

WARDENS SERVICE

1909 – 2009

100 YEARS

All materials have been donated for this project and have been retyped according to what has been submitted. If there is misrepresentation of facts or other errors please leave a note to that effect in the binder and I will make any necessary changes.

Thank you.

Ione Langlois

Other information not provided from a warden or a warden's family has been taken from the book Guardians of the Wild: a history of the Warden Service of Canada's National Parks by Robert J. Burns with Mike Schintz. University of Calgary Press c 2000.

The research and compilation for this project was done by Ione Langlois, Curator, Waskesiu Heritage Museum for the 100th anniversary of the National Park Warden Service.

The original document she created is in the Museum. Some pages of the project are reproduced on the Museum website (www.waskesiuheritagemuseum.org) with her permission.

C. Arnstead, Curator
February 2021

As the Canadian Pacific Railway spread across Canada in the early 1880s [interest in] the countless natural features of beauty was awakened across the country. In 1885 the federal government set aside a small reserve around Banff which was to become a National Park in 1887 called Rocky Mountains Park later to be renamed Banff National Park. Yellowstone National Park became the first National Park in the USA in 1872. Over the years similar reserves were set aside for future development.

A handful of federal civil servants and day laborers managed Rocky Mountain Park until the position of Fire and Game Guardian was created. Their duties evolved to include resource management, law enforcement and public safety. These men had to be sober, industrious, and orderly and not be engaged in other employment. They had to have experience in the woods and be able to organize men as firefighters and have enough education to be able to file reports to the Department. They were replaced by today's National Park Warden in 1909. The Warden Service was a way of life in the early days but over the years, trends in visitor activities and changing attitudes in society impacted the service. As the system expanded, new skills were developed through training schools to help wardens cope with their new way of life.

In 1911 the National Parks Branch was established and James B. Harkin was appointed its first commissioner. His goal was to balance the policy of advocating conservation and encouraging tourism in national parks. Rules were set in place regarding restrictions of fire arms by the public to discourage poaching. A big emphasis was put on fire prevention but it soon became apparent that without agents on-site these rules would be difficult to enforce.

By 1916-18 wardens began to appear in other western federal parks such as Buffalo Park near Wainwright and in Elk Island. In 1914 Waterton suffered from a shortage of Wardens after a massive extension of territory. In 1915 Yoho and Glacier National Parks only had wardens appointed for a five month period.

Back east smaller parks near Ottawa were maintained by part-time care takers for several decades. In 1918 Point Pelee National Park received a single warden, **George Finlayson**, a former Royal North West Mounted Police. **John M. Giddie** became Chief Warden of Yoho National Park in 1920.

Shelter was essential for the wardens. They built the cabins themselves and sometimes used old hunting cabins. They used material that was at hand such as logs. Cabin designs were produced in Ottawa and remained unchanged for decades. The first cabins were 14'x16' but in 1919 replacement cabins increased in size to 20'x24' because most wardens had families so required more space.

It was a lonesome isolated life. A work day consisted of 10 hours but wardens were on call 24 hours a day and were expected to work whatever hours during fire and hunting seasons. The warden's life was physically challenging and sometime dangerous. Injuries suffered while alone could be life threatening. Sometime poachers or wildlife attacked the wardens. This situation was alleviated by hiring married men. Women played key roles in the day to day activities of the Warden Service. The wives of wardens became unpaid silent partners sharing their husband's workloads and the primitive living conditions. In 1916 when **Tom Staples** of Rocky Mountain Park died his wife Annie took over as gatekeeper wearing a navy blue uniform complete with official Canada buttons. She served into the 1930s. In Nemiskam Antelope Park, Florence

McHugh, wife of **Ed McHugh**, served as the first and only park warden to be assisted by his wife in all phases of park work. Florence became the only warden's wife to be responsible for a national park when she took charge of the duties for two years when her husband died in 1936.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s wardens' wives continued to be unpaid assistants of the Warden Service. Their responsibilities encompassed such jobs as telephone dispatchers, gate controllers, information centres, weather recorders and public safety officers.

The initial salary of a warden was \$75 per month and their duties included patrolling the park, being helpful to visitors but not their tour guide, clearing trails, building cabins and enforcing park regulations. They were provided with two horses one used as a pack horse. By 1914 the salary had increased to \$90 per month.

Other essential supplies included: horse shoeing kits, first aid kit for animals, saddle blankets and bags, uniform of khaki army shirts with collars, khaki ties, puttees, leggings and boots. Mountain wardens designed their own uniforms in the 1920s. Generally wardens did not want to wear a uniform because they did not want to be obvious when tracking poachers.

