

# 100 YEARS OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION

BY BARB MacDONALD

During 1985, a very special centennial will be celebrated across Canada. On this 100th anniversary of the creation of our national parks, everyone will be invited to celebrate 100 years of heritage conservation in Canada.

The origins of Canada's national parks are linked to the construction of the transcontinental railway, and its final crossing of the Rocky Mountains. Railway workers were inspired to explore the majestic natural beauty that was all around them. One day, in November, 1883, a foreman, Frank McCabe, and one of his co-workers, William McCardell, visited the area close to Terrace (now Sulphur) Mountain and discovered two natural hot springs.

News of the discovery spread like wildfire, and due to the possibility of making a financial gain on this unusual attraction, the site was soon overrun by railway workers. A legal battle to establish ownership followed, a battle which soon came to an unexpected ending.

On November 28, 1885, the Government of Canada passed an Order-in-Council which decreed that an area approximately 26 square km around what are now known as Cave and Basin Hot Springs be set aside for future park use, thereby protecting the area from exploitation. The beginning of Banff National Park, the preservation of the Hot Springs was the first step towards creation of our network of national parks.

On June 23, 1887, Parliament passed the Rocky Mountains Park Act which officially created the first national park. As early as 1886, the government had created land reserves, including one at Lake Louise that would eventually be part of Banff. Other land reserves laid the foundation for Yoho and Glacier. With the setting aside of land for the future Waterton Lakes National Park in 1895, Canada was well on its way to conserving important parts of its natural heritage.

The national parks movement, born in the Canadian Rockies, spread quickly to other parts of the country and new parks began popping up in every province. Due to public interest in the conservation of wildlife, and particularly a small herd of elk north of Edmonton, Elk Island National Park was established in 1913. Other early western parks include Jasper (1907), Mount Revelstoke (1914), Kootenay (1920), Wood Buffalo (1922), Prince Albert (1927) and Riding Mountain (1929).

Further east, the first park to be established was St. Lawrence Islands National Park (1914). Point Pelee, long renowned as a game preserve, came next in 1918, and Georgian Bay Islands National Park was officially established in 1929. Cape Breton Highlands National Park, created in 1936, was the first national park in the Maritime

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