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Riding Mountain
Yesterday and Today
EMMA RINGSTROM
To
STERLING R. LYON,
PREMIER OF MANITOBA
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Introduction

Professor Henry Yuill Hind was one of the first Canadians to view the scenic beauty and unique characteristics of Riding Mountain and Clear Lake in 1858 after reaching the summit of the escarpment from Dauphin Lake. What he may have thought of them, however, is not known because he did not commit his impressions to paper.

Many years later Alice McFadden of Dauphin stood atop the hill overlooking the lake in the forest reserve. The family had taken a forty-four-hour ride over a muddy trail to reach the site. Alice reached for her father's hand as they stood viewing the panorama and said, "Oh, daddy, it was worth it."

This could have been the conception of the Riding Mountain National Park for the father was none other than Jack McFadden who, as secretary of the Riding Mountain Association, devoted the years 1927 to 1930 to making the project a reality.

Mr. and Mrs. McFadden managed to include the family cat in their first vacation to Clear Lake. They were greeted with warmth and hospitality as they stepped into the log cabin of the Lepper family one day at 2 a.m.

Why write the story of the Riding Mountain? What is its purpose? In the words of Pierre Berton, "The quality of the future depends upon what is kept of the past." This book looks in two directions: toward the past and toward the future. It may help us to learn to understand the present and accept its limitations.

It is a story which emphasizes the human history of the area; the Cree, the Saulteaux, the fur traders, the sawmill owners, the fishermen and hunters, the first campers, the area settlers and
employees and, above all, the first builders who came and saw the potential of the Riding Mountain and proceeded to do something about it.

In 1895 the Canadian government stepped into the picture and declared the area a timber reserve and undertook to protect it from further devastation.

Art Bickerstaff, former parks surveyor, provided copies of the forest reserve survey made between 1906 and 1908. These were of great help in obtaining material in forming a picture of the park's history.

Co-operation was forthcoming from the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, the Hudson Bay Archives, the Manitoba Archives, the Centennial Library, the Dauphin Museum and archives, Hansard and the Legislative Library of Manitoba.

Anecdotes and other information were provided by George Bedell, the late George Tunstall, Charles Thomas, Mrs. Jack McFadden, Mr. Bickerstaff, Madge Bauer, Mrs. Joe Tinker and Dave Binkley.

The work of John Tanner was helpful as were regional histories of Manitoba and LaVerendrye. The stories of Dr. Grant McEwan and Dr. Peter Neufelt provided still more information. A twenty-five year history by G. A. McMorran of Souris was invaluable.

Conversations with descendants of families whose experiences in the area span the last eighty years have been most enlightening. The Peden family, the Hall, Gusdal and Lee have watched it evolve from a “wreck of a forest” to a beautiful national park.

It was L. B. Gusdal, who was instrumental in selecting Clark’s Beach for a summer resort, who assisted in the survey for the first lots and built the first cottage. His daughter, Lenore, is married to Walter Dinsdale, member of Parliament for Brandon-Souris.

As minister of Indian affairs and northern development in the 1960s he was able to serve the park in a special way.

Mr. Dinsdale later wrote on House of Commons letterhead that “many pioneering personalities and groups were involved in the campaign to have the Riding Mountain Forest Preserve established as a National Park, and their story has never been told.”

This book is an attempt to tell that story. At the same time, in keeping with Mr. Dinsdale's zoning policy that “Canada's national parks should be people places for our children and our
children’s children,” it highlights the park’s many facilities, which attract more than 950,000 people a year.

July 26, 1983, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Riding Mountain as a national park. The Wasagaming Chamber of Commerce, the Interpretive staff and residents of the Riding Mountain are planning to make it a memorable occasion.
CHAPTER ONE

Riding Mountain Today

The facilities provided at Riding Mountain National Park attempt to meet the needs of the camper or trailer enthusiast, the vacationing family escaping from the city, or the backpacking individual eager for a wilderness experience.

At the same time, the park tells the story of a highland plateau in the centre of North America. It is a crossroads where habitats characteristic of eastern, western and northern Canada meet and mingle in a diverse pattern of forest and grasslands, hills and valleys. It is a sanctuary for a remarkable variety of plant and animal life.

The park is easily reached by car and bus from centres to the north and south. Highway 10 connects Brandon, 95 km to the south, with Wasagaming, and continues to Dauphin, 13 km beyond the northern border of Riding Mountain. From the east, Highway 19 enters the park through the scenic escarpment route. The nearest commercial airport is at Dauphin. Those driving into the park require a motor vehicle permit which may be purchased at the entrances.

Campgrounds are located in various areas and range from fully serviced sites to bare camping areas. Wasagaming campground, adjacent to the Services Centre, has 86 fully serviced sites for trailers, 72 trailer sites with electricity and 379 unserviced sites. It is equipped with kitchen shelters and modern trailer buildings complete with showers.

Lake Katherine campground is 15 km from the Services Centre. It has 118 camping sites; modern toilet buildings and kitchen shelters are located throughout the campground.
Situated in attractive settings near the park's larger lakes are several unserviced camping sites, equipped with kitchen shelters, wood-burning stoves and dry pit privies. These sites are easily accessible by car along park roads and highways.

There are two group camping areas, Camp Manito and Camp Kippechewin. Camp Manito will accommodate 160 people, and is approached on the Riding Mountain Parkway. Facilities include dormitories, a dining hall and a fully equipped kitchen. Mattresses are provided but campers must bring their own bed linen.

Camp Kippechewin, on the other hand, is 6.5 km west of Wasagaming Visitor Services Centre on the shore of Clear Lake. It is an unserviced tenting camp area, with a kitchen and picnic shelter.

Winter camping is available at Moon Lake and Whirlpool Lake. Kitchen and picnic shelters and privies are located at both sites.

The Wasagaming Visitor Services Centre provides a range of hotel, motel and cottage accommodation of more than 300 units. Modern businesses cater to the needs of visitors.

A network of hiking and riding trails provides for the recreation of outdoor enthusiasts. The park is a year-round facility, though the Visitor Services facilities are mostly seasonal. Consider a winter visit, when a quiet beauty provides another view of the park.

Winter recreation includes ice fishing in Clear Lake, for which a park fishing licence is necessary, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and downhill skiing at Agassiz Ski Hill.

The park provides a variety of recreational activities, including a fine 18-hole golf course, asphalt-surfaced tennis courts and lawn bowling. Horses and bicycles are available for hire.

An information staff is on hand seven days a week from May to September in the Visitor Services Centre. Exhibits in the Interpretive Centre introduce the visitor to the geology, biology and ecology of the park.

The park naturalist and his staff conduct guided hikes, car caravans, and illustrated programs each day. Films and slide programs are held at several locations during the evenings. Self-guiding tours, on-site exhibits, lookouts, planned interpretive programs and children's programs all explain the park to its visitors.

High areas of the park are covered with evergreen forest, white
and black spruce, jack pine, balsam fir and tamarack, as well as trembling aspen and white birch.

Along the base of the escarpment, the park's lowest and warmest region, the soil supports a deciduous forest of hardwood, shrubs, vines and ferns. Because of the lighter rainfall, sandy soil and results of fire, extensive western sections of the park are covered with meadows and grasslands. In this windswept environment, grasses mix with a pageant of wildflowers at the height of their beauty in July and August.

The park's varied elevations and plant-life support a diverse animal population.

Among the larger mammals are black bear, waipiti, moose and white-tailed deer.

Skeletal remains have established that bison once roamed the Riding Mountain Park area. When the park was established, four adult bulls and 16 young cows were shipped here. The bison

Nearly one million vacationers enjoy the park's facilities every year. Here, crowds stroll along Clear Lake's main beach soaking up the July sunshine and frolicking in the sparkling waters.
Two riders pause in a beautiful setting during a ride in Riding Mountain National Park. They are beside Clear Lake, the largest and most picturesque in the area. Riding Mountain Park lies 165 miles northwest of Winnipeg, and 125 miles north of the international boundary.

range, an area of about 647 ha, is one of the most popular interpretive features. A herd of 30 bison roam a semi-forested grassland plain. An enclosure also houses an exhibit which tells the story of the bison.

The beaver can be observed in almost every pond, lake or stream, and the changing landscape that results from their habitats is visible. Ponds formed by beaver dams may eventually become marshes and meadows, providing foods and habitats for other forms of wildlife.

The park is well known for the size and number of its fish. Northern pike is the main game fish, and specimens 13 kg in weight have been taken from Clear Lake. Walleye and whitefish also flourish in the deep cold waters. Lake trout ranging from 2.3 to 9 kg may be caught in Clear Lake. Rainbow and brook trout populate Lake Katherine and Deep Lake.
In the 1980 season a total of more than 950,000 people were admitted into the three entrances of Riding Mountain National Park during the tourist season, an increase of more than 200,000 in the past ten years.

Twenty-six thousand campers made use of the five camp sites. More than 24,000 people were attracted to the golf course, and about five thousand to the bowling greens.

The interpretive program, instituted in 1965, drew a total of 32,424 to its hiking trails, slide and school programs. The twenty-five hiking trails recorded 14,000.

The eight park naturalists made 14,507 personal contacts. Thousands of tourists are interested in the park’s wildlife and in wilderness experiences each year. The Riding Mountain is geared to satisfy this desire.

The renovated and modernized Interpretive Centre on Wasa-
gaming Drive underwent more changes in 1980. A pictorial history of the wildlife of the park is displayed on the walls of the centre. These displays replace the old museum with its artifacts, carvings and cultural objects. Steps are being taken to retrieve the old museum pieces for display elsewhere.

The interpretive staff introduced a monthly publication for the summer of 1980. It contained illustrations and information on what can be seen on the many excursions into the wilds of the park.

The Riding Mountain Historical Society succeeded in leasing a building from Parks Canada to house the archives. A small beginning on the project was made during the summer.

The chapel in the old museum, which served as a religious centre until 1970, was replaced by a community centre. This modern building is located near the entrance to the Wasagaming Camp Grounds and makes a fine setting for weddings, baptisms and other religious functions, as well as community affairs. Visitors who return to the park after an absence of many years often speak with nostalgia of the history of the little chapel with the first wedding, the first baptisms, the hand-carved furniture and pulpit.

Year-round activities and facilities are available in the Riding Mountain for people of all ages and interests. There are five family campgrounds, two of which are used for winter camping. Snowshoeing, snowmobiling and cross-country ski trails are laid out each year for those who favor wilderness experiences.

The annual sail boat regatta, instituted in 1969, drew a record attendance in 1980. Water sports, shuffleboard, checkers and horseshoe pitching facilities are available. The children's playground, located between the tennis courts and the main beach on Clear Lake, includes swings and slides for the small ones. Qualified lifeguards are on duty and they provide swimming lessons for children.

The summer of 1980 saw a change of superintendent in the park. George Rochester retired from service with the National Parks branch after eight years of service to Riding Mountain. In his own words he retired "in a blaze of glory." Efforts to control the forest fires had dominated the closing months of his time.

Randall B. Mitchell, who took over, called the season a successful one.
CHAPTER TWO

Music Beneath the Pines

Musician Roy Brown recalled the first song his six-member group played at the opening of the first Danceland in Clear Lake on May 24, 1932—"one year before the official opening of the Riding Mountain National Park in which Danceland is located."

Mr. Brown said in an interview, "As we played the first chorus of Hoagy Carmichael's Lazy Bones, it seemed so appropriate because that is precisely what we had planned for that summer... do nothin' but sit in the sun."

The band returned in 1933 for a second season at Danceland. "I shall never forget the feeling of excitement within the band to know that we would be sittin' in the sun for another wonderful summer. And by the time the season ended, it had become certain that a larger and more luxurious pavilion would be needed to handle the hundreds of thousands who were to visit the park."

Newspaper stories about the opening of the park created a desire among Manitobans to visit it.

In the spring of 1934, the new Danceland was opened and Clear Lake heard its first big band. Band leader Dean Smith of Brandon had joined the group. "Who could ever forget those wonderful waltz nights when dancers put on their best bib and tucker and added real class to the weekly event? And then, of course, there were the special Campers' Night every Monday and the Midnight Frolic starting at 12:01 Monday. Music emanated from beneath the pines seven days a week—and the people turned out by the hundreds to enjoy it."

After an absence of four years, Mr. Brown returned to Clear
Members of Clear Lake’s first dance band sit on the back of a car likely parked beside Danceland in this photo taken May 24, 1932. They are (left to right) Del Hudson, Tom Brown, Wilf Carpentier, Roy Brown, Bruce Pedlar and Dean Smith.

Lake with his own big band consisting of the five Brown brothers in addition to five or six more players. “The bands prior to 1939 had consisted of only eight men but they were all good bands and featured many top men from all over the west. Clear Lake’s Danceland fast became the top spot in the country and musicians were anxious to spend a summer at the beautiful resort.”

Competition to play Danceland became fierce.

On the long weekend at the end of the 1939 season, the newspapers published hints and rumors of another war breaking out in Europe. “Little were we to know that the terrible news would bring hundreds of thousands of young men and women in uniform to Clear Lake to have one more good fling before leaving for overseas. Songs like There’ll Be Bluebirds Over The White Cliffs of Dover, I Left My Heart at The Stage Door Canteen and I’ll Be Seeing You were the songs that tugged at the heart strings of the young men and old alike as they listened to my brother...
Percy sing the lyrics....” Many of the dancers never returned to Danceland.

“I played my last engagement in Danceland on September 1, 1946. I was followed by one of my well-known trumpeters—Johnny Bering—who provided big-band music until the late 1950s. During the fifties, of course, many of the world’s finest dance bands played one-night stands in Danceland.

“Who could ever forget the beautiful sounds of Tommy Dorsey’s theme song—I’m Getting Sentimental Over You—the sound of his brother Jimmy’s sax (the world’s greatest) playing five solos or the sweet music of Mart Kenny filtering through the huge pines surrounding the grand old pavilion? But like most good things, the big bands at Clear Lake became too costly and smaller groups took over.

“It wasn’t until June, 1979, that the big-band sound would be heard again and that was when I was invited to join the Golden Brass of Jimmy King to make a series of TV shorts for CKND. When I gave the down beat to play my old theme song, the thrill I had experienced when I first played there in 1932 came back to me... and what a thrill it was.” (These excerpts were taken, with the author’s permission, from the Roy Brown Story.)
CHAPTER THREE

Buffalo Hunting Grounds

That portion of the Riding Mountain which includes the Audy Plains is heavy grassland and was, early in its history, the buffalo hunting grounds of Metis and Cree. Future archaeological excavations may reveal how early and by whom the area was first inhabited, first utilized and explored. The Strathclair Trail first defined by Metis, Indians and fur traders, followed the Minnesota River by Lake Audy and went north into Manitoba. It became the Colonization Trail for hundreds of settlers who needed a thoroughfare into the fertile Dauphin Valley and points north and west in the 1880s.

The story goes that after the park was established there was a movement afoot to eliminate the old trail, as it no longer served any useful purpose. It was Albert Baldwin who was able to stop this transgression of an old Queen Victoria law. According to Lorne Burkette of Erickson, “He told the powers-that-be that the old law forbade the destruction of any colonization trails in Her Majesty’s colonies.”

Baldwin and his father had squatted on the trail in the 1880s and knew the old law. The trail was retained; but since it now has sentimental value only as an historical landmark, the gates are locked and the keys are in the hand of the park staff. A tourist may travel its course and relive its historic past by joining the many car caravans promoted by the park naturalists.

The Manitoba Archives has a number of letters sent from Lake Audy to Scotland in the years after 1880. James and William Lothian from the Lowlands wrote home frequently and their address at this time was Old Hudson’s Bay Company Fort,
Riding Mountain, North West Territories, North America.

In their first letter home in October, 1880, they wrote, “We have now been here for six weeks and are living in an old Hudson’s Bay Company fort which is in a state of disrepair as it has not been habited for six years.”

This fort was a winter post, a subpost to the Fort Ellice (now St. Lazare). The Riding Mountain post was established in 1854 by the Hudson’s Bay Company and moved down the Minnedosa River to Elphinstone, “having been located at Lake Audy for twenty years,” according to the company’s records.

“On the voyage we met Glen Campbell. His father has two sections of land which Glen wishes to farm when he becomes of age which will be in three years’ time. He asked us to occupy the fort and make whatever use of the land we wished.”

On their way to the Audy Plains they had stopped at the Brandon Plains, “hiring out for $120.” With this cash they had purchased a “creaking cart, ponies, oxen and provisions.”

“Crossing the Big Plain from Brandon we passed the homes of the McKenzies and McEacherns and spent the night with the Camerons. We paid $2.50 for room and board, slept between two feather ticks, German fashion, and were served a breakfast of potatoes, pork, biscuits and tea.”

Leaving Prairie City (Minnedosa) they entered the Riding Mountain where they found the road was “difficult to trace through mountains, hills and over sloping trails through birches, young poplars and tall trees ten to fourteen inches thick where a fire had passed through.”

James C. Audy was an officer with the Hudson’s Bay Company, in charge of the Riding Mountain post when it was transferred to Elphinstone. His visits to the Lothians were appreciated.

“Audy often takes two or three weeks to go into the mountains to trade with the Indians in the winter time returning with as much as four or five hundred dollars worth of furs. He uses a dog sleigh with three dogs in single file and bells on each dog.

“There is an Indian reserve between us and the Hudson’s Bay Company post and at present buffalo, elk and moose are plentiful but I fear they are fast disappearing.”

In December, 1880, William wrote home to say that Mr. McDonald had entered into a contract with the Hudson’s Bay Company for twelve thousand logs of pine. He and James had obtained employment for two or three months at a monthly
salary of $30 with a team of oxen, and $20 without. William termed this “a nice nest egg for spring.”

In January, 1881, he was able to describe a lumber camp. “Two men chop down the trees, two sawyers saw them into twelve, fourteen and sixteen-foot lengths, two swampers cut off the branches, two skidders and swampers arrange them in groups of ten to one hundred logs, two teamsters take the logs to the creek or lake until the ice breaks and they are floated down the river for eighteen or twenty miles.”

The trees around were mostly tamarac and they were tall and often yielded ten or twelve slabs of hard durable wood. “Tall pines and poplar surround the area.”

Jack Proven was a cook in the lumber camp and William Lothian mentions three more employees—Sherwin Gibson, Bill Wyman and a Mr. McGregor. In the spring of 1881 they were able to sell hay from Glen Campbell’s land for the horses of the Riding Mountain post.

In August of 1881 Mr. Lothian was happy to be able to report “a church has been built for the Indians, Mr. Stuart is conducting service there tomorrow in English and I shall attend. Singing classes are being conducted for the Indians three nights a week. These classes are led by the miller of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s flour mill.” The mill was not in use at this time.

There does not appear to have been churches and missions in the Riding Mountain area at this time. There was a mission established at Fort Ellice in 1856 but that was not in the Riding Mountain.

James Nesbitt of the Presbyterian Church in the Red River Settlement said in a letter written in 1864 to Rev. W. F. Burns of Toronto, “I have sent a missionary to the Indians of the Hudson’s Bay territory and instructed him to simply learn the language as he travelled among them, explore the country, get acquainted with their customs and habits, but, on no account must there be any construction of any kind for some time.”

John McLeod and family owned and operated a half-way house on Lake Audy near the junction of Lake Audy and the Minnedosa River, where the river rose when the dam was released in the spring. Here they supplied accommodation for homesteaders and freighters going north.

They had attempted farming in the Newdale district but successive years of crop failure had discouraged them. On the shore of Lake Audy lived their trapper friend, Bussey; they joined him
in 1889 and here they lived increasing their livestock and holdings in the lush growth of the Audy Plains while they supplied the needs of the traveller.

This point of the Strathclair Trail was once the scene of tragedy due to the swollen waters of the Minnedosa River in the spring. Having performed their homestead duties one spring, the McLaughlins of Dauphin left their young family in capable hands to pay a visit to old friends south of the mountain. On the return journey they spent the night at McLeods Crossing before attempting the final stage home. Rising early the next day they undertook fording the river at this critical time, their wagon upset and the occupants fell into the turbulent water. Mrs. McLaughlin was able to catch the limb of a tree and cling to it until rescuers arrived from McLeod's House. Mr. McLaughlin was drowned.

The subsequent story of that family is one of courage as the widow who went home to her family, completed the homestead requirements of her husband's quarter section and then obtained and proved up one in her own name; making use of the products of the land and forest as she raised her young ones.

Dauphinites can supply many stories of the Strathclair Trail. The Durstons who lost their oxen on the way to their homestead duties in the winter, the Malcoms who followed after them, and discovering the frozen oxen worried as to the whereabouts of the occupants of the deserted sleigh.

The McDonalds of Dauphin came through the Riding Mountain deserting the Strathclair Trail in their search for a homestead. They had been told the trail was impassable. Indians directed them across an old Indian trail.

No story of the Riding Mountain would be complete without the story of Glen Campbell. After meeting with the Lothians he continued on into Canada for his annual summer visit with his father, a retired officer of the Hudson's Bay Company. Back in Scotland he proceeded through the Glasgow Academy and the Merchison Castle School in Edinburgh, and, upon graduation, returned to North America to prepare himself for his chosen career, that of ranching on the land in the Riding Mountain which his father had bought for him.

He spent two years in Montana learning the art of roping, riding, shooting and pursuing the life of a cowboy.

By 1884 he was established on his ranch and raising cattle. He and his father brought out from Scotland a hardy specimen of
Highland cattle which thrived on the grass of the Audy Plains. These cattle adapted well to Canadian climate and were easily disposed of to other areas of Western Canada.