One of the duties of the warden was to clear the old hunting trails. Park officials decided to create a network of trails to aid in the enforcement of park regulations. During the Depression under the Federal Relief Act, Canada's mass of unemployed cleared and graded roads, developed campground and constructed park buildings in PANP. Fire roads were built to provide access by truck as well as tread vehicles. Patrols by wardens could be made by car and truck rather than on foot or horseback. Helicopters were introduced in the 1950s for the support of fire suppression.

Fire fighting procedures and equipment changed over the years. In the 1920s portable pumps mounted on horseback were used. In PANP Superintendent Wood encouraged the use of Caterpillar tractors. He also encouraged the use of aircraft and in the late 1930s pilots in float-equipped aircraft were in use. Fire towers connected by telephone with park headquarters aided in the speedy fight against forest fires. When telephone lines were damaged two way radios were implemented. Temporary patrolmen manned the fire towers. The Warden Service also developed a system of training of the new techniques. New measures of fire prevention and suppression were developed. Wardens had to know their district and who to call for extra help in Sask Department of Natural Resources. They were required to keep all equipment in top shape.

In the 1970s new guidelines were looked at for fire suppression work. Wardens routinely assessed and monitored campgrounds planning fire escape routes for visitors. The Wajax pumps were aided in effectiveness by the helicopter which transported men and equipment and water to parks in need. This method of response and putting out fires was quick. *'Prescribed' burns was also implemented to better control a fire in an old forest with years of deadfall which would be highly assessable to fire storms caused by a combination of drought and lightning strikes. Today a major role of warden fire-fighting units is to assess fire risk and develop fire and vegetation management plans. "Current national park fire policy is predicated on a determination to let natural processes unfold with minimal intervention."* P 295

In the 1920s the national playgrounds became more accessible because of the automobile which led to the building of new roads and hotels as well as campgrounds. More scenic trails were cut to show off the natural beauty of the parks.

“The 20s and 30s were seen as the ‘golden age’ of the Warden Service when legendary figures such as Bill Peyto and Bill Potts made their solidity patrols and helped to establish an ethos and an esprit of corps which remains today.” p64. By 1930 several new parks existed each with a unique mandate and each with a warden component.

In the 1930s a new National Park Act was instituted which dedicated parks *“to the people of Canada for their benefit, education, and enjoyment and ordered that, such parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” P66.* This was to become a tall order and was interpreted differently by each park. There was a constant battle to balance the wildlife population and predators while continuing a rigorous policy against poaching. Fires in the park were also a concern with the increase in visitors. The pressure of more visitors to the park was felt in every aspect of park management.

Poaching became a big problem and wardens were being threatened. In 1928 **Warden H.D. Merrell** who occupied Meridian cabin heard gunshots. Upon investigation he found where the hunters entered the park by car, shot and dressed the buck deer. Merrell escorted the hunter to PA where he charged him before the local magistrate. The hunter was fined \$100 and costs and had his rifle confiscated. **Warden H. W. Genge** was not as lucky. He was attacked and beaten by three men he had arrested for poaching. In the Russell District of Riding Mountain National Park, **Warden Lawrence Lee** was murdered at his kitchen table by poachers.

Supervising Warden George Davies in Prince Albert National Park was a strong advocate of the predator control policy. He confided to his superintendent that wolves were leery animals and impossible to control by shooting and asked for more drastic measures to exterminate them. In February 1939 the staff in PANP was provided with 200 wire snares for taking wolves. It was also realized that other species such as deer will be caught at times. It was recommended this method should not be known publicly.

Dogs were used to assist wardens in their work to hunt predators as well as to provide company for the wardens. However the dogs who were companions to wardens were not necessarily the best hunters.

Bear and other predators became a problem to control. Harkin did not approve of poison or traps. To solve the bear problem the bear management policy stated that they should only be shot if they became a nuisance. The burning of garbage was the preferred non violent means of dealing with the bears. Bear traps were used to haul away problem bears to a remote part of the park. New bear management guidelines were developed in the 1970s. Dumps were shut down and problem bears were relocated or destroyed by use of immobilizing equipment.

In 1918 wardens were allowed to keep the pelts of coyotes, wolves and mountain lions killed in the line of duty and supplement their salary. Bear skins had to be sent in to the administration. This policy was terminated in 1928.

