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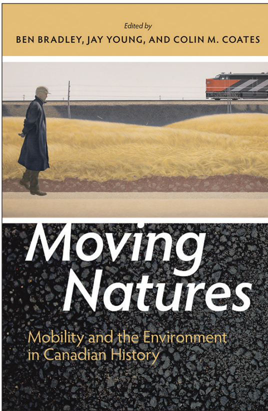

MOVING NATURES: Mobility and the Environment in Canadian History Edited by Ben Bradley, Jay Young, and Colin M. Coates

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PART II: Consumption, Landscape, and Leisure

The chapters in this section shift the focus from mobility aimed at production to mobility for the purpose of pleasure. They provide further case studies on how mobility and the environment have shaped and in turn been shaped by sightseeing, outdoor recreation, and tourism. These leisure activities saw enormous growth from the late nineteenth century onwards, gradually spreading to large sections of Canadian society, from the wealthy to the middle classes and eventually much of the working class. These activities furnished many people with memorable encounters with Canada's natural environments, and their popularity also allowed some to make a living and a few to make substantial profits.

Certain types of travel have long been combined with culturally conditioned perceptions of landscape to stir up powerful emotional responses. Glimpsing a glacial lake surrounded by majestic peaks from a winding mountain track, for example, or a mist-shrouded coastline from an ocean liner, can be a thrilling experience—for better or worse, depending on the precise direction and speed of travel. Many historians of tourism, parks, leisure, and Canada's "culture of nature" have commented on how complex systems of transportation technology and infrastructure made these leisure activities accessible to large numbers of people, who could now travel greater distances for pleasure than would have once been unimaginable. Typically, these scholars have done so when establishing the background context for studies that focus more

closely on the economic or cultural significance of pleasure travel. The chapters that follow place in the foreground the intertwined relationship between mobility, the environment, and leisure.

Three chapters examine how patterns of mobility associated with modern transportation systems helped to make certain environments into regionally or nationally iconic landscapes. Areas that were traversed by or readily accessible from major traffic corridors caught the attention—and sometimes captured the affection—of thousands of travellers. Over time, these areas became part of shared landscape experiences and popular culture. Elsa Lam's chapter shows how the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) branded the narrow band of mountains around its mainline in western Canada as the "Canadian Pacific Rockies." The CPR played a crucial role in introducing Canadians and visitors from afar to western "wilderness" areas through its trains, tracks, hotels, and promotional campaigns. However, as J.I. Little's chapter shows, the iconic status of landscapes made accessible by transportation companies did not necessarily endure. The West Coast's seaside landscapes—made familiar to large numbers of Vancouverites during the first half of the twentieth century by the Union Steamship Company—were quickly forgotten following the company's decision to cancel passenger steamship service, shortly after World War II. Little's chapter highlights the shifting fortunes of Canada's tourist and recreational attractions. The expansion of the country's road network allowed business interests to play a crucial role in the rise of automobile tourism, as suggested in Maude-Emmanuelle Lambert's chapter. This form of mobility generated a new geography of competition for pleasure travellers' attention and dollars, with businesses, communities, and entire regions employing distinctive environmental features as a means of differentiating themselves from other possible touring destinations.

Three of the chapters in this section examine recreational activities that involved pre-modern (or at least nonmotorized) forms of mobility, such as canoeing, hiking, and horseback riding. These slow-paced, contemplative leisure activities provided intimate encounters with nature to participants, thereby seeming to recuperate some of the time and space that modern transportation systems had supposedly annihilated. Yet it

was the same transportation systems that often made these Arcadian leisure activities feasible: very few Canadian railways, steamships, or automobile roads were built primarily for the purpose of moving pleasure travellers. Instead, pleasure travellers founds ways—or were actively encouraged by boosters and businesses—to piggyback along lines of mobility that had been established to move natural resources, manufactured products, and business travellers between important sites of production and consumption. These metropolitan corridors that facilitated Canadians' mobility between cities, the countryside, resource hinterlands, and a small number of "wilderness" areas were adapted to cater to pleasure travellers and tourists who wanted to view scenic landscapes or participate in outdoor recreational activities far from home. Sociability, health, and status-seeking were important motives for participating in these mobile engagements with nature. At the same time, supplying pleasure travellers' wants and needs became a way for transportation companies to wring extra returns from expensive vehicles and fixed infrastructure.

Differences in pace provide another theme that connects many of these chapters. Jessica Dunkin, Elizabeth L. Jewett, and Lam show that considerable preparation and logistical work were often involved in what could be termed "mobility play," with some Canadians willing to travel very long distances at high speed in order to reach appealing environments where they could then radically slow their pace and move in close contact with valourized forms of nature. These chapters suggest that the allure of speed has been overrated by many theorists of mobility. Even the automobile, which we tend today to associate with separation from the natural world, is shown in the chapters by Jewett, Lam, and Lambert to have been adopted as a highly flexible device with which to get in touch with the great outdoors. The early appeal of auto touring was that motorists could travel at their own pace, slowing down, stopping, and doubling back in order to take in features of the landscape that caught their attention—to the delight of boosters and roadside business owners.

As with mobility aimed at productive activities, in most parts of Canada the business of selling goods and services to pleasure travellers was (and remains) highly seasonal. Summer dominates in the period

examined here, in large part because city people who are not concerned with the growing season can choose to take time off work for pleasure travel when it is warm and dry. The resorts, camps, motels, and playing grounds that the following chapters examine tended to shut down during the winter months—the CPR's famous Banff Springs Hotel, for example, started staying open during the winter only in the mid-1970s. The seasonality of leisure, tourism, and outdoor recreation is a topic that merits further attention from historians of mobility and the environment.

Canoeing, golf, hiking, automobile touring, and sightseeing from ocean-going vessels are not leisure activities that are in any way exclusive to Canadians. However, the stark climatic variations in seasons in most parts of northern North America and the changing availability of daylight circumscribed Canadian leisure patterns in specific ways. During much of the period covered by the chapters in this collection, mobility in pursuit of leisure remained primarily a summertime activity. Canadians revelled in grandiose vistas and close connections with manicured landscapes, and they ascribed certain features of national identity to this concept of "nature." Through mobility corridors constructed for productive goals, Canadians were able to access these non-urban spaces of pleasurable and therapeutic leisure.