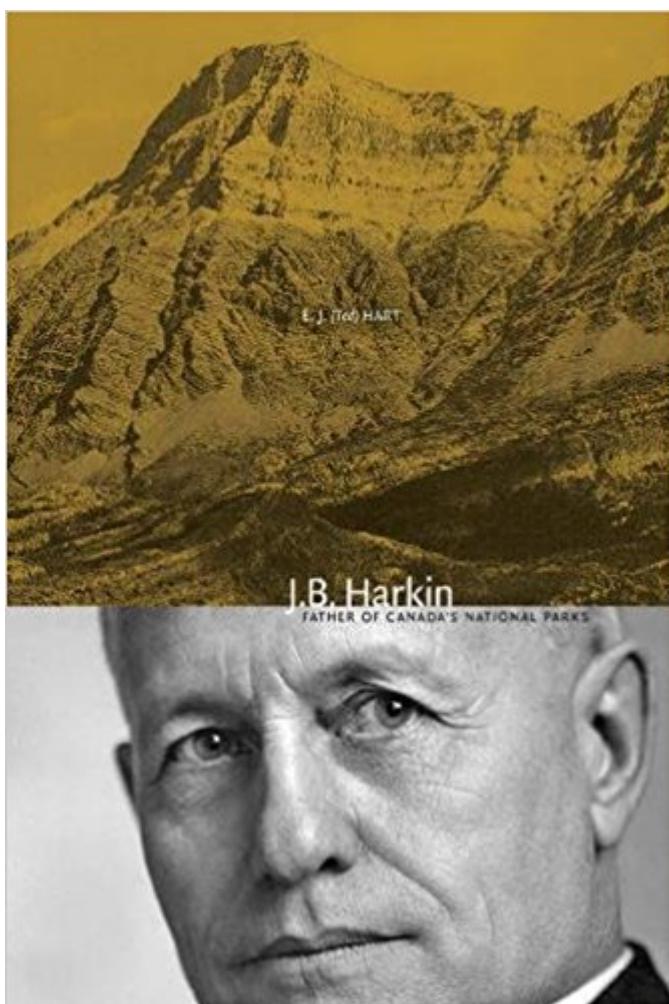


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# **J.B. Harkin: Father Of Canada's National Parks (Mountain Cairns: A Series On The History And Culture Of The Canadian Rocky Mountains)**



## **Synopsis**

Many of Canada's superb national parks owe their existence to James Bernard Harkin (1875-1955), the first commissioner of Canada's new Dominion Parks Branch in 1911. Ted Hart follows Harkin's career from his apprenticeship in the Department of the Interior to his retirement in 1936, and presents Harkin as a major force in early Canadian parks and wildlife conservation. He supported Canadian wildlife conservation at its inception, created the world's first park service, and developed major park policies. Conservationists, serious history enthusiasts, and those with an interest in Canada's national parks will enjoy this biography of a multifaceted and significant individual.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"J.B. Harkin: Father of Canada's National Parks is a thorough biography, just released by the University of Alberta Press. Author Ted Hart is the head archivist of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff. Harkin, as the first commissioner of dominion parks from 1911 to 1936, was the architect and first leader of the government agency charged with overseeing the national park system.... Though 1885 seems a long time ago, the pressing issues of that time are still with us today.... Everyone interested in the current debate over the development of Banff-and all Canadian national parks-can benefit from reading this biography. J.B. Harkin believed these special places could make us all 'better, happier and healthier.' It falls to our generation to interpret and apply his lofty goals as we manage and protect this timeless treasure." David Finch, Calgary Herald, January