In the 1930s it was not only the large animals that were being protected from poachers but smaller species as well. In 1931 **Warden David Binkley** at Riding Mountain worked with Grey Owl to re-establish beaver colonies to protect them from poachers and predators. In 1938 **Supervising Park Warden George Davies** explained how hawks controlled rodents and urged that hawks not be shot. PA's superintendent was also warned not to introduce any exotic plants such as the wild rice that was seeded in several lakes to improve wildfowl habitation. Wardens were encouraged to monitor all wildlife, to be aware of their habits and numbers, and to report changes as they occurred.

The discovery of pelican rookeries in the Lavallee Lake district in the late 1930s resulted in plans to set aside a restricted-access territory from which visitors were excluded. It is one of the largest protected areas in North America.

It became apparent that wardens be trained in the use of new equipment to advance their skills. **Howard Sibbald** was promoted to Dominion Park Inspector and traveled from park to park inspecting how things were done and suggested improvements. He suggested to Commissioner Harkin that the Warden Service could benefit from an exchange of knowledge among its members.

The first conference of supervising wardens took place in 1923 at Banff with the focus being fire prevention and suppression.

Warden training schools were held to recruit suitable men for Warden Service. They had to have a basic level of education but more important they had to have background understanding of outdoor work such as farming, trapping, timber cutting and game conservation. They also must be handy and self-reliant.

The wives carried on the routine duties while the warden was on patrol. In the 1940s May Tocher, wife of **Jack Tocher**, in Yoho National Park was paid \$7.50 per month as a weather observer, recording temperatures and measuring precipitation on a daily basis. The acting superintendent at Yoho suggested wives be paid \$10 per month to provide the service of telephone operator. However there is no indication that wives were ever compensated for their services.

The 1942 Warden School at PANP included sessions on fire prevention and suppression, law enforcement, telephone and radio maintenance, timber cruising, wildlife conservation and fish management." P168. Applicants had to write examinations after the course which was sent from Ottawa.

Prince Albert National Park was made up of a system of districts. Each warden was given responsibility of patrolling a particular area. These districts were linked by trails and a simple telephone system making each district station more or less self-sufficient. Phone lines were often knocked out by weather conditions and although quickly repaired communication was down for short times. In 1938 experiments were conducted with radio equipment provided by the Sask Department of Natural Resources. One radio set was established in the Waskesiu townsite and a second portable set was tried out at Boundary Cabin, Montreal Lake, Emma Lake and Lac La Ronge. It was a successful demonstration. By 1942 radio equipment had been permanently installed at PANP. Four district warden stations were equipped with elaborate

ground and aerial wires. Each warden had to maintain a log of calls and keep track of weather patterns.

The 10 districts were:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Waskesiu | 6. Rabbit |
| 2. Crean | 7. Silver Grove |
| 3. Kingsmere | 8. Meridian |
| 4. Boundary | 9. Pine Grove |
| 5. Sturgeon Crossing | 10. Bittern Lake (until 1947) |

The district system was changed in 1970. Since 1973 all Park wardens have been stationed in the Waskesiu townsite. Many of the district buildings have been sold, but a few are used on a patrol basis, as are a number of patrol cabins in the Park.

The patrol has always been one of the most important of warden activities continually checking for poachers and fire. In the early years, summer patrol was carried out on foot and horseback and by canoe. In later years PANP used light trucks to navigate the fire trails to deter poachers.

In the winter the wardens used snowshoes until Superintendent Wood recommended dogsleds for Kingsmere Crean and Bittern plus one for the supervising Warden. PANP bought their own dogs and sled while the department absorbed the cost of their feed. They were soon replaced by horses and toboggans. It is reported that a warden travelled 600 miles monthly.

After WWII, wardens began to play a more central role in the direction and management of the parks. They began to transfer species from one park to another. The beaver is one example of being moved because they were destroying the nearby water systems.

District wardens patrolled their territory and recorded the species of animals present, their sex and age and condition as well as tracks, carcasses and feed conditions on census cards which they turned in on a monthly basis. Tagging of wildlife became part of the wildlife studies.

In 1947 **Chief Park Warden Davies** introduced the 'Humane coyote getter' a trap set with bait and an explosive cartridge and cyanide poison. However wolves and coyotes soon became suspicious of the traps and avoided them. By 1950 the wardens asked for the re-introduction of poison bait to be used to control the population of predators.

