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The Backcountry as Home: Park Wardens, Families, and Jasper National Park's District Cabin System, 1952-1972

by

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Abstract

This research examines home life as experienced by single and married National Park Wardens, their partners and children who resided year-round in the backcountry of Jasper National Park (JNP) between 1952 and 1972. Since the establishment of JNP in 1907, park wardens were responsible for maintaining, monitoring and patrolling large backcountry districts, and used cabins as home bases and overnight shelters. Although the district system officially ended in 1969 and no wardens have lived year-round in the backcountry since 1972, these historic cabins remain in the park and are maintained for use by current park personnel. I have drawn upon interviews with twelve retired park wardens and family members, archived and onsite cabin register entries and travel to three selected former district cabins to explore their sense of home and the challenges and pleasures of this way of life.

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I met former warden Monrad Kjorlien in June 2011 and I am very grateful for the time he shared with me that afternoon. Sadly, Monrad passed away in February 2012. His love of the mountains was evident in the stories that he shared.

I would like to thank Mike Dillon, Jasper National Park's Cultural Resources Manager (and former Brazeau Warden!) for his encouragement and support of this project. I greatly benefitted from our conversations and the insights you offered on the cabins, the warden service, and the history of the area.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 On the Cabin Porch

A hiker travelling on a boundary trail in Jasper National Park may meet few others on her journey. The trails in the park are well marked; the designated campsites are neat and inviting. The hiker, surrounded by iconic scenery and with a sense of being in truly wild country, may be surprised when she passes a drift gate, enters an open meadow and encounters one of the park's historic warden cabins.

The rustic log cabin will likely be unoccupied; they are no longer used on a year round basis. The meadow might appear grown in, a sign that horses are no longer as frequent in the yard as they once were. Forty years earlier the backcountry traveller might have been invited in for tea with the district warden or his wife and offered advice and information about her route before continuing on. Nothing at this cabin indicates that this place was once a home place for a warden family. In recent times the chances of meeting park personnel here have become slight.

If the hiker stops for a few minutes on the porch to rest and take in the scenery, she may note a white hinged box mounted behind her on the outside wall of the cabin. Inside the box is a cabin register. The entries of other travellers record tales of weather, blisters, clouds of mosquitoes, and animal sightings as well as sketches and poetic dedications to the beauty of the mountains. Among the entries by hikers and horse travellers are some by wardens and park personnel. These are sometimes, but not always, more prosaic, documenting distances travelled, messages to trail users, and work completed. As the hiker pauses to reflect on her own entry, she imagines her connection to unseen past and future persons arriving and departing from this spot.

From the porch of the cabin, the backcountry reveals itself as a space of interconnected stories, a place where many voices contribute to the human history of the park.

1.1 Project Beginnings

This project began in a pub in the town of Jasper in Jasper National Park, Alberta. On an August evening in 2010, I was part of a standing-room-only audience which had gathered for an event called "Tales with Ales" at the Whistle Stop Pub. This Parks Canada sponsored event featured several retired park wardens who shared their "true life stories of living in the backcountry in the Canadian Rockies" with an eager audience. [1]

Audience members were given a handout which introduced the wardens who would be storytelling that evening. Here, former park warden Bob Barker was described as the "last warden in Jasper to raise a family in the backcountry."

Like the imaginary hiker described above, I had stumbled across a warden cabin at Jacques Lake during a backcountry camping trip but I did not recognize it as a place where a family might have lived. If Mr. Barker was the last warden to raise a family in a cabin like this, how many had come before him? How common was it for a warden to raise a family in the backcountry? Why did families stop living there? How did his family cope with living in such a remote place?

I didn't learn the answers to all of these questions on that evening in Jasper, but the stories of the backcountry cabins and the people who lived there became the heart of this research.

1.2 Research Question

The major research objective of this project is to explore home life as experienced by wardens and families who lived at district cabins in the backcountry of Jasper National Park. The time frame that my research focuses upon is between 1952 and 1972, which is the range of time in which the interviewees with whom I spoke experienced living on backcountry districts. Although the district system formally ended in 1969, several wardens in Jasper stayed year round at district cabins until approximately 1972. On

[1] This quote is taken from a poster advertising a similar Tales and Ales event which took place at the Whistle Stop Pub on January 19, 2011.

September 8, 1972 the last family to live year round in the backcountry left their district and moved to a headquarters cabin near the town of Jasper.[2]

Were the district cabins felt to be homes by those who lived out in them, and if so, how was a sense of home achieved? This research explores these questions, and also aims to document some aspects of daily life for district wardens, warden wives, and children in the backcountry. What challenges did they face, and what pleasures, perhaps unexpected, did they experience?

By drawing upon the concept of dwelling, as proposed by Martin Heidegger (1971) and anthropological developed by Tim Ingold (1995; 2000), I argue that for wardens and family members who lived year-round in the backcountry of Jasper a meaningful sense of place was fostered by acts of engagement. Wardens and their partners attended to, cared for, and engaged with many aspects of their environment in daily practice. Their sense of home extended beyond the home cabin and included the trails and the district, and even the park as a whole.

This project included several primary data sources. I reviewed published memoirs written by former park wardens (Camp 1993; Marty 2008a; Marty 2008b; Schintz 2005) and Ann Dixon's collection of women's stories, Silent Partners (1985). I also accessed archival materials, including tapes, documents and original cabin registers held at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives, and the Whyte Museum of the Rockies. The richest source of information on the experience of backcountry living was, of course, the people who had been there. In the summer of 2011, I interviewed twelve people who had experienced life at the backcountry cabins. My interviewees included six male former district wardens, three women who had lived with their husbands in backcountry cabins, two now-adult children of a former district warden and one woman who lived with her husband at Maligne Warden Station.

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[2] Robert and Barbara Barker are known to be the last couple to live with a family in the backcountry of Jasper National Park. This exact date was taken from a departing message in the cabin log book. Brazeau Cabin Book, 1953-1977.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 will begin with an introduction to the theoretical perspectives that informed this research. I follow this section with a discussion of my choice of location in section 2.1 and my sources information in section 2.2. Next, I introduce the cabin registers in section 2.3. Cabin registers are kept in a box outside of the district cabin. These log books record the arrivals and departures of wardens and families and contain contemporaneous insights from cabin users and visitors on home life, experiences of hospitality and welcome, and other details on cabin history that are not available elsewhere. I discuss methods, including interviews, in section 2.4, and transcripts and transcript conventions in section 2.5. I introduce the warden cabins in section 2.6, and finally, in section 2.7, I discuss the limitations of this research.

Following the theory and methods section, Chapter 3 includes a brief outline of the history of Jasper National Park and the Athabasca and Yellowhead Pass Region in sections 3.1 through 3.3. In section 3.4, I will discuss the history of the Canadian National Park Warden Service, followed by a review of the changing roles of women in Canada's National Parks, again with a focus on Jasper, in section 3.5. With this background I aim to provide a context for this period of park history and clarify the locations and terminology that are employed in the succeeding sections. Finally, I close this chapter with a discussion of the system of warden cabins and district divisions in Jasper in section 3.6. This section will also introduce in detail the three district cabins that were selected for this study.

Chapter 4 is the central chapter of this thesis. In sections 4.0 and 4.1, I discuss how a sense of home might be realized at the cabins for families and individual wardens. I describe life at the cabins, drawing upon interviews, published memoirs, and archival documents and log book entries. I discuss the stresses and other pressures on backcountry life, and consider the absent voices of those who left the warden service after one or two seasons on a district. Next, I consider the use of space at the cabin, which was both a residence and an office where the warden would deal with the public in section 4.2. During the period when the cabins were year-round residences, wardens and family members often invited visitors in for tea and company, and I discuss some of the stories of hospitality received at the cabins in section 4.3. Section 4.4 explores backcountry food and food planning.

In section 4.5, I discuss the experiences of children at backcountry cabins and highway stations. Isolation and risk, as experienced by the men and women who lived on the districts, is considered in section 4.6.

In sections 4.7 to 4.8, I analyse two themes which stood out during this research: the relationships of horses and humans, and the role of storytelling among wardens.

In chapter 5, I explore the concept of pride in the conservation and protection of the parks expressed by former wardens in response to current National Park issues, and how this may be connected to personal engagement with backcountry spaces, the traditions of the warden service, and the guardianship and care of the park.

My final chapter summarizes the previous chapters and reconsiders my research question. Finally, I reflect upon the current and future prospects of cabin use and care in Jasper National Park, as informed by this research.

1.4 Terms and Naming Conventions

Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho National Parks are among the oldest National Parks in Canada. These parks share not only a contiguous geography but also an overlapping, shared, cultural history. Where appropriate, I will refer to the group of parks as "the mountain national parks" for the sake of brevity.

The town of Jasper is located within the borders of Jasper National Park and both place names are commonly shortened to "Jasper." To avoid confusion, the town will be always be referred to as "the town of Jasper," and Jasper National Park will often be shortened to Jasper.

"Backcountry" and "frontcountry" are terms used to designate different use areas in national or provincial parks. The areas that I am considering to be frontcountry are those that are accessible by paved or gravel road, including areas (campsites, trails, the townsite of Jasper, and other facilities) that are two kilometres or less from such roads. I am considering backcountry areas to be those that are more than two kilometres from a gravel or paved road and, although park personnel may access these areas by helicopter or by snow machine, they are normally accessed by non-motorized means: on foot, on horseback, by snowshoe or ski. Backcountry areas include trails, campsites, warden cabins and yard areas, privately run backcountry lodges, and Alpine Club of Canada

huts.[3] Frequent hikers in Jasper will know that some trails are at least partially on fire roads: however, fire roads are no longer maintained and are not normally accessible by vehicle to members of the public. Travel to backcountry district cabins in Jasper National Park requires at least one day of non-motorized travel.

The terms "park warden" or "warden" refers to the job title of men and women who perform paid professional duties such as resource management, public safety and law enforcement within the Canadian National Parks. As I will explain further in section 3.4, the duties and responsibilities of wardens have changed substantially in their hundred year history. One relatively recent change that may cause confusion to some readers concerns the warden job classification. In 2008, most National Park Wardens lost the "warden" job title and their positions were reclassified as resource conservation and public safety personnel. A select few received training in law enforcement and have been issued government side-arms; only these personnel have retained the warden title and distinctive uniform. Today, park wardens in all Canadian National Parks deal exclusively with law enforcement, while the reclassified personnel are no longer authorized to do so. To avoid any potential confusion associated with this relatively recent change, I will always use the current job title of park personnel (park warden, resource conservation staff, etc.) regardless of whether the person was a park warden before the 2008 changes. Any person who retired as a park warden will simply be referred to as a former or retired warden.

The terms "warden wife" and "silent partner" are often used to describe women who married into the warden way of life. It is important to note that the era of the warden service that I am focusing on ended before women were hired as park wardens in Canadian National Parks. An excellent collection of stories edited by Ann Dixon, *Silent Partners* (1985), is one of the only published sources to give voice to women's experiences, and likely popularized the latter term. While these terms are commonly found in memoirs and histories of the warden service and used by women themselves, I initially found "warden wife" and "silent partner" to be problematic in that the woman's

[3] These definitions are consistent with those provided in Herrero and Higgins (2003).

identity was bound by her husband's work. Yet, these terms also recognize that a woman had to be as dedicated to the warden way of life as her husband to allow both to succeed in the backcountry districts. I will discuss this point in greater detail in section 3.5. For the purposes of brevity and clarity, and in recognition of women's dedication and partnership with their husbands, I will use the term "warden wife" where appropriate.

Throughout this thesis, I frequently refer to the "district system," the "district era" or to "living on the districts." Prior to 1969, Jasper National Park was divided into 14 districts, and one warden was employed with the responsibility for each district (for a visual reference, please refer to figure A.1 in Appendix A). During this period, wardens were expected to live on their district, and used the main cabin, often called the district cabin in backcountry districts, as a home base. Likewise, wardens who had been assigned a district were called "district wardens" and often signed their title after their personal name in cabin registers, for example, as "Willow Creek Warden," or "Brazeau District Warden."

Finally, as this project is focused on an historical period beginning in 1952 and ending in approximately 1972, some district names and their boundaries, as well as the locations of cabins and other structures have changed not only since the creation of the park to the historical period under study, but also from this period to today. I have attempted to explain discrepancies in historical and current naming conventions and the locations of cabins and other landmarks where they occur. A map showing district names and boundaries from the 1960s is included in Appendix A and I will be using this map as a reference point when discussing the warden cabins. A second set of maps in Appendix B illustrates the current trail system in Jasper National Park which I used to reach selected cabins in July and August 2011.

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

2.0 Relevance of Research

Very little published anthropological study appears to have been done on the experiences of people living in national parks and I could find none on wardens and family members. Individuals who reside within the boundaries of national parks are living in beautiful but cramped, expensive and highly regulated spaces. Kim Orlando's MA thesis, *We Live Here": Constructing Place in a Canadian National Park Town* (2008) explores place-making and community building in the town of Banff, Alberta. Towns like Banff and Jasper which are located within National Parks, have an eligible residency requirement which prevents persons from living in the town if they are not employed or running a business within the park. This regulation is meant to control the growth of mountain towns like Banff and Jasper, where second homes and recreational properties might otherwise squeeze out the employees and business owners who keep the tourism industry running there (Parks Canada 2011a). However, as Kim Orlando found in her research on place-making in Banff National Park, the "need to reside" clause can prevent individuals from feeling a sense of belonging and connection to the community (2008). Some individuals are eligible to retire in national park towns, but as Orlando found, many found the high cost of living in Banff to be a deterrent, or, did not desire to retire in the place where they had spent their career, because "retiring in Banff would almost be like retiring to a tourist attraction" (Orlando 2008:95).

The town of Jasper is much smaller than the town of Banff (in 2011 its population was 5,236 people compared to 8,244 in Banff); however, as a tourism-based community within a national park the constraints would be similarly experienced.[4] Also, although

[4] These population numbers include temporary residents, which are defined as those who are employed a minimum of 30 days. I located population numbers for 2011 on the Jasper and Banff municipality websites. For the town of Jasper see: http://jasper-alberta.com/default.aspx?pageid=330 and for the town of Banff see: <http://www.banff.ca/news-room/banff-facts/census.htm (Accessed July 27, 2012.)

Orlando did not speak to park wardens or their spouses, many of the same concerns apply to former and current wardens and their families.

This research asks the question of whether wardens and family members felt a sense of home at the district cabins. To consider this question, I needed to define what I meant by a "sense of home". Heidegger (1971) described the nature of dwelling as being at peace, preserved from harm, and to be free: "To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*" (1971:149, emphasis in original). Heidegger demonstrates that the philological root of the word building, *bauen*, in Old English and High German holds the meaning "to dwell." *Bauen* is also the basis of the German verb, *bin*, as in *Ich bin*, "I am" (1971:147). Dwelling, then, can be defined as the nature and basic character of human being, a meaning that is, Heidegger argues, lost in modern times where building is assumed to be creating a space for to dwelling to occur (1971:148). However, "only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build" (1971:160).

In his essay, *Building, Dwelling, Living*, Tim Ingold draws upon Heidegger's work in his discussion of "built environments" (1995). Ingold argues for the adoption of a "Dwelling Perspective": an approach to understanding built environments which observes that all building, including the imagination and design that comes before application, arises out of the practical engagement of people and their surroundings (1995:76). Ingold concludes his essay with a discussion of houses as "living organisms … they have life histories, which consist in the unfolding of their relations with both human and non human components of their environments" (1995:78). Thus, a house is maintained and cared for in an ever-evolving and active process of dwelling, while an abandoned house will begin to show signs of decay. The "life histories" of the cabins which I have focused on in this research include the arrival and departure of single wardens and warden families, the objects they brought in or created onsite to create a home, and the care they bestowed upon the cabins.

Ingold argues in *Hunting and Gathering as ways of Perceiving the Environment* that for hunter-gatherers, nature is not divided, objective or separate from humanity but is understood and lived through engagement: an approach that he terms an "Ontology of Dwelling" (2000:42). The essay concludes with this line: "Environments are constituted

in life, not just in thought, and it is only because we live in an environment that we can think at all" (2000:60). Ingold's ideas were useful in my considerations of home life. Wardens and family members approached their environment with different intentions and concerns than hunter-gatherers but they still lived in direct engagement with backcountry spaces: moving through, attending to, and caring for them in daily practice. When wardens and families were displaced from the backcountry to town centres with the end of the district system they no longer had the opportunity for active deep engagement and the cabins were no longer dwelling places.

Another article relevant to this research is John Grey's "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places" (1999). Grey's article considers work lives of Scottish sheep farmers and describes how meaningful connections to place are formed by "going around the hills" in the daily routine of shepherding (1999:441). Further, their attachment to the hills forms their distinctive identity as borderlands people. This article offers particular insight into the question of home-making and place attachment among wardens and family members residing at the backcountry cabins. Wardens engage with their district on a daily basis by attending to the cabins, the trails, the details of animal movement and numbers and much more. Further, many wardens took pride in knowing every side valley, the locations of natural springs or salt licks and the source of every stream. Since all wardens during this period were required to spend a few years on a backcountry district at the beginning of their career, the districts were a kind of sorting ground. Those who thrived on the districts moved on to a successful career in the warden service and those who did not, moved on.

Critical attention to the warden service has come from the disciplines of women's and gender studies, and from environmental studies. Below, I will discuss two papers which analyze representations of the park warden service and the conceptions of wilderness and masculinity as expressed in the official warden service history by Robert Burns (2000) and Sid Marty's popular memoir, *Men for the Mountains* (2008a).

Margot Francis devotes a chapter in her book, *Creative Subversions: Whiteness, Indigeneity, and the National Imaginary* (2011) to an exploration of the construction of "gender, race and respectability" in the ideology of wilderness parks. Focusing on the park warden service, through a reading of Burn's history, and a contemporary advertising blog for Banff National Park based in Banff, Alberta, Francis discusses the naturalization of a white, ruggedly "hetero-masculine," benevolent warden, a "mountain man," as a

symbol of wilderness, while Indigenous peoples were simultaneously depicted as "outlaws, mascots or spectres" (2011:95).

Francis's book is concerned with imagery and national ideology in portrayals of whiteness and indigeneity and in this chapter her attention is fixed upon Banff National Park. Yet many of her criticisms could easily be directed towards Jasper National Park: a large mountain national park with a vast backcountry area which shares a similar history of dispossessing the original Aboriginal and Métis inhabitants and (as in all Canadian National Parks) of only hiring male, white wardens prior to the 1970s.

Francis' discussion weakens, however, when she begins to discuss women's roles in the United States and Canadian parks services. While Francis points to clear inequalities in warden numbers (in 2000, only 14.8 percent of wardens were women) she goes on to state that "women tend to be clustered in "soft" employment as park interpreters or "communicators" the qualifications for which include '"sparkle' … and the ability to greet everyone with a smile" (2011:118-9). These qualities, Francis argues, are polemical to the "particular kind of man (racially fit and chivalrous?) [who] is ideally suited for ranger positions in wildlife management, law enforcement, and visitor protection" (2011:119).

Francis appears to glean some of this information from a review of Polly Kaufman's *National Parks and the Women's Voice: A History* (1996). Kaufman's book focuses on women's experiences as "ranger wives" and as female rangers in the US National Parks service. In the US, women rangers were, in a sense, hired as early as 1921. However, in the words of Isabel Wasson, the first US woman ranger, who was hired for three months in Yellowstone National Park, "it was a matter of new work under an old name. I didn't 'range,' I talked" (Kaufman 1996:66). Women were hired as "ranger-naturalists" and handled work considered at that time to be too "effeminate" for male rangers, including interpretation, biology and botany. Francis implies that Canada followed a similar route of development in respect to female wardens.

Comparatively little has been recorded regarding the experiences of Canada's first female park wardens. Burns (2000) only devotes a few pages of his history to women wardens and to date, no former female warden has written a personal memoir. However, Francis does a disservice to female wardens when she suggests that they were shuffled into "soft

employment" when they were first hired in 1973 or today. In a Heritage Fireside chat (recorded in Banff National Park in 2005) entitled *Silent Partners and Women Wardens*, former warden Kathy Calvert, one of the first women wardens hired in Canada, described going out into the field and proving herself by doing the same work as the male wardens. Calvert and other female wardens participated in all aspects of warden life, from backcountry patrols and science studies to mountain rescue.[5] Two other women who participated in the talk were Wardens Lisa Paulson and Sylvia Forest, who were the first two women to do a climbing rescue alone and have both since become rescue leaders in the National Parks. Search and rescue is one of the most dangerous and stressful specializations in the warden service: hanging by a sling below a moving helicopter, as Calvert, Forest, and other women would have done as part of their rescue work, can hardly be described as soft employment.[6] Nor would Warden Lisa Paulson's story, shared during the Heritage chat, of losing a pack horse named Traveller while travelling alone on a backcountry patrol in Jasper. The horse panicked, slipped down a hill and broke its neck. Traveller died near a backcountry campsite and had to be taken out by helicopter for safety reasons. Paulson was faced with the necessity of cutting her deceased horse in half, alone in the field, because the helicopter could not carry the weight of the whole horse at once.

Clearly, tracking the history of women's experiences as warden wives or wardens in Canada's National Parks is far more complex than Francis suggests. Catriona Sandilands provides an interesting critique of the popular representation of park wardens as solitary "mountain men," and the mountains as a masculine space, as opposed to domesticated spaces, that is, the homes represented by women. Sandilands combines a reading of Robert Burns' *Guardians of the Wild* (2000) and Sid Marty's *Men for the Mountains*

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[5] Entries by female wardens begin to appear in backcountry cabin registers after 1973. The details of these entries demonstrate that women were participating in backcountry work on their own and alongside men in Jasper National Park.

[6] See Calvert and Portman (2008) for more on the history of rescue in the Canadian Rockies and on women's involvement in rescue work.

(2008a), with Ann Dixon's *Silent Partners* (1985) and the work of performance artists Lorri Millan and Shawna Dempsy in 1997 called *Lesbian National Parks and Services.*

Sandilands is interested in the narrative of parks: these are the stories in which wilderness is created by the "violent and systematic erasure of people from particular landscapes," the now-empty lands are then replaced with "wild and masculine spaces" while domestic spaces and women's contributions to labour are "systematically excluded from depictions of the history of the parks," and finally, she notes that these gendered divisions assume a heterosexual complementarity (2005:159). She concludes that "wild spaces are … performed and justified by their attachment to the feminine, even as their ideology of wilderness would seem to exclude and such domesticating space" (2005:159).

Backcountry cabins, especially those with resident families, certainly did "domesticate" the "wild" spaces: the buildings with their picket fences, children wandering in the yard, and tidy curtains hung in the windows invoke a sense of comfort and homeliness. At the same time, these building allowed the warden to manage and attend to the backcountry areas: maintaining the trails, buildings and phone line, noting the numbers and habits of wildlife, patrolling the boundaries and watching for fires. The backcountry is a remarkably controlled, monitored, and managed space. At the same time, the highly valued and glorified image of the solitary, rugged mountain man may have made it difficult for wardens and their partners to admit to loneliness, fear, or unhappiness when living in the backcountry districts.

The relevance of this research to National Parks

This research documents a part of the history of Jasper National Park's warden cabins, and the wardens, warden wives and children who lived in them that is not easily accessible. For visitors encountering the warden cabins along the roadways or in the backcountry of the parks, these places may represent little more than the institutional presence of Parks Canada: places seek information and assistance or where an authority figure might check your backcountry pass or fishing permit.

In addition, the last generation of people who lived year-round in warden cabins in Jasper's backcountry districts are now past retirement age. Several people connected to the warden service with whom I spoke brought up the timeliness of my project: many

former wardens and warden wives who were in Jasper at the same time have since passed away.

Finally, while many backcountry cabins have received Historic Places Designation, there are many that have not.[7] Backcountry maintenance, and the warden presence there, has gradually decreased since 1969 and in 2011 only two resource conservation/visitor safety specialists were employed in the backcountry areas of the park.[8] Without regular maintenance and use the cabins are vulnerable to decay, whether from mould, packrats or vandalism. By recording some the stories of these cabins while the buildings remain, this research can perhaps focus some attention to their importance.

2.1 Choosing a Location

In the beginning stages of this project I considered including warden cabins in other mountain national parks, including Banff, Yoho or Kootenay. Banff National Park, Jasper's mountain park neighbour to the south, could also have been a good choice for this research: not only is it the oldest and most popular of Canada's National Parks, but the park warden service had its beginnings in Banff and the park has a network of historic and storied backcountry warden cabins. Yet for precisely these reasons, popular writers and researchers across disciplines have tended to focus on Banff and I felt that Jasper's history deserved more attention.

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[7] Federally owned buildings over 40 years old are reviewed by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office, managed by Parks Canada, and assessed for their historical, architectural and environmental significance. Buildings that meet heritage criteria are designated as Classified or Recognized Federal Heritage Buildings. This designation offers protection of the character and heritage value of the buildings and will affect how they may be used or disposed of. See: http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/beefp-fhbro/pol.aspx.

[8] In May 2012, cutbacks to Parks Canada resulted in further reductions to backcountry maintenance. See Struzik, Ed. 2012. "Jasper park staff losing jobs to budget cuts." Edmonton Journal, May 7, 2012. http://www.edmontonjournal.com/travel/Jasper+park+staff+losing+jobs+budget+cuts/6555741/story.html (Accessed May 21, 2012.)

Second, Jasper is the largest of the mountain national parks, measuring 11,228 square kilometres of which 97% is considered "wilderness."[9] These wilderness areas, which I am normally referring to as backcountry, remain accessible only by trail as no motorized access is permitted. Backcountry wardens (and family members) reached their home cabins on foot, by horseback, snowshoe or snow machine, on trips that might take a day or longer to complete. These places were extremely remote compared to those in other National Parks such as neighbouring Banff, where many backcountry home cabins could be reached with relative ease by a fire road.[10]

The relative remoteness of the cabins in the two parks is perceivable by viewing a trail map, the sort provided to hikers at the Parks Canada information desk. Jasper's backcountry has two long boundary trails: the North Boundary is 174 kilometres long and passes through three former backcountry districts and the South Boundary is 165.7 kilometres long and passes through two (See Appendix B, Figures B.1-B-5)

Third, although other national parks in Canada have a system of backcountry warden cabins, each park's history (including that evidenced by the range of local administrative decisions which affect who may use the cabins) is unique, even among the mountain parks. For example, and as I will explain further in section 3.4, the district system was officially replaced with a centralized "areas" system in 1969. In most National Parks that formerly had wardens living in backcountry districts, this policy change meant that wardens were moved out of the backcountry and into town or highway stations. However, in Jasper, wardens remained in the backcountry until 1972. I determined that including other National Parks with backcountry cabins in this project would take attention away from the human history of the cabins by weighing it down with the particulars of regional administrative history.

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[9] See Parks Canada, Jasper National Park Management Plan 2010.

[10] The fire roads were not cleared in winter and were not open to the public. Families who lived in cabins at the end of fire roads in Banff share similar experiences of isolation (See Dixon 1985:180-199). However, their ability to leave the backcountry with ease was greatly increased, at least in the summertime.

Finally, as a resident of Edmonton I have often taken advantage of my proximity to this park. My familiarity with the area, its history and geography, has made the area more intimate to me than other, less personally visited places. Jasper has always been close to my heart.

2.2 Sources of Information

One of the reasons I found the subject of the warden cabins so intriguing (and frustrating!) was the lack of information readily available on the warden cabins and their former inhabitants. In the initial stages of this study, I searched extensively for cabin names and locations, for information on who had lived in them and for how long. These details began to emerge during my visits to the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives and later in conversation with current park staff and retired wardens.

Some cabin locations have changed in the years since the district system ended. The map in figure A.1 (see Appendix A) has been adapted from a Parks Canada map created in 1968.[11] It shows the cabin locations and district boundaries as they would have appeared during the 1960s. Further discussion on relocated or destroyed cabins can be found in section 2.6 below.

Published parks and warden histories and personal memoirs

A handful of memoirs have been published by former park wardens in the Canadian Rockies (Camp 1993; Marty 2008a; Marty 2008b; Schintz 2005). The most well-known of these memoirs is Sid Marty's collection of short stories, Men for the Mountains (2008a). They are excellent resources for understanding the nature of warden work and life on the backcountry districts from the warden's point of view; however they only provide small glimpses into home life.

[11] I am indebted to Mike Dillon, Cultural Resources Manager in Jasper National Park, for sharing this document with me.

Women's stories from the backcountry of the national parks are relatively sparse, with the exception of a collection of women's stories edited and published by Ann Dixon, herself a former park warden wife (1985). Aptly named *Silent Partners*, the book includes stories from women who lived in national parks across Canada, including Jasper National Park. Dixon contacted former warden wives and invited them to share their experiences for her book, and so many of the entries are written by the individual women or are transcribed from a personal interview with Dixon. Their stories illustrate many aspects of domestic and work life that are not available elsewhere.

The official history of the warden service, *Guardians of the Wild* by Robert Burns (2000), like the warden memoirs mentioned above, is mainly concerned with the history of wardens and their work. Burns devotes several sections in his history to home life, families and the warden cabins, which I have drawn upon. C.J. Taylor's history of Jasper National Park, *Jasper: a History of a Place and its People* (2009) also provided area specific information on wardens, their work and domestic life.

Archival Documents

Part of my research plan was to review cabin registers which were contemporaneous with the years that wardens and family members lived on Jasper's districts. Cabin registers are books kept onsite at the warden cabins which document the names of those who have lived at, or who travel past the cabin. After inquiring with Mike Dillon, Cultural Resources Manager in Jasper National Park, I learned that some cabin registers were kept at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA). On two trips in April and June 2011, I booked researcher time and travelled to the town of Jasper to look at materials including cabin registers, warden diaries, photographs, and a video recording made by former warden Max Winkler and his wife Julie. I will discuss the cabin registers, which have been very useful in this research, in more detail in section 2.3 below.

The video recording made by Max and Julie Winkler was an extremely valuable resource. This recording included an interview with the Winklers and also showed original video that they had recorded while living at Brazeau District Cabin. The original film documented them travelling out of the district in wintertime with their infant son Terry (the film showed the carrying-bag sewn by Julie for travelling with Terry), the large collection of carvings that Julie created while at the cabin (including toys for their son: a

rocking horse and pull-along toy among others), and included footage of Art Allen and a construction crew building the new Brazeau Cabin onsite in 1961. The small details captured on this film enriched my understanding of the experience of life in the backcountry for a small family.

During my follow up interviews, I learned of a recording made of an event held at the Num Ti Jah Lodge in Banff, Alberta in 2005 entitled *Silent Partners and Women Wardens*. This talk was organized and hosted by Brian Bindon, and copies of the recording were archived at the Whyte Museum of the Rockies in Banff. In December 2011 I travelled to Banff to listen to and record notes on this recording, which became very influential in this research.

I was given permission to photograph documents at the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives. I also planned to photograph log book pages on site at the three selected warden cabins. As a novice photographer, I was not sure how to approach photographic documentation of the materials I was interested in. I did not find any published books on this topic, but I did find online forums and other websites that recommended using a tripod for stability, avoiding the use of a flash, and photographing documents on a plain white background.[12] I adapted these recommendations as necessary, as I had limited researcher time available to me at the JYMA.

The following details are provided to assist others who share my interest in documenting materials like the cabin registers, under similar conditions. I used an Olympus Stylus Tough-6000 digital camera to take images of log book pages in the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and inside of the warden cabins. Although this is not a professional quality

[12] Two of the websites I consulted were: "Use Your Point-and-Shoot Digital Camera as Document Scanner" (http://diyivorytower.wordpress.com/2011/05/24/use-your-point-and-shoot-digital-camera-as-document-scanner/) and "Photographing and Scanning Old Photos and Documents" (http://www.subchaser.org/photographing-documents).

camera, it does have an automatic "document" setting which increases the contrast between black letters on a white background. Using this setting I was able to take high quality photographs of documents so I could reference them later. Unfortunately, this setting worked best on black and white documents and the results were blurry if pages had blue or red handwriting or lines on them (and many did). Additionally, when the book was photographed on a background other than a plain white surface the quality of the image was often reduced. As I was taking photographs onsite, I was usually using a kitchen table or desk as a background and many images suffered as a result. Even the white reverse side of my topographic maps had fold lines that disrupted image quality.

I later learned by accident, while camping at Willow Creek campground on the return trip from Blue Creek cabin, that another setting called "cuisine" worked much better for documents which were not black and white. The "cuisine" setting, which I had ignored, brings out colour and is intended to bring out detail in close-up shots, making it perfect for documenting log book pages that had colour or were set against a textured or coloured background.

I used a tripod for some document photographs, since even a small amount of instability in my hands made the image blurry and unusable. I purchased a Joby GorillaPod SLR-Zoom tripod which I used at the archives and later when I travelled into the backcountry to document the cabins and onsite log books. This type of tripod has legs that can bend, and can be adjusted and positioned on almost any surface. Although my camera was only a "point and shoot" model, the SLR tripod was taller and stronger than the one made for digital cameras like mine, and could be fitted with a ball-head mount. When the camera was attached with the ball-head the camera could be adjusted so that it was parallel to the table surface, avoiding the distortion of an angled shot. Depending on the material I was photographing and what was available on site, the tripod was sometimes balanced with the back leg attached to the table, or on top of a stack of books for additional height.

Using the tripod resulted in improved images, however setting up the camera and tripod was a time-consuming process. Also, I found that depending on the angle of the light in the room, it was difficult to set up the camera so that its shadow did not obscure the image. Despite all my research into photographing documents, I took a great deal of document photographs by hand, since this allowed the most freedom of movement. The

document photography methods I had learned were developed for use in libraries or archives rather than inside remote cabins with limited time, reduced availability of appropriate materials (such as a large white sheet of paper), and a decided lack of control over lighting.

2.3 Cabin Registers

> *This register is truly a gem – any thoughts on having it published?*
>
> - August 17, 1973 hiker entry, Blue Creek Register 1959-1974

Like the hiker in the above quote, I found the cabin registers extremely enjoyable to read. I sought out the archived registers hoping to find hints from the hikers, outfitters, work crews, and the wardens and family members themselves on the lives lived at the cabin. I was not disappointed.

The entries written during the time period where wardens lived year round on the districts suggest warmth and hospitality in the living spaces of the warden and family. It is clear that many backcountry travellers take the time to read earlier entries before writing their own. The registers are full of what I've called "back-references": comments on other people's entries.

About the registers

Cabin registers record the names, number in party, travel purpose, routes and other relevant information of individuals and groups travelling past, or staying in, the warden cabins. Archived registers contemporary with the time period that I have focused on for this research, provide valuable insights from cabins users (the wardens and families living there), visiting park staff (including other wardens and the chief or assistant chief park warden), and visitors (outfitters, hikers, travellers and others).