Unpredictable, unconventional and full of energy; stories of his antics are legion. It was he who rode a wild moose in the Riding Mountain. From his perch on a tree he dropped down on the unsuspecting animal's back and there he clung, in spite of the frantic beast's contortions, until the moose dropped in exhaustion. With this story and others he was able to amuse his fellow members of the Manitoba legislature in 1902 to 1907, and later in the House of Commons after the 1908 federal elections.

Glen Campbell was a big man, "Big Glen" the Indians and his neighbors called him, his skill in hunting and riding were well known. He married Harriet Bones of the Riding Mountain Indian Reserve and later owned two baby moose. Perfecting a lingo all his own by mixing Cree and English he was able to compete with members of the House of Commons, who were fluently bilingual, to the entertainment of the august group. He distinguished himself during service in the First World War and died overseas.

Herb Johnson, one of the first builders in Riding Mountain, is shown here with an unidentified friend feeding two young elk in the old campground area in the 1920s.
In order to reforest denuded areas of the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve, a nursery was set up at Lake Audy in 1923. This requires open areas for the four-year growth of the seedlings and the Audy Plains lent themselves to this type of activity.

Dave Binkley was assigned the post of forest ranger and conservationalist at Lake Audy in 1927, became park warden when the national park was instituted and continued occupying the station until his retirement in 1957. As a result of his tree-planting program within its confines the Audy Plains now features a beautiful stand of trees along the Strathclair Trail.

The Lake Audy ranger station was a busy one since it was on the Strathclair Trail with its constant flow of traffic. Its district comprised fifty square miles and these must all be covered by the ranger or warden. In addition, Mr. Binkley built, then maintained the first telephone line. “Dave and I surveyed the Lake Audy road after I arrived in Dauphin,” writes George Bedell. When camp grounds were added to the facilities at Lake Audy Mr. Binkley had their supervision added to his duties.

During the Second World War a prisoner-of-war camp was opened in the west end of the park. Mr. Binkley’s responsibilities increased with this innovation as he became responsible for its supervision. On occasion he had to spend several days out there, leaving his wife in the Audy station alone. She was understandably nervous. As a result he appointed one of the German prisoners to guard the post in his absence.

Until 1937 an area on the northwest shore of Clear Lake was used by Indians as a fishing camp and several small clearings were made for their houses but now all that is left is the Indian cemetery.

Audy Plains was once the roaming grounds of herds of buffalo but the animals became extinct. In 1931 an area of three hundred and thirty-two acres was fenced in at Lake Audy and an exhibition herd of buffalo, consisting of four bulls and sixteen cows, was shipped in from Wainwright, Alberta. This animal enclosure has proved to be a great local attraction.
CHAPTER FOUR

*Man Puts in an Appearance*

When did man first appear in this area? Was he here in the pre-glacial era? Was he here during the centuries the land lay frigid in the icy grip of the thousands of square feet of ice? He would hardly attempt to migrate during the post-glacial period when the land was submerged in Lake Agassiz—covered in areas to a depth of six hundred feet of water. Remember, man needs game animals and vegetation to survive and these were not present at that time.

According to a survey conducted in the park in 1970, “beaches were beginning to form along the glacial lake about 13,000 years ago.” It is questionable whether early man may have moved gingerly into the area at that time.

“Following deglaciation a spruce forest covered the region, creeping in from the south.” This type of fodder is not conducive to a game animal diet, hence the stage was not yet set for man.

“Then a treeless type of vegetation emerged to mix with the spruce and this included grasses, willows and juniper. Then about 10,000 years ago, as a result of warmer, drier climate, a growth including shrubs and herblike goosefoot, ragweed, lambsquarters and wormweed appeared.”

Now we have food suitable to game animals and we can begin to look for man’s presence.

“About 6,000 years ago the above chenopod growth decreased, making room for a Corylus growth of hazel and filbert shrub along with other shrubs and small trees. About 2,500 years ago coniferous trees immigrated.” Now our present-day vegetation in its natural stage is complete.
The glacial and erosion phenomenon, which occurred in the eons before 13,000 years ago, is a prehistoric legend. Here in the park these phenomena are responsible for the unique escarpment forming the eastern boundary, for the lakes, rivers and hills, all the physical features with which we are familiar, are a habitat suitable to game animals.

The Dauphin Hills were rated as “good rat country.” Man is not likely to pass up an opportunity like that. Just when did he arrive?

“From the digging done about a quarter of a mile west of the Boat Cove, water-worn tools and artifacts were uncovered which could be placed in the category of 1,350 to 1,750 years ago. At Deep Bay excavating revealed pottery, cultural remains, remains of hare, elk, dog or coyote, gill plate, fragments of some undefinable species of fish, all denoting man’s use of the area in prehistoric times and indicating Cree culture.”

Evidence of prehistoric occupation was found in the Jackfish Creek area where “long bones of a large mammal were uncovered; butchered elk bones with butchering marks indicating stone tools.”

In the McKinnon Creek area cultural material appeared and an Indian trail.

“The Baptist Camp area on the west side of Clear Lake produced excavations disclosing late prehistoric occupation since this area was located within the boundaries of the Indian reservation until 1930.” Grooved axes were uncovered here, tools used about 4,500 years ago. From all this it can be inferred that Cree occupation featured man’s first habitation in the area.

What manner of people were these first occupants? For this information we shall go to the words of early fur traders but first of all to the story of John Tanner, recognized as the first white man to stroll the shores of Clear Lake. This occurred in 1799 we can determine from the diary of Alexander Henry; John Tanner does not supply dates in his narrative. A spring storm so unusual and violent that it must have been the same one that was described and experienced by both and it happened in the Riding Mountain in 1799. Also, Henry mentions dealing in furs with John Tanner, which establishes the year.

The story of John Tanner is a fascinating one. Tanner’s Lake commemorates his early appearance in the area and his contribution to its story. He should not be confused with the John Tanner of Tanner’s Crossing, now Minnedosa, although there is a rela-
tionship. John Tanner of Riding Mountain is grandfather of the younger John Tanner and son of James Tanner.

Tanner of Riding Mountain was the nine-year-old boy who was captured by a band of Shawnees from his Kentucky home in 1789 and from then until his death, with one brief and unsuccessful attempt to regain his white status, lived the life of his captor race. After a year with the Shawnees he was sold to Nettokwa, principal chief of the Ottawwaws, who became his foster mother, treating him as kindly and affectionately as a natural mother. That he returned his affection is gathered from the chronicles of several fur traders such as Daniel Harmon, Alexander McKenzie, Peter Fidler and others.

When his foster father, Big Hunter, died from injuries suffered while the tribe was travelling to Red River to join up with their Ojibway relatives, young Tanner assumed the role of head of the family.

“We met Peshaub who had a lodge on the shore of Clear Lake and, at his urging, joined him. There was at that time Aneeb’s Trading Post on Clear Lake.”

It is to Peshaub’s credit that Tanner became proficient in the art of buffalo hunting, for he was but a young lad at the time with much to learn. He was an apt learner, his foster mother had reason to mention her pride in his markmanship, and his ability and willingness to provide for her and his foster siblings.

“We travelled up the Sas-kaw-je-wun [Minnedosa] River to the Sah-kee-gun [Audy] Lake by the Naowawgunwuja or Hill of the Buffalo Chase [Riding Mountain] to the Me-naw-konos-keeg [Valley] River at which point there was a trading post of which M’Glees [Angus McGillis] was in charge.” Tanner mentions the epidemic among the beaver which depleted the animal’s population to the extent that it has never been as great since.

Now Tanner was of the tribe of the Ojibway or Saulteaux, related to the Cree but not of them. They differed in many respects and did not speak the same language. Tanner’s description of them is therefore pertinent. True, we have the descriptions of Daniel Harmon, Peter Fidler, Peter Pond and Alexander McKenzie but here is the impression of a man who first lived the life of the white for nine years and later traded with his counterparts in the area for an equal length of time.

“The Cree are tattooed with two blue lines from mouth to ears, with one blue line down the centre of the chin. Men wear skin jackets with leggings reaching to the hips, held in place with
belts fastened to breechcloths. Their hair is parted in the middle and braided in tails down the back. Young men have side braids with the hair on top cut short, decorated with feathers, quills and ermine tails. Women braid their hair and roll it in buns with a rounded beaded piece of leather.”

Tanner's first meal with the Cree must have been his initiation into eating pemmican, that staple food of Indians, Metis, fur traders and explorers.

“Buffalo meat with saskatoon berries, dried and stored in leather bags, then cooked in grease.

“The lodges of the Cree were made of skins and on the outside were red and blue figures telling stories of adventures of hunt and war. The inside of the wigwams also had pictures but they told stories of parents and grandparents.”

According to Alexander McKenzie, “the Cree were friendly in their intercourse with both French and English fur traders so were rarely disturbed. They were of moderate stature, active, well-proportioned, cleanly and agreeable. They were intelligent morally, and eagerly embraced religion. Their women were attractive and were the choice of fur traders in selecting a wife.

“The arms and utensils were pots of stone; arrow points, spearheads, hatchets and other edged tools of flint; knives of buffalo ribs; fishhooks made of sturgeon bones and awls from the bones of moose; the roots of the white pine were used as twine for sewing their canoes and thread from a weed for nets; spoons and pans were carved from the horn of moose.”

These were the requirements of the first inhabitants of this area and these requirements could very well have been met from what we have learned from the archaeological report.

The Saulteaux came after the Cree. We know from John Tanner's story that relatives of his foster parents were here when he arrived in 1799 but the Cree were here first.

Now the Saulteaux are of the Ojibway, which is simply a popular adaption of the Chippewa, according to the Handbook of Indians of Canada. The latter was linked with the Ottawwaws of which Netnokwa was chief. It was her husband, Tawgaweninne (The Hunter) who was an Ojibway of Manitoba and gave the family reason for coming here. Before Netnokwa could obtain possession of John Tanner from the Shawnees, she had to pay for him, “10 gallons of whiskey, some blankets, tobacco and other articles.”

Netnokwa's family built winter lodges in the Riding Mountain
that winter and Tanner describes their buffalo pound. “With birch and poplar poles we built a fence four feet high between tree trunks. It was shaped like a funnel, one end open for the buffalo to enter. One morning a small herd appeared. With buffalo hides over our heads we walked into the herd, imitating the mooing of cows and the barking of calves. We led into the pound and the buffalo followed us and were slaughtered.

“We hunted all winter and in spring when the Sas-kaw-je-wun River was free of ice returned to Fort Assiniboine in moose-skin canoes which became water-logged.”

That Tanner should make mention of the moose skin canoes would indicate they were a novelty. Other sources indicate that the Saulteaux used birch bark canoes and they depended largely on fish for food. Their wigwams were made of birch bark or grass mats. “Poles were first planted in the ground in a circle with tops bent together and tied, and the bark, or mats, thrown over them, leaving a smoke hole at the top.”

These were the people the fur traders dealt with in their search for high-quality furs. These were the people who occupied the two reserves in the area after the Manitoba Treaty was passed in 1871 and Treaty No. 2 comprised that portion of Manitoba from Lake Winnipegosis south to the United States boundary, from Lake Manitoba east to the Saskatchewan border.

That first treaty placed the Riding Mountain Reserve in the area between the Turtle and Valley rivers, south of Lake Dauphin. However, in 1874 a letter from the Metis chief of that reserve to A. Morris, lieutenant-governor of the North-West Territories, requested a change of location to a site on the south side of the mountains.

“We have been good Indians. The Riding Mountain Post will be closer for us to collect our treaty money than Lake Manitoba.”

This request must have been granted for a map in the Handbook of Indians in Canada indicates the Riding Mountain Indian Reserve was located near Elphinstone, that the Clear Lake Indian Reserve occupied 1,076 acres on the west end of Clear Lake and that both reserves were inhabited by Keesee-koowenin bands.

There is a permanent reminder of the occupants of the Clear Lake Reserve in the Okanesse cemetery. There are forty marked graves there and one headstone. The reserve was established in 1896 with Pat Bone as the first chief and most of the members were his descendants. Some land was cleared, houses built in
the clearing which gave a full view of the western end of Clear Lake, but there was no cultivation.

In 1930 when the National Park absorbed the area the following owned homes there and were required to move—Mrs. Joe Boyer, M. Blackbird, D. Burns, Mrs. Baptiste Bone, Sam Bone, Gilbert Bone, M. Gaywis, W. Bone, Mrs. Gambler, George Bone, A. Bone and P. McKay.

The pupils of the Rolling River School compiled a history of the Rolling River Indian Reserve which they presented to the Queen on the occasion of her 1970 visit to Manitoba. This informative handbook tells the story of Andrew McKay, an occupant of the Clear Lake Reserve for many years.

“McKay was partially blind yet lived a useful life. He was an active participant in all the activities of the reserve. He kept cattle and horses, made the long walk to Dauphin and back. He was recognized as the healer of the band, using the plants of the park for his healing potions. He loved parties, played the violin for his guests.

“Native people were well able to live off the products of the land, grinding cat-tail roots into flour or boiling them for vegetables. Bannock was a favorite food flavored with wild fruits.

This photo from the family album of Don Lee, president of the Riding Mountain Historical Society, shows a Saulteaux family camped on the west end of Clear Lake in the early 1920s. In the background a flag flies from a teepee.
of the park. Tobacco they made from leaves of the wild bushes or sweet grass, wine from fermented berries. Skins of animals were utilized, the scraping of these done with scrapers made with metal blades and elk-horn handles.”

An 1895 report to the superintendent of Indian Affairs in the federal government stated that “the members of the Riding Mountain Indian Reserve #61 have good houses, live comfortably and in a friendly manner with neighboring settlers. They have a day school and a presbyterian mission and are regular attenders of the church. They are well-clothed, have decent homes, well furnished, their stables and corrals are well kept.”

The Indians of the Riding Mountain and Clear Lake reserves were both of the Keeseekoowenin tribes and they were Ojibway and Saulteaux. There is archaeological proof that the Cree were the earliest inhabitants. There is no proof the Assiniboine inhabited Riding Mountain. It could very well be that further excavation in the Riding Mountain, particularly in the Audy Plains area, will uncover cultural remains indicating they did roam the park, as did the Cree and Saulteaux.

When the boundaries of the Rolling River Reserve were being designed in 1893 with Shawannigwanns as first chief, a request went out from the members that Clear Lake be included in their territory. However, the application arrived too late, the lines had been set and Clear Lake left to be included in the Timber Reserve, the Forest Reserve and now, the national park.
CHAPTER FIVE

Preserving Riding Mountain

The Riding Mountain was unknown territory to the Canadian government until 1858. The Hudson's Bay Company had had the monopoly of trade and commerce in Canada since 1670 and its licence would be up for renewal in 1870. Both British and Canadian governments were beginning to wonder if this land had some further value than just fur trading.

Accordingly, two survey teams were organized: a British team under the guidance of Captain John Palliser going west into Alberta; and a Canadian team under Henry Yuill Hind covering what are now portions of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Hind was a professor of chemistry and biology at the University of Toronto and had with him George Gladman, W. H. E. Napier, S. J. Dawson and eleven assistants. Among the latter were surveyor and engineer Dickson, draughtsman John Fleming, photographer Hime, six Cree half-breeds, ten Ojibway half-breeds, one Blackfoot half-breed, a French-Canadian and a Scot native of Red River.

With five Red River carts, a wagon, canoes and provisions for three months, the entourage left a point eight miles east of Fort Garry at noon on June 9, 1858. The party arrived at Lake Dauphin on October 8, having travelled east to the Qu'Appelle Valley on to the Saskatchewan River, up to Lake Winnipegosis and now Lake Dauphin.

An Indian scout was delegated to inspect the surrounding area. "Eighteen inches of water lay in the surrounding swamps with a quarter of an inch of ice covering." This condition prevailed for nine miles.
Undaunted, the group rose at sunrise and proceeded to ascend the Riding Mountain, leaving three men in charge of their boats at Dauphin Lake.

Hind describes the "pitching trails and Indian trails which lead from one part of the area to the other, following ridges, the only dry areas around." They climbed the escarpment "through marshes, knee deep in water, through which we waded for half a mile. We came to a small island covered with stunted aspen and then a small bog.

"At the bog the Indians demanded a smoke before they explained the manner in which the next portion of the journey must be executed. The thick elastic film covering would carry a man's weight if he moved quickly and lightly. The Indians and half-breeds were successful but Mr. Fleming and myself let one foot break through the film and this emitted a most unpleasant odor."

In spite of the adversities the group hiked eleven miles that day through bog, swamp and over ridges and camped that night "on a forty-foot hill where the men killed a dozen rabbits which they skinned and roasted." On October 10 they arrived at a steep escarpment "about seventy feet high, climbed the plateau to a hill bank, followed a broken hilly tract, took a moose path to a high conical hill where we could view three plateaus."

They reached the summit of the Riding Mountain at three in the afternoon after two days of climbing. Mr. Hind mentions the last ascent as "abrupt, consisting of a steep escarpment of drift clay and boulders covered with white spruce, birch and aspen."

This second night in the Riding Mountain was spent "under heavy spruce sheltered from the snowstorm which arose. We reclined on a couch of spruce boughs with a roof of spruce over us and dined on bear steaks."

"Awakening on the morning of October 11 we found the ground covered with snow and, since we shortly encountered an impediment in the form of a lake, we began the return journey. For our descent we chose a path to the left of our original one. At one point the Indians refused to follow a fresh moose track unless a half-breed accompanied them, declaring the area was full of devils." By October 12 they were back at Dauphin Lake, having found "the return journey more exhausting than the climb."

From Mr. Hind's report the Canadian government received its first intimation of the location and potential of the Riding
Mountain. Thirty-seven years went by before any action was taken and this would be after the enactment of the British North America Act in 1867 and the subsequent withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869.

With the opening up of western Canada to settlers, and the impending trans-Canada railroad threatening the existence and life style of Indians and Metis, the Canadian government was forced to take a hard look at this new territory under its jurisdiction. Establishing reserves for the natives took top priority and this was followed by a general survey of its resources.

Here in the Riding Mountain 1,535 square miles were designated as a timber reserve in 1895 by the then department of the interior. This was followed in 1906 by the Dominion Forest Reserve Act and in 1911 by the Dominion Forest Reserve and Parks Act.

The purpose of these acts was "to preserve and produce a perpetual supply of timber for the people of the prairie, considering first the needs of the homesteader. They were not to furnish wood for the lumber business."

In considering this legislation the Canadian government took for its motto "seek ye first the production of wood and its right use and all these other things will be added to you."

It had learned, by this time, that trees must be protected for they feed springs, prevent floods, hinder erosion, protect game and fish, while they give the country aesthetic qualities. It is this foresight on the part of the Canadian government which has preserved the natural beauty which prevails in many areas of the park.

"The most difficult problem facing our government was the one of fire protection. Constant surveillance was necessary particularly in the spring when the surrounding meadows contained dry grass. It was not uncommon for the rangers to burn these meadows in order to form fire guards. One year ninety acres around the Riding Mountain were treated in this way."

Reforesting was of prime importance at this time so as to replace the areas denuded by fires. "Removing squatters who had already started farming, hoping at some time and in some way to be permitted to make official entry, presented a delicate situation which required good judgment on the part of the forest rangers. It took chief ranger, W. A. Davis, and his one hundred and twenty-six rangers a whole summer to remove them in a fair and equitable way."
Cutting timber was under the control of the superintendent of forestry. “Permits to cut were granted only to actual settlers within fifty miles radius of the nearest reserve boundary line and only to those settlers with an insufficient supply on their own homestead. This must all be of a specified quantity and type. Timber cut without permits was seized by the rangers and double duties charged. If these were not paid the timber was sold at public auction. Only portable saw mills were allowed, mill owners received permission to utilize tracts of timber, the trees to be cut must first be marked by rangers.”

Following the act of 1906 a general inventory of the Riding Mountain Reserve was made under the direction of Jas. R. Dickson, assistant inspector of forest reserves for Canada. Art Bickerstaff preserved one of the original copies of this survey.

Three excursions were made into the reserve, the first in the summer of 1906, starting at Dauphin under the charge of H. C. Wallwin. In spite of an extremely wet season with almost impassable trails, 337 square miles were covered.

The following year, 1907, was even wetter. Under H. D. Ross a party entered the reserve west of McCreary and attempted to work toward Clear Lake. Progress was impossible; the group returned and chose for entry a point south of Kelwood.

“We managed to cover one hundred and seventy square miles in spite of difficult conditions. The terrain was hilly, miles of wagon road had to be cut and several cordwood bridges were constructed. Added to our many vexations were millions of mosquitoes which retained their tenure from June to September.”

The season of 1908 proved more successful. J. R. Dickson assumed charge and led a party of eleven, starting at the village of Ochre River.

“We followed the Ochre River Trail to Clear Lake, a distance of about forty miles, working the trail on both sides. Lack of interior trails forced us to go west by way of the Galician settlement bordering the south side of the reserve, enter the Birdtail Valley, along Russell, Fisher and Gamblez trails.”

The party covered about six hundred and sixty square miles that season, mapping and studying as they surveyed, for a total of one thousand, one hundred and sixty-seven square miles for the three years.

The object of this three-year survey was “to learn the quantity of timber remaining; to map the existing trails, water courses
and forest types; to study the rate of growth of the various species and the possibility of introducing better species; to estimate the present use and abuse of the forest by mill men and settlers; to consider means of reducing the ravages by fire and other enemies."

