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Report of the Annual Meeting

Report of the National Historic Sites Division National Parks Branch

Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources

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REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARKS BRANCH

Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources

Inauguration of a broad program of historical interpretation at the National Historic Parks and the major National Historic Sites was the major development in the work of this division during the year.

As the agency responsible for the administration of federal interest in the identification and preservation of historic sites, the National Historic Sites Division operates and maintains 23 National Historic Parks and major National Historic Sites and cares for 580 monuments and tablets identifying places of national historical importance.

Beyond the basic responsibility of the Division to preserve and identify national historic sites, there is an urgent need to explain and communicate the significance of national history to the public. This need was translated into action during the year by a program emphasizing historical interpretation.

The interpretation program was applied in the National Historic Parks and major National Historic Sites, which offer greater opportunity for the dramatic presentation of history than the numerous small sites on which the conventional cairns, monuments and tablets have been placed. Each of these major historical areas preserves some significant physical remains of the past and offers rich potential for the presentation of historical displays, the establishment of small museums, and the larger tasks of restoration and reconstruction. By improving the presentation

of history at these major sites, the National Historic Sites Division is enhancing their intrinsic interest and appeal to the public and, from the viewpoint of members of the Canadian Historical Association and others concerned with the active preservation of historic sites, developing an imaginative and positive approach to historical presentation that will stimulate further complementary efforts on provincial and local levels.

During the fiscal year, 1960-1961, completely new museums were established within the Batoche Rectory at Batoche, Saskatchewan and the Memorial Chapel at Grand Pre National Historic Park, Nova Scotia. In both these museums, historic relics were combined with interpretative material and presented with modern display techniques to portray in terms of both people and events, the significance of the historic ground and buildings.

The restored 18th century Maillou House at 17 St. Louis Street, Quebec City, was opened on April 30, 1960. The house is a good example of the policy under which buildings of national historic importance because of age or architectural design may be preserved by the federal government in the national interest, under agreements. In addition to being preserved as a National Historic Site, the Maillou House is serving usefully as the offices of the Quebec City Board of Trade which provided a large part of the costs of restoration.

Period furnishings as well as artifacts are an important part of the interpretation program and a great deal of effort was spent during the year on studying and acquiring them. Period furnishings were acquired for the Maillou House, the birthplace of Sir Wilfrid Laurier at St. Lin, P.Q., and Woodside, the boyhood home of Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King at Kitchener, Ontario.

A number of new properties were declared national historic sites and passed under the administration of the Division. The Palace Grand or Auditorium Theatre at Dawson City, Yukon Territory, was found to be beyond restoration and was carefully demolished under supervision of the National Parks Engineering Division so that an authentic reconstruction could be built on the same site as the focal point for the Gold Rush Festival of 1962. Four sternwheel steamboats that once plied the Yukon River were transferred to the federal government by the White Pass and Yukon Route Company and one, S.S. "Keno" was moved under her own power to Dawson City where she will be fitted out as a museum of river transportation. The Fisgard Lighthouse, Esquimalt, B.C., one of the first lighthouses on Canada's West Coast, was also declared a National Historic Site.

The National Parks Engineering Division completed the restoration of the walls of Fort Prince of Wales National Historic Park, Churchill,

began major restoration works at Signal Hill National Historic Park, Newfoundland, and the Port Royal Habitation, Nova Scotia, and continued restoration at the Halifax Citadel, Grand Pre National Historic Park, and Fort Anne National Historic Park, all in Nova Scotia. National Parks engineers also began to reconstruct completely the tower and clock mechanism of the Halifax Town Clock.

During 1960, tablets were unveiled at the Jonathan Sewell and Mailou Houses at Quebec City and Laurier House at Ottawa. At Horton Landing, Nova Scotia, a tablet was unveiled to the New England Planters and at Edmonton, a tablet to Emily Ferguson Murphy.

During the fiscal year 5,845,330 visitors were recorded at all National Historic Parks and major National Historic Sites, 603,378 more than the previous year. The greatest attendances were at Halifax Citadel, Signal Hill and Fort Langley and there were striking increases in the attendance figures for Fort Lennox National Historic Park in Quebec and Fort Anne National Historic Park in Nova Scotia.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the national advisory board of historians, held one general meeting during the year to make recommendations on national historic sites to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. Its Fur Trade Committee met at Edmonton in September to consider further what steps could be taken to commemorate the Canadian fur trade routes. To assist the Board members at these meetings, the Division's research section provided 30 historical briefs.

Dr. C. Bruce Fergusson, Halifax, is chairman of the Board. The members are: Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, Ottawa; Dr. Donald G. Creighton, Toronto; Dr. A. R. M. Lower, Kingston; R. Earl Taylor, Charlottetown; Richard Y. Secord, Winterburn, Alberta; Dr. Margaret Ormsby, Vancouver; W. D. Smith, Brandon; Clifford Wilson, Ottawa; Major C. G. Dunn, Quebec City; J. P. Palmer, Saint John; Arnold Agnew, Prince Albert; E. B. Foran, St. John's; and Dr. Marcel Trudel, Quebec City. J. D. Herbert, Chief of the Historic Sites Division, is secretary.

The Historic Sites Division gratefully acknowledges the interest the members of the Board showed in its activities during the year and the stimulus its officers gained from professional associations with a distinguished group of historians representing diverse fields of national history and all levels of historical endeavour.