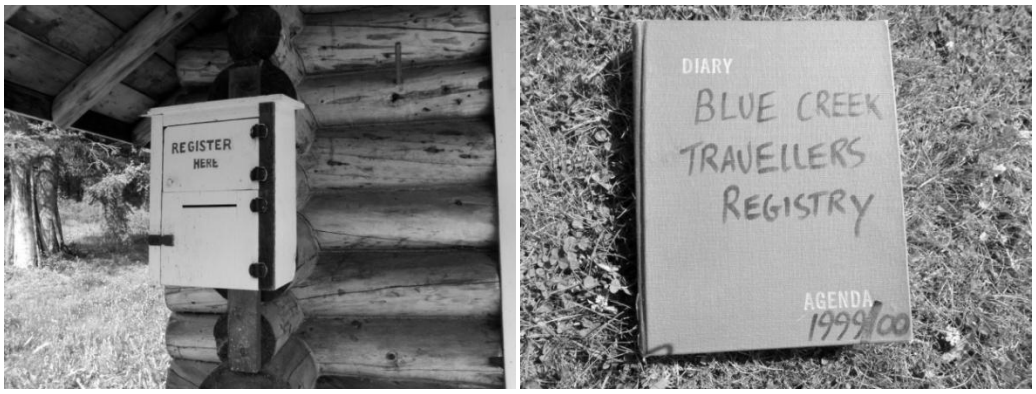

Figure 2.1 [L] Outside cabin register box at Blue Creek Cabin, August 2011.

Figure 2.2 [R] Current Blue Creek outside register, August 2011

Separate outside cabin registers were introduced in the 1979 and are kept in a box outside the cabin door of district cabins.[13] The patrol cabins I visited did not have a register on the outside of the cabin, although they did have an inside register for cabin users. I also have found travellers registers at some backcountry hiker campgrounds, such as Jacques Lake, Four Point, Wolverine and Willow Creek. These registers are normally not, to my knowledge, archived and have not been considered for this research, although I did enjoy reading these register books while at camp. Camp registers can be found in a box near the "kitchen" area. They are often, but not always, marked, but are always clearly visible.

Each of these register boxes, like many items found at the cabins, was created onsite from available materials and are therefore each unique. Inside you will find a register and one or more pens or pencils. I was not able to find out why this new system of inside/outside cabins registers was introduced, however, it is likely related to the changes in the warden service (discussed in section 3.4), and the explosion of interest in backpacking which began in the early 1970s.

[13] This date is taken from warden entries in the Adolphus Lake (outside) Register 1979-2003 and Jacques Lake (outside) register 1976-1981. These entries describe the introduction of the new register system.

With wardens living only seasonally on the districts, outside log books allow visitors to record their travel even when the warden was not at the cabin. The outside log books also provided information to travellers, and could also be used to glean information from them, including hiker use, trail and campground conditions, animal sightings and weather in the area. This is the same information that would generally have been provided by, or gathered by, the warden stationed year round at the cabin.

An increased number of hikers in the backcountry will naturally lead to an increase in register entries. Even a cursory glance at the registers shows a remarkable increase in hiker entries from approximately 1970 and onward. Previously, most visitors had been wardens, horse outfitters and their guests, and work crews. The separate, outside, register for visitors appears to be more forgiving of long tangential entries, poetry and illustrations. The inside registers have their share of these sorts of entries but in general more prosaic, documenting details such as miles travelled, work completed (or still required), and days spent at the cabin.

Current registers which I viewed inside cabins in July and August 2011 hold a laminated bookmark on their last page with a Parks Canada logo on it. On the bookmark are these instructions: "Log books are primarily for warden entries. However, everyone should sign the book, but we ask that you include important information only." The bookmark warns against the sort of inspired, poetic, long entries often found in these register. In my experience of reading through the registers, this suggestion was often ignored (to my delight). The poems and sketches, the comical or philosophical entries, all contribute to a sense of the human connection to these places. Are they important? An enthusiastic "yes" from this corner. However, I admit that if I were responsible for replacing them or searching only for information on weather, cabin use, animal sightings, dates of construction, replacement or repair, my answer might be different.

Locating registers onsite and in the archives

Current cabin registers are located at cabin sites. Outside log books are kept in a box near the door and inside log books can usually be found in a prominent location such as on a bookshelf or on the kitchen table. Parks Canada has deposited many older registers at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA) in the town of Jasper, Alberta, in their Parks Canada collection. The log books remain the property of Parks Canada.

Several older cabin registers had been previously photocopied. These copies are used as reference copies at the JYMA, and these duplicates are also kept onsite at some backcountry cabins. Not all of the older registers were available. It was suggested to me that, sadly, some were destroyed by park staff that did not recognize the value of preserving them. For this project, I analyzed the Blue Creek 1959-1974 and Brazeau 1953-1977 registers. A register from Jacques Lake (Rocky River District headquarters) that covered the time period between 1952 and 1972 was not available.

I viewed the aforementioned registers along with historic warden diaries, photographs and other related materials at the JYMA in May and June 2011. I was invited to scan several archived cabin registers at the Parks Canada office, and completed this scanning in October 2011. I was given permission to make and use digital copies for this project. Registers held by the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA) which were scanned and converted into .PDFs include: Blue Creek 1959-1974 and Brazeau 1953-1977[14]; Jacques Lake (outside) registers from 1976-1981 and 1981 to 1988; Blue Creek (inside) register from 1979 to 2003; Brazeau Cabin (inside) register 1979-1972; Seldom Inn (inside) register 1979-1995; Isaac Creek (inside) register 1979-1992; and Willow Creek (inside) register 1980-1989. The original cabin registers which I reviewed at the JYMA, which have not been scanned, include: Adolphus Lake Register 1939-1944; Adolphus Lake (outside) Register 1979-2003; Arête Cabin (inside) 1980-2002; Blue Creek 1936-1958; and Lower Smokey 1937-1984. I also read through the current cabin log books at Brazeau Cabin (inside); Four Point Cabin (inside), Willow Creek Cabin (inside and outside), Blue Creek Cabin (inside and outside), and Jacques Lake (inside).

When I initially expressed interest in the cabin registers several people suggested that I might be interested in archived warden diaries. I viewed several warden diaries at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA) in May and June 2011 but I determined that these would not be useful for this study. Warden diaries are official records which were submitted to the chief park warden in the town of Jasper in person

[14] Where inside/outside is not indicated, the named register was completed prior to the introduction of separate registers inside and outside of the cabin.

each month. They document information such as weather, wildlife observations and how the warden's time was spent each day, and how many hours on each task. For example, an entry dated January 21, 1965 in the Brazeau district provides the following information:

> Weather: +28
> Route Travelled: Brazeau
> Cabin maintenance: 7 hours
> Patrol: 1 hour [15]

This appears, from my observation of several diaries at the JYMA, to be a typical record. Further details are provided on the work completed by the warden such as doing laundry, cleaning and maintenance, and searching for sheep, and the types and numbers of wildlife sighted. The diary entry demonstrates that the warden diaries are dedicated solely to the work life of a warden. This is the information that would be most relevant to the chief park warden and park management concerned with whether the warden was completing his duties since no direct supervision was feasible. As such, they provide little information on personal time or home life, and rarely mention whether a family was also present at the cabin.

Cabin registers were written in by wardens and warden wives, outfitters, guides, park staff, hikers, horse travellers and the members of work crews. They provide actual dates for events like cabin construction and arrival and departure of wardens and families. Maps, diagrams, and other information indicate where water was gathered, where outbuildings are located and how the cabin and surrounding area has been altered. These entries provide a rich, multivocal tapestry of experience and insight on the cabin and its inhabitants.

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[15] The weather measurement is given in degrees Fahrenheit and is approximately equal to -2 degrees Celsius. Warden Diaries (January 1965) Yellowhead, Pocahontas and Brazeau Districts. Jasper National Park, Parks Collection, held by the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Accession No. 999.22.02.156.

Although the registers are not considered restricted and anyone who would have written in them would expect others to read their entry, I have not included the names of any of the writers. However public the book may be, an entry written down deep in the backcountry of the park might never be imagined by the writer to escape the register into the pages of this thesis. Obtaining permission would be out of the question in many cases: identifying information can be vague, or the entrants may be deceased. Where I have quoted an entry, I have identified it by date, register name and a general description such as "hiker entry" or "Brazeau Warden."

Front matter: instructions, maps, poems and sketches

The earliest registers which I viewed at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA) contained little front matter explaining the purpose of the registers or information on the area. The Adolphus Lake Register from 1931 only contained only the year the register was started, the cabin name and the instruction to "please register" (Adolphus Cabin Register, 1931-1944). Over the years, the front matter included in the registers has grown to include maps and diagrams, sketches, poems and information on the areas trails, water access, dangers, best grazing/where to find your horses and other important details.

The registers which I viewed on-site at the cabins in 2011 all contained hand drawn maps of the area on their front pages. The maps included trails, bridges, horse pasture, waterways, the cabin and its outbuildings, hiker and horse campsites and park boundaries. The first few pages of registers also included a brief history of the cabin and surrounding area, notes on wildlife, and descriptions of the area trails.

Poems

Sid Marty, an author and former park warden in Jasper, Yoho and Banff National Parks, began his collection of poetry *Headwaters*, with the poem, "Dawn, Jingling Ponies" (Marty 1973). The poem describes the morning routine of a backcountry warden, preparing coffee and gathering the horses which have been hobbled and turned loose in the meadow for the night. I found this poem, or versions of it, over and over again in the registers.

The poem is copied into the current Brazeau Cabin inside register and altered versions of it appear in both the Arête Cabin 1980-2002 inside register and Brazeau Cabin 1979-1992 inside cabin register.[16] The altered poems are printed under the title: Visitors: Dedicated to Wardens; Past Present and Future. They were, perhaps, recalled from memory on the spot since they are not copied word for word. Like Marty's original, they describe the morning routine using the same imagery, and a "white bell mare" appears in the first, and the second, closer to the original, begins with the same five lines, only changing the Maligne River to the Brazeau River.

At Blue Creek Cabin, a stanza from a poem by Jim Deegan appears on page two of the 1979-2003 inside register:

> Reloading the packs at the cabin
> Tied with diamond hitches
> His only conversation was
> "Whoa there, you sons a bitches"
> - "Prospector of Talc Mountain" by Jim Deegan (1994:54)[17]

Other poems found in the log books appear in other sections of this thesis (see 2.6, Warden Cabins). The poems begin to appear in the 1970s, after the end of the district system. Wardens at this time did backcountry patrols and lived at the district cabins in the summer.

Imagery

In the front inside page of the 1953-1977 Brazeau Cabin Register, Warden Mike Schintz drew a sketch of an elk, including a detailed drawing of the tree stump that served as a salt lick, and wrote, "This old cow left her sign by the salt lick … but we'd rather you signed the book." When I travelled to Brazeau in the summer 2011, the instructions at the

[16] Arête is a patrol cabin located in the Brazeau district (see figure A.1, Appendix A)

[17] Blue Creek Cabin Book 1979-2003. Deegan's poem "Prospector of Talc Mountain" is about Bill Peyto, one of Banff National Park's first park wardens.

beginning of the current inside cabin register included a drawing of the same salt lick that Mike Schintz drew in 1956, and reminded cabin users that:

> It has a lot of history and if it could talk, could probably tell you how many animals visited it. So I hope no one distroys [sic] this landmark. Just keep putting salt blocks on it and incourage [sic] the wildlife in this great pasture.[18]

There is no date associated with this entry, but it was likely written in 1992 when the register was started. To my dismay, I was not able to locate the salt lick in the meadows at Brazeau in August 2011.

Notes from families and wardens

> *Came in over Nigel Pass to our new home today. [Our son] made the trip very nicely; he slept most of the way with a short stop over at Four Point for a bottle. His baby buggy and bath tub rode along as top packs without mishap. Beautiful weather, sunshine all the way.*
>
> - August 20, 1960 entry by arriving "warden wife", Brazeau Cabin Book 1953-1977

Notes written by wardens and family members which are contemporary to the time period I am concerned with are especially interesting. They record their sense of arrival and early impressions of the cabin. When departing, the warden or warden sometimes recorded a "goodbye" message to the cabin. The families and individuals who write these notes appear to see the cabin as "theirs" rather than as belonging to the park.

The register is a public item, and writers make their entry with the knowledge that others will read it. They must attend to an audience of future readers including future wardens and families, visitors and other cabin users. Within the log books I occasionally found that a warden or family had recorded an arriving message, but disappeared in less than one year. I found no entries in the Brazeau Cabin Book 1953-1977 or Blue Creek Cabin Book 1959-1974 that signalled unhappiness or indicated that a warden or family member

[18] Brazeau Cabin Register, 1992-present. Viewed onsite at Brazeau Cabin, August 2011.

wished to leave. Since the writers would be aware of potential future readers, they may have been reluctant to admit to a sense of discomfort or isolation at the cabin.

Cabin registers and park history

> *This will be my last patrol thru the Smokey district for 1984. I feel very honored and proud to be part of the history that this book exemplifies…. The entries in this book represent the history of this district and I hope this book will be preserved for the future.*
>
> - September 1, 1984 entry by a Smokey District Warden[19]

As the warden quoted above has stressed, cabin registers provide an important window into the history of a district. The Lower Smokey Register in which he wrote this entry covers 53 years of park history, stretching back to 1937. The registers, both inside and outside, are "truly gems" as described by the hiker quoted at the beginning of this section. Hopefully they will continue to be archived and preserved for future researchers.

2.4 Interviews

As I prepared to make contact with former wardens and their families who lived in the backcountry cabins before the early 1970s, I was aware that most individuals from the community of people whom I hoped to interview were retired from the warden service and had since dispersed from the Jasper area.

Mike Dillon, Cultural Resource Manager in Jasper, provided me with a list of potential interviewees: retired wardens and women who had lived in the backcountry districts. I am very grateful to Mr. Dillon for his thoughtful advance work: I found that most of the people whom I contacted had been told about my project already. Eleven individuals were interested in meeting me and participating in an interview.

In preparation for this research I had determined that a snowball sampling method would be most appropriate, and I anticipated that those I spoke to would recommend other potential interviewees. However, although several other people were recommended to me

[19] Lower Smokey Register 1937-1984.

as my interviews progressed; I interviewed only one additional person. Some potential interviewees were not interested in participating in the project, while others resided a long distance away.

I created a basic set of interview questions based on documents such as National Park and park warden histories (Burns and Shintz, 2000), published memoirs (Camp 1993; Dixon 1985; Marty 2008a; Marty 2008b; Shintz 2005) and archival research. Unique questions for some individuals were also used based on my prior knowledge of them or their stories. In addition, questions arose during the interviews based on interviewee responses. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for additional questions to be included based on the individual's responses. All of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the interviewees in June and July 2011, and one additional interview was completed in December 2011.

I recorded interviews with a Sony PCM-M10 digital sound recorder mounted on the tripod described in section 2.2, under "archival documents," above. The recorder is small, lightweight (it is only slightly larger than my digital camera) and produced remarkable sound quality. It has built in condenser stereo microphones, which proved extremely useful in interview situations involving more than one interviewee. The recordings were extremely clear, even in circumstances where background noises were present. In one recording I could hear very detailed ambient noises including outdoor wind chimes, a school bus turning and raindrops on the roof! These small sounds easily brought back the feel of the interviews as I later transcribed them.

The sound recorder also featured a remote control to begin and end the interview recording, which avoided the rustling and "clack" of shutting it off on the main device. Although it had 4GB of internal memory, I added an additional 4GB micro SD card to ensure I did not run out of space. All interview sound files were transferred to a memory stick using a laptop computer as soon as possible after an interview to ensure they were not accidentally copied over or destroyed. The recorder used battery power, a useful feature since I did not have to rely on having an accessible power outlet.

Although I had purchased the Joby tripod described in section 2.2, above, for photographs, I found it to be extremely valuable for recording. First, when I tested the recorder at home I found that when placed on a table, the recorder was sensitive to small

surface vibrations, as small as a coffee cup being placed on the table. The Joby tripod has rubberized foot grips, which are a bit sticky and improve the stability of the tripod. When the recorder was mounted on the tripod, these rubberized tips reduced the "buzz" caused by table vibrations. Second, the adjustable legs and ball-head mount improved the adaptability of the recorder, so that whether placed on a kitchen table or a much lower coffee table, the angle and height of the recorder could be adjusted to a suitable position.

The interviews were transcribed between June and September 2011, and I mailed out transcripts to the interviewees who indicated that they would like to review them before their use in this project.

In December 2011, I met with interviewees who had reviewed their transcripts and did short follow-up interviews which were recorded by notes. I did not formalize a set of follow up questions: most of my questions were clarifications of the earlier interview.

2.5 Transcripts

I began the process of transcribing the interviews after returning home to Edmonton in July 2011. I had just travelled to the first of my three selected cabins, Jacques Lake, and finished my last set of interviews. I had over 8 hours and 45 minutes of tape to transcribe, which I completed in one hour to two hour sessions over the next few months. Ives (1995) suggests that each hour of interview will take approximately 15 more to transcribe. My transcription rates were often faster, but they ranged quite a bit depending on the speakers, the amount of background noise or how often I came across an unfamiliar name or term. I found that sometimes I could complete as much as one hour of interview in 3 hours, while other times it might take 6 or more. Interviews with more than one speaker always took more time than individual interviews, since overlapping speech and interjections required several listens to sort out.

The interviews were recorded as .WAV files which I imported into an open source music editing program called Audacity. This program was more complex than transcribing required. However, the advantage of this program over others that were available to me was that it allowed me to quickly zoom in on the sound file, mark sections, and easily re-listen to sections as necessary without altering the original recording.

Transcript Conventions

This study is not concerned with linguistic analysis, and so I felt that a simplified system of transcription system would be the most appropriate.

Following transcript conventions suggested by Ives (1995), repeated words, false starts, or fillers such as "uh" or "um" and "like" (the latter used mainly by me), have not usually been transcribed except where they contribute to clarity. Although these are part of normal speech, this project does not involve an in-depth analysis of speech patterns and I believe this sort of close transcription would be distracting to most readers. Therefore, their absence is not indicated in any way. I have not indicated pauses in speech, or indicated details such as speaker emphasis. As always, the interview recordings remain the primary document for further analysis.

When I have used transcript quotations in-text, they are set off from the main text, except where the quote is shorter than one manuscript line, as shown below:

> **Nicole:** Can you describe how you travelled with your children in the district, like when you travelled out there or within it?
>
> **Barb:** Well, when we lived in the Brazeau we took Cheryl out on horseback when she was six weeks old and she was born in May, so I went into the Brazeau about the middle of July

Ellipses at the beginning of a quotation indicate that the quotation has begun mid-sentence, as in this example, selected from the above quote:

> **Barb:** … we took Cheryl out on horseback when she was six weeks old and she was born in May, so I went into the Brazeau about the middle of July

Descriptive or explanatory notes which I have added are indicated by square brackets and italic font. These may include laughter, indications of a gesture important to the meaning of the text, or clarifying information (such as an explanation of an abbreviated place name), as demonstrated in the quote below:

> **Max:** … I never had to shoot a bear and I would have not liked to attract the bears. We had bears walk by the cabin like Julie said
>
> **Julie:** We had one put his paws up and look in the window at me [*Julie and Nicole laugh*]

Or, as in this quote:

> **Gord:** That's Rocky Forks Cabin [*showing picture from personal photo album*]. That's what it looks like now

Often, more than one person participated or was present during the interview. Although these interviews were more difficult to transcribe, I was pleased with the results. Narratives overlapped, speakers built upon each other's stories, often adding humour and enriching the recording. When the speakers overlapped, or interjected, or spoke simultaneously (but a second speaker did not completely interrupt the speech of the first speaker, and the first speaker continued on) it is indicated on a separate line using a square bracket, as in this example:

> **Max:** But if somebody hadn't heard from you for some time and the office certainly didn't really keep track of us
>
> **[**
>
> **Julie:** oh, no
>
> **Max:** or anybody else. There were two occasions when they realized that they hadn't heard from us and they sent in Monrad Kjorlien that time when the phone
>
> **[**
>
> **Julie:** the phone was out, yes
>
> **[**
>
> **Max:** was out and it had fallen in the creek on a creek crossing and so they thought, well maybe she burned up! And I was with my girlfriend in Cairn Pass! [*all laugh*]

Interviewees were given the opportunity to review their transcript before it was used in this research. Any part of the text which has been redacted by the interviewee will not appear in this paper, and its absence is not indicated in-text. Often the text that was redacted was no more than a correction of natural speaking patterns and any corrections that interviewees made to the transcript are not indicated here. These might include the correction of a misspelled or misunderstood word, changing the tense of a verb in a sentence (such as "is" to "was"), or removing one of the fillers or repeated words that I had slipped in. Several interviewees took the time to provide additional information and clarification on their transcript. Since this additional information is often quite valuable (not to mention quite thoughtful!) I have included it in square brackets, set off from regular text using a10 pt Ariel font, as in the quote below:

> **Sharon:** … it was Gord's district, there's a sense of ownership [and pride in upkeep]. And they also got two for the price of one because [of what the wife did to contribute]

Finally, I have occasionally used italics to emphasise a particular section of a quote. To avoid confusion, this will always be indicated.

2.6 Locating and Selecting Warden Cabins

Selecting the cabins

There are currently at least forty cabins in Jasper National Park including highway, district and patrol cabins. In Jasper, the district system also included "highway" districts such as Sunwapta and Cavell which were accessible by road.

Backcountry districts were remote, and were usually given to new wardens with no seniority, including those with small children. As a warden advanced in his career he would be promoted to a highway district. I chose to focus on backcountry cabins, rather than all out of town warden accommodations since the experiences of these single wardens and families would be very different than those at highway stations.

I selected three out of five backcountry district cabins based on their accessibility and the availability of interviewees who had lived in them: Jacques Lake Brazeau, and Blue Creek.

Jacques Lake Cabin, the headquarters for the Rocky River District is located 12.5 kilometres from a trailhead on the Maligne Lake Road. This cabin had been home to two of the families who I interviewed. Brazeau Cabin is located 30 kilometres from a trailhead located on the Icefields Parkway. The trailhead is inside Banff National Park, and enters Jasper National Park on the trail, after crossing Nigel Creek. Two families and one warden (single at the time he was at Brazeau) who I spoke to resided at Brazeau. The final cabin at Blue Creek is located 38.2 kilometres from a trailhead in Rock Lake Provincial Park, Alberta. I spoke to one single warden who lived at Blue Creek in the 1960s.

The two remaining backcountry district headquarter cabins are Willow Creek and Smokey River. Willow Creek cabin was an area of interest: two individuals who I interviewed had a connection to this place. Barb Barker's father, Norm Young, was the

district warden there in the 1950s. Mac Elder was the district warden at Willow Creek between 1959-1964. The original cabin, which was built in 1927, was replaced with a Pan-Abode in 1978.[20] The new cabin is in a different location, facing northward towards Daybreak Peak rather than westward, overlooking the Willow Creek stream bed. The replacement cabin had never been lived in by a family on a year round basis and is a pre-manufactured building, while the original cabin was constructed using local materials. Although I chose not to include this cabin in this research, I passed through the Willow Creek Cabin yard. I took the opportunity to stop and photograph the cabin and view its log books.

Smokey River Cabin was excluded as a focus of this study for two reasons. First, although one of my interviewees, Monrad Kjorlien, was the Smokey River district warden for five years in the 1960s, I did not interview anyone else from this district. When Monrad was the district warden on the Smokey, Jasper National Park had a lease on 90 acres of land in Mount Robson Provincial Park, which is located on Jasper's north-western border in the province of British Columbia. Monrad did not use Smokey Cabin as a home base: at the time there was a five bedroom house in Mount Robson Park available to the warden (Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript).

The Mount Robson Ranch, founded in 1921 by Roy Hargreaves, and the Berg Lake Chalet, built in 1927, were located at site of the present-day Berg Lake backcountry camping area until they were closed in 1977.[21] The house Monrad used, which was located one mile away from where Murray and Ishbel Cochrane ran Berg Lake Chalet at that time, no longer exists.

Second, and more importantly, this Smokey River District Cabin is comparatively very remote. It is accessible on foot from either Mount Robson Provincial Park in British Columbia (53 kilometres), Rock Lake Provincial Park in Alberta (103 kilometres) or

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[20] "Pan-Abode" is a brand name of the building manufacturer.

[21] Hargreaves Glacier-Place Names in the Canadian Rockies. http://www.spiralroad.com/sr/pn/h/hargreaves_glacier.html (Accessed August 31, 2012.)

from the Celestine Lake fire road in Jasper (126.4 kilometres). While it was possible to continue to Smokey Cabin via the North Boundary trail from Blue Creek Cabin (an additional 64.8 kilometres), this trip, at 156 kilometres, would take at least seven days of travel to complete. The alternate route from Mount Robson Park would involve travel on the Berg Lake Trail, one of the most popular backcountry trips in the mountains. As I am not a strong enough backpacker to reach the Adolphus campsite, up and over Robson Pass, in one day, an overnight stay at Berg Lake would be necessary. I decided against travelling to this cabin based on its distance and the difficulty of coordinating a trip through the busy Berg Lake Trail area.

Although I was focusing on the district cabins I also documented two patrol cabins that I encountered during travel: Four Point en route to Brazeau Cabins and Welbourne en route to Blue Creek. These smaller cabins were used as overnight shelters while a warden travelled in his district. They will be discussed further below.

Locating the warden cabins

In the early stages of this project I was often frustrated as I tried to learn the names and locations of warden cabins in Jasper National Park. Their names do not appear on standard topographic maps or on the backcountry maps supplies by Parks Canada. Cabin locations on topographic maps sometimes appeared to be incorrect, and some were not marked at all.[22] The most accessible and reliable source of information turned out to be a copy of the Canadian Rockies Trail Guide, which often mentioned cabins which were visible from the trail as distance markers (Patton and Robinson 2007). Later, I was fortunate to receive a digital copy of a map of Jasper created in the 1968, which showed the cabin names and locations, as well as the district names and boundaries as they would have been during my period of focus (See figure A.1, Appendix A)

[22] My map reading skills are admittedly limited. However, I found that Four Point patrol cabin was indicated on the Natural Resources Canada (Sunwapta Peak 83 C/6) map to be on the east side of the trail; it is found on the west side, Some patrol cabins, such as Little Heaven in the north area of the park, were not marked at all (Blue Creek 83 E/7).

On the trail I found that Parks Canada trail signage, which provides information on distances relevant to hikers including kilometres to a significant landmark or to backcountry campsites, does not include information about the locations of warden cabins. The trail did often pass through the yard of several of the cabins I visited; at Brazeau, Willow Creek, Four Point and Jacques Lake the cabins were impossible to miss. Others, however, were located off the trail, like Welbourne Patrol Cabin, found down a mysterious, unmarked side path near the hiker campground. If I had not been looking for a cabin I knew to be there, I would not have found it.

In current times it is reasonable for the cabins to be relatively unmarked: they are not for public use and backcountry travellers would have little chance of finding assistance there. The absence of markers indicates that an insider's knowledge is required to locate them, but it is also suggestive of the fading perceived importance of the cabins.

The lost cabins: under a different name, destroyed or relocated?

Occasionally, a cabin will have more than one name, which may reflect a name change over time. Sunwapta Warden Cabin, a headquarters cabin located on Highway 93 in Jasper National Park is one such cabin. It is sometimes called Poboktan (it is located near the meeting of Poboktan Creek and the Sunwapta River), or Mile 45, which is its distance by highway from the town of Jasper.

While some cabin names have changed, others no longer existed at all. I soon realized that some of Jasper's warden cabins which were present between 1952 and 1972 have been destroyed, relocated or replaced.

Two large wildfires, in 2003 and 2006 respectively, destroyed two of Jasper's cabins. The Syncline Fire in July 2003 began when embers from a prescribed burn inside the park reignited as a result of extremely dry conditions and a strong east wind. The effects of this fire are still visible along the Yellowhead Highway near the east gate of Jasper,

where the fire crossed the highway.[23] This fire destroyed Grizzly Cabin, a patrol cabin located in the former Rocky River District, along the South Boundary trail. A tack shed that had been located at the Rock Lake trailhead in Rock Lake Provincial Park was relocated to the Grizzly Cabin area.[24]

On July 2, 2006, a fire which began from a lightning strike in the province of Alberta destroyed Southesk Patrol Cabin, which was built in 1931. This cabin was replaced with a brand new cabin.

Some cabins in areas of the park that no longer receive regular use and maintenance have been purposely burned down. Meadow Creek Patrol Cabin, in the Tonquin/Cavell area was an alternative access to Moat Lake once used by the Alpine Club of Canada. The trail is no longer used, and the cabin has been destroyed. Rink Patrol Cabin, on the Miette River was also destroyed.

Willow Creek Cabin, headquarters of the Willow Creek District, was replaced with a Pan-Abode, a prefabricated log building, in 1978. The new cabin was relocated in the yard to face north, towards Daybreak Peak, whereas the original cabin had been located on the banks of Willow Creek, facing west.

Seldom Inn patrol cabin, formerly of the Willow Creek District, was burned in August 1995. I enjoyed this cabin's name, reportedly given because it was seldom used if a warden or other personnel could help it since it was in a boggy, unfavourable spot near Snake Indian Falls. The last register from the cabin, begun in 1979, opens with this poem:

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[23] "Fighting Fire with Fire at Syncline Ridge" Parks Canada Fire Podcast. Audio available from ParkRadio.ca. http://www.friendsofbanff.com/park-radio/podcast/parks-canada-fire-podcast-2-fighting-fire-with-fire-at-syncline-ridge/ (Accessed January 23, 2011.)

[24] The Rock Lake trailhead is the main access point for the North Boundary area of the park, including Willow Creek and Blue Creek Districts.

Seldom Inn

So apt a name
Where wardens are concerned
It's absence as you pass this way
Might hardly be discerned
So make a mark, ensure your fame
Suggest it could be burned
(The sixpence saved in hauling hay
Is surely a sixpence earned)

Horses though-

With flick of tail
Send best laid plans awry
A broken fence, tracks down the trail
You cuss, you pray, you cry
You look all day, your efforts fail
Footsore, you wonder why
And fetch your water in a pail
You're full, you're warm, you're dry
- October 11, 1979 (Author Unknown)[25]

I could not decipher the name of the author of this poem, which was initialled but not signed. The author, presumably a warden, suggests that the cabin is both a nuisance and a blessing. Halfway cabins such as Seldom Inn were critical when wardens lived on their districts year-round, since during the winter one might only be able to travel 15 kilometres per day. For wardens who were only seasonally living in the district, or, as they do today, travelling through on two week tours, a halfway cabin might be a nuisance to keep maintained and stocked since it would rarely be used. Yet in a storm, or if waylaid by troublesome horses, the warden could prepare a meal and find warmth by the fire.

Photographing the cabins

[25] Seldom Inn Cabin Register 1979-1995.

I used the same Olympus camera, described above in section 2.2, to document the warden cabins that I visited. My partner and I had purchased the "tough" model camera, which can withstand water, freezing and "shock" (i.e. dropping it) so that we could take it when canoeing, skiing or hiking. Since we would be hiking to the three selected cabins in changeable mountain weather, carrying our supplies on our backs, these qualities were well suited to this project. I photographed log book pages on site at the cabin (as described above), documented the interior and exterior of the cabin, and photographed the surrounding area.

As I photographed the exterior and interior of the cabin I tried to capture the place as it would be viewed when approaching and entering it in person. When I reviewed the pictures at home I realized that I had failed to take images of the cabins that could be easily compared. For example, when placing a photo of Four Point patrol cabin, a small one room cabin, next to a photo of Brazeau District Cabin, a larger home cabin which is divided onto three rooms, the two cabins appeared to be the same size, based on the perspective of the photograph. It would have been better to take at least one photo of each patrol and district cabin form the same angle and distance so that the cabin differences in size were evident.

Sound recording at the cabins

I brought the Sony sound recorder with me when I travelled to the warden cabins and recorded up to ten minutes of soundscapes from the front porch of each cabin. Although these sound files only capture a small sound moment of each place, they have been as valuable to me as photographs in bringing back my experience of visiting each cabin.

Portable Battery Recharging

This project involved backcountry travel to the warden cabins, and I was concerned about the possibility of arriving at a cabin after two days of travel on foot, only to find my camera batteries were dead. Fortunately, I had access to a Brunton Solar Roll (as with the Sony sound recorder, this was borrowed from my partner for this project), a lightweight and weatherproof means of recharging batteries while in the field.

Planning

Travel to the three selected cabins involved a total of twelve days of backpacking over three separate trips to Jasper National Park which were completed in July and August 2011. I was given permission from the current resource conservation/visitor safety specialists for the North and South Boundary areas of the park to enter the cabins, and entrusted with a key. However, as I was not trained in using the wood stove and Coleman lanterns, I was not given permission to stay overnight at the cabins unless I could coordinate my trips with backcountry parks staff. My husband travelled with me and we packed out our tents and sleeping bags and obtained overnight wilderness passes while in the backcountry.

Figure B.1 in Appendix B illustrates the current trail system in Jasper National Park. The trail sections which I travelled in August 2011 to document warden cabins are highlighted and enlarged to show greater detail in figures B.3-B.5.

My criteria for selecting Jacques Lake, Brazeau and Blue Creek District Cabins have been outlined above. Below, I will introduce each selected cabin, including a description of my experience of visiting the cabin, its background and history, and its current status.

Jacques Lake Cabin – Headquarters of the Rocky River District

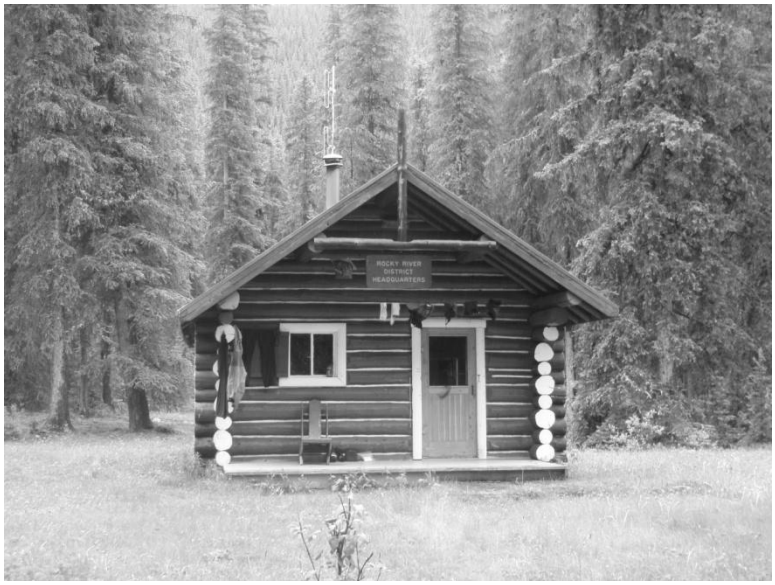

Figure 2.3: Jacques Lake Warden Cabin, July 2011. The clothes hung outside the cabin belong to campers who were, like us, soaked after their hike to Jacques Lake campground.

Jacques Lake Cabin was built in 1951 by Harvey Crate and the cabin and its tack shed were designated as a Recognized Federal Heritage Building in 1997. [26] The cabin has a unique appearance compared to all of the other cabins I viewed in the summer of 2011: the logs are stained a dark brown colour and the ends of the logs have been painted white. During my interview with Gordon and Sharon Anderson, Sharon told me that she had painted the white ends during her residence there, because that was how they were done in Banff National Park. The interior logs are painted white, although I am not aware of when this was done or by whom. The white paint increases the brightness inside the cabin.

