Roving Eyes: Circulation, Visuality, and Hierarchy of Place in East-Central British Columbia, 1910-1975

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis broadly explores the complex relations between commodity circulation, modes of visuality, landscape experience, and hierarchies of place in the Yellowhead Pass and Robson Valley areas of east-central British Columbia during the period 1910-1975.

By examining a wide array of sources, including some that are banal, fragmentary, and indirect, it shows that views of that space and the numerous rural communities located within it have been structured and mediated by modern networks and systems of transportation and communication, beginning with transcontinental railways and ending with transprovincial highways. It demonstrates that the shifting ways in which places in this corridor-region have been connected to and separated from these lines of circulation, and also the associated ways in which they have been seen (and not seen) by people travelling along them have played vitally important roles in both the routines and possibilities of residents' everyday lives, and their local, place-based identities.

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PROGNOSTICATIONS, INTRODUCTIONS

In the summer of 1871 the photographer Benjamin Baltzly was a member of the first Geological Survey of Canada party to explore the east-central portion of the newest province in Confederation, British Columbia. During the following summer, Montreal's *Gazette* newspaper produced a series of articles based on Baltzly's journal of this expedition. In the last of these articles Baltzly described the upper North Thompson River valley and Yellowhead Pass as bereft of agricultural or mineral value but explained that those areas nevertheless possessed "an important redeeming feature." The natural corridor that they formed, he wrote, was "perhaps the easiest and best gap for the Canadian Pacific Railroad to pass through the Rocky Mountains. The grade is very gentle; the highest point—which is at Leather Pass—being only about 4,500 feet above sea level."[1] Baltzly had discerned what would soon be confirmed by the Canadian government's intensive program of surveying the routes by which a railroad could cross from the prairies to the Pacific: that compared against any other pass through the Rockies, the Yellowhead Pass—or Leather Pass, as it was then sometimes called—offered markedly superior grades, and thus competitive advantages, to any future transcontinental railway.

Baltzly concluded this last article with an imaginative description of what travellers would experience when conveyed through east-central BC along the tracks and aboard the trains of the railway that he believed would inevitably traverse the area. "No route on the continent," he opined,

> could boast of scenery as rugged, grand and awe-inspiring as would be seen by the Western-bound traveller as he nears the Rocky Mountains, and rushes past peaks, columns, domes, glaciers, lakes, cascades, over sparkling streams and through stately forests [...] His heart would be continually thrilled with delight and awe, as he would gaze upon this charming panorama. There is Mount Brown rising to the enormous height of 16,000 feet. At its base the cars would thunder along, while its peak extends far above the clouds; or should the sun lend its radiant light, the mountain crest ever covered with snow would reflect the light of the ruler of the day, and thus make the opening scene a masterpiece of this panorama of Nature.

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[1] Benjamin Baltzly, "Reminiscences of the Expedition up the North Thompson River Valley to Leather Pass," [Montreal] *The Gazette*, 1 August 1872: reprinted in Andrew Birrell, *Benjamin Baltzly: Photographs and Journal of an Expedition through British Columbia, 1871* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1978), 154.

> Rushing on he enters Leather Pass. [...] Now the cars pass Yellowhead Lake which is at the highest point in the Pass. Here, look where he will, he will behold mountains. [...] Hastening on, he soon arrives at the Grand Forks of the Fraser [at the foot of Mount Robson]. The heart of the tourist must indeed be hard if it is not touched with the scenes now before him. It will stir him with feelings he cannot express, nor are words able to paint the scene. Stopping but a moment to note the beauties around him, the cars whirl him through a narrow mountain gorge with the turbulent waters of the Fraser at his feet until he arrives at Tete Jaune Cache. Here, again, his heart and eyes will be delighted with new scenes, and in response he can only exclaim: How grand! how sublime! But no time for reverie, for the iron horse gives the signal and away the long train speeds through the Tete Jaune Cache Valley in continual sight of snow-clad mountains [...] and in a few moments the tourist is in full view of Mount Milton.
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> But the cars speed him on past Albreda lake; past the forks of the North Thompson, and now they enter the dark forests, still in their primeval glory. As he rushes on through these mighty old forests, he gets a glimpse of Garnet River Cascade, Mount Cheadle, and numerous other cascades, rugged peaks, and glaciers equally grand. Arriving at Blue River Station it would be well for him to stop for several days to behold some of the charming scenes of the Selkirk range of mountains. [...] After spending several days pleasantly beholding the delightful scenery which ever and anon greets the eye, he returns and again enters the cars, which whirl past the torrents of Murchison's Rapids...[2]

This thesis explores the historical connections, intersections, and tensions between visuality, circulation (transportation and communication), and people's experiences of travelling through and living in the spaces, places, and landscapes of east-central British Columbia during the twentieth century. Precisely because it was written more than forty years before the first passenger train traversed the Yellowhead Pass, several aspects of Benjamin Baltzly's imaginative, forward-looking description of future railway journeys deserve to be elaborated on prior to the main part of this introduction. First, it must be pointed out that Canada's first transcontinental railroad did *not* cross the Rockies by way of the Yellowhead Pass, despite Baltzly's prognostications and Sandford Fleming's expert recommendations—the latter of which were based on surveys which showed that engineering-wise the Yellowhead was the best route through the mountains, and that from its western foot either the upper Fraser or North Thompson river valleys could provide a good route towards the Pacific. National political, economic, and military considerations trumped matters of grade, curvature, and construction cost, so that

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[2] Baltzly, "Reminiscences of the Expedition," 154-156.

during the early 1880s the Canadian Pacific Railway was built far to the south, through the tortuous terrain of the Kicking Horse and Rogers passes. The fulfillment of Baltzly's 1872 prediction that east-central BC would one day be "renowned as a place of grandeur and beauty to the tourist" because of the "sublime and awe-inspiring panoramic scenes which ever and anon meet the eye as the cars would rush through the Rockies" would have to wait until that stubbornly fixed space could be animated by the presence of a railway.[3] It would be thirty-nine years until the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway began clearing and grading a right-of-way through the Yellowhead Pass, and another three until the Canadian Northern Railway (which parallelled the GTP through the pass) pushed its line southwards down the North Thompson River valley. In the interval, the area's inextricably connected scenic resources and "redeeming feature" as a transportation corridor lay dormant and unexploited, notwithstanding the commercial popularity of the photographic images that Baltzly brought back with him.[4]

Second, it must be noted that the rosy, forward-looking perspective taken by Baltzly in the excerpt cited above stands in marked contrast to the rest of his narrative of the Geological Survey of Canada's 1871 expedition, which reads as a litany of miscalculations and hardships in the unfamiliar, inaccessible, forested, and mountainous geography of east-central BC. The survey's organizers had overestimated the speed at which they could travel through the terrain and underestimated how early and abruptly the onset of winter could arrive on the western slope of the northern Rockies. As a kind of barometer of the expedition—which did not even manage to reach its goal of Jasper House, a fur trading post at the eastern foot of the pass—Baltzly noted that only twenty-six of the 150 pack animals his party had started out with survived to return to Kamloops. The rest died or were abandoned because of accidents, overwork, exposure, and lack of forage. When the surveyors had raced back down to Kamloops in dugout canoes as the first snow fell and ice began forming on the North Thompson, they had eerily been able to trace their northward path by the series of mules and horses lying dead or dying of cold and starvation along the riverbanks. When one of the larger canoes wrecked after striking a rock in the Murchison rapids, the bundle of glass plates that contained Baltzly's

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[3] Baltzly, "Reminiscences of the Expedition," 156.

exposed negatives