



## Jasper-Yellowhead Museum & Archives

# Modern Day Mary

Most people are familiar with the names Mary Schaffer, Mary Vaux, and Mary Jobe-Akeley. These three Marys are fine examples of women who pushed boundaries in early mountain exploration. These women mapped, charted, and documented

landscapes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. These women defied the stereotype applied to their gender in the early 1900s and each of them, in return, has been given a namesake peak. In these modern times, much of the Rocky Mountains has been explored, mapped and is easier to access thanks to the help of helicopters. However, there are lots of historic sites in Jasper National Park and outlying areas that are just waiting to be rediscovered.

Many of these sites are lonely remnants of activities and lives that once thrived in the region. Some of these forgotten places were once hubs of activity and although they may have been well known 50, 60, 70 years ago, many of these sites have been reclaimed by the landscape and are difficult to recognize. They are sensitive sites that should not be disturbed, but left to rest as marks of time and examples of history in motion. An interesting aspect of many of these sites is that often they are right under your nose, as you jog along a trail or hike a favourite mountain. You just can't see them right away, as they have been reclaimed by the forest and lie peacefully under a camouflage of mossy carpet and over growth. Some of these sites have incredible stories that have almost been forgotten. But, thanks to a modern day 'Mary,' these stories have been preserved and may just be the last visual record of their existence.

Thanks to recent funding from the Archives Society of Alberta, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, and the Canadian Council of Archives' National Archive Development Fund photographic records of some of these historic sites have been made available to the public through the on-line database at [www.jaspermuseum.org](http://www.jaspermuseum.org) on the archives page, under the Alberta InSight link, or at [www.archivesalberta.org](http://www.archivesalberta.org). These photographs are excellent records of historic sites within and near the park and will be a valuable resource for researchers as they provide instant access to sites that could normally take hours to get to and there is no risk of damage to the site.

An example of one of the more unusual sites in this collection straddles the Alberta and British Columbia

Border. Along tracks at the highest point along the Yellowhead Pass, near Summit City (another story in itself) are the remains of a monument that was built by the Canadian National Railway (CNR) in 1925. The monument was fitted with a water pipe that supplied a stream of water to the fountain fixture at the top. The first day the 'tap' was turned on the stone tower collapsed on to the tracks, before a train had time to stop, causing a derailment. The incident was taken as a sign and the monument was not rebuilt. Over the next couple of decades the pile of stones became weathered and covered by moss and other alpine growth and nearly forgotten.

During World War II, hundreds of Japanese Canadians were forced into labor and confinement throughout the region, in internment camps. One such site was along Yellowhead Lake, on the British Columbia side from 1942 to 1945. The site of the old CNR monument was not far from the internment campsite and some of its inhabitants built a model airplane that they fixed to the top of the remains of the old monument. The airplane acted like a windsock and could turn with the wind. The model airplane has not stood the test of time and no longer resides at the top of the old stone tower, but remnants remain, implanted in the landscape below.

These types of sites are an interesting opportunity for us to interact with past. It is always a unique sensation to stand on ground, conscious of the history that is beneath your feet. These sites are sacred and should be available for all to experience; removing or destroying historic sites disrupts the historical context. If you discover a historic site and are concerned for it, you should mark the spot on your GPS unit (if you are so lucky) or take down your coordinates and contact Mike Dillon, a Cultural Resource Specialist with Parks Canada to ensure that the site is not compromised. Also, if you want to find out more about any sites in the parks, the archives is an excellent resource (on-line and on-site), or if you have a unique photograph of a site, stop by and share it with us.