations became increasingly important and Hay Camp and its location on one side of the park became less and less relevant. In 1992 a request was made to “return the Hay Camp site to a natural state.” A fire management report for 1993 stated that the “Hay Camp tower has the poorest detection success rate of any post in operation since 1975.” It was also expensive to operate. In 1995 it was decided that, with the Fire Base “situated at Pine Lake, there is no need to maintain the Hay Camp facilities.”

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Transportation and Communication

- Roads and Trails: Fitzgerald and Pine Lake

A major part of the annual work undertaken by the wardens at Hay Camp was the maintenance of the evolving infrastructure of park trails and roads. In the 1920s, the inaccessibility of much of the park created problems in its administration. As Potyondi explained,

Probably the chief liability of the warden service was its general ignorance of the physical geography of the park. On the eve of the depression [1929], Wood Buffalo was still largely an unknown land. Its vast expanses, stretching far away to the west and the south from administrative headquarters at Fort Smith, contained thousands of acres that no white man had yet seen. Most of the interior was poorly known, for the difficulty of transport and the chronic shortage of staff inhibited exploration. If any part of the country was well-trod by the wardens, it was that sliver of sand and pine along the western bank of the Slave River between Fort Smith and the in-park administrative centre of Hay Camp. Less than 100 miles separated the two offices, a distance that said much about the staff’s limited perspective.196

The problem of access was recognized by the authorities in the early 1920s, and not long after the establishment of Hay Camp as an in-park administrative headquarters, a proposal had been made for the construction of a telephone line “along the west bank of the Slave River from Fitzgerald to a point near the 30th Base Line or below Peace River.”197 The direct benefits of a phone line into a remote location are obvious. The indirect benefit of the telephone line was the use of the cutline “to patrol the outside limits of the winter feeding grounds of the buffalo by utilizing the telephone clearance as a winter road.”198 The shortcomings of the river as a winter road were noted. “Using a sled road over the ice for horses, is heavy pulling over drifted roads, dangerous travelling near rapids, lateness in opening of fall travel and early break up of river for use of horses over Slave River.”199

In addition, a ground transportation link between Hay Camp and Fort Fitzgerald was identified as an important factor in park administration. To that end, as John A. McDougal noted in August, 1926, a “road crew [was] sent to the Hay Camp where a road was started to be cut out leading towards Fitzgerald. This road will be ten feet wide and used for patrol purposes with horses this winter.”200 The telephone line was planned to follow the same route. As McDougal’s comment makes

196Barry Potyondi, “Dual Allegiance.”

197NAC, RG 85, Vol. 1183 file: 351-2-20 v.1, J.A. McDougal, Letter to the Director, North West Territories and Yukon Branch, Ottawa, Ontario, August 13, 1925.

198Ibid.

199Ibid.


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clear, the road was originally intended for horse traffic, in a time when horses and dogs were the
major means of transport within the park.

The Hay Camp-Fitzgerald road was also presented as of benefit to the local community, including
the "mail driver and the general public" who "will be permitted, under supervision of our Warden
Service, to use our new overland winter road from the hay camp to Fitzgerald along the Slave River
in the old Park, a distance of twenty-eight miles."\footnote{201} An old cabin was "fitted up and made
comfortable with a stove for the use of the travelling public this winter who stop at our hay camp
over night."\footnote{202} Annual maintenance of the Fitzgerald road involved rebuilding bridges and culverts
washed away in the spring floods.

The patterns of road development were also indicators of the evolving relationship between Hay
Camp, Fort Smith, and Pine Lake. Although Hay Camp became a focal point within the park after
1924, the Fort Smith - Pine Lake - Peace Point trail remained an active travel corridor. In 1928,
supplies being shipped to Pine Lake had to be transported almost 100 miles, from Fort Smith to the
Mission Farm and then to the Salt Mountains. The obvious alternative was to supply Pine Lake
directly from Hay Camp. In addition, a road would increase access into the interior for fire-fighting
crews. Not long after construction began on the Fitzgerald road, the first proposal was made to
upgrade the trail running between Hay Camp and Pine Lake.

By 1935, there was a "wagon road - 40 to 44 miles long,"\footnote{203} linking Pine Lake to Hay Camp. It
was described as "the only wagon trail into the interior of the park which can be used during the
summer season [and] should be maintained. All bridges and culverts should be repaired and in some
cases rebuilt."\footnote{204}

As with the Fitzgerald Road, the Pine Lake road was plagued with maintenance problems. "There
is a stretch of road approximately 10 miles long of floating muskeg, with small jackpine sand ridges
intervening every mile or two. Heavy loads cannot be drawn through this muskeg - even a saddle
horse can get bogged. This area is practically level and could only be drained at great expense. I
would suggest that we corduroy this muskeg and cover the corduroy with sand and gravel from these
numerous jackpine ridges."\footnote{205}

A third reason for creating a network of roads through and within the park was as an
encouragement to tourism. In 1930, partly for adventure, and partly as a test to see how potential

\footnote{201} NAC. RG 85. Vol. 1183 file: 351-2-20 v.1, J.A. McDougal. Letter to Mr. Finnie, October 20, 1926.

\footnote{202} Ibid.

Buffalo Park." November 5, 1935.

\footnote{204} Ibid.

\footnote{205} Ibid.
tourists might experience a road trip through part of the park, Mike Dempsey, J.F. Moran, and Major Burwash undertook to travel the Fitzgerald to Hay Camp road by automobile. The choice of a vehicle was unfortunate, considering the condition of the road. Their Dodge sedan, “a very heavy, and low car, [was] not at all suitable for a road like the one from Fitzgerald to Hay Camp after so much rain as there has been in this vicinity.” 206 The men left Fitzgerald at 9:40 a.m., and a mere two miles out, they got stuck in the soft ground.

We had to use a pry to raise the car and put poles and brush under the wheels [then] about seven miles North of Buffalo Landing the car stopped owing to a lack of gasoline. An inspection showed that the gas line was broken. A temporary repair was made about one and a half hours being spent making the repair. 207

The men stopped for lunch at Buffalo Landing, and finally reached Hay Camp at 5:10 p.m. During the afternoon it had started to rain, and continued all night, “so after consulting Mr. Moran it was decided to load the car on the Ranger for the return trip.” 208 Tourists in motor vehicles could not be expected to put up with the difficulties inherent in a road built primarily for horse-drawn traffic.

After more than a decade of annual maintenance and expansion of the network of roads and trails throughout the park, the entire program was called into question. Superintendent Mackay Meikle did not foresee a significant tourist use of the park, and in 1938 he proposed a series of cost-saving changes to the administration of services within the park including a reduction in the number of horses, the down-grading of the Pine Lake and Murdock Creek roads into park trails, and the “discontinuation of the extensive road maintenance and haying operations.” 209

Meikle’s proposals related to a comprehensive attempt to reduce operating costs within the park. Wood Buffalo had always had a dual mandate of conservation and development 210 and it is assumed that up to this point the costs of maintenance and development had exceeded any returns from commercial development.

While general policy was geared toward the abandonment of the various trails and roads within the park, wardens continued to maintain and upgrade the ‘wagon road’ between Fitzgerald and Hay Camp. The main reason was that it followed the same route as, and facilitated regular maintenance of, the telephone line.


207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.


In 1944 the park was “endeavouring to secure some of the road building equipment which the United States engineering Department shipped into the Northwest Territories, and if a tractor and bulldozer are obtained, they will be available for making the required improvements to the road.” Recognizing the potential for developing the Fitzgerald road, it was proposed in 1945 that the road be improved to allow “Department Officials [to] travel to the Hay Camp by car or truck.” By 1947 the road was improved enough to allow a vehicle to travel it safely at a speed of twenty to twenty-five miles per hour.

The cumulative impact of Meikle’s policies for the abandonment of trails and roads in Wood Buffalo would not be evident until a renewed interest in development emerged in the late 1940s. In 1949, District Forest Officer H.L. Holman, criticized the park road system.

With regard to Wood Buffalo Park I might as well say frankly that I think it is in a disgraceful condition. There is no sense of mincing matters and this is the record so far as I have been able to determine it to date. In 1940, or thereabout, when Mr. Dempsey, as Supervising Warden had charge of the Park, there were 150 miles or more of good wagon road, 150 miles of telephone line and some 300 miles of trails suitable for pack horses as well as many miles of winter dog trail. Now there is practically nothing. The roads have not been maintained and all bridges and culverts are out. Brush has invaded the right of way to such an extent that the roads are not only impassable for cars or horse drawn vehicles but are difficult to follow on foot. The pack trails, of course, have all grown in and for the most part, cannot be followed at all.

The second stage of road development in Wood Buffalo National Park was very different from the initial creation of an infrastructure of trails and wagon roads. Beginning in the 1950s, stage two is defined by the construction of “all-weather truck trails. We do not expect to build highways in this park.” The plan was not to create new routes as much as it was to upgrade the abandoned routes wherever possible. For example, one recommendation was to construct “a road from Hay Camp to Pine Lake to follow as closely as possible the old wagon road which was built many years ago and has become unfit for use.”

The rationale for the new program of road development fitted in more closely with the park’s mandate for commercial development.

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215 Ibid.
The buffalo herd in the park is increasing and the slaughtering of animals for food purposes has increased from 56 some twelve years ago to 60 in 1949. Due to the lack of reefer service on the river the past practice has been to slaughter the excess buffalo after freeze up when the meat could be handled without loss. If these roads are constructed it will facilitate the killing of surplus buffalo through the summer months when it is expected reefer service will be available on the river to transport the meat to Fort Simpson and Fort Providence. During the summer season the buffalo pasture is well back from the river and not accessible to roads. The construction of roads (a) Hay Camp to Pine Lake (b) Pine Lake to Peace Point and (c) Pine Lake to Conibear Lake, would permit of truck access in this area.216

It was also noted that increased access would “permit better control of the buffalo herd” as well as “facilitate fire protection ... and greatly reduce the amount of air service charges in this connection. In addition, these roads would provide ready access by vehicular transportation to a large area of the park for fire fighting crews to control and extinguish fires.”217

The road to Hay Camp was still in bad condition in the mid-1950s. During spring thaw, freeze-up, or after a heavy rain, it was almost impassible. Employees had to walk on the side of the road and trucks often broke down. Tony Evans and Gord Masson were riding in the back of the truck en route to Fort Smith for Easter in 1955, when, about ten miles out, the truck slid off the road and the front wheels broke off. They had to walk the rest of the way — twenty-seven miles to Fort Fitzgerald before they got a ride.218 By the end of the 1950s the construction of a network of all-weather and seasonal roads had been completed in Wood Buffalo Park. Cars and trucks were now the main means of transportation and it was essential to have roads constructed to allow access for these vehicles to various parts of the park. Gone were the days of the horse and dog. By the early 1960s hundreds of thousands of dollars were being spent annually on road construction, and new trails were being cut. The network of roads provided access between Fort Smith and Pine Lake, Peace Point, Carlson Landing, Rocky Point, Sweetgrass, and Hay Camp. The 1965 annual maintenance report noted “grading and snow removal” under the heading of “road maintenance.” Construction of the modern abattoir at Hay Camp had precipitated the final step in connecting the formerly inaccessible interior of the park to the outside world.


217Ibid.

218Tony Evans, interview by S. Dolan, July 17, 2000. Tape 1, Side B.
> Horses

For the first half of the twentieth century, horses and dogs were an integral part of the work-force of Wood Buffalo Park. Horses played an important role as draught and pack animals; dog teams were used by wardens for their winter patrols. The Buffalo Rangers\textsuperscript{219} were grazing horses and cutting hay for horse feed at Russell's meadow before the park had acquired the hay camp and established the warden service there. A.L. Cumming reported arriving at “Russell’s Hay Camp” in the fall of 1923, “where your men were putting up hay for the horses ... there is well over 30 tons of first class hay in stock so your horses should winter well. I might say that Rangers Klukas, McDermott and Browning, who put up this hay, certainly did very good work. The team they were using were in excellent condition.”\textsuperscript{220} Although the Buffalo Rangers were working Russell’s meadow at this time, a patrol cabin had not been built at the hay camp and the horses were generally left to fend for themselves at the meadows.

It appears that all of the park horses were stabled at Hay Camp for the winter, during which time dog teams provided necessary transportation. In 1924 five horses were taken from Fort Smith to Fitzgerald, then sent by barge to Hay Camp for the winter.\textsuperscript{221} In a report from the same year, F.C. Bennett referred to the hay camp as the place “where our horses were wintered last year [1923].”\textsuperscript{222} Bennett identified Warden Browning’s and Russell’s hay camp as a type of “joint endeavour,” although at this time park personnel visited the meadows only to cut hay and graze horses, and do not appear to have maintained any buildings in the immediate vicinity. Warden Browning’s responsibilities for the Slave River patrol during the winter of 1923 were to “patrol the section from his camp [at La Butte] to the 32\textsuperscript{nd} base line with warden McDermot and the section below his camp for some 20 miles alone. He has also been instructed to keep in touch with our horses at Russell’s camp.”\textsuperscript{223} Starting in 1924, when the government acquired Russell’s hay meadow and the Buffalo Rangers were converted to the Warden Service, a warden was resident at Hay Camp year-round with a specific responsibility to tend to the park’s horses.

In 1933, Robert Wylie sent a letter of complaint to the Minister of the Interior. The correspondence surrounding this letter contains many references to everyday activities at Hay Camp during the 1920s and 1930s. Among other things, Wylie’s letter gives us an impression of the type

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\textsuperscript{219}‘The Buffalo Rangers were a precursor to the Warden Service in Wood Buffalo Park.