24, 2010"Although not popularly known, J.B. Harkin played a major role in the development of Canada's national parks. Appointed commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch in 1911, he found a balance between public use and protecting the environment. ... [He] developed an efficient park service and policies that favoured conservation and recreation. When one reads this book, they can appreciate both the career of Harkin and the excellent work that Ted Hart has done in creating this biography." Alberta History, Summer 2010"Hart provides a biography of James Bernard Harkin (1875-1955), a tireless proponent of conservation and historic site preservation and, as many would say, the father of many of Canada's national parks. The author follows Harkin's career from his internship with the Department of the Interior through his retirement as first commissioner of Canada's Dominion Parks Branch. Harkin was creator of the world's first park service." Reference and Research Book News, August 2010"Hart (Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies) restores the reputation of James Bernard Harkin, first commissioner of Canada's Dominion Parks, who served from 1911 to 1936.... [Harkin] became responsible for instituting standards for all dominion parks. This study will also interest students of the US National Park Service (NPS) in its parallels between the evolution of NPS director Horace Albright (1929-33) and Harkin to become protectors of the integrity of park resources. In one case, the NPS helped Harkin save the international waters of Waterton Lakes from being dammed for irrigation purposes. Recommended." P.W. Kaufman, University of Southern Maine, Choice Magazine"In taking on this biography, Hart, like the historians who preceded him, faced a formidable obstacle. Harkin left no personal papers shedding light on his private life and thoughts. Consequently, this book is a biography of Harkin as public servant, and from that perspective, it is a very good one. Hart has scoured the voluminous Dominion Parks Branch files (RG-84 Library and Archives Canada); all Department of Interior files relating to parks branch activities; the relevant prime ministers' papers; the major Alberta archives possessing material on the western parks; and the papers of Mabel Williams (a long-standing parks branch employee during Harkin's tenure), collected by Robin Winks and now housed in the Whyte Museum. Based on this extensive research, Hart has convincingly answered many of the criticisms made by the revisionists against Harkin." Gerald Killan, King's University College at The University of Western Ontario. [Full review at <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=32511>]"Ted Hart is no stranger to mountain slopes or national parks. The former executive director of Banff's Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies has been an archivist, a historian and a proponent of national park history for nearly four decades. Reading his remarkably well-researched biography of Canada's first commissioner of national parks, one could easily imagine Harkin's reaction to these recent developments ['via ferrata' and 'ziplining']. Throughout his career, Harkin worried about the

'increased demands for more and more roads, cheaper forms of amusement and commercial exploitation' in national parks." Ed Struzik, Canadian Geographic, April 2011 "In 1920, Prime Minister Arthur Meighen described James B. Harkin, director of the Dominion Parks Branch, as 'one of the most competent officers in the Government Service' (p. 336). It strikes me as a most Canadian of compliments, for a man who emerges from E. J. Hart's lengthy biography as a deft and dedicated bureaucrat who consistently and effectively championed national parks to the Canadian government and the Canadian public throughout the first half of the twentieth century....Harkin deserves a biography of this magnitude. He succeeded in transforming the Canadian landscape by creating a national parks system, but more importantly, he grappled with many of the same issues-political, public, and ecological-facing Parks Canada at the beginning of its second century. We can learn much from studying the life and times of one of our 'most competent' historical figures." Claire Campbell, Environmental History,(doi:10.1093/envhis/emr065)"Hart has written a very thorough piece of administrative history. By catching the cadence of bureaucratic life, he has imparted a sense of Harkin's reality. This provides the context in which Harkin can be fairly assessed.. Ted Hart has done well to have memorialized him in such a careful fashion." Peter E. Rider, *Histoire sociale / Social History*, Vol XLIV, No 88, November, 2011

"Having set out to reveal a great builder and administrator of Canada's national park system and a champion for its wildlife, I instead discovered a great Canadian." From the Introduction "The battle for the establishment of National Parks is long since over but the battle to keep them inviolate is never won..." J.B. Harkin Many of Canada's superb national parks owe their existence to James Bernard Harkin (1875-1955), the first commissioner of Canada's new Dominion Parks Branch in 1911. Ted Hart follows Harkin's career from his apprenticeship in the Department of the Interior to his retirement in 1936, and presents Harkin as a major force in early Canadian parks and wildlife conservation. He supported Canadian wildlife conservation at its inception, created the world's first park service, and developed major park policies. It seems strange that a man who played a key role in establishing a legacy for future generations on issues of conservation, recreation, historic site preservation, and tourism should be relatively unknown today. But perhaps not, for we are more accustomed to our heroes being actors, sports stars, generals, and scientists, not government bureaucrats. Conservationists, serious history enthusiasts, and those with an interest in Canada's national parks will enjoy this biography of a multifaceted and significant individual. E.J. (Ted) Hart currently resides in Banff, Alberta, where he is Director Emeritus and Head Archivist at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

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