



**Jasper-Yellowhead
Museum & Archives**

Jasper National Park Wardens

As tourism and local populations of Canadian National Parks increased, so to did the need for a formal system of authority, to insure that parks were not abused and that park regulations were respected. In 1909, the Dominion

Government of Canada established an official warden service. Early Park wardens were primarily concerned with the safety of visitors and residents, predator control, game management, and fire suppression. In 1913, H. E. Sibbald, the Superintendent of Banff National Park, was put in charge of appointing game and fire wardens to other mountain park areas, such as Jasper Forest Park.

Alex McDougall was chosen as Jasper's first chief park warden and with that title came the responsibility of enlisting the help of volunteer wardens. These early volunteer fire and game wardens were assigned to patrol districts in the park. A warden's district usually had a warden station for basic shelter and protection from the elements and to store equipment. Warden duties included construction and maintenance of trails, investigation of forestry and wild life problems. They were also responsible for making sure that roads, bridges, cabins, look-outs, and telephone lines were all well kept.

Another major concern for early park wardens was forest fire. In the early days of the park, the majority of forest fires were started by sparks from train engine that would ignite wild grass along the tracks, cigarettes, and illegal campfires. In the event of a fire, wardens were expected to organize firefighting operations, as well as making sure that fire fighting equipment was in proper working order. Also, any park regulation violations were usually investigated by the warden working in that district.

Wardens were also expected to keep a daily log of their patrol, the weather, and any other unusual encounters. Many Warden logs are not particularly exciting reading, but they are a wealth of historical records pertaining to weather, wildlife, and human activity in the remote reaches of the park. Warden John James' entries from his 1918 warden diary offers a little glimpse into the day of the life of a warden almost a century ago:

Wednesday, 20

Weather: Fine not quite as cold as the 19th, mist.

Duty: 10 hours