\textsuperscript{222}NAC. RG 85 Vol. 151 file: 420-2 [1a]. F.C. Bennett. Report. August 6 - 22, 1924. “From Peace Point I accompanied them downstream to Fitzgerald, in a canoe, stopping at Warden Klukas’s cabin (Pt. Providence) Quatre Fouche, 30\textsuperscript{th} Base Line cabin (Slave River) Warden McDermott’s, La Butte. Warden Browning’s and Russell’s hay camp, where our horses were wintered last year.”

of care needed for maintaining horses. Wylie made several complaints to which Warden Dempsey wrote the following replies.

The horses are not allowed to suffer from the flies at Hay Camp. The method of fly protection at Hay Camp is - There is a large stable with a double door at each end, saddle blankets are hung across the doors reaching halfway to the bottom thus allowing the horses to go in or out as they please ... when Warden Nelson Hoy was in charge of the Hay Camp the winter of 1928 he trimmed the tails of the two work horses which he used without consulting me ... [he was advised] that the horses tails are not to be trimmed as they need full length tails during the fly season ... the horses hooves are trimmed regularly and there is first class equipment for that work at Hay Camp.224

J.A. McDougal, visiting the park in November, 1926, travelled by “horse and flat sled from Fort Smith to the Hay Camp and return, and dogs the rest of the trip.”225 A.L. Cumming visited Hay Camp following the flood in 1934, and noted that “during the fly season the horses are stabled during the day and turned out at night to feed. A smudge is kept going but the horses prefer the barn and seldom go near it [the smudge].”226 Teams of horses were also integral to the annual hay harvest and for the transportation of work crews and supplies for regular maintenance along the telephone line between Fitzgerald and Hay Camp. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, as the network of trails and communications infrastructure was expanded, a number of the more important access routes were upgraded to allow for the passage of teams of horses pulling wagons.

The general decline in the park’s infrastructure throughout the 1930s led the park to question the number of horses needed for general operations. M. Meikle submitted a detailed report on the status of the Wood Buffalo Horses.

Horses were introduced to the Park some years ago when it was the Department’s intention to make this Park a place where tourists might visit and this idea together with the need of giving means of entering the Park for maintenance, fire patrol and scientific expeditions, has caused the subsequent addition to the number of horses. As the original horses have become very old, a breeding stallion was purchased a few years ago for the purpose of raising new stock for Park purposes.

From my observations, I do not think it advisable to continue considering this Park as a place where tourists are likely to visit and I see no need of maintaining our wagon roads except the one from the Hay Camp to Fitzgerald. It would be sufficient to have suitable Park trails which can be used by Park horses and dog teams in the winter. The present roads from the Hay Camp to Murdock Creek and Pine Lake should be

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converted into Park Trails. This question of trails is closely connected with the question of park horses and if the roads are not to be maintained any longer, except the one from the Hay Camp to Fitzgerald, then it would only be necessary to retain one heavy work team and two lighter Park horses...The heavy team is required for hauling out the ‘Ranger’ and barge, hauling freight to the warehouse, hauling wood to the Hay Camp, maintenance work on Muskrat dams and other construction work. The Park horses are needed for line work on the telephone line and any necessary trips to Pine Lake and Fitzgerald.  

The reduction to the number of horses would make a considerable saving in the purchase of oats and making of hay each year, together with the maintenance of necessary machinery and equipment ... If the present number of horses were to be reduced to four, then the large stable could be divided so as to provide four box stalls on one side and warehouse capacity on the other. With the discontinuation of extensive road maintenance and haying operations, there would be Wardens available for a systematic fire patrol along the Athabasca and Peace Rivers during the summer.

In February, 1939, Mr. R.A. Gibson wrote to Meikle that

We [the administration] are in general agreement with your suggestions in respect of wagon roads and horses ... there is nothing to be gained in endeavouring to keep up an extensive road system or a large number of horses ... with a reduction in the number of horses there would of course be a corresponding reduction in the quantity of oats and hay required. It is also thought that when the horses which are retained are not working they can rustle for themselves with very little attention during the six to eight months of the year.

By 1944 the number of horses at Hay Camp had been reduced to eight, but questions were being raised as to the suitability of the remaining animals for the tasks they were required to perform. Gibson was concerned that “there may be too many heavy type work horses and not enough light horses for saddle and pack use.” Meikle visited Hay Camp and reported that of the eight horses belonging to the park, “we are raising too many heavy type work horses and not enough light horses suitable for saddle and pack purposes.” The shortage of light horses was fully realized when

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228 Ibid.
veterinarian Dr. B.I. Love planned to travel throughout the park on horseback. Meikle wrote to Gibson.

I have discussed with Park Warden Dempsey the arrangements to be made for Dr. Love’s proposed trip ... and it will be necessary to provide extra pack horses as we have not sufficient suitable horses of our own. There are only two animals at the Hay Camp that could be used as saddle horses ... the remaining four horses at Hay Camp are all heavy work horses unsuitable for saddle or pack use.... When the department decided to reduce the number of horses at the Hay Camp a few years ago provision was made for retaining a proportion of heavy work horses and some lighter animals which would be suitable for saddle and pack purposes to take care of normal requirements, however, our present establishment is not adequate for the needs of a party such as Dr. Love will require consisting of himself and three Park employees. On previous occasions horses have been rented for similar purposes at the rate of one dollar per day.  

Two light horses were loaned to the park by Mr. John Delin of Fort Smith for use by Dr. Love. In exchange for the free use of the horses, the park allowed them “pasturage on our meadows at the Hay Camp for the duration of the summer with the understanding that they will be cared for in the same manner as the park horses.”  

The following spring, Meikle expressed his concern at the lack of suitable horses at Hay Camp, in particular horses available for packing fire fighting equipment. The need was for pack horses that could be transported by scow up and down the river then dropped on shore to carry equipment inland to the fire location. Pack horses were also needed for researchers coming into the park. In 1944, J.D. Soper hired a team of trail horses in Fitzgerald to conduct research west of Fort Smith because he had been advised that none of the park horses were suitable for the trip.  

Meikle’s request for extra horses does not seem to have been acted on, for in 1949, H.L. Holman conducted an inspection of Wood Buffalo Park and, among other things, noted that “pack and draught horses have all been disposed of and there is nothing to take their place.” Holman was concerned that the park had failed to maintain the infrastructure of trails developed over the previous three decades. The availability of horses was of secondary importance, as most of the pack trails had grown over, leaving the park “completely inaccessible during the summer months, except by aircraft.” 

\[23^2\]NAC. RG 85 Vol. 1392 file: 406-13 (3a). M. Meikle, Memorandum to R.A. Gibson, June 8, 1944.  
\[23^3\]Ibid.  
\[23^4\]Ibid.  
\[23^6\]Ibid.
By 1950, horses were no longer an official part of the government work force at Hay Camp, although some were still present. The Beaulieu brothers brought their own horses for the bison round-up, and horses were also used to herd bison when Sweetgrass was flooded in 1960.

Mechanized Transport

Modern machinery became part of Hay Camp’s operations in the 1950s. Perhaps the earliest use of a gas-powered vehicle was in 1951, in conjunction with the first use of the portable abattoir and associated cabooses. A bombardier and sleigh, on loan from the Department of Indian Affairs, were used to transport meat from the kill site to the portable abattoir. The bombardier proved effective and a request was made by the Park for the purchase of one the following fall. It was considered essential in connection with the annual buffalo slaughter which is undertaken between December and February in Wood Buffalo Park, and for the transportation of supplies and equipment to warden and patrolmen stations, and for inspection within Wood Buffalo Park. In connection with the latter use, it will permit more economical transportation and permit the Chief Warden to carry out his supervisory duties in a more efficient and thorough manner. The purchase of a bombardier, cabin type, heavy track, transmission, equipped with a heater, towing attachment and cable winch - estimated cost $5,500.00.\textsuperscript{237}

As new machinery became available it was incorporated into the slaughter operations. At different times and locations, trucks, snow machines, helicopters, and fixed-wing aircraft were all used in the annual slaughters at Sweetgrass and Hay Camp to herd bison and transport meat products between kill sites and abattoirs.

Water Transport

One of the many functions fulfilled by Hay Camp was as a storage and distribution centre for goods and supplies within Wood Buffalo Park. Goods heading down-river toward Fort Smith could be landed at Hay Camp en route, saving on the extra cost incurred by having them shipped, back up-river, from Fort Smith. A dock, or wharf, was built at Hay Camp in order to accommodate the landing and unloading of supply steamers.

Wood Buffalo acquired its own river steamer, Ranger, in the early 1920s. In 1927, while undergoing regular maintenance repairs, Ranger caught fire and was destroyed. That winter a request was made for funding to build a new boat.

I am sending you our report relative to the recent destruction by fire, of our gas boat ‘Ranger’ plying on the Slave and Peace Rivers, adjacent to the Wood Buffalo Park. These rivers run for 150 miles through this park and movement of equipment and supplies as well as personnel is very largely along these rivers and a gas boat is

indispensable. It is also used as a patrol for fire.\textsuperscript{238}

A replacement boat, \textit{Ranger 2}, was built to match the specifications of the original \textit{Ranger}. Annual reports note general maintenance on the \textit{Ranger 2} until the late-1940s, at which point, the \textit{Beaver} was purchased to replace the aging \textit{Ranger 2}.

Earl Gordon recalls being sent to Hay Camp around 1955 to repair the \textit{Beaver}.

The old \textit{M.B. Beaver} was used for freighting in the park, they didn’t have any roads and they had to use a barge. The boat was really old and it was, you know, in pretty rough shape! We had to replace all the back end ... so we cut the back end off about six inches and replaced the back end and put the rudders back on. Then we took the blowtorches and we burnt all the paint off and scraped it. There was paint on there nearly half an inch thick. Just paint over paint, you know! It never did any good. Then we re-chinked it - the whole thing - with oakum, then repainted it. It was just like a brand new boat when we finished - it was really something to see! We did the same thing with the engine room, and the galley and the sleeping quarters. We really fixed it up nice. It was kind of a pleasure you know, to do that. We spent a month doing that.\textsuperscript{239}

Leonard Wylie described the \textit{Beaver} as “about forty-seven feet [in length]. It wasn’t a steel hull it was lumber, everything was lumber. One motor. It had sleeping quarters for five, four in the back in double bunks, and one in the wheelhouse. The galley was just below that. And they had one barge.”\textsuperscript{240} According to Mary McNeill Heron barges were usually pushed, “the only time you pulled a barge was on the lakes, with a towline.”\textsuperscript{241}

Water transport provided a number of important services for Hay Camp. Leonard Wylie, who was hired primarily for the fire patrol, states that during his time on the \textit{Beaver}, “beside the fire patrol, we’d haul supplies to the warden stations, when the Hay Camp was the depot there ... and that’s what I’d do all summer long. And also patrol at the same time. If there was any fire, well, they load the equipment on the barge and away I’d go wherever it was, ‘cause there were no planes. You had to walk in to the fire from the river.”\textsuperscript{242}

Earl Gordon was Skipper of the \textit{Beaver} for three summers in the late 1950s. He remembers hauling construction freight from Fitzgerald to Fort Chipewyan, Lake Mamawi, Lake Claire, and up Sweetgrass Creek, as well as barrels of diesel, gas, and food. Mary McNeill Heron remembers a

\textsuperscript{238}NAC, RG 85 Vol. 52 file: 143-15 Ranger 1 & 2. O.S. Finnic Memorandum to W.W. Cory, November 21, 1927.

\textsuperscript{239}Earl Gordon, interview by S. Dolan, 2000.


\textsuperscript{241}Mary McNeill Heron, interview by S. Dolan, June 12, 2000.

\textsuperscript{242}Ibid.
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variety of things being transported by barge along the river. “It [Beaver] transported different things, you know, if somebody was moving, if they had furniture it was transported with a boat in the summer months. On the river to the outer stations and stuff like that. And then, also with the fire rations and fire equipment.”

It is not known how long the Beaver was in service but in the end it was “pulled out and it sat on the flats in Fort Fitzgerald for years! It just deteriorated. I think what they did was just burn it.”

In 1935, Colonel F. M. Steel proposed that the landing at Hay Camp be updated. Steel, accompanying the Snyder Expedition through the Mackenzie District, reported that Hay Camp is “well kept but a better landing stage might be made available by use of barrels or drums, well anchored in the river with the posts arranged to take care of the rise and fall of the streams.” The existing stage was described by A.L.Cumming as a “small floating wharf to which aeroplanes could tie up, and also to which the Ranger is tied when loading and unloading supplies and equipment at the Hay Camp. This dock is pulled out by horses in the Fall and relaunched again in the Spring.”

Cumming listed the several shortcomings of the existing dock.

At extreme low water there is a long sand bar in front of the camp which prevents planes or boats using this dock. During this period planes are pulled up on the sand bar, but at high water they can tie up to the bank or to the floating wharf mentioned. This floating dock has given us fair service for the Ranger and scow, but is not strong enough to receive the heavy Hudson’s Bay boat and their 300 ton scow. The Captain of the H.B. boat much prefers to unload direct to the bank, water permitting, and if the water is too low on to the sand bar.

Cumming agreed with the proposal to build a new dock and suggested one “of larger dimensions similar to the one built by the Canadian Airways at McMurray.” He also down-played the amount of airplane traffic passing through Hay Camp, stating that they seldom arrive “unless they meet with trouble and wish to get in touch with the radio station by using our local phone. I think one plane per

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243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid., The dock is described as “constructed in sections so that it could be dismantled in the Fall and hauled to safety”.

