

MB Williams oral interview, conducted by her niece Ruth and Ruth's husband Len Wertheimer, 1969-70



Track One (31:40)



[\[click to listen\]](#)

Track Two (27:36)



[\[click to listen\]](#)

M.B. Williams Audio Interview Timeline

[Track One Timeline \(31:40\):](#)

00:06 - The background of national parks in Canada.

02:16 - Frank Oliver proposed a government branch for national parks. A second branch was created for waterpower.

02:34 - JB Harkin was given the opportunity to become head of the branch of his choice and selected the Dominion Parks Branch.

02:42 - Harkin offered MB Williams a position with the Parks Branch.

03:17 - Williams' work history and duties. Includes discussion of Clifford Sifton, JB Harkin, and Frank Oliver.

07:28 - Harkin and the Doukhobors.

08:41 - The Parks Branch's move into the Birks building in Ottawa at the end of August 1911.

09:22 - The early days of the Branch, and MB's duties.

09:37 - Information about the Dominion Parks Act.

10:04 - Frank Oliver's interest in the buffalo.

11:03 - Further information on the Dominion Parks Act.

11:20 - Land ownership.

12:44 - MB's discovery of 19 lumber companies that had been allowed to cut timber in the parks having violated of their leases.

14:04 - Harkin looking in 1912 for a way to justify requesting a large appropriation for the Parks Branch from the House of Commons. He asked MB to find anything to "supply a monetary argument."

15:25 - MB's finding a volume of the Scenic and Historic Preservation Society of America, which stated that "beautiful places" had the potential to attract tourists and therefore bring in money.

16:04 - Williams took the information to Harkin, who liked the idea. They contacted various tourist destinations for data about the income from tourist traffic.

17:26 - Harkin wrote about the benefits of tourist travel in the first annual report for the Dominion Parks Branch, which was sent to every Member of Parliament. The desired appropriation would later be approved in the House of Commons.

18:23 - A copy of the Dominion Parks Branch's annual report's were also sent to every newspaper in Canada. Many newspapers published editorials about the benefits of tourist travel.

19:18 - Conservation.

27:00 - Harkin began to develop a system for the conservation of large areas.

28:49 - How MB Williams began writing promotional material. Discussion of the creation of the 1914 travel brochure *Just a Sprig of Mountain Heather*. (Continued in Track Two)

Track Two Timeline (27:36):

00:01 - On writing *Just a Sprig of Mountain Heather*. (Continued from Track One)

00:12 - Williams given more writing duties when Harkin discovered she had a talent for writing.

00:29 - *Just a Sprig of Mountain Heather* widely distributed to anyone that the Canadian Pacific Railway or the Canadian government thought would be interested in it.

00:46 - Harkin's idea of publicity was "to get as much as possible for nothing" and to appeal to people's emotions.

01:57 - MB's increased writing duties through the 1910s.

02:03 - MB's writing of the 1921 *Through the Heart of the Rockies and Selkirks*.

02:39 - MB's role in writing long memoranda to the prime minister and the annual reports for the Dominion Parks Branch.

03:27 - The United States followed Canada's example and created a single governing organization for their national parks. Dr. Klotz [?] from the Kruger National Park in South Africa visited the National Parks Branch offices.

04:54 - *Through the Heart of the Rockies and Selkirks* did very well; the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) bought 2000 copies for their "deluxe" tourists. A discussion of CPR publicity follows.

05:32 - The National Parks Branch got involved in the making of travel and wildlife films in the 1920s. MB's job was to create the intertitle scripts; she was involved in approximately 50 documentaries.

08:18 - MB's role in writing the first Empire broadcast for King George V.

08:35 - MB's changing job titles.

09:54 - Discussion of 19th century American and European visitors to the Rockies.

14:41 - Marius Barbeau and Harlan Smith.

17:43 - Marius Barbeau.

18:21 - While at Jasper National Park, Marius Barbeau invited MB to Hazelton, British Columbia, to attend the "last" potlatch.

21:48 - On writing about the Banff-Windermere Highway and Waterton Lakes National Park.

22:28 - The national parks and Harkin. Also, discussion of fire protection engines and fire prevention.

25:15 - Harkin's personality.

25:49 - MB and the "hardship" of staying in a cabin at Jasper National Park.

26:04 - Tells of meeting Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, then visiting his cousin Maynard Rogers, the superintendent of Jasper National Park.