[26] Canada's Historic Places, Jacques Lake Warden Cabin. http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=15275 (Accessed July 21, 2012.)

Figure 2.4: Jacques Lake Cabin, interior, July 2011. The heater stove is directly behind the cook stove and not visible in this photograph. Bunk beds and a bookshelf are visible in the background and a drying rack is located overhead.

Figure 2.5. Jacques Lake Cabin, interior, July 2011. Part of the kitchen counter and cupboards are visible in this photograph. Outside the window, the edge of the tack shed is visible.

The cabin yard features a small corral, hitching post, equipment shed, wood shed and tack shed. The meadow is smaller than those at Blue Creek and Brazeau, and appears grown in. On the lake there is a small rowboat for the use of wardens, resource conservation specialists and other cabin users, although it is kept locked and out of sight to prevent campers from accessing it.

Of the three main cabins we visited during this research, Jacques Lake was the only one previously familiar to me. Years ago I had travelled back there on my second ever backcountry trip with my now husband. On that first trip, a trail crew was using the cabin but we did not go over to talk with them. I did not expect to see a cabin at the lake.

Jacques Lake Cabin is located 12.5 kilometres from a trailhead at the edge of Medicine Lake (See figure B.4 in Appendix B,). It is a trail often recommended to beginners: there is little elevation gain, it is short and it is very rewarding. Jacques Lake is beautiful and is an excellent location for viewing wildlife.

The valley is locally known as a wet one, and when I walked in with my husband in early July the rain was incessant. Many sections of trail were more like stream beds. We found ourselves ankle deep in water and the rain-heavy willows soaked our clothes and packs as we brushed past.

The green metal roof of Jacques Lake Cabin first comes into sight across Jacques Lake as you come into a small clearing by the drift fence gate. A “drift fence” is a fence used to keep horses from wandering too far in search of better feed. They are built from local logs and tied with haywire. To access the cabin, you must pass through the backcountry campground, cross a log bridge over Breccia Creek, and cross an area grown over with willows before you come into the clearing where the cabin stands.

The recording that I made on the porch of the cabin is remarkable for the diversity of wildlife sounds present. Marmots whistle up in the mountains while birds call out, their patterns are twittering and laughing. Throughout the recording the rain is unceasing, pattering on the metal roof and flowing in the distance.

Jacques Lake Cabin is the headquarters of the Rocky River District and two couples, Gord and Sharon Anderson and Max and Julie Winkler, had small children while at the cabin. Both couples generously showed me their photo albums when I visited them and it

became clear that the appearance of the cabin and yard area had changed since they lived there. The cabin once had a small fenced-in area, a courtyard, in the front and flagstones were placed. Inside the cabin, there was a divider between the front area (the front area included a kitchen/cooking area, and a kitchen table and chairs), and the back area, where the bedroom was located. No sign of the courtyard fence remains, and the divider was removed sometime in the 1970s.

Brazeau Cabin – Headquarters of the Brazeau District

Figure 2.6: Brazeau Warden Cabin exterior, August 2011. The tack shed is visible to the left of the cabin.

Brazeau District Cabin was built in 1961, replacing a smaller cabin built in the 1920s. Art Allen was the builder and the cabin crew consisted of four other men. Max Winkler was district warden for the district at the time and resided there with Julie and their son Terry. Plywood to use for the floors, cupboards, and lumber to frame in the doors, windows and foundation were packed in by the cabin building crew, however the logs were obtained locally. When the new cabin was built, whip-sawed lumber from the roof

of the old cabin was re-purposed to use in building a woodshed.[27] The logs above the current cabin's porch, decorative with their burls, were selected and peeled by Max and Julie.

Inside, the cabin is partitioned into two bedrooms, with a larger kitchen/living room area in front which includes food storage cupboards, a sink, washing area, kitchen table, cook stove, woodstove, and a couch. The floor and partitioning walls of the cabin were replaced in 2010. During this renovation the doorways were widened and the dividing wall lowered to allow more light and heat circulation.

Figure 2.7: Brazeau Warden Cabin, interior, August 2011. In this photo you can see the doorway of one of the two bedrooms, dividing wall and cook and heating stoves. Two pack-boxes are in the foreground.

[27] Whip-sawing is a method of manually cutting boards from logs. Max Winkler mentioned that the whip-saw pits can still be found in the yard at Brazeau: "On the Brazeau you can find [*the whip-saw pits*] on the exit near the gate where you go to Poboktan Pass there is a pit where one person would stand underneath with a saw and one up above on a kind of platform and they sawed this lumber and really quite amazingly straight" (Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript).

Figure 2.8: Brazeau Warden Cabin, interior, August 2011. In this photograph the kitchen counter space and cupboards are visible. The containers above the cupboards contain flour and other grocery items. Below the window is a gas stove, and at the very top right a drying rack is visible.

This cabin currently has a surrounding log fence which was built by Bob Barker while he was district warden. The original fence, built the same year as the cabin, was a white picket fence. In the yard, there is a woodshed, tack shed, equipment shed and outhouse. Brazeau also has a working well, which was dug during Max and Julie's time at the cabin. This cabin was also home to Bob and Barbara Barker between 1968 and 1972. When Mac Elder was the Brazeau district warden between 1957 and 1959, his headquarters cabin was the original 1920s cabin.

This cabin received Recognized Federal Heritage Building designation in 2007. The Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO) Heritage Character Statement for this particular cabin, under the heading "historical value," describes the cabin as "associated with several wardens, such as Max Winkler and Mac Elder, who lived here with their families and who went on to become Chief Park Wardens and Superintendents" (FHBRO Heritage Character Statement, Brazeau Warden Cabin, Jasper National Park, Alberta). No FHBRO statement for any other warden cabin in Jasper mentions the wardens who lived there by name.

The FHBRO report confusingly provides the date of construction as in the 1920s: this is likely when the original cabin, destroyed in October 1961 to prevent it from becoming a haven for packrats, was built.

We reached Brazeau Cabin after two days of hiking under clear skies. It was August, and the days were hot, but we woke up to frost on the inside of our tent on both mornings. The cabin is 30 kilometres from the Nigel Pass trailhead, over a stunning pass. The Brazeau-Jonas Pass loop is one of the three most popular in Jasper National Park, known for its beauty and we passed several hikers along our way.

After crossing the Brazeau River late on the second day, we noticed the drift fence and knew we were close. Our certainty increased as we began to hear the faint jingling of horse bells. We eagerly followed the trail until we found the gate and immediately noticed the horses in the yard, grazing in the meadow beyond the trees. They watched us curiously, but remained intent on their food.

The South Boundary Trail passes right through the Brazeau District headquarters and a traveller will pass through the gate and the cabin. The cabin came into view not long after entering the yard, against the backdrop of Longview Mountain to the east. As we crossed the meadow towards the cabin we noted the openness of the location and the vivid colours surrounding us.

Brazeau Cabin and its location in Jasper has been described as beautiful so many times that our expectations were extremely high. Coming into that clearing we were not disappointed.

The cabin was well kept, clean, and brightly lit by sunlight. We were welcomed by Al McKeeman, the Resource Conservation/Visitor Safety Specialist for the South Boundary trail and his packer, Sean Elliot.

I made two recordings on the porch of Brazeau Cabin. They are similar, except the second was set up during a short thunderstorm: rain, wind, and the low rumblings of thunder are audible in the background. The most distinctive presence in these soundscapes is the sounds of the bells around the horses' necks, gently ringing as they grazed in the meadow, broken occasionally by the neighing of the horses.

Blue Creek Cabin – Headquarters of the Blue Creek District

Figure 2.9: Blue Creek Warden Cabin exterior, August 2011

According to the Blue Creek cabin register, Blue Creek Cabin was completed between July 1st and October 13, 1960.[28] The new cabin is not in the same location as the original cabin which was located in the same spot as the current horse and hiker campground, approximately 500 metres further down the trail. The old location was reputed to receive only five minutes of sunshine in mid-December. The new location appears well-chosen, with a striking view from the porch and the open, sunny meadow. The current tack shed, located across the meadow from the cabin beside the corral, is likely the original tack shed, moved to the new cabin location.[29]

The cabin is divided into three sections: a main front area with food storage cupboards, a sink, washing area, kitchen table, cook stove and woodstove. Two bedrooms make up the

[28] Blue Creek Cabin Register, 1959 to 1974.

[29] This was suggested in a note under a photograph, inside the cabin, of the old cabin with the original tack shed right beside it.

back part of the cabin, one with a bunk bed and a second with a double bed. Each of these rooms had their own storage areas for clothes or other items.

Figure 2.10: Blue Creek Warden Cabin, interior, August 2011. The kitchen table is visible, centre, with cooking stove on the left and kitchen counter and cupboards on the right.

Although this cabin was built one year before Brazeau Cabin and shares similar character-defining features, Blue Creek Cabin has not been designated as a Recognized Federal Heritage Building. This cabin was the home cabin for Al Stendie between 1971 and 1973.

We travelled to the Blue Creek District Headquarters Cabin from the Rock Lake Trailhead in Rock Lake Provincial Park, Alberta. Hiking to the Blue Creek Cabin this way saved approximately 24 kilometres of hiking along the North Boundary Trail from its eastern terminus in Jasper, a distance that would have taken at least one extra day on the trail. The trail from Rock Creek joins the North Boundary trail near the Willow Creek warden cabin. Wardens during the district era would have usually travelled to Blue Creek by using a truck to get their horses to Seldom Inn via the Celestine Lake Fire Road, and travelling from there, through Willow Creek District, by horse or on foot.

The Rock Lake trailhead is also the one commonly used by Jasper's current backcountry resource conservation personnel when travelling on the North Boundary. The trail appears well used by horses and outfitters but rarely, it seems, by hikers. Horse shoe prints vastly outnumbered boot prints and each hiker camp looked more unused and desolate than the last, while the horse camps appeared recently inhabited, welcoming and friendly. We encountered only three other people on the trail, the first a lone woman on horseback leading one packhorse and a dog, coming from Hardscrabble Pass and heading towards Little Heaven, and on our way out to Willow Creek Campground we ran into the North Boundary's Resource Conservation/Visitor Safety Specialist and her packer, also on horseback.

The trail begins in country that is wide open and unlike the Jasper we were most familiar with. As you travel into the Blue Creek area the mountains are closer, higher and the waters faster. There are large meadows and boggy areas, where the presence of beaver lodges makes one sure to take precautions against giardiasis. The water has a sulphur taste to it even where it runs clear and fast. The North Boundary feels so unexpectedly different.

Figure 2.11: Blue Creek Warden Cabin yard, August 2011. The tack shed and hitching posts are visible in the centre of this photograph, and the corral is to the left. This photograph was taken from the middle of the cabin yard: Blue Creek cabin was behind me.

The quiet that we encounter here is stunning. Jacques Lake had been characterized by the sound of rain, the whistling of marmots and the calls of birds, while at Brazeau the most distinctive sound was the jingling of horses. Here even the sound recorder picks up only a gentle wind, the slight sound of the Snake Indian River across the meadow and the occasional whine of mosquitoes (it is almost impossible not to begin swatting my neck when I return to the recording!). The day had been hot, and we arrived at the cabin in the early afternoon.

Blue Creek Cabin is in a meadow just off the main trail. Unlike at Jacques Lake, Brazeau and Willow Creek Cabin, the trail does not pass right by the cabin, but is found by a small detour. The trail marker directs the traveller past the cabin and does not mention its presence.

The trail had led us through the trees for so long that we gazed in awe at the view before us. The cabin sits in an open meadow facing the magnificent high face of Mount Simla. Walking across the meadow to see the front of the cabin better you can see the mountain range known as the Ancient Wall. Blue Creek Cabin is the largest warden cabin in Jasper, yet in the photo it is dwarfed by trees twice as large as its radio tower and the mountain range behind it.

My visits to these three cabins were some of the most memorable moments of this research project. I had viewed some of the cabins in photos at the Jasper-Yellowhead Archives and in the private collections of the former wardens and family members who I spoke to. When I arrived at the cabins, I remembered the stories that they had shared with me or that I had read in published memoirs, archival documents and cabin registers. These places, and the trails connecting them, were alive with story. I instantly recognized the strawberries planted near Blue Creek Cabin, mentioned in the cabin register as early as 1974, and the name plate at Brazeau Cabin which was carved by Julie Winkler when she resided there.

2.7 Limitations of the Study

This research is based on the experiences of 12 individuals that experienced living at one of Jasper backcountry district cabins between 1952 and 1972. This time period begins at the earliest recollections of my interviewees and ends in 1972 when the last family left the backcountry of the park. The stories shared here cannot necessarily be generalized to

other national parks or other time periods. In the background section, I will place my interviews within the historical context of the time-place discussed.

The interviewees that I spoke to were only a handful of those who had lived in backcountry cabins in Jasper during this time period. I was not able to interview all the men and women who were recommended to me. The wardens who I spoke to had retired after a lifetime in the warden service and are naturally those who thrived there. The voices of the wardens and families who found it difficult to cope with life in the backcountry, those who might have left after one season, are only hinted at. Not all individuals or families shared the same experiences, or responded in the same ways as those who I interviewed, but it is also one of the strengths of this research that the lives and experiences of these 12 individuals are recorded in connection with their former, historic, home places.

Chapter 3: Background

3.0 Historical Sources

Much of the historical information that I introduce below may be found in published sources. Therefore, I have concentrated on events and details that are most relevant to providing a background to this research. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 briefly describe the history of National Parks in Canada and of Jasper National Park. I have mainly drawn from Lothian's *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks* (1987) for these two sections. Although Lothian devotes only four pages to Jasper's history, this history provides concise dates for events such as establishment, the completion of roads and railways. A second source which I consulted, which focuses directly on the history of Jasper, is C.J. Taylor's *Jasper: A History of the place and its people* (2009).

In sections 3.3, I briefly discuss the history of the area that is now Jasper National Park, prior to the establishment of the park. I consulted several sources to better understand this history, including A *Hard Road to Travel: land, forests and people in the Upper Athabasca Region* (Murphy et al. 2007) and Peter Murphy's *Homesteading in the Athabasca Valley to 1910* (2007), C.J. Taylor's *Jasper: a history of the place and its people* (2009) and Susan Feddema-Leonard's *People and Peaks: a history of Willmore Wilderness Park* (2007).

In section 3.4, I describe the history of Canada's Park Warden Service. I have mainly drawn upon its official history, *Guardians of the Wild*, which was written by Robert Burns, with former park warden Mike Schintz (2000). This history mainly focuses on the first seventy years of the warden service, but unfortunately offers scant detail the decades that followed. I also consulted C. J. Taylor's *Jasper: A history of a Place and its People* (2009), E. J. Hart's *J. B. Harkin: Father of Canada's National Parks* (2010), and Kathy Calvert and Dale Portman's history of mountain rescue, *Guardians of the Peaks* (2006). I have also drawn upon some of the narratives shared with me during interviews to provide context for how structural changes were experienced by former wardens.

In section 3.5, I discuss the roles of women connected to the warden service: the warden wives who joined their husbands in the backcountry and at the highway warden stations, and the female wardens who were hired after 1973. In this section, I will also compare the experiences of Canada's warden wives and female wardens with the "ranger-wives"

and female rangers in the American National Parks system, drawing on Polly Kaufman's *National Parks and the Woman's Voice* (1996).

In the final section of this chapter, section 3.6, I introduce Jasper's warden cabins and the district system. I found Edward Mills' *Rustic Building Programs in Canada's National Parks 1885-1950* (1994) to be very useful in understanding the rustic architectural style of the warden cabins, and I located some historical information on Jasper's warden cabins in Burns (2000) and Taylor (2009). These sources, however, did not provide detailed information on the locations of cabins or their individual histories. Several cabins have been designated as Historic Places and are recorded, and searchable, online through the Canadian Historic Places Register. [30]

Where appropriate, I round the background information in this chapter with information found in archival documents such as cabin registers, and the interviews I completed with former wardens and family members.

3.1 National Parks

The concept of National Parks was born in the United States in 1872, when the US Congress created Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The Canadian national parks system began thirteen years later, in 1885, when an Order in Council reserved a little more than 26 km^2 of land on the northern slopes of Sulphur Mountain for "future park use" (Lothian 1987:17). The area, then called Rocky Mountains Park, preserved sulphur hot springs at Banff, discovered by railway surveyors in 1883, from private ownership and development. The park was later expanded and established as Banff National Park in 1930, with its final size adjusted in 1949 to 6,641 km^2 (Lothian 1987:33).

In Canada, the establishment of the national parks system was closely tied to western expansion and the building of the first Canadian transcontinental railway. Robert Craig Brown has argued that the exploitation of resources rather was the impetus behind the creation of national parks in Canada than an ethos of preservation (1969). This argument

[30] See http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/register-repertoire.aspx (Accessed July 21, 2012.)

was further explored by Leslie Bella in *Parks for Profit* in which she argues that the parks were "built not to preserve a natural landscape, but to centralize control of that landscape in the hands of the railroads. That control was used to reduce competition on the parks and to restrict access to the mountains" (1987:24). Bella further argues that this precedent of favouring business interests over preserving the environmental integrity of the parks has continued into present day. Other park historians, including Alan MacEachern (2001) and C.J. Taylor (2010) have suggested that while ideals of preservation and use are largely contradictory, an ethos of conservation and preservation is demonstrated in the development of a national parks system in Canada.

Today, Canada's National Parks system includes 43 national parks across Canada, representing 39 "Natural Regions" (Parks Canada 2010).

3.2 Jasper National Park

Jasper National Park is located in the province of Alberta, Canada. It is the largest of the Canadian mountain national parks, at 11,228 km^2. The nearest major city is Edmonton, Alberta, located 365 kilometres east of the park via the Yellowhead Highway. Jasper shares a border with Banff National Park to the south, and these two parks are connected by Highway 93, also known as the Icefields Parkway.

The following paragraph draws heavily upon W.F. Lothian's A *Brief History of Canada's National Parks* for dates on road construction and other developments within Jasper National Park. I offer these details to provide context for some of the changing roles and responsibilities of Jasper's park wardens over time which I discuss further in section 3.4.

Jasper Forest Park was established in 1907 but was not developed until the after the arrival of the Grande Trunk Pacific railway in 1911.The Jasper townsite was surveyed in 1913, and its administration and maintenance buildings were built in 1913 and 1914. The park borders were altered several times between 1911 and 1930, when the final boundaries were settled, and the park was renamed Jasper National Park. Tourists hoping to travel to Jasper arrived by railroad well into the 1920s and hired horse outfitters to reach destinations within the park. Motor roads within the park, including scenic roads to Maligne Canyon, Mount Edith Cavell and nearby lakes were completed as early as 1924. Construction of the Jasper-Edmonton highway was completed in 1931 and extended up the Miette River Valley to Yellowhead Pass and British Columbia in 1968. The Banff-

Jasper Highway was opened in 1940, allowing automobile access to the park from the south. Maligne Lake Road, which connects the town of Jasper to the Maligne Lake area, was completed in 1962 and paved by 1970 (Lothian 1987:52-54).

The major tourist centre of the park is the town of Jasper which had population of 5,236 people in 2011.[31] Jasper is part of the Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site, designated by UNESCO, along with Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks and Mount Robson, Hamber and Mount Assiniboine Provincial Parks.

3.3 The Athabasca Watershed and Yellowhead Pass region: a brief history

Archaeological artefacts and campsite remains in the Athabasca Valley demonstrate the presence of Aboriginal peoples as early as 10,000 to 11,000 BP (Murphy et al. 2007:29). Sekani, Shuswap, Kootenay, Salish, Stony and Cree people seasonally hunted in the area, and used the corridors offered by the confluence of the Athabasca, Snake Indian, Rocky Rivers for trade and travel (Murphy et al. 2007:30-31; Taylor 2009:112). Archaeologists have found obsidian flakes at Jasper's Patricia Lake which originated over 1,000 km away, near Mount Edziza in the Coastal Ranges (Murphy et al. 2007:30).

In 1811, North West Company surveyor David Thompson, led by his Iroquois guide known only as Thomas, mapped a route over Athabasca Pass which would become the primary fur trade route in the region for 40 years (Murphy et al.2007:67-71). This route connected York Factory, located on the shores of Hudson Bay, to Fort George on the west coast. Travel took between 90 and 105 days and was called the Columbia Express while travelling west, and the York Factory Express while travelling west (Murphy et al. 2007:68-69).

Jasper National Park took its name from the original trading post, Jasper House, located on Brûlé Lake in present-day Alberta. The post was originally named Rocky Mountain

[31] These population numbers include temporary residents, which are defined as those who are employed a minimum of 30 days. Census information was retrieved from: http://jasper-alberta.com/default.aspx?pageid=330 (Accessed July 27, 2012.)

House, but, became known as Jasper House after its manager Jasper Hawes, the North West Company manager at the first Jasper House between 1814 and 1817 (Murphy et al. 2007:67). The Jasper House trading post was relocated to the far end of Jasper Lake in 1929, after the competing Northwest and Hudson Bay trading companies amalgamated in 1821 (Murphy et al. 2007:71). During the 1920s and 30s, game animals were scarce in the Athabasca Valley and hunters travelled north as far as the Smokey River and to what later became the Willow Creek District and Rock Lake Provincial Park for meat (Feddema-Leonard 2007:2).

When Jasper Forest Reserve, which officially became Jasper National Park in 1930, was created in 1907, there were seven Métis family homesteads in the Upper Athabasca River Valley (Murphy 2007:128). The families who homesteaded in the Athabasca Valley were of mixed heritage: many Iroquois freemen who had worked for the North West Company prior to its amalgamation with the Hudson's Bay Company had married local Aboriginal women and settled in the area.

Although the federal government promoted the development of tourist concessions, including restaurants sleeping accommodations and stable accommodations, government commissioner J.W. MacLaggan served eviction notices to the settlers in 1909 (Murphy 2007:128). The homesteaders were given a cash settlement based on the improvements they had made to their land, and told that they could move anywhere outside the borders of the new park (Murphy et al. 2007:225). Only Lewis Swift was able to retain rights to his land and his family were allowed to remain in the park. Swift later sold his homestead to a private buyer in 1935, and the property was purchased by the federal government in 1962 (Murphy et al. 2007:227). The land is now used as a training centre.

Many of the families who were evicted from Jasper later worked as guides in the park. Adolphus Moberly guided outfitter John Yates to Robson Pass from the Moose River valley, an area he knew well as his family had hunted there (Feddema-Leonard 2007:10). Adolphus was recognized for this knowledge in the name of Adolphus Lake, located near Robson Pass (the warden cabin built in 1957 near the lake was given the same name). However, as Susan Feddema-Leonard points out:

> Few mountains, rivers or lakes were named after the First People of the Rockies. In fact, Native people who showed the trails to the first explorers, the Jasper Park Wardens, and the outfitters have been

generally unrecognized for their eminent skill as mountain men (2007:10).

3.4 Canada's National Park Warden Service

In this section I will provide a brief introduction to Canada's National Park Warden Service and its history. Below, I have divided my brief history of the Canadian National Parks warden service into three sections. In the first, I describe the beginnings of the warden service. The second section focuses on the years between 1952 and 1972, which is the historical period this research is focused upon. This section demonstrates the changes which occurred within National Parks, including Jasper, which led to the end of the district system in 1969. The final section includes a discussion the changes which occurred in 2008, when the warden service was drastically restructured.

The background given below draws on the history of the warden service across the national parks, however I have drawn specific examples from Jasper when possible.

The Early Years of the Warden Service

A small number of "game guardians" were hired in Banff National Park[32] as early as 1887, however the beginnings of the warden service are usually traced to 1909, when, by Order in Council, new park regulations called for the hiring of individuals to monitor activities in the national parks (Burns 2000:6-7). In 1914, Fire and Game Guardians were officially redesigned as Park Wardens, in an effort to differentiate them from both provincial forest rangers and American park rangers (Burns 2000:13).

Most early wardens were outfitters, guides and packers already familiar with the Rockies: men who were used to working in the woods, able to manage a crew of firefighters and literate enough to submit reports on their daily activities and observations (Burns 2000:8). Their work included trail, cabin, and forestry telephone line building and maintenance, patrolling of the park boundaries for the prevention of poaching, and fire

[32] Banff National Park was Canada's first national park, created in 1885 as Rocky Mountains Park. It did not officially become Banff until 1930.

suppression. Wardens were also charged with "predator control," that is, the killing of carnivorous animals such as wolves, bears, and cougars to improve the numbers of elk and other game animals. Although it was now illegal for "poachers" to hunt or trap in the park, wardens were allowed to sell the skins of predator wildlife for extra income until 1928 (Burns 2000:24).

Large parks like Jasper were divided into areas called districts, each overseen by a district warden. The warden was required to reside within his district and since direct supervision of the wardens was unfeasible, wardens were required to maintain a work diary and travelled once a month to town to submit it to the Chief Park Warden. If the warden failed to properly fill out and submit their warden diary, they were not paid (Hart 2010: 199). The monthly trips to town also gave the warden the opportunity to pick up mail and supplies.

The district and patrol cabins that wardens resided in, and used as overnight shelters while travelling in their district will be discussed in detail in section 3.6, below. Most of the warden cabins in Jasper and other National Parks were connected by a forestry telephone line: a single line which was attached to trees or posts. The forestry telephone line was removed in the early 1980s, and some of the ceramic insulators are still visible on standing and fallen trees along Jasper's trails. The telephone line connected to most of the headquarters cabins in Jasper, allowing the warden to report a fire or request assistance in an emergency. Keeping the phone line working was a major part of the warden's work in the backcountry: anything from wind to avalanches could bring the trees holding the lines down, and cut off the warden from contact with the town switch board and other wardens. While travelling on patrol, a warden always carried climbing spurs, a climbing belt and the tools needed to fix the line.[33]

[33] For an excellent description of the work involved in maintaining the forestry phone line, see former Jasper warden Mike Schintz's memoir, *Close Call on the High Walls* (2005:17-20).

1952 to 1972: From districts to areas

In the 1950's and 1960's, the parks became increasingly accessible by automobile and, combined with the growing popularity of nature-based travel, this led to a large increase in visitors in Jasper National Park, second only to Banff National Park in total visitor numbers (Taylor 2009:194-195). This trend spread to the backcountry areas, where backcountry hiking registrations doubled in number between 1969 and 1973, from five to ten thousand visitors a year (Taylor 2009:195).

Backcountry hikers flowed into some areas more than others. Cavell District Warden Toni Klettl wrote a report expressing his concern over random camping in the popular Tonquin Valley, which resulted in the establishment of designated campgrounds and toilets by 1970.[34] The North Boundary was also one of the most popular destinations, as Al Stendie describes below:

> **Al:** … in 1971 there were only about 25 people that went by Blue Creek cabin and then in the next year, in '72, there were over 400 people signing into that book. I don't know if you looked at that book or not but if you look about that time, '72, '73 they just blossomed out of everywhere … at some of the backcountry cabins, or campgrounds like Blue Creek which is just a mile down from the cabin, at where the Snake Indian and Blue Creek come together, you'd be walking down in the evening and you'd hear the buzz of people talking.[35]

Not only were more visitors entering the parks, they were increasingly hiking and climbing independently of professional guides. Park wardens were increasingly called upon for emergencies which they were not equipped or trained to respond to. Most park wardens in the 1950s had been raised on farms and ranches, or were recruited from outfitters that worked in and outside of the park. Although these men were very competent in working with horses and living independently in the backcountry, they were

[34] Klettl, Shirley. N.d. Toni's Years with the Warden Service – JNP. Klettl Family Fonds. Held by the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Accession number 990.05.06.

[35] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

not usually experienced climbers or skiers. Walter Perren, formerly a Swiss guide with the Canadian Pacific Railway, was hired to run Parks Canada's mountain climbing and rescue program in 1955 (Calvert and Portman 2006:34). Wardens attended intensive ski and climbing rescue schools throughout the 50s and 60s to improve their skills in these areas.

Wardens attended training programs to upgrade their skills in other areas of specialization during this period, as Mac Elder describes below:

> **Mac:** The Alberta government pulled in all their old rangers … [*and*] started pulling in all these people and put them into forestry school in Hinton and they took those bush rangers and put them into a six-month upgrading program and brought them up to a technical level and I say the federal government learned it off of them because then they started doing it with us and they had the first one of those upgrading programs, I went to it, it was right up here in Banff, and the next one that I went to they started at the Palisades in Jasper … that was set up as a warden training school and they would pull us in there in April and we would be there for probably fifteen days or twenty days and they would give us a major and a minor and the one I took was fire suppression and public safety and the next one was fish and wildlife and then we did some administration stuff.
>
> I think I did seven or eight of those over the years and they were smart enough at that time, and they said to us: "You guys are going to eventually be hand-picked to supervise the young guys that come in here because we aren't going to hire you guys anymore that are uneducated" [*laughs*]. Well they didn't call us that but that's what they were saying, people were either going to come out of the technical schools or they were going to be out of the university program or something and they did it but anyway this generation that I came through, we ended up being the supervisors and the first time that they told me that I didn't believe it but it happened.[36]

As Mac mentions above, the minimum education requirements for new wardens were raised during the 1960s. By mid-decade, new recruits were required to have completed high school and by the early 1970s, many had completed college or university (Burns

[36] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

2000:252). The emphasis was no longer on practical, outdoors skill and experience. Mac Elder describes how valuable these skills were to wardens in the quote below:

> **Mac:** … they've lost that training and these young guys aren't prepared for some of this backcountry travel … and dealing with what they have to deal with. A lot of those poor guys can't even build a fire in a woodstove and you can't live there if you can't be self-sufficient, you've got to keep yourself comfortable, you've got to be warm, you've got to be dry, you've got to cook for yourself and look after yourself and you've got to be able to work and if you don't work, and you don't do things, you're bored and you're stiff and you don't like it and even in the wintertime you have to keep your mind active and you've got to do things, even if you're just cutting wood, you've got to do things, you've got to go out and look and count how many sheep are on the mountain and how many moose are in the meadow and all this kind of stuff. We did all that, at least the ones that were happy, and those kind of guys in that generation, not necessarily me but my generation, we understood poaching, we understood what trappers do, we understood what was valuable to a hunter and the guys that had credibility didn't have poachers. They said: "Well I'm not going to poach on that old guy."
>
> That's all gone by the wayside and poaching was something that got talked about but it wasn't the only part of our job. We were, there's such a thing came along as a definition was a resource inventory and a resource inventory is: what have you got? How many sheep you got? How many moose? How many bears are travelling around in the winter? What is your water conditions like? How much snow do you get? How much rain do you have? What's your fire hazard? And all this stuff was all part of your job and we had rain gauges and things and we kept ledgers around. They don't do that anymore. You know, all those places we used to have a ledger that's been there a few years and the guys that were there in the wintertime, they'd say well, at such-and-such a place there's five moose and we got this much snow and that much this and it's a dry year and whatever. You could go back and read them, all this stuff in these ledgers. How many people would travel through your district and who came here and there.[37]

[37] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

Many of the new wardens who met the increased education requirements were less experienced and prepared for life in the backcountry than the generation of wardens before them. As Monrad Kjorlein describes below, the challenging circumstances of that way of life could be difficult to adapt to:

> **Monrad:** … Here I am, I'm slugging through the snow up over my knees and then I look up in the sky there and the Canadian Forces from Cold Lake, and they're refuelling planes. Up there they used to use Mount Robson for a turning point and so you, their concern was that if you had an education and what they were paying you was, as a warden and what not, well you'd figure: "What the heck am I doing here?"[38]

Perhaps there were many wardens during this period that had this question in mind: the roles and responsibilities of members of the warden service were becoming increasingly specialized and the warden service struggled to redefine itself. In 1966, as a result a wider restructuring of the federal civil service, all federal employees were placed in occupational groups , yet wardens were responsible for a wide range of duties and it was difficult to define their role (Burns 2000:257-158). One large scale study, done in 1966 and 1968 called the Management Utilization Study Teams (MUST), aimed to improve the efficiency of the park's civil service, and a second study was commissioned in 1967 to examine the warden service and make recommendations for its future (Burns 2000:258). The second study was referred to as the Sime-Schuler Report after the study's authors. It emphasized the warden's resource management role, and recommended expansion of public relations and public safety roles, yet stressed that wardens are not a "law enforcement body" (Burns 2000:262).

Several changes to the warden service followed the recommendations of the Sime-Schuler and MUST reports, including the end of the district system. In the fall of 1969, all National Parks changed over to area systems. In Jasper, the fourteen districts became five areas: the Snake Indian, Lower Athabasca, Cavell, Sunwapta, and Jasper (town). Although the district era had officially ended, Jasper's Chief Park Warden, Mickey

[38] Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript.

McGuire was resistant to the removal of wardens from backcountry areas and wardens remained year-round in the backcountry for a few more years.[39]

After the end of the district system, wardens and family members no longer lived out year round in the district cabins. The cabins were occupied between May and October each year as the warden service continued to be redefined in reflection of the changing needs and responsibilities of the park. Wardens no longer paid rent for the use of the cabins or for the gas they used to light their lanterns, and their food was subsidized while working in the backcountry. The warden service was also unionized, and wardens began to work a 40 hour, five day week with paid overtime (Burns 2000:318).

Wardens and firearms: the end of an era?

A recent and quite drastic change to the warden service occurred in 2008, following a long dispute on whether wardens should be issued side-arms. Park wardens carried rifles in the backcountry which would assist in dealing with wildlife, but were never issued handguns which could be used in a defensive manner. Historian Robert Burns notes that while Canadian park wardens were denied handguns, park rangers in the United States have been allowed to carry open-holstered side arms since the creation of their National Parks Service in 1916 (Burns 2000:7).

An archived copy of the Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal decision made in 2002, available online, provides an in depth background to this issue, which I will briefly describe here.[40] In 2000, an occupational health and safety officer received a complaint

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[39] Chief Park Warden Mickey McGuire's role in keeping wardens year-round in the backcountry of Jasper after 1969 was pointed out by several interviewees and is mentioned in Taylor (2009:190).

[40] Randy Fingland and Jurgen Deagle vs Parks Canada Agency. Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal Canada. Decision no.: 02-009, May 23, 2002. Online document available at: http://www.ohstc.gc.ca/eng/content/html_archive/02_009.shtml (Accessed May 14, 2012). The two appellants were park wardens who made formal complaints and refused to work due to unsafe working conditions.

from a Canadian National Park Warden that he was not issued necessary defensive equipment (that is, a handgun) when doing law enforcement duties (Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal Canada 2002). The tribunal declared that the status quo was not acceptable and that wardens who participate in law enforcement duties must be issued side arms (Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal Canada 2002). In response to the tribunal's order, Parks Canada removed law enforcement as a warden's duty, and contracted the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to manage this role.

In 2007, after several appeals by Parks Canada, a final and legally binding directive was issued to Parks Canada by the Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal of Canada to provide side-arms to park wardens along with appropriate training, screening, and supervision similar to that of other federal officers who are charged with resource conservation law enforcement.[41]

Parks Canada was reluctant to train and arm all national park wardens, and responded to the directive in 2008 by reclassifying most park wardens as resource conservation and public safety personnel. A small number, 60 of the 340 wardens working across Canada in 2009, who passed the qualifying psychological and physical tests, were provided with special training in law enforcement and given government issued side-arms (Struzik 2009). The latter have retained the title of "park warden" and deal exclusively with law enforcement while the former are no longer authorized to do so, regardless of previous training or experience in this area of specialization.