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month would cover this class of traffic.”

Dempsey agreed with the proposal for a new dock at Hay Camp, stating that a “good dock of that kind is a much needed improvement.” He also pointed out that low water made it difficult for boats to approach the landing due to the sand bar “in the process of formation directly in front of the landing ... which would have to be considered in any plans for a solid dock.”

The various proposals met with a negative response from the Department of the Interior. “Mr. Cumming suggests improvements to the wharf at the Hay Camp on Slave River, but in view of the fact that this wharf is used almost entirely for freight for the Wood Buffalo Park, any improvements thereto could scarcely be charged to appropriation for the provision of transportation facilities into mining areas.”

In light of this response, and the fact that no further correspondence was found relating to this event, it is thought that a new wharf was never built at the Hay Camp.

**Telephone Line and Communications**

Communication between Hay Camp and Fort Smith was along a telephone line passing through Fort Fitzgerald. The initial proposal for the installation of a telephone line, put forward in 1925, had a dual purpose. “A telephone system for Wood Buffalo Park would be of great assistance in directing operations, besides which it would enable us to do effective patrol work with less men. We could use some of our horses to patrol the outside limits of the winter feeding grounds of the buffalo by utilizing the telephone clearance as a winter road.” Once the line was in place it became part of the annual maintenance program conducted by the wardens at Hay Camp. Spring flooding and storms uprooted and dislodged poles, and otherwise disrupted telephone service.

Until 1935, the government line was the only telephone line into Fort Smith. Around 1935, local businesses began applying for extensions of the government line. The Hudson’s Bay Company wanted to run an extension to its offices in Fort Smith. The company felt that if it could be notified prior to the arrival of its supply ship, the *Northland Echo*, outgoing passengers would be better prepared and ready for departure when the ship docked. A.L. Cumming failed to see any shortcomings in the existing system whereby “it has been the custom for the Warden in charge of the Hay Camp to telephone this [Fitzgerald] office as soon as the Hudson’s Bay boat or the Northern

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241Ibid.


243Ibid.

244*NAC, RG 85 Vol. 1183 file: 351-2-20 v.1, J.A. McDougal, Letter, August 13, 1925.
Transport boat has passed that point. The office staff immediately notified the parties concerned at Fort Smith.²⁵⁴

The system of telephone lines throughout the park expanded along with the network of roads and trails. A new road opened areas for the extension of phone lines and vice versa. Hay Camp remained a central location, as with the roads and trails. Remote locations converged at Hay Camp which in turn fed information to Fort Fitzgerald which passed it on to the District Headquarters at Fort Smith. For this reason, the section of telephone of primary importance within the park was the section between Hay Camp and Fort Fitzgerald.

By the 1940s, the Hay Camp-Fort Fitzgerald phone line was falling into disrepair, as were the roads and trails. Dempsey's 1941 Report observed that "the telephone line system in Wood Buffalo Park is in need of major reconditioning; during the last two summers due to the need of the warden staff on what was considered work of more pressing nature only the most urgently needed repairs have been made on the telephone lines."²⁵⁵ Maintenance work was done in response to several factors.

In the dry sand on the Jackpine ridges, poles rot off in four or five years; on the metallic line between Fitzgerald and Fort Smith poles have been reset until they are too low and approximately 250 new poles are needed and fifty per cent need resetting, and the line tightened all the way across the portage.²⁵⁶

Innovations in communications enabled the park to purchase six radiophone transmitter receivers in 1942. Receivers were installed at Hay Camp, Egg Lake, Hay River, Jackfish River, and Fort Smith. The sixth unit was used as a portable during the annual bison hunt, as well as on board the Ranger. When the question of telephone line maintenance came up in 1943, it was proposed that "as we have purchased radiophones for use in the Wood Buffalo Park, it has been decided not to continue a ground telephone line between Hay Camp and Rocky Point, and between Hay Camp and Pine Lake."²⁵⁷ The line between Hay Camp and Fort Fitzgerald was to be maintained as a back-up in case the radiophones failed.

During the 1940s, communications along the Hay Camp-Fort Fitzgerald road were upgraded and maintained in 'first-class' condition, while the reminder of the park deteriorated. The situation prompted, as with the deterioration of the roads and trails, the following comment by H.L. Holman after a visit in 1949.

The telephone line has fallen into complete disrepair and disuse. Either Oldham or


²⁵⁶Ibid.

Prescott, (I am not sure which) gave the last remaining workable bit (between Fitzgerald and Smith) to the Hudson's Bay Company on condition that they keep it in repair and allow us to have a phone on it. Our present radios by no means take its place and in fact function so imperfectly in certain seasons that for long periods we are completely without communication of any kind.  

THE FLOODS OF 1933, 1934 AND 1963

Annual flooding has always been a source of minor damage along the Slave River, although major floods which caused a great deal of damage were recorded at Hay Camp in 1933, 1934 and in 1963. The 1933 flood was described by J. Dewey Soper as of “proportions hitherto practically unknown. This is, in my estimation, the result of a very long, cold winter, great consequent thickness of ice and a cold spring,” all of which led to the ice damming the river and raising water levels to a point which “had not been paralleled in the past 20 years at least.” Many of the buildings were flooded by about a foot of water, although a series of dikes held back the largest portion of the flood. The worst flooding occurred in the meadows which were located in a “shallow basin about 4-5 feet lower than the buildings [and were] completely flooded - maximum depth of water about 5 feet. This covers the entire area of the main meadow of about 140 acres as well as smaller adjacent meadows and forested lowlands, making a total of probably close to 250 to 300 acres. This area still assumes the appearance of a lake.” When the meadow did not drain there was no food for the camp horses. Therefore, a ditch was dug about 140 feet south of ‘the southernmost residence’ to drain the water into the Slave River.

Damage to the site, according to Soper, was “practically negligible ... rations, furniture, etc., was elevated on boxes and stagings” above the high water mark. Only reserve hay stacks and ‘about’ forty buffalo hides were damaged by water. The dry tops of the hay stacks were fed to the horses, and the hides were “hung up on poles in the sunshine and wind and ... thoroughly dried and reconditioned.”

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
The 1934 flood was a much more severe event throughout the region. Many farmers and ranchers suffered losses and most reports noted the 1934 flood as the worst in fifty years for the Slave and Peace rivers.

No floods were experienced by Russell or Wagonitz, or [at Hay Camp] until 1933, when Peace river and Slave river spring floods were unusually high. This spring Peace river was ice jammed again at some islands on Slave river ... this caused the rivers to raise three feet higher than during the flood period of 1933. Our loss from this year was slight as compared to the loss at other hay camps on Slave river. Ryan Bros lost 250 tons of hay and 13 head of stock ... others lost wood, cabins, and supplies.264

A.L. Cumming visited Hay Camp following the flood and reported considerable damage to the buildings, and provisions and equipment destroyed.

The Ryan Bros. ranch and hay camp ... was also badly damaged by the flood. They lost twenty head of cattle and all pasture land and hay land is still flooded to a depth of five feet. They are killing off the remainder of their stock and shipping out their horses to McMurray. The R.C. Mission is exploring the Peace River in search of meadow which can be cut for hay. Colin Fraser and other owners of cows and horses are importing hay from Edmonton district.265

The situation was serious enough that tents were erected on high ground to accommodate J.D. Soper and C.H. Cooper and their families. At Hay Camp, various buildings were damaged, pole wood and building logs were scattered, hay racks were floated away, gasoline tanks drifted into the river, and a large portion of the stored provisions was damaged. Damage to the hay meadows was minimized by the drainage ditch dug during the flood in 1933.

According to Cumming, “all hands [at Hay Camp] willingly turned in to repair the damages and clean the buildings and equipment, also the grounds. Today [Hay Camp] is in a presentable condition.”266 The remaining work involved the recovery of cord wood and building logs that had been scattered around the hay meadow and into the surrounding bush.

Some discussion of alternative locations for Hay Camp followed the flood of 1934. Warden Dempsey located “a good site about one quarter of a mile up river from the present site which has not flooded yet where there is a good boat landing at all stages of water.”267 He suggested using the two heavy, and two good light harness teams at Hay Camp to haul the existing buildings on skids to the new location, while the old buildings could be stripped of lumber and rebuilt with fresh logs.


266Ibid.

Cumming was unwilling to incur the expenses of moving the entire camp. He responded that “the question of the location of the Hay Camp was decided ten years ago. I am of the opinion that a better site might have been chosen but due to the expense involved in moving buildings I would not recommend a change at this time.” The alternative was to construct any new buildings on higher ground, removed from the river’s edge.

The second abattoir at Hay Camp, constructed from 1960 to 1962, was, therefore, located on higher ground out of harm’s way. Still, flooding continued at the site, often inundating the meadows and damaging the system of fences and corrals.

A series of spring floods occurred along the Slave River from 1960 to 1962. The 1960 flood was severe enough to stop the planned slaughter at Sweetgrass. The water was too deep to allow for the use of machines for herding so horses were brought in. They proved inefficient as they were too often spooked and injured by the frightened bison. The superintendent even gave “full consideration to the possibility of diverting the [slaughtering] operation from Sweetgrass to Hay Camp” but there were, among other shortcomings, “no testing facilities, the corrals require extensive repairs, the old portable abattoir is beyond use and as it now stands it is condemned, no sharp freeze or storage facilities are available” at the latter location.

The construction of new holding and testing corrals planned for 1962 was delayed by spring flooding.

In respect to testing facilities and main holding corral, we were unable to start construction in the early spring because of soft ground conditions and all low spots were under water 1 to 2 ½ feet deep, and the condition continued throughout the summer due to heavy rainfall. The killing corral adjacent to the Hay Camp station between the Warden’s residence and the present site of the abattoir is low, and during the summer the Slave River twice overflowed its banks into this area which absolutely precluded any sturdy fence construction. Posts are put down 4 feet into the ground and to use any type of vehicle to dig the holes was out of the question - and in any event, had we done so under these circumstances, the resistance offered by such fences in soft water-logged ground would be negligible and any minor effort by the animals to escape would have resulted in mass exodus out of the corral. Low spots in the Hay Camp area started to dry up in October, but ground conditions are still wet in places, preventing sturdy corral construction.


\(^{270}\) Ibid.
Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

As a result, corral construction was “concentrated ... on high ground and fencing was completed on approximately seventy percent of the area to be enclosed.”

The 1963 flood at Hay Camp had the most severe consequences. Again, the higher location saved the new camp from the flood waters. “The buildings in the old camp however, suffered considerably and several buildings were lost completely.” Several of the buildings were salvaged and moved to the higher location of the new Hay Camp. The following year it was reported that “the old Hay Camp area was badly flooded last year with much ice damage ... some buildings have been moved from the old area. All that is left there is an [illegible] house (cold in winter), the old condemned makeshift abattoir and the first Wood Buffalo National Park log building (said to have been built in 1921).

Hay Camp Since the 1980s: The ‘Return to a Natural State’ or ‘Clean-up’

Ken East, who came to Wood Buffalo National Park as Superintendent in 1983, recalled a busy place with fire-fighting crews, service staff, and visitors in the summer. “In addition to those who drove to Hay Camp to visit people stationed there, the camp was a favourite stopping place for folks who intended to boat to Fort Chipewyan and sometimes to Fort McMurray.” Driving to Hay Camp, and using the boat launch ramp maintained by the Park, was a practical alternative to the long trip above the rapids at Fort Fitzgerald, and reduced the trip to four or five hours. Some drove directly through and launched their boats at Moose Island for a somewhat shorter journey, or to avoid the small set of rapids around the 30th Baseline.

In the winter, Hay Camp was comparatively quiet, even desolate at times, even though there was still a fair amount of local and Park traffic:

People, not in large numbers, bent on other business passed by. Families headed to Fort Chipewyan from Fort Smith passed by during the winter on their way to see relatives. And others drove in the other direction - certainly to see families but also for the bingo, for groceries and for Christmas presents.... The others who passed it by were the trappers with cabins along the way - Gabe Wandering Spirit, Ben Houle and his nephew Tommy, Peter Arnold and others. Trappers with lines on the opposite side of the river would frequently use an open area just south of Hay Camp to leave their trucks as they crossed the river by snowmobile and headed into the Shield.

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275 Ibid.
Park maintenance staff and the propane truck also came through on the way to La Butte to service the 400 foot radio antenna to the south. The propane generators powered flashing red air traffic warning lights.

The “fair weather” Loop Road (see Figure 2) and associated winter road linking Hay Camp to Fort Fitzgerald, and to Fort Smith to the north and Fort Chipewyan to the south, was integral to the continued existence of Hay Camp. The winter road traversed the Peace Athabasca Delta, crossing the Embarras, the Quatre Fourches, and the Peace River by means of ice bridges constructed by Park maintenance crews. It then headed north along the Slave River to Hay Camp. The road through Hay Camp was a key transportation link for local communities. “Anxieties over whether the winter road would be open in time for Christmas shopping started sometimes as early as mid-November in Fort Chipewyan with daily calls to the Warden Station to learn about progress on its construction.”276 From 1983 to 1985, there was still a commitment to the road and to Hay Camp. One of the proposals in the 1984 Park Management Plan provided for the upgrading of the Loop Road, but when the work estimate was presented at over $7 million, the prohibitive costs put an end to that option.