Mr. Dickson’s report includes the information that “the timber reserve is a mere wreck of a forest and will require efficient management in order to ensure the future welfare and permanence of its growth.”

Federal government intervention at this time was most timely for he goes on to describe “the devastation wrought by fire in the previous twenty-five years due to the carelessness of lumber men, settlers, half-breeds and Indians. For miles and miles along old Indian trails stretches open prairie or desolated waste of blackened stumps. Ground fires around the outskirts of the reserve, especially those bordering settlements, are annual infestations. All around Clear Lake denuded semi-prairie conditions exist indicating fire destruction. Northwest of the Ochre River valley and an area of township 19 are both wilderness of destruction due to fires.”

However, Mr. Dickson’s report concludes on an optimistic note. “The fires have not impaired the producing power of the soil. There is very little waste land unsuited to tree growth, every dollar spent in improving and developing the resources of the forest will be returned with interest.”

He mentions the species of trees which dominated the forest at the time. “The eight most important are white and black spruce, aspen (white poplar), balm (black poplar), larch, canoe birch, balsam and jack pine.”

He advised that “white spruce should be favored for future timber management purposes as it is the tree of greatest all-around utility. It is a prolific seeder, grows quickly and under conditions unsuitable to many other trees in the Riding Mountain.”

At present we see three major natural divisions in the timber growth in the park. In the northeast we have a boreal forest dominating, on the east deciduous trees, and around Clear Lake, aspen. It is suggested that the reason for this phenomenon is that the 100 degree longitude line which divides eastern and western Canada passes through Clear Lake, making the Riding Mountain the middle of the continent.

In 1930 the government again intervened in the affairs of the
Riding Mountain when an act of Parliament established it as a national park to be used by “all the people of Canada.”

The park received royal recognition in 1970 when Queen Elizabeth paid an official visit in the course of her tour of Manitoba in its centennial year. The then-superintendent of the park, Paul Lange, and his wife, Evelyn, had the honor of entertaining the Royal Family on that occasion, in the house provided for superintendents on the north shore of Clear Lake.

Accompanying the Queen were members of her family, including her husband, Prince Philip, son Prince Charles and daughter, Princess Anne.

Princess Anne made the trip by way of Duck Bay in a helicopter. She was met by golf professional John Lawrence, who has a picture to commemorate this high point in his forty-three-year-long golfing career.

When Prime Minister Trudeau paid an unofficial visit in 1977 along with sons Justin, Sasha and Michael, residents felt the park had risen high in the estimation of the Canadian government in one hundred and nineteen years. Had he, however, chosen the same entry point in 1977 as Henry Yuill Hind did in 1858 he would have been compelled to use the same mode of transportation as the professor. The prime minister and his family had the pleasure of strolling the shores of Clear Lake, as did John Tanner in 1799.

In August, 1979, Governor-General Edward Schreyer vacationed in the park while attending the Canadian National Ukrainian Festival at Dauphin.
CHAPTER SIX

An Outpost of the Fur Trade

The records of the Hudson's Bay Company indicate there was a trading post on Lake Audy in 1862, a winter post, subpost to Fort Ellice, which was located where present-day St. Lazare stands. In 1879, Factor Archie McDonald of the Swan River district, which included Fort Ellice and the Riding Mountain, wrote "the Riding Mountain post has been moved down the Minnedosa River six miles, after occupying the old location for twenty years. The old location has been disposed of."

A report from Isaac Cowie, in charge of the Fort Ellice post in 1867, said, "from the Lake Audy post, which is located in the wooded Riding Mountain, we received large quantities of furs trapped by the hunters of the Saulteaux tribe of Indians of whom the family of Little Bones is most expert."

During this period eight clerks and interpreters were in charge of the post and actively engaged in trading with the Indians of the Riding Mountain. They were David Prince, John McNabb, Ballenden McKay, Charles McKay, Walter J. S. Traill, Thomas Spence, Frances Maloney and James C. Audy.

The last name left a permanent reminder of his presence in the area in the name of the lake and the plains. Hudson’s Bay Company minutes indicate he spent fifteen years in service with the company, twelve of which were in the Riding Mountain, the remaining three in Russell. During his years here he was highly rated in annual reports. "He was an energetic and interested fur trader." He appeared to lose interest after being transferred, being classified "light and flippant in his dealings." When he
retired he settled in Elphinstone where he became a popular story teller.

Finding a northwest passage to the Far East was the driving force which spawned explorations from Europe in the seventeenth century. The futile efforts of Martin Frobisher in 1576, Henry Hudson in 1610, Captain Thomas Button in 1612, Jens Munk in 1619, Captain Luke Fox in 1631, Gibbons, Bylot and Baffin are well chronicled. The one redeeming feature of these pilgrimages was the discovery of the beautiful little beaver with luxuriant skin so very suitable for the making of hats.

These beaver hats became a status symbol to the gentry of Europe. So urgently were they required that a fur-trading company evolved for the express purpose of obtaining and selling the pelts of the beaver. Prince Rupert, cousin to King Charles of England, obtained a charter “to trade in that whole area draining into the Hudson Bay, approximately 340,000 square miles of what is now Canada.” Thus was the Hudson’s Bay Company formed in 1670.

Hudson Bay posts were established around the Hudson Bay, Fort Churchill (then Fort Wales), and furs were accepted from the Indians, who must be prepared to make the journey to those points. The members of the august company were not enterprising or aggressive, too timid to leave the forts.

It was Henry Kelsey of the company who, with an Indian guide, first plucked up the courage to travel into Cree and Assiniboine country. The year was 1690 and he was the first white man to see the grasslands of Manitoba; but he, as far as we know, came no closer to the Riding Mountain than The Pas.

Even with Kelsey’s explorations it was almost a century before forts were established in the surveyed area and then only because they were spurred on by the competition provided by the French traders and members of the North-West Company coming in from the east along the St. Lawrence River. Most notable were the efforts of Sieur de La Verendrye and his three sons who followed the historic river by way of the Great Lakes, Pigeon River, Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg, Red and Assiniboine rivers.

Their assignment was to “find a land route to India and China across the continent.” La Verendrye’s achievement included the establishment of fur-trading posts, the most significant being Fort Charles on the Lake of the Woods, Fort Alexander and Fort Maurepas on Lake Winnipeg, Fort Rouge on the Red and Fort la Reine on the Assiniboine. These were built at the “request
of the Cree” who resented having to travel long distances to exchange their furs for provisions.

It was for this reason he agreed to establish a fort at the mouth of the Mossey River, giving it the name Dauphin, in honor of the heir to the throne of France. This was a gesture no doubt designed to pacify the French king, who would be most disappointed in his unsuccessful attempt to find a land route to India. He probably found a trading post small consolation. From now on this area, including the Duck and Riding Mountain with the intervening country, would be called the Dauphin Hills. The year was 1741.

With competition from the eastern routes the Hudson’s Bay Company was forced into action. Smith and Waggoner, representing the company, “came through in 1756, 1757 and 1758 bringing Indians back to York Factory for the purpose of purchasing their furs each spring.” William Tomison did more than that; he actually “wintered here in the years of 1767 to 1770, trapping with the Indians in the Riding Mountain.”

Peter Fidler, a geographer and surveyor for the Hudson’s Bay Company, spent the years between 1817 and 1823 travelling around Fort Dauphin. It was he who first used the name Riding Mountain in his reports, as opposed to Dauphin Hills. This term stemmed from the fact that “canoes could not be used over the mountains, riding ridges were used for the convenience of horses” used by trappers, hunters and others.

Alexander Henry, the younger, was on the White Mud River on the eastern slope of the Riding Mountain in 1799, as a trader for the North-West Company. It was his uncle, Alexander Henry, the elder, who has the distinction of “being the first English fur trader to penetrate former French territory after the fall of New France” in 1760, according to L. J. Burpee in Two Canadian Adventures. Peter Pond, his partner from Lake of the Woods to Cumberland House, left him in 1775 and headed south to Fort Dauphin and Winnipegosis.

John Tanner describes his foster mother’s experience after a whole season of trapping. “Netnokwa traded one hundred and twenty beaver pelts, some buffalo robes, dressed and smoked skins and a few other articles, all for rum. Of all our large load of pelteries, the product of so many days of toil, of so many long and difficult journeys, one blanket and three kegs of rum remain, besides the poor and worn-out clothing on our backs,” Tanner records in the Indian Captivity of John Tanner. The Indians
would give five or six prime beaver pelts for a quart of Saulteaux
rum, which was simply a cup or two of rum and remainder water.
Tanner traded with Alexander Henry, the younger, spending
the winter with him in his post.

Henry mentions in his narrative that one of his men had bar­
gained shrewdly, "obtaining one hundred and twenty beaver
skins for two blankets, eight quarts of rum, and a looking-glass.
The pelts have a cash value in Montreal of four hundred dollars.”

Henry had many interests outside of fur trading while he
sojourned in Manitoba in the concerns of his company. He
travelled extensively among the Indians and visited the adjoin­
ing trading posts. In spite of his questionable bartering principles,
he made friends with them and learned their ways. He brought in
seed and planted gardens so as to assure a supply of fresh vege­
tables. He brought in horses which he bred and raised.

Besides being an interesting individual himself, his crew in­
cluded interesting characters, particularly one.

Previous historians have given Marie Lagimodiere, Louis
Riel's grandmother, credit for giving birth to the first white
child born in Manitoba, then Saskatchewan and lastly Alberta.
This may be true of Saskatchewan and Alberta, but, here in
Manitoba, one of Alexander Henry’s benchmen supersedes
Madame Lagimodiere in this distinction. Masquerading as a
boy in her attempt to find her lover, she joined the North-West
Company and was assigned to Henry’s crew. Her disguise
was a complete success, for Henry describes his surprise and dismay
when “she came into my camp one evening obviously ready to
give birth.”

Up until the time that the La Verendryes came into the area
the Indians of the Riding Mountain were required to travel to
Fort Wales on the Hudson Bay to exchange their furs. Their
mode of travel would be canoe and boat in summer with por­
taging; in winter it was on foot. Both restricted the number of
pelts they could carry, the amount of provisions brought back
and the number of trips they could make in a season. With the
establishment of Fort La Reine near present-day Portage la
Prairie in 1739 and Fort Dauphin in 1741 the lives of the natives
of the area became more simplified and productive.

The Hudson's Bay Company reached the area in 1756 when
Smith and Waggoner established a Fort Dauphin on the west
side of Mossey River. The North-West Company had a Fort
Dauphin on the Valley River for a time but when the two com­
panies amalgamated in 1821 the Hudson’s Bay fort was abandoned and both companies operated out of the North-West site.

Hudson’s Bay council meeting minutes indicate Fort Dauphin served the Indians and fur traders until 1823 when it was abandoned for four years, re-established for a period of three years when it was suspended again until 1867. However, by this time a fort had been opened at Fort Ellice by the company and this continued to operate until 1895 when fur-trading posts lost their usefulness. Indians were engaged in both hunting and farming, railroads came in and the white settler was here. It was the opening of a new era.
CHAPTER SEVEN

_Hunting and Lumbering Grounds_

The Riding Mountain was skirted by two historic trails, a nineteenth-century map shows.

To the west ran the Carleton Trail, starting at Fort Garry and proceeding in a north-westerly direction through to present-day Alberta, attracting missionaries like Father Lacombe and the McDougalls, explorers, fur traders, settlers and adventurers. It passed through Fort Ellice, now St. Lazare, but skirted the Riding Mountain.

To the east of the area ran the Dominion Government Telegraph Trail which had its beginning at present-day Selkirk. It, too, proceeded in a north-westerly direction, travelling through The Narrows of Lake Manitoba, northward around Lake Dauphin, proceeding further north around the Duck Mountains and on west to present-day Edmonton, also skirting what is now the Riding Mountain.

The Strathclair Trail followed the Minnedosa River by Lake Audy and on north into Manitoba, and it alone provided access into the area. Having first been defined by Indians, Metis and fur traders, it quickly became the main thoroughfare for colonists in the 1880s.

These settlers needed lumber for houses, barns, fences and firewood. While their own homestead acreages on being cleared for cultivation might yield sufficient quantity of this commodity at the beginning, the time did come when they were forced to go further afield in search of the wherewithal to complete the construction requirements of their permanent homes, hence forages into the Riding and Duck mountains.
The present-day No. 10 Provincial Trunk Highway (or as the park portion is now known, the Riding Mountain Parkway) actually had as its beginning a lumber trail into the reserve and was known as the Thompson Trail, as it proceeded south from the Dauphin Valley. Settlements to the east, west and south made the same encroachment into the heavily timbered area until the Government of the Dominion stepped into the picture in 1895. From then on restrictions were placed on the removal of timber.

Lumbering was done but under strict supervision. Dave Binkley, while ranger at Lake Audy in the Forest Reserve days, had 13 portable saw mills plus two stationary under his jurisdiction. It was his duty to see that permits were obtained before the timber was cut, that trees had the necessary markings before they were cut and that discretion prevailed in the removal of timber.

Portable saw mills were brought in by horses, Nellie Gusdal tells us, “the engines on one sleigh drawn by two teams of horses.” These could be followed by any number of bob sleighs containing all the requirements for living in the bush for an unallocated period of time.

Upon arrival at their destination the saw mill was set up; engine and mill with a belt joining them at the required distance. The engine supplied the power to pull the belt which motivated the saw mill which cut the timber into the desired width and thickness. “The first operation removed a slab from each of the four sides which left a square white beam.” It was the sawyer’s duty then to adjust the setting lever on the carriage and turn the beam until it was sliced into as many boards as the timber’s size would allow.

“My father, Eric Hall, owned and operated a saw mill when I was a little girl. We often had as many as 16 of a crew to operate our saw mill. When I was older I cooked for my father’s crew sometimes.” A portion of the crew would be employed in the cutting of the trees, some would be allocated the duty of hauling these trees to the saw mill.

“At the saw mill the engineer, the sawyer and his helper adjusted the levers and turned the logs, one man carried away and piled the slabs beside the mill, some piled boards. When a planer was used after the boards were dry, additional help was required. Accommodation in the way of bunk houses was provided for the workers on the camp-site, the cook camp provided accom-
modation for the girls who were responsible for the meals.”

Portable saw mills in the reserve were numerous and efforts to obtain names of owners and operators present a formidable task. Conrad Halvarson, whose experience in the area goes back to the twenties, recalls that “my father Otto Halvarson with Charlie Bengston had one on the north shore of Clear Lake across from present-day Deep Bay for several years prior to and including the twenties.” Halvarson’s was portable and he could provide names of several. There was the one of Sandy McLean, Hillstrand, Wickdahl, Bill Wilson, Bergwall, Albin Gustafson, Hans Hemingson, H. G. Winslow, Ira DeWitt, Dan Crawford and Joe Skog at Crawford Park; James and Thomas Shaw, on Edwards Creek; McEwan and Evans, Blaine and Anderson at Ochre River; Walter Scott and a second Scott site at McCreary. Jim Prout had a portable saw mill north of Lake Audy in 1897.

Stationary saw mills number two, the one of Alex Kippan and Peden’s Mill. The latter started operation at Gunn Lake in 1895, the year the area was set aside as a timber reserve by the government. However, Marion Day and her cousin Bill Peden tell us there were at least two saw mills in the area before this time. As the timber in that area diminished, the Peden Mill

Peden’s saw mill at Whitewater Lake, west of Elphinstone, Man., around 1910. The mill, operated by Bill Peden, was one of two saw mills in Riding Mountain and employed up to 40 workers every winter.
moved further into the wooded area and 1910 finds it on White-water Lake. It becomes quite clear that stationary saw mills were not entirely so, as they had to move when the supply of timber was insufficient.

However, moving a stationary saw mill was tantamount to the evacuation of a village and the establishment of another. It entailed moving not only the saw mill and the engine but the cook house, the bunk house, the blacksmith shop, the stables for the horses, the many cabins for occupancy by the employees and their families, the cooking equipment and household effects, not to mention the employees which could number 30 full-time and any number of part-time.

Marion had experience in serving as a cook for a period of three seasons at the Peden saw mill. She recalls “baking 30 pies every morning,” among the varieties being fig pie. She set bread by hand in laundry tubs to ensure a sufficient supply for the day to feed the quorum of workers plus customers waiting for their order of lumber. These were the settlers who had secured permits to cut timber which they then brought to the mill to be made into lumber.

“The cook house was a huge log building containing eight long tables, each table seating eight people. The floors and tables were wooden and required scrubbing each morning to preserve their white clean look, a task so strenuous it required the efforts of a strong man. Breakfast and supper were served at the tables but lunch was made up in the morning and taken out into the bush where a fire was built, in order to thaw out the sandwiches and heat the water for tea.”

Since a number of horses were required for the use of the mill workers and the customers, a blacksmith shop was a prerequisite and Peden’s was manned by Jack Peden, a farmer in the off-season but also an excellent blacksmith. Shoeing horses properly was an important factor in the operation of this saw mill. Roads from the mill to the timber permits were iced to make for easier sledding but created more hazardous footing for the horses. To avert disaster, the horseshoes were fitted with cleats as a safety measure. In addition, more skilful handling by the teamsters of the animals was necessary to avert accidents. The vehicles for hauling the timber featured “wider than normal tracked sleighs and therefore required wider swaths through the trees for trails.”

The most important employee at the saw mill was the sawyer;
it was he whose duty it was to obtain as many boards as possible from each log which went through the saw mill. After removing a slab from each of the four sides he adjusted the saw in order to produce the width of board desired and proceeded to slice off as many as possible. William Peden, Marion and Bill's grandfather, was the first sawyer for the Peden Mill, followed by Bill Peden, Marion's father, and later by Tom Slater. It is likely that Bill, Sr. learned the art in his native province of Ontario from which he migrated to Manitoba in 1870. It was he who could sharpen an axe to the fine edge by which one could shave if a razor were unobtainable.

Engineers were also important links in the producing of lumber from logs, for it was their duty to produce the energy which drove the belt for the saw mill. The energy was steam, which is one of the reasons that saw mills were invariably located near water. The fire box in the engine was stoked with slabs from the saw mill and this heated the water in the boiler. Joe Partridge was an engineer for the Peden Mill, Dave Broadfoot and a Mr. Kennedy. Attachments at the mill provided for the removal of saw dust, the rolling in of logs, for edging, planing, and shingle making. Harry Wyman had the duty of keeping the engine supplied with water. Albert Woods was head of the bush camp for a number of years. "Six or seven of these bush men made up this camp and one winter saw three Austrians in this service. They became so adept at this duty they set records of 150 trees cut per man per day."

Alex Kippan brought a portable saw mill into the reserve in 1926 and set up about a mile from Clear Lake along the Thompson Trail. By 1928 he had enlarged his operation to a stationary mill, taken up permanent residence and proceeded to build up a year-round business activity which provided homes and employment for anywhere from 60 to 75 people in the winter months, 25 to 30 in the summer. Cutting the timber and some sawing featured their late fall and winter activity when snowfall reduced fire hazards. Fires invariably accompanied timber cutting so it was mandatory that all branches and chips be completely removed from the site of the cutting. The spring months were devoted to sawing and planing in order that the lumber be ready and available for summer construction. The months of June and July were used for the repair of the saw mill and its equipment. By July the wood was dry enough for planing.

Since the Kippan Mill was located near the Indian fishing
ground on the west shore of Clear Lake, a number of Indians were employed in the performing of part-time jobs, as tank men, waterboys, caring for cattle and horses, and for filling in for absentees. In the compound then, along with the bunkhouses, cook house, homes for families employed, blacksmith shop, barns, planing house, laundry, storage sheds, there were shacks for the Indians who often preferred wintering there to returning to their own homes.

In 1936 Kippan closed his Clear Lake saw mill, relocating on Edwards Creek on what was known as Shaw Limits and which in 1904 was purchased by T. A. Burrows. By this time all portable saw mills were phased out and by 1946 all mills were barred from activity in the park.

Thus ended the saw mill era in the park. Gone were the sharp whistles of the engine on a cold frosty morning, calling the lumber men to work—a sound which carried from McCreary to Whitewater Lake. The forest had done its duty to the settlers and pioneers of the surrounding area, to the businessmen and the cottage owners of the reserve and park. It had assisted in the construction of the Peace Garden in 1935. It has made its contribution to history and earned its right to retire and heal.

The Dominion Forest Reserve Act of 1906 placed restrictions on hunting as well as timber cutting. This activity was allowed only in the fall months for specified periods of time which became progressively shorter until they were completely dissolved with the enactment of the Riding Mountain National Park Act in 1930. Poaching of game, like timber, was indulged in by the surrounding settlers, presenting a perennial problem to the rangers whose duty it was to monitor the actions of all migrants into the area. On occasion catching the culprits and applying the terms of the legislation would result in hard feeling, lead to mysterious accidents, and in one instance, murder.

Honest, sportsmanlike hunters who observed the rules derived a great deal of pleasure from this diversion from their labors. The Gusdals, Halls, Carlson, Halversons, Swen Gunderson, Charlie Hill, Mark Corbett, Andrew Sandstrom and many others made this annual excursion into the reserve a satisfying as well as profitable holiday, one they planned well in advance.

Mrs. Carlson (Emma Hall) said that this event was solely for “the fellows and became almost an obsession with them.” With the crop off, the summerfallowing done, grain stored and all fall work done, they began the preparation for the months or
weeks or whatever absence from home. Organization was important; all requirements for survival in the forest for that period of time must be included in their packing.” One year they included a cow in their prerequisites to ensure a sufficient supply of milk and butter for the camp.”