Post war era also saw the end of commercial fishing in PANP. This had been allowed during the war as a means of supplementing meat that had been in short supply. Commercial fishing did continue until 1965

After WWII there was an improvement made to warden's cabins. In 1947 three new warden cabins were proposed for PANP, two in Waskesiu with water and sewer which was available for half of the year. The third cabin was to be the renovation of the Silver Grove warden residence which was built in 1937 and was now in poor shape. Park officials realized that the cost of implementing the current day standards were more than they were willing to pay.

In the 1950s wardens became more mobile resulting in the promotion of wardens and transfers among the parks. In 1960s this led to a re-assessment of warden entrance standards and responsibilities.

In 1950 the prospect of unionization was presented. The actual work of the warden was also changing due to evolving circumstances in the park.

Wardens wanted changes in their work hours and the right to have Sundays off. Superintendent Heaslip of Riding Mountain National Park maintained that because part of the warden's job was to patrol for poachers they could hardly be exempted from Sunday work. They could get time off during slack periods and days off in lieu of time worked on Sundays and holidays. In 1952 wardens raised a complaint about being charged rent for accommodations. This was not dealt with until 1960s. In 1958 the federal cabinet approved a 40 hour week for all employees. This meant an increase in personnel to maintain parks.

After WWII there were major changes in the duties of national park wardens starting in the mountain parks. The number of visitors grew who wanted to explore more of the wonders in the mountain parks. The wardens took on the task of an alpine search and rescue service. To do this many of them first had to learn to ski. Once they became proficient in skiing they became actively involved in the ski hill operations in Banff and Jasper. New ski lodges had to be built and ski areas developed starting with tow ropes then Palma lifts and then the 'T bar' lifts. As the upper reaches of the mountains were developed chair lifts were built to carry the more experienced skiers to the top.

This increased the difficulty of rescuing injured skiers. Also avalanches became a hazard. Wardens now expanded their work of policing the ski hills, providing first aid to skiers and transporting any injured skiers. They learned avalanche control. All of this involved training in search and rescue. The Cuthead cabin area in Banff became the site for warden teams to practice and learn techniques. Cuthead was close to suitable terrain for the practice that was needed. It became affectionately known as 'Cuthead College'. Wardens learned the basics of rope work and increasingly difficult climbing maneuvers and rescue techniques. They used baskets and ropes, map and compass use as well as first aid for fall victims. In time cables would be replaced by helicopters. Dogs were trained for search and rescue.

In the 1960s came regionalization of national parks as more national parks were created. There were five new offices headed by a regional director with assistant directors.

1. Western regional supervisors stationed in Banff were responsible for superintendents of mountain and prairie parks. This was expanded in 1964 and the Banff post was expanded into a western regional office in Calgary. It was still responsible for mountain and prairie parks and historic parks and sites were added.
2. Atlantic region was centered in Halifax.
3. A central region had its office in Cornwall which serviced the Ontario parks.
4. In the 1960s a prairie and northern region was carved out of the Western region with headquarters in Winnipeg.
5. In 1970 when a national park was created in Quebec the central region was divided into Ontario and Quebec regions.

Issues and problems that confronted the Warden Service were handled by the Chief Park Wardens who met and suggested solutions to the headquarters' administrators.

One issue was to raise the basic educational standard for entry into Warden Service and promotion in the Service. The Chief Wardens at their 1965 annual meeting recommended in-house administrative training thus the Junior Officer Training Program developed. Another issue was the question of the warden role and function that would meet the changing needs of the park.

In 1966 L.B. Pearson's government decided to introduce collective bargaining into the federal civil service. This meant all federal employees must be placed in occupational groups. When the occupational groupings were announced in 1967, wardens found themselves to be placed in a lower service category similar to a janitor, laundry and food service personnel due to their custodial duties in the parks.

A study prepared by western Chief Wardens grouped the current warden functions into four general categories: protective service, reporting service, public relations and law enforcement. *"The protective service meant that the warden was responsible for protecting 'everything in the Park... the Park visitor from himself and nature, the forest from fire or disease, the animals from themselves due to over populations and disease, the land from harmful effects of over grazing, erosion and other things.' The protective service also encompassed the new technical areas of mountain rescue and water safety work. The reporting service covered co-operative work with Canadian Wildlife Service, and the planning and interpretive sectors of the parks' administration. It included the communication of routine daily observations and provision of specialized data as requested. The role of public relations-officer was recognition that the warden was a focus of attention for visitors and, in his uniform, a personal representation of the park that must be intelligent, knowledgeable and courteous in all his dealing with the public." P 258-259*

A study by the Management Services Division recommended a full scale study be done on the function of a Park warden. A team called the Management Utilization Study Team (MUST) developed reports which were prepared system wide with the purpose to streamline the federal civil service and improve efficiency.