The demise of the Loop Road from Hay Camp to Moose Island ultimately sealed the fate of Hay Camp. In 1985-86, an Engineering Report concluded that the bridge over Darough Creek posed an imminent safety hazard, and that the condition of the Hornaday Creek structure was also bad. The Darough Creek bridge was removed, bringing immediate closure to the Loop Road as a year-round route. A snow and ice bridge was constructed over the creek to allow for winter use. Ultimately, however, the Hornaday River Bridge was removed for safety reasons and it became impossible to maintain the road, even in the winter. For a number of years afterwards, the winter road was ploughed as far as Darough Creek to allow access for local trappers.

As previously noted, Hay Camp was used only as a fire tower base in the 1980s. In 1989, the function was relocated to Pine Lake, amid some staff opposition, and a recommendation was made to “mothball” Hay Camp.277 Pine Lake was considered a more strategic and cost-effective location. The Hay Camp fire-fighting facility was completely closed in 1992. Around that time, or shortly before, there was a proposal to conserve the extant resources (cabins, abattoir, squeeze pen, corrals and fire tower) at the Hay Camp complex to interpret park conservation themes for visitors. The proposal called for exhibits on bison management activities from 1954 to 1967 in one of the remaining structures and interpretation along the access road which was one of the original park trails. Another important theme, the administrative history of the site, was also identified for presentation to visitors. Resources such as the telephone cut-line that followed the Fitzgerald-Hay Camp wagon road were still in evidence, and plans were available for the fire tower and the buildings dating back to the 1920s. The proposal also called for a moratorium on all plans for disposition278 but

276Ibid.


278“Historic Themes and Resources Wood Buffalo National Park”, no author, no date. Park files.
Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

it was not implemented. It is not clear from Park files consulted by the authors, why the resource conservation and interpretive plan was not acted upon, but it is suspected that costs and other priorities came into play.

In 1994, a decision was made to return Hay Camp to a “natural state,” or more specifically, to remove all man-made structures and debris, and to rehabilitate the landscape. The disposal and rehabilitation plan provided for the removal of all concrete structures, such as foundations, a barrel tank, an incinerator, and the sealing off of an old well. Contaminated soil located at the garage-powerhouse site was also to be removed. Excavations were to be filled and graded to allow the land to maintain its natural contour and allow for re-vegetation. The Environmental Assessment report prepared in 1995 specified that the enclosed laboratory and disposal site for infected bison, located about 100 metres southeast of the incinerator, was not to be disturbed. The only structures still standing in 1995 were the patrol cabin and the old fire tower. Local accounts suggest that not all materials were removed or salvaged by the contractor, as specified in the contract, and that some were burned or destroyed. The last remaining structures at the government Hay Camp — the cabin and fire tower — were removed in 1999 effectively obliterating the structural history of Hay Camp. Today, all that remains is the spirit of the place and the memories of all those who lived and worked there.

CONCLUSION

Hay Camp existed at a time when government policy regarding resource conservation was ambiguous, if not contradictory. Bison were to be protected in the park, but at the same time they were harvested for profit as well as food. A former local resident and employee recalled that “when they took that land over from the Natives, they said they only wanted it for the buffalo.” But people were pushed out. In acquiring the land, the Park also imposed restrictions on hunting and trapping by local people. Many felt that “Animal rights” had taken precedence over “Aboriginal rights,” and that a natural co-existence had not been achieved.

There were three classes of people employed at Hay Camp — the government “brass,” administrators who were almost exclusively “outsiders” and who “gave the orders” while seeming to have little understanding of local conditions; local Eurocanadian and Métis employees, mainly patrolmen or wardens, who directed operations in the field and were in contact with surrounding communities; and local Métis and Chipewyan seasonal employees who, in their own words, “did all the dirty work” or manual labour. The government bureaucracy knew how to exploit, or “work the Natives,” but Aboriginal employees were not involved in the decision-making or often given credit for their achievements. In terms of bison management, the outcome was also unsuccessful if not tragic, due to the lack of an integrated Aboriginal and Western knowledge base, as well as many ill-
conceived experimental studies and decisions. Except for a few outspoken individuals, the former Aboriginal employees at Hay Camp were generally cautious in their comments, acknowledging their opposition and indignation but also their powerlessness. Perhaps, for those who still work at the Park, there was a certain unwillingness to point fingers. “Telling their story” was often painful, as it brought back unhappy memories of orphaned childhoods, hard times and racial discrimination.

Local people regret the closure and removal of heritage resources at Hay Camp: “Too bad they let it go.” One person interviewed remarked: “Somebody said there were people there long, long ago — people were living at that place. It was nice and flat there ... I don’t know what happened.” In the 1970s and 1980s, Parks Canada carried out a number of studies that outlined important themes and resources in the Park. As the site of early Aboriginal land-use activities, the first Park administrative centre, a warden base camp and an important bison management complex in the 1950s and 1960s, the venue had a lot of heritage-presentation potential. But its history — particularly with respect to bison testing and slaughters — was controversial, and even embarrassing for Parks Canada, which wanted to avoid conflict and present a happy, nation-building history. This unwritten policy may at least partly explain the decision to dismantle Hay Camp. There is now a commitment to present “the many conflicting voices” of history as was done in this account and hopefully other park sites will benefit from this.

Hay Camp will be returned to descendants of the people who are indigenous to the region. The site is rich in natural and human history. It is hoped that the new occupants will respect the land and its memories and take the opportunity to tell its many faceted history in a spirit of reconciliation and hope.
Jack Russell’s Hay Camp on the Slave River, c. 1920. (National Archives of Canada - NAC PA-203567)

The Hay Camp viewed from the Slave River, c. 1940s. (Wood Buffalo National Park - WBNP)
Wardens Browning and Tompkins at the government Hay Camp putting up hay, cutting logs for cabins and stable. Photograph by Acting Chief Warden F.C. Bennett, August, 1924. (NAC PA-102504)

Warden Browning and J.A. McDougal, Superintendent, Wood Buffalo Park, in front of warden’s cabin at Hay Camp, September 1925. Photograph by O.S. Finnie. (NAC PA-147707)
Aboriginal cabin and log cache on the Upper Buffalo River. Date unknown. (University of Alberta Archives - UAA)

L to r: J. Dewey Soper, A. Berens, P. Bourque, M.J. Dempsey, R.J. Crew, on board barge on Peace River, June 1945. (NAC PA-101881)
Charlie Bird - Madeline Mercredi family, at either Rocky Point or Hay Camp, Wood Buffalo Park, c. 1930. L to r: Annie, Madeline (nee Mercredi), Mary with Dempsey girl, Joe, Charlie, Marguerite. (Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) OB21026)

Rosalie Mercredi and Mike Dempsey at Hay Camp, c. 1930. (PAA OB21024)

Adolphe Mercredi (left) with Brother Henri Sareault, c. 1930. (PAA B21023)
Nora and Margaret Dempsey, 1936. (WBNP)

Rosalie and Colin Dempsey at Hay Camp, 1925. (WBNP)

Buffalo Rangers south of Fort Smith, 1920. (NAC PA-101697)
Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

Roland Soper and Barney Cooper at Hay Camp, 1932. (PAA)

Portable abattoir at Hay Camp, 1960. (WBNP)
Slaughtering bison. (WBNP)

Corrals at the Old Hay Camp. Date unknown. (WBNP)
Putting up hay at the government Hay Camp, September 1925. Photograph by O.S. Finnie. (NAC C147706)

Granary and barn at Hay Camp, 1933. (UAA)
Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

Mike Dempsey on patrol at Hay Camp, 1930s. (PAA OB21017)

Warden D'Arcy Arden and dog team, 1933. (UAA)
J.D. Soper, M.J. Dempsey, and J. Taylor travelling by dog sled, 1932. (UAA)

Fire crew c. late 1970s. L to r: ‘Sloan’ Whitefish, Gerald Gibot, Archie Antoine, Sonny Bourke, Willie Courtoreille, Fred Vermillion. (WBNP)
Wagon road in Wood Buffalo Park, 1932. (UAA)

Road construction along the Pine Lake Trail, 1930. (NAC C66712)
Mike Dempsey, J.F. Moran, and Major Burwash jacking up their car two miles south of Fitzgerald, en route to Hay Camp, September 11, 1930. (NAC C66714)
Hay Camp: Part I: A Social History

Ranger II with sled dogs. (PAA)

Carrie and Roland Soper's temporary residence during spring flood of 1933. (UAA)
Spring flood at government Hay Camp, 1934. View is looking southwest. At maximum height, the water was three feet higher than in the photograph. Photograph by J.D. Soper. (NAC C147628)

View of the 1934 flood at the government Hay Camp looking southwest between the bunkhouse and the wood-work house. May 7. Photograph by J.D. Soper. (NAC C147628)

Flood water at corrals at Hay Camp, c. 1963. (WBNP)
Old Hay Camp after flood of 1963. (WBNP)

Flood damage at Old Hay Camp, 1963. Photograph by K.W. Hawkins. (NAC C147708)
Appendix A
A. List of people who worked at Wood Buffalo National Park based on government files, publications and oral history interviews consulted for this project. Those who are known to have been associated with Hay Camp are identified with an asterisk.
1916-22 William (Billy) McNeill - Chief Park Warden*
1920s John A. McDougal - Dist. Agent and Park Supt.*
1922 F.C. Bennett - Chief Ranger
1920s John Tournageau, Patrolman*
1922 Pierre Gladu(e)- Buffalo Ranger
1922-26 Hugh McDermott - Buffalo Ranger*
1923 A.G. Fowler - Ranger
1923 J.T. Browning - Ranger*
1923 Rudeen - Ranger
1923-24 Isidore Mercredi - Warden*
1923-26 F.J. Browning - Warden*
1923-26 H. Klukas - Warden
1924 F.C. Bennett - Assistant Chief Park Warden*
1924-26 Claude A. Watt - Warden
1924-26 J.T. Browning - Warden
1924-33 Philip D'Arcy Arden - Warden
1925 Kennedy - Warden
1925-26 Peter Tompkins - Warden*
1925-28 George Milne - Warden
1925-28 J.G. (Gus) D'Aoust - Warden*
1926 D.Watson-Warden
1925-28 Peter Tompkins - Warden*
1928 Biggs - Warden
1928 Nelson Hoy -Warden
1928-30 Hordal (Hordel?) - Warden
1928-31 DeCourcy C. Ireland - Warden
1929 O'COffey - Warden
1929-33 Robert Wylie -Patrolman*
1929-41 Frank C. Dent - Warden
1931 Hector McDonald - Warden
1931-41 Charlie Cooper - Warden*
1931-43 Robert James Allan - Warden
1932 Jack Taylor - Warden*
1933 Dave Hooker - Warden
1933-42 Charlie Bird - Warden
1934 F.C. Campbell - Warden
1934 P. Campbell - Warden
1934 Walter Wylie - Warden*
1934 Nelson Hoy - Warden
1934 William J. Rikley - Warden
1934-38 Lawrence H. Nice - Warden
1934-43 John A. Routh - Warden
1935 Peter Hanson - Seasonal Labourer
1935 Philip McKay - Assistant Warden
1935 Tom Bulteil - Warden
1935-37 Colin Wylie - Warden*
1930's Robert and Walter Wylie-,Seasonal Labourers
1936-40s Lawrence Clarke - Warden*
1936-37 A.H. Kemp - Warden
1938-50 William Braiden - Patrolman*
1939 Cunningham - Warden
1941 J.W. Stewart - Warden
1941 R. McRae - Warden
1941-46 Jack Sutherland - Warden
1942 Poitras - Patrolman
1942-43 Charlie Bird - Patrolman*
1943-48 Alec Berens - Patrolman
1943-52 Philip Bourque - Patrolman*
1946 I.F. Kirby - Warden
1946 Leonard Cardinal - Patrolman*
1946 Clayton Wylie, Warden*
1946-50 Philippe Mandeville - Patrolman*
1947-48 B.W. Duffy - Warden
1947-48 Bruce Boyes - Warden
1947-51 Herb Spreu - Patrolman
1947-52 F.A. McAll - Warden
1947-52 F.L. Fraser - Warden*
1947-52 J.H. Camsell - Warden*
1948 Doré - Warden
1948 E.A. McAll - Warden
1948 G.W. Gillies - Warden
1948 I.F. Kirby - Chief Park Warden
1948 J.B. Parsons - Warden
1948 J.W. Taylor - Warden*
1948 L.B. Post - Warden
1948 Lindberg - Patrolman
1948-52 W.H. Day - Warden
1949 Green - Warden
1950 E.M. Bulmer - Warden
1950 F.A. McAll - Chief Park Warden
1950 L. Beaulieu - Patrolman
1950 O.F. Eliason - Patrolman
1950 T.G. Douglas - Warden

Hay Camp: Part 1: A Social History
There were a number of other local people mentioned in interviews who were seasonal employees at Hay Camp or were associated with the 1966-67 bison slaughters. They were: Napoleon Abraham, Charles Desjarlais, Gordon Flett, Malcolm Jewell, Raymond Marie, Louis and Patrick Mercredi, Reginald McKay, Gilbert McDonald, Moise Nadary, John and Joe Tatson, William and Gabriel Tuccaro, Frederick Vermilion, Ernest and Laurence Villebrun, Ernest Cardinal, Horace Adams, Wallace Evans, John James Fraser,
Appendix B: Other people specifically associated with Hay Camp since 1924

1927-43 Brother Henri Sareault - Mobile Bison Slaughters
1930-34 J. Dewey Soper - Naturalist
1940s-50s Father Napoléon Lafferty [Lafferté] - Oblate Priest at Fort Fitzgerald
1940s Gabe Wandering Spirit - La Butte area trapper
1949- Nick Novakowsky and W. A. Fuller - Bison Research
1950s Paul, Harry and Arthur Beaulieu: Family of Horsemen
1958-68 Ray J. Cyr - Rifleman, Buffalo Slaughters
1952-55 D. Van Dyke - Butcher, Canada Packers
1954-55 Dr. F. Gallivan and Dr. G. Rankin - Meat Inspectors
1954-55 Jack Long - National Film Board Producer
1950s-60s Laco Hunt - Indian Affairs Administrator, Fort Smith
1966-67 Dr. L. Choquette, Canadian Wildlife Service
1966-67 Dr. W. Raine - Department of Agriculture
1966-67 Ken Powell - Meat Grader
1960s- Peter Arno(l)d - Trapper between Carlson Landing and Hay Camp
1960s- Narcisse Cardinal - Trapper, WBNP
1960s- Ben Houle - Local trapper
1960s to present, Gabe Sepp - Trapper Little Buffalo River
HAY CAMP: WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

PART II:
CULTURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY
HAY CAMP: WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK (1922 - 1995)

PART II: CULTURAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT:
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION

The Hay Camp Cultural Resource Assessment was triggered, in large part, by the signing of a treaty land entitlement with Smith’s Landing First Nation. As part of the land transfer, and in keeping with Parks Canada’s Cultural Resource Management and Environmental Assessment responsibilities, an inventory of in situ cultural features was conducted at Hay Camp from May 31 to June 14, 2000.