It takes very little imagination to visualize the departure of the entourage on a crisp morning in November. Sleighs loaded with provisions, drawn by horses, spirits light in the hearts of men in anticipation of the days ahead, days filled with good fellowship, good sportsmanship and a holiday from the mundane and routine day-by-day duties.

Until 1912 only hunters’ cabins were located in the park. Dr. Montague owned a cabin on what is now Deep Bay. Gerald Stone had one near the Swanson Creek.

In 1893 there were few elk in the area, though thousands of deer, up to and including mule deer. It was after 1920 that elk migrated and by the thirties there were thousands. Their natural environment is foothill country. Theory has it “that prairie fires pushed them north from Montana and finally east into the
Riding Mountain.” Elk and moose were the objects of the hunters before hunting was banned.

Buffalo were plentiful in the Riding Mountain until 1875. By 1885 they were extinct in the area and on the prairies. In spite of the demands of the native, the toll of prairie fires, floods and disease, immense herds roamed the prairies. It was the mass hunting, the feeding of railroad construction crews, the greed and the ingenuity of the white man with his gun that wiped out the buffalo.

“On one hunt in 1856 more than 2,500 buffalo were slaughtered. Buffalo tongue was a delicacy; most of the slaughtering was for those, but 275 bags of pemmican and 250 bales of dried meat were saved by the women after the feast of the tongues,” the History of the Carleton Trail reveals.
Several surveys have been made in the Riding Mountain mainly to determine the density, quality and classification of timber. The first one was conducted between the years 1906 and 1908. Aerial surveys, followed by ground surveys to check their accuracy, were carried out in the thirties. Students and graduates of the forestry engineer faculty of the University of Toronto were employed on some of these survey teams.

Art Bickerstaff, second-year student, was a member of the team which made the first comprehensive survey of the area, and he was able to supply a copy of the original report of the survey conducted in 1906 to 1908. However, Mr. Bickerstaff failed to mention an experience he had with poison ivy in the Riding Mountain. Hughie Johnson, Jimmie Goodison and George Tunstall were involved in some of these surveys.

It was in 1914 that George Tunstall, with a Bachelor of Forestry Science degree from the University of Toronto, arrived to do the surveying in the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve for the Canadian government.

The headquarters for the reserve were in Roblin in 1914 but were transferred to Dauphin in 1915. By this time Mr. Tunstall had surveyed the first subdivision for resort purposes in the reserve. However, the initial survey for this purpose was located on the west side of Clear Lake and "this choice did not suit those holidayers who wished to make use of the beaches of Clear Lake." The area was retained for picnic grounds and a search started for more suitable sites for a resort area.

From 1912 on, George Clark and his wife from Newdale
camped regularly on the shores of Clear Lake near the end of Crocus Street and this became known as Clark's Beach. Before this time only hunters' cabins existed for short periods of time, one of them belonging to Dr. Montague of Minnedosa. As a matter of fact Aeroplane Bay or Deep Bay was first known as Montague Bay.

When the west side of Clear Lake was labelled unacceptable for resort purposes, Mr. Tunstall was offered the suggestion that Clark's Beach might be more suitable. Fred Smith, head of the Forest Reserve at Dauphin, apparently opposed this location on the basis that "the seasonal invasion of mosquitoes in that heavily wooded area would discourage any holidayers from using it."

At this point, Ludvig and Oswald Gusdal enter the picture and this was to determine the future of the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve. They had hunted, fished, cut timber and picnicked in the reserve for years, knew its lakes and streams, its scenic beauty and possibilities. Along with the families of Lee and Hansen they had camped and picnicked here in 1908, travelling from Erickson in wagons drawn by horses, building cordwood bridges over the swamps as they proceeded.

*Oswald Gusdal (centre with hat) enjoys a family picnic in 1908 at the old Clear Lake campgrounds, near the present location of Jamboree Hall.*

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Nellie Gusdal said in an interview, “They chose a site on the shore of Clear Lake where the Jamboree Hall stands because it was high and dry for their tents. There was lots of grass there for their horses. They needed grass to fill their mattresses as well. They had plenty of pure, clear water for drinking and for the horses. The view was beautiful and they enjoyed the holiday.”

Several years later, by chance, Fred Smith and Ludvig Gusdal, along with Colonel Stevenson, head of the forestry department, were on the train, en route to Erickson from Winnipeg. The subject of a resort area for the Riding Mountain came up and Mr. Gusdal was able to convince the skeptics that Clark’s Beach was suitable for a summer resort area.

Accordingly, in 1916 George Tunstall, with the assistance of Ludvig and Oswald Gusdal, surveyed the first lots on what is now Wasagaming Drive. The width of these lots, according to Mr. Tunstall, was “66 feet (one chain) and these were available on a yearly basis for a fee of ten cents per foot frontage.” It was fitting that these surveyed lots should be allocated to Ludvig Gusdal and Peter Lee, and interesting to note that these same lots were still in the possession of the same families in 1980. Mr. Tunstall recalled that “Peterson and Miller obtained lots on that same occasion.” Mr. Baker of Kelwood built the first store and it was located on the main beach. A post office was added to it later.

It was 1928 before Mr. Tunstall did any surveying on the North Shore and this was at the urging of the people of Dauphin. Before this time, D. D. McDonald of Dauphin and president of the Riding Mountain Association had secured the services of Gottfried Johnson in the construction of a log cabin for himself and family, in what is called the “second circle.” At the same time, a Mr. Hall of Brandon, with the help of the same builder, obtained a log cabin in the “third circle.” Mr. Tunstall recalls surveying for William Scott, “a forest ranger who became the chief park warden after the national park was established.”

Bert Scrase and Cecil Bryce of Dauphin built a log cabin in the first circle on the North Shore. Gottfried Johnson did the constructing, after he had selected the site with the aid of a lantern in the dark of the night. The prerequisites were not difficult—a lot that was surveyed, on the North Shore, and one with four large spruce trees at the front of the lot.

After Mr. Johnson had built the cabin, he constructed a small model of it and this was shown at the Brandon Exhibition that
year. Mr. Scrase, an enterprising businessman, along with his family, established what is now Scrase's Groceries and Meats in the Wasagaming townsite, a business which continues to this day.

George Bedell, with a degree in forestry from the University of Toronto, came to the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve in 1926. He was posted to Dauphin where Fred Smith was the reserve superintendent with Jack Chalmers as clerk. Neither had forestry training. Bedell rented a small cabin with outdoor plumbing from C. B. Gill. Mr. Gill drew up the first map of Indian Trails in the reserve.

Mr. Bedell's posting was to Lake Audy when the ranger there was promoted and he filled in as substitute until the position was filled.

It was in this assignment he learned that rangers could practise skulduggery in the marking of trees.

Mr. Bedell said, "A ranger was suddenly promoted and I had to look after the district.

"On my first visit to a mill site I discovered that the practice had been for that particular ranger to leave his marking axe just inside the wee cabin door ... reach in the hay that was used as a mattress and find a supply of homebrew that had been placed there. When the homebrew was finished, his timber would be marked and he could head home.

"I didn't approve of this—so next morning I headed out alone. No one offered to come with me.

"There was no map of the timber stands. Eventually, I found some that should be cut and marked it for removal. However, it was a long haul to the mill.

"Next day they decided to co-operate and they sent someone out to help. So we marked some timber that was a little closer.

"I ran a compass line and told my assistant which trees to mark and which to leave. He didn't approve of the trees I was leaving—'Oh, Meester, Meester, that's a good tree'—his idea of seedtrees was any tree that would not make good timber.

"However, in spite of this little story the vast majority of early markings in the Riding Mountain was done intelligently and honestly.

"I stayed at the Thompson cabin a few times. Once I was cruising timber just east of there. I had one helper. When he was hired I was skeptical and tried to explain it would be a really hard trip.
"He took one look at me and said he would go anywhere I would go. So I told him that was good enough.

"I was quite willing to break trail all day if he would follow.

"One day a blizzard came up—it was getting late and hard to see a compass so I said I would push ahead to the line and he could follow... I made it all right but he didn't show up. There was no answer to my yelling so I went to the cabin and boiled up a pail of tea and had my supper. It was really stupid to go out into the bush before morning but I couldn't feel right to leave him in the bush.

"So I put some hot beans in a lard pail, well wrapped in newspaper, and some hot coffee in a thermos. My tracks were already obliterated and one could see little or nothing. At the line there was no answer to my calls, so I started into the bush.

"There I saw a ruddy glow. It was my man sheltering alongside a big fallen spruce tree and he had managed to start a fire. So he had something to eat and I led him back to the cabin. He stuck out the trip, though his feet were bad and he was limping. He never wanted to go on another trip with me."

Mr. Bedell and ranger Jack May had several interesting cruising experiences. Mr. Bedell recalled an occasion on one strenuous trip when he became thirsty and broke the ice for a drink of water.

"The water was bad, my nose told me, but too late. I had taken a mouthful." He became violently ill and was forced to return to the Thompson cabin. "All I could find there was a bottle of rum." He swallowed some of the chilled rum, blistering his mouth and tongue.

"I had to skip supper that night and eat only bread and milk for a few days." However, he was able to warn Jack May to take the chill off the rum before drinking any of it.

Before leaving on one auspicious run he had told Jack to bring a sharp axe, not the usual dull one he usually carried. All went well for some time. If the axe had been "in the hands of an expert" there would have been no problem but it eventually slipped and inflicted a hefty gash to his knee. "I wrapped a towel around it and we continued until the job was done."

The Thompson trail was passable only for wagons during Mr. Bedell's term in the Riding Mountain. The Strathclair Road (Lake Audy) was the one they used for the long climb up Spruce Hill, now levelled. "It was a red letter day if one could get up that hill without getting out to push."
"In the spring and the beginning of the mosquito season it was quite impossible for cars—and almost so for a democrat. I can remember when we couldn't get more than half a mile until all four wheels would refuse to turn. Then we would have to get out and spend half an hour removing the gumbo. Luckily the whole road was not like that. Near Lake Audy there was a lot of gravel."

Ranger Pete Brodie was Bedell's companion on a number of explorations into the timber area. Brodie owned some fine horses and occasionally they were used by the cruisers in their tasks. One of these, the one Mr. Brodie allocated to Mr. Bedell, was inclined to become fractious. It was not above taking the bit in mouth and galloping off home, leaving his rider no alternative but to hang on as best he could without regard for dignity or horsemanship.

Mr. Brodie loved horses; cows he could take or leave for very good reasons. With several days of exploring to do in the west end of the reserve, he and George Bedell dug a well, pitched a tent for their supplies and rode forth for a strenuous day in the woods. Returning in the evening hot, tired, dusty, hungry and thirsty, they discovered their quarters had been taken over by a herd of cows. One of the cows was actually inside their tent, the rest were trampling in their well and spreading the mud around their provisions. In frustration, Mr. Brodie heaved an axe at one animal; his anger marred his aim and the animal escaped harm. Another well must be dug to obtain water to clean up the mess, supper cooked, good humor restored, appetites appeased and they could seek rest.

The Swanson cabin was the scene of many of the surveyor's stories. It was here a bear entered the supposedly bear-proof building when the wooden catch was inadvertently left off. The door swung to after the animal entered; it panicked and tore the place to shambles, up to and including a bag of flour. In desperation it went through the window, taking the frame as a yoke around its neck, and, covered with flour, tore off into the woods.

The Swanson cabin was a sturdy one, lined with slabs and the outside logs. It was from this cabin George Bedell, Jack May and Jack Vicars carried out a cruise of tie-timber in 1926. It was a warm cabin but the season was cool and rainy, the roof leaked, the steam rose from the sleeping bodies in the morning, but, above that, the wee mice who made the sawdust insulation their home, had cold feet, and, in the process of travelling over their faces at night, awakened them. One found shelter in Mr. Bedell's
warm underwear and in order to extricate it, he had to commit mouse murder.

It was data from this survey that was used in laying out a big tie-sale awarded to the Italian settlement at Alonsa.

Lorne Burkett of Erickson described that operation. "It was shortly after World War One that Frank Concilla of Winnipeg, owner and operator of Frank's Cafe, sponsored a group of his fellow Italians as immigrants to Canada. In order to regain some of his expenses he took a timber limit in the Riding Mountain in the jack pine area just east of Swanson's Creek, at the turn to the Rolling River warden station. Here these Italians cut wood for ties to be used in the laying of railroad tracks."

George Bedell attended the initiation of these men into the art of tie-making. They had "not one idea as to the procedure, could not even fell a tree properly," until Bedell showed them. They had, however, obtained the services of a top-notch sawyer, so completed the assignment with no difficulty.

The hospitality of this camp was outstanding and Mr. Bedell thoroughly enjoyed the assignment. The food was good, the service perfect. A man came into his room at night to make up a fire and "a quietly extended hand in front of him held a glass containing a special kind of Italian wine." In the morning the same procedure—a fire laid so quietly it did not disturb his sleep, then "the extended hand with the glass and the wine."

In his estimate of this timber limit Bedell learned that a proficient sawyer could embarrass a surveyor. His estimates were too low, and when he and Jack Harrison watched the sawyer in action they learned the reason. That sawyer was getting ties from timber he and Allan Molloy had considered too small for that purpose.

It was during Mr. Tunstall's period here in the area that a portion of the Forest Reserve was withdrawn for settlement by the returned men from the First World War. Tom McElhanny was in charge of the program and George Tunstall had occasion to discuss his plan over coffee one night in Miller's boarding house in Erickson. He became disturbed when he noticed that these proposed changes would leave only a small portion of Clear Lake in the reserve; the rest would be included in the farm land. He was able to convince Mr. McElhanny "that Clear Lake was such a beautiful body of water that it should be left in public ownership." As a result all quarter sections bordering the lake are in the park, thanks to Mr. Tunstall.
It was left to Mr. Bedell to survey the first nine holes of the golf course when the park was instituted. The engineer sent out from Ottawa to lay out the course was called back suddenly. He had time to describe a tee, dog leg and green, select the location for the clubhouse and he was on his way. Mr. Bedell was able to lay out the course with the help of one assistant.

On one survey trip to Gunn Lake, Mr. Bedell was accompanied by a half-breed by the name of Old Jack. The assignment took longer than they expected and they ran short of food. Old Jack disappeared, reappearing in a couple of hours with two ducks, ready for the pot. Since he carried no firearms this was no mean feat. However, he explained, “I used a large hook on the end of some stout cord, with some extra fine bait on the hook, and the ducks swallowed the bait.” Since there was no other explanation, Mr. Bedell swallowed the story. Besides, he was hungry!

One of the duties of a surveyor was to lay out the saw mills in the forest reserve and George Tunstall laid out many, among them McEwen's south of Edwards Creek, Blaine and Anderson, Scott Mill near McCreary, the McEwen and Evans Mill where Ike Nellis was the sawyer. McEwen had been a sawyer before he was a mill owner, during which time he lost an arm. He

These cabins are among the first built on Clark's Beach by L. B. Gusdal and Peter Lee in 1917. Today there are 274 cabins along Clear Lake.
marked the timber in the area in the early days and was followed in this duty by C. B. Gill.

While carrying out his duties in the forest reserve, Mr. Bedell located “the largest spruce tree ever to that point in time found in the Riding Mountain. A stump slice was made into a table and exhibited at the Brandon Fair. One large slice was presented to the faculty of forestry at the University of Toronto.”

George Bedell was theoretically finished at the Riding Mountain when it was instituted as a national park. However, his services were engaged in controlling a big fire which broke out. From there he went on to survey whatever saw mills were still in operation and presented a report on their fate. He then was asked by Superintendent Jim Smart to survey and test the swamp where the parking lot, tennis courts and cabins are now located. From there he went on to the Whiteshell.

Following the survey of 1916 with George Tunstall, Ludvig and Oswald Gusdal in charge, Clark’s Beach became desirable for summer cottages. Seventeen lots were surveyed on this first occasion and by 1918 there were half a dozen or more cottages on the beach. Surveying was being done on the North Shore known as Dauphin Beach. In 1931, after the area was transferred to the federal government and became a national park, further permits were issued for the construction of cottages on Clark’s Beach. The date these were to become available was known in advance and the evening before the line-up began and remained through the night. The permits were issued on a first-come-first-served basis and it was necessary to be at the top of the line nearest the office door the next morning in order to get the lot of their choice.

In the fall of 1931 an official survey of the townsite was made similar to the original forest reserve survey and more sites were made available for the building of cottages. The lots closest to the present business section were all taken up by 1930, some of which extended through to Ta-Wa-Pit Drive. The south side of the latter drive was opened for leasing in 1946 and choice lots were soon taken up.
CHAPTER NINE

Forest Rangers

The duties of a Park Resource Officer in Riding Mountain today are no different from those of a forest manager or warden before the reserve gained national park status. The duties of these important links in the chain of park management are still the same, essentially the policing of park resources. It is their duty to carry out the provisions of the acts, "the objects of which are to protect the timber, the birds, flowers, animals, fish and waters within the confines of the park boundaries."

After the enactment of the Timber Reserve Act in 1895 and the Forest Reserve Act in 1906, each reserve was under the jurisdiction of a superintendent of forestry subject to the minister of the interior. It was the latter who appointed the forest rangers, giving them all the powers of a Justice of the Peace within their own territories. Upon appointment to the office the rangers swore to "faithfully, honestly and impartially fulfil, execute and perform his duties."

There were 126 rangers on duty in the Riding Mountain at the end of the last century as compared to 20 park resource officers in today's park management personnel. The reduction in staff is probably due to the phasing out of saw mills which required frequent inspection, the elimination of timber cutting, the decrease in poaching incidents and the lessening of danger incurred in the carrying out of their duties. It is no longer necessary for them to carry firearms. Motor vehicles and roads have replaced Old Dobbin and Indian trails.

When the reserve became a park in 1930 a number of the rangers were promoted to park wardens. Ranger William Scott
became chief warden. Ranger Pete Brodie filled that position when Scott vacated it, after having served as acting chief warden in 1941. Dave Binkley, Jack Vicars, Jack May, Lawrence Lees, Jack Hyska, and Roy McKinnon were promoted. McKinnon joined as a patrolman in 1917 and became a warden in 1929.

Lawrence Lees lost his life in 1932 when a sniper caught him in his ranger cabin through the window. His wife was injured at the same time when she attempted to phone the RCMP. Jack Hyska was appointed to that Rossburn post to follow Lees and his nervousness was understandable. He drew his shades in the early evening.

Joe Allan and Bill Campbell were seasonal workers who were promoted to wardens, Joe Allan following Pete Brodie as chief warden in 1950, when the latter was transferred to Jasper. Gudlander Paulsen was appointed warden in 1933, patrolman R. T. Hand made warden in 1940, E. F. Little in the late thirties.

It was Dave Binkley who made the greatest contribution to the Riding Mountain in terms of long service, devotion to his work and loyalty to park policy. In his 30 years of service as forest ranger and park warden he fell irrevocably in love with the Riding Mountain and his home and acreage on the Mooswa Drive just outside the park limits bear testimony to this sentiment.

The lawn, resurrected from muskeg and scrub trees, now proudly boasts spruce, pine, maple, birch and cedar trees all transplanted from the nursery he conducted out at the warden's station at Lake Audy. The flowers he grew are native to the park and they flourish as pleasingly as they do in their natural environment. Mr. Binkley died in the summer of 1979 after 30 years of service and 22 in retirement here.

The home, built largely with his own hands from native wood, contains furniture and ornaments personally crafted from products from the park. From the antlers of elk and moose, from the driftwood and timber of the woods he constructed tables, smoking stands, lamps, picture frames, desk sets, to mention a few. The mantel over his fireplace he made from native birch and on it rests the gift of a German prisoner-of-war complete with a swastika. Over it hangs his certificate of recognition of 25 years of service to the national park and five as forest ranger.

Mr. Binkley came to the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve in 1927 when ill health made it imperative for him to seek the outdoor mode of life. George Bedell, surveying out of Dauphin,
posted him to the Lake Audy station as a ranger. Included in his duties at this time were those of a tree conservationist. It was his duty to plant the seedlings, give them four years to grow, then have them transplanted for the reforestation of denuded areas of the reserve.

In this capacity he conducted a rather unusual transplanting program in the spring, a program which required many extra hands. He engaged the services of Ukrainian girls and women from the settlement and they proved excellent workers, accepted with good grace the life of camping in tents for the duration and enjoyed the wind-up and dance with which Mr. Binkley concluded the spring time exercise. One spring something ugly emerged, something of which our own era is guilty—racial discrimination.

The transplanting program was conducted in three stages. In the first stage the little seedlings were dug out of the ground by hand. The second stage was performed under the shelter of a tarpaulin where the seedlings were threaded on to a transplant board. The final stage was carrying the transplant board out to the transplant row and putting them in the ground.” It is not difficult to assess the most disagreeable and arduous stage, naturally the one of digging up the seedlings in the cold. Hands would become cold, dry, cracked and bleeding, so it was an accepted rule, though not defined, that each girl would work that shift for just one hour, at which time another girl would automatically relieve her, and this without prompting.

One year a pretty little French girl, not as sturdy as her co-workers, was engaged for this work and the other girls resented her. They completely ignored the unwritten rule and allowed her to dig, hour after hour. By the time Mr. Binkley became aware of the situation, her hands were bleeding, she was crying and yet furiously and proudly still digging away. She was then transferred to a lighter task and carefully instructed as to procedure. However, when he proceeded to repeat the instructions she interrupted, “I'm not stupid. I'm not Ukrainian, I'm French.”

