

Algonquin Park - A Place Like No Other...

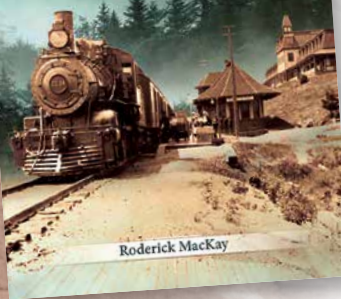
will guide the reader through the rich history that led to the Park we know today, beginning with early indigenous hunters and gatherers, their displacement by colonist lumbermen, the formation of the Park in 1893, the growth of lodges, camps and cottage leases, the challenges faced by early and latter day park superintendents, the development of a multiple-use concept including both regulated logging and recreation, the influence of today's Algonquin People on the Park and ongoing negotiations about the role they will have within it and much more. Long-time cottager, and director of The Friends of Algonquin Park, Brian Maltman has said, "This is the definitive work on the human history of the Park, and how it has been shaped by the people who explore, work in, live in and love this place."

Price: \$34.50

Available at the Algonquin Visitor Centre Bookstore & Nature Shop, West and East Gates, or online at algonquinpark.on.ca

ALGONQUIN PARK

-A Place Like No Other



Roderick MacKay



Forests for the Trees

Our thoughts on restoring disturbed sites in Ontario have changed over time. In the past, when an area that had been cleared for farming, buildings or other purposes was set to be returned to a natural state, it was densely planted with perfectly straight rows of Red Pine seedlings. This was the practice in many places in Ontario, to improve aesthetics, prevent soil erosion, and potentially gain a valuable timber crop in the future. The trees grew well, giving the appearance of a forest, but not much grew up underneath the tall, thin pines – certainly not an actual forest. In Algonquin, there are many such Red Pine plantations, and recently we have undertaken restoration work to thin the stands of Red Pines in areas such as the Algonquin Logging Museum and Cache Lake. The thinned stands have more space and more sunlight reaching the forest floor. This will allow a more natural and diverse community of vegetation to recolonize the "human-made" forest. While the newly cut stands may not look too restored at the moment, in the next few years, a whole suite of trees, shrubs and forest plants will grow between the stumps and remaining pines.

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As of early 2021, the Algonquin Provincial Park iNaturalist project had over 51,000 observations of 3600 species!

Available on iOS, Android and at inaturalist.org



1. Upload a picture of any wild plant, animal or fungus.



2. iNaturalist's community and image recognition software will help you identify it.



3. Help out other naturalists by identifying their observations.



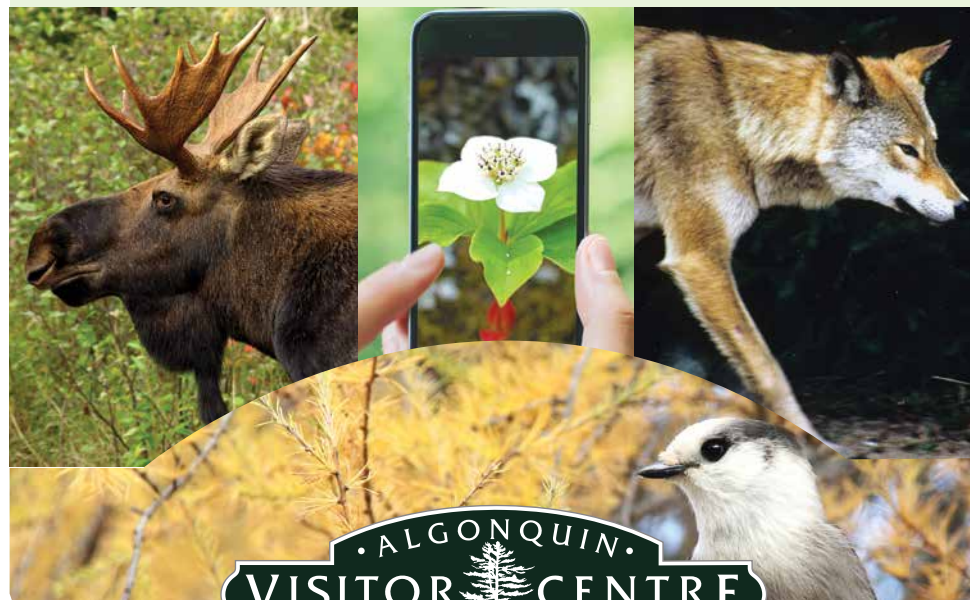
4. Every observation becomes part of a growing record of Earth's biodiversity.



iNaturalist

By submitting your observations and photos to Citizen Science platforms like iNaturalist.ca, you can help park staff document biodiversity in the Park and even protect habitat. For more information join iNaturalist.ca, and check out Algonquin Provincial Park under projects.

iNaturalist Canada is run by the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Royal Ontario Museum, and iNaturalist.org at the California Academy of Sciences.