The people of Smith’s Landing First Nation are descendants of signatories to Treaty 8 which was signed on July 17, 1899 at Smith’s Landing (Richards 1999:1). The treaty land entitlement was never completed. Some of the land included under the treaty agreement fell within the boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park when the park was established in 1922. Smith’s Landing First Nation was a signatory to a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) with Parks Canada and the Department of Indian and Northern Development with selected lands specified in the MOI (Richards 1999:1).

One of the areas identified in the MOI was a 2.13 square kilometre area surrounding Hay Camp. This location is significant with regard to changing park administration objectives, particularly as they relate to bison and fire management. In many ways, the evolution of events at Hay Camp is a microcosm of the broader economic and social concerns of park management. This portion of the
social and land-use history report focuses on the land-use history by providing an on-site cultural resource inventory of the physical remains at Hay Camp. The information gathered during this inventory is correlated with the oral and documentary history of the area as part of the final report.

The area requested for excision as part of the treaty land entitlement is the 2.13 square kilometre portion of the Hay Camp complex identified in the Memorandum of Intent. From 1924 to 1989, the Hay Camp served, first as an active administration centre, and latterly as a bison and fire management centre for the park (Figure A). The camp’s location made it ideal as a stabling, haying, and warehousing centre for warden cabins situated in the park’s interior. Hay Camp served as the site for extensive bison management operations during the 1940s and 1950s. Those operations were moved to Sweetgrass in 1957. A “New” Hay Camp was established in 1962 as a result of continual flooding problems at Sweetgrass. The “New” Hay Camp was located on higher and dryer ground approximately 0.75 km north of the earlier location.

Hay Camp is one of the few sites within a national park to be associated with wildlife conservation for over half of a century. The Hay Camp complex consisted of administrative buildings, wardens’ dwellings, corral system, fire tower, and research centre. There are presently no extant structural resources although physical remains, such as foundation and corral outlines, cement foundations, and vegetation and topographic variation, all indicate the locations of previous structures and activities. The last two remaining extant structures, a fire tower and small cabin, were removed after the land was selected as part of the treaty land entitlement.

**OBJECTIVES**

Two of the key objectives identified in the terms of reference for this project were:

(a) to provide a documentation and an assessment of the cultural resources at Hay Camp as part of Parks Canada’s environmental assessment requirements for the treaty land entitlement and the upcoming transfer of land to Smith’s Landing First Nation; and,

(b) to provide a history of the development of Hay Camp which can be of mutual benefit to Smith’s Landing First Nation and Parks Canada in providing a point of reference for park visitors who wish to have a better understanding of the historical development of WBNP.

The intent of this portion of the report is to provide an inventory, description, and interpretation of the on-site cultural resources for both Parks Canada and Smith’s Landing First Nation.

**INVENTORY METHODOLOGY**

All visible or surficial cultural resources were assigned a Parks Canada provenience number, described, mapped, and photographed. The initial stage of this work involved conducting a reconnaissance of Hay Camp and defining functional areas identified as occupations in the Appendix, Part II. Each functional area was visually examined to identify locations showing terrain
modification, vegetation variation, or the remains of foundations and other extant features. These locations were then recorded as cultural features, described, photographed, drawn, and flagged for subsequent survey by the heritage recorders. The purpose of the survey was to develop a scaled map as a record of the physical cultural remains still present at the site.

Subsequent to field activities, the physical cultural features were correlated with information gathered from other project activities including: a review of historical documentation gathered from the archives; interviews conducted during the project; and a compilation of historic photographs of the Wood Buffalo/Smith Landing area focussing on images of built heritage and land use activities related to the history of Hay Camp.

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

Hay Camp is located near the junction of the Slave and Hornaday rivers, approximately 60 kilometres southeast of Fort Smith, in the Alberta portion of Wood Buffalo National Park (see Figure A). For the purpose of organizing information gathered during the inventory of the Hay Camp property, the study area was broken into the four distinct areas. The four occupation zones also represent geographic areas within the property.

1) “Old” Hay Camp- Site of early in-park administration and depot/entrepot for back-country supplies. It later became the first centre for the bison slaughter and disease testing programs. This area is situated on a floodplain in the south part of the entitlement area (Figure B).

Figure B: Remains of ‘Old’ Hay Camp. Photo by D. Hems, WCSC (2001R-121T).
2) **The Corral Systems**- Site used for bison testing programs at both the “Old” and “New” Hay Camp, originally consisting of winged fences and holding corrals. Later, holding pens, a squeeze shoot system, and an anthrax testing barn were constructed (Figure C).

![Figure C](image)

*Figure C: Remains of the corral system at Hay Camp. Photo by D. Hems, WCSC (2001R-127T).*

3) **Fire Management**- Area of the fire towers and staff cabins, situated in the north part of the entitlement area on the highest point of land in the area (Figure D).

![Figure D](image)

*Figure D: Remains of fire towers and staff cabins. Photo by D. Hems, WCSC (2001R-136T).*
4) "New" Hay Camp- The relocation of the bison management operations back to Hay Camp 3/4 km north of the previous location on higher ground. It is located along the Slave River in the central portion of the entitlement area (Figure E).

![Figure E: Remains of 'New' Hay Camp. Photo by D. Hems, WCSC (2001R-113T).](image)

ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION

The site, situated in a mixed poplar and spruce forest interspersed with meadows composed of a mixture of native and non-native grasses, is surrounded by forest, wetlands and water bodies. Soils are fluvial, and include a mix of sands and silts from the Slave River. The site is subject to flooding in high-water years. The higher areas are composed of dolomite covered with silts.

PRE-PARK LAND USE

The environmental setting of Hay Camp suggests a strong probability that it contains evidence of pre-contact occupations. Many areas in and near the portion of land selected for treaty land entitlement fit criteria commonly associated with the presence of pre-contact archaeological sites. In addition, the Slave River would have served as a major transportation corridor, and numerous archaeological sites have been recorded along its banks and islands.

In 1980 a 36.2 kilometre section of the Slave River, between the mouth of Murdock Creek and a large rock outcrop 1.5 km upstream of the Caribou Islands, was investigated and 15 archaeological sites were recorded (Stevenson 1981). Two of these sites 32R11 and 32R12 are in very close proximity to Hay Camp. 32R11 is 2 km south of Hay Camp on the west side of the Slave River. 32R12 is also on the west side of the river, 1 km downstream from Hay Camp (Figure F).
The Slave River archaeological survey revealed several multi-component sites rich in archaeological remains. At 32R7, charcoal collected from a hearth feature occurring 35-40 cm below the surface yielded a radiocarbon date of 3340-3630 BP. An Avonlea projectile point collected at 32R7 also suggests that bison hunters occupied the area between 1650-1150 BP. Site 32R13 yielded a corner-notched quartzite point with slight basal thinning and grinding which has been identified as a Pelican Lake projectile point. This projectile point style is associated with the late Archaic period and is thought to date between 3300 and 1750 BP. In summation, there is evidence that the Slave River has been used by hunters and gatherers for at least 3,500 years, the predominate group being northern plains bison hunters.

Other factors conducive to past habitation include a tributary of the Hornaday River which flows into the Slave River at Hay Camp. This tributary would have provided a reliable water source to past inhabitants. Furthermore, the Hornaday River was identified by François Paulette as a traditional transportation corridor used to access the northeast portion of Pine Lake (François Paulette: pers. com. 2000). The large Hay Camp meadow, as well as the relatively flat landscape near the Slave River, would have been an attractive food source for herbivores, particularly bison. These factors would have made the study area attractive for the original establishment of Hay Camp.

A high point of land, approximately 1 km north of the treaty land entitlement, is of particular interest. It has extremely good drainage characteristics and provides a superior lookout for game. This area was identified by François Paulette as having been previously used for hunting encampments. Its location and description correspond roughly with the location of 32R12 identified by Stevenson in 1981 (see Figure F). Testing of this site yielded only one green chert flake at a depth of 3-4 cm below the surface. Bedrock was reached at a depth of 10 cm below the surface (Stevenson 1983:7). An examination of the area during the summer of 2000 left little doubt that this would have provided a suitable vantage point for past peoples. However, no additional pre-contact cultural material was observed; this is likely the result of having had most of the top strata stripped away to extract underlying gravel deposits (Figure G). These gravel deposits have probably been used in the construction and maintenance of the

Figure F: Archaeological sites along the Slave River. From Stevenson, 1981.
Fitzgerald-Hay Camp road. Overall site significance is considered low, but there is little doubt that this location has been used in the past, probably as a lookout site.

The flood plain at the Old Hay Camp is another area with a high potential to contain buried archaeological deposits. Archaeological deposits in this area are likely to be found intact, as they would have been covered by flood deposits. Below-ground testing was not initiated because the objective of the inventory work was to record surface features only. The increased time and expense needed to conduct a sub-surface testing program was also a factor in this decision. A soil probe, however, showed evidence of at least 12 flood events in the upper 30 cm which would have naturally sealed and protected any buried deposits. Furthermore, because many of the structures at “Old” Hay Camp were built on the ground’s surface, very little terrain modification occurred, therefore, it is likely that buried deposits are undisturbed. It is also worth noting that, in one of the interviews concerning “Old Hay Camp”, Nora Dempsey Freund remarks that her “mom says somebody told her that house was built over an Indian grave” (Dempsey Freund interview).

“OLD” HAY CAMP

Administration

Wood Buffalo National Park was created in December of 1922. The original park boundaries encompassed the area of the present park north of the Peace River (Potyondi 1979:84). The intent was to protect the few remaining wood buffalo. As a means of administering this wood buffalo sanctuary, a chief park warden was appointed to supervise buffalo rangers, and a warden headquarters was established at Hay Camp. This marked the first phase of Hay Camp as an administration centre for Wood Buffalo National Park. With the importation of bison from Wainwright in 1926 north of
Hay Camp: Part II: Cultural Resource Assessment

Hay Camp it grew in importance and more administrative activities were conducted from this location. Horses were maintained at Hay Camp and used as pack horses, while dogs were also used by wardens to assist in carrying out patrols. In 1933 Dewey Soper made a complete survey of the Hay Camp complex and its buildings (Figures H and I). Soper also arranged to have hay cut from four areas totaling 100 square feet each in order to arrive at an estimate of the hay yield that could be expected from this location (Potyondi 1981: 14-15). Haying was undertaken from the 1920s until the late 1940s to feed horses. Later haying was conducted to feed corralled bison being held for disease testing. Experimental farming was also undertaken and Brome grass and oats were planted as an experiment (see Figure H).

By the 1940s the area's importance as an administration centre had diminished and it was used primarily as a depot for back country warden stations. In the early 1950s it became the base for bison management activities and the location for the portable abattoirs and those individuals employed for the bison slaughter. This Hay Camp location was abandoned when the bison management activities were moved to Sweetgrass. Some buildings were also moved to Sweetgrass and in 1963 the remaining buildings were either destroyed because of damage from the 1963 flood or moved and used at the “New” Hay Camp constructed 0.75 kilometres to the north.
Figure H: Hand-drawn map of Hay Camp including the Hay Camp meadows by J.D. Soper, 1934. NAC RG 85 Vol. 1200 file: 400-15-1 v
Figure I: Hand-drawn map of Hay Camp produced by J.D. Soper, 1934. NAC RG 85 Vol. 1200 file: 400-15-1 v.1.
Inventory Results of Old Hay Camp

A total of 17 surface features were documented on this grassy flood plain of the Slave River. These features consist, generally, of some form of terrain modification such as mounds or depressions. The various features are described in detail in the Appendix to Part II, and plotted on the site map. According to historic records, “old” Hay Camp was a hub of activity from 1924-57. By 1932 a complex of 10 buildings (exclusive of implement storage sheds) existed at Hay Camp (Figure I). By the late 1940s reports indicate that the “old” Hay Camp had fallen into disrepair. In 1963 the last of the buildings at the “old” Hay Camp were dismantled or removed. Gord Masson, who assisted with the moving of the buildings from the “old” Hay Camp to the “new” Hay Camp, provided a sketch map of his recollection of the building locations at the “old” Hay Camp at that time (Figure J).