In 2011 Jasper currently had about forty resource conservation/public safety specialists and six park wardens. These numbers include both seasonal and permanent staff. Only three resource conservation/public safety specialists are responsible for backcountry areas. Wardens spend 99% of their time in the frontcountry, and do not normally do

[41] Section 919, Park Canada Agency vs. Douglas Martin and Public Service Alliance of Canada. Occupational Health and Safety Tribunal Canada. Decision no.: CAO-07-015, May 8, 2007. Online document available at: http://www.ohstc.gc.ca/eng/content/pdf_archive/07_015.pdf (Accessed August 15, 2012).

boundary patrols.[42] Backcountry resource conservation/public safety staff that do resource monitoring and cabin and trail maintenance are not authorized to do law enforcement. This means that although they have the means to report any criminal activity observed in the backcountry, including violations of the National Park Act, they are unable to interfere with or respond to these activities.

The changes that occurred in 2008 coincided with preparations for the warden service's centennial celebrations, which were held in the town of Banff in Banff National Park in August 2009. In an article published in Canadian Geographic, retired park wardens described the changes as "heartbreaking," and accused Parks Canada of "ripping the heart and soul out of the service" (Struzik 2009).

Although I did not question the retired wardens and family members who I spoke to directly about the 2008 decision, the topic was on many people's minds. Also, it was not possible to mention current resource conservation/public safety staff (most of whom would have been wardens before 2008) without bringing up this issue. For many, the title of "warden" is more than just a job title: it is connected to a sense of pride and a tradition of service in the National Parks. The changes were significant and devastating to current and retired wardens. At the same time, these changes are relatively recent, and it is difficult to guess whether this is truly the "end of an era."

3.5 Warden Wives and Women Wardens

Warden Wives

Most memoirs and histories of the National Parks or warden life mention "warden wives": women who, through marriage, entered the world of the park warden service. Women were not hired as park wardens until 1973; however women who married warden became unofficial assistants in the backcountry and on the highway districts. Women participated in most aspects of warden work, and took on a great deal of responsibility at

[42] Email correspondence and interview notes, Mike Dillon, Cultural Resource Manager, Jasper National Park.

the cabin while the warden was away on patrol. Women acted as switchboard operators on the forestry phone line, sold fishing licences, responded to emergencies, fed work crews, and packed horses. However, only two women were ever paid for their work: Annie Staple was paid a salary as Chief Gate Keeper in Rocky Mountains Park, now Banff National Park, after her husband Warden Tom Staple passed away and Beatrice Bryant, wife of Jasper warden Frank Bryant, received a cheque for twenty dollars for helping her husband put out a fire on the Smokey River District in 1925 (Dixon 1985:39-41; 61-62).

There are four published memoirs written by men who were wardens in the Canadian Rockies: Frank Camp's *Roots in the Rockies* (1993), Sid Marty's *Men for the Mountains* (2008a) and *Switchbacks* (2008b) and Mike Schintz's *Close Calls on the High Walls* (2005).[43] All three of these men were married for at least part of the time that they were wardens, and their wives joined them in the backcountry, but their memoirs mainly focus on the work-life of the warden. Robert Burns' history of the warden service devotes only two pages to women wardens, near the end of the book, although he does include pieces of information on women's contributions throughout. The sole published collection of women's stories is Ann Dixon's *Silent Partners* (1985).

In the initial stages of this project, when I described my project as being about home in the backcountry, several people immediately recommended Dixon's book. Ann Dixon was a warden wife at the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch[44] and in Banff, Yoho, Riding Mountain and

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[43] Sid Marty's poetry collections and his book, *Black Grizzly of Whisky Creek* have not been included in this list. Marty's poems, especially those collected in Headwaters (1973), do reflect upon warden life but they focus on the author's personal experience and responses. Ray Fetterly's two memoirs about his experiences as a park warden in Canada's Riding Mountain National Park, and memoirs written by American park rangers have are not included here because they are not situated in the Canadian Rockies.

[44] The Ya Ha Tinda Ranch is a federally owned horse ranch in Alberta, located on the Red Deer River approximately 83 kilometers west of Sundre, Alberta. It is not located in a National Park

Elk Island National Parks. Her book tells not only her own story, but the stories of 53 women from a range of National Parks, based upon transcribed interviews by the author, letters written by women or their descendants, and archival documents. In her introduction she writes that: "My sincere wish is that these writings will bring to light the tremendous role that those women played in the National Parks of Canada" (Dixon 1985:3). The stories in Dixon's collection indeed demonstrate the commitment, strength and determination of warden wives, while providing a great deal of insight into their daily lives.

Married wardens had an advantage over single wardens in the company and assistance of their spouses. Wardens who lived alone on a district were extremely vulnerable to the stresses of isolation, and the risks of injury and death, far from any sort of assistance. At the same time, wives and children appear also to have been viewed as a "liability." Margaret Fowlie, who lived at Willow Creek and Devona warden cabins with her husband George beginning in 1927, wrote that:

> The parks … were concerned about a man having his family with him, because in those years the districts were so isolated that illness or accidents to his family and himself could be a serious thing with no way of reaching medical help. It was very distinctly put to the warden that it was his responsibility if he took his family with him (Dixon 1985:49).

In Jasper during the period under study, wardens advanced in their career by being given a highway district after a few years in the backcountry. This timing worked out to the benefit of young families, but men who had school-age children when they joined the warden service were not given special treatment by avoiding time on a backcountry district. Some wardens who had school-aged children while working on a backcountry or highway district kept a separate home in town for their families, and other children were home schooled by their mothers (Burns 2000: 153; Dixon 1985:122). Barb Barker was home schooled by her mother while their family lived at Snaring Warden Station and she describes her experience below:

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and is not itself considered a National Park. The ranch is used as a winter range and as a breeding and training facility for park horses.

> **Barb:** I had a wonderful childhood because we did correspondence and my mom was our teacher, so how hard was that? And she had tonnes of patience with us and it was awesome. And we never started our lessons until October usually when it started to get cold outside and then we were almost finished by April usually because we did two or three lessons a day when it was cold out, and then we had a huge long summer holiday and my dad took us almost everywhere because in those days he was at Snaring and his whole district was all off the highway. So we would always jump in the back of the truck and ride around … we used to go everywhere with him.[45]

One thing that was clear during my interviews and in reading the letters or transcripts contributed to Dixon's book is that these women experienced a great deal of isolation on the remote district cabins and they were certainly capable of doing, and often did, the same work as their husbands. Yet, women were not paid for their labour as "warden wives" and women were not hired as park wardens until 1973. Julie Winkler perhaps spoke for a lot of women when stated during the "Silent Partners and Women Wardens" talk that: "I could have been a damn good warden."[46]

Women's unpaid labour on the districts appears to have been taken for granted by the parks administration, who were happy to have "two for the price of one." [47] An acting superintendent in Yoho National Park recommended in 1942 that women be paid for maintaining the forestry phone line and acting as switchboard operators, but this recommendation never led to compensation (Burns 2000:175).

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[45] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

[46] This quote is from my notes, written while listening to the Heritage Fireside Chats tapes in December 2011."Silent Partners and Women Wardens," Heritage Fireside Chats, hosted by Brian Bindon, April 2, 2005.

[47] Dorothy Carleton, quotation from notes "Silent Partners and Women Wardens," Heritage Fireside Chats, hosted by Brian Bindon, April 2, 2005.

Women Wardens

Female wardens were not hired anywhere in the Canadian National Parks system until 1973 when Jen Cadieux was hired as a seasonal warden in Yoho National Park (Burns 2000:311-12). It is unclear when the first female warden was hired in Jasper. Taylor reports that Jasper's first female warden, Bette Beswick, was hired in 1978 (2009:193). However, an entry signed by "Bette Beswick, Park Warden" in the Brazeau Cabin Log book on September 30, 1976 indicates that she was a warden by 1976, if not before.[48]

There are few resources available for information on the experiences of the first generation of female park wardens. Burns' history of the warden service dedicates only two pages to women wardens, and no woman has yet published a memoir of her career in the warden service.

In the United States, a history of women in their National Parks, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, written by Polly Kaufman, was published in 1996. Kaufman's book provides insight into a very complex story: women were hired as "ranger-naturalists" in US National Parks as early as 1921. The "ranger-naturalists" were employed to do interpretive and educational work with the public and did not patrol or work in isolated places (Kaufman 1996:66). These women were pushed out of naturalist jobs by the mid-thirties as the profession was increasingly defined as men's work (Kaufman 1996:87). As Kaufman writes:

> Women who wanted to join in the adventure of living and working in the nationals parks, helping protect them and educating the public about their goals, were left with one choice…. marry a ranger. (Kaufman 1996:87)

In 1962, two women joined a ranger training session at the Albright Training Centre at the Grand Canyon and as Kaufman describes: "their reactions ranged from shock and intolerance to deciding to make the best of it" (Kaufman 1996:130). The women were subjected to hazing from the men, and although both women completed the program, one

[48] The later date that Taylor reported appears to be taken from the caption below a photograph of Ms. Beswick in Burn's history of the warden service (2000:309).

left within a year. By 1969, women were no longer restricted to "ranger-historian" or "ranger-naturalist" positions but were given the title of ranger and by 1977 women were trained in law enforcement alongside men (Kaufman 1996:131-133).

In the Canadian Park Warden service, some men were reluctant to work alongside women, as reported by retired wardens who Robert Burns spoke to while researching his history of the warden service:

> There were, it was often argued, some roles that were not suited to the female physiology…. Also suggested as a likely problem was the issue of enforced intimacy on lengthy joint patrols of wilderness areas…. One of the first women recalled being told by a Chief Park Warden in the mid-1970s that he would not hire a warden "who had to squat to pee" (Burns 2000:377n)

Burns also notes that no one could give specific examples of women being unable to do the same work as men (2000:377n). These comments suggest that women faced obstacles in the perception of their abilities, rather than in their actual capabilities they demonstrated in the field.

The best single resource on the experiences of Canada's female park wardens that I have found is a recording of a "Heritage Talk" at the Num Ti Jah Lodge in Banff, Alberta, in 2005 entitled *Silent Partners and Women Wardens*, in which a group of former warden wives of the district era, current and former women wardens and two current warden wives discussed their experiences in front of an audience.

Kathy Calvert, one of the first female wardens hired in Canada (Calvert was hired in Yoho National Park in 1974), was the moderator of the talk. Calvert was an accomplished climber, had experience with horses, and was completing her degree in biology when she was hired as a summer warden in Yoho National Park. She spent 25 years in the warden service, led the public safety program in Yoho, and also wrote *Guardians of the Peaks* (2006), a history of mountain rescue in Canada, with her husband warden Dale Portman. During the talk, she described how backcountry wardens who had lived with their wives were the most accepting of her when she joined the warden service: male wardens who

had worked alongside their wives knew from experience that women could pack a horse and could endure the hardship and isolation of backcountry life.[49]

Today, there are many female resource conservation and public safety specialists in Canada's national parks. In Yoho National Park, Sylvia Forest currently oversees the public safety and rescue program. In the "Silent Partners and Women Wardens" talk, women wardens spoke of their role in mentoring younger women who are entering the warden service. In 2011, when I travelled in the backcountry to document the warden cabins, Jasper had two backcountry resource conservation/public safety specialists, one male and one female.

Warden husbands, warden wives

Today, the spouse of a law enforcement warden or resource conservation/public safety specialist might be a man or woman or even another law enforcement warden or resource conservation/public safety specialist. During the Heritage chat, Warden Sylvia Forest described an example of a warden couple who, after having their first child, decided that the mother would return to work while the father took a leave of absence to care for the child.

Warden spouses still face challenges related to their spouse's work, whether in remote parks or in tourism-centred mountain national parks like Jasper and Banff. Finding a job in one's field, and the advancement of one's career, can be extremely difficult for spouses. As a result, one partner may be forced to sacrifice their career in support of the other: one of the women who spoke at the Heritage Chat described altering her career path and becoming a nurse so that she could find work in the town of Jasper, where her husband was a warden. Warden families still live at some highway stations in Jasper, and the non-warden spouse will still find him or her self responding to phone calls and knocks at the door, providing information and assisting in emergencies.

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[49] Paraphrased from notes. Silent Partners and Women Wardens, Heritage Fireside Chats, hosted by Brian Bindon. April 2, 2005. Num Ti Jah Lodge. Discs held by the Whyte Museum of the Rockies, Banff, AB.

3.6 Warden Cabins

The warden cabins that I have focused upon in this research are log buildings located in backcountry of Canada's National Parks. District cabins, also called stations or home cabins, are the larger, multi-room cabin used as living quarters for single wardens and wardens with families. Patrol cabins are smaller, single room cabins located approximately 15 kilometres apart, were used by the warden while patrolling his district. These two cabin types will be discussed in further detail below.

A third type of warden cabin is located in the frontcountry, along Jasper National Park's roadways: the Yellowhead Highway, Maligne Lake Road, and Highways 93 and 93A.[50] There were also cabins located near the railway line at Snaring and Devona. The highway cabins were also used as home cabins and although they were accessible by road they could be, especially in winter, isolated. The Maligne Lake Road, for example, was not paved until 1970, and the road was not cleared in the wintertime. For a warden or family living at the Maligne Lake headquarters this meant a long and lonely winter, since the hotel and concessions around the lake closed for the season in the fall. Although I did not intend to include these cabins in this study, I will discuss some of the stories and experiences of wardens and families who lived at the highway cabins in later sections.

Jasper is not the only Canadian national park with a backcountry cabin system. Banff, which adjoins Jasper to the south, has a large, historic cabin system. Backcountry cabins can also be found in several other parks including Yoho and Kootenay National Parks in British Columbia, Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan, and Kluane National Park in the Yukon Territory.

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[50] Burns refers to three categories of cabins in his history of the wardens service: Number One, a multi-room cabin large enough for a warden and family (likely these were the larger, bungalow style highway stations); Number Two, which were three room structures built as district cabins in the backcountry; and Number Three, which were the single room patrol cabins (2000:122). I am not using these categories because I find the descriptive terms more useful, and they are in accordance with the naming used by former wardens and family members.

Districts

Before Jasper National Park changed to an areas system in 1969, there were fourteen districts in the park (See figure A.1, Appendix A). Every district, with the exception of the town of Jasper, included backcountry areas but not all district cabins were located in the backcountry. Smokey River, Blue Creek, Willow Creek, Rocky River, and Brazeau district headquarter cabins, even today, may only be reached by horse or on foot.

Backcountry District Cabins

As I have mentioned in section 1.4, I am defining backcountry as areas more than two kilometres from paved or gravel roads, normally accessible by non-motorized means.

The backcountry district cabins at Brazeau, Jacques Lake, Smokey River, Blue Creek and Willow Creek are multi-room cabins which were used as home cabins for wardens. These cabins were usually divided into a single front room and one or two bedrooms at the back of the cabin.

Outside of the cabin, a large meadow provided horse grazing, and outbuilding were constructed including tack and equipment sheds and of course, a privy. A corral and hitching rail used for horses are also located near the cabin.

The district cabins were stocked with tools and equipment for the warden to use, and for which he was responsible (Burns 2000:123-124). The warden, and family members who joined him, brought only their personal effects and food supplies, along with any replacement supplies or furniture as needed. Wardens paid rent for the use of the district cabin: between five and fifteen dollars a month which included the naphtha gas they used to light their lamps.

Patrol Cabins

Patrol cabins are smaller, halfway cabins which were used by the warden while travelling in his district. Smaller patrol cabins are often called halfway cabins or shelters (such as Cairn Shelter, or Grizzly Shelter). I visited one of the smaller patrol cabins, Four Point, while travelling to Brazeau, and one larger halfway cabin at Welbourne while travelling to Blue Creek. These one-room cabins are intended for overnight use only. They

generally contain a bunk bed, a cooking stove and wood stove, a table and chairs, and a small amount of counter and cabinet space.

Figure 3.1: Four Point Patrol Cabin, August 2011. The building visible to the left is a wood shed.

Figure 3.2: Four Point Patrol Cabin, interior, August 2011. This photo was taken was near the rear of the cabin. Not visible in this photo is a bunk bed and a small kitchen table and chairs.

Figure 3.3: Welbourne Cabin, August 2011. A woodshed is visible in the background to the right of the cabin.

Figure 3.4: Welbourne Cabin, interior, August 2011. Not visible in this photo is the kitchen counter and cupboards, heating stove (directly across from the visible cooking stove), and second bed.

Wardens were responsible for maintaining and supplying these cabins with food, firewood and other supplies. This was done by horseback in the fall since the wardens could not travel as far in the winter months, when they were travelling on foot or on

snowshoes. During travel in extreme winter weather, a well-stocked and prepared cabin meant a comfortable evening. Feathersticks (dry, small, pieces of wood that are peeled, or "feathered" at the tips and used as kindling) were, and still are, prepared and left by the stove so that a fire could be quickly started.

Cabin Architecture: Materials, styles and types

The design and materials of Jasper's backcountry cabins are considered to be representative of "rustic architecture," that is, built with local materials and within an "indigenous vernacular building tradition" (Mills 1994:13). By "indigenous," Mills refers to the style of log cabin built by trappers, prospectors, railway workers and homesteaders who settled in the area prior to the creation of the national parks.

Rustic design was the favoured architectural style in Banff, Canada's first National Park, established as Rocky Mountains Park in 1885. The initial buildings constructed around the Cave and Basin Hot Springs were "undeniably rustic," using local logs and designed in a Swiss style, "drawing on European architectural images in an effort to promote tourism" (Mills1994:13). While these buildings were designed for the pleasure of tourists, rustic architecture was also both practical and economical and, as Mills describes, both became "important aspects of design policy in the national parks for the next 50 years" (1994:13).[51]

Building with local materials was of course the most sensible option in the remote regions of the national parks. The first warden cabins constructed in the national parks were built by wardens out of available materials, with windows and roofing material brought in by horse (Burns 2000:34). A standard plan for one-room shelter cabins and year-round residences in the backcountry districts was designed by Banff engineer James T. Childe in 1918 (Mills 1994:42). This design was often modified to suit the materials available or preferences of the builder. One example of a common modification that was

[51] Mills' study on rustic architecture in the national parks includes a background to, and critical analysis of, the rise of rustic design in the late 19th century in the section, "The Rustic Idea: Cabins and Castles in the Wilderness" (1994:16-23).

favoured by Jasper's cabin builders is the use of saddle notched logs, rather than the vertical corner posts in Childe's design (Mills 1994:42).

New warden cabins were built in the 1920s to1940s to replace the older, decaying cabins. A few of these original cabins remain in Jasper National Park including Hoodoo Patrol Cabin (built in 1928), Middle Forks Patrol Cabin (built in 1930), and Topaz Patrol Cabin (built in 1931).[52]

Jasper began a cabin building program in the late 1950s, replacing several cabins including Adolphus and Twintree in 1957, Blue Creek in 1960 and Brazeau in 1961. Mac Elder shared this description of packing in lumber in 1957 for building crews at Twintree and Adolphus:

> **Mac:** … we packed about 7000 feet of lumber, which was quite a lot of lumber to pack on horses and quite a distance, and then we had a couple of crews working there. First of all they had a crew that went in and cut the logs and the material and another, they moved, I moved them on to the second site and the second guys started and they put up these buildings and it was a summer operation and it was well organized and good and then by, I think, the tenth or so of October when I was finished there with that job, Mickey [*McGuire, Jasper's Chief Park Warden in 1957*] had me going to the south end of the park, to the Brazeau District and take over that district.[53]

Mac was a licensed Alberta Guide, and had guided geological survey crews and hunting outfits throughout the Canadian Rockies for over ten years before he took the position of district warden at Brazeau.

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[52] These dates are provided by the Canada's Historic Places Register. See: http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/home-accueil.aspx (Accessed July 10, 2012.)

[53] Mac Elder, interview transcript. There is a photo, contributed by Mac, of the horses carrying lumber through the Smokey River area in Susan Feddema-Leonard's *People and Peaks of Willmore Wilderness Park: 1800s to mid-1900s* (2007:325).

The new cabins built in the late 1950 and early 1960s were based on Childe's design, with some modifications, and many of the cabins were built by Art Allen.[54] Allen was considered a "master logman" and his craftsmanship can be seen in the cabins he built in Jasper National Park and elsewhere. Allen ran traplines outside of Jasper, and worked as a guide and outfitter in and outside of the park, including working on the topographical survey which established the boundary on the north side of Jasper. Allen and his crew built several of Jasper's warden cabins, including Blue Creek and Brazeau district cabins and Adolphus, Twintree Lake, Hoodoo, Welbourne patrol cabins in the north area of the park (Feddema-Leonard 2007:147).

Log cabin construction continued in Jasper after it had been phased out in other National Parks since pre-manufactured alternatives were often unavailable or unfeasible, well into the 1970s (FHBRO Benchmark Report, Brazeau Warden Patrol Cabin 2007).

Highway warden stations were not built according to the same design or with the same materials as those in the backcountry. Stations such as Sunwapta were built using pre-manufactured materials such as milled lumber rather than locally cut logs, and were based on a standard plan developed in 1938 (Mills 1994:209, Burns 2000:125). The stations are usually "L" shaped, with two or more bedrooms and a separate kitchen and often have half-cut logs on the outside logs as decorative a nod to the rustic design aesthetics found elsewhere in the park (Mills 1994: 209).

According to a map of Jasper National Park created in the 1960s, there were 14 districts in Jasper during before Jasper changed to an areas system in 1969. (See figure A.1, Appendix A). With the exception of the Jasper town district, every district warden had backcountry areas to patrol, even those on the highway districts. Five of the twelve districts had home cabins in the backcountry: Smokey River, Blue Creek, and Willow

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[54] Jacques Lake Cabin, built by Harvey Crate in 1951, is one exception as it is not based on Childe's design. According to the Heritage Character Statement for Jacques Lakes Warden Cabin, its designer is unknown.See: http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=15275 (Accessed July 10, 2012.)

Creek in the north region of the park and Brazeau and Rocky River in the southeast region of the park. Each of these backcountry districts had between four and seven patrol cabins in addition to the home cabin which needed to be maintained and supplied by the warden.[55]

[55] Brazeau District has seven cabins, including Camp Parker which is located in Banff National Park. Camp Parker was normally only used by Jasper wardens/resource conservation and visitor safety staff to access the Brazeau area. Bob Barker, who was the Brazeau warden from 1968-1972, told me that he also supplied and maintained Waterfalls Cabin, in the Sunwapta District, which brings the total to eight (Bob Barker, interview transcript).

Chapter 4: Cabins and Home Places

4.0 Cabins and home places: conceptualizing home on the districts

The previous chapters have been dedicated to providing a setting and context for understanding the history and nature of warden work, introducing Jasper National Park's history and its network of cabins and trails, and discussion of the contents and significance of cabin registers. This chapter, the central chapter of this thesis, draws upon the narratives shared with me during interviews to explore how wardens and their partners found a sense of home in the backcountry districts of Jasper.

I entered each interview with a set of questions designed to understand various aspects of daily life at the district cabins. The people who I spoke to challenged my assumptions about their experiences, and provided me with rich descriptions from the smallest daily tasks to the most unbelievable challenges, met with humour and determination. Therefore, I have quoted liberally from the transcripts, for it is not only the stories but how they are recalled by those who experienced that way of life that can best provide a glimpse into the cabins when they were home places.

This chapter begins with a discussion of my research question, including how I am defining home and a "sense of home." Following this introductory section, I have included several sections on daily life on the backcountry districts. These include a section on public and private space at the cabin, an exploration of hospitality and "gathering," and a section on food planning and preparation.

I discuss the experiences of families who had small children while residing at the district cabins in section 4.5. Following this is a discussion of the isolation and risks in living on the remote districts.

Section 4.7, which I have called, "Little (horse) Heaven" was inspired by the stories that were shared with me regarding horses. Although I did not expect horses to emerge as characters in this research, I learned during interviews that horses were an important part of backcountry life, whether entrusted to carry infants or teaching a new warden about his district. In section 4.8, the final section of this chapter, I discuss storytelling as a tradition among wardens.

Where appropriate, I discuss the experiences of single wardens and of married wardens, women and children separately. The challenges of living in the backcountry alone were very different from those of families. Women handled many daily chores and assisted the warden with his work: they were also a source of support and company on the district. Single wardens living on the districts had no one at the cabin to share their lives or their work with, especially in the long winter months when few travellers passed.

Defining home places in the backcountry of Jasper National Park

> *Arrived here today after a very tiring trip from Parker Ridge …. My first sight of Brazeau Cabin was a happy one, marking as it did, the end of a long trail, and the beginning of my sojourn in the Brazeau District, as the wife of the warden. It is a beautiful spot, visited constantly by elk and deer, with sheep grazing on the slopes behind.*
>
> -September 7, 1959 entry by arriving "warden wife," Brazeau Cabin Book 1953-1977

Brazeau Cabin, as noted in the above register entry, is located in a lovely, idyllic spot near the Brazeau River. An open meadow welcomes the traveller who enters the cabin yard, along with impressive views of Chocolate Mountain, behind the current Brazeau Cabin, and the Longview ranges to the east.

Despite its beauty, and the relative comforts and amenities the cabin provides, the cabin itself is not necessarily a home-place: its homeliness cannot be presumed. During the time period that I am concerned with, the district cabins were lived in by individual wardens or warden families for no more than four years. Wardens paid rent (which included the naphtha gas packed in and used in lanterns) each month for the use of the cabin, and none of the families who I spoke to kept a separate home in town. Not only were the cabins temporary residences, they are owned by the park and bound by its regulations, and they were always symbolic representations of the parks service rather than private spaces.

In addition, the inhabitants had to deal with the potentially overwhelming stresses of isolation. Although most of the cabins were connected to the main Jasper switchboard

through the forestry phone line, cabin inhabitants had little contact with friends, family, or even strangers.[56] Although there is certainly a camaraderie, and community among park wardens, it was not often in person. Mail, including magazines and personal letters from friends and family, was picked up in town once a month, when the warden submitted his monthly report, and those with access to an AM radio were treated to entertainment and news.

It is tempting to assume that home life on the backcountry districts was similar to that of other places in rural Canada. In certain ways it was: firewood needed to be chopped for cooking and heat, water gathered from wells or from streams, bread baked at home almost daily, and residents had a largely independent way of life. The men and women who had grown up in rural areas had a distinct advantage in adapting to life on the districts because they had experience with these things. However, when I posed this question to Cathy Elder, who resided at Maligne Lake with her family in the 1960s, she replied:

> **Cathy:** We were isolated. In a rural area you are out there on the highway and you have neighbours and you can go see people and rural areas have lots of things going on and you're always either visiting with people or [*going to*] dances.[57]

One significant difference, hinted at in the above quote, is that regardless of whether one *wanted* to go to dances or visit with neighbours, the *choice* was there. In the backcountry districts, opportunities like these were rare. As I have mentioned, wardens returned to town every month to hand in a monthly report. This was also an opportunity to visit with friends and other wardens and families in town. Women often stayed at the home cabin when there were small children to take care of, since travelling was much more difficult

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[56] The forestry phone line was the single line telephone system that connected most of the cabins in Jasper National Park to a central switchboard in the town of Jasper. It was called a forestry line because it was usually strung across trees, not, as the name implies, because it was in any way associated with forestry projects in or outside of the park.

[57] Cathy Elder, interview transcript.

with the child. Their sense of confinement, and isolation, at the home cabin without other company would naturally be greater than their partner, who would be busy patrolling the district and had the opportunity to go to town once a month.

Not everyone who experienced living at the district cabins was happy or comfortable there. The voices that are missing from this research are those who lived only a few months in the backcountry and moved on to a different career. Although I read through several archived cabin registers, I found no entries written by a warden or warden wife who stated or hinted that they were leaving the parks service forever when they left their cabin. Occasionally there is a note of arrival from a new warden or warden family, but the warden is abruptly replaced after one season. Since the circumstances of their departure are not recorded in any of the sources I consulted, their stories remain hidden.

The individuals that I spoke to overwhelmingly described the cabins as home, and remember them fondly. As I have suggested above, those who resided at the cabins lived there only temporarily, had little control over places owned by the government, and experienced a great deal of isolation. In the next five sections I will explore the stories and personal histories that were shared with me regarding their former backcountry homes.

Defining a sense of home: place-making

What does it mean to be at home? Heidegger's essay on dwelling provides one framework for understanding a sense of home, as he explains, to dwell is to be at peace, to be free, and to be safe (1971:149). Further to this, he suggests that a building, such as a cabin, is a location as a built thing, a location which creates space by its presence, and by its nature, gathers to itself (Heidegger 1971:152-153). The cabin, the yard, the trails, the district are all part of this relationship; the cabin is the residence but it is though engagement and connection with the backcountry as a whole, through maintenance and care of the cabin and trails, that a sense of being at home is experienced.

In the article "Open Spaces and Dwelling Places" (1999), John Grey discusses how, for shepherds on the borders of Scotland, being at home on the hills involves personal knowledge of the hills and sheep under their care (1999:449-452). Dwelling is realized by "going around the hill" in the daily routine of herding. This article provides an excellent parallel to the work-lives of wardens. Like the shepherds, wardens are engaged

in an occupation that strongly tied to identity and a "way of life." Like the shepherd in moving through the hirsel,[58] the warden moves through his district during monthly patrols, while maintaining the trail or forestry phone line or stocking patrol cabins for the winter months. Intimate knowledge of the land is gained through movement and essential to a sense of home in both examples.

For women, the warden wives who joined their husbands in the backcountry, their sense of home and connection to these places was not necessarily reduced due to their relative lack of movement through the district. While those women who were caring for small children were more likely to stay near the home cabin than travel out on patrol with their husbands, they also were engaged with the cabin and their environment in everyday life. Women did not just stand by and tend the children. They actively participated in many of the warden's duties, from wildlife counts to maintenance and repair.

4.1 The Warden Cabin as a Home-Place

In this section I discuss some aspects of daily life at the district cabins as described by those who I interviewed in 2011. Daily life for wardens and family members in the backcountry varied widely with the season, as I will discuss further below. As a way of introduction, I would like to begin with the following quote from Barb Barker:

> **Barb:** … there's a lot to do when you are in the backcountry and you have to split your own wood, and you have a wood heater and a wood stove, so you cook on the woodstove and the wood heater is to heat the cabin so during the summer you don't need that on too much, but splitting wood and carrying that all in, that's huge work. And then you use coal oil lamps so those all have to be filled and pumped up and ready so when it gets dark and because you don't want to use up fuel beforehand you always wait till it's just turning dusk.
>
> So, because all this has to be packed in by horseback, all the fuel and everything, you are a very conservative person when you live in the backcountry. Then you have to make your own bread and wash your

[58] Hirsel is a local name for these hills, "referring simultaneously to one shepherd's sheep and the area of hills they graze" (Grey 1999:447).

> own, you heat the water to wash your dishes and it's ongoing, so there's not really that much time of day that you have to sit around and read, it would be nice to, but then there's all the interesting things you can watch, you know, hike around the cabin and look at. Like, I am very interested in wild flowers so I could spend hours meandering in different areas looking at flowers and, maybe because I was raised in the backcountry, to me it's very natural to be outside and to be doing these kinds of things and now I am a gardener because I just have to have an excuse to be outside and digging around in the dirt.[59]

Barb emphasises the degree of forethought and the amount of time involved in the daily household activities such as cooking, cleaning, and keeping the cabin warm and lit. The activities she mentions had to be completed every day, and this is of course not a complete list. Other activities around the home cabin include gathering water, laundry (done by hand), and cabin maintenance and repair. Single wardens managed these daily tasks in addition to their work, while married wardens had the assistance of their spouses.

Warden's work changed with the seasons. Fall meant patrolling the park boundaries of the district and packing and supplying food, firewood and supplies to patrol cabins for the winter months. In winter, travel was done on foot and so patrolling the district took more time. Some wardens used snow machines to bring in supplies or to help with carrying family members. A lot of work was done in the summer: patrolling, maintaining the district trails, bridges, and cabins. Work crews were sometimes sent out to assist the warden with larger projects. Year round, wardens were involved in wildlife counts, phone line repair and maintenance, public safety/public relations and law enforcement.[60] They received three weeks each year as vacation time, but otherwise worked a six day week, and were on call if there was an emergency. Wardens were also not permitted to leave their district without permission of the Chief Park Warden.

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[59] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

[60] Bob Barker described the seasonal work done by district wardens during our follow up interview. These details are taken from my interview notes.

When I asked former wardens and family members whether the backcountry cabins felt like homes, many pointed out that they did not have another home in town or elsewhere. In addition, wardens were charged rent by the park for the use of the cabins and for the gas they packed in to light their lanterns:

> **Julie:** … when we made that first trip he carried me across the threshold of Brazeau Cabin, I remember that [*all laugh*]
>
> **Max:** Because it was our first home [*all laugh*]
>
> **Julie:** Other than that, yes, we were renting places although we rented the cabin. We had to pay rent for the place you know [*Julie and Nicole laugh*] fifteen dollars a month and utilities which, the utilities were the fuel that you used
>
> **Max:** **[** the naphtha
>
> **Julie:** **[** for your Coleman lantern
>
> **Max:** That kind of cheesed us off, the backcountry wardens I mean, if we had had nothing else to complain about we could complain about the fifteen dollar rent [*all laugh*]
>
> **Julie:** Well, fifteen dollars then was worth more than it is now[61]

Former warden Al Stendie also pointed out that, in a sense, paying rent contributed to a feeling of home at the cabins:

> **Al:** … they all became home and they became home more when I realized that I was paying twenty-five dollars a month [*Nicole laughs*] to be in them. They definitely were your home [62]

The act of paying rent for the use of the cabins contributed to a sense of ownership and guardianship over them. Gord and Sharon Anderson shared one story with me of a couple they met near their home cabin at Jacques Lake. The Andersons invited the couple in to the cabin for coffee and during their conversation the travellers complained that the

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[61] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[62] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

cabins should be made available to the public. At first, the Anderson's had trouble convincing the couple that the cabins were in fact warden's homes. Only when they explained that they paid rent for their use, and paid for the food and other supplies inside, did the couple finally accept that these were homes, rather than places that the public was entitled to use (Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript). Wardens were no longer charged rent after the end of the district system, when they lived only seasonally on the districts, and their food was paid for by the park.[63]

Home-making: furniture and personal items

The warden cabin was outfitted with basic household items when a new warden or family arrived, including a wood stove for heat, a wood stove for cooking, a table and chairs, beds, tools, and cooking utensils.[64] The beds were notoriously uncomfortable. As Monrad Kjorlien describes below, many were simple rope beds:

> **Monrad:** … I packed bunk beds in on the horse that first summer and so I had bunk beds at Adolphus and at Twintree Lake and otherwise what was in there before I did that was that they had rope beds. We had a bed frame on logs and then they had generally drilled holes and strung rope through it and kind of had this rope so it was kind of saggy and you had a mattress on it and then you could, I think most of them packed a sleeping bag with them although there was blankets, wool blankets there. You'd have a wire across the cabin that you'd hang your blankets and everything on to try and keep the mice out of them and what not. I don't know if it was successful it really was, if you had mice in there well the little buggers, they can walk on wire[65]

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[63] After the end of the district system some backcountry wardens posted between May and October brought their families with them but Parks Canada only provided food supplies for the warden.