ALGONQUIN VISITOR CENTRE

HOURS OF OPERATION
Museum • Bookstore
& Nature Shop



Algonquin Visitor Centre
April 24 to October 31, 2021
Open Daily 9 am - 5 pm
November 1 to December 23, 2021
Weekends 9 - 5 pm, full services
Weekdays 9 - 4 pm, limited services

Algonquin Logging Museum
June 12 to October 17, 2021
Open Daily 9 am - 5 pm
The 1.3 km trail with outdoor exhibits is available year-round.

OntarioParks.com • algonquinpark.on.ca

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Algonquin

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Thanks for the Memories

by Roderick MacKay

For many visitors, the environment and the history of Algonquin Provincial Park are totally unfamiliar. Coming to such a special place may be overwhelming, and the Algonquin Visitor Centre can be a welcome experience to help you understand what you will see in the Park. Of course, some visitors will walk quickly through, barely glancing at the exhibits and consequently taking in only some of the Park's history, while others are more mindful, taking time to read every word and examine every detail. Occasionally, notice of a scene, object, or image we have seen before, or to which we can at least relate, will trigger a memory from our past. An "I've seen a place like that" or a "We had one of those" thought can lead into an "I remember when" story, perhaps about an earlier visit to the Park. It matters not if that was last summer or sixty years ago.

I noticed recently that there have been improvements made to some of the history exhibits, thanks to the work of the Park's Discovery Program staff. I had seen the railway station exhibit many times—with its familiar Algonquin Park Station sign, railway tracks, and station front—but since my last visit something new had been added—a baggage cart piled with

luggage. Seeing it brought to mind a story my parents told me about a day in 1953, when my father took his three-year-old son (me) to the railway station at Cache Lake, after a long drive from Toronto. A photograph taken that day shows me squatting down next to my father at the end of the station platform, poking the steam locomotive with a stick. It was an exciting experience for a young boy fascinated by trains, but of all the sights, sounds, and smells of that day I recall only a station platform baggage cart loaded with suitcases and trunks.

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The author (R) and his father (L) with a steam locomotive at Cache Lake Station (where the parking lot is now). R. MacKay collection



Ontario

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Given my interest in the Park’s past, thoughts of the baggage cart reminded me that it was the railways that had opened up the Park as a healthy environment in which people could vacation (one of six reasons why Algonquin Provincial Park was established in 1893). Previously constructed northern and southern cross-Park railways were operated after 1923 by the Canadian National Railway. They carried mostly well-to-do passengers to privately operated lake-side lodges in the Park. Some guests could afford to stay in the Park for a month or two. The luggage they brought contained the usual vacation clothes of the day, including the dress shoes, gentlemen’s suits, and ladies’ dresses required for meals in the dining room and perhaps dancing, if available. Sweaters were needed for Algonquin’s cool evenings, as well as leisure clothing for sporting activities. In short, there was a lot of luggage required to ensure style and comfort for these early park vacationers.

Lodges established along the southern railway line included Hotel Algonquin at Joe Lake, Bartlett Lodge (still operating) at Cache Lake, and Mowat Lodge at Canoe Lake. Lodges in the north included Kish-

Kaduk Lodge at Cedar Lake, Lake Traverse Camp at Lake Travers, and Wigwam Lodge at Kioshkokwi Lake.

None of the other lodges in the Park could compare to the grandeur of the Highland Inn, which was established at Cache Lake by the Grand Trunk Railway. Construction of the Inn was begun in 1908. It was the Inn for which Algonquin Park was best known. Every effort was made to make the Highland Inn one of Canada’s finest resorts where one could take in fresh air and the resinous scent of pines while enjoying all the conveniences of a luxury vacation. According to a 1921 Railway brochure, it had “electric lights, modern plumbing and large bright sleeping rooms.” It also included “fine cuisine”, “a commodious dining room” set with Grand Trunk Railway dishes and cutlery, writing and reading rooms for the ladies, and a billiard room for the gentlemen. The Highland Inn could accommodate 150 guests, including some during the winter months, thanks to steam heating in one wing of rooms. If one sought a more rustic vacation in a smaller setting, two well-equipped log-cabin outposts of the Inn were reached by horse-drawn cart, for a fee of \$1.00 each way per passenger. Nominigan Lodge was five miles to the west on Smoke

Lake. Minnesing Lodge was ten miles to the north on Burnt Island Lake. Historical interpretive panels with old photographs of the Highland Inn and Algonquin Park Station were installed along the old station platform and in front of the old steps of the Inn by The Friends of Algonquin Park in 2008. They are located just west of the Cache Lake parking lot.

