

The national historic parks and sites of Canada commemorate the persons, places and events that have been declared of major significance in the development of Canada. They are operated by Parks Canada for the benefit and enjoyment of all Canadians.

History

The passage of the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act in 1911 was a significant milestone in the Federal Government's commemorative program. Before this date, the Government's involvement was through financial contributions to memorial activities. This act created within the Department of the Interior a Dominion Parks Board to administer national and historic parks. In 1917, Fort Anne at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, was transferred from the Department of the Militia and declared Canada's first national park of historic significance.

Upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of the Dominion Parks Board, the seven-member Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was formed to advise the minister on the matter of sites of national historical interest. The Board met for the first time at Ottawa on October 28, 1919.

The second national historic park was established in 1927, and by 1950 there were nine such parks, visited annually by over 150,000 persons.

Until 1953, the Board operated under Order-in-Council authority, and no provision was made for Parliament's formal review of its decisions. The Historic Sites and Monuments Act of 1953 provided for the first time the statutory basis for the operation of the Board. The significant change brought about by this act was the definition of the role of the Board as adviser to the minister, whose statutory responsibility it became to develop and implement a national program of commemorating historic sites.

The intent of this act and the National Parks Act is the commemoration, preservation and restoration of sites and artifacts of national historic, prehistoric and scientific interest.

The Canadian Historic Sites Division, later renamed the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, was created in 1955 within the National and Historic Parks Branch of the Department of Northern