

The Canadian Historic Sites Division, later renamed the National Historic Sites Service, was created in 1955 within the National and Historic Parks Branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources to develop, interpret, operate and maintain historic parks and sites and to act as secretariat for the Board.

Policy

A policy statement on national historic sites was tabled for the first time in the House of Commons in 1968 by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Among other things, the policy elaborated the criteria for the designation of national historic sites for the benefit of Parliament and the public.

For commemoration, a site or structure must be closely associated with a person, place or event of national historical importance, or it must illustrate the cultural, social, political, economic or military patterns of history or of a prehistoric people or of archaeological discovery, or be valuable as an example of architecture.

The policy statement also included guidelines for the provision of visitor services, interpretative programs and the promotion of information to the public at large. Standards for the preservation, restoration and reconstruction of structures were established that stressed authenticity in the materials used and in furnishings and artifacts. The policy also recognized the need for a comprehensive program to give full thematic and geographical representation and to establish a long-range planning program to facilitate the development of parks based on such themes as exploration and social, cultural, economic and prehistoric events.

Advisers

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has 15 members: two representatives each from the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec and one from each of the eight other provinces; a representative from the National Museums of Canada; a representative of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; and the Dominion Archivist (*ex officio*).

In advising the Minister on the commemoration of places, persons and events of national historical importance, the Board may recommend that sites, buildings and other structures of national importance be developed as national historic parks or historic sites or that commemoration be carried out by the erection of national historic plaques, or, in exceptional circumstances, of distinctive monuments.

Suggestions for the establishment of historic sites and parks come from many sources -- the general public, Members of Parliament, historical societies and other groups, department staff and members of the Board themselves.