Figure J: ‘Old’ Hay Camp circa 1963 based on a sketch made by Gord Masson. Digital map adapted by Patrick Carroll. WCSC.
It was possible to locate only a portion of the building remains documented in the historic record. There are several reasons for this:

a) Historic records document numerous floods along the Slave River with particularly heavy flooding in the years 1933, 1934, and 1963 (Figure K). Analysis of a soil probe revealed at least a dozen flood events within the top thirty centimetres of soil. Flooding resulted in the deposition of river silts overtop of what may have been foundation remains. The degree of soil deposition on this site also suggests the possibility of buried pre-contact remains. The potential for locating buried cultural resources could not be confirmed as sub-surface testing was beyond the scope of this project.

b) Many building remains are not visible because the buildings were constructed on the surface without a substructure and without modifying the terrain.

c) The north end of the site was used as a dog camp during the “New” Hay Camp period. Extensive digging by the dogs kept at the camp would have obliterated evidence of structural remains in this area. In addition, a new access road leading to the dog camp changed the perceived relationship between feature remains at the “old” Hay Camp.

d) Subsequent alteration of the Fitzgerald - Hay Camp road alignment made it difficult to use historic photographs to place the location of structural remains and features relative to the original location of the road.

THE CORRAL SYSTEM

It is difficult to discuss Hay Camp and the evolution of the construction of the corral system without some background on the history of bison management in Wood Buffalo National Park. The following bison management eras are based on a report by Randy Mitchell (1976).

1922-50 (Field Slaughters)

In 1929, the Chief Warden authorized the slaughter of ten buffalo, with the meat going to support missions at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution. In later years, meat was also distributed to local residential schools and hospitals (Potyondi 1979:92-93). Due to a developing bison management policy, and as a means of controlling disease and herd size, an annual slaughter was begun. In 1931 J.D. Soper was sent to Wood Buffalo to conduct a census of bison herds. If he found the herds were
increasing in number, he was to make recommendations as to the appropriateness of establishing a park abattoir for the annual slaughter of bison (Potyondi 1981:12). In 1945-46 investigations suggested that 4% of the bison herd were infected with tuberculosis. Consequently, testing for the disease became part of the annual bison management program. (Potyondi 1979: 99)

1950-52 (Field Kills)
Slaughters were first conducted in the field, but conditions provided little control over butchering and storage, and raised concerns regarding the quality of the meat. To address these issues, a portable abattoir was constructed in 1950. The portable facility consisted of three large, wooden, cabooses towed behind a Caterpillar tractor. The cabooses were linked together at the kill site to form the ‘abattoir,’ then later disconnected and towed back to be stored at Hay Camp (WBNP file v:6). (See Figure L)

1952-56 (Hay Camp)
The first major report on tuberculosis was written in 1952. The study indicated a correlation between the distance from Hay Camp and the incidence of the disease. It was established that between 29% and 45% of the Hay camp herd were infected (Potyondi 1979:99). The bison management program involved an annual slaughter conducted by park staff, with the assistance of a veterinarian. The slaughter occurred in a portable abattoir at Hay Camp, where a corral facility and winged fences had been constructed. By 1954 the sale of meat was seen as an opportunity to generate revenue with surpluses directed toward the costs of maintaining the Wood Buffalo National Park.

1957-61 (Sweetgrass)
In association with the transfer of the Wood Buffalo Bison Management program, a modern abattoir was constructed at Sweetgrass in 1957. The Sweetgrass abattoir was used annually, despite serious flood damage in 1958, 1960, and 1962.

1962-68 (“New” Hay Camp)
In 1961, due to excessive flooding at Sweetgrass, a second abattoir was constructed at Hay Camp. Construction coincided with a major effort to create a southern Canadian market for bison meat. The presence of anthrax in the Wood Buffalo herds led to the initiation of a massive vaccination program which involved a series of experiments intended to assess the efficiency of the vaccine.

Inventory Results of the Corral System (Old and New Hay Camps)
The corral system was first constructed between 1952 and 1953, and consisted of winged fences to guide the bison into a holding corral. Later, as part of the disease testing program, two holding
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Figure M: Map of the Hay Camp corral system based on a sketch map drawn by Gord Masson. Digital map adapted by Patrick Carroll, WCSC.
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corrals — one to hold bison prior to testing for tuberculosis and brucellosis, and the other to hold the bison which were to be slaughtered — were constructed. In 1962, the centre of the first holding corral saw the construction of three elliptical holding pens, a double fence feature, a squeeze chute containing squeeze pens, and a squeeze barn. The holding pens were constructed in an elliptical fashion to ensure that the bison circulated around the pen. Early attempts to use rectangular pens resulted in the bison crowding in the corners and trampling one another (interview with Earl Gorden). The bison were given a tuberculosis injection to test for their reactions to the disease. The quarantine period for tuberculosis testing was seventy-two hours during which the animals were routed through a series of three holding pens. Each day, the animals were moved into the next pen in order to segregate the various stages of testing. On the third day, the injected animals were examined. The animals that reacted positive to tuberculosis were classified as 'reactors' and killed. A decision was made regarding the animals that tested negative as to whether they would be released, or directed to the holding corral for slaughter (Figure M).

Extant remains of the holding pen consisted of collapsed posts outlining the exterior of the pen, as well as collapsed posts which formed part of the centre posts (Figure N). The areas of the holding pens, double fence, and squeeze chute show excessive trampling, which in concert with a sharp distinction in vegetation height, delineate their location. This is the result of the holding pens having been cleared for construction. The regrowth is substantially lower than in the surrounding area. For detailed descriptions see Appendix and the associated site map.

Remains of the holding corrals are also present. Although many of the posts have been cut, they are still piled in their original location. In some instances the base of the post is still visible in the ground. The holding corrals and winged fences, which were used to herd the bison into the corrals, encompass a large area outside the property designated for treaty land entitlement. These features are visible on the master map.

After the outbreak of anthrax in the park in 1964, a large plywood barn was constructed at Hay Camp. Experiments were conducted wherein bison kept in this barn were injected with anthrax. The barn was burned after all the animals died. This area was then covered with a mound of lime and gravel, and enclosed by a wire fence (Gord Masson pers com 2000).

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (FIRE MANAGEMENT)

Fire towers were constructed in the park as a means of environmental protection. When J.D. Soper visited the park in the 1930s, there was a plethora of fire towers (Potyondi 1981:115), but by 1953 there was only one fire tower operating in the park, as much of the fire monitoring was by then reported to the Fort Smith office by airline pilots (Potyondi 1981:115). In 1953 a wooden fire tower
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was constructed on a height of land located about one kilometre northeast of New Hay Camp (Potyondi 1981:117). Associated with the tower was a cabin which housed the fire tower employee. In 1962 a metal-framed fire tower was constructed to replace the original wooden tower, and a new cabin was built for the fire tower employee. The previous cabin was used as a storage shed.

In 1973, with the closure of the abattoir at the end of the bison slaughter program, Hay Camp became a base for Wood Buffalo National Park’s fire management program. Existing buildings were used, which meant that no new buildings had to be constructed. In one instance, disturbance to the remains of the resident’s house mark the location where a radio cabin was placed. In 1989 Hay Camp was moth-balled as a fire management centre and the operations moved to Pine Lake. In 1993 a fixed-detection analysis recommended that the Park cease staffing the fire tower at Hay Camp. The Hay Camp fire tower was finally removed in 1999. The remains of the lookout cabin were extant near the remains of the old abattoir during the period of the inventory (Figure O).

Inventory Results of the Fire Management Area

The location of the fire tower is identified by eight rectangular depressions which had been excavated to remove the concrete blocks which supported the tower. Four of the depressions mark the location of the base of the tower; the other four mark the concrete blocks which were used to secure the guy wires which helped to support the tower. Locations of the cabins were identified by the presence of leveled ground and the associated effect this had on vegetation regrowth.

Remains of garbage pits, privy holes, scattered fence posts, and the employees’ gardens are also visible in this area. All of these locations are described in the Appendix and are plotted on the site map. Also, a large refuse area situated in close proximity south of the fire tower area was used for the disposal of slaughtered bison carcasses.

“NEW” HAY CAMP

Construction of a modern abattoir in a new location at Hay Camp was undertaken during 1960-61, in response to repeated flooding at Sweetgrass. Construction at the “New” Hay Camp included log houses, warden’s quarters, bunkhouses, warehouses, and sheds. A major flood at Hay Camp in 1963 destroyed most of the remaining structures at Old Hay Camp. Salvageable buildings were moved to the new location, including the bunkhouses, one of the warehouses, and the old warden cabin (the brass house). These are identified in the descriptions provided in the Appendix.
In 1975 the equipment at the New Hay Camp was removed. The camp was primarily occupied in the summer as a base for the park’s fire management crew. Most of the extant structures and features were removed in 1995, and, in 1998, a Memorandum of Intent for treaty land entitlement was signed, resulting in the demolition of the remaining structures.

**Inventory Results for the New Hay Camp**

A total of 33 physical features were identified and described (see Appendix). These are primarily the remains of the staff housing, bunkhouses, warehouses, various sheds, and the abattoir. Three concrete foundations belonging to the abattoir, garage, and lime shed, are still evident (Figures P, Q, R). Remaining features were identified by the presence of depressions, and variations in vegetation. These features consisted of cess pits, wells, walkways, and roadways. The core of the “new” Hay Camp facility was situated on the terrace above the boat launch.

**Linear Features**

There are a number of linear features related to transportation and communication that could not be specifically associated with any of the designated areas. Still, they were important to the development of Hay Camp. These features have been identified as roads, trails, and communications. The roads and trails have been identified on the site map.

In 1928, park wardens installed a telephone line through the trees along the Fitzgerald-Hay Camp cut line (WBNP v:5). In 1942 the park began to install radio phone transmitter receivers to improve
communication (Potyondi 1981:68). In a 1945 report, Soper indicated that telephone lines were often out of service, roads and trails were overgrown, and many cabins were decrepit. After the second World War a motorized grader was allocated for work on the Hay Camp-Fitzgerald trail, and also used to upgrade the trail from Hay Camp to Pine Lake (Potyondi 1981:68). The Hay Camp - Fitzgerald road was upgraded again in 1963 as part of the infrastructure for the New Hay Camp. This work altered the road alignment through Old Hay Camp. In 1967 an access road to the dog camp established at old Hay Camp was constructed further altering the location. Road construction between Hay Camp and Pine Lake began in 1950 (Potyondi 1981:104).

CONCLUSION

The evolution and development of Hay Camp closely parallels the changing priorities of Wood Buffalo National Park. The creation of the park in 1922, and the need to administer this vast land base containing the last remaining wood bison, led to the creation of bison rangers who were stationed at Hay Camp. The importation of diseased bison from Wainwright in 1925, and the expansion of the park, resulted in even greater administrative requirements. This was followed by early attempts at bison disease management and small scale slaughters, intended to provide meat to northerners who were losing their traditional way of life. As a result, Hay Camp’s function within the park shifted from an administrative centre to bison management. Later efforts to eradicate diseases such as tuberculosis and brucellosis within the wild herds led to bison management practices that reflected a high level of intervention, and often resulted in even more elaborate field structures. Coincident with an increasingly complex management program was a shift to supplying meat for southern commercial markets as a cost-recovery approach for the disease management programs. The shipment of meat to upscale restaurants, and ultimately Expo 67, can be seen as reflective of Canada’s expanding role on the world stage. Efforts in the 1990s to return Hay Camp to its “natural state” mirror Parks Canada’s interest in an ecosystem-based approach to park management and commitment to ecological integrity. The present efforts to document Hay Camp show the gradual recognition that cultural and ecological concerns are interwoven, and attempts to obliterate evidence of past human activities are essentially futile. Whatever efforts are undertaken to remove the evidence of Hay Camp, the landscape will always speak, through its altered vegetation and terrain, of the operations which occurred at this site.
APPENDIX

The following is a list and description of the visible cultural resource features at Hay Camp examined as part of the archaeological inventory. Where possible identifications have been made as to the original function of each feature on the basis of historic photographs or individual recollections. This inventory data is to be used in conjunction with the maps which follow and which pinpoint the locations of the physical features described below.

The descriptions have been divided into geographic zones identified in the report, and correspond to the various map details that have been included.

HAY CAMP (2001R0)

HISTORY OF OCCUPATION

A. Old Hay Camp
In-park administrative centre for Wood Buffalo National Park since the establishment of a warden cabin in 1924.
AD 1924 - 1957
COMMENTS: The Chief Warden, an administrator, and their families lived permanently at Hay Camp. Visiting wardens, labourers, and cooks lived and worked there seasonally. Supplies for park operations arrived by steamer and were stored for redistribution. By 1932 a central administrative complex consisting of 10 buildings (exclusive of sheds) was present. Buildings included cabins, warehouse, cookhouse, barn, granary and bunkhouse. During the 1940s and 1950s extensive bison slaughtering was conducted as part of the bison management program, to eradicate TB and anthrax from the park herds. In 1957 the annual slaughter was moved to Sweetgrass and some buildings were moved there from Hay Camp.

B. Corral System
Winged fences, corrals and holding pens used for bison slaughter in order to supply meat to various centres.
AD 1953 - 1967
COMMENTS: The corral system was built partly in response to increased demand for meat from northern settlements and was used for both Old and New Hay Camp. Bison slaughters continued until 1967. An unsuccessful program was instituted to eradicate TB and anthrax. In 1956 bison were tested for TB and reactors were killed. In 1964 an anthrax outbreak prompted the start of an experimental vaccination program at the corrals. Many bison died or were killed and the barn was burned. The last commercial bison slaughter occurred in 1967 and the corrals were no longer used. In 1977 the anthrax vaccination program was abandoned.
C. Fire Tower
Wooden fire tower and associated fireman's cabin were constructed in 1953. In 1993, recommendation for Parks Canada to cease operation of the fire tower.