Poachers were bold characters in the early days of the park. They thought nothing of cutting off a mile or so of telephone wire to be used for snaring elk. Elk teeth were much in demand and commanded a good price on the market. Elk meat could be smuggled out under a load of timber, to the city if possible.

However, the telephone wire had to be replaced to resume communications with the outside world. It was the ranger’s
duty then to ride out in the dead of winter, with an extra pack horse loaded with telephone wire, locate the break and repair it.

Mr. Binkley located another strange break in their telephone communication on another occasion. This time it was a beaver who became a culprit. He had built his home around the wire, a home with a telephone yet!

Some of the rangers could be described as characters. One of these had incurred the deep displeasure of the settlers. On one of his visits to a mill site, these settlers in revenge cut his horses' harnesses to pieces and buried his jumper deep into the sawdust pile.

In a sadistic mood one day, this same ranger flogged his horse until it died. This event was dutifully recorded in his daily diary, concluding with the words, "I hitched myself to the remaining horse and proceeded to the ranger station."

Ranger Roy Bell conducted the first controlled fire in the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve. It was he who assisted surveyor George Bedell in putting out a big fire in the Ochre River district of the reserve. However, when several smaller fires followed it became obvious that an arsonist, or arsonists, were active in the area. They were successful in apprehending them and brought them before Judge Bonycastle where Bedell became a technical witness. A conviction was effected with no sentence, but the fires did cease.

Mr. and Mrs. Bell were as capable and ingenious in the home. With a large family of their own and with the constant flow of visitors and surveyors requiring accommodation, their facilities were often taxed for sleeping needs. They solved the problem by constructing beds which could be folded back against the kitchen wall each morning and brought down each evening if they were required. Mrs. Bell could produce a nourishing meal on short notice. She had on hand at all times a particularly tasty stew which she canned and stored.

"There were many around who could properly be described as 'characters'—in fact most of us fitted into that description. I wonder if I ever told you about Irish Baldwin? In his last days he lived across Jackfish Creek from the Lake Audy ranger station. He was an old lumberman, a big, brawny Newfoundlander, nothing ever scared him, until the day he said he saw a bear, twice as large as any he had ever seen before. Colonel Stevenson accused him of reading about grizzlies and then using his imagination for the rest of the story. Then the colonel discovered Irish
had never learned to read. Incidentally, the old man finally taught himself to read—his favourite book was *The History of the Red River Settlement* and he could quote it almost word for word. Old Irish was really very factual and had a deep knowledge of nature.

"Old Irish was a real gentleman—to anyone in need he would give the shirt off his back—but due to his background, it was very difficult for him to get through a sentence without at least one swear word. His most common oath was, 'Be the Blue Jesus'—quite common, I have heard in Newfoundland—anyway he was very well aware of this and would never go near a woman if he could avoid it—and would, when cornered confine his remarks to 'yes, ma'am' or 'no, ma'am' or to very well considered sentences.

"Some of the poachers were pretty rough people and in the early days many of the rangers used to carry a revolver—in fact I was sometimes ridiculed because I did not carry one. However, I never had a shot fired at me either so maybe it paid off."

Marking trees for cutting is one of the duties of the rangers of the reserve, the wardens of the park and the present resource officers. The head of the marking axe has the initials FB on one end and FS on the other. The designated and ill-fated trees receive two markings, one some inches from the root with the initials FS. The second is blazed some inches above the first and contains the initials FB, FS indicating the stump end, FB the butt end. Now, the tree must be cut down with an axe or a saw in the space between these two markings. This could seem pretty superfluous and confusing until we check the purpose of these markings.

One of the duties of a ranger in days past was to check on suspected fraudulence and this system of marking gave him three avenues by which to proceed. He could go out into the forest and check the tree stumps of the limit in question, and, if every stump did not bear the initials FS he was one step in the right direction. He could then overtake the load of timber en route to the sawmill and check the trees on the load and if every piece of timber did not boast the initials FB he could confiscate those which did not. Thirdly, he could go right out to the mill site and check the timber there in the mill yard. "If unmarked timber was found, stiff penalties could be imposed, seizures made, and, if the millman was suspected of co-operating in the fraudulence, all operations of the mill were stopped until the matter was
A cheery group of Riding Mountain Park employees (above) in 1936. They are (back row, left to right) Bob Hand, Joe Allan, Vern Tulley, Dalton Boyd and Bill Franks. (Middle row): Jack Halverson, George Tonsel, Roy McKinnon, Jack Hesca, and Jack May. (Front row): Pete Brodie, Park Superintendent Otto Heaslip, Dave Binkley, Pat Mulligan and Jack Spillet.

When Riding Mountain National Park was officially opened in 1933, the government hired the first park wardens. Here former ranger Bill Campbell (above) displays his park warden uniform as he poses with his car.
cleared up.” Pretty tricky, eh? A conscientious ranger or forester could very easily incur the animosity of mill owners, lumbermen and settlers.

Ranger Fred Howell had a patrol cabin on the east side of the Strathclair Trail from which headquarters he patrolled the game reserve. Trying to stop poaching during this era was difficult due to slow transportation, numerous saw mills and the attitude of the settlers. He loved birds and animals and made friends of them to the point where the birds would perch on his shoulders.

“He was as efficient as a ranger could be under the circumstances, successful in apprehending yet disliked by the culprits, either because of his effective methods or because of his lack of diplomacy.” At any rate trip wires were laid for him by the poachers in the spirit of revenge. His horse fell into one and was killed. He himself escaped injury.

Gerry Melcher was a forester who lost his eye in a gun accident. He eventually became head of the Manitoba Game Branch.

Many and varied were the experiences of Ranger Jack May in the area. It was suspected he was a remittance man trained in the art of boxing, among other accomplishments. While covering the Blaine and Anderson saw mill at Ochré River on one occasion, he was challenged by the bully who had reigned supreme in the boxing arena up to this point. Reluctantly he accepted the challenge and proceeded to annihilate the champion, to the delight of the onlookers.

It was Jack May who, in the pursuit of his ranger duties, would attach antlers to his shoulders to entice elk into his line of vision. He gained the dubious distinction of shooting the third largest elk ever seen in the area.

Installing a telephone wire into the reserve assisted the rangers to a large extent in carrying out their duties. However, Ranger Pete Brodie found the convenience a hindrance in his efforts to apprehend poachers who were stealing firewood and even sawn wood. He knew it was happening but became frustrated in his efforts to catch the thief or thieves. It turned out that a certain lady with much time on her hands possessed a pair of binoculars which she kept focused on his route, through her window. When she saw him she would phone up and down the line to inform her neighbors. When he changed his route a great deal of lumber was placed under seizure.

Jack May and Old Irish were good friends while they manned their ranger station, until a certain surveyor with Ranger Tom
Pollon appeared on the scene. The two friends were extremely frugal in the dispensing of any liquid refreshments they had in their possession. When the visitors intimated their need for a drink, they were quickly assured there was not one drop available. The next morning the doubting, and still thirsty, surveyor instructed Tom Pollon to take the two rangers out with him to hitch up the horses in preparation for departure, taking a great deal of time in the process. In the meantime, he carefully explored the ranger cabin from roof to cellar; finally he found a jug carefully cached in the lower level, and brought it upstairs for transference to another vessel. A jar containing prunes was quickly relieved of its contents and filled with the more fiery product. Diluting the remaining liquid in the jug with water was the work of a minute and the pranksters were on their way, having first carefully replaced the vessel in its hiding place.

It was months later, when the rangers were sampling their wares and found them weak that the pilfering was discovered. By this time they had both forgotten their visitors and naturally suspected one another. Their warm friendship cooled considerably. It was years later that Jack May learned the truth of the matter. It is not known if Old Irish ever did.

As we mentioned earlier, rangers and superior officers could incur the displeasure of those who wished to defy regulations. In one dispute over seizure Fred Smith, Jack May and Jack Vicars became involved. The three visitors were to sleep in the government cabin but Jack May was persuaded to occupy another building for the night. After the fires were banked at night in the cabin, a gang of fellows dragged logs across the door, then climbed up on the roof and plugged the chimney, filling the little cabin with smoke. The occupants were “not burned but they were smoked like kippered herring,” in the words of George Bedell.

In addition to his ranger duties in the area, Jack May was a collector of butterflies and upon retirement toured Canada and the United States with his exhibit; finally he established a private museum in Colorado Springs.

Here are the names of some of the rangers who have served in the area: Brisley, Tom Beddome, Mickey McMillan, Jack Handley, Gav Wade, Jack Hjalmarson, Bud Armstrong, Alex Young, Tony Ewasiuk, Charlie Kilmister, Mel Greenway, James Spillet, Oliver Price, Bill Scott, Sid Carter, Howard McCracken, John Mudrey and Jack Hutson.
Early construction in the Riding Mountain Reserve featured mainly log cabins, much of it done or guided by Scandinavian craftsmen. Ludvig Gusdal's and Peter Lane's cottages in 1917 were the work of their own hands. In quick succession came those of Charlie Johnston, Chris Olson, Frank Hillstrom, Charlie Hill, and Mr. Harrison.

A number of early cabins were built by Alfred J. Sjogren, many of them, like the ones owned by Jean McLeod, Barbara Sarantankos, Bill Wilton and the Stevensons, stand as sturdily today as the day they were built.

The Sjogrens came into the area in 1918, squatting first where Spruce Crescent winds today, on the property leased by Gordon and Muriel Cummings. It was 1922 when that portion of the reserve was surveyed that the Sjogrens were able to obtain a lease.

Building log cabins was not Mr. Sjogren's sole talent. He was a photographer and his photographs have stood the test of time. Mrs. Sarantankos has some taken of the first log cabins, summer and winter scenes, all as clear as the day they were taken.

Mr. Sjogren was also a fine furniture craftsman, a cabinet maker. A photograph of the interior of their cabin depicts Mr. and Mrs. Sjogren at work carving and spinning. All around them are the products of their busy hands. Handcrafted from the woods of the area are clocks, shelves, stools, tables and fretwork, all skilfully formed and beautifully finished by the master craftsman. Mrs. Sjogren's talent is apparent in the knitted garments around.

Visitors to the Sjogren cottage were invariably treated to a
John Alfred Sjogren (top), pioneer cottager at Clear Lake, was well known for his early photographs of the area and for his woodcarving talent. Sjogren and his wife are shown here in a self portrait, taken in the 1920s, at their Spruce Crescent cabin.

Mr. and Mrs. Sjogren (below) sit beneath a totem pole carved by the Swedish cottager. He was often called “Mr. Strongarm” because of his strength. Later some family members changed their names to Armstrong.
cup or more of excellent coffee, brewed in true Scandinavian tradition. It began with the grinding of the bean, the aroma of which activated the taste buds, and by the time the beverage was brewed the visitor was ready. One surveyor never missed an opportunity to taste the liquid which to him was “pure ambrosia.” Her cinnamon buns were equally delectable.

Eric Hall, whose daughter married Ludvig Gusdal, did the early stonework in the reserve. It was he who lined the first Wishing Well with round stones. Ole Ramsted installed several stone fireplaces and left his initials in the one in the clubhouse at the golf course. Alex Doner said both fireplaces featured in his lodge are of Ramstad construction. Ted Neilson learned the art of stone masonry and contributed his share to stone construction in the park.

It was John Anderson (married to Bertha Hall) who did the bulk of contracting for construction in the late twenties and early thirties. He contracted for the building of the Administration Building, Danceland, the North Gate Kiosk and several cottages. He was injured while roofing the North Gate Kiosk and from then on his contracts were fulfilled by his workmen, including his son-in-law, Ted Neilson.

A construction crew building a log cabin for Dr. Royal Dicks of Dauphin pauses for this 1932 snapshot. The cabin on Spruce Crescent is owned by the doctor’s wife Greta.
Frank Thaczuk, now living just outside the park limits, provided some first-hand information on the early construction in the park. Working under Helge Holmberg, he learned the art of log building and assisted in the construction of the superintendent's residence in 1930. Working with him were Gottfried Johnson, Herb Johnson, Carl Bow, Cecil Bow, Alex Erickson and Mr. Sadler.

In 1931 his crew built the staff bunkhouses, the Medical Centre, old campground office, reinforced the main pier, and erected the auditorium as it was then known, later the Museum, and today the Interpretive Centre.

Mr. Thaczuk has a very personal interest in that last-named building, for it was he who chose the logs for it. A supply of logs had been cut during the winter months and left to dry for six months. He then chose from these logs those which he deemed most satisfactory for the auditorium, marked them for scribing and directed the building. In the actual construction he was assisted by Bill Clyde of Neepawa.

Scribing is defined as “the process whereby the logs are marked along the sides in preparation for grooving by which means the logs are fitted together.” Grooving was done with an axe and a V-shaped knife and this also formed the gouges for the corners. The corners do feature a few long spikes but metal drift pins are preferred here as well as at long intervals along the sides. All this makes for a sturdy structure, neat appearance and durability.

Mr. Thaczuk explained that “the most important tool in the art of log construction is a good sharp axe, then a one-man crosscut saw, a crooked draw knife for hollowing the logs, the scriber, which in appearance resembles a compass, a key-hole saw, a level, and two types of “dogs,” implements which hold the log in place while working on them.”

When the auditorium was completed the logs were all treated with linseed oil and the fireplace installed. Mr. Ramstad did the latter construction. The chapel was then built into the new structure.

The log theatre, though contracted by John Anderson, was actually built by Carl Bow, Arvid Bow, George Bergman, Ole Nelson, Edward Johnson, Axel Neilson and Charlie Erickson. Mr. Anderson's accident prevented his actual participation in the construction but he did manage to place the cement supports
and the pillars before retiring from this activity, his daughter Ethel Neilson said.

Mr. Anderson contracted for and built the first Administration Building across from the present-day Siesta and built several cottages with the help of Olov Olson and Ted Neilson. He and Neilson constructed the Art and Craft shop for Miss E. R. Williams, the building and business owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Burr of Winnipeg.

Gottfried and Herb Johnson were deeply involved in log construction in the area. A number of cottages are to their credit, among them being the one D. D. McDonald of Dauphin, the first such to be built on the North Shore. The year was 1927. The next year saw them build Scrase's and that of Mr. Hall from Brandon. Wasagaming Lodge was the product of their workmanship in 1931 to 1932 and this facility they operated, adding indoor plumbing in 1935 when these services became available.

John Gottfried Johnson was not only a contractor and builder but an accomplished stone mason as well. An early visit to Texas and a period of employment in the shipyards there prepared him for the work in the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve. He was instrumental in the building of the clubhouse at the Golf Course, the Fire Hall, the first administration building, the Johnson Cabins along with several log cabins.

The first restaurant, the Wigwam, was the work of the Johnsons and the Gusbals in 1930. It was operated by Oswald Gusbald until 1934 when J. Tainsh assumed proprietorship of the business. Mrs. Conrad Halvarson, Oswald Gusbald's daughter, said, “My father was not really a builder, he was a businessman. He managed the Wigwam restaurant after it was built.”

It was under his management that the official opening was held and Mrs. Halvarson recalls attending it. It was a gala occasion in the park when all of Erickson and the surrounding area gathered for the celebration. The building was not quite completed, the rafters still open but a picture showed the gaiety and importance of the auspicious occasion in the social life of the park and area residents at the time. The Erickson Orchestra was in attendance; Oscar Olson, a grain buyer in Erickson, was on the trumpet; teacher, Miss Lindquist on the piano; Irvin Johnson, farmer, on the saxophone; Wilfred Magnell, farmer, on the guitar; Sam Bolt, Alex Doner's cousin and operator of Sam's
Confectionery at Erickson, on the drums. The photograph is owned by Edna Corbett of Erickson.

Eric Hall built the Casa Loma in time to provide an aesthetic background for his granddaughter, Ethel Anderson's wedding reception in 1933 when she married Ted Neilson. The Alguire brothers of Neepawa were responsible for the construction of the Chalet on the main beach in 1933. Ed Poole of Neepawa built the Idylwylde Cabins, the Siesta and the Sylvan Lodge. The last-named burned in 1969 and the lot now serves as a parking area. The Chalet burned down in 1959 and was not rebuilt.

Charles Pedlar of Neepawa located, and Ted Neilson built the first Danceland in 1932, on the corner where George Neilly conducts the business of the Texaco Oil Company. It took just two years for this popular form of entertainment to outgrow those facilities when it was moved across the street to the present location.

J. H. Baker of Kelwood had the first store in the area, located on the lake front. It was relocated in 1933 when the Chalet was

Election victory picnic held in Riding Mountain for Premier John Bracken in 1922. Attending the event were (left to right) Neil Cameron, MLA, Ludvig Gusdal, Nellie Gusdal, Mr. and Mrs. Ab North, Martin Lee, Mrs. Eric Hall, Mrs. Charlie Johnson, Eric Hall, Mrs. Peter Paulsen, Mr. Bracken, Charlie Johnson, Rudolph Paulsen, Paul Paulsen, Mrs. Harold Jacobson and husband; Elsie Hall (front).
constructed in its place, and built on relatively the same spot as the Sylvan Lodge occupied later on. In that same year Douglas Brown of Neepawa established Brownie's Tea Room which is now the Clear Lake Trading Post, owned and operated by Bill Piett since 1976.

By 1922 there were several log cabins on Clark's Beach, and Charlie Johnson entertained Premier John Bracken of Manitoba in his in that year to celebrate the premier's election victory. Nellie Gusdal has a picture to commemorate the occasion. In her husband's boat on Clear Lake in front of the cottage are her husband Ludvig Gusdal, Neil Cameron, minister of agriculture in the then Manitoba government, Albert North and Mr. Bracken. Attending the event along with the above-mentioned were Eric Hall, Peter Paulsen, Klaus Haroldson, along with their families.

Gloria Gunnarson, the land revenue clerk in the Administration Office, was able to provide information about the builders from files in her possession. She said labor gangs, which would often include park staff, were responsible for some of the construction and that these gangs would probably include many of the builders already mentioned.

The tennis clubhouse in 1935 was built at the hands of such a gang as was the clubhouse out at the golf course built in 1932. The Freiheit Construction firm at Dauphin provided the extension to the administration building in 1957, but park staff added to its facilities in 1965.

G. W. Epton of Brandon constructed the Jolly Robin Tea House on Buffalo Drive for Rebecca Henrietta McCullough in 1933. This building has gone through the hands of Jerrett, Helfgatt, Komarniski, and is presently owned by McArthur of Dauphin and known as the Summer Place Souvenir Shop.

The Meldrum complex was done in three stages by Aubrey Randolph Henson with the help of three different builders. The original building, the centre portion, appeared in 1932 with A. Polson of Minnedosa doing the constructing. The extension on the west side was done by Albert Madill in 1941 when Henson received appointment as postmaster for Wasagaming. Freiheit Construction did the east extension in 1950. G. S. Porter of Dauphin purchased the drug store, souvenir shop and ice cream bar from Henson, and in turn sold it to Meldrums.

The Manito-Weban on Ta-Wa-Pit was originally an old log service station on Wasagaming Drive, built in 1931. It was pur-
chased by G. A. McMorran in 1935 and moved to its present location where it served as the telephone exchange and as his printing office for the Wasagaming Guide. The old printing press can be seen today in an adjacent shed. In 1936 he engaged the services of Ted Neilson in the construction of living quarters and the complex served the McMorran family until it was purchased by the Kells of Dauphin in 1969.

Alex Doner said his father, Abe Doner, found the services of Ted Neilson excellent and engaged him in the construction of his building in the thirties. Doner came into the park in 1937 but before that conducted a business with Sam Bolt at the south entrance to the park. There they dealt in the needs of everybody—and this meant everyone inside or outside the park, including those employed in the park in the depression of the thirties.

In the park they built the Buffalo Lodge which Alex still owns and operates. It is to their credit that the present-day New Chalet was built, first known as the Lake Lodge and the Ice Cream Bar, including at one time a supermarket. Both buildings were sold to Abe Ratson in 1945 and converted into an accommodation centre and restaurant.

Neilson also built cottages for Mr. Doner, eight in number with lumber purchased from Kippan’s Mill. One of these was fully winterized and reserved for the use of the RCMP stationed at Wasagaming at the time. As Alex recalls, “the fee was eight dollars a month.”

The Mooswa complex made a small beginning in 1949 with the building of the Blue Bird cabins by George Timpson, later added to by Cecil Faggetter, then by William Andrews and became known as the Rainbow Cabins. “I couldn’t stand the look of them,” says Mr. R. Gregerson of Fargo, North Dakota, “so I bought them, remodelled them and built the Mooswa Lodge and the Fireside Inn.” He now owns them in conjunction with Les Holden. Mr. Gregerson is also responsible for the construction of the Elk Horn Ranch just outside the park limits which was officially opened in 1969. This business is now owned and operated by Ruth and Lorne Aitken.

The present-day Cedar Shack was built in 1932 for Walter Townley, operated under the name of Wally’s Delicatessen and Home Cooking until 1949 when it was bought by John Taverner and bore the name of Devon Inn. It became the Grey Owl Restaurant in April, 1965, under the proprietorship of Anita Lee and George Clarkson, owned by Don Lee from that time until
1971 when he sold it to Champs of Winnipeg. Don Miskiman and Dave Farrell of Yorkton purchased and renovated it in 1979 and are operating it under the present name.