Fishing and canoeing were popular pastimes for those staying at any of the lodges. Of course, the lodges had outfitting stores which provided everything needed for short or long canoe trips. Especially during the late 1920s and 1930s, most guests on a canoe trip travelled in the company of one or more experienced guides, who could be hired at each of the lodges. The guides soon got to know the repeat visitors and how to meet their specific needs.

Guests at the Highland Inn came to know and value the skills of the twenty or so guides who worked from there.

Up to the 1930s, the Canadian National Railway through the south of the Park was still providing passenger service right through the Park, but that service was no longer profitable. A consequence of the Great Depression that followed was a decrease in tourism. The Highland Inn began a slow decline.

There was heated discussion as early as 1930 about whether a highway into Algonquin Provincial Park was a good idea. Some people thought that motor cars would pollute the air with the smell of leaded gasoline exhaust. Road access would bring hordes of workers from the city. Over-use would be a deadly menace to the Park’s fisheries, mar its unspoiled beauty, and be its ruination. Others thought that a highway was needed to provide a more convenient connection from Huntsville to Ottawa, and would provide more dependable access to the Park than the railway.

In 1933 some of the railway trestles at Cache Lake were condemned due to deterioration, which put an end to the connection between Georgian

Looking at the baggage cart in the exhibits brought me right back to a very early childhood memory

Bay and Ottawa. Fortunately, that same year, funding for construction of a road was provided as a provincial project to relieve unemployment during the Depression. By June 1936 one could drive to Cache Lake and make it across the Park to Whitney, provided there wasn’t a heavy rain to wash out the gravel. The route of the paved highway has changed very little since that time.

Quoted in my book on Park history, Algonquin Park – A Place Like No Other, former guide Ralph Bice compared the ways of tourists before and after the road was built: “We knew when they were coming. We knew when they were going away, because they had to go on the train. When the roads came, why people would come for a night or two and decide they didn’t like it and go someplace else, and it was just people coming and going all the time. You never got time to get acquainted with them... Everybody seemed to just forget all their cares when they came [to the Park], until they built that confounded road and let so many people in.”

Even as construction of the highway was started, Park managers had begun having lakeside campgrounds cleared along the highway, at Tea Lake and at Lake of Two Rivers. The organized campgrounds made it convenient for visitors to experience the Park as an accessible wilderness (even if it had not been a true wilderness for over

a hundred years). Arowhon Pines Lodge and Killarney Lodge (both operating currently) were constructed in the 1930s, the former up a gravel road and the latter right next to the highway. After World War Two, more people could afford an automobile and camping equipment, making it easier for them to get to the Park for a short vacation or a day trip. But it was a challenge to manage the large numbers of people, about which Bice and others had warned. Campers pitching tents illegally along roadsides became a problem. More campgrounds were created as people enjoyed the Park in ever-increasing numbers.

By late 1957 the aging Highland Inn had

implementation of the Park Master Plan in 1974. In the current age of tourism and tripping, the lodges and campsites require a reservation.

The Park certainly has changed a great deal, even in the time I have known it. The days of travelling in luxury by train to the Highland Inn are long over, but the attraction to the Park remains the same. Sometimes a small detail hits you and brings back seemingly unconnected memories. Looking at the baggage cart in the exhibits brought me right back to a very early childhood memory in a place that would become and will always be a very important part of my life.

It’s too bad that I don’t recall anything else from the day, but as always when in Algonquin, history is never far out of

reach. Perhaps the next time you are in the Algonquin Visitor Centre, some little detail in an exhibit will spark a memory and you will be able to share an “I remember when . . .” story. Here’s to the history yet to be.

A postcard of the Highland Inn. Donor; APPAC #6401

Locomotive, baggage carts, Algonquin Park Station. Needham, John; APPAC #3634



From baggage car to baggage cart and then to the lodge lobby, these cases were a vital part of an Algonquin Park vacation.