[64] This is not a complete list. Burns includes a list of items stocked at one warden district in Waterton Lakes National Park (2000:124). Warden cabins in Jasper National Park were probably stocked similarly.

[65] Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript.

Max and Julie Winkler invented a way to deal with the saggy bed when they lived at Brazeau:

> **Max:** … we had the nine months of food which we had to pack in and we had a shortage of room … we put all the food underneath the bed and then it was quite good sleeping there [*all laugh*] I mean you had flour and all these kinds of things, sugar. But as you ate your way down off it sagged again [*all laugh*][66]

One of the questions I asked wardens and family members was: did you bring in anything to make life more comfortable? And, did you make anything when you were living there to suit the cabin to your needs? I was interested in how the people who lived there changed their surroundings to suit their needs. A few mentioned bringing in beds to replace those that were falling apart or were naturally unbearably saggy. As Barb Barker explained, bringing any additional items required careful consideration since everything would be brought in by pack horse:

> **Barb:** I used to take a lot of hardcover books, well they ended up being soft cover when I got there because I was horrified to see him ripping the covers off my books as he put them in the pack-boxes. But then I learned: everything, you took the cardboard off everything. There's no extra weight. And it's very interesting how much you can learn to put in a pack-box.[67]

Al Stendie, who was not married when he was district warden at Blue Creek, mentioned packing in a guitar:

> **Al Stendie:** …. I was three years on Blue Creek cabin and unlike Bob [*Barker*], I was footloose and fancy free so I didn't have to carry cats or anything like that. I did carry my guitar along with me and it used to come loose at the top pack and the horses would run away with it [68]

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[66] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[67] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

[68] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

Due to the difficulty of bringing things in, and because no amount of forethought can prepare an individual for every circumstance, many items in and around the cabins were created on the spot, from local materials. It is likely that every warden and warden wife who spent time on the districts created objects out of scraps, such as tin cans, reclaimed or foraged wood, old fire hose or haywire, to use at the cabin.

Max Winkler described, during the interview which I viewed as part of their Brazeau film, how objects created by wardens and by warden wives, became part of the cabin: one warden built it, the next painted it, and soon the item became permanent.[69] Max and Julie created a large amount of furniture and other household items, as Max describes below:

> **Max:** … the headquarters quite often they had a touch of a woman and there would be curtains and things and just little gadgets and everybody, well Julie would have made all kinds of little things and like you see here [*indicating photograph*] we made a fair bit of furniture and that stays there and that was handy to have and this [*indicating photograph from personal collection*] was a place for the toilet articles like the toothbrush, the toothpaste and various things. This here [*indicating photograph*] I had made a slop bucket would go in here and made a little
>
> **Julie:** [a funnel
>
> **Max:** [a funnel where you could actually put your washbasin in there and then wash and then just tip it over and the water goes into the slop bucket and this [*indicating photograph from personal collection*] was for firewood. I had, well I made the table here and I had a piece of plywood for the [tabletop] but the rest of it was all made by going out in the bush and cutting a tree down and squaring it off with an axe and planing it down and it was [built], these were challenges because neither one of us, we were not carpenters before but we learned a lot and we never were bored. We are still not bored [*laughs*].[70]

[69] Paraphrased from notes. Max and Julie Winkler, Brazeau Interview.

[70] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

Julie is an accomplished wood carver and she explains that she began her carving career at Brazeau cabin when she had to make a new soother for her son Terry, after the one that was packed was broken.[71] Later, she sold carvings that she made at Brazeau and Jacques Lake cabins. These were packed out by Max when he returned to town to hand in his monthly report and sold at a gift store in Jasper. She also carved signs for each of the cabins in Brazeau district, each with the name of the cabin and an image of an animal. Julie's signs still hang above the porches of cabins in the Brazeau District. Bob Barker mentioned that during a trip around the South Boundary that he did after retirement, he re-burned in the letters on the signs.

Flag stones and fences

> *We finished our fence, complete with 2 gates and it is a pleasure to have that boy contained.*
>
> - from Julie Winkler's Backcountry Journal

The picket fence that was built around the new Brazeau Cabin in 1961 was part of the builder's design, and it added to the homey charm of the new cabin. It also had the benefit of enclosing the Winkler's one-year-old son, Terry, in the yard. Jacques Lake Cabin, which the Winkler's moved to in 1962, also had a picket fence out front. Julie laid flagstones near the cabins, "to prevent [*Terry*] from making soupy puddles in the black mud there" (Winkler 1960:113).

Details such as the fence outside of the cabin were appreciated by families that followed. When I asked Gord Anderson whether the cabins felt like homes, he brought up the division of spaces and the fence around the cabin as contributing to a sense of home:

> **Nicole:** Did the cabins feel like homes to you?
>
> **Gord:** Oh for sure, yeah, Jacques Lake certainly did and Beaver did become home, I guess wherever we started feeling like it was home. But Jacques Lake we really did settle in there, we really felt comfortable. And it's not the same now as what it was then. There was a two room

[71] From notes. Silent Partners and Women Wardens, Heritage Fireside Chats. April 2, 2005.

> thing at the time; they had a divider at the back side of the cabin and a little bunk that a warden a couple of years prior to us had built. They had been there with three kids so … the warden that was there and he built bunks so all the kids could have a place to sleep and then there was a double bed there. And a little curtain to divide the cabin up and that sort of gave it a feeling of hominess, you know, sometime in the seventies they tore that thing up out of there and I think they put a new floor in and when we were there, there was little picketed railings around the porch and a little gate.[72]

The bunk beds, cabin divider and fence around the porch added to a sense of hominess at the cabin. Notably, although the picket fence at Brazeau was replaced with its current log fence by Bob Barker when he was the warden there between 1968 and 1972, there is no longer a fence or even flagstones around the porch at Jacques Lake.

4.2 Public and Private Space at the Cabin

> *"Is this a bedroom or an office?"*
>
> - a visiting assistant chief park warden to Mike Schintz, Brazeau District Warden (Schintz 2005:120)

The above comment, made in respect to a calendar Warden Schintz had on his wall at Brazeau District Cabin, is illustrative of the thin division between public and private life at the district cabins. The old Brazeau Cabin where Warden Schintz resided did not have a dividing wall, however even in the replacement cabin the bedroom was divided from, but literally steps away from the "office": the front area of the cabin where the kitchen table, counters, cook stove and wood stove were located.

Being a warden has been described by many former wardens as a "way of life," a phrase that demonstrates how little division there was between personal and private worlds. Wardens could be called upon on at any time in an emergency, such as a rescue or fire. During the district era wardens worked a 28 day month, with one day off per week.[73]

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[72] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript.

[73] Wardens did not receive overtime pay, but, were given time off in lieu (Burns 2000, 257).

They were given three weeks off per year for vacation, but wardens spent most of their time living and working in the backcountry.

At home, the cabin represented the control and management of the park by the parks service, and the warden, in uniform, was a symbol of that authority. Did the warden ever stop being a warden at the end of the day? On a personal level, it is hard to say. However, one warden diary entry from 1967 is illustrative: under "Summary of Days Activities" the warden wrote, "Day off. Made a rescue on Parker Ridge with a Ski Doo."[74] Likewise, Burns reports that Banff warden Bill Peyto noted in his personnel record that he worked an average of 19 hours per day, every day (2000:169).

The thin division between work and home is apparent in the multi-room district cabin. Most district headquarter cabins had dividing walls, providing a small amount of private space in the bedroom area. Gord Anderson, in the quote at the end of section 4.1, mentioned that the divider gave the cabin a homey feel and that it was later removed when the cabin floor was replaced in the 1970s. The removal of the dividing wall reflected the changing status of the cabins from year-round homes, to seasonal living quarters. Without wardens and families inhabiting these spaces year-round, the private space allowed by a dividing wall was no longer needed.[75]

In 2010, Brazeau Cabin was renovated: the floor was replaced, and in order to finish the floor, the dividing wall was removed. The dividing wall was not immediately replaced because there was not enough wood left after completing the floor. The new "open design" was welcomed by some park staff: it was not only brighter but also warmer because the heat from the wood stove in the front area was not blocked from the sleeping

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[74] May 22, 1967. Warden Diaries. Jasper National Park, Parks Collection. Held by the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Accession no. 994.22.02.19d.

[75] On the flip side, May Tocher, who lived at Deer Lodge Cabin in Banff National Park in the early 1920's, mentions her husbands efforts to renovate the cabin prior to her arrival there, including adding a partition to the one-room cabin to make a bedroom (Dixon 1985:57).

area by the dividing wall. Brazeau Cabin, however, is a Recognized Federal Heritage Building and the dividing wall is considered one of its key features:

> Though a simple building type, the cabin exhibits a good understanding of the warden's families though its multi-room interior consisting of kitchen/dining area, two bedrooms and a root cellar.[76]

The dividing wall was replaced, to the disappointment of those who preferred the temporary open design. In somewhat of a compromise, the walls were lowered to allow more light to enter and better heat circulation, and the current doorways are larger than the previous ones. The desired adaptation of this space is symbolic: they are no longer homes, and private space is no longer as important. These are working cabins, still used by current park staff while in the backcountry yet their protection as historic places prevents them from changing to suit the needs of the current users.

4.3 Hospitality and "gathering"

> *We have received wonderful hospitality from warden Barker and hope that the tradition of his individual consideration will survive as more people enter the beautiful park under his care.*
>
> - June 12, 1970 hiker entry, Brazeau Cabin Log Book[77]

> *Think that some of the best times so far is visiting the people in the cabins along the way. Ain't no hospitality like back country hospitality. Thank you …*
>
> - September 17, 1971 hiker entry, Blue Creek Cabin Book[78]

Cabins registers record the many thanks of travellers who experienced the "backcountry hospitality" of the warden and family. I made note of this phrase when I first read

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[76] Parks Canada 2007. Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) Heritage Character Statement, Brazeau Warden Cabin, Jasper National Park, Alberta.

[77] Brazeau Cabin Book 1953-1977.

[78] Blue Creek Cabin Book 1959-1974.

through cabin registers at the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives and I wondered what the writers, who ranged from work crew members and wardens to hikers, meant by it. I asked a few of the former wardens and warden wives what backcountry, or mountain, hospitality meant to them and Barb Barker gave this illustrative answer:

> **Barb:** … in the backcountry of course you never know when people are coming or what hour to expect them. You never know what kind of conditions they are going to face, how late they got away, you know, what kind of weather conditions they are going to have …. one time I hadn't seen the fellow who worked for the government as a carpenter for years and years and years but he'd come out to our place at Snaring when I was a young girl and I had been re-introduced to him and I wanted him to remember me but I didn't think he would probably recall my name so I said: "I don't know if you remember my mom and dad, Norm and Jean Young, they lived at Snaring?" he goes: "Ah, your mother, she made the best doughnuts!" [*both laugh*]. So I guess that's mountain hospitality, if they came to work out there they would get fresh pastries and coffee always.[79]

By mountain hospitality, then, I believe that the entries in the log books reflect the welcoming presence of the warden (and family, when present), who shared tea or coffee, and also sometimes fed, dried out or patched up hikers at the cabin. Al Stendie provided this description:

> **Al:** … it's kind of western hospitality, it's not just mountain. I mean, where Bob [*Barker*] comes from, and same in Saskatchewan, if somebody came by your place they either ate or at least had coffee and you visited and you had the time to do that.[80]

In Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," he describes how a built thing (in his example, a bridge) "gathers to itself"; the cabin is a location and the space it allows "contains many places variously near or far" from it. (1971:153-155).

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[79] Barb Barker, interview transcript. Snaring Cabin is located on the Celestine Fire Road in Jasper, and was the headquarters cabin of the Palisades District (See figure A.1, Appendix A.)

[80] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

The cabin, whether meaningful as a destination, a rest stop, or distance marker, connects all travellers in the backcountry; it is itself a location that creates a space where these connections can happen. The hiker in the below entry is connecting his personal experience to future readers and simultaneously considering the experiences of the past writers:

> I was sitting here reading the book & being entertained by your lovely horseflys [sic] & mosquitoes … when the mountain across the stream started to have all of these lovely rock slides (August 20, 1973, Blue Creek Cabin Book 1959-1974)

This particular writer, judging by his entry, is alone on the doorstep but in the company of the hikers, wardens, horse outfits and trail crews that have passed, and will pass by.

Today, Blue Creek cabin is rarely occupied and is not open to travellers, yet the porch here and at other cabins still "gather." The outside registers which I viewed on location in 2011 were full of entries describing time spent on the porch and in the yard. In my casual conversations with current park staff, they mentioned often finding people lingering there when they arrive, even camping under the porch roof. The porch offers shelter and often the best view in the vicinity, thanks to the large meadows in which the cabin stands, which expose the mountain ranges. Unfortunately, unoccupied cabins will sometimes attract a different kind of attention. Trespassers, those who break into the cabin with various personal justifications, are notorious for not doing their dishes and eating cookies that don't belong to them.

4.4 Berries, Fresh Fish and Prem: backcountry meals

Robert Burns writes that: "life in a district for a warden and his family, in comparison with circumstances in much of rural Canada at this time, offered few hardships not common elsewhere" (2000:185). However, those living in remote areas of the park had far less access to fresh food than those living in cities or in rural areas. In a rural area a family might keep chickens for fresh eggs and meat, perhaps milking cows, and a ready supply of winter vegetables stored in a root cellar.

In Burns' history of the warden service, he notes that warden families at stations in Riding Mountain National Park, established in 1929 in the province of Manitoba, kept gardens, chickens and even milk cows (2000:228). To my knowledge no families in the

backcountry of Jasper kept gardens or animals, other than companion animals such as dogs and cats. Dixon's collection of women's contains no descriptions of gardens in Jasper, although in one story by Ellen Giddie, who was stationed in Waterton National Park, Giddie wrote that "we tried to keeping chickens but they would wander off or were killed by mink or skunk and the eggs eaten" (Dixon 1985:74). Catriona Sandilands reports that gardens were "grown and officially tolerated" in the Rocky Mountain parks, as long as the work of tending the garden and animals was done by the warden wife or on the warden's own time (2005:162n). In one instance, a warden at Waterton who reported planting a garden in his warden diary under "maintenance" had the time charged against his annual leave (Hart 2010:198-199).

A quick glance at two winter supply lists for families living in the backcountry in 1961 and 1958 reveals that most of their supplies were dried or canned. Supplies for winter were brought in to the home cabin by a team of packhorses with the help of government packers. The warden would then travel out alone (although some wardens would travel with their wives) and supply each of his patrol cabins with adequate food supplies for the winter months. I viewed one winter grocery list, for "9 horseless months" of food supplies, in Julie Winkler's Backcountry Journal (See Appendix C) and a second by Shirley and Toni Klettl, published in the Elder Skinny, a small local magazine published in the town of Jasper.[81] Evaporated milk, canned vegetables, hardy vegetables such as potatoes and carrots, dried or canned fruit, canned meats, flour and baking supplies, spices, oil, coffee and tea appear to have been staples. Toiletries and cleaning supplies for the winter were also brought in by packhorse in the fall including soap, foil and wax paper, toilet paper and laundry detergent.

Groceries would, of course, vary between families based on personal preferences. Max and Julie Winkler's 1961 grocery list included "6 boxes dried eggs," but Barb Barker told me that she and Bob brought in fresh eggs when they were at Brazeau:

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[81] Winkler (2006:114). The Elder Skinny, February 2011, Issue 4. http://www.jaspercommunityteam.ca/img/elderskinny/pdf/SeniorSkinny4small.pdf (Accessed June 30, 2011).

> **Barb:** …. Bob used to have a box that he made just out of plywood and it would hold, I think it was ten dozen eggs … and they all fit in there perfectly with those little cardboard holders and he always top-packed it on top of the two pack boxes, and put a tarp over it. I don't think we ever lost an egg.[82]

The eggs were kept cool in the cabin root cellar, a small room dug into the earth below the cabin floor. The cellar was covered by a trap door in the floor of the front main room.

A great deal of planning was required to prepare a winter grocery list and the wardens were responsible for the entire cost of purchasing food supplies. Six to nine months of food needed to be purchased in the fall, costing approximately six to eight hundred dollars, depending on the size of the family, in 1959.[83]

In 1959, Warden Toni Klettl returned to his home cabin at Blue Creek (after taking a day's leave to visit his wife and newborn twins) to find that a bear had broken into the cabin and eaten or destroyed most of the winter food supplies. The lost food was worth $800 and the Klettl family was not compensated by the park for the loss of their supplies.[84] As Loni Klettl, Toni and Shirley's daughter, described: "in those days they had to pay for it all themselves, so Dad worked basically a whole winter for nothing because the bear ate all their food for the winter" (Loni Klettl, transcript). Toni's annual

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[82] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

[83] To provide a context for these amounts, I used a Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration web site. According to this calculator, $600.00 in 1959 dollars is equal to approximately $3894.6 in 2004, and $800 in 1959 is equal to approximately $5192.80 in 2004 (see http://cost.jsc.nasa.gov/inflateCPI.html). This calculator does not adjust amounts to 2012 dollars, so I have shown amounts in the latest calendar year available.

[84] Covey, Bob, "Jasper Pioneer Comes Full Circle" February 2011, Issue 4 Elder Skinny (see: http://www.jaspercommunityteam.ca/img/elderskinny/pdf/SeniorSkinny4small.pdf (Accessed June 30, 2011). After the end of the district system, wardens who worked in the backcountry no longer paid for their own food while in the backcountry. In the 1970s, helicopters also began to be used for bringing in supplies.

salary was $3505.95 in 1957.[85] Assuming that he was received the same or slightly higher salary in 1959, the Klettl family would have had a very difficult year after approximately 45 percent Toni's income was spent on winter groceries.

Spam and Prem

Canned meats and dried foods made up a large portion of the diets of wardens and family members and, as Sharon Anderson describes below, fresh food was dearly missed:

> **Sharon:** I can remember after, just prior to us coming out, you know when we'd be at Rocky, that I think I would have given … my right arm maybe for something fresh, like a fresh tomato or some fresh greens because by that time you were living on canned food[86]

Fresh food and other treats, such as chocolates, were sometimes brought back with the warden on his monthly trip to town. For one special Christmas, Julie Winkler prepared fresh baked cookies and Max travelled 120 miles in eight days, on snowshoes, to bring in mail and parcels for the holiday, along with a fresh duck which was roasted for dinner with cranberries, potato salad, carrots and turnip.[87] Their son, Terry, received presents which were hand carved at the cabin, including a pull-along horse that "clicked" as it was pulled and a rocking horse (Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript).

The lack of fresh food on the district resulted in big cravings for items like ice cream and fresh vegetables which were available in town:

> **Max:** …. we [*the other wardens and I*] would, at the month end turn in our month-end report and we would meet in town and then quite often we would go out together to a restaurant, you know. People would look

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[85] Toni's Years with the Warden Service – JNP. Written by Shirtley Klettl. Klettl Family Fonds. Held by the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Accession number 990.05.06.

[86] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript.

[87] Julie Winkler, Backcountry Journal (2006:79). Staying at the cabin for Christmas was unusual: the Winklers and other families with whom I spoke usually travelled out of the district for Christmas.

at you, well gee, they are ordering a salad, they are ordering a milkshake, a banana split [*all laugh*].[88]

A few fresh items were available to wardens and family members: bread and other baking done by the warden or warden wife. Julie mentioned fresh baking and its connection to making a home in this passage:

Julie: The warden's cabin as home. I think the warden's cabin was more home when there is a woman in it. I don't think that a single man feels that much more warmth in the home cabin, that's his headquarters, but Max used to say that he could smell the bread cooking, you know, a long ways away because I would try to make bread on the day that he was coming home. And that's [what] the real estate people say: the best way to sell a house is to have the woman make bread that day. There is something homey about that. And cookies, and fudge, and cakes that a man wouldn't make for himself. And if you have a child, it's just that much more that you do. You do things that are homey.

Max: I can't say a man wouldn't do it, I mean I made bread, not very often because you had made it … you know what you do if that you crave sweets and you crave fresh salads and things like this

Julie: [and vegetables, yeah

Max: [and [*Rocky River District Warden*] Terry was, I mean he made cakes and so on and one time, I guess he had been on the district a little bit longer by that time … when Nestle Quik came out with different flavours than just chocolate and there's banana and strawberry and various things, I don't know if they still have it but he was raving about how near one of his cabins was a spring that was just the most beautiful water it was quite a heavy spring, you know he said: "Oh you take that water, it was ice cold, and you put that Nestle Quik in there and it's just like a milkshake," and so yeah, we had numerous milkshakes [*all laugh*].[89]

[88] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[89] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

Max and Julie both make valid points here. Julie stresses the sense of coming home to a place where bread is being made, a welcoming homey scent. However, as Max points out, single men also made bread and other fresh baking for themselves while living on the district, as Monrad Kjorlien discusses below:

> **Monrad:** In the three main cabins, Adolphus, Smokey and Twintree Lake I had a stove with an oven so I could bake bread and I so I baked bread in those main cabins and then I'd pack this bread with me to these shelters when I was going there or if I was going up in a side valley and camping out.[90]

Fish

Wardens and family members also made use of local food, including fish available in streams and lakes in the district. Fishing has always been legal in the park and trout was stocked by wardens in Jasper's lakes from the 1920s to the early 1970s (Taylor 2009:141). In the backcountry, fresh fish offered a welcome respite from canned or dried meat. Al Stendie, when describing Topaz Patrol cabin, mentioned the availability of fresh fish as something he looked forward to:

> **Al:** … one thing that I always liked about Topaz [*patrol cabin*] was if you were out of meat and you wanted fresh fish for supper there is a little, two little branches of a creek came out right in front of the cabin and if you were where the branches of the creek went together you could go down there and get yourself two pan-fries out of there, anytime you ever wanted to.[91]

Berries

> The wild strawberries somebody planted out back are sure excellent!
>
> - September 3, 1974 warden entry, Blue Creek Cabin Book 1959-1974

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[90] Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript.

[91] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

I found the Blue Creek strawberries described in the above register entry when I travelled to the cabin in August 2011. There are no entries mentioning the strawberries before 1974, and I cannot say whether these strawberries were cultivated to grow near the cabin, or grew there naturally.

Officially, collecting berries is illegal inside any of Canada's National Parks. In practice it is very likely that many wardens and family members used local sources of fresh berries when they were available. Julie Winkler, in her Backcountry Journal, described making a few jars of jam from fresh gooseberries collected near the home cabin at Brazeau (Winkler 2006:9).

Wild Meat

Hunting is illegal inside Jasper National Park, and one of the main duties of the warden was to monitor hunting activities near the boundaries and prevent poaching. Unofficially, wardens were allowed to harvest one game animal (usually elk or moose, depending on availability) each year to provide fresh meat for themselves and their family. According to Burns, this "shadowy tradition, which quietly continued for several decades" began in 1941 upon the recommendation of Dr. C.H.D Clark of the Wildlife Protection Branch (2000:185).

I did not ask any of the former wardens and family members I spoke to whether they ever harvested an animal when they lived in the backcountry. This question was posed to women who participated in the Heritage Fireside Chat, "Silent Partners and Women Wardens," and Dorothy Carleton, former warden wife at Stony Creek Cabin in Banff National Park, recalled her husband hunting one elk each year, which Dorothy processed and canned. Julie Winkler, who also participated in the event, recalled that she and Max

were unaware of the policy and so Max acquired provincial hunting licence so that they could take an animal from across the park boundary while residing at Brazeau.[92]

4.5 Children in the backcountry

> *[O]ur oldest daughter was born in Jasper but we took her back into the backcountry at six weeks old. People thought we were crazy but, about the only animals that we were afraid of were the two-legged kind. The rest of them, we respected the wildlife and they more or less respected us.*[93]
>
> - Bob Barker, interview transcript

Wardens were posted to backcountry districts early in their career: receiving a district indicated a promotion from an assistant or seasonal warden position to a full time job in the warden service. After a few years on a backcountry district, the warden was promoted to a highway district. As I will discuss in the following paragraphs, young couples with small children met special challenges in their years on the backcountry districts. Travel was more difficult with a small child, and women were often more confined to the space of the cabin than the warden, who was often away on patrol and travelled to town each month to turn in his work diary. Parents brought in toys, or created them for the children, who spent those years far away from potential playmates. The families who I interviewed all left the backcountry districts before their children were old enough to remember very much about life there. Therefore, I have included some discussion on the experiences of children at the highway stations, including a project by the one warden's son which aims to visit and photograph all the warden cabins in the Rocky Mountain National Parks.

Travelling with children

[92] Jasper National Park's borders mainly follow the ridges of the mountains, however the boundary between Jasper National Park and Alberta near Brazeau Cabin lies along the Brazeau River.

[93] Bob Barker, interview transcript.

A sketch by Peggy Dixon which appears in Ann Dixon's "Silent Partners" shows a pack horse walking with a baby buggy packed on top (1985:96).[94] The baby buggy perhaps most potently symbolizes the arrival of the family to these spaces.

Parents were quite inventive in creating packing systems to travel with small children to and from the home cabin. In C.J. Taylor's *Jasper: A History* there is a photograph of a warden and his family travelling with packhorses, and the caption underneath reads "the boxes on the packhorse in front of [Warden Macklin's] wife reputedly held infants" (2009:83).

Pack boxes were, of course, not the only means of transporting small children. Parents were inventive and adaptive: the methods and strategies they used for carrying children to and from the home cabin were altered with changing seasons, as children aged or the family grew, and as new technologies became available.

Below, Barbra Barker describes how she and Bob carried their infant daughter, along with their pet Siamese cat, to Brazeau Cabin:

> **Barb:** I would have Cheryl on my horse on the front and I'd roll up a little blanket and tuck it between the saddle horn and myself and she would sit there or lay there, whatever the case and the cat would ride on the skirt of the saddle in the back.[95]

It seems remarkable that that both Cheryl and the cat rode comfortably this way, and also that the Barkers trusted their horses to carry them. However, it seems that dependable horses were carefully selected by Jasper's barn boss to carry small children. During my interview with Max and Julie Winkler, they described some of their concerns before their first trip to Brazeau Cabin with their son:

> **Max:** …. what gave us a certain amount of apprehension is how to travel with an eleven-week-old kid and what would happen if we ran into a

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[94] Peggy Dixon is Ann Dixon's daughter and her artwork is found throughout and graces the cover of *Silent Partners*.

[95] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

grizzly bear. I mean, again, the barn boss, I knew in hindsight, that he selected good horses for us that we could handle and the horse that Julie rode with Terry was just an excellent, dependable, not a plug but just a good horse. And so, you know, she made this compartment to carry Terry

[

Julie: Kind of a papoose bag

[

Max: and you know we had figured out what would we [would do if we had a bad experience with the horses], I mean you can ride into a hornets nest, or you can meet a grizzly bear, or different things can happen.

Is it better to have Terry just tied to us in a way that we have him or should we throw him away and hope that he wouldn't [*all laugh*] be hurt

Julie: That was kind of worrisome that first trip

Max: And how would both Julie and Terry feel after riding twenty miles? In hindsight, had my inexperience I suppose, we could have said, "Okay, we'll only go ten miles," because there's a cabin every ten miles which would have made it easier but longer and I think we were quite anxious to get to where we wouldn't have to travel anymore and everything went fine. We stopped

[

Julie: It was a relief, the first trip, that it went okay

[

Max: at that cabin, made a fire, warmed up his bottle and fed him and he slept through the whole darn thing [96]

Despite their initial concerns, the horses were very reliable and their son was comfortable for the entire trip. I was fortunate to view two of the methods that Max and Julie Winkler devised to carry their infant son, Terry, into the Brazeau District when I watched a film that they recorded, archived at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Julie sewed a bag in which Terry could be securely laced in, which she or Max could carry and their backs. They used this method to bring in Terry by horse and later again when they came

[96] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

out at Christmastime. Later, when Terry was older, they created a carrier with a seat that Terry could securely sit in, which was carried on one of the adult's backs.

Toys and Imaginative Play

When I asked Sharon Anderson if the cabins felt like homes to her, she mentioned bringing her children's toys:

> **Sharon:** … that was one of the ways we made it home. Kids were allowed to pack their toys. Some things we left there but some things we moved. He wanted to make sure that those would, maybe they were new, I can't remember now, but he wanted to make sure if dad was going he wanted to make sure his stuff went with him[97]

In the last two sentences, Sharon is referring to a time when their son replaced Gord's tools with toys, hoping that he would be joining his dad on a December trip to fix the phone line near Grizzly Cabin, a story Gord shared during our interview:

> **Gord:** I left at daybreak, which would have been eight o'clock or eight-thirty. I used a Trapper Nelson. They were a pack-board with a [canvas] bag tied onto it and I used to put all my tools on the bottom and then my fresh food on top. I had a loaf of bread and a dozen eggs, I think, sitting on top. All our other food was upcountry so I when I got to Jacques Lake I just had my meals, and carried on. The next day [at Grizzly] I had breakfast and then thought: "Well I guess I'll get started here and I started digging in the pack [*Nicole and Gord laugh*] [to find toys and no tools]. After supper I packed up to go and he must have slipped them in there just before we went to bed [*Nicole laughs*] [98]

Gord had to return to Beaver Lake Cabin, a forty mile round trip, to pick up the missing tools.

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[97] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript.

[98] Gord Anderson, interview transcript.

Much like the adults, children were without the company of others their age unless they had siblings. Max and Julie's son Terry was an only child, and below they describe his imaginary play:

> **Max:** Terry, for a while he thought he was a horse because he didn't have any kids, any friends, quite a few times he had all his imaginary friends….
>
> **Julie:** He wore a bell you see [*indicating photograph of Terry from personal collection*] if you called him, he'd whinny! [*Nicole and Julie laugh*]
>
> **Max:** We'd put that bell on so we knew where he was. [99]

Keeping an eye on small children is a challenge for all parents. As I mentioned in section 4.1, parents sometimes modified the cabin yard to control the wanderings of children. Sharon and Gord Anderson built a sandbox for their son at Rocky Forks Cabin, and, as Sharon describes below:

> Travis would do things that scared me to death. One day while I was making bread, he was playing in the sandbox. I turned to check the stove and when I looked back he was gone. Then I saw him sitting under the horse's belly. I just ran and pulled him out. The horse was quivering, but I was shaking.[100]

Fortunately, their trustworthy horse Paddy showed considerable patience when Travis crawled underneath him.

Connecting the past to the future: Preservation and Love

Max and Julie's son, Terry, became a park warden in Jasper and lived seasonally on the Brazeau District in the same cabin he lived in as a child. Gord and Sharon Anderson's daughter, Rundi, also became a park warden, working in Pacific Rim National Park in

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[99] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[100] As told by Sharon in Debbie Dach's magazine article, *Memoirs of a Backcountry Warden* (1981).

British Columbia. Several other wardens mentioned their children working in some capacity with parks, advocating for conservation or returning often for recreational visits.

I only spoke to two people who had experienced growing up at a warden station. Loni and Howie Klettl were infants when they were brought to Blue Creek Cabin. Although they were both to young to have a memory of Blue Creek, they expressed fond memories of Cavell Station, located on Highway 93A, where they lived until they were teenagers. They had quite a bit of freedom there, as Howie describes below:

> **Howie:** Between me and my brother as soon as you got out of the car you're gone, into the bush, just gone and then your mom would honk the horn. The car horn, you had to stay within where you could hear the car horn, come back for supper and then out you'd go and you'd come back again for bedtime whenever she honked the horn. [101]

Loni Klettl wrote this touching story, which was included on a special menu at her workplace during the 2007 centennial celebrations in Jasper National Park, which she has allowed me to include here:

> When we were kids living at Cavell Warden Station, our father would be gone on backcountry patrol for weeks. Finally, one day, mom would announce, 'Dad should be due back by now' and we'd race each other up the trail to be the first to spot him! Every long, endless stretch and bend looked the same as we anticipated seeing our dad; the ones at the back calling ahead, 'Is he there?' and 'Do you see him yet?' It was worth the race because whoever spotted our Dad first was the one who got to ride back to the station – on his horse with him! When we finally spotted him, we all got a hug – and a whisker rub. This is the story of how much a girl loves her daddy… There is nothing sweeter than the smell of leather, sweat, horse, chainsaw and tree sap. It's the stuff of my most beloved memories. – Loni Klettl, who can still outrun her brothers. [102]

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[101] Howie Klettl, interview transcript.

[102] Loni Klettl, 2007. The stories included on the restaurant menu were designed to celebrate the history of the Jasper community.

Loni's story captures a lovely and deeply personal moment in her family's experience at the warden station. When I met Loni in the early stages of this research, she told me about her brother Howie's project, what she called a "Quest for the Cabins." I later spoke to Howie in person and he described how he began this project after coming across a warden cabin along the Spray River in Banff National Park:

> **Howie:** … I was cross country skiing up the Spray River and I came across this old warden cabin that was falling into disrepair, plus, it was right at the time when I was really chewing over what was happening, you know, the disembowelment of the warden service and at the same time this just struck me as: is that symbolic or what?
>
> I knew that there was a lot of funding cutbacks that a lot of these cabins weren't being used any more, they weren't being sent, the maintenance wasn't there and the backcountry patrolling wasn't happening and I thought, you know what, these things might becoming a thing of the past, plus all the memories I have growing up in them. I thought: I want to get to all of them before they die, take a picture of myself at all of them and find out what I can about who built them and why, what their purpose was and put them on the, what I am going to do eventually is I'm going to write up a thing on each cabin, I'm going to come up with a blog and stick it up on the internet so if someone ever does a search, then here's the Windy Cabin, why and when it was built and put it on Google Earth because I want to know whenever I go on a hike I want to see if there's pictures there of what to look out for so if it's, you know, I figure it's more exposure for them and maybe generate a little more interest in them and a little bit of maintenance and some of them certainly have been well maintained, the ones that are on popular routes, they are really well taken care of there but the ones that are way back in there some of them are rotting off pretty good.[103]

Howie intends to visit every cabin in the Rocky Mountain parks: Banff, Jasper Yoho and Kootenay, and document them online. His project has a definite poignancy as the son of one of Jasper's well known park wardens, and as a child who grew up at a highway

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[103] Howie Klettl, interview transcript. In the first paragraph Howie is referring to the changes drastic changes to the park warden service which occurred in 2008 (see section 3.4). The Spray River and Windy Cabin are located in Banff National Park.

station. It was very clear to me that he has a strong connection to these places, and a sincere recognition of their significance.

4.6 Isolation and Risk

Isolation

At the backcountry warden station, the nearest neighbour may be more than a day's travel by trail. The warden picked up personal mail and magazine subscriptions in town once a month, when he returned to submit his monthly report. The phone line was one means of communication with the outside world, and a battery-powered AM radio provided news, entertainment and company.