The present-day Added Touch Boutique, located in the building of Harry Dmyterko on Wasagaming Drive, was under the name of Chelswicks Barber Shop and Beauty Parlour according to a 1934 copy of the Wasagaming Guide. By 1942 it was under the management and ownership of Mr. F. Robinson who later sold it to Mr. Dmyterko.

Henry Ward of Dauphin, brother of W.J. Ward who, as MP for the Dauphin riding, was instrumental in changing the Riding Mountain from the status of a forest reserve to that of a national park, was also a builder of log cabins in the twenties. Three of those in the third circle on the North Shore are the work of his hands, one of them now owned by Mrs. Frances Elvis. All three are presently occupied.

Albin Wickstrom was another builder in the park shortly after its institution. Scrase’s Groceries was constructed by him in 1932 and he operated it as a meat market until Mr. Scrase took over.

Joe and Fred Skog, beside managing a sawmill, did fine furniture for buildings in the park in the early days. In the late thirties and early forties, Johnie Green, an old country craftsman, made a lot of willow and birch furniture; much of it graced the old museum for years. He used Riding Mountain oak for reproduction of fine furniture.

Albert Rogan had visions of building a houseboat for himself out where Deep Bay is, but the authorities had another idea and he had to be content with the log cabin he constructed beside the Casa Loma. Others who followed were Theodore Lee, M. P. Gusdal and Peter Paulsen.

A couple of canvas houses was ingeniously devised in the early days of the area. These were not the ordinary tent type of structure as they were spacious, divided into rooms, high and roofed, and became as warm and dry as a log cabin. Mr. and Mrs. Londry had one of these, as did builder Bill Clyde.

Building of residences and businesses did not fully occupy the promoters of the Riding Mountain in the twenties and early thirties. Clear Lake’s beautiful beach area was, in the twenties, simply a swamp area. “It was necessary to haul rocks, stones and sand from the North Shore across the lake, to build up the beach for swimming,” Conrad Halvarson said. His father, Otto, was
Clearing the bush to build Wasagaming Drive in 1920 was no easy task. Much of the clearing was done by hand, horse-drawn equipment and small caterpillars shown upper left. Construction extended into the 1930s and today it is a modern paved main street in the town of Wasagaming.
active in this as he was in the road building program.

Transportation of the materials from across the lake was done “in the winter months when the ice was strong enough to carry horses and vehicles.” Rocks and stones were extricated from the ice by means of crow-bars in the hands of strong men, loaded on to sleighs and stone boats, and, along with the loosened sand, brought over to Clark’s Beach for filling in the swamp area. “It was not uncommon to see 20 teams of horses occupied at one time” in the process.

It was in the year of 1922 to 1923 that Peter Paulsen and Eric Hall took out large tracts of logs from the present-day golf course area. This became necessary to avert the destruction of the timber by an infestation of worms, following a forest fire. The sawing of this timber was done by the sawmill of Charlie Bengston on Mud Lake. He had moved his facilities from the north shore of Clear Lake.

Transportation of the timber and lumber was by way of Wasagaming Drive which at that time was simply a trail built by the forestry department, using only small tractors and graders. However, according to Conrad Halvarson this was “the first decent road north beyond Ludvig Gusdal’s farm to Clear Lake.”

The lumber from these logs was brought back from the sawmill to Clark’s Beach and used for the construction of the log cabins which sprang up, also for an extension to Baker’s store on the main beach.

Activity ran high in the Riding Mountain during this period. There could be as many as 100 teams of horses involved in the hauling of logs and rocks in the winter time. This building interval would include the thirties when relief camps were established here for the benefit of the thousands of unemployed. What was a low point in the economic history of Canada proved beneficial and timely to the Riding Mountain.

Figures on the number engaged for employment in these camps vary. Anywhere from seven to 13 camps at various times were occupied with 160 men to a camp, distributed over the whole park. All reports agree that the energy supplied by these workers was well utilized, for the park emerged with roads, trails, cleared underbrush, and beautiful stonework, not to mention an 18-hole golf course.

Each camp had bunkhouses for sleeping and recreation, a kitchen and its own power plant. There were cooks, bull cooks with a man for each duty. The workers were organized for sport,
a hockey league was in action, and a hockey rink maintained on Clear Lake near the old pier which was located in front of Baker's store on the main beach. This was Camp One and included Turk Broda who earned his first claim to hockey fame on that team. He subsequently went on to the Brandon Wheat Kings and the National Hockey League.

Each camp was supervised in its duties by local men or those experienced in the art of building, road work and stone work. Otto Halvarason, with ten years of hunting experience in the area and as many in the operation of a sawmill, was in charge of one camp. He had a unique and effective way of inspiring incentive in his workers. Any sign of indolence or carelessness would automatically invite penal servitude, that of sawing up by bucksaw the firewood required for the stoves of the camp.

The Norgate Road was built in 1931 with engineer Walker in charge. His subsequent assignments included the engineering of the Kicking Horse Pass in the Rockies. Tommie Fenton, assistant engineer in the Norgate project, became the park engineer, and in 1936 acting superintendent until Otto Heaslip took over the post.

The Thompson Trail to Dauphin became a highway during this same period with Strang and Watson as contractors and Les Kennedy the engineer, and became known as Highway 10, now the Riding Mountain Parkway. This road has undergone some changes of direction since its Thompson Trail days but follows relatively the same route as the old forestry trail.

Main streets in Wasagaming townsite were built by the members of these Relief Camps. Ta-Wa-Pit and Wasagaming drives were constructed by means of wheelbarrows and shovels.

The trail built by the forestry department before 1923 was constructed by means of a small tractor and grader.

In the struggle by the Riding Mountain Association to have the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve established as a national park for Manitoba, W. J. Ward, member of Parliament for the Dauphin constituency, persuaded Interior Minister Charles Stewart that it was necessary for him to visit the area before the bill establishing a national park for Manitoba was introduced in the House of Commons. He felt when the minister could compare it with the Whiteshell his decision would go to the Riding Mountain. Having gained the promise that the minister would make that visit in August, 1928, a jubilant Mr. Ward went back to his constituents to solicit help in the preparation for this visit.
The preparation included building a road to the north shore of Clear Lake. Spring and summer of 1928 featured rain and more rain. The builders of the road were loyal, willing to work and anxious to see the completion of the road on schedule, but it was muddy and it was wet. Mr. Ward made daily visits to the site of the construction, slept very poorly that summer, but the rains did hold up long enough to allow the road to be finished and the picnic was held. Mr. Stewart came, saw and was convinced.

The recreation grounds in the Riding Mountain was known as Clark's Beach in the Hansard of 1929. In the years of 1926 to 1929 the Dominion government spent a total of $104,799.52 of taxpayers' money to provide facilities for the recreation area. Roads were financed, beginning in 1917, with an expenditure of $60 and continuing on into 1929 for a total cost of $2,598.50. The pier was built in 1928 and it was valued at $466.62. They began to dig wells for the use of the tourists and campers in 1926 and by 1929 had spent $111.83 on this commodity. The telephone system installed in 1923 to 1924 cost them $163.57, a fireplace in 1926 required $5 to obtain, a kitchen in 1928—$110.00. Toilets were provided in 1923 and over the next six years $140.93 went in that direction.

Government cabins were constructed for rangers and foresters and from 1923 to 1929 a total of $1,239.34 was used for this construction beginning with $939.46 in 1923. It took $144.20 to clear the grounds and maintain them in the years 1926 to 1929, $500 to clear the land on the North Shore in 1928 to 1929. An interesting assignment for the summer of 1980 would be comparing these figures with those of 1979.
Charles T. Thomas of Portage la Prairie is the only surviving member of the Riding Mountain Association which was organized in 1927 to present to the Dominion Government a proposal to change the status of the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve to that of a national park.

Mr. Thomas said in a letter that the original idea of securing a park in the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve was “conceived in the minds of Jack McFadden and Duncan McDonald of Dauphin. Collaborations between the two resulted in an inaugural meeting being called in Neepawa in October, 1927, to which delegates from all areas of the province were invited. Eighty representatives turned up and the Riding Mountain Association was founded.”

Duncan McDonald became president of the newly formed organization with Mr. McFadden as secretary. An executive committee of 12 completed the rostrum which had as its objective the pressuring of the government of the day to make the area a national park. Mr. Thomas emphasizes that “the original idea of securing the park was that of Mr. McFadden and Mr. McDonald, not the government nor the politicians. Only when the tremendous value of the idea became obvious did the politicians get on the bandwagon.”

In the meantime the association was formed with the following membership: Mr. McMorran in his 25-year history of the park lists the following—C. T. Thomas, Glenella, barrister and secretary-treasurer of Glenella; Michael Baroni, Neepawa, hotelier; J. L. Cowie, Carberry, newspaper man who became King’s
Printer for Manitoba; James Allson Glen, Russell, originally from Marquette and later Speaker of the House of Commons; Marcus Lyman, member of the Manitoba legislative assembly; Reeve David L. Mellish of Pipestone, later chairman of the Municipal and Public Utilities Commission of Manitoba; Mayor Roderick McAskill of Gladstone, businessman; William A. Oglesby, Brandon, merchant and alderman; H. Cater, Brandon; R. Harrison, Minnedosa; Alex Rose, Souris and Elgin; P. H. Nelson, Russell; W. G. Robertson, Neepawa; D. R. Cameron, Grandview; D. H. Hill, Ochre River; W. H. Burns, Portage la Prairie; Robert Garland, Carberry; C. Richardson, Elphinstone; H. Brown, Killarney; J. B. Laughlin, Cartwright; T. G. Murphy, Neepawa, later member of the House of Commons and Minister of the Interior; Dauphin was represented by president Duncan McDonald, Jack McFadden and W. J. (Billie) Ward, MP for Dauphin. He and J. A. Glen were the influential voices in Ottawa.

All the above-mentioned were not members of the working executive which “fought long, hard and intelligently to sell the idea to the government against considerable resistance,” Mr. Thomas said. They were, however, active at some point.

The first line of action for the newly-formed committee was to enlist assistance and this it did. About 80 organizations and a thousand citizens were recruited. Members of the provincial legislature had to deal with the project and take a stand.

There was a good deal of opposition to the idea of using the area for a national park. This came from those who felt the Whiteshell would serve the purpose more effectively; some feared the loss of fishing and hunting privileges, others the restriction of obtaining firewood and timber, and then there would be entrance fees, permits and such red tape. Some feared fires might be set by disgruntled individuals. As a matter of fact a number of fires did break out during the early days of the park.

Only through the dedicated work of the Riding Mountain Association did the project achieve its goal. After three years of intense promotion the announcement came through from Ottawa on January 25, 1930, that a national park would be established at Riding Mountain. The official opening was held on July 26, 1933, three years after its creation.

On the official platform for the opening ceremonies were the following only: T. G. Murphy; Lieutenant-Governor James D. McGregor of Manitoba; Premier John Bracken of Manitoba;
Premier J. T. M. Anderson of Saskatchewan; J. L. Bowman (chairman); Colonel H. A. Mullins, MP; W. C. Wroth, president of the Union of Municipalities.

Attending as guests were the following cabinet ministers in the Manitoba legislature: W. R. Clubb, minister of public works; W. J. Major, attorney-general; J. S. McDiarmid, minister of mines and natural resources. Attending as well were W. H. Burns, MP, and Errick Willis, MP, along with Mayor S. E. Snively of Duluth, and Mayor Ralph Webb of Winnipeg.

The event was an important one in the history of the park and of Manitoba. The ceremonies were broadcast, courtesy of the Manitoba Telephone System, in collaboration with the CBC. Yet not one single member of the Riding Mountain Association was on that historic platform, not one single member was an invited guest, and not word of acknowledgment from that official platform of the dedicated service of those 12 men who spent three years in achieving the important goal.

Had the establishment of a national park in the Riding Mountain become a political football and did the change of government affect the official opening? Was it politicians who achieved the ultimate outcome or was it the members and friends of the Riding Mountain Association? Probably both contributed in some aspect but it was the latter who supplied the initiative, the persistence and the dedication without which there would not have emerged what we have today.

Since this was to be the only national park in Manitoba it is understandable that supporters of the Whiteshell, notably Winnipeg citizens and those of the south and southeastern areas of the province, would oppose the selection of the Riding Mountain. Members of Parliament, members of the Manitoba legislature as well as individual citizens and organizations could not agree. With strong leadership from the Riding Mountain Association along with continued resolutions, letters and telegrams from more than 80 organizations in the province and a visit from Interior Minister Charles Stewart on August 16, 1928, the pendulum swung to the Riding Mountain.

Newspapers of the day entered actively into the pros and cons of the two national sites. Editor W. S. Marsh of The Dauphin Herald conducted a campaign favoring the Riding Mountain, the Minnedosa Tribune and the Brandon Sun supported his idea. The Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Tribune were easily persuaded that the eastern location was less desirable in
its rocky state. It was the indecisiveness and the vacillating of the politicians which stalled the progress of the movement and almost lost the national park.

The visit of the minister of the interior in 1928 did give the nod to the Riding Mountain in preference to the Whiteshell—but as a recreational centre, not a national park. This did not satisfy the members of the association and they went into action again. A small recreational area under the jurisdiction of the federal government, beside a small game preserve under provincial jurisdiction, was unthinkable. The Riding Mountain was an entity and should be under one government.

Suddenly their hopes and aspirations were realized and in January, 1930, the announcement came from Ottawa that a national park would be established in the Riding Mountain embracing the whole escarpment. What or who sparked the then members of the House of Commons to come to a decision in favor of the Riding Mountain remains buried deep in the records of the federal government.
CHAPTER TWELVE

Grey Owl
and other Park Naturalists

The first chief park naturalist in the Riding Mountain after its inception was the one with the most colorful background. He was none other than Archie Belaney, who preferred to be known as Grey Owl, the nom-de-plume under which he wrote *The Men of the Last Frontier, Pilgrims of the Wild, The Adventures of Sajo and Her Bear People* and *Tales of an Empty Cabin*, all chronicles of his experiences with wild animals in the wild while he was engaged in the activities of a trapper, mail carrier, fire ranger and conservationist.

From trapper of wild animals to conservation would indicate a personality change in this unusual man. Perhaps a bit of his early history would not come amiss at this point. As a boy in England he was a student with an unusual interest in Indian lore and in animals. He was the descendant of an intellectual family who boasted writers in previous generations, a talent he inherited.

However, when he came to Canada in 1906 he appeared to be seeking a change, to make a break with his old life in his homeland, a complete withdrawal from the rule of his maiden aunts' and grandmothers' jurisdiction. Up to this point in his life he was being trained to become a musician and an intellectual. From now on he wanted to be a savage.

He claimed a fictitious background: he was a half-breed, his mother an Apache Indian, his father an Indian Scout in the United States. He attached himself to an Ojibway Band in Northern Ontario, learned their trapping methods, woodcraft and Indian lore. He let his hair grow long and tied it at the back with
The famous Englishman Archie Belaney, better known as Grey Owl, was a trapper-turned-conservationist who lived in a small cabin on the shores of Beaver Lake in Riding Mountain for nearly a year. The cabin, a five-mile trek into the woods off Highway 19, is preserved as a tourist attraction.

a strip of rabbit skin. He wore long buckskin clothes with moccasins, and when his face and arms became darkened through exposure to sun and wind he looked the part he was playing. Under this misrepresentation he married an Ojibway girl by whom he had two children. Grey Owl's mother and father were both English but his masquerade was complete and effective. He discarded it briefly in 1908 when he paid a visit to his aunts in England but by 1910 when he married Angele he had resumed his role as an Ojibway.

He saw active service in the First World War at which time he again visited his aunts and this time married an English girl, a friend of the family. He received an early discharge due to a permanent foot injury for which he received a small pension, gave Connie, his English bride, two-thirds of his army pay and came back to Canada. Since she was not prepared to leave England for him, she subsequently sought and received a divorce.

Back in Ontario he resumed his masquerade, but as a ranger, and became concerned when he saw lumbermen abusing the fine trees of the forest and the ruthlessness with which animals were being trapped. Fur prices were higher and trappers became
greedy. In 1925 he met Gertrude Bernard (Anahareo) (Pony), an educated and beautiful Iroquois girl with whom he fell in love. This was to change the course of his life for she loved animals and disliked trapping and cruelty.

By 1928 his trapping days were over and he turned to conservation. He began writing and lecturing on conservation. He was a natural and gifted speaker as well as writer, a flamboyant showman who filled the halls when he spoke throughout England and the United States. He honored a command performance to Buckingham Palace during the reign of George V, delighting the granddaughters, the present Queen and her sister, Princess Margaret Rose.

At home he adopted two beaver kittens, McGinnis and McGinty, and trained them, fed them and made pets of them to Anahareo's joy. He made them the subject of many of his stories and lectures.

In the meantime he made himself known to the Canadian government which had become interested and concerned with the destruction of the wildlife in the country. A commission for the conservation of natural resources has been set up before the First World War but had been withdrawn during that period. It was important that this program be reviewed and the solution appeared to be the engaging of naturalists for parks, and Grey Owl seemed the ideal choice for Riding Mountain when it was instituted as a national park in 1930.

McGinnis and McGinty had deserted them but were replaced immediately with Rawhide and Jelly Roll, and they were included in the entourage which came to Clear Lake in 1931 with Grey Owl and Anahareo. The first naturalist was promised a salary, adequate quarters to develop, a beaver colony and a cabin of his own. All seemed satisfactory until the level of his lake went down and the water became stagnant and unsatisfactory to the beaver. Grey Owl became discontented and requested a move to Waskesieu. Here he found conditions more satisfactory and here he remained until he died in 1938.

Anahareo, very much a part of his life during this period, showed her own ability as an author in the book she wrote, *Devil in Deerskin*, and shared the publicity he received as a speaker. In August, 1932, a little daughter was born to them, Shirley Dawn. Now as Dawn Bruce she tells us, "I was conceived in the Riding Mountain but born in Waskesieu."

However, with Grey Owl's absorption in writing, Anahareo
led a lonely life and left in November, 1936, after which he married Yvonne Perrier (Silver Moon).

Anahareo and Dawn now live in British Columbia, along with Dawn's two children and her grandchildren, but come back for visits to Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The Interpretive Program now existing in our park grew slowly. On occasion the duties of a park naturalist could be included in those of the sports director for the tourist season. Dick Sutton provided naturalist programs to the public before 1962.

Services of seasonal naturalists were utilized until 1965 when Robbie Walker became permanent chief naturalist, and this position is now an established link in park personnel. Robbie continued in this capacity until December, 1973, when Ron Routledge assumed the post. Ron, in turn, was replaced by Celes Davar in 1979. With seasonal naturalists working under them, these three chief and permanent naturalists have expanded and improved the park interpretive program until it now requires a staff of 14 to carry out its duties as compared to two in the season of 1962.

By 1973 the duties of the permanent chief naturalist became so heavy that it became necessary to add one more full-time employee to the staff and Ian Church was engaged as assistant naturalist until 1974 when Jacques Saquet replaced him. Jacques has now served three chief naturalists in this role as he continues to provide support for Celes Davar. Winter and summer interpretive programs continue to grow in size and popularity.

Walter V. Krivda was a seasonal naturalist in the park for 10 seasons beginning in the tourist season of 1962. Assisting him for three years was Harold Fehr, with Doris Wright added to their staff in 1964.

Guy Jourdain, Terry Tabulenas, Cheryl Shea, Cheryl Chabauty, Claire Desaulneirs, Cecelia Courchene, Cheryl Panny, Jan Simonson, Nola Brown, Josee Neron, Susan Davar and Don McDonald.

Bilingual exchange students and native students have added to the interest and effectiveness of the park interpretive program.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Supervising the Park

When Randall B. Mitchell came to Riding Mountain National Park in September, 1980, he was the twelfth superintendent since its institution and took over twenty years after his father K. B. Mitchell. He faced a season which featured a measure of discontent and disillusionment. The position had become increasingly challenging in the past years as the Canadian government attempted to ease the burden of park financing for the Canadian taxpayer, attempting at the same time to place the burden to a greater degree on those who obtained the greatest benefit from the parks.

A rental review board was set up in 1969 to consider increases in lease rentals which culminated in moderate and acceptable increases.

However, when later measures suggested the government was attempting to phase out cottages and cabins in an effort to return the park to its wilderness state, and to make room for campers and short-term visitors, the residents were upset. Privately owned businesses and cottages have been purchased in recent years by Parks Canada. The superintendent, who must implement the government's policy, must bear the brunt of this discontent and have answers for the complaints. The position requires tact and diplomacy.

"A superintendent is responsible for the supervision of all activities within the park, including the conservation and management of wildlife, and the protection and safety of park visitors. He controls the operation of visitors' services centres; supervises the use of public land within the park and the collec-
tion of land rentals; issues licences and permits; supervises the Park Warden Services and other operation components of the park staff; he supervises park maintenance and minor construction projects; assists in the planning of park development and cooperates with the parks branch in carrying out major construction and development projects." These are his duties as outlined by Parks Canada. He must carry out the terms of all legislation but he must not be accused of favoritism nor can he issue monopolies. He treads a fine line.

