

F E B R U A R Y

[BRRRRR]

2 On this cold day in 1947, the proud town of Snag, in the Yukon, registered the lowest temperature in North American history, -81 degrees.

[GOTHIC BLAZE]

3 In 1916 fire destroyed all of Canada's Parliament buildings except the Library which was, fortunately, a fine specimen of early Victorian exuberant Gothic.

[BALL]

4 Canada's first ball was held this day in Québec in 1667 to celebrate a resounding victory over the Iroquois. They danced all night.

[GREAT EXPECTATIONS]

7 On this day in 1867, the Earl of Carnarvon introduced the British North America Act to an indifferent Parliament. The Act would join the various colonies into a single Confederation, but the House of Commons took it casually. When the vote was taken, the House was almost empty, though it filled up when debate began on a proposed dog tax. When the Act became law the *New York Tribune*

took a dim view: "When the experiment . . . shall have failed, as fail it must, a process of peaceful absorption will give Canada her proper place in the Great North American Republic. . . ." The *New York Times* was more sanguine. It said Canada would become a "populous, rich and powerful independent nation (and one of the) most reliable and useful allies" of the U.S.A.

[ACES HIGH]

8 World War I air ace Billy Bishop was born in Owen Sound, Ont., in 1894. Canadians would make up a third of the Royal Air Force in that war but Billy would be statistically the best; he shot down 72 German aircraft. Another Canadian, Roy Brown, had the distinction of shooting down the German ace of aces, Baron Manfred von Richtofen. Canada's own Air Force, the RCAF, took off in 1924; its first peaceful mission was to check on the well-being of Canada's waterways, forests and seafood, for the Departments of Interior and Marine Fisheries.

[LAB TEST]

11 Dr. Charles Best and Dr. Frederick Banting announced the discovery of insulin on this day in 1921.

In 1889 Oscar Minkowski, of Strasbourg, had reported that when the pancreas was removed from a dog, the dog died of diabetes. Dr. Best and Dr. Banting took it from there, working all summer in a borrowed lab at the University of Toronto. By the following spring they had isolated enough purified insulin to save the life of a fourteen-year-old boy.

[GUSHER NO. 1]

13 Oil was discovered at Leduc, Alberta, in 1947, the first indication that Canada, and particularly Alberta, might be full of the stuff. Alberta also has the Athabasca tar sands which were formed eons ago when oil seeped into what was then the Arctic seabed and settled in sandy layers 50 to 200 feet thick. The sands contain some 600 billion barrels. For a long time no one could figure out how to separate the oil from the sand profitably. With advances in technology and hikes in the price of oil it has become practical, if not yet profitable.

[BY JINGO]

14 Col. John By arrived in Ottawa in 1826 to build the Rideau Canal, connecting the future capital (it was first called Bytown) with Kingston, Ont. The canal is no longer used mili-

tarily or commercially but it is still one of the joys of Ottawa. Hard by the National Arts Centre in the centre of town, it is used for fun and games.

[FLAG DAY]

15 The first purely Canadian flag — the Maple Leaf — was unfurled on this day in 1965, replacing the Canadian Red Ensign. The previous lack of a flag had struck different people in different ways. When an intensely patriotic television commentator asked American comedian Mort Sahl what he thought of a country that didn't even have a flag, Mort replied, "Well, it's a start."

[CHRISTENING]

19 The first Lutheran baptism in Canada occurred in Québec in 1631. The baptismal name is not recorded but it may well have been Martin.

[GUSHER NO. 2]

24 On this day in 1972 a drilling crew on Ellesmere Island, hundreds of miles north of the Arctic Circle, sent word by radio that it had struck oil after drilling 3425 feet.

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