This report was known as the Management Improvement Study (the PANP Report) of 1967. **Jim Sime** and **Don Schuler** were assigned to study this report. They interviewed people in regional offices, superintendents, Chief Wardens and interpretive officers. They were to identify, examine and assess the various resource management methods and compare the best methods with existing Warden Service roles and suggest any changes that would improve the warden's function in the parks. They were also asked to suggest standards for recruitment and training. The Sime-Schuler report is the single most important document in the history of the Warden Service as it studied how wardens stood in the mid 1960s and offered suggestions for future development.

From the Sime-Schuler report came two changes in Warden Service – the ending of the district warden system by centralization where wardens would be housed in central staff housing and the reclassification of the wardens from the operational to the technical grouping thus creating a more educated and skilled Warden Service with a wide range of technically demanding functions and responsibilities such as the use of search and rescue equipment, Scuba gear,

tranquilizing agents and trained dogs. Regular training programs were held to educate the Park wardens.

One of the strongest messages in the Sime-Schuler report was that the Warden Service must be freed from maintenance work. This became the domain of works personnel.

Another directive from the Sime-Schuler report regarded that of law enforcement. Wardens were to protect park resources against human threats and visitors against the dangers posed by the natural world ranging from wild animals to avalanches to forest and water activities. They were not responsible for the protection of property or enforcing traffic and liquor regulations. The basic role of maintaining law and order was left to the RCMP acting on behalf of the provincial authorities but wardens were frequently in the thick of these struggles. Acts of vandalism and arson were common in parks and wardens found themselves objects of physical threats. In some instances wardens carried a concealed hand gun even though this was not part of the official uniform. In newer developed parks there was much resentment from the people who had been displaced by the creation of the park. Discouraging and curtailing unruly campground behavior remained a warden priority and as early as 1980 alcohol was banned especially on long weekends.

In 1987 enforcement powers of wardens was extended to government property, traffic regulations and small vessel regulations under the Canada Shipping Act. Wardens could deal with traffic problems on park lands and boating safety infractions in the park. The warden was also issued a new peace officer identification card to be carried by all qualified personnel.

In 1988 changes to the National Parks Act discouraged big game trophy hunting which resulted in increased penalties for poaching. This led to the commercial poaching of animal parts which were used in medicinal and aphrodisiac markets in Asia.

The Warden Service became the agency for implementing the National Parks federal legislation assessing probable impacts upon the environment or proposed developments – the Environmental Assessment and Review Process (1973) and integrated into Parks Canada policy in 1979. EARP serves as a powerful tool in implementing the organizations long standing mandate for conservation and protection. By 1980 EARP workshops were added to the warden training schedule.

Park staff developed and implemented a scheme called the National Resource Management Process. It was designed to guide the wardens in their increasingly complex natural science research projects. The most important step in the process was the formation of park conservation plans. By gathering biophysical data the wardens could lay out reasoned courses of action for the management of the various resources.

Women were first accepted into the Warden Service on a seasonal basis around 1973. **Jen Cadieux** became a seasonal warden in Yoho. In 1974 four more women were hired. In the 1980s there were 30 or more young women across the country.

Native peoples initially played a peripheral role in national parks in the Warden Service. Many formed the majority of fire crews under the supervision of the warden. They also assisted with park predator control and often served as guides for the park wardens.

In the late 1960s aboriginal candidates were targeted to join the Warden Service. In 1973 **Warden David Kooneeluisie** joined the Warden Service and in 1980 **Amie Nashalik** also joined the Auyittuq Warden Service.

Changes to the Warden Service over the years:

- wardens once lived in isolated back country cabins but now usually reside in small communities abutting their park
- warden's families now enjoy social, cultural and education amenities of community living
- wardens no longer require permission to leave their districts for supplies
- wardens no longer have districts

* Retired wardens who had worked both systems felt this to be an erosion of the sense of the responsibility a warden had felt for his district. The wardens' function had been viewed not so much as a job but rather as a way of life suitable for those who enjoyed a healthy and active outdoor existence. Older wardens felt a great loss that part of the romance of the Warden Service and its enduring mystic is now history

- Warden Service is unionized. They are no longer on call 24 hours 7 days a week. Now they enjoy a five day 40 hour week.
- actual duties changed from suppressing fires and preventing the destruction of game animals by hunters and trappers and other animals to maintaining parks and their infrastructure.
- equipment changed

A second study similar to the Sime-Schuler report is now examining the future of the wardens' role.