Mr. Mitchell, who was born in Banff, Alberta, in 1939, obtained his education in that province, earning his degree in civil engineering at the University of Alberta in 1961. The years 1962 to 1964 were spent as assistant resident engineer in the Jasper National Park followed by one year as resident engineer in Elk Island. In 1967 he obtained his master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Michigan at which point he joined Parks Canada and served as architectural designer in Ottawa until 1972 when he was transferred to Calgary. He was the regional landscape architect for the western region of Parks Canada until 1975 when he was appointed superintendent of Wood Buffalo Park and the Nahanni National Park in the Northwest Territories. He was later in Dawson City as project manager of Klondike National Historic Sites.

Mr. Mitchell is married with three children of elementary school age.

James Smart came to the Riding Mountain in 1930 and became its first superintendent after its institution as a park. He held the post as acting superintendent until 1934 when he was appointed superintendent, a position he held until 1936 when he was transferred to the Cape Breton Highlands Park where he remained until 1937. He was the son of James A. Smart, deputy minister of the interior in Ottawa from 1897 to 1904.

Mr. Smart was born in Brandon, received his education in Ottawa and at the University of New Brunswick after which he joined the Dominion Forest Services. After three years of war service during the First World War, he returned to Forest Service and in 1930 joined the National Parks Branch. He was assistant controller of the National Parks Branch in 1937, controller in 1941 and in 1950 was made director of the National Parks Branch, a post from which he retired in 1953. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1947, died in 1957 at Morrisburg, Ontario.

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A. J. Sjogren, a pioneer cottager in the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve, took this photo of a cabin on Clark’s Beach in the summer of 1920.

Mr. Sjogren captured the quiet beauty of cottage life (below) in the midst of winter in the 1920s.
Thomas Fenton, a native of Saskatchewan and a graduate of the University of Manitoba, was the park engineer at the Riding Mountain National Park in 1935 and 1936. After Mr. Smart’s transfer to Cape Breton he acted as superintendent until Otto Heaslip assumed the post in 1936.

Otto Heaslip, a druggist from Dauphin, served as a labor foreman in the Riding Mountain before his appointment as superintendent in 1936. Under his 19-year jurisdiction the park underwent a great deal of development, including the improvement and extension of its highway system, the development of park campgrounds, the improvement of the park golf course and the expansion of the Wasagaming townsite. He died in Winnipeg in June, 1969.

K. B. Mitchell followed Mr. Heaslip in 1955 after 28 years of forestry experience in Alberta and Banff National Park. He was the first fully qualified superintendent to hold the position. From then on training for the post was mandatory. Following five years in the Riding Mountain, Mr. Mitchell was transferred to Kootenay National Park in 1960, to Jasper in 1963, and in 1966 became regional supervisor of national parks for the Western Region.

J. A. Pettis served as superintendent of the Riding Mountain from 1960 to 1965, having joined the National Parks service in 1948 as engineer for Jasper National Park. Born and educated in Edmonton, he graduated from the University of Alberta with a civil engineering degree. Following service with Jasper National Park and the Kootenay National Park in British Columbia, he came to the Riding Mountain for five years when he was transferred to Waterton Lakes in Alberta after which he was assigned to duties in Ottawa as program co-ordinator for the National Parks Branch.

The year 1965 saw the Riding Mountain National Park change superintendents four times. H. R. Webster was appointed in February of that year and in April was assigned to position of regional park naturalist for the western region in Calgary. B. R. Styles followed him, but after two months' service here qualified for a position in the Northern Administration Branch of the department at Ottawa, and in 1968 was transferred to Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. R. J. J. Scott served the Riding Mountain National Park as superintendent for three months that same year, then was transferred to the national parks service at Ottawa, and R. H. Kendall arrived to take over.
Mr. Kendall was born in London, England, graduated from Epson College in 1939 and from Aberdeen University in 1949 as a forest engineer. He served with the Royal Navy in the Second World War and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. After coming to Canada in 1957, he was first employed with the B.C. Forest Service after which he joined the federal department of northern affairs and natural resources and served as assistant superintendent of the MacKenzie Forest Service at Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories. He served as superintendent of the Yoho National Park from 1963 to 1965 when he was transferred to the Riding Mountain in October, 1965. June 1, 1969, he was assigned to the Atlantic region national parks branch as regional supervisor of national parks of Halifax.

Paul A. Lange was appointed in June, 1969, from Halifax where he had served as regional supervisor of national parks in the Atlantic region for four years.

He was born and educated in Edmonton, graduated from the University of Alberta and entered the national parks service at Jasper as an accountant in 1948. He went to Ottawa in an administrative capacity in 1958. After three years as superintendent in the Riding Mountain he was transferred to the Winnipeg office and from there to Banff.

George Rochester followed Mr. Lange to the Riding Mountain from which point he retired from the service and returned to England with his wife in 1980.

He came from England, originally, having been born in Tynemouth, Northumberland, in 1923, attended public and high schools there which he followed up by attending a forestry school for three years. It was during this time he had the opportunity to hear Grey Owl on one of the latter's speaking engagements in England, an experience he treasures.

The years 1941 to 1947 were spent in the armed forces, with the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, followed by four years with the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade. He served in North Africa, the Middle East, France and Italy from 1946 to 1947.

Coming to Canada in 1950 he spent the first year as surveyor in Alberta with a seismic exploration crew from Weiss Geophysical Corporation, following which he served as conservation officer with the Alberta forest service for seven years, a supervisor of Alberta provincial parks southern region during the next seven years. He joined the National Parks Service in 1965.
as operations officer in the Western regional office. He saw stints as superintendent of Yoho National Park, Cape Breton Highlands and the Riding Mountain in the next fifteen years.

Before joining the national parks branch in 1965 he received a diploma in parks management from the University of Guelph, Ontario, along with the graduates' association award for highest academic standing. He swings a mean Highland bagpipe.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The National Park

A meeting of vital interest at Riding Mountain National Park was held October 27, 1927, in the Court House at Neepawa. Roy Brown and his father attended that meeting which was covered by the Neepawa Press.

The newspaper called it "one of the largest gatherings heretofore held from the various constituencies and municipalities of Manitoba, direct and indirectly interested in the promotion of the Riding Mountain Reserve as the proposed national park site."


J. M. McFadden of Dauphin, secretary at the meeting, had spent some time in gathering information and arousing the people of Manitoba to the decided advantage of having the national park in the Riding Mountain Reserve.

The difference between a park and a reserve was explained in a letter written by the commissioner of the Canadian national parks. Roads would be built, the reserve cared for and made habitable for tourists and every encouragement given the tourists from Europe to visit the national parks of Canada, he said.

The assets of the Riding Mountain Reserve in 1926, covering a territory of 800,000 acres, was put at $132,777 from the sale of lumber, firewood, fence posts, logs, pulpwood, bridge piling, railway ties, fence rails and hay.
As a park site it contains the beautiful summer resort of Clear Lake with an altitude of 2,000 feet, clear water, good beaches, bathing houses and eighty cottages already erected. Also, the mountains afford a wealth of scenery and grandeur of rock scarce to be vied with anywhere. Of timber there is sufficient white spruce to last at present state of cutting for twenty-five years. Reforestation has been carried on since 1918, first in an experimental way but in 1927, 15,000 five-year-old spruce were planted at the nursery at Lake Audy. Game is estimated at 2,000 elk and 500 moose with an excellent location in the interior for a herd of buffalo.

The objections to the eastern side (Whiteshell), the speaker briefly summerized as follows... not centrally located and therefore of little value to Manitoba. Tourists passing through Manitoba would be required to travel through the poorest and most unrepresentative parts, while those from the east need never come into Manitoba at all. No beauty of lakes, no grandeur of rocks, few beaches or points of interest. Over half the land in the proposed area consists of muskeg, and people would have both hardship and expense to contend with. The Manitoba and southern side are all muskeg and accessible only by canoe.

The eastern preserve is bounded on the east by Ontario, on the south and west by muskeg; the natural inclination of wild animals would be to wander into Ontario. Big game is similar to all northern Canada and the area contains none which is likely to become extinct.

Considerable discussion followed on the question of eliminating that portion of the forest reserve which financially is making large returns to the government by the sale of its products.

With the vote in favor of the Riding Mountain reserve, F. E. Simpson, J. W. Ward, F. L. Davis and Robin Harris were appointed to draw up a resolution which was later unanimously accepted by the conference.

The resolution endorsed the proposal that the Manitoba national park be located in the Riding Mountain Reserve. It suggested that the area of the park should include the whole of the area comprised within the boundaries of the Riding Mountain Reserve, excepting therefrom all that portion lying east of Range 18, and also that portion lying north of the centre line of township 22, in ranges 18 and 23 inclusive.

A motion was passed that all members of the federal government be ex-official members of the executive.
Hundreds of unsuitable acreage was cropped from the pistol-shaped Riding Mountain Forest Reserve after surveys in 1930. Compare the 1915 boundaries (top) with those of 1979 (below).
On the question of finances, the executive was given power to interview the various municipalities and ask for financial aid.

J. A. Glen, MP for Marquette, and Mr. McFadden were thanked for their active interest in the furtherance of the project.

A "real meeting" was the comment passed by one member of the conference and judging by the wide representative gathering, enthusiastic and purposeful discussion, the leadership of two federal members present, Manitoba had every reason to hope for a favorable reply to the resolution when it went before the next session of Parliament.

These reports show clearly that the key figure in promoting the Riding Mountain from the status of a forest reserve to that of a national park was J. M. McFadden of Dauphin.

A letter from Mrs. McFadden substantiates this perception.

"In the early 1900s the people of Brandon and other towns south of the mountain visited Clear Lake and environs during the summer holidays. My husband's parents took their family to Sandy Lake as a rule but I think he had been to Clear Lake once. From the Dauphin side I have always thought Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Lepper were the first to open camp at Clear Lake. It was Gerald and his father who saw us through the first attempt to reach the place, and just may have been the cause of my husband's keen interest in it."

Mr. McFadden's first move was to educate his home town. "It was difficult at first to develop much enthusiasm in Dauphin. Dauphin Lake was close and there was a good golf course. My husband turned to the Rotary Club and there it took root. They invited the members of the Winnipeg Club to... a banquet in Dauphin on a Saturday evening and on to a picnic at Clear Lake on Sunday. Charles Stewart was the guest of honor and the speaker for the occasion. That trip is another vivid memory for me but the important fact is that Mr. Stewart came, saw and was conquered. There were still federal difficulties."
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Crawford Park

Crawford Park was within the boundaries of the Riding Mountain Timber Reserve and, up until 1921, a portion of the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve. During that period it was known as Clear Creek and located on the southwest side of Clear Lake.

After the Second World War, when land was being made available to the returning men for settlement, that portion was withdrawn from the forest reserve for that purpose.

Mrs. Tinkler said in a letter that in 1921 five families moved in, braved the winter, one of them in a tent, and settled there. More families moved in in 1922 and by 1925 there were enough children in the district to warrant a school. She was the first bride in the district, their first home was a 10 x 12 granary with a slab kitchen and a dirt floor.

A small log store was in operation on the shore of Clear Lake, owned and operated by Charles Crawford. His assistance to the newcomers gave reason for the naming of the school in his honor and later, the post office. While clerking in the store in 1921, Mrs. Tinkler learned the art of dealing in seneca root and moccasins.

A picnic was held in 1926 and attracted visitors from the Danvers district and Erickson, and it featured pony races, ball games and track sports.

Great community spirit was evident in the settlement. A community hall was built in 1933 with volunteer labor, and a curling rink in 1936. Homebuilding bees, housewarmings and dances made for friendly gatherings with the ladies providing the lunches, and music recruited from the district.
A team of horses (above) was used to power a piledriver working on a breakwater on the main dock of Wasagaming during the winter of 1934. Piles of snow can be seen in the foreground with cottages among the pines in the background. The Vickers Vedette (below), shown moored at Deep Bay between Wasagaming and the golf course, was used to patrol the area to spot forest fires during the summer of 1934. It was a single-engine, float-equipped aircraft.
An official post office was granted the people in 1925. Up until that time their mail came in to Erickson, and neighbors going there picked up all the mail and left it at Crawford's store to be collected. Abe Best became the mail carrier from Erickson to Crawford Park, a duty he performed every Saturday with a team and democrat. When Si Baxter took over those duties, he was able to use a truck for the service, combining his postal duties with those of picking up all the cream in the district to be delivered to the Erickson Creamery.

Mrs. Baxter was a registered nurse who delivered most of the babies born in the district during this period.

The first Crawford School was an old school building purchased and brought into the district. Renee Kesten of Winnipeg was the first teacher.

Mrs. Tom Buchanon said that the Buchanons and Bales had a shingle mill out there, and Tom later worked as engineer for the Kippan Mill. The Nichol and Forsythe partnership owned a sawmill in the early days which was sold to William Wilson who later sold it to Fred, Ed and John Skog.

Mr. and Mrs. Tanner were pioneers in the area. Mrs. Tanner later married Abe Best, the first mail carrier. Mrs. Tanner's son was John Tanner by her first husband.

Mr. and Mrs. George Kelly were squatters in the Riding Mountain until that portion of the district was opened to homesteaders and they could make legal entry. Ludvig Oberg had a shingle mill on their holdings, Albin Gustafson a sawmill. Mr. and Mrs. Mel McLaughlin owned and operated a sawmill on their land. Robert McLaughlin, Mel's father, was a pioneer.

The Thomas Buchanon farm remains in the family today with son George continuing the operation. Listed as pioneers of the area are Mr. and Mrs. James Zahara, Frank Carroll, Archie Buchanon (Tom's brother), James Rochelle, the Girlings, the Youngs, Mr. and Mrs. George Griffiths, Gilbert Montague, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin and William Noon.

Church services were held in the homes, the first one in 1924 in the home of the McIntosh family with the student minister, a Mr. Anderson, in the pulpit. When the school was built in 1926, the services were held in that building and the minister then was Arthur Aitkenhead.
Engineer Con Duncan was one of 7,800 unemployed men to work under a government-sponsored relief program in Riding Mountain during the “dirty thirties.”

With chisels, axes, picks and shovels they built roads, streets and sidewalks, cleared timber, surveyed for and constructed cottages, thus qualifying for the five-dollar monthly stipend. Some of them put in the stone curves of the sidewalks, the curves and piles of the main pier, the riprapping, the staff quarters, the roads and water works.

This was in addition to board, room and a clothing issue. Mr. Duncan was fortunate; his degree in engineering promoted him to the surveyor staff and, after some experience, his salary rose to $40 a month.

He feels the stonework has stood the test of time and views their handiwork with a great deal of pride.

His fellow employees came from all walks of life. One of his roommates was a violinist, with a classical repertory, an interest he had acquired from listening to the London Symphony Orchestra in London as a boy. The story goes that he went on to Mexico and became the first professional violinist there.

There were cake decorators, textile mill operators, street car drivers, surveyors, farmers and businessmen in these camps. One had a set of developing equipment with which to furnish the photographs he was able to obtain. However, taking of pictures was not encouraged because living conditions for these men were not something the authorities wished to publicize.

“This depression is good, otherwise we would not have been
Bill Fowler (fourth from left) used a darkroom in a caboose on a siding in Riding Mountain to develop and print the plates of photographs he was able to obtain of conditions in the "dirty thirties." He shared the caboose with seven other men. They lined up outside the rail car in the spring of 1934. They are (left to right) Con Duncan, Bob Lunes, Mr. Graham, Mr. Fowler, who was a pastry cook, Dick Vesey, Bill Greenwood, Bert, a street car operator from Winnipeg, and Mr. Valiant, a farmhand. The men received $5 a month plus board and room.

able to get people to do all this work," was a remark overheard time and again by some of the workers.

The Wigwam was the canteen for the men, their centre of entertainment. Superintendent Smart, with his wife and children, was a faithful supporter of these shows. He provided hockey and baseball equipment for them with which to fill whatever leisure hours they had.

T. C. Fenton was the engineer in the national park during Mr. Duncan's period of employment as a surveyor. During this time the water works program was initiated and the sewage disposal ditch dug by hand. Lots were surveyed on Wasagaming and Tawapit drives for cottage owners. Irish Baldwin, a Newfoundlander, operated a caterpillar tractor for hauling logs, Mr. Duncan recalled, John Brennon was a timekeeper, Tiny Watts, a surveyor, who was killed on the North Shore.
In 1935 the single men were all trucked to Shilo for employment, leaving only married men in the park.

This unhappy period in Canada’s history was a long step in bridging the gap between the facilities of the Riding Mountain Reserve and those of the national park. “The wreck of a forest” emerged as a beautifully treed park with reforestation and clearing, with landscaping, swamp drainage and construction, with favorable publicity which attracted tourists. Nature had given a good start but it was man’s labor which completed the program.

Jean McLeod came into the forest reserve for the first time in 1913 along with her mother and Mr. and Mrs. Hill Baker of Kelwood. It was in 1922 that Mr. Baker built the first store on the lake front near the Somerville cottage, later moved across the street. This made room for the Old Chalet in the Kelwood merchant’s first location.

Mr. Baker expanded his business with this move, adding a post office, sleeping accommodation, meals, groceries and souvenirs. At present there are 10 accommodation centres in the park site, three grocery stores, a post office, four clothing stores, nine restaurants, eight places of business which provide souvenirs. Added to these facilities are a bank, a real estate agency, laundromat and theatre.

The first cottage in the area was built in 1917. At present there are about 280 but along with these cottages are about 500 cabins on the old campgrounds, now located and situated where the first campgrounds were established.

A. L. Shuttleworth’s Home Cooking supplied visitors to the park with baked goods. From a farm outside the park, Mrs. Shuttleworth was able to provide home cooking, milk, cream and farm produce. Her son, Stan, recalls his mother would bake pies, cakes, cookies, doughnuts, jelly rolls, date loaves, meat pies and muffins.

She would roast chickens and beef, make stews, which would all be loaded on the truck in the morning and brought into the townsite for sale. Today there are two bake shops and four creameries to meet the need.

The first tennis courts were located on the North Shore. By 1935 they were transferred to their present location and the clubhouse constructed.

The Indian trails of 1858, the wagon trails of 1908, the forestry roads of 1922, the first auto roads of 1917, which would be dirt,
have gradually evolved into a splendid road system. Wasagaming Drive and the old Thompson trail with a perimeter road now is an all-weather road, hard topped and available at all seasons. The Norgate and Audy roads are gravelled and maintained during the summer.

The Thompson Trail, a wagon trail with a telephone line, originated at the Dauphin ranger station and proceeded through the reserve in much the same direction as the present-day Riding Mountain Roadway. The Ochre River features no telephone system, enters the park along the Ochre River, cuts the Thompson Road at the Thompson cabin site and follows a southwesterly direction by Shoal Lake. The Central Road originates at the Gilbert Plains ranger station and follows in a southeasterly direction all the way to Clear Lake with telephone service over its entire route.

There are two riding academies in the park. Jack White’s Riding Academy, Miss Alexander and the Archers of Dauphin provided this service until the Styles family took over. Latterly the C & E Stables have joined the program from a location just outside the park. The first stables were located at the end of Tawapit.

Electric lights from a diesel-powered plant located in a fireproof building on Orchid were providing bright lights in 1936 for all streets through the business section as well as cottages and camp areas. A new log and stone fire hall on Tawapit Drive with a tower 65 feet high had been completed. Tap water was available to every cottage and place of business.

A new all-weather scenic highway to Clear Lake from Dauphin was completed along with new roads to Moon Lake and Lake Katherine.

Ted Nelson from his home at Orchid and Tawapit was in the business of contracting and building. Cottages and log cabins, brick and stone work were his specialty as he helped develop the Riding Mountain. John Anderson did the contracting and building before that.

Miss M. E. Murray of Winnipeg said that when their cottage at 257 Wasagaming was built in 1932, the stipulated cost must have had a total value of $1,000 so as to comply with government regulations. The lease rental was ten cents per square foot and the foot frontage was 66 feet which amounts to $6.60.

One thousand dollars was a lot of money in 1932. Rev. P. M. Murray, Miss Murray’s father, built his cottage with his own
hands, with some help from his young parishioners, at a much lower price, buying the lumber from Kippan's Mill and Crawford Park. The cottage continues to attract members of the family to Riding Mountain every year as it remains in family ownership. The night Mr. Murray stood third in line in the 1931 lineup for lots in front of the park office sparked a love which has continued.

A sequel to the many references to the relief camps of the dirty thirties reveals the ingenuity with which the parents of the era coped with the problems which surrounded them. The clothing issue for the members of the camps included long army coats, relics of the First World War, dyed black to cover the drab olive-green shade. One worker in the Riding Mountain was issued two of them; his wife converted the extra one into a warm outfit for their school-aged son. Breeches were fashioned for boys.

The coat made a pair of breeches and a warm jacket, the warmest outfit in the whole school, the material withstood wear and tear until the outfit was outgrown. She later produced three more in the same way.

Probably the greatest advance over the years has been shown in the interpretive program conducted in the Riding Mountain. Latterly great emphasis has been placed on making available to the public scenic areas in the park which were formerly unavailable. Conducted and self-guiding nature walks now are on the program, short, easy ones like the Ma-ee-gun, the Evergreen, The Ominnik broad walk, Burls and Bittersweet Loon's Island, Arrowhead, Brule and the five-mile Grey Owl Train to Grey Owl's cabin. There are car caravans like the 14-mile Stathclair Trail, the 45-mile Central Trail; long hikes can be enjoyed by the hardy on the 15-mile Clear Lake Trail, while a six-mile walk takes one around Moon Lake after one drives out there. The Clear Lake hiking trail features several picnic sites.

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are permitted now, marking areas of the park available to winter visitors.