AD 1953 - 1993

COMMENTS: The 1953 fire tower was replaced by a metal structure in 1962. A fireman's cabin was associated with each fire tower. In 1973 the fire control base camp was moved to Hay Camp from Pine Lake. A new helicopter pad was built and existing structures were used. Hay Camp was in use only during the summer. In 1989 the base camp was moved back to Pine Lake. A 1993 fixed detection analysis recommended that Parks Canada cease to man the fire tower. The tower was removed in 2000.

D. New Hay Camp
Construction of new camp began with land clearing in 1961, some structures were built on the site, others were moved from old Hay Camp. Last commercial bison slaughter in 1967.

AD 1961 - 1967

COMMENTS: Flooding at Sweetgrass led to the decision to return the annual bison slaughter to Hay Camp. A permanent abattoir constructed at the new camp was operational by 1962. Other structures included cabins, bunkhouses, warehouses, implement shed, barn and helipad. By 1963 all standing structures at Old Hay Camp had been demolished or moved to New Hay Camp. Bison slaughters continued as did unsuccessful anthrax vaccination testing. Last commercial slaughter was in 1967 and the abattoir was no longer used after this. Full camp no longer in use, although a warden continued to reside year-round until 1972. The camp was used later for fire management purposes.

HISTORY OF SITE INVESTIGATION

2000
David Hems
mapped/recorded

OBSERVATIONS: Inventoried, mapped, and photographed structural remains and features associated with (A) Old Hay Camp, (B) Corral system, (C) fire tower area, and (D) New Hay Camp.

REFERENCE: FN
LISTING OF CULTURAL RESOURCES BY AREA OF OCCUPATION

A. OLD HAY CAMP
See Map: Detail A.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE

1 bridge crossing
COMMENTS: An approximately 3m wide bridge crossing located at the top of the bank on the north side of the 9.7m wide drainage ditch constructed in 1933 to drain floodwaters. The bridge marks the location of the original Hay Camp road. The present road is about 42m to the west.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 43

2 concrete foundation
COMMENTS: Grass-covered concrete footing 0.4m wide, separating two structural depressions, one 3.8m x 2.7m and the other 3.5m x 3.2m. Structure function unknown.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 37

3 depression
QUANTITY: 2
COMMENTS: Two shallow depressions separated by a ridge and delineated by an area of shorter and thinner grass. One depression measures 4.5m x 3.6m and the other is 3.1m x 3.3m.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 38

4 depression
COMMENTS: A shallow depression with sides measuring 2.7m, 2.9m, 3.1m and 3.2m. Located in an area of small poplars. 1.8m north of the log box (#12).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 47

5 depression (barn)
COMMENTS: A large, deep depression south of the creek and west of the road which accesses the north part of the site. Gabe Sepp was able to identify this location as the barn because as he had to excavate out the manure, creating the depression. The barn was 12.8m (42') x 10.6m (33') with stalls for 12 horses and built of spruce logs with a high-pitched gable roof. Part of the barn was walled off for use as a tack room. A hay loft was above the entire length of the main floor.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 53

Resource No. 53: Barn built in 1930. Photo on file - WBNP
6 depression (cookhouse)
COMMENTS: A long, rectangular depression measuring 15.2m and 14.6m along the sides, and 5.2m and 3.7m at the ends. Identified by Gord Masson as the likely location of the cookhouse, which was a log structure with two windows along each side wall and one window on either side of the entrance in an end wall.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 41

7 depression (portable abattoir)
COMMENTS: An L-shaped trench depression located north of the small depressions associated with the dog pens (#10). Possible location of the portable abattoir.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 51

8 depression (powerhouse)
COMMENTS: A shallow rectangular depression with sides measuring 2.98m, 2.85m, 3.2m and 3.45m. Located northwest of the warden's house (#17) and east of the access road to the house. Identified by Gord Masson as possibly the powerhouse that was moved to New Hay Camp where it functioned as warehouse #1 (#71).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 49

9 depression (warehouse #2)
COMMENTS: A rectangular depression 3.7m x 3.1m x 0.3m deep. Identified by Gord Masson as location of warehouse #2, which was subsequently moved to New Hay Camp.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 40

10 dog pen
COMMENTS: Dog pen 8.2m x 6.0m with associated small depressions located 2.8m north of a drainage channel from the road. The road was likely constructed in 1967 to access the dog camp established here, but associated with New Hay Camp.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 39
11 mound
COMMENTS: A rise of land 16m x 11m, possibly a building platform, located south of the shallow depression (#3).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 52

12 log box
COMMENTS: A four-course log stand 1.2m x 2.2m x 0.6m high filled with soil, cobbles and gravel. A woodpile is nearby. Located north of the warden’s house (#17).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 46

13 refuse area
COMMENTS: A graded area pushed up to create an 18m x 6m berm and a mound on the south side of the drainage trench. Willow growth occurs on the north and south sides of the berm.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 48

14 root cellar (antenna tower)
COMMENTS: A 1.5m x 1.5m x 0.35m deep depression located near a row of willows. Gord Masson identified this as possibly the antenna tower location.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 42

15 rose bushes (Heron log cabin)
COMMENTS: A patch of rose bushes north of the dog pens (#10), identified by Mary Heron as the area of her log cabin. Nora Dempsey Freund identified this location as the original Soper house prior to Heron occupying it.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 50

16 septic pit
COMMENTS: A 4.2m x 3.7m x 2.5m deep depression located southeast of the warden’s house (#17). A pipe is in the north part of the feature. Caragena growth surrounds the pit with a scattering of poplar to the south.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 45
17 warden's house ("Brass House")

COMMENTS: Constructed in 1947, this structure replaced the log cabin which had been the residence of park warden M.J. Dempsey. The Dempsey cabin was at this location, but construction of the new house obliterated its remains. The “Brass house” was later moved to New Hay Camp (see #56) and what remains at the second location is the 8m x 7m foundation with concrete footings 0.25m wide. A 1.5m x 1.0m well is in the northeast corner, with a 1.0m wide by 6.0m long walkway leading to it. A 1.2m wide by 14.7m long walkway leads to a 1.5m x 1.5m x 1.2m deep depression at the exterior of the west wall. Refuse dumps are located behind the house and the garden was near the rhubarb plant about 7m southwest of the house.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 44

B. CORRAL SYSTEM

See Map Detail: B

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE

18 anthrax barn (vaccination)

COMMENTS: Located in eastern part of corral complex, area currently fenced off and known as the “bison burial”. After the outbreak of anthrax in the park in 1964 a large plywood barn was constructed, where, according to Gord Masson, anthrax vaccines were tested. Upon completion of the experiment the barn was burnt. One hundred cords of wood and 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel fed through the roof were used in the burning process. The area was then covered with 1.0 foot of lime, then plastic and 3.0 feet of gravel.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 61

19 bridge

COMMENTS: A bridge at the east end of the corral chute (#20), crossing the creek. The bridge connected the holding corral to the slaughter area. A culvert is lengthwise in the creek.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 64
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20 **corral chute**

**COMMENTS:** Corral chute leading to south holding corral. Represented by 18 fence post piles, with a ridge on either side of the piles. The ridges were created by intensive bison traffic. This chute separated the bison testing area from the holding corral for infected bison.

**RESOURCE NUMBER:** 60

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21 **double fence**

**COMMENTS:** A double fence running along the outer and inner edges of the bison path leading from holding pen #3 (#32) to the funnel (#22). Outer edge defined by a ridge and a border of vegetation, while disturbed vegetation and willow growth indicate the inner edge.

**RESOURCE NUMBER:** 71

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22 **funnel and squeeze chute**

**COMMENTS:** Squeeze chute defined by worn bison trail running from the funnel to the squeeze barn (#29). The funnel is defined by disturbed soil and vegetation due to bison trampling, with slight ridges and occasional posts also present. The funnel was 16' (4.9m) wide with an overhead gate, narrowing to a 32" (0.8m) squeeze. Twenty individual stalls (squeeze pens) were located in the chute.

**RESOURCE NUMBER:** 75

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23 **holding pen #1**

**COMMENTS:** Holding pen 300' (91.4m) long, oriented north-south in the eastern part of the corral complex. Defined by a centre ridge with fallen fence posts, while tall poplar growth, fallen fence posts and a ridge indicate the outer edge. The inner edge has been obliterated by grading and vehicular traffic. Gates measuring 16' (4.9m) across would have been at either end of the pen.

**RESOURCE NUMBER:** 65

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24 **holding pen #2**

**COMMENTS:** Holding pen oriented east-west in southern part of corral complex. Defined by a line of small poplars along the centre ridge and tall trees along the outer edge. The inner edge has been obliterated by grading and vehicular traffic, and a line of willows may define some of the edge. Gates were present at either end of the pen. The east gate connecting to holding pen #1 (#23) has fallen over and the west gate connecting to holding pen #3 (#25) is absent.

**RESOURCE NUMBER:** 67
25 holding pen #3
COMMENTS: Holding pen oriented east-west along the southern part of the corral complex. Defined by a centre ridge and fallen fence posts, with fallen posts and tall poplars indicating the outer edge. The inner edge has been obliterated by grading and vehicular traffic. Gates would have been present at either end of the pen, with the eastern gate connecting to holding pen #2 (#24) and the western gate to the funnel.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 69

26 mound
COMMENTS: A 14m x 10m x 1.0m high sniper mound located in the slaughter area of the corral complex, north of holding pen #3 (#25). The bison were shot and killed from the mound.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 77

27 north corral fence
COMMENTS: A fence extending north from the corral chute (#20) toward the road to the abattoir.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 63

28 south corral fence
COMMENTS: A fence extending south from the corral chute (#20).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 62

29 squeeze building
COMMENTS: Remains of a structure defined by a disturbed graded area, intersecting the end of the squeeze chute (#22) just west of the road to the abattoir. Building was 24' (7.3m) x 40' (12.2m) and contained the squeeze pen and a weigh scale. Animals were given a dose of TB, held in the building and then sent to either holding pen #1 (#23) or the anthrax barn (#18). Blood samples were also taken from the animals and they could be branded, vaccinated, and tagged.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 76

30 trough (holding pen #1)
COMMENTS: A 11m x 3m trough located on the centre fence line in holding pen #1 (#23).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 66

31 trough (holding pen #2)
COMMENTS: A 10m long trough located on the centre fence line in holding pen #2 (#24).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 68
32 trough (holding pen #3)
COMMENTS: A 10m long trough located on the centre fence line in holding pen #3 (#25).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 70

33 wood remains
COMMENTS: Wood remains associated with and located in the funnel, possibly indicate the location where the funnel begins to narrow.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 72

34 wood remains
COMMENTS: Wood remains associated with the funnel and located east of the wood remains in the funnel (#33).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 73

35 wood remains
COMMENTS: Wood remains associated with the funnel and located east of other wood remains (#34).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 74

C. FIRE TOWER
See Map: Detail C.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE
36 depressions (fire tower)
QUANTITY: 8
COMMENTS: Fire tower represented by four 1m x 1m depressions delineating a 6m x 6m area. In addition, four guy wire depressions are situated diagonally 15m to 16m from the tower base depressions. The tower originally sat on four concrete pedestals 4.5' (1.4m) high. A road runs to the south and west.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 54
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37 disposal area
COMMENTS: A large disturbed area located south of the fire tower, west of the access road to the tower on the south side of the creek crossing. This area was used for both refuse and the disposal of bison carcasses.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 59

38 garden
COMMENTS: A garden area located between the old fire tower (#36) and the old fireman’s cabin (#40).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 58

39 new fireman’s cabin
COMMENTS: A rectangular disturbed area with sides measuring 4.9m, 5.2m, 5.3m and 5.9m, located at the end of the fire tower road. A 5.9m long walkway leads from the north side of the cabin to a deep rectangular depression covered with wood.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 55

40 old fireman’s cabin
COMMENTS: A slightly raised earth platform 6.8m x 4.6m covered with small poplar and spruce saplings. A slight depression 1.5m x 2.0m indicates where a plywood porch was added. The cabin was a log structure later used as storage for the fire tower after the new tower was built. Four rectangular depressions about 1.0m x 0.7m each are behind (south of) the structure and probably indicate outhouses.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 57

41 refuse dump
COMMENTS: A trapezoidal depression used as a refuse dump, measuring 5.2m along each side and 1.4m and 2.3m at the ends. Located behind (south) the fireman’s cabins about 20m into the spruce and poplar growth, north of the clearing.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 56
D. NEW HAY CAMP
See Map: Detail D.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURE

42 abattoir
COMMENTS: Abattoir represented by concrete foundation remains 12.95m x 17.9m excavated into a rise of land. This 12.9m x 32.3m rise, consisting of backfilled soil, served as a building platform. Structure would have had a cutting area beside a quick-freeze room which, in turn, was connected to a holding freezer. Construction began in spring of 1962 and first animal was slaughtered Oct. 31, 1963. One storey 180' x 40', concrete footings, solid concrete slab, asphalt roof, 12' high ceilings, plywood walls and ceiling, exterior covered with ribbed aluminum. Rooms: head preparation, hide, viscera, delivery, slaughtering floor, drip cooler, holding cooler, boning and cutting, two freezers. Offices on side. Ceased operation in 1967.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 17

43 access road
COMMENTS: Gravel access road overgrown with vegetation, heading past the south edge of the house remains (#69), and curving north toward the oil tank storage area and well in the southeast part of the camp clearing.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 7

44 bunkhouse #1
COMMENTS: One-room bunkhouse, foundation remains 7.5m x 9.8m situated on cement blocks. Tall, thin vegetation growth present at the location. A 3m long x 1.0m wide walkway with a concrete pad leads east from it. Original wood-frame structure measured 20' x 24' (6.1m x 7.3m).

