



It's Our History, Our Country

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Banff National Park - Nov. 25, 1885

Twas the month before Christmas and all through the nation not much was happening but in Alberta something was stirring. In 1885 Banff National Park (BNP) opened to tourists. Now, it may not have been a huge grand opening but a Canadian event to remember nevertheless.

The park is a massive 6,641 kilometers (2,564 sq mi) and is part of the piques Rocky Mountains. The mountains were formed when the Pacific tectonic plate slowly moved under the North American plate. As this plate moved, it forced all the land mass together, causing this large amount of rock to move upward. An easier way to think how this was done, take two pieces of paper and slowly move the two tops together. The two pieces should move upwards

This is the big boy of the National Parks and also Canada's oldest national park. It all started with prospectors searching for gold. What they found, however, was better. A steaming, relaxing, life-giving hot spring at the centre of jagged snow-capped mountains, broad U-shaped valleys, turquoise lakes, rich forest and meandering rivers.

With some of the best activities in the world on offer, it is no surprise that over four million people annually visit here. The first visitors to Banff were the native

people of Canada, with archaeological records from 11 000 BC, when the Crees, Kootenays and Plains Blackfoot were believed to have lived in the region of the bow valley, hunting and fishing in the vast natural region.

The first recorded visit of a European to the Rockies is Anthony Hendy, in 1754. Later on, in 1800, David Thompson and Duncan McGillivray explored the bow valley and the area beyond. These two gentlemen are well documented in having mapped out a large part of western Canada. It was not until 1886, when the Canadian Pacific railroad set up its trans-continental line that Banff became the true tourist destination.

There was once so many elk parading around town that the park staffers were given sling shots to drive them out of town. Much of Banff is a result of the Canadian Pacific Railway and its history. The famous hot springs at Sulphur Mountain were discovered by three railway workers, the first major hotel was constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) company, even the name Banff originates from Banffshire, Scotland, the birthplace of the presidents of the CN rail at the time.

The park is open year round but closed on Christmas Day. The park's grand opening may not have been an earth shattering event but the park's picturesque

scenery certainly is.

Remember, it's our history, our country.

http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/index_e.asp

<http://www.banffnationalpark.com/>

<http://www.britishcolumbia.com/regions/towns/?townID=4003>

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