There was one campground in the park when it was opened; now there are five—Wasagaming, Moon Lake, Lake Audy, Lake Katherine and Whirlpool Lake, a tenting camp at Kippechwin and a group camp at Manitou, all designed to introduce the Riding Mountain to the general public.

A ski hill for downhill skiing was added to the park facilities in 1961, the park building the public toilets and a chalet, but a
syndicate from Neepawa runs the concession. It is known as Mount Agassiz.

Although herds of buffalo once roamed the Audy Plains these animals had become extinct. In 1931, an area of 332 acres was fenced in at Lake Audy and an exhibition herd, comprising four bulls and sixteen cows, was shipped in from Wainwright, Alberta. By 1937, the herd had increased to eighty-one. As this was considered too many, a slaughter was held and the herd reduced to sixty. After an epidemic, the enclosure was left empty for one year, at which time ten buffalo were shipped in from Elk Island to form the nucleus of the present herd. Efforts are being made to keep the herd to the carrying capacity of the range, and the Buffalo Enclosure, with the adjoining Buffalo Exhibit, continues to be one of the most popular attractions.

From forest reserve to national park days, the Camerons of Dauphin have watched the Riding Mountain progress from the doors of tents in the beginning and later from cabins on the campgrounds. They rightfully claim 55 years of continuing camping experience, four generations up to 1980 with the fifth in sight.

It was in 1925 that William (Bert) Cameron with his family first came into the forest reserve and camped on the shores of Clear Lake. Sons Cameron, Lambert and Leighton pitched their tents on the lake front where the Old Chalet was later built, and adjacent to the J. H. (Hill) Baker store. One evening they arrived home to find a young moose occupying the tent of an elderly couple close by.

Heavy tree growth and dense underbrush featured Riding Mountain in the early years and the Camerons enjoyed exploring its possibilities. Before leaving the point of departure, it was necessary to make adequate preparation for a safe return so as to avoid getting lost. They used an old Indian method. Decaying poplar trees give off a luminous glow and they broke off pieces and laid them in the path to mark the road back home.

In 1929, when the highway to Clear Lake from Dauphin was being built by the Joe Shand Construction gang from Dauphin, Bert Cameron did the cooking for the crew. Albert Schneider did the cooking for the gang which built the golf course. His daughter, Joan, subsequently married Leighton Cameron. Lambert Cameron also cooked at the golf course. He and his wife, Eva, camped in a shack tent on the campgrounds.

Joan Schneider said in a letter that “Lucille Cameron with
husband, Ken Lauder and daughter Sheilagh camped at Crawford Park in a tent by the now Church Camps. They bought supplies from Crawford's store and cooked in a large brick outside fireplace." When one afternoon the sky turned black, they hurried to Jack Reid's farm for shelter. "After the war Ken worked a few summers in Wilkey's garage; Lucille and Sheilagh worked for Bing Jukes."

When Danceland opened, the Cameron girls, Vida, Beatrice, Lucille and Ina, worked in the dining area. They enjoyed the bands which came to play—Jimmy King's, Roy Brown's and Johnny Bering's among others.

"At that time the park had its own power plant and at 2 a.m. the lights were all turned off so we had to carry a flashlight to get home safely from the dances. Coal oil lamps and candles were in great demand to light our tents and trailers."

Vida Cameron still has a cabin on the campgrounds on Third Street. She has given service at Danceland, Porter's Drug Store and Meldruns in her summer vacations away from her teaching career in the Dauphin area. Leighton and Joan, although they moved to Winnipeg, "spent every summer holiday camping on Third, beside Vida and Beatrice." They live at Headingley but they, their children and grandchildren continue the tradition of summer camping.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Snapping up Lakeside Lots

The first baby delivered in Riding Mountain National Park was born August 6, 1931, to Mr. and Mrs. Ludvig Gusdal of Erickson at Clark's Beach, Clear Lake.

Mr. and Mrs. Gusdal were the owners of the first cottage at Clear Lake and it was at this summer home that the child was born in the new national park. He was christened Leonard Bruce Gusdal.

Park Superintendent James A. Smart and Mrs. Smart were among the first to call on the Gusdal family. They presented the baby with a silver baby set.

The event caused considerable excitement among the cottagers who were of the opinion that the national parks commission should present the baby with a lot.

Meanwhile, a lengthy line of men lined up overnight at the new administration building in the park to be the first to apply for lots which they wanted for summer cottages on the shores of Clear Lake.

Only six lots with beach frontage were available for entry on the south shore. These were quickly snapped up by the first applicants when Superintendent Smart opened the doors at 9 a.m. Choice locations on the second row and on the North Shore were next to go.

During the night the line of men, which included clergymen, merchants, teachers, garagemen, doctors and builders from Winnipeg, Binscarth and other parts of Manitoba, passed the time by telling fish stories and experiences of camp life.
Before sunrise more people joined the line. Among these were several women.
 Applicants for lots have one year in which to build summer homes on the land, plans for which must be approved by the park authorities.

This is Leonard Bruce Gusdal playing on the porch of his parents’ cottage in the Riding Mountain National Park. Leonard, who was the first baby to be born in the park, was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ludvig Gusdal. The birth caused a good deal of excitement at the time.
The Royal Family was welcomed as visitors to the park in 1970.

The Queen expressed interest in the superintendent’s residence, the log structure on the lakeshore near the golf course, constructed in 1932, and where she was entertained. She was interested in the rabbit population which was on the upswing of a seven-year cycle in 1970. She had noted a number of casualties on the road from the North Gate to the superintendent’s residence and wondered if disease could diminish their numbers.

Prince Charles questioned the wisdom of a policy which forbids the hunting of animals in the park. He felt that whenever excessive population of a species occurred hunting should be permitted. It became the duty of Superintendent Paul Lange, along with Highways Minister Peter Burtniak of Manitoba, to defend the policy of Parks Canada.

Prince Charles provided a light and unofficial moment in the visit when he had to wait his turn at the washroom. His hostess, Evelyn Lange, came down the stairs to find him at the foot, at which point she said, “Oh, there you are.”

To which Prince Charles replied, “Yes, I am waiting my turn at the lou.”

The Duke of Edinburgh was in the lou at the time.

It was a hot July day. Lunch was served on the lawn, the cheese became soft and unmanageable and the Queen had difficulty separating the slices. The chair she was offered by James Richardson, host of the event, became too warm for comfort. No sooner had she seated herself than she quickly got up saying,
"That chair is hot, beastly hot." Mr. Lange was able to provide one which had been in the shelter of a tree.

This stop was, in its initial stages, simply a rest period but the Duke of Edinburgh was interested mainly in the young people and interviews with them. He became impatient during the long wait for that portion of the program. He was reminded by the Queen and Mr. Lange that they were to meet the young people in "precisely ten minutes."

* * *

One day Lorne Burkett made a special trip to Beaver Lake Lodge, where Grey Owl had his cabin, to observe the beaver. The population of that species had been drastically depleted in the park at that time and, as he explained to the naturalist, he had never seen one and would be most appreciative if he could bring one to show him. Grey Owl put on a great show, saying he could bring one out of the lake if Mr. Burkett would stay well back out of sight so the beaver would not see him, since they were wary of strangers. He went to the water's edge and called. Immediately two furry objects appeared and came running toward them.

They were not just any old beaver. They were Rawhide and Jelly Roll, pet beavers who were not afraid of human beings, either strangers or friends. It was a great performance by an experienced showman who went on to say the beaver must have realized Mr. Burkett was a friend or they would never have come so close to him.

* * *

A great deal of effort was put forth to attract visitors to the park after its inception. A small zoo was established in 1931 and flourished until 1936. There were black bears, porcupines, skunks, rabbits and other animals. The zoo may have been located in that area along which the road to the campground now runs, adjacent to Alex Doner's pool.

* * *

A regular visitor to the park is Shirley Dawn, Anahareo and Grey Owl's daughter. Dawn has made several appearances, covering the early haunts of her famous mother and father, taking nostalgic excursions out to the cabin on the shore of Beaver Lake. In 1980, when she and husband Bob Richardson returned for a short period, she was afraid to visit her father's cabin for fear that it had been damaged in the devastating forest fire of that spring.
Dawn was born in the Prince Albert hospital on August 23, 1932, having been conceived, as her mother says, in the Riding Mountain. Her first trip came at the age of two weeks when Anahareo, tiring of confinement in the hospital, struck out for Ajawaan deep in the heart of the Prince Albert National Park (Waskewieu), and accessible only by water. “With her infant lying in the bottom of the canoe, mother paddled the canoe to her destination to be met by Grey Owl, to whom Dawn became the centre of his life, and to a home which at this point in time had no roof,” Dawn said.

She was only five and a half when her father died so she does not remember him. She does recall Jelly Roll, the beaver which was her constant playmate; neither recognized the other as a different species. Dawn has a daughter, Sandra, a grandson, Grey, and a son, Glaze.

Sandra’s wedding carried out the Grey Owl theme. In her wedding finery the bride walked across the creek on a plank in the autumn sunshine. The wedding cake, decorated by Anahareo, featured replicas of Jelly Roll and included leaves and symbols of nature’s specimens in decorative icing.

Bob Richardson is a wildlife artist. His charcoal of Grey Owl at Riding Mountain National Park is realistic, executed by a sensitive and accomplished artist.

* * *

Mary B. Fidler of Bolsover, Derbyshire, England, was a guest of the Dauphin Museum Board in June, 1980. She was presented with a key to the town by Mayor Andy Newton of Dauphin.

Mrs. Fidler is the wife of Norman Fidler. The Fidler family is of great interest to Manitoba and to Western Canada, most specifically to Dauphin.

Mary Fidler’s husband is a descendent of Peter Fidler, geographer, surveyor and trader for the Hudson’s Bay Company, in which capacity he covered a large portion of Western Canada, settling at Fort Dauphin where he died in 1823. Peter Fidler evidently intended to return to his native Bolsover, as he purchased property there but never lived to claim it.

His only contribution to the Riding Mountain is the fact that he was the first geographer to use in his reports the term “Riding Mountain.” He paid visits to the reserve while carrying out his duties for the trading company between 1795 and 1823. There was no trading post at Lake Audy then. It was established in
1858 so Indians of the Riding Mountain would trade with him at Fort Dauphin.

Peter’s family still lives in Derbyshire, the selfsame spot from which he left to come to Canada in 1788. Mary’s husband, Norman, is a great-great-grandson of James Fidler, Peter’s brother. Mary is interested in her husband’s family history and has researched it right back to Manitoba. Some of her descendants live in Alberta.

Vic Barker of Dauphin, a member of the Dauphin Museum Board, has traced the history of Peter Fidler back to his hometown of Bolsover.

At Mr. Barber’s suggestion, Canon A. J. Scrase and Mrs. Scrase visited Bolsover on their trip of England and thus established contact with the Fidler family.

Of the 35 years Peter spent in Canada, 28 of them were here in Manitoba, largely at Fort Dauphin. He married a native, two of his sons remained on the Fort Dauphin staff after his death. Dauphin has applied for a cairn to be built in his memory.

* * *

In 1919 G. A. McMorran of Souris made his first trip into the then-forest reserve and discovered its attractions. In 1920 he repeated the excursion and this time met Peter Lee. Mr. Lee offered the use of his cottage for the next two weeks, an offer which was readily accepted.

Mr. McMorran indicated in his diary that mosquitoes dominated Clark’s Beach that summer just as Fred Chalmers had predicted. Although those first two weeks in Mr. Lee’s cottage saw them using bolts of netting over windows and beds in order to protect themselves from the mosquitoes, they remained for the rest of the summer. Even though the Lees arrived to claim the use of their cottage, the McMorrans were not defeated. They pitched a tent in the Lee back yard and continued to enjoy the facilities of the Riding Mountain.

Mr. McMorran was a newspaper man, owner and editor of the Souris Plaindealer, interested in history and known as “dean of Manitoba historians.” He lost no time in publishing a newspaper in the Riding Mountain National Park. The Riding Mountain Park Guide first appeared in 1934, later the Wasagaming Guide. It recorded the happenings, the progress in facilities as they were obtained and became the official organ of the chamber of commerce.

Mr. McMorran further contributed to the history of the park
by publishing in 1958 *The Story of Riding Mountain* on the 25th anniversary of the institution of the national park.

Mr. McMorran mentions in his diary the Gusdal cottage which was next door to Mr. Lee's, also that of Myers Peterson of Clanwilliam on the other side. By 1918 there were about eight cabins at the foot of what is now known as Crocus Street.

Early workers in the park mentioned by Mr. McMorran include Bill Clyde, foreman of log construction when the relief camps were established; George Boggiss and Albert Baldwin with engineer George Paulson built most of the early park roads; Victor Creed assisted in laying out the golf course; his son, Vic, later became head greens keeper and was followed by Irvin Baker; Dave Reid was the first gate man and held the position for more than 28 years; Wally Hutton, the park's head electrician; Tom McBurney was the park's first electrical engineer. He operated the 200-h.p. diesel plant, supervised the early wiring in the townsite, doing some of the work himself. When the load became too heavy for the diesel plant and a contract was signed with the Manitoba Power Commission he continued this service to the park. In 1937, when water and sewage became available, he supervised those services.

George Lien was the first park gardener. This brings to mind an amusing story. Before the floral crown on the grounds of the Interpretive Centre could be instituted, royal assent was required. It was an attractive and popular innovation, and when a succeeding superintendent removed it, a hue and cry arose. On checking the legality of this act, it was discovered that royal assent was as necessary in removing a replica of the crown as it was in establishing it. The floral crown was returned to the grounds where it still flourishes.

* * *

Superintendent James Smart had his office at Neepawa until accommodation was provided for him in the park. Gertie Fairbain was his stenographer in Neepawa and went into the park in the same capacity in 1933, remaining until 1939 when she retired. She was active in the community life, making presentations at social and competitive functions. She had been given credit for the suggestion that streets in Wasagaming be named after flowers, most of them native to Riding Mountain—Columbine, Crocus, Dogwood, Golden Rod, Harebell, Hawthorn, Lily, Marigold, Orchid, Primula, Pucoon and Viburnum.

* * *
Cedar trees were not native to the Riding Mountain. Dave Binkley introduced them while he was in charge of the tree nursery at Lake Audy. There were no Texas gates in the park either; now there are four containing the buffalo herd; Mr. Binkley built the first. It was while he was in charge of the German prisoner-of-war camp at White Water Lake during the Second World War that the five hundred prisoners learned that he was not a man to be tampered with. It seems they came into camp one day to find a bear had cleaned out their supplies. Adding insult to injury he stood looking gloatingly at them. With one shot, Mr. Binkley felled him and the Germans were impressed.

* * *

J. M. Chalmers was the clerk for the Riding Mountain first during the forest reserve days and later. He clerked for Fred Smith in the Dauphin office in 1926 and came to the park in the same position in 1930 under Superintendent James Smart. However, during the period of unemployment camps in the '30s, he did the clerical work and accounting for the relief camps and made his headquarters in Dauphin.

When permanent quarters were established at Wasagaming in 1933 he came back and continued as clerk and department accountant, assisting the superintendent, and acted as superintendent until he retired in 1954.

* * *

While occupying the position of the golf professional at the Dauphin golf course in 1929, Johnnie Lawrence assisted in the construction of the Clear Lake golf course. After the termination of his service to the Dauphin club he assumed this position in the Riding Mountain which boasted a nine-hole course. By 1935, this had been extended to an eighteen-hole course. He continued in this position for forty-three years. Now retired with a life membership in the club he faithfully supported, he continues to play the course and give assistance to anyone who desires it in the fine points of the game. To date he has seen forty-six editions of the Clear Lake golf tournament (now the Tamarack), which was initiated in 1934, and eighteen appearances of the Grey Owl tournament which was initiated in 1934, and eighteen appearances of the Grey Owl tournament which was started in 1961.

* * *

The first road from Dauphin was built in 1889. T. A. Burrows was commissioned by the department of public works to super-
vise the construction. It was as early as 1910 that J. R. Dickenson, assistant inspector of forest reserves for Canada, suggested that the Riding Mountain was suitable for a resort area. In 1914 the Brandon Auto Club checked on this suggestion by making a trip in a car cavalcade.

* * *

There was no indoor plumbing in the Riding Mountain until 1934. This created no problem, as adequate outdoor facilities were ordinarily available in the camps, even in winter. Not until the time the camp was supplied with frozen buffalo meat from the surplus which arose at Wainwright, Alberta, did the inhabitants become aware of the disadvantages of outdoor plumbing.

The buffalo meat was an innovation, delicious in the eating but dynamite to the digestive organs. The lineup at the outdoor facilities during the night, in the sub-zero temperatures, is well remembered.

* * *

Anahareo, Grey Owl's beautiful wife, was a friend of Ethel Neilson, a guest in her cottage for tea, along with Mrs. Smart, the superintendent's wife. Anahareo practised palmistry and during the afternoon read her hostess's palm.

* * *

Charles Edward Crawford came to Clear Lake in 1921 when some of the forest reserve was opened up for returned men from the First World War. He opened a general store there and when a post office was opened the area became known as Crawford Park. This spot now is known as Camp Wanna Kum Bac, owned by the Wasagaming Foundation, and lies beyond the boundaries of the present-day Riding Mountain National Park.

* * *

The unique bench beside the fountain in the English Gardens is the work of John Green. It boasts a thatched roof. Mr. Green used native birch, oak and diamond willow to carve an altar for the chapel.

* * *

Lord Elphinstone of Scotland paid his first visit to the park in 1879, reaching Lake Audy a year or so before the Lothians. He described the lake as prettily situated and surrounded by woods on one side and on the other by a thousand acres of fine, rich prairie.

Having travelled by boat, train, Red River steamer and ox cart from his native country, he covered the last twenty-seven
miles on horseback. He spent the night at a point twenty miles from Prairie City (Minnedosa). The next morning he engaged the services of a young Saulteaux Indian and headed for Lake Audy. They made the return trip in one day—fifty-four miles, and on ponies that had never seen the inside of a barn nor had eaten anything but grass—in eight hours.

* * *

Bernice Brown of Neepawa said in a letter that her husband “was the first foreman and first maintenance supervisor, a position he held for forty years. Mrs. Lee used to say he knew every tree and stone in the park. I was the first stenographer for the park under Mr. Smart when the office opened in Neepawa. Our daughters were the first babies to be christened in the little chapel in the museum and I was the first information clerk, a position I held for fifteen years.”

* * *

George Tunstall, an early surveyor in the park, gave this explanation of the origin of the name Dead Ox Creek. “The story I heard on my arrival in the area in 1913 was that one of a yoke of oxen, owned by the government and working on the Norgate trail, died at this creek.”

* * *

Madge Bauer of California wrote to say that her first husband, Neil Tracy, did contract building in the Riding Mountain in preparation for its becoming a summer resort. “I was a bride when I went to Clear Lake in 1920. My husband (Neil Tracy) and I started the first post office and as we built our house on a hill we named the post office Onanole.”

Their property around the knoll consisted of eighty acres of timber. “The lumber was taken off our 80 acres, a sawmill was brought in [Alvin Gustafson] and the many timbers were used for building in the Clear Lake area.

“We made many friends at Clear Lake; it being a soldiers’ [First World War] settlement we were all in the same boat...the Christensons, Ramgrens, Donald Grant, Bob Smith and many more were our friends.”

Edna Corbett of Erickson said that “Jack Clegg from Onanole did a great deal of work in the park in the early days.” He took over the supervision of the first bath house after Mrs. Londry retired.

Mrs. Corbett said that, before the establishment of commodity stores in the townsite, milk, eggs, cream and vegetables were
supplied the campers and others through deliveries from farmers. George Bartley and the Townley family provided this service for a number of years.

* * *

Present-day Lake Katherine, with its camping grounds, theatre and hiking trails, was once known as Crossley Lake. The reason for this is not known. After the First World War it became Cameron Lake when Neil Cameron ran cattle there. Later Mr. Cameron became minister of agriculture in the Bracken government. It was Otto Heaslip, second superintendent of the park, who gave it the name Lake Katherine in honor of his wife.

* * *

Lorne Burkett came into the forest reserve with a unique assignment in 1927. Game fish were being introduced into Clear Lake. However, the experiment was not a success. It was thought that suckers were eating the fish eggs and Mr. Burkett was assigned the duty of catching the predators and destroying them.

"After netting approximately 45,000 of them the first season in the creek by the Wishing Well, digging pits and burying them, there seemed no beneficial result and the program was discontinued."

* * *

What is the story of the Kennis Meadows on the Strathclair Trail? It seems that a Mrs. Kennis ran a boarding house there in the latter part of the nineteenth century and left a permanent reminder of this period in her life in the name of the meadow.

* * *

While wearing a pair of snowshoes, Conrad Halvarson met a cranky moose when he was on his way to Erickson to obtain supplies for their winter camp. Now you can't outrun a moose if you are wearing snowshoes, neither can you climb a tree. Conrad removed his snowshoes, climbed a tree to safety and there awaited the moose's pleasure before proceeding.
The Red River cart was chosen as the colophon of The Prairie Publishing Company because it is a symbol of the early history of Manitoba. It first made its appearance in 1801 at Pembina Post, at the confluence of the Red and Pembina rivers, according to Alexander Henry, The Younger. This is the earliest reference to the cart. It symbolizes the inventiveness of the peoples of Manitoba who took a basic vehicle design and adapted it to their own purposes. In similar manner, The Prairie Publishing Company aims to be a vehicle for the creativity of its people.

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