RESOURCE NUMBER: 14

45 bunkhouse #2
COMMENTS: A one-room bunkhouse represented by foundation remains 7.5m x 9.2m situated on cement blocks, indicated by an area of tall grass and small shrubs. It is located just north of bunkhouse #1 (#44). A 2.5m long x 1.0m wide walkway leads east from it. Original wood-frame structure measured 20' x 24' (6.1m x 7.3m).

RESOURCE NUMBER: 15
46 bunkhouse #3
COMMENTS: A bunkhouse 7.7m x 9.8m represented by a removed concrete foundation and an area of tall grass and small shrubs. Located just north of bunkhouse #2 (#45). A 4.0m long x 2.0m wide walkway leads east from it. Original wood-frame structure measured 28' x 30' (8.5m x 9.1m).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 16

47 cut area to fuel tank
COMMENTS: An approximately 9m long cut area leading to the fuel tank, tapers in width from 4m at the tank to 2.5m at its far end. Cut is 25cm deep.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 9

48 depression
COMMENTS: A 4.3m x 4.6m depression on the terrace edge southeast of the abattoir (#42). A 1.5m x 1.0m extension is along the eastern edge.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 22

49 driveway
COMMENTS: A 24m long gravel driveway runs from the road to the southwest corner of the residential house remains (#68). It is 3.55m wide with 20cm concrete forms along the sides.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 3

50 driveway
COMMENTS: A 22.6m long gravel driveway from the road south to the north extension of the cookhouse remains (#69). Concrete forms are along the sides of the driveway.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 5

51 fuel tank
COMMENTS: Base of fuel tank consisting of a sand and gravel fill in an approximately 6m x 6m area. A 20,000 lb. bulk oil storage tank was formerly at this location.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 8
52 garage
COMMENTS: Concrete footings enclosing an area 8.7m x 14.8m with a 1.1m wide doorway along the northeast wall at the south corner. A depression for an oil tank is just outside this doorway. The footings are 0.2m wide and 0.4m above ground level, with the exception of the southeast wall which is at ground level. A 1.15m x 4.7m x 0.15m high concrete footing is located in the interior, beginning 1.9m from the southwest wall and 7.1m from the northwest wall. The original log structure measured 28' x 48' (8.5m x 14.6m) and had two bays.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 21

53 helipad
COMMENTS: A 5.2m x 5.2m patch of tall brown grass identified by Gord Masson as the helipad. Located just west of Hay Camp Road on the edge of new poplar growth, southeast of a larger poplar stand. An old trail or path extends from the helipad, around the poplar stand to the entrance of warehouse #2 (#72).

RESOURCE NUMBER: 33

54 implement shed
COMMENTS: A raised gravel pad 6.6m x 24.9m with a concrete footing at each corner, six footings along each side and another footing centered at each end. Each footing measures ca. 0.5m x 0.6m and 11 of them have been removed. The shed would have been open in the front with the footings supporting beams that held up the roof. The remains are in the northern part of an approximately 25m x 40m clearing.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 24

55 lime shed
COMMENTS: A 4.3m x 4.9m structure represented by 0.2m wide concrete footings. A 1.1m wide doorway is in the northeast wall footing, 0.1m above ground level. Other footings are 0.3m and 0.49m above ground level. The dove-tailed log structure, constructed in 1962, was later converted to a warden cabin.

RESOURCE NUMBER: 20
56 old warden's cabin
COMMENTS: Concrete foundation remains about 8m x 7m, much of it covered by moss and small spruce trees. Located off an old road clearing accessed by Hay Camp Road to the west. Identified as the warden’s cabin (“Brass House”) which had been moved from Old Hay Camp (see #17). Gord Masson identified the woodframe cabin as having a full basement with a kitchen, living room and bathroom on the main floor, and two bedrooms on the second floor. The exterior was painted white.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 26

57 parking lot
COMMENTS: A 25.6m x 19.4m parking area along the road near the sidewalk (#66) leading to the bunkhouses (#44, #45, and #46). Consists of a slightly raised gravely area with thin vegetation growth.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 31

58 pond
COMMENTS: Disturbed soil indicated by small trenches over a 5m x 5.3m area. Identified by Gord Masson as his pond and patio complex. A Y-shaped area of tall dead grass is just to the west and likely relates to this complex.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 11

59 septic pit
COMMENTS: An 8.85m x 14.75m x 0.1m-0.15m deep depression identified by Gord Masson as a cribbed septic pit with a flat roof of logs. Located south of the abattoir (#42) and beside the gravel access road to it.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 18

60 septic pit
COMMENTS: A 3.3m x 2.7m x 0.1m deep rectangular depression identified by Gord Masson as a cribbed septic pit with a roof of peeled logs. Located south of the abattoir (#42).
RESOURCES NUMBER: 19

61 septic pit
COMMENTS: A 5.4m x 3.6m rectangular depression about 8cm deep located along the terrace edge, surrounded by small ridges, near the pond and water pump (#58 and #74). The pit would have had a log structure covering it with a pipe running into the ground.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 28
62 septic pit
COMMENTS: A 4.6m x 4.2m rectangular depression 7cm deep, located along the terrace edge just south of another septic pit (#61). The pit would have had a log structure covering it with a pipe running into the ground.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 29

63 septic tank
COMMENTS: An 11.0m x 7.5m septic tank depression located about 30m north of the old warden’s cabin remains (#56). It appears as a widening of a trench and has a maximum depth of 2.0m in the centre. It had a log frame and cribbing.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 27

64 shed remains
COMMENTS: A 3.2m x 3.0m sand-filled area north of the fuel tank, probably the remains of an associated shed.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 10

65 sidewalk
QUANTITY: 2
COMMENTS: Sidewalk leading from the road 18m to the east side of the residential house remains (#68). Sidewalk is 0.9m wide and is delineated by thin brown grass. A shorter sidewalk 10.7m long x 0.7m wide runs southeast from it to the driveway (#49).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 2

66 sidewalk
COMMENTS: Sidewalk in front of the bunkhouses (#44, #45, and #46). Delineated by a gravel sub-base and thin vegetation.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 25

67 sidewalk trench
COMMENTS: A 14.3m long x 0.9m wide x 0.15m deep trench, representing the excavation to remove a sidewalk leading to the abattoir (#42).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 34
68 structural remains
COMMENTS: House remains indicated by a hummocky area containing thick grass. Area measures 13.55m north-south x 7.41m east-west. Possible porch in front area indicated by compacted thin brown grass. Foundation beam present in southwest portion. Original woodframe structure measured 24' x 42' (7.3m x 12.8m), had four bedrooms, a side and end entrance, and was used as a staff house.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 1

Resource No. 1: Staff house, Nov. 1976. Photo on file - WBNP.

69 structural remains
COMMENTS: Remains of a 13.5m x 8.3m cookhouse with a 3.8m x 2.7m extension on the north end and a 3.5m x 2.8m extension on the south end. The house had a concrete foundation, full basement, kitchen, dining room, bathroom and storeroom. Most of foundation was broken up and pushed into the house interior. Original structure measured 28' x 45' (8.5m x 13.7m).
RESOURCES NUMBER: 4

Resource No. 4: Cookhouse, Nov. 1976. Photo on file - WBNP.

70 walkway
COMMENTS: A 30.3m walkway connecting the houses represented by #68 and #69. Concrete was removed by backhoe, leaving a 0.9m wide trench.
RESOURCES NUMBER: 6

71 warehouse #1
COMMENTS: A grass clearing 4.3m and 4.2m along the ends by 5.2m and 5.8m along the sides, located about 30m north of the garage remains (#52). Young poplar growth surrounds the clearing. Original structure measured 28' x 30' (8.5m x 9.1m).
RESOURCES NUMBER: 23

72 warehouse #2
COMMENTS: A 16.3m x 10.5m disturbed area, likely due to grading, identified as warehouse #2. Located just north of warehouse #1 (#71). A path leads from it around a poplar stand to the helipad (#53). Original structure measured 28' x 30' (8.5m x 9.1m).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 35

73 warehouse #3
COMMENTS: A 9.25m x 6.3m concrete foundation 0.45m wide located west of the road to the fire tower, north of warehouse #2 (#72). The foundation area is covered with small poplar and spruce growth. The structure was moved to Crow Look-Out. It originally measured 20' x 40' (6.1m x 12.2m).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 36

74 waterpump
COMMENTS: A pipe set in the ground with a tire around the top may have served as a pump. Gord Masson identified it as a secondary drain from the radio cabin area by the bunkhouses.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 12

75 well
COMMENTS: A well once covered by a plywood structure, now filled in with sand and concrete blocks. Lush tall grass delineates an area with sides measuring 7.3m, 7.4m, 8.2m and 8.9m. This is likely the outline of the pumphouse. Located along the terrace edge between the septic pit (#62) and the backfill depression (#76).
RESOURCE NUMBER: 32

76 well backfill depression
COMMENTS: An irregular-shaped depression with sides measuring 7.0m, 8.1m, 10.8m and 11.8m. Soil was excavated from the feature to fill in the well, located immediately to the north.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 30
ARTIFACT

77 wooden stand
COMMENTS: A wooden stand south of the fuel tank (#51) toward the creek bed. Possibly a laundry stand based on historic photos.
RESOURCE NUMBER: 13
Old Hoy Camp
1 - Bridge Crossing
2 - Concrete Foundation
3 - Depression
4 - Depression
5 - Depression (Barn)
6 - Depression (Cookhouse)
7 - Depression (Portable Abattoir)
8 - Depression (powerhouse)
9 - Depression (Warehouse #2)
10 - Dog Pen
11 - Land Rise (Mound)
12 - Log Box
13 - Refuse Area (Horse Corral?)
14 - Root Cellar (antenna tower)
15 - Rose Bushes (Heron Log Cabin)
16 - Septic Pit
17 - Warden's House ("Brass" House)
Detail "A"

Old Hay Camp
1- Bridge Crossing
2- Concrete Foundation
3- Depression
4- Depression
5- Depression (Barn)
6- Depression (Cookhouse)
7- Depression (Portable Abattoir)
8- Depression (Powerhouse)
9- Depression (Warehouse #2)
10- Dog Pen
11- Land Rise (Mound)
12- Log Box
13- Refuse Area (Horse Corral?)
14- Root Cellar (Antenna Tower)
15- Rose Bushes (Heron Log Cabin)
16- Septic Pit
17- Warden's House ("Brass" House)

LEGEND

FEATURE #
FEATURE DETAIL
ROAD DETAIL
VEGETATION DETAIL
SPOT ELEVATION
GUY WIRE ANCHORS

SCALE 1:2000
Corral System
18- Anthrax Barn (vaccination)
19- Bridge
20- Corral Chute
21- Double Fence
22- Funnel and Squeeze Chute
23- Holding Pen #1
24- Holding Pen #2
25- Holding Pen #3
26- Mound
27- North Corral Fence
28- South Corral Fence
29- Squeeze Building
30- Trough (Holding Pen #1)
31- Trough (Holding Pen #2)
32- Trough (Holding Pen #3)
33- Wood Remains
34- Wood Remains
35- Wood Remains

Detail "B"

Legend
--- FEATURE #
--- FEATURE B.E. #1
--- ROAD DETAIL
--- VEGETATION DETAIL
--- SPOT ELEVATION
--- OUTFALL ANCHORS

Scale 1:2000
Fire Tower Area
36- Depressions (Fire Tower)
37- Disposal Area (Note: See Detail "D")
38- Garden
39- New Fireman's Cabin
40- Old Fireman's Cabin and depressions
41- Refuse dump associated with Firemen's Cabins

LEGEND
- FEATURE
- FEATURE DETAIL
- ROAD DETAIL
- VEGETATION DETAIL
- SPOT ELEVATION
- GUY WIRE ANCHORS
36 - Depressions (Fire Tower)
37 - Disposal Area (Note: See Detail "D")
38 - Garden
39 - New Fireman's Cabin
40 - Old Fireman's Cabin and depressions
41 - Refuse dump associated with Firemen's Cabins
New Hay Camp
37- Disposal Area
42- Abattoir
43- Access Road
44- Bunkhouse #1
45- Bunkhouse #2
46- Bunkhouse #3
47- cut area (Fuel Tank Access)
48- Depression
49- Driveway
50- Driveway
51- Fuel Tank
52- Garage
53- Helipad
54- Implement Shed
55- Lime Shed
56- Old warden's house
57- Parking Lot
58- Pond
59- Septic pit
60- Septic pit
61- Septic pit
62- Septic pit
63- Septic tank
64- Shed remains
65- Sidewalk
66- Sidewalk
67- Sidewalk trench
68- Structural remains
69- Structural remains
70- Walkway
71- Warehouse #1
72- Warehouse #2
73- Warehouse #3
74- Water Pump
75- Well
76- Well backfill depression
77- Wooden Stand

Legend
- FEATURE
- FEATURE DETAIL
- ROAD DETAIL
- VEGETATION DETAIL
- SPOT ELEVATION
- GUY WIRE ANCHORS
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