When the topic of isolation came up during my interview with Gord and Sharon, they described how the forestry phone line worked and brought up an interesting point about the line:

> **Gord:** … we had a telephone, they called it the forestry telephone … we had a wire strung from tree to tree and Sharon made good use of that especially at Rocky Forks and that, but we never saw anybody. Very few hikers during our time and then, that came after, we'd have been
>
> **Sharon:** But that was local too, I couldn't call my family
>
> **Gord:** [No long distance, just local to Jasper
>
> **Sharon:** [or best friend, it was just calls to Jasper, so for twenty-one days you were pretty isolated, you know except for each other. We really relied on each other.[104]

As Sharon describes, they were not able to make long distance calls to friends or family meaning little contact with loved ones beyond letters that could be sent or received about once per month. The forestry telephone was a single line, or "party line," system, so the switchboard operator and any other cabin sharing the same line could listen in:

[104] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript.

> **Julie:** People probably told you what the telephone was like, that it was a switchboard and you never talked to somebody without realizing that there was probably somebody listening in, so you didn't have many intimate conversations on the phone but nevertheless it was a real link.[105]

Wardens and warden wives clearly could not have private conversations on the party line, since it was always possible that others were listening. Julie was not the only person who mentioned the lack of privacy when using the forestry phone line. Although I did not address this issue directly during interviews, it seems that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to admit to being unhappy, or even to having a bad day if you felt social pressure to "keep-face" in front of an attentive and invisible audience. In spite of the availability of the phone, people in the backcountry might feel further isolated by not being able to speak openly on it.

The forestry phone line was, however, an important means of connecting to other district cabins and the town switchboard, to catch up on the news in neighbouring areas, as Al Stendie describes below:

> **Al:** Well they were a real godsend because they, you had to do a lot of work on them to keep them up but they were what made things work back there and they were also an entertainment … on the North Boundary they went from Jasper to over Smokey Cabin and there would be sometimes 7 or 8 people on there at night and you could all get on there and it was just like you were sitting in each other's cabins and you'd get on there and talk and visit and you'd find out what was happening in town.[106]

One of the misconceptions that I had in the early stages of this project was to assume that wardens and families were disconnected from the news and events in Canada and abroad. I did not realize that, in addition to news received in personal letters or the magazines brought home by the warden, AM radios were regularly used at the backcountry stations:

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[105] Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[106] Al Stendie, interview transcript.

Julie: … we had the radio and we had excellent radio reception so that we really relied on it for music and for news and certainly we were as well-informed about what was going on in the world as we are today and the radio was really, it was something very special

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Max: At that time the transistor radios were then just invented and so then we had it more modern than the generation before that packed batteries and stuff like that. We had relatively small radios. I had one, I didn't use it while I was walking but I would carry it along from cabin to cabin and it was much smaller than the one that stayed at the cabin which wasn't very big either but you would have thought twice whether you wanted to carry that. In a month I travelled probably 200-250 miles on foot, snowshoes, but that was very important for both of us, I mean, as Julie said, we knew what the news were, we got a bunch of magazines. We had at that time Maclean's and Readers Digest and

[

Julie: and National Geographic [and Popular Mechanics]

[

Max: and so at the month end when I came in to town and I would bring the mail home and it was like Christmas every time at the month end because that was the only communication that Julie had and I had basically, except I had it a couple of days earlier of course, in town. [107]

Gord and Sharon Anderson also discussed listening to AM Radio; however they described to me how the content on public radio stations did not seem as real as the nightly radio call, where the wardens reported on their daily experiences:

Sharon: … We had an AM radio, we listened to the radio and we used to, it seems so crazy now, we'd gather around for the

[

Gord: radio call

[

Sharon: radio time, when people would call to check whether we were all safe. At the fire hall they would check in, so that was a highlight, to hear what other

[107] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

people had to say so it's really interesting. It wasn't that you really missed people, it was that you missed

Gord: Catch up on the gossip [*Gord and Nicole laugh*]

Sharon: Yeah, you missed just hearing what somebody else was doing even though on the AM radio it didn't quite seem real, you know; whereas now you listen to the radio it seems real

Gord: [it was like you were on another planet or something

Sharon: [but out there it just, you know when they were talking about stuff happening, because you are so disconnected from everything. But when you listen to the radio sked, those were people that you knew and those were instances that could happen to you or had happened to you like, oh I lost my horses or, you know, some story that they told. So that seemed real because it was relevant to what you were doing but the AM radio, you'd listen to it and you'd hear the music and you'd hear conversations but it didn't seem relevant to your life.[108]

Most of the people I spoke to saw travellers in the years they spent at the district cabins. Entries in the log books during the 1960s appear to mainly be from wardens travelling through or visiting from other districts or from outfitters and their guests. Government work crews sometimes came out to assist the warden on larger projects, such as the building of a new cabin, in the summer or fall. Prior to the 1970s there were few hikers: Barb Barker reported about 7 in her first year at Brazeau Cabin in 1968 (interview transcript). Travellers who did pass by were more likely to be guided by outfitters who were known to the wardens.

I often wondered if the individuals living at the cabins felt isolated or lonely, but when I asked directly during interviews, the answer was usually no. Were single wardens more

[108] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript. Note that Sharon and Gord are talking about two different radios in this section: AM and Single Side Band (SSB). When I stayed as a guest at Brazeau Cabin in August 2011, I witnessed a few of the type of nightly radio calls which Sharon describes. They are still done every evening to check in on park employees travelling in the backcountry.

prone to a sense of isolation than married wardens and their partners? When I interviewed Mac Elder, Monrad Kjorlien and Al Stendie, who were all single wardens during their employment as backcountry district wardens, none reported feeling lonely or isolated. Mac Elder, who lived alone at Willow Creek for 7 years, responded that:

> **Mac:** I'd been around Jasper enough that I knew a lot of people around there and I've had guys that would say to me: "Mac, how come you're out there, you've spent two or three winters out there and you don't get bushed?" and I said: "Well, I'm too busy, I've got too many things to think about and I'm content with what I'm doing."[109]

Bushed, in the sense that Mac uses, does not mean exhaustion. I heard this term several times during interviews, or in casual discussion with wardens, warden wives and family members. The Oxford Dictionary of English defines this sense of the term as "psychologically disturbed on account of isolation."[110] However, the descriptions that interviewees shared with me revealed a more complex meaning. Wardens and warden wives could become bushed from spending long periods of time alone at the cabin, as Barb Barker mentions in the quote below:

> **Barb:** … I spent a lot of time in the backcountry on my own. I think the longest time I ever spent in the Brazeau, he [*Bob*] came back and forth to town on quite a few occasions, was nine weeks, but I was very bushed after that [*Nicole laughs*] very bushed.[111]

I did not ask Barb what it meant to be bushed, but from the context it is clear that what she experienced was the result of lack of contact with other people. In the quote below, Mac Elder describes a different way in which wardens might get bushed:

> **Mac:** … it's like I used to tell all these young people. I said: "Don't stay up and read until three o'clock in the morning because if you do that then you don't get up in the morning and if you don't get up in the morning

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[109] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

[110] Oxford Dictionary of English, 2nd ed., s.v. "Bushed".

[111] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

> you don't travel and in just no time at all you've let yourself get bushed." What I used to tell these guys is that if you get bushed then you'll eat up your blankets [*both laugh*] and you don't want to do that. I don't know whether you know what it means to get bushed but people that get bushed, they get really weird.[112]

Mac's quote suggests a second meaning of the term, as if the mind is being taken over by the environment like willows growing in an unused meadow. By sitting still and not moving through the district, not learning, not exploring, the warden fails to keep up his district and fails to be at peace. Mac is describing how a warden can become bushed through lack of engagement.

In a quote by Barb Barker which appears in section 4.1, she notes that:

> **Barb:** … there's not really that much time of day that you have to sit around and read, it would be nice to, but then there's all the interesting things you can watch, you know, hike around the cabin and look at.[113]

Here, she is also talking about engagement with the environment. Barb is describing an engagement which happens closer to the home cabin where she would have spent more time than her husband, Warden Bob Barker. The warden, or warden wife, who knows the trails and is attending to their environment, will not get bushed in the second sense. Although they might understandably feel or act strange after long periods of time alone, they are comfortable and feel at home.

Pressures on marriage

I did not address pressures on marriage in my interview questions. However, as Julie and Max Winkler brought up during our interview, living in the remote and isolated circumstances of the district cabin could be hard on a married couple:

> **Julie:** You were in this very confined area and living that way for four years, it's enough to make or break a marriage. You can't sort of get

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[112] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

[113] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

> away from each other except when we had those periods when we were away out in civilization or he was away on patrol. There was stress that normally would be relieved in other ways …. And everybody has habits or other things that irritate the other person and you have to cope with these things and get along and we're, what, it'll be fifty-five years wont it? Yeah fifty-five years we'll be married this summer
>
> **Max:** I can't count that far [*laughing*]
>
> **Julie:** No, I'm not very good at math [*all laugh*] but there were times, you know, when you would rather be alone in the cabin then there with this man that you couldn't get rid of [*Nicole laughs*] and vice-versa, you know but that's what it was like

Max and Julie continue to discuss pressures on marriage a few pages later in the transcript:

> **Max:** …. She [*Julie*] was more, the woman was much more confined in the whole thing because the guy, he had to do his work and it took him to different places, new sites, new experiences, some days were maybe dull too but every day brought a new experience
>
> **Julie:** … Ian Tyson [the singer], he says that, "This country is hell on horses and women," and that was the old west, you know and in lots of ways the man was doing his work and getting paid for it and it was exciting and it was challenging and so on, but in lots of ways [the woman] was just the silent partner as she said. And if you liked it that was great but not everybody liked it and some people just weren't happy in it and sometimes the marriage failed, you know, and it's understandable.[114]

Women's confinement to the cabin

As Max and Julie mention in the above quote, women were faced with the additional challenge of being alone at the cabin with small children for long periods of time. Many women travelled on patrols with their husbands before they had children, but once children entered the family it was often no longer practical to do so, as Barb Barker describes below:

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[114] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

> **Barb:** … I used to go with Bob on a lot of the horseback trips but you know the first month we were married we rode 365 miles and the longer I stayed there the more I felt like I wanted to be in the cabin on occasion. For one thing you had to make bread from scratch and there was always laundry to do, it all had to be done by hand and so I guess I became more of a housewife type of situation but I did travel an awful lot with him. Not so much once we had Cheryl because it was so much more of a problem and especially if it's pouring rain and all that: it's no fun for you and a little kid to be riding along.[115]

In the absence of neighbours, friends or family who could baby-sit, women on the districts were rarely able to take a break from watching the children and could not easily travel far from the cabin with a child in tow.

One of the questions that I asked individuals who lived at the district cabins was whether they ever felt isolated or lonely. When I asked Julie Winkler this question, she brought up her sense of confinement at the cabin:

> **Julie:** I wouldn't say, no, I felt alone but I never felt loneliness in the sense of being unhappy. Sometimes I felt quite confined when I had to be in the cabin with the little boy instead of being able to hike and things like that, or go fishing. I could only go fishing when Max was home to baby-sit. But never lonely. I had a good number of people with whom I exchanged letters and really looked forward to the letters coming in at the end of the month and I read lots and I wrote in my journal and I don't know, I don't think I have ever been lonely. Sometimes I've been lonelier in crowds and in the city than actually out there.[116]

As Julie describes, she wasn't lonely at the cabin, but in having a small child to look after she was often felt very confined. This issue was brought up by other couples as well. Wardens were often away for twenty days or more while on patrol while women stayed

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[115] Barb Barker, interview transcript. This distance is remarkable, averaging 12.2 miles (19.6 kilometres) every day over thirty days. However, it is no exaggeration. A Parks Canada document from 1968, contemporaneous with Ms. Barker's time in the Brazeau with her husband, Warden Bob Barker, indicates that between 195 and 425 miles (314 to 684 kilometres) were travelled by horse each month between June and September (Parks Canada [1968?]).

[116] Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

at the cabin with the child. Several wardens and warden wives stressed that life on the districts was more difficult for women, not because they were less competent or "tough" as the men, but because they were stuck at the home cabin once children were born into the family.

Ann Dixon devotes a chapter in her collection of women's stories to the warden cabins in Banff National Park which were connected to the highway by a restricted fire road, titled "Behind Locks". In Banff, the restricted fire roads were closed by a locked gate: visitors were not allowed to use the road and keys were only provided to the warden and a handful of other park staff (Dixon 1985:180). As Joan Vroom, who lived in the Bryant Creek District wrote in her entry:

> Loneliness was the single most difficult thing to cope with. We spent four years in the Bryant Creek district, Banff National Park, behind the "Jack Pine Curtain" as the locked fire road gates were called…. I hated living behind the locked gate. It was the thing I disliked most. It meant nobody could drop in for a visit (Dixon1985:181-182)

Jasper did not have home cabins at the end of restricted fire roads like the one at Bryant Creek. However, the description of the locked gate is very similar to one woman's experience at Maligne Lake in the 1960s. Warden cabins like the one at Maligne Lake are not considered to be "backcountry" because they are accessible by car. However, when Cathy Elder moved to Maligne with her husband, warden Mac Elder, the road was not yet completed and would not be paved until 1970 (Lothian 1987:54). The road was not open to the public all the way to Maligne Lake when Mac and Cathy first arrived and it was not usually ploughed in the winter. Two concessionaires operated boat and bus tours and had overnight accommodation between May and September. However the winter months could be very isolated, as Cathy describes below:

> **Cathy:** … the road [to the public] wasn't all the way in to Maligne Lake when we were first there and so there was a gate down at the upper end of Medicine Lake, and then halfway between Medicine Lake and Maligne [and as they built more highway the gate was moved to the end of the pavement]. So yes, we had a steady stream of company in the summer because it was a wonderful place to visit and then in the winter, it was really quiet, it was awful. I'm one of these people that if I know I can go somewhere, I'm fine but if I can't go it gets. And in the winter we would be snowed in. In the winter, Mac would maybe go to town for meetings and where do go you with two little kids for all day? You stay

> home, and for some people it was fine, and I mean I'd knit and sew and did things like that and you bake your own bread and I had a wringer washing machine and lots of warden wives were quite envious because I came on the scene and lived in a three bedroom house that had running water and a gas plant, so I had electricity and [*laughs*] and I didn't have to rough it like they did.
>
> But when the two concessionaire camps closed down [at the end of] September we always went to town [the day the last one closed]. Well it wasn't so depressing [as just saying] goodbye to them …. And in the spring once I saw those lights across the way and I knew that I could go visit somebody if I wanted to, it was fine. [I'd get busy and do all the work I'd been neglecting all winter, just seeing the lights energized me]. Maybe I wouldn't go over there for a week or so but I could go if I wanted.[117]

Cathy described summers that were beautiful and filled with visitors, including visiting dignitaries such as Princess Margaret of the Netherlands. However, staying behind at the cabin during winter, with small children at the end of a snowed-in road, led to profound sense of confinement. In a note that Cathy added after reviewing her transcript, she explains that:

> It was stressful for me and even when Ann Dixon wrote her book, "The Silent Partner," once I started having to remember I couldn't do it, all the stress was too fresh in my mind. I've tried to block it out and only remember the good times. We all handle isolation differently. It was a different way of life.[118]

Cathy speaks, perhaps, for many other women who were reluctant to submit their stories for Dixon's collection. Dixon's book commemorates and celebrates the role women played in the history of national parks. Yet, as the author recognized in her introduction, it was "by no means complete," and many stories remain untold (1985:3)

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[117] Cathy Elder, interview transcript.

[118] Cathy Elder, note added to interview transcript.

Risk

> *These are the words he told me*
> *at fifty degrees below*
> *as the wolves sang out in a funeral choir*
> *and hunkered down in the snow:*
>
> *"Now do this act before you freeze;*
> *let it be the final thing –*
> *cross your arms and legs so you'll skid out*
> *behind a saddle horse in the spring."*
>
> - From "Game Warden's Lament" by Jim Deegan (1994:13)

The dark humour in Deegan's poem suggests a harsh reality for park wardens who worked alone in the backcountry. In Jasper during the time period under study, wardens and families checked in with the Jasper switchboard on a daily basis, except while on patrol in an area without a phone connection. Wardens and families looked out for each other, as demonstrated in one story told by Max and Julie, of a time when a neighbouring warden travelled out to check on Julie and Terry when the phone line connecting Brazeau to Sunwapta Station was broken and Julie was unable to check in with the switchboard (Max and Julie, interview transcript)

For park wardens in the mountain parks, the risks of their employment ranged from the catastrophic to the mundane: crossing avalanche paths, leading climbing rescues, climbing trees to repair the phone line, lighting the Coleman lamps, and even fetching water in the morning could be hazardous. Animals, such as moose or grizzly bears, may attack if they feel threatened, and a nervous horse may startle at the sight or scent of wildlife and throw its rider.

The backcountry wardens and family members with whom I spoke described the dangers of working and living in the backcountry, but emphasized that they had to depend on awareness and experience to avoid the most common hazards. In the passage below, Max and Julie Winkler described how they adapted to some of the risks associated with their remote location:

> **Julie:** … were we worried? I don't think actively worried, lets say we were just concerned and this thing about, I wouldn't raise the alarm and call for help until he didn't come back on the appointed day and so a lot could happen in ten days if he had broken a leg. And of course with me, I

was very careful with the fire because it the cabin burned, well I suppose I could have lived in the equipment shed until he got home but it would be much more serious than a fire that happened here

Max: And basically every warden had to do that because it was a thing of survival but you know, in general you have come to the parks and if you are there in the wintertime well you look at the avalanche hazard and if it is a real danger you don't go there and if it's just a moderate danger you don't take any chances by going way up into an avalanche slope or if you cross an avalanche quickly, an avalanche slope, because I have had it happen that I've noticed there was an avalanche hazard but not an extreme hazard and so you'd just go over the avalanche slope a little bit quicker and on the way back a couple of hours later the avalanche had come down so you knew that these things can happen but it never happened to me, you know, one warden got caught in an avalanche in, well not right in the place but only about a half a mile away from there and he got out of it alive but it could have been more serious. But that's just something you do, like that picture that I showed you of when we did install the phone line, you could fall off a telephone pole or a tree and you had an axe in your hand or something, you know, so it was something that made you just a little more alert to the dangers

Julie: I think too it's a case of knowing what to be worried about…. certainly we had some bears very close to the cabin and Max was very close to them on horseback and one time there was a grizzly that was [hanging around near the cabin while] we were throwing brush onto a brushfire and there was a grizzly just on the other side of the pile and he just hung around and he didn't bother us and we weren't frightened

Max: You have be able to learn this over a period either from yourself, from your experiences or from other people that have gone through that kind of thing. People like Frank Burstrom, Alfie Burstrom's father or George Camp, Frank Camp's father were kind of mentors to me in a way that from their experience which was far greater than what I [had when I] came into the organization. And I learned from them what is a real problem, a real danger what isn't and we, in general we were careful, we were careful with bears, we were sure that the garbage was looked after, that there wasn't any food around

Julie: [We burned every can so there was no food smell on it

Max: [and we closed the shutters every time we went away for more than just a day we closed the shutters and we never had problems and there were some people that always had problems. I never had to

shoot a bear and I would not have liked to attract the bears. We had bears walk by the cabin like Julie said

[

Julie: We had one put his paws up and look in the window at me [*Julie and Nicole laugh*]

[

Max: And you could think, well that one is going to come back in tonight but it never did and it is just, I always thought, the bear has to walk some place too so he's going to walk sometimes by the house, by the cabin and it's still exciting to see a bear today

[

Julie: Like the bluebird just now

Max: and the cougar just the same thing, maybe a cougar walking on the deck here and, "Oh my god, got to call the Fish and Wildlife Officers," or you realize that okay, you just happened to be on his trail.[119]

As Max and Julie described above, bears were not usually an issue in the backcountry as long as they did not attract them to the house with garbage or be careless with food. Unfortunately, poor garbage management in the frontcountry areas of Jasper were responsible for creating "problem bears," that is, bears that have become dependant on garbage.[120] Mac Elder explained in a note added to his interview transcript that, "During the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s the various park dumps provided an artificial source of food for park bears." In 1965, a young man who was out hiking with a friend near the open pit garbage dump at Maligne Lake was attacked by a grizzly bear. He was severely mauled, but he fortunately survived. Mac Elder, who was the district warden at Maligne when this happened, explains how Parks Canada neglected to take care of garbage at that time:

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[119] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[120] The garbage management problem was not exclusive to Jasper. In *The Black Grizzly of Whisky Creek* (2008c), author and former park warden Sid Marty takes a creative and critical look at the circumstances that led to several bear maulings near the town of Banff in the summer of 1980, and the resulting changes in national parks policy towards garbage management.

> **Mac:** The last thing that the government did and the parks did was take care of the bloody garbage and you know they built roads, and built this and that but the damn garbage was still sitting there …. That's always been a sore point for me that they didn't do something with the garbage first…. We started killing bears was when they closed down the damn dumps because the bears are dependant on those dumps and as long as the bear was in the dump, well, stay out of there. But they closed the dumps, well what is the bear going to do? He's going to go where there's another meal and they didn't start to do anything about controlling garbage until 1973, in the fall of '73.[121]

The mauling at Maligne Lake happened only about a hundred metres from the headquarters cabin where Mac and his family lived. As Cathy explained, there were often grizzlies near the cabin:

> Always, when we'd walk over to Maligne Tours or anywhere around, one never walked totally carefree, one always watched out for grizzlies, especially in the spring and the fall. We've seen them in the yard and out by the woodshed and kid's swing set.[122]

Clearly, the negligence of the park administration in regards to bears and garbage management created an environment that was potentially dangerous not only to park visitors but also to the warden and his family and any other residents nearby.

Most home cabins were connected by the forestry phone line; however some patrol cabins had no such means of communication. On the Brazeau District, for example, the forestry phone line connected to Brazeau Cabin from Sunwapta Warden Station, to Waterfalls Cabin and Poboktan Patrol Cabin.[123] The line was not connected to the Four Point, Arête, Isaac Creek Southesk or Cairn Pass patrol cabins. Max and Julie Winkler

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[121] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

[122] Cathy Elder, note added to interview transcript.

[123] Sunwapta Warden Station, located on Highway 93 near the confluence of the Sunwapta River and Poboktan Creek, is sometimes referred to as Poboktan station or Mile 45 (the latter a reference to markers on the old highway which indicated the distance from the Jasper town site). Please see the Jasper National Park Districts Map in Appendix A for visual reference.

described how, when Max left for patrol, he would plan to be gone for a certain number of days, depending on the conditions and the work he needed to do. However, as Max described: "if I was gone and in the first day I broke my leg, we wouldn't have any communications for twenty days or fifteen days." (Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript). No one, including Julie, would be aware that Max was in trouble for days, even weeks.

The dangerous situations encountered while patrolling in a district might be more expected than those close to home. Injury could also come from unexpected sources: Julie Winkler shared this story, which occurred when she was alone at the cabin with Terry:

> **Julie:** … there was, in the floor, a trap door, [a 9X5 foot deep cellar] where you kept things you didn't want to freeze when you left the cabin. You mean when I went down there
>
> **[**
>
> **Max:** yes
>
> **[**
>
> **Julie:** and was coming up and Terry, the baby, dropped the door on my head! [*all laugh*] I could've [been knocked out]
>
> **Max:** I might have come home two weeks later and she would have been in the [cellar]
>
> **Julie:** Unconscious on the floor! [*all laugh*]
>
> **Max:** She said, "Oh dear, Terry, you shouldn't have done that!" [*all laugh*][124]

Although the Max, Julie, and I laughed at this story when they shared with me, it could have been a very serious incident. When I visited backcountry cabins in 2011, I tested the trap door in the floor of Jacques Lake Cabin. It was no small thing, and was quite heavy. While this sort of accident could happen in any home, help was very far away when accidents or injury happened at the remote cabins.

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[124] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

Monrad Kjorlien was single for most of the time that he was the district warden in the Smokey River District, but when he married his wife, Gail, she joined him for a few seasons before the couple moved to Sunwapta Station. On a patrol in November 1965, Monrad and Gail travelled by snowshoe over Byng Pass to Blue Creek to visit with the warden family living there.[125] When they arrived they found that the couple's small baby was very ill, and an emergency evacuation of the child was quickly planned:

> **Monrad:** This was the first time that I remember of them using a helicopter in Jasper for a rescue. They called Ken in the airport there and there was a helicopter there but they were running out of daylight.[126] This was about three o'clock in the afternoon already so he [*the Chief Park Warden*] says, "I'll meet you at the Rocky River, the head of the Snake Indian and fly you in."
>
> They called us back, told us to take down the radio antenna and to tramp out a landing site for the helicopter in the yard. And so that's what we did and they flew in with the chopper and Ron got in the helicopter with the baby and away they went to Jasper. There was a ball diamond right behind the hospital and they had to line up a bunch of vehicles so that there was light so that the chopper could see to land and then they took the baby into the hospital[127]

Helicopters had been used in Jasper National Park by survey groups, and in climbing rescues in Banff National Park by 1960; however this was the first time that a helicopter was used in rescue in Jasper and it likely saved the child's life. As I mentioned in Section 3.5, families were considered to be the warden's own responsibility.

This child was not the only one to become ill while living on the districts. Parents usually had to make do with a call on the forestry telephone line to the doctor in the town of

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[125] Monrad also told me this trip was Gail's first on snowshoes and a very long one – the couple travelled over 100 miles (160.93 kilometres) to Blue Creek Cabin and back, often breaking trail through fresh snow.

[126] In the northern part of Jasper National Park in mid-November, the sun would set at approximately 4:45 pm.

[127] Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript.

Jasper. Loni Klettl, daughter of former Blue Creek warden Toni Klettl and his wife Shirley, describes what it was like for her mother below:

> **Loni:** Blue Creek was insane because it was so far back in there you know we would be packed in. We were babies, I mean newborns, so we went in at three months old … it just was so remote so when they were in there, and I tell you, Mom, she, what a trooper she was because she would be left because Dad … he'd be gone in the winter, two weeks snowshoeing his district and so Mom would be here with two newborns, I am a twin, two newborns and a three year old so that's a lot of lonely time on your hands. But she always said they were the best years of her life, those years in Blue Creek.
>
> Yeah, the stories of how hard it was to get in and how hard it was to get out and Mom's worry was: What if something goes wrong? What if something happens? What do I do if Dad's not there and something happens?
>
> That's why the phone line was so important because that was the only link to the outside world, it was that phone line. So that's why they always had to be maintained and checked and Mom did phone the doctor in Jasper numerous times going, "I've got a sick kid, what I do?"[128]

The Klettl family lived at Blue Creek years before the dramatic helicopter rescue recounted by Monrad Kjorlien, above. Parents could not assume at any time that this kind of assistance would be available to them if their child became seriously ill.

4.7 Little (Horse) Heaven: exploring horse and human relationships

> *Those horses, if they could talk, taught us an awful lot…*
>
> -Bob Barker, transcript

In the north region of Jasper National Park, on the Glacier Pass Trail, there is a patrol cabin named Little Heaven. The name suggests a place of great beauty to be appreciated

[128] Loni Klettl, interview transcript.

by humans, and although I have only seen it in photographs I believe this to be true. This high mountain meadow has also been described to me as "Little Horse Heaven."[129]

As a city person with little exposure to horses, I knew little about them, and I did not anticipate needing to when I approached this project. However, during my research into home-life in the backcountry of Jasper I heard a great number of horse stories and I began to understand the importance of horses, the history of their use for travel in the mountains, and the rich relationships between horses and people.

Horses in Jasper National Park

The history of horse use in and around the Jasper area has been documented in several histories of the region, including James MacGregor's *Packsaddles to Tête Jaune Cache* (1962), E.J. Hart's *Diamond Hitch* (1979), and Susan Feddema-Leonard's *People and Peaks of Willmore Wilderness Park* (2007). Horses were the most efficient means of travel in the mountains for the guides and outfitters who worked in the region.

With the establishment of Jasper National Park and the division of the park into districts, each overlooked by a warden, horses played an important role. Horses were used to pack out supplies to the cabins, and used by the warden for patrols from spring until fall.

Wardens were usually given three horses: one as a saddle horse, and two for packing (Taylor 2009:69). The horses were owned by the park, and were wintered along the western boundary on the Colin Range, and later at Willow Creek (Taylor 2009:69). In the quote below, Mac Elder describes caring for park and outfitter horses while he was district warden at Willow Creek in 1959:

> **Mac:** … at Willow Creek, I had a bunch of horses that wintered there. I had about thirty head of park horses and about a hundred and fifty head

[129]Gordon Anderson, interview notes. Gordon Anderson introduced me to the phrase "Little Horse Heaven," as he shared his collection of photos from his career in the warden service. I have heard variations of this expression elsewhere: in Patton and Robinson's *Canadian Rockies Trail Guide* the authors describe the meadows of Little Heaven as: "traditionally, a heavenly pasture for horses" (2007:258); and in *Jasper-Robson: A Taste of Heaven*, Don Beers writes that the name was "chosen by wranglers who considered these lush meadows … a paradise for horses" (1996:88).

> of outfitters horses out there and of course I used to kind of keep an eye on them and then in February or March I'd move those government horses out of there and trail them out of there. [130]

Jasper National Park's horses have wintered at the Ya-Ha-Tinda Ranch since 1961 (Taylor 2009:69). The Ya Ha Tinda Government Ranch is owned by Parks Canada, but is not a national park: it is a working ranch where park horses are trained and wintered (Parks Canada 2009). It is located near the east boundary of Banff National Park in the province of Alberta, along the Red Deer River. In the summer, when not on the trail, park horses are kept in a local barn and pasture overseen by Jasper's barn boss (Taylor 2009:69).

A few horse-related terms

Some of the unfamiliar words I encountered during this research are related to packing horses for the mountains. They are not unique to the warden service and would be familiar to mountain outfitters and cowboys on the ranch lands of southern Alberta.

The diamond hitch is perhaps the most famous of these terms, and the title of E.J. Hart's history of Banff and Jasper National Parks' early outfitters and guides (Hart 1979). According to C.J. Taylor, Jasper wardens have a distinctive way of "throwing" the diamond, a "neat, tied-off-at-the-top" method, which differed from their counterparts in Banff (2009:69).

Wardens were required to learn this method of tying packs to their horses: it was best method of keeping their packs on a horse. The process, as described by Hart, begins with a packsaddle, to which two equally weighted pack boxes are balanced (1979:2). A top-pack (usually heavy canvas rather than a box) is placed on top and finally:

> With an intricate series of loops and twists the lash rope was tied … [and] the entire load was securely fastened to the saddle and the horse (Hart 1979:2)

[130] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

A properly tied diamond hitch provides enough freedom of movement for a packhorse to travel though varied mountain terrain, yet is secure enough that if it is startled, the horse not lose its load.

A second term, jingling, refers to a system of gathering horses in the morning which have already briefly mentioned in section 2.3. When a warden is at a cabin or camping for the night, the horses are let loose to graze overnight. A bell is tied to the lead horse, and in the morning, by listening for that bell (which will ring as the horse grazes) the warden may find the lead horse, and the rest of the horses will follow. Horses were sometimes hobbled (their front legs tied together) to prevent them from travelling too far. A warden that is going out, looking for his horses is said to be "jingling."[131]

Relationships: people and horses.

> *Those horses, if they could talk, taught us an awful lot and I've got two park horses here that travelled everywhere with me. They are ones that I got after I left the district and I still travelled the backcountry, in fact they're in that RCMP picture up there. The one that I am on is 38 years old now and the other one is 34.*
>
> - Bob Barker, interview transcript

The first part of the above quote was used to introduce this section. I have reprinted the full quote because I believe that it illustrates two points about people's relationship with their horses. First, Bob and a few other wardens described the horses as teaching them about their district and how to live on it. Second, although Bob was the only warden who I spoke to who brought his horses home after retirement, others described a similar sense of connection to their horses.

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[131] An evocative description can be found in "Dawn, Jingling Ponies" by Sid Marty (1973), previously mentioned in section 2.3 (Cabin Registers) and C.J. Taylor provides an excellent description in his history of Jasper National Park (2009:71). I have heard or read in the term "jingling" in numerous locations but this meaning of it does not appear in any dictionary that I referenced. The description above is based on my understanding of the term.

Horses who teach

Some of the wardens who I spoke to had grown up working with horses on ranches or farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan and came into the job with a great deal of knowledge and skill. Other wardens learned about working with horses after joining the warden service, with humility and determination, as Max Winkler describes below:

> **Max:** I had skied and mountaineered a lot before I came to Canada but horse experience was something completely new to me …. I asked the barn boss whether he would teach me how to pack and how to use a horse which he was very willing to do. I would go there on my days off and he gave me an old plug that was foolproof and showed me how to do it. I mean he would saddle and pack the horse and then say, "Now you do it" and if I didn't do it right then he would say, "That's a better way of doing it," and I spent considerable time there and the same thing with the blacksmith who was a very nice person also and I said, "I would like to learn about shoeing horses" [132]

Max invested his own time learning how to work with the horses and when he was given the Brazeau District, he was prepared. Monrad Kjorlien described a similar experience when he was hired as district warden at Smokey River:

> **Monrad:** … in the 60s they sent me out to Mount Robson itself and kind of left me on my own, although I was pretty green, not having grown up in that kind of environment and so I guess the Chief Warden, he told the barn boss, "this guy doesn't know too much about horses so what I want you to do is pick some horses for him *that are going to teach him what he needs to know*." And that's about the way it was. I wasn't a real horseman like some of them were and so I took off with these horses and *I had to have kind of an open mind to learn from the horses* what I needed to know about handling the horses and working with them, rather than working against them[133] (emphasis mine)

Like Bob Barker, above, Monrad specifically mentions learning *from* the horses, and his willingness to learn helped him on those first years in the district. In one conversation

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[132] Max Winkler, interview transcript.

[133] Monrad Kjorlien, interview transcript.

with Gord Anderson, he mentioned that two or three horses were always kept on the same district, and therefore knew the district, such where to find the camps and the best graze, very well. Any warden who took over a district was wise to learn from them.

Horses and trust

Whether learning about, or learning from them, wardens and warden wives placed a great deal of trust in their horses. It was not that uncommon, as I described in section 4.5, for families to travel out to their district carrying an infant by horseback.

Experienced riders also know to trust the horse not to startle at the scent of a bear. Park horses are selected and trained for work in the mountains, including being introduced to the scent of bears so that they are less likely to startle and throw off packs or people.

Sharon Anderson described one of the differences between riding on horseback versus hiking: "if you are on a horse it's a whole different story because you trust that that horse is going to give you a sign." [134] The sign that the horse gives the rider might prevent a potentially dangerous encounter with a grizzly. The rider, able to see father than a hiker, is also in a better position to anticipate anything that might startle the horse.

At home, bears were less likely to hang around while horses were in the cabin yard, although often moose and deer are attracted to the blocks of salt set out for the horses.

Horses as trouble-makers: personality

> *Horses though-*
>
> *With flick of tail*
> *Send best laid plans awry …*
>
> - "Seldom Inn," October 11, 1979 (Author Unknown)[135]

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[134] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript. Gord provided information on the conditioning of park horses in a note when he and Sharon reviewed the transcript.

[135] Seldom Inn Cabin Register 1979-1995. The full poem is printed in section 2.6.

A horse could be a dependable trail companion, a trustworthy carrier of children and cabin supplies. But, as the Seldom Inn poet implies, they are creatures with their own personalities and desires. They could also be a source of grief and frustration for the warden. When I described the term jingling, above, I did not mention that if the horses wandered too far from the cabin, the warden spend the entire day trying to find them.

