

Miss Mabel B. Williams,
Apartment 609,
100 Ridout Street South,
London, Ontario.

OTTAWA 4, June 13, 1967.

Dear Miss Williams:

What a pleasant surprise to receive your letter of May 29, 1967! My first thought on going through the pages was that you have lost nothing of the vigour in your writing which I remembered from long ago. It is wonderful to have a memory such as yours and to be able to recall on the spur of the moment happenings of half a century ago.

Yes, I am trying to work up a history of the establishment and development of the National Parks. I was slated for retirement some time ago and my former position of Assistant Chief, National Park Service, was filled, but the Director, Mr. Coleman, asked me if I would stay on and help out during a staff crisis. Later I was assigned to the present job. Plans are that I will develop a history of each individual park and then compile a lengthy foreword. This will incorporate such items as how the Parks Branch came into being, how policy was developed, the institution of various features of our work such as promotion of tourist travel, construction of trunk highways, preservation of historic sites, conservation of nature, etc., etc. It looks like quite a job, but we already have on file a substantial nucleus in the form of brief draft histories of development and notes on most parks compiled by the various Park Superintendents.

I have already completed a chapter on Kootenay National Park and have done considerable work on Banff and Jasper Parks. Unfortunately, one of our key men in charge of lands and properties died suddenly in January and I was thrown into the breach to supervise the work until the position could be filled. This was done quite recently and I hope to get back to my labour of love soon.

Fortunately, some years ago I compiled bound histories of the illustrated reports of the Commissioner, Director, etc., and have these dating back to 1909. They have been a wonderful source of

information over the years. We also now have a well-stocked and documented library in our building (Centennial Tower) which houses the entire Department. This is a far cry from the 1930's when we were scattered all over town.

The notes which you have provided in your letter are very interesting and helpful. I have been digging into the annual reports as far back as 1883 and I have already consulted your informative little book "Guardians of the Wild".

The former National Parks Branch has been expanded considerably over the past few years. It is now composed of the Executive Division with three Assistant Directors; National Parks Service with ^{operations and} Planning Divisions; Engineering and Architectural Division; Canadian Historic Sites Division; Interpretation and Natural History Division; Information Division, Personnel Adviser, and Financial and Management Division. Moreover, we have regional offices at Calgary, Alberta; Cornwall, Ontario; and at Halifax, Nova Scotia, each under a Regional Director, with staffs of Park and Historic Sites Officers, Engineer(s), Clerical, etc. Most of the policy decisions are still made in Ottawa, and the Lands and Property records are also centred here. The Canadian Wildlife Service recently was given full Branch status and functions as a separate unit.

I was interested in your comments on the publicity activities of the old days. I am pretty well acquainted with these, and it came as a shock to one of my former Chiefs (Mr. W.W. Mair) when I told him that in 1930 when I joined the Parks Branch there were 24 individuals in the Publicity Division. As you probably know, this Division was decimated after you left the Department and has never regained its former status and prestige as much of its former work was absorbed by the National Film Board and the Canadian Government Travel Bureau. The enclosed chart may be of interest.

One has only to go through the old annual reports commencing in 1912 and read in the forewords Commissioner Harkin's ideas on what should be done for National Parks and the conservation of nature. He certainly was years ahead of his time. Strange to say, it is much easier to compile the history of the earlier days than that of more recent years. Our annual reports no longer contain detailed reports of the past years' activities and what is assembled must be gleaned from the files. Again we are up against difficulties as the Canadian Government instituted a file disposal system some years ago and a number of our files which would have proved useful in compiling historical data have been destroyed!

I am mailing you for perusal, a couple of copies of our staff magazine "Intercom" which contain short articles I contributed to help the editor out. This little publication is a staff magazine which normally is issued quarterly. Your letter has given me a real "lift". I do hope I can get down your way and have a chat with you before too long. Bert Spero lives in Thamesville and I saw him a few years ago

on my way to Point Pelee. I know you have been going to Florida in the winters for some time and in fact, I tried to get in touch with you on the occasion of my stay at Daytona Beach in November 1963. However, even with the help of Jim Abercrombie, who stays at 166 South Atlantic Avenue each winter, I was unable to contact you at that time. Mrs. Lothian and I have lined up a flight to England early in July with a tour of Central Europe to follow. We are sitting on pins and needles at present wondering if we will be able to go.

In the meantime, thank you very much for your most interesting and helpful letter. I shall certainly avail myself of your offer of help when the time comes.

Very sincerely yours,

W. Fergus Lothian,
(Special Assistant).

LOTHIAN/ea

W. Fergus Lothian (Special Assistant), Ottawa, to Miss Mabel B. Williams, Apartment 609, 100 Ridout Street South, London, Ontario, 13 June 1967

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