Mac Elder shared a story about returning to find his horses on an island in the Athabasca River, after leaving them with the warden at Snaring for a few days:

> **Mac:** I'd left two or three horses there with him and he [*the warden at Snaring*] had a young horse there too but anyway he thought he was being kind to him, instead of keeping him in there and feeding him, he let him out, telling him to get some grass. Well, the first thing he did was take off and headed east and then they went over on an island on the Athabasca River[136]

Mac and the other warden had to take a boat out to the island and retrieve the horses.

During my interview with Gord and Sharon Anderson, they shared a story about a time when they and their horses were travelling out from Jacques Lake in the fall, later than horses are usually kept in the backcountry. The pack horses, anticipating the grain and hay and grain they would receive once they were back at the ranch, ran past the Andersons once they arrived at the fire road near the Summit Lakes. One of the packhorses, Paddy, was carrying two cats in his top-pack. As the horses ran, three of the four packhorses threw their packs, spilling much of their supplies along the trail:

> **Sharon:** … then we get to the Beaver Cabin, and here's Paddy standing there and all the ropes are slack but the pack is right there sitting on top and he hadn't bucked them off. Gord takes the box and carefully opens the door and those cats *whoop*, [*Nicole and Sharon laugh*] both of them were out of there, just gone. It was funny but those last few miles down

[136] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

> the road by horseback, wondering where those two cats were [or if they survived was somewhat of a concern].[137]

The cats were found, and they survived the ordeal (I didn't ask whether they ever tried to pack the cats again!). This story could have easily been placed under the section on trust, above: the Andersons had waited longer than usual to travel out of the backcountry because they hoped to save one of their older horses, Paddy, from being destroyed. Paddy had been on the Jacques Lake district for 10 years and the Andersons described him as extremely reliable; he was the horse they trusted to carry their three year old son.[138] Notably, Paddy was carrying the Anderson's cats and he was the only horse who did not throw his pack.

Horses at home

The Anderson's horses clearly knew their district, and their annual routine, so well that they impatiently ran down the trail. In another story shared by the Andersons, their horses rushed into the yard at Jacques Lake, upset over finding strange horses in their meadow. The horses, Gord explained, "Had been on that district for years *so that was their home*" (transcript, my emphasis).

These two stories emphasize, as in the section above on horses teaching the wardens, that the horses were at home on the trails and in the meadows of the district.

Horse/Hiker conflicts

Horses are not universally loved or appreciated in the mountain parks. During, and long after, the explosion of backcountry hikers in the early 1970s to areas that were formerly the dominion of horse outfits and wardens on horseback, complaints about horses emerge in the cabin registers. From horse manure on the trail, to the "muddying" of the trail by horse's hooves, to the annoyance of sharing camp with horses that are let loose to graze for the night, many of these complaints are valid concerns to hikers. Some areas in Jasper

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[137] Gord and Sharon Anderson, interview transcript.

[138] Paddy is the same horse as mentioned in the story shared on page 107.

National Park are now closed to horse use due to concerns about erosion, environmental stresses, the introduction of weeds, and in response to hiker complaints. However, as one horse traveller stressed in the Brazeau Log book, in response to a recent hiker complaint:

> Most of the pack trails would not be here except for horsemen. Hundred of horses used to work out of Jasper for decades and all the harm they ever did was open up many trails to take their clients out on that the government may never have opened (July 28, 1973, Brazeau Cabin Book 1953-1977)

In a recent article published in Canadian Geographic, former Banff warden Don Mickle expressed concern that the Ya Ha Tinda ranch and park horses may cease to be used; as backcountry patrols are reduced in Banff and Jasper, the need for trained horses is also reduced (Struzik, 2009). In May 2012, an article printed in the Edmonton Journal, regarding cutbacks in funding to Parks Canada, stated that: "there will be fewer horses in Jasper's fabled stables and fewer patrols of trails such as the North Boundary" (Struzik, 2012).

The loss of horses in the backcountry areas of the park might be celebrated by those focused on the mud and dung left on the park trails, or (in my mind, more reasonably) by those concerned with ecological integrity. However, it is difficult to see how the cabins, the network of trails, campgrounds and other amenities could be maintained without horses in the heart of the park. Increased use of all-terrain vehicles and helicopters would degrade the areas far more than horse's hooves, adding engine and chopper noise to the acoustic landscape and disturbing wildlife and backcountry travellers. When backcountry resource conservation/public safety specialists travel through the trails by horseback they are able to observe and manage the backcountry areas, they are aware of wildlife and their movements, and can attend to the small changes and details. They are much safer than they would be on foot or using all-terrain vehicles because horses will respond and warn the rider of danger. While no one has resided year-round in the backcountry cabins

since the early 1970s, warden/resource conservation specialist travel continues to be reduced in the backcountry. [139]

The best means of protecting and conserving these spaces is in the physical presence of the individuals responsible for their care. Horses are an integral part of this work, carrying the chainsaws needed to clear trail, allowing considerably longer distances to be travelled in a day, alerting the rider to the presence of bears, and keeping an important tradition alive.

4.8 "There is no end of Stories": story and storytelling in the Warden Service

At the "Tales and Ales" event I described in my introductory chapter, one of the wardens remarked as the evening ended, "there is no end of stories."[140] This statement holds a great deal of truth, which I experienced during interviews: there is a strong tradition of storytelling among wardens. As I will demonstrate below, these stories are significant to the tellers and often illustrate the traditions, the sense of community, and ways of understanding and coping with the warden way of life. Whether shared over supper or a game of card at the cabin, or over a drink in town, these stories are a part of the warden tradition.

What makes a *good* story, the sort of tale that is shared over and over again? The sorts of stories that are told at events like the Tales and Ales event in the town of Jasper or that are told by many tellers and appear in several places are filled with humour and stretch the listener's belief. A good story might describe the courage and determination of the subject, as in the story of Warden Ed McDonald's near death; while others make light of the hard work and everyday dangers of life in the backcountry. Some tales approach the

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[139] I use the considerably more vague word "travel" here because "patrol" can no longer be used to describe the backcountry work done by resource conservation/visitor safety specialists. I was advised that patrol implies law enforcement capabilities, which resource conservation/visitor safety specialists can no longer do.

[140] The event was held in the Whistle Stop Pub in the town of Jasper in August 2010. Unfortunately I didn't see which warden made this statement.

"tall tale" genre: exaggerated for dramatic or humorous effect. These stories are also very illustrative, and often demonstrate a point about the traditions of the warden service. Although I don't have space here to include every good story that was shared with me, I will discuss a few that I was told below.

"Many stories are told of the warden's grit," as Taylor writes in his history of Jasper National Park, before telling a short form of the story of Ed McDonald's near death on the Rocky River district in 1937 (2009:71). MacDonald's ordeal is additionally recorded in three published warden memoirs (Camp 1993; Schintz 2005; Marty 2008a; Marty 2008b), in Sid Marty's poem, "Three Bears," (1973), in the official history of the warden service (Burns 2000). MacDonald's own account of the incident was included in a collection of bear stories published by the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (2008). The story was also shared with to me a few times in conversation over the course of this project.[141]

Roughly it is as follows: Ed McDonald was the Rocky River District warden, and lived alone on his district. In 1937, near Grizzly Cabin, his horse was spooked by a grizzly bear and he was thrown, breaking his pelvis. [142]

McDonald knew that no one would be likely to travel this trail or be concerned about him for a week or more. His dog, Willie, remained at his side. It took McDonald three days to reach his cabin, crawling on his stomach and intermittently falling unconscious from the pain. The bears which had spooked his horse remained in the area, but did not interfere with him. When he reached the cabin another task lay before him: he could not stand to reach the phone to call for help.

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[141] I am certain that this is not a comprehensive list; it only includes the sources that I am aware of.

[142] According to Don Beer's "Jasper-Robson: A Taste of Heaven," Grizzly Cabin received its name in honour of Ed MacDonald's ordeal (1996:108).

By moving some furniture he was finally able to reach the phone and contacted Charlie Matheson, the warden at Maligne Lake. He was carried out on a litter between two horses and recovered in hospital. When McDonald returned to his district, he moved the phone from its spot on the wall to the floor. Here, as the story is told, the phone remained in respect for McDonald.

The Syncline Fire in 2003 destroyed Grizzly Cabin and the loss of this cabin was also the loss of an historic, storied place. I was saddened when I learned that it was impossible to travel here and see if any evidence existed of the phone being relocated near the floor. The story demonstrates the resourcefulness and hardiness of early park wardens. While stories like these, which seem to glorify the "golden age" of the warden service, have been criticized by authors such as Catriona Sandilands (2005) as promoting a "highly prized frontier masculinity," there is at least one other way of considering these stories, especially when shared among wardens.

Stories like these form a part of a strong tradition of storytelling and might also have been a means of understanding and coping with daily life and some extremely stressful events experienced by wardens and family members. In the backcountry, wardens worked in conditions that were both isolated and unpredictable, something also experienced by the family members who joined them. When I asked Max and Julie whether they worried about each other when Max was away from the home cabin on patrol, they shared this story:

> **Julie:** We've told the story a few times but it just probably illustrates the sense of *things can happen.* As he was saying, he would tell me what day he was coming and so the day that I expected him, Terry was able to walk at this point and the two of us walked down to meet him and he didn't come, he didn't come and so we turned around and came home and we'd been in the cabin for some time when the door burst open and Max came in and said, "So you're okay?" and we said, "Sure, we're okay, what's wrong?" and he said, "Well I thought something had happened to you," he heard this scream down on the trail, you know. We learned later it was a cougar but he had seen our tracks and seen that we'd gone back and ahead of him he heard this awful scream and so he

> ran all the way to the cabin. It just shows you that you are kind of alert to things that might happen that wouldn't happen on the ranch here.[143]

Julie later stressed that although they did not constantly worry, they were always extra careful and attentive to possible dangers. Stories like the one Max and Julie shared about their son dropping a trap door on Julie's head (see section 4.6), or this one, told by Julie, demonstrate that while dangerous situations in everyday life are elevated due to their remote location and isolation, they can be met with courage and humour:

> **Julie:** I was out, paddled across the lake in Waterton in my kayak and I was looking for some trillions that grow there …. and I came to kind of a turnaround on the trail and I came head-to-head with a grizzly bear. I measured it afterwards, it was just twelve yards from where we let each other and I had whistle, a thundering whistle, like a sports whistle, and I blew this really loud and instead of scaring him off he just kind of stamped his foot and then walked towards me …. I talked to Andy Russell about this and you know he's a bear expert, a writer about bears. He said, "That bear was sure curious, he just wanted to see you," and I came to think, "well he thought I was a big marmot," because I whistled [*Nicole laughs*] he'd never seem one like that before [*both laugh*]
>
> **Max:** So never whistle!
>
> **Julie:** Never whistle when you meet a bear [*all laugh*]
>
> **Nicole:** I'll remember that [*laughs*][144]

Each of these experiences could have been felt as traumatic, and reason to turn away from the warden service and the backcountry. In sharing these stories, wardens and warden wives share details of potentially dangerous events while tacitly demonstrating their resilience, competence and comfort in their backcountry homes.

One aspect of warden work, which I have mentioned only briefly in previous sections, is search and rescue. In Jasper, wardens respond to climbing accidents, avalanches, and rescue lost or injured hikers or skiers, and even arrive as first responders to highway

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[143] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[144] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

accidents. They may find victims seriously injured, or be working to recover bodies or body parts. Due to the nature of high altitude mountain rescues and the extreme, changeable mountain weather, wardens may find themselves camped out overnight with such victims until morning or a break in weather.

Kathy Calvert and Dale Portman, both former park wardens who specialized in mountain rescues in the Rocky Mountains, discuss the development of "critical stress debriefing" for rescue workers in the parks in their book, *Guardians of the Peaks* (2006). Calvert and Portman write that in the early days of rescue work, wardens met afterwards to discuss what went well, and what could be improved, usually "over a few beers" (2006:306). These informal conversations were effective and preferred by wardens over more formalized debriefing sessions, because it was an, "opportunity to share the experience with co-workers who were there and who understood … no one went home right after a serious accident to sit and stew alone" (2006:306-307).

Critical stress debriefing was, however, not in place in the early development of search and rescue in the national parks and unheard-of for early wardens. During our interview, one former warden described the difficulty he faced after participating in a rescue where remains were recovered and returning not long after, alone, to his district cabin. As per the quote above, the trauma of the experience was difficult to deal with alone in the backcountry.

There are many other types of stories that were shared with me during this research, including those of domestic life and home spaces. For couples at the cabin, finding a bit of personal space was sometimes impossible. Max and Julie Winkler shared this story, about the difficulties of living in a confined space and sharing an extremely saggy bed:

> **Julie:** …. there were times, you know, when you would rather be alone in the cabin then there with this man that you couldn't get rid of [*Nicole laughs*] and vice-versa, you know but that's what it was like
>
> **Max:** **[** And then you see the bed brought us together again. We had such lousy beds sometimes they'd sag this way and they'd sag this way [*demonstrates*]. She always thought that her knees should be bending the [wrong] way. I mean, they really had poor beds because the places were not really made for the comfort of married people and so it really brought you together by morning you were practically on top of each other

Julie: I put a pole down,[from top to bottom] so then we were in each our own little cup, you know, [*Nicole and Max laugh*] but there was the pole that was taking [so much space], so instead I did a wire from top to bottom

Max: And I say she strung a barbed wire! [*all laugh*]

Julie: But it wasn't, it was under the mattress

Max: But when we had the nine months of food which we had to pack in and we had a shortage of room, maybe you can find your sketch for how much room there was

Julie: **[** oh it was a bed and a figure lying on it

Max: **[** we put all the food underneath the bed and actually then it was quite good sleeping there [*all laugh*] I mean you had flour and all these kinds of things, sugar. But as you ate your way down off it sagged again [*all laugh*][145]

In the above story, Max laughingly admits to exaggerating by saying that Julie placed a barbed wire between them on their bed. A stretching of the truth is, as Bauman writes, "exaggerates and selects [and] is not exactly the same as an outright lie" and in it's expressive elaboration is "a form of verbal art … characteristically *performed*, subject to evaluation, both as truth and as art for the skill and effectiveness of which it is told" (1981:89-90). Stories were, of course, also shared for entertainment, in the company of other wardens who have had, or can at least relate to, your experiences. This is very similar to what Sharon Anderson described (as quoted in section 4.6) about the evening radio call feeling more real and relevant to her life than the AM radio when she and Gord lived at Jacques Lake.

When listening to stories, I found that the tellers made it clear when a story was exaggerated, as Bob Barker and Al Stendie demonstrate here, in response to my question about the cabins feeling like homes:

[145] Max and Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

> **Bob:** The cabins were home, boy, every one of them was home. You made very single, even a halfway cabin. There was a cabin roughly every ten miles apart. Some places they were thirteen miles but most of them were ten miles apart.
>
> **Al:** In wintertime they were fifty miles apart [*Al and Nicole laugh*]
>
> **Bob:** Yeah, you want to believe it. We had incidents there too, one cabin on the Southesk, on the South Boundary that had a padlock down low. I came in there in the summertime and I thought: "What in the world is that thing down there for?" Well, the following winter I found out after going thirteen, or eleven miles from Isaac to Southesk because that's about where I was just about down here getting to it [*Al and Nicole laugh*] on snowshoes. And then I realized the guy wasn't so bad that put that lock there at all. But no those cabins, boy I'll tell you, every time you come around the corner and saw the cabin – home, home at last.[146]

Al's comment on the cabin distances isn't meant to be taken seriously, while Bob's story about the padlock seems incredible, but is true. I interviewed Bob and Al separately at Bob's home and the result was two interviews where stories and comments weaved in, often with humorous results. Another interesting thing that appears in this exchange is how both Bob and Al make light of the Bob's description of arriving so exhausted that he was practically crawling to the cabin.

Some stories seem to get away from the original teller, such as this one, told by Mac Elder:

> **Mac:** When I was at Willow Creek I had a grizzly put me up a tree one time …. I was on foot and I was walking and I had a Malamute dog one time that'd been wished on to me. I didn't ask for it but I got one and it was a nice dog but anyway the dog wasn't at fault. *Lots of people tell this story and say the dog brought the bear back to* me and that didn't happen, it could have happened but it didn't happen.[147] (emphasis added)

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[146] This quote appears in both Bob Barker's and Al Stendie's interview transcript because of the overlapping nature of the interviews.

[147] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

I had heard this story before I met Mac, and in the version I heard, the dog brought the bear back to him. Mac told me that the dog did bring back elk a few times, and he shared another story where the dog brought back a moose: perhaps this is where the confusion began.

> **Mac:** I had a moose run up to me when I was walking, looking for horses one time in the long grass and the dog ran up right beside me and I said to the dog, "What's chasing you?" and then I thought about what I said you know [*Nicole and Cathy laugh*] and I looked around and this moose was so close to me I hit it across the face with my bridle. I was carrying a bridle in my hand and then I hit the moose first and then I hit the dog next and the dog ran away again and got rid of the moose.[148]

For the story to get away from the teller like the one above, it must be shared and shared again. Whether shared on the trails, while visiting at the cabins, or in town over a drink, a strong tradition of storytelling goes hand in hand with the spirit of camaraderie and pride in the warden service. As Warden Sylvia Forest described during the *Silent Partners and Women Wardens* talk, the warden service is a strong community, a *family*, where lifelong connections are made.[149]

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[148] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

[149] Paraphrased from notes. "Silent Partners and Women Wardens," Heritage Fireside Chats, hosted by Brian Bindon, April 2, 2005.

Chapter 5: "Guardians of the Wild": engagement and pride

5.0 Living in Places

> *The wardens were the people, the guardians of everything …*
>
> - Bob Barker, interview transcript

"Guardians of the Wild" is the title of the official history of the Canadian Park Warden service (Burns 2000), and I borrow this phrase as the title of this chapter because it highlights an important theme apparent in conversations with former wardens and family members, and in archival documents and published memoirs: pride in the care of the parks and a sense of duty towards them, fostered by their deep engagement with these places.

Temporary and seasonal wardens spent time in the backcountry before being hired as permanent wardens and were given a backcountry district in the first few years of their career. After a warden was promoted to a highway district, they still travelled in backcountry areas to patrol, to do maintenance on cabins or trails, and to monitor and observe. Over the warden's career, this adds up to an incredible amount of time spent on the trails of the parks, moving on foot or on horseback, all the while attending the environment, from the movements, tracks and numbers of animals, to the conditions of the trails, to the weather patterns and changes, to the minute changes in a horse's manner.

The first few years which the warden, or warden and family, spent living in the backcountry were incredibly important in encouraging a sense of home and connection to these places. As Julie Winkler describes below, in response to my question of whether the cabins felt like homes, to her the home was more than just the district cabin:

> **Julie:** Oh very much so. Very much so and the home included not just this little cabin but all the environs, all the mountains around and the waters and the animals. Everything about it, it's something like we feel on the ranch here that home is this little house but a hundred and sixty acres is home for us because we spend more time outside than inside in

> the summer. Yes, I think you'd find that other people felt the same way.[150]

During my interview with Barb Barker, she also touched upon the subject of engagement, in the quote below:

> **Barb:** … If you start to live in a place you become part of it, it becomes part of you and you become naturally protective towards it. When we lived in the backcountry with my dad or even when we were at Snaring, my dad and Bob could take you to any place to see whatever it was and they knew approximately how many were in the herd and that was from repetitive counting and usually the wife had the job of being the secretary and they would go: "cow, calf, yearling, bull," you know and they would do that on more than one occasion with the same herd so that they knew almost exactly how many animals were in that particular herd and they could tell you how many rams, how many lambs were born every spring in a particular herd, they knew where everything was. The Canadian Wildlife Service were always amazed when they would want to find out where anything was because both Bob and my dad could tell them, "okay of you want to find the such-and-such you look here and go about six o'clock at night is a good time," because they knew their district right? When you are just travelling through you are just a passer-by.[151]

Barb is talking about deep, direct sensory engagement with backcountry areas. Unless the warden/resource conservation specialist moves through and attends to these spaces, their knowledge, connection, and dedication to these spaces cannot be as strong. While no one has resided year-round in the backcountry cabins since the early 1970s, every time that warden/resource conservation specialist travel is reduced in the backcountry a little more of that potential for personal connection and knowledge of these places is lost.

The concept of pride was frequently brought up by wardens and family members. At first I felt that they were describing pride as in "to take pride in" something, I now believe they refer to pride as distinctive, observable quality; a reflection of the care bestowed not only upon the cabin but the district as a whole.

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[150] Julie Winkler, interview transcript.

[151] Barb Barker, interview transcript.

During my second meeting with Bob Barker, he described the yearly round of work he completed on the district, finishing by saying that, in general, it was important to "make the district look like someone cares about it" (Bob Barker, interview notes). As I have noted above (see section 4.6) there were few visitors to the backcountry before the 1970s. The annual appearance of the chief or assistant chief park warden may be reason enough to keep a district in order, but judging by the language used by the former wardens, I did not get the impression that maintenance of the district was just about "doing the job." Mac Elder, in the context of describing how the backcountry areas had changed since he lived on the districts, told me that:

> **Mac:** It's changed in that there's a lack of maintenance, there's a real, real lack of maintenance in that the places are not well kept and even the buildings and cabins there, everybody there goes through and uses them but they're not as clean as they should be and they're not as, it's because it's not a custom, it's not, you know years ago everything had to be spic and span and if you used somebody else's stuff, and went into somebody else's house, you know, *we used to figure that we were the caretaker… this is mine, I'm a caretaker but it's got to be in perfect condition*[152] (emphasis mine)

In the latter part of this quote, Mac Elder brings up two points about the cabins: a feeling of responsibility to care for them, and a desire to make it perfect. How does care tie in to home in the backcountry?

The answer is suggested by Heidegger, who writes that dwelling means "staying with things," that is, in preserving, cultivating and constructing (1971:151). It seems that the concept of pride, as a quality observable to any outsider, is one key to understanding dwelling in the backcountry because pride connects work life to home life. The pride demonstrated in a well kept home and district signifies that the warden is at home, is dwelling, here.

Mac also points out in the above quote that there is, today, a visible lack of care of the cabins. He was not the only former warden to describe the cabins as looking neglected,

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[152] Mac Elder, interview transcript.

especially in comparison to how they appeared and would have been cared for in prior years. Tim Ingold writes that:

> [Houses] have life-histories, which consist in the unfolding of their relations with both human and non-human components of their environments. To the extent that the influence of the human component prevails, any feature of the environment will seem more like a building; to the extent that the non-human component prevails, it will seem less so. Thus does the house, following its abandonment by its human occupants, become a ruin (1995:78)

Many of the cabins have begun to show signs of "ruin," most noticeably in places that are no longer regularly used. Water damage and mould can quickly overtake a building in the backcountry. Careless cabin users who neglect the cabin closing procedures may invite flies and mice inside.[153] Occasionally, backcountry travellers will break into the cabins: sometimes seeking comfort and shelter in an emergency, in other times they have less justifiable reasons. In either case, a broken window unattended for days, weeks or longer invites decay.

When I travelled to warden cabins in Jasper during the summer of 2011, I found only two cabins that I would, with my outsider's perspective, describe as appearing neglected: Jacques Lake and Beaver Lake. Jacques Lake Cabin is often used by park staff (that is, other than wardens/resource conservation specialists), and several recent cabin register entries suggest that not all users are doing their part to maintain the cabins. Beaver Lake, near the trailhead to the Jacques Lake and the South Boundary trail, does not appear as if it is ever used by anyone. In the heart of the backcountry, where cabin use is reduced and tends to most regularly be wardens/resource conservation specialists, the cabins appeared very clean and orderly inside.

Some warden stations, including Snaring, Cavell and Decoigne, located on Jasper's highways are used as seasonal housing for park staff rather than for wardens or resource

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[153] A list of cabin closing procedures was posted near the door of each of the cabins I visited. The list included general cleaning and repair where possible, removal of extra food and garbage, the emptying of the slop bucket, and a reminder to top-up lamps, the wood-pile and kindling.

conservation/visitor safety specialists. Unfortunately, with only seasonal use, the cabins and warden stations are no longer cared for as they would have been when they were homes. Loni Klettl, whose family resided at Cavell Warden Station from 1960 to 1972, describes the visible changes to her former home below:

> **Loni:** … Cavell house is still there and it's just used by summer staff and it still gets, it's kind of hard on my dad when he drives by because he built such a home there you know. *That was the Tonquin Valley District Headquarters and so that was, that house and the sign epitomized how he felt about his district*. So then the house was always tidy and the yard, because he felt that that was really important because that was the headquarters of that district and then see, he put so much effort to build, as I said, to make the place look really nice and then when people, like now it's just summer staff, and it just has this air of neglect that it's really hard for these old guys to see their homes just so run down
>
> **Nicole:** How does it feel for you to see it?
>
> **Loni:** Well it's still the same, sorry, it's just [*pauses*]. What it is, it's because things change so much and it's just, *there's no pride because people aren't living in places*, people aren't living in these areas, they are not living, so when everyone's just there for the month it's like it doesn't … it's really sad to see those stations really become really run down, because we have such a different memory of them, right, because that was our home. *It was our very special spot where Dad made a difference in his district. And his home reflected that*.[154] (Emphasis mine)

Loni emphasizes that Cavell Warden Station was once a dear home to her and her family, under the care of her father Warden Toni Klettl. As the cabin begins to suffer from lack of maintenance, it no longer has the appearance of a home.

Above, I have linked pride to dwelling, but if *people aren't living in places*, as Loni described, is it possible to have pride today?

When I met with former wardens, their wives, and children who experienced life in the backcountry, I did not realize how important current, highly contested issues would be to the community of people connected to the park. In 2011, several new developments were

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[154] Loni Klettl, interview transcript.

proposed for Banff and Jasper National Parks, including via ferrata (a system of bolted ladders and cables on the sides of mountains), zip lines and canopy walks and, in Jasper National Park, the "Skywalk," a commercial, glass-floored walkway overlooking Tangle Creek. [155]

Some of the most active opponents of these new developments were, and remain, Jasper's former wardens. Many wrote letters to local papers in Jasper and Hinton, the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald and spoke on national radio.

In an interview with Ed Struzik, printed in the Edmonton Journal on May 14, 2011, Max Winkler stated that "It would be easy to put this behind me now that I'm retired … I believe that the national parks stand for something in this country, and that it is my duty to preserve that ideal for future generations."

Former Jasper warden Rod Wallace, now on the Board of Directors for the Park Warden Alumni Society of Alberta, wrote a letter of protest which was sent to Parks Canada and also published in the Fitzhugh, Jasper's local newspaper. In the letter, written on behalf of the Park Warden Alumni Society, Wallace calls the Tangle Creek skywalk an "eyesore" and a concept "revolting and degrading in a national park" (Wallace 2011).

Gord Anderson, in a letter that was sent to the Director General of Western and Northern National Parks, finished by saying, "Oh for the days that we rode for the brand … and

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[155] The "Skywalk" was approved in late 2011 and construction is proposed to begin in summer 2012. The controversy, which is ongoing at the time of writing, regarding the walkway was focused on two main issues. The first was the commercialization of landscapes in the park. The Tangle Creek Viewpoint, located 97.5 kilometers from the town of Jasper on the Icefields Parkway, was formerly free for any visitor to experience, however visitors will now have to take a bus from the Icefields Centre (6.5 kilometers away). The bus is free, but payment is required to access the full walkway with a tour guide, which will be owned and operated by Brewster Corporation. The second main issue was concern for the wildlife in the area. Although a preliminary study suggested that that the walkway would not greatly disturb habitat for mountain goats and other species, opponents of the walkway argue that more study is required.

were proud to do so …" (Anderson 2011).[156] The "we" he is referring to are the retired members of the warden service, like himself, who have been fighting the walkway. In the same letter, Anderson writes:

> Most of my service with Parks Canada was as a warden in the field and a good portion of that was in the backcountry…. From the beginning, the warden service was given the task of protecting and managing the park ecosystem with minimal impairment as a heritage to be enjoyed by our children of the future. The majority of us took this very seriously, often to the detriment and hardship of family and personal life. The trade off was the opportunity to experience and absorb the essence of our great Canadian wilderness in the course of our duties in the field. No other function in national parks had the opportunity to manage the resources of the park like the warden service as it once existed. No person can understand the connection with the landscape that grew within each of us until you have spent extended periods of solitary time soaking up the wilderness of which you have been tasked to protect (Anderson 2011).

Anderson points out that wardens like himself have been instilled with the ethic of preservation, protection and management in their training, and in their employment. Park wardens have become intimately connected to these places through long periods of sensory engagement: in their movement through the backcountry, and by attending to it, and caring for it with pride. It is clear that for many, a sense of guardianship over the parks does not fade after retirement. However, their sense of pride is being eroded as they witness developments which contradict the ethics ingrained in words and in practice: on the trails, at the cabins, across ridgelines and along the rivers of the backcountry.

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[156] A copy of Gord Anderson's letter was printed in the Fitzhugh, a newspaper distributed in the towns of Jasper and Hinton, Alberta, and in the Rocky Mountain Outlook a newspaper distributed in Banff and Canmore Alberta. See: http://fitzhugh.ca/letters-to-the-editor/3217-march-31-2011 (Accessed July 21, 2012.) Also see: http://www.rmoutlook.com/article/20110331/RMO0904/303319982/0/RMO0307 (Accessed July 21, 2012.) Gord provided a copy to me when I met him and Sharon in June 2011.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Research Summary

This research project aimed to explore daily life in the backcountry of Jasper National Park between 1952 and 1972 as experienced by district wardens, warden wives and their children. I also hoped to understand whether those who lived year-round at the district cabins felt a true sense of home in these places — isolated, remote, and temporary as they were.

At the end of this project I must admit that I have had only a small glimpse into the lives of wardens and families on the backcountry districts. I often reflected on how different this project might have been if families were still residing year-round at the cabins or had this research been done in 1965 and I could have witnessed life there in person; with notebook, pencil and a tape recorder in-hand. In 2011 my imagination and attention to traces had to suffice when I stood inside Jacques Lake, Brazeau and Blue Creek cabins.

There is still a great deal that I do not know about everyday realities of backcountry home life in Jasper during the district era, about the management of the backcountry or the traditions of the warden service, especially as these are experienced from within. I have, however, come to understand the following things:

Many of men and women who made their home in the backcountry adapted and thrived in these places. There were many challenges to be met: planning and paying for a winter's worth of food, transporting small children, and keeping the forestry phone line working, to name a few. I often imagine the strength and determination of wardens who walked out of their districts by snowshoe in the winter months to turn in their monthly report, only to turn back and return to their district alone, over passes and across avalanche slopes. Yet at home, warden wives experienced a sense of isolation and confinement as they remained at the cabin, caring for children while wardens travelled on patrol or to town.

The cabins were welcoming places and wardens visited their neighbours, whether thirty or sixty kilometres down the trail. Cabin registers record messages from work crews or hikers, thanking the wardens and family members for their hospitality. Single wardens and families looked out for each other, and kept in touch over the forestry line.

Wardens and family members who lived year-round in the backcountry were deeply engaged with, and knowledgeable of, the spaces they lived within. The individuals with whim I spoke expressed love and concern for the integrity of the national parks, which lasted beyond their years working in them.

6.1 Reflections on Policy and the Future of Backcountry Spaces

One of the questions that I asked during interviews was: Do you think that current park personnel who patrol the backcountry in Jasper or in other parks still have the same connection and understanding of those places [as the interviewees did] without being there full time?

This question was designed to explore the responses of former wardens and family members to current reductions in the backcountry presence of resource conservation/visitor safety specialists, not to criticize their dedication or efforts. No one who I talked to blamed a lack of care on the current park staff when they described the lack of maintenance done on the cabins. Rather, they were critical of the changes in policy which have led to a focus on frontcountry areas, and of federal cutbacks to park funding. Bob Barker, in answering the above question, responded that:

> **Bob:** All they know is what was left for them, that we left for them and they read up on, and it's nice that they have two people that are keen about being out there. I know there's a lot of young people who would love to do what we did and it's a different system for them and they don't have that opportunity because I don't think that the higher ups feel that it's a necessity to have people out there and they need to be looking after the frontcountry more. But it doesn't mean that those young people wouldn't want to do what we did, if they could, if they were allowed to and I think it's kind of robbed them a bit because I know that anyone that Al [*Stendie*] and I have ever dealt with and taken with us is really showed, most of them, not all of them, but most of them have shown a keen interest in knowing some of the stuff that we actually learned and were taught to survive.[157]

[157] Bob Barker, interview transcript.

As Bob points out, backcountry resource conservation specialists do not have the same opportunity to live on a district, nor do they have the time while working in the backcountry to keep the trails, cabins, campsites, and bridges maintained to the same standards as prior wardens. His use of the word "robbed" is especially poignant: they are robbed of opportunity for engagement, and they are robbed of a sense of pride in the knowing and keeping of those places.

Only two people are now responsible for the North and South Boundary areas of the park (see trail maps in Appendix B). These backcountry areas were once split into several districts, with wardens living full time within each. I did not conduct formal interviews with current backcountry staff, but I did meet both of Jasper's North and South Boundary resource conservation/public safety specialists. It is difficult to say whether they feel the same pride towards their areas as was expressed by previous generations of wardens. What was clear, however, was their dedication to and love for these places, and their respect for the history and traditions of the warden service.

There has been a slow withdrawal from backcountry areas in the history of the national parks and the park warden service: from its beginnings, when tourists arrived by train and travelled with guides by horse outfit, to the building of roads, the arrival of cars, and the end of the district system, to current times. Many former wardens and family members recognize and described to me the importance of living within the spaces that they have been entrusted to study, to manage and to protect as part of their development of a meaningful connection to the park.

Their sense of connection transcended work-life: they were at home in the backcountry. Yet the deep engagement and attention to backcountry spaces described by former wardens and family members is difficult to achieve without long periods of time working and living within them. A sense of connection and active attention to the environment cannot be made remotely; a wildlife camera or an overhead wildlife count by helicopter can only tell part of the story. The implications for the future of parks like Jasper are significant. Budget cuts have reduced the movement and presence of resource conservation/public safety specialists and other park staff through the backcountry. Current resource conservation/public safety specialists are responsible for larger areas than previous generations of wardens, yet have less time in the backcountry to manage and care for these areas.

The unexpected

When I approached this research I had expected that the changes to the warden service which occurred in 2008, when most wardens were re-designated as resource conservation or public safety personnel, to be a sensitive issue. What I did not anticipate was the passionate and well organized activism of former wardens and family members against new developments proposed in Jasper National Park in 2011 discussed above. In May 2012, cutbacks in federal funding, which affected all National Parks and Historic Sites in Canada, led to the loss of 41 jobs in Jasper National Park (Struzik 2012).

The reduced numbers in park staff and services were followed by a summer of intense weather in Jasper. Heavy rains brought high waters and flooded areas of Jasper and other mountain national parks. In the front and backcountry areas, bridges and trails were washed out and low meadows became swamps. Parks resources, already strained due to funding cutbacks, have been stretched even further. My partner and I cancelled a planned recreational trip up the Blue Creek Valley in the north area of Jasper after we were warned that Blue Creek was running extremely high and had washed out a major bridge. This was one of the areas we visited in 2011 as part of this research. This trail is part of the "decommissioned" north area of the park, meaning that it does not receive regular trail maintenance. Now, we wonder if the trail is lost, or whether the bridge will ever be replaced.

On August 7th, Fifth Bridge, an access point to the extremely popular Maligne Canyon trail was washed out and Maligne Lake Road was closed by a mudslide. Although Maligne Lake re-opened a week later, the loss of foot bridges on front and backcountry trails is alarming. Resource Conservation specialists and other backcountry workers may still be able to travel through these areas by horseback or if they are brought in by helicopters, but without bridges and trail maintenance, backcountry areas become adverse and dangerous for hikers. With recent cutbacks in federal funding to the national parks, resources are already stretched, and where available, tend to focus on the user-heavy frontcountry. Sadly, reduced access for hikers in backcountry areas, especially trails like the North Boundary, already "decommissioned," may justify their further neglect and render them unusable except to the most determined. One such area is the trail between the Jacques Lake and Grizzly hiker campgrounds and warden cabins: after the Syncline

Fire in 2003, deadfall on this trail has made it impassable for horses and very difficult for hikers.

With the cumulative impacts of reduced funding to the parks, reductions in backcountry maintenance, unusual weather, and wildfire, do the backcountry trails and campsites that draw Canadians and visitors from around the world still "look like someone cares" about them, in the manner Bob Barker described in section 6.0?

When park wardens and resource conservation specialists attend to and care for the backcountry, they are also modelling a relationship of respect for that environment for visitors. Whether the visitor meets the warden or resource conservation specialist on the trail or at the cabin, or if their work is only perceived from a distance, the well-kept trails and cabins, the open grazing meadows, the marked and welcoming campsites all indicate that the backcountry areas are cared for.

Reductions to current resource conservation staff presence are more than alarming: in order to protect the ecological integrity and cultural heritage of National Parks like Jasper, it is essential to keep resource conservation specialists on those trails, engaging with their environment, caring for, and attending to, backcountry places.

While it is unlikely that wardens or resource conservation specialists would desire to return to year-round residence in the backcountry, there are other options that would give backcountry resource specialists the opportunity to maintain and attend to the park and its resources. Longer and more frequent backcountry trips, the hiring of additional backcountry resource conservation specialists who would be responsible for smaller areas and/or a return to seasonal backcountry residence would all offer the potential for current and future backcountry resource conservation specialists to experience, engage with, understand, guard and care for the backcountry of the park.

The Warden Cabins

I mentioned early in this thesis how difficult it could be to find information about the cabins and their histories. Locating cabins in person or verifying their existence on a map proved, in some cases, very difficult. Some cabins, once found, looked lonely and unused, slowly returning to nature as the meadows grew in around them.

On the way to Brazeau Cabin, I stopped at Four Point Patrol Cabin, unlocked the door, opened the storm windows, and commenced taking pictures. At Four Point, the hiker trail passes directly in front of the cabin and as I photographed outside, I met two hikers who were hiking out of the South Boundary area. They wondered what I was doing there, with the cabin opened up, and I explained my project. The male hiker suggested to me that the cabins had limited days. As he explained, because of the reductions in backcountry maintenance they were not being used as often and, at least in Banff where the couple resided, they were no longer considered necessary. He also pointed out that with the restructuring of the warden service which occurred in 2008, wardens are now involved only in law enforcement and primarily work in frontcountry areas. There were no longer *wardens* in the backcountry; therefore the warden cabins were no longer needed.

This was the first time that someone had so strongly suggested to me that the cabins might be destroyed.

I admit that I first approached the backcountry cabins with admiration, mingled with longing. I did not have permission to stay in the cabins: I was entrusted with a key for the purpose of photographing the cabins only. I earnestly believed and, at the time, would have argued if anyone had asked, that if they were not being used, if they were thought of as "assets" to be "reduced" then why not rent them to the public? The funds would pay for their upkeep and provide an incredible experience for visitors.

In my imagination, "visitor" surely included me.

As my project progressed I began to revisit these assumptions. In conversation with current personnel, and when as I returned to my interview tapes to transcribe my interviews a new understanding of the cabins emerged. I approached Jacques Lake cabin, the first cabin that I visited, with excitement, perhaps even a sense of entitlement. When I reached my last selected cabin, Blue Creek, I realized that I now felt like a wandering thief, a stranger in someone's home. I snapped my photos quickly, awkwardly, and left the cabin as soon as I could. I wrote my notes on the porch of the cabin with mosquitoes buzzing in my ears rather than lingering inside.

Why? Because they felt like home places, not "assets" with an interesting history, or something similar to the backcountry alpine huts administered by the Alpine Club of Canada or the backpacker lodges operating on the Skyline Trail.

When I spoke to Howie Klettl in December 2011, he told me he had been offered keys to the backcountry cabins which he was documenting, but he had refused it. I asked him why, and he described a similar feeling of invasiveness. In the quote below, he describes his experience of arriving at a cabin, providing hints at the reasons he felt this way:

> **Howie:** I know where they are, I've looked on the map so I know I'm getting close so I think, *what's this one going to look like? What's this one going to look like?* And then you come around the corner and there it is … you pull up to the front porch and you get your pack off and you sit there and just spend half an hour before you do anything else you just sit there and think and listen and smell and pick some weeds around and just try to do what you can, straighten the woodpile out and then start taking pictures and walk around and see what's around the cabin, where their water supply is and that sort of thing. But it's that half hour you spend on the porch that, because usually most of them have a stump or something to sit on, or an old chair that was built a hundred years ago and you just sit there and go, *who else sat here and looked out like this?* And when kids were out playing around …. It's a sentimental thing actually … because *you think about what has happened there over the 80 years the cabin has been around and you just give it a little respect.*[158] (emphasis mine)

Howie's attitude towards the cabins above and in the quotes elsewhere in this thesis is very instructive: they were homes, they are places with a rich history that is not accessible to everyone, and they deserve respect. However, while some people will approach the cabins with an understanding of their history and a sense of respect towards them, the average hiker will not. The average visitor has little opportunity to engage with the stories, the life histories, of these former backcountry home places.

Recall the imagined hiker which I described in the first paragraphs of this thesis. The porch of the uninhabited cabin offers many things: shelter from the rain, a resting spot, an impressive view, and a register book with the names, hometowns, and detailed entries of

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[158] Howie Klettl, interview transcript. Emphasis mine.

other travellers. Lacking from the porch is any interpretive material that might assist a visitor in understanding the lived history and purpose of the cabin.

In Banff National Park, at Stony Creek Cabin, there is a plaque commemorating Dorothy Carleton, a current resident of the town of Banff and former warden wife in Banff's backcountry.[159] I, for one, would love to see some of the stories of Jasper's warden families shared at or near the cabins where they made their homes. While some of that history is recorded in the pages of this thesis, or can be found within published memoirs and histories and archival documents, and perhaps, soon, online as Howie Klettl's cabin project grows, I believe the most powerful place to encounter the history and learn of the significance of a cabin would be on that porch.

A gesture of acknowledgment of this kind is perfectly in step with Parks Canada's mandate, quoted below, which is not only to protect but to foster understanding of historically significant places:

> On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations (Parks Canada 2011b).

A warden cabin hidden deep in the backcountry of a National Park need not be mysterious in its purpose, location, or history. Many of these cabins have been recognized as National Historic Places. Considering that visitors will likely encounter warden cabins empty a little context would surely add to their experience and appreciation of these places.

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[159] Stony Creek Cabin is located on the Cascade Fire Road, and can be accessed near Lake Minnewanka near the town of Banff. I am grateful to Howie Klettl, who has documented this cabin for his project, for mentioning the plaque when we spoke in December 2011. Despite an attempt on cross country skis in March 2012, doomed by slushy, gritty, late-season trail conditions, I have not seen it myself.

Commemorative signage at or near the cabins would have a second, related value: in remembering the historic and ongoing value of these places, Parks Canada may demonstrate its dedication to its own legacy of protection in the backcountry.

The mention of these cabins often brought back dear memories to those with a connection to them, with stories and laughter soon to follow. When I spoke of the cabins to those who had never heard of them, or who had seen them and wondered what they were about, I witnessed their interest and excitement. Surely, there are ways to tell hikers and other backcountry travellers, on the spot, about the history and significance of these places.

The most important contribution that this project can make is to record the stories of men and women who experienced living year-round in the backcountry districts. These have no doubt been shared elsewhere: over coffee, on the trail, or even in front of audiences at events such as the Tales and Ales events held in the town of Jasper. In the same summer that I travelled in Alberta and British Columbia to interview former wardens, their partners, and family members, a representative of the Warden Alumni Association was also collecting the oral histories of many of the same people I spoke to. Mike Dillon, Cultural Resources Manager in Jasper, mentioned that he was also completing an oral history project involving retired Jasper wardens. When I met with Max and Julie Winkler, Julie reflected that, "You know we've done this a few times and, funny, we always tell the same story. If anybody did any research on us in the future they'd say, "Well they told that story about six times!" (Julie Winkler, interview transcript).

Some stories deserve to be repeated and I did encounter stories during interviews and conversations that I had heard elsewhere. I believe that where this research departs from others is the focus on home life and the experiences of family members rather than the work life of wardens. A good bear story will delight an audience and the stories of the grizzled toughness of early wardens are incredible to hear. But there is so much more: what I hope to have also captured here is the collective, collaborative stories of wardens and family members, speaking together of their shared experiences. When I think of the backcountry I think of the many narratives captured within my interview transcripts. I imagine Barb and Bob Barker travelling on horseback over Nigel Pass with their infant child wrapped in a blanket and held between the saddle and themselves. I think of the gentle old horses that were entrusted to carry children, and the little picket fence built around the brand new Brazeau Cabin in 1961 which kept Max and Julie Winkler's young

son, Terry, from wandering out of his parent's sight. Or, Gord and Sharon Anderson's two year-old son, Travis sitting up in his bed, shouting, "Shut up you elk!" as the elk bugled in the yard at Rocky Forks Cabin. I am touched by the tenderness and humanity these stories impress upon the cabins and the backcountry areas.

6.2 Directions for Future Research

Women

There is still much more to be told about women's history as wives and wardens in the National Parks. In section 3.6, I discussed the scarcity of information available on the experiences of the first female wardens in Canada's National Parks. In the introduction to her collection of women's stories, Ann Dixon wrote that, "The history within these pages is just a beginning and by no means complete, but perhaps it is enough to encourage another to take up the pen" (1985:3). Sadly, in 2012 there has not yet been a memoir published by a former warden wife or female warden in Canada. Nor is there a volume like Polly Kaufman's history of women's experiences in the parks service in the United States, which demonstrates the connection between warden wives and women wardens, and brings attention to women's struggles for recognition, equal treatment and acceptance from their male counterparts (1996).

In this research, indeed as part of my original research question, I aimed to explore life in the backcountry during the district era as experienced by women, the warden wives, with as much attention as I gave to the men. I heard many stories about the struggles, the strength, and the humour that women brought with them when they rode out to live in the backcountry.

However, I only interviewed three women who lived on the backcountry districts. This was personally very disappointing. One reason is a practical one: not all wardens were married, thus there are more men who experienced this way of life than women, who were not themselves hired as wardens until 1974.

Some women whom I contacted were not interested in speaking to me about their experiences. I did not pressure them for a reason. Some women might simply be uncomfortable talking about their experiences, or wish for privacy. My sense is that others may not feel that their experiences as backcountry "warden wives" are strongly

tied to their sense of self identity. Although women would have continued to be involved in assisting their husbands, with no compensation, even after moving to a highway district or to town, it was their husbands who made their career as wardens while women made their own paths.

These possible explanations are not, however, an excuse not to learn about their experiences, nor am I attempting to diminish their contributions. I hope that in the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated that women's stories are also known, shared and respected in Jasper. They are inscribed onto these places, from Julie Winkler's carved name plates on the cabins in Brazeau district to white log ends on Jacques Lake Cabin, painted by Sharon Anderson.

Horse and Human relationships

Another area which deserves more attention is that of human and horse relationships in the mountain national parks. In my section titled, "Little (horse) Heaven," above, I touched upon this subject but this is only a glimpse and suggestion of what could be a very interesting research topic. Most of the information shared with me about horses was given without my asking; it was one of the unexpected, but very rewarding outcomes of this project.

Although I have focused on the warden service in this study, a study on horses and humans in the mountains could be opened to include horse outfitters who work both in and outside of the national parks. The horse use in the Rockies preceded the creation of the parks, however, horse use has declined since the 1960s and horse outfitters are finding it more difficult to make a living in and around today's parks.

6.3 End

Standing on the porch the district cabins that I visited, even at Jacques Lake in the rain, the stunning surroundings filled my heart with joy. It was difficult for me, as a visitor, to imagine a person who did not want to make their home, or could not feel at home, here. I imagined these places, alive, with children wandering in the yard and all the small homey details of a lived-in place.

There were many stresses and pressures on everyday life on the backcountry. There were men and women who could not feel at home at these cabins. Yet, for some, the

anticipated and the unexpected pleasures of life at the cabins made their years memorable and dear to them and they thrived in these places, creating life-long connections, a sense of pride and duty to protect them.

There were so many memorable stories were shared with me over coffee, over the digital recorder, on the telephone, or in notes in the margins of the transcripts that could not be given adequate attention here. I hope some day they will, in some format, somewhere.

This thesis project began on an August evening, at a warden storytelling event in Jasper. By and round, as stories go, I must return to that evening again to end it, as one warden did that night, with the reminder that "there is no end of stories."

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Appendix A

Jasper National Park District Map

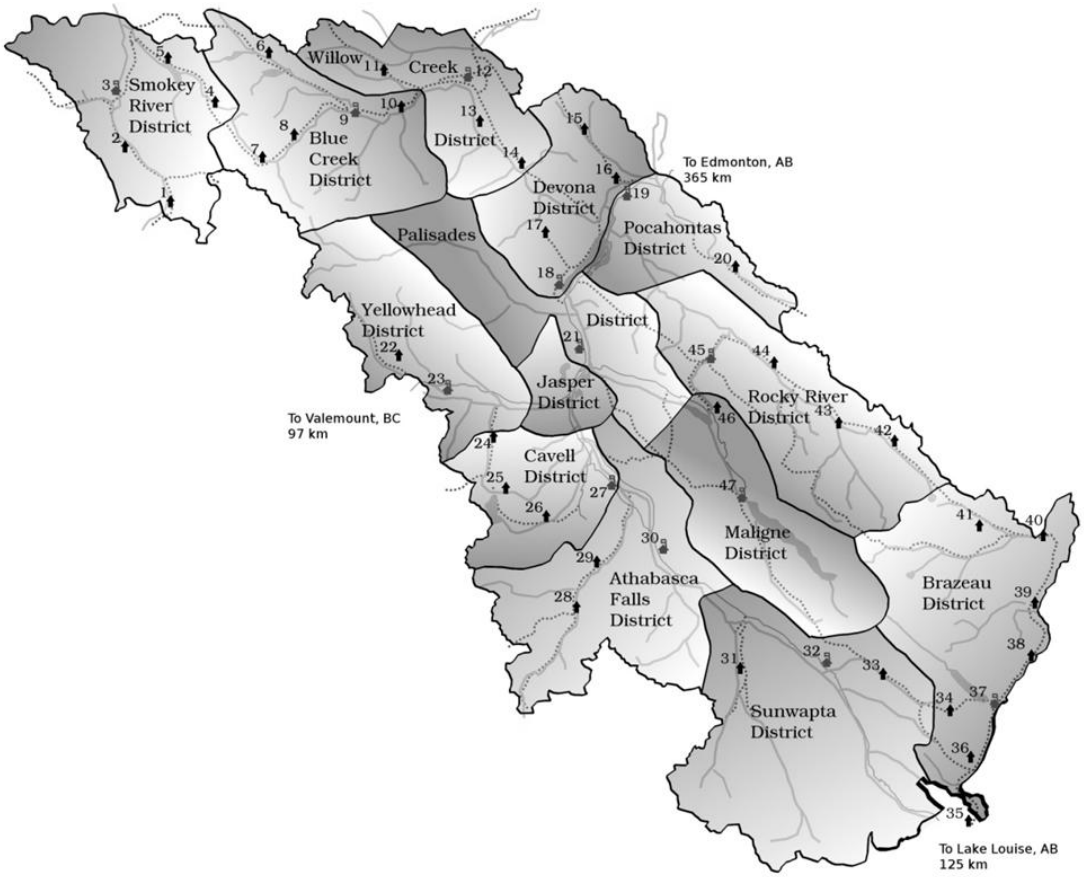

Figure A.1: District Map, Jasper National Park.

This map is based on a scanned copy of a district map created in 1968. The original was shared with me courtesy of Parks Canada.

See next page for the key to Figure A.1

Smokey River District

1. Adolphus Cabin
2. Wolverine Shelter
3. Smokey River Headquarters Cabin
4. Byng Shelter
5. Twintree Cabin

Blue Creek District

6. Topaz Shelter
7. Hoodoo Cabin
8. Three Slides Shelter
9. Blue Creek Headquarters Cabin
10. Welbourne Cabin

Willow Creek District

11. Little Heaven
12. Willow Creek Headquarters Cabin
13. Seldom Inn Cabin*
14. Shalebanks Cabin

Devona District

15. Moosehorn Shelter
16. Miette Cabin
17. Vine Creek Shelter
18. Devona Headquarters Cabin

Pocahontas District

19. Pocahontas Headquarters Cabin
20. Fiddle Creek Shelter

Palisades District

21. Palisades Headquarters Cabin (Snaring)

Yellowhead District

22. Rink Shelter*
23. Yellowhead Headquarters Cabin (Decoigne)

Cavell District

24. Meadow Creek Shelter
25. Maccarib Shelter
26. Old Horn Shelter***
27. Cavell Headquarters Cabin

Athabasca Falls District

28. Middle Forks Shelter
29. Tie Camp Shelter
30. Athabasca Falls Headquarters Cabin

Sunwapta District

31. Chaba Shelter
32. Sunwapta District Headquarters (Poboktan or Mile 45)
33. Waterfalls Cabin

Brazeau District

34. Poboktan Shelter
35. Camp Parker
36. Four Point Shelter
37. Brazeau Headquarters Cabin
38. Arête Shelter
39. Isaac Creek Cabin
40. Southesk Shelter**
41. Cairn Shelter

Rocky River District

42. Medicine Tent Shelter
43. Rocky Forks Cabin
44. Grizzly Shelter**
45. Rocky River Headquarters Cabin (Jacques Lake)

Maligne District

46. Beaver Cabin
47. Maligne Headquarters Cabin

* Purposely Destroyed

** Replaced due to fire

*** Moved to another location

Appendix B

Jasper National Park
Trail Maps

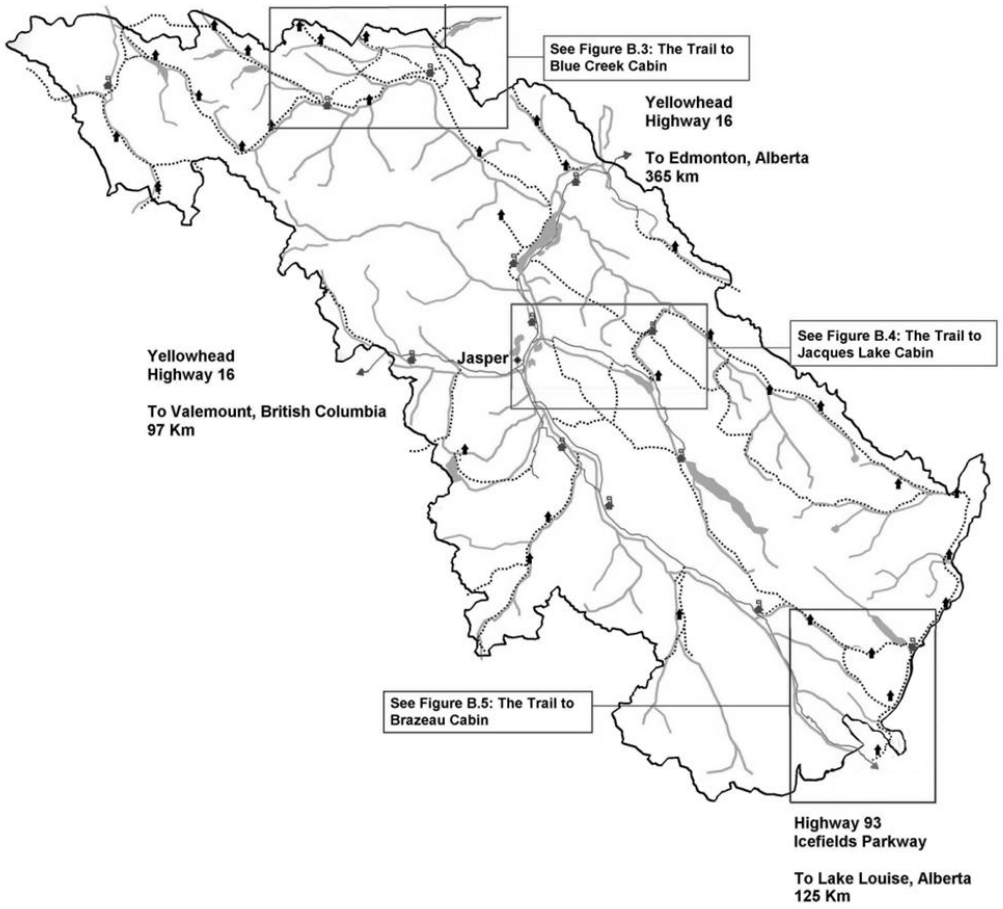

Figure B.1 Jasper National Park

The areas highlighted the map above are enlarged to show greater detail (including trail names, campgrounds and other features) in figures B.3 to B.5, below.

Only the trails mentioned in the pages of this thesis have been named in the enlarged maps. Please note that these maps are not exactly to scale: features such as waterways, roads and trails are emphasized. For more detailed information on the trails in Jasper National Park, see Don Beers (1996) or Patton and Robinson (2007).

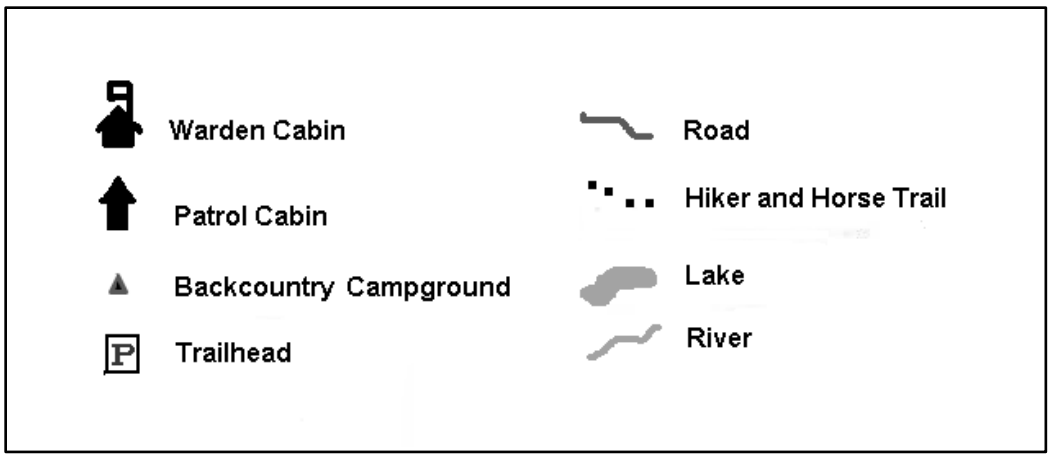

Figure B.2: Key for figures B.3-B.5

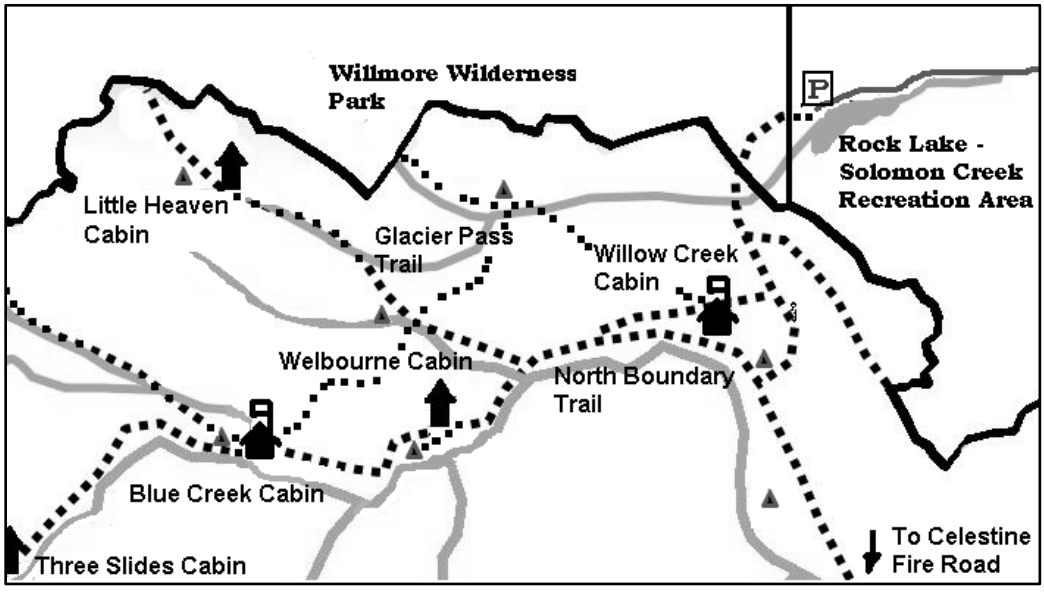

Figure B.3: The trail to Blue Creek Cabin.

My partner and I accessed Blue Creek cabin from the Rock Lake Trailhead, in Rock Lake Provincial Park, Alberta. The distance to Blue Creek Cabin is 38.2 km. The North Boundary Trail officially begins at the Celestine Fire Road in Jasper, passing through Willow Creek, Welbourne and Blue Creek, and Three Slides Cabin and continuing from there to it's terminus in Mount Robson Provincial Park, British Columbia: a total length of 179.4 km.

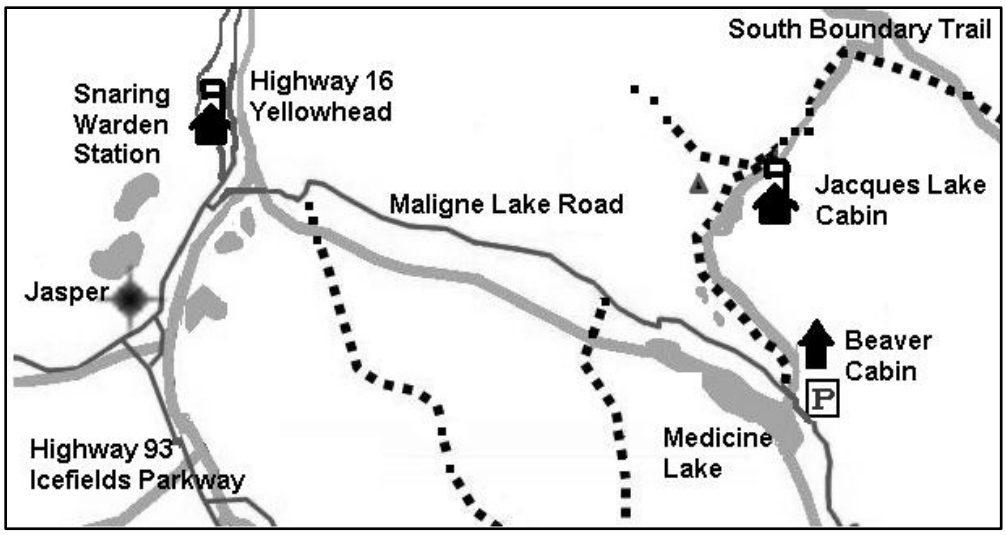

Figure B.4: The trail to Jacques Lake Cabin.

We accessed Jacques Lake Cabin, the former headquarters of the Rocky River District, from it's trailhead on the Maligne Lake Road. This trail is often called the Jacques Lake trail, and the backcountry campsite near the cabin is a popular one. This trail is the northern access to the South Boundary Trail which connects to the Nigel Pass trailhead visible in figure B.5. The total length of the South Boundary Trail is 165.7 km. We travelled 12.2 km to reach Jacques Lake.

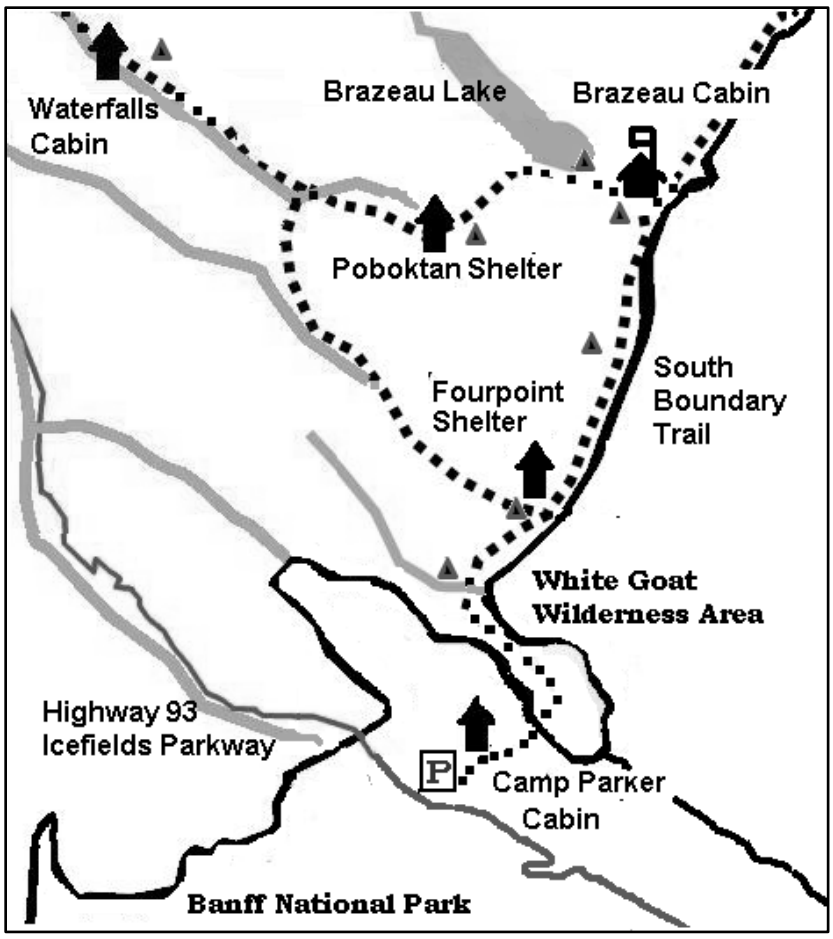

Figure B.5: The Trail to Brazeau Cabin

This trailhead, which is located in Banff National Park, is the southern access route for Jasper's South Boundary Trail. Its northern terminus is visible in figure B.4. Hikers also use this trailhead to day-hike to Nigel Pass, or to do overnight trips on the Jonas Pass/Brazeau Lake Loop. We hiked in past Camp Parker, over Nigel Pass, and past Fourpoint Shelter to reach Brazeau Cabin, a total of 29.8 km.

Appendix C: Max and Julie Winkler's Winter Grocery List, 1961

Soaps
4 Giant Lux Flakes
7 King size Oxydol
4 copper pot scrapers
2 gal. Perfex bleach
4 cans Ajax clenser
4 rolls paper towels
1 pkg. Spic & Span
6 bars Ivory soap
10 bars Woodbury Facial
12 double bars Sunlight
20 roll toilet tissue
6 12" rolls foil wrap
4 200' rolls wax paper
6 giant Kleenex

Dried fruit
5 lb dried figs
4 32 oz. " apples
15 lb " peaches
5 lb. " figs
5 lb. " apricots

Canned Vegetables
2 cases 15 oz. peas
1 case mushrooms
1 case peas & carrots
5 cans diced beats
10 " 20 oz. tomatoes
12 " green beans
6 " bean sprouts
15 " asparagus
12 " tomato soup
12 " crm of mushroom soup
12 " vegetable soup
15 " spinach
6 " mixed vegetables
70 pkg. asst'd Lipton Soup
6 cans sauerkraut

Canned Fruit
1 case peaches
1 case strawberries
1 case applesauce
1 case plums
1 cae apple juice
5 cans cherries
12 " orange sections
10 cans raspberries
21 " crushed pineapple
10 " raspberries
12 cans pears
2 tins corn syrup

Canned Meats
6 cans (unreadable)
6 " Boston Beef & Gravy
10 " meat balls
10 " whole ham
15 " kippered snacks
15 sm " pink salmon
1 case corned beef
½ case Spork
½ case chopped ham
½ case Boston Casserole

Cereals & Beverages
2 25 ib. bags rolled oat
5 lrg. Cans Juffy Chocolate
7 10 oz. jars Max Inst. Coffee
4 boxes (of 120) Salada Tea
8 lb. Fry's Cocoa
3 lb. Nabob Coffee
2 lb. Brex Cereal
5 lb. Red River Cereal
2 bags Puffed Wheat
15 4 lb assrt'd jams
3 4 lb. cans marmalade
3 5 lb. honey
2 4 lb. peanut butter
8 cans lemon juice
6 lrg. Corn Flakes
10 Shredded Wheat
2 lbs. Pablum Mixed
4 cases baby food
5 pkg. graham wafers
4 pkg. Ritz Biscuits
4 boxes soda crackers
5 pkg. Arrowrooot Biscuits
5 boxes of matches

Baking Supplies
6 20 oz. Domolco Molasses
2 15 lb. boxes Milko
3 bottles parsley flakes
3 " dried onions
3 " chicken soup cubes
6 lb. pitted dates
4 pkg. sweet coconut
3 lb. currents
16 lb. raisins
6 lb. semi-sweet chocolate
18 lb. shortening
20 lb. lard
1 gal. Mazola Oil
10 Jello jelly powder
2 lb. walnuts
2 pkg pop corn (kernels)
3 cake mixes
2 cases margarine
1 lrg. Cinnamon
1 container sage
1 " allspice
1 " cloves
1 " poultry dressing
2 " ginger
2 " nutmeg
6 lb. iodized salt

Baking supplies cont'd
6 boxes dried eggs
1 gal. wht. Vinegar
2 sm. Prepared mustard
11 cans dried yeast
2 pkgs. Baking soda
1 sm. Cream of tartar
10 lb. icing sugar
30 lb. brown sugar
300 lb. white flour

20 lb. white sugar
2 lb. long rice
2 lb. short rice
3 16 oz. vanilla
1 pkg. Minit Tapioca
30 assorted Jello puddings
6 5 lb. pkg. macaroni
2 5 lb. pkg. spaghetti
½ case canned butter
4 6 oz. salad dressing
6 cans tomato paste
6 Parmissilo Cheese
6 Velveta Cheese
1 pkg dry mustard
1 case (?) Carnation evap. Milk,
2 100 lb. bags potatoes

This list appears in Julie Winkler's Backcountry Journal (2006:114). It has been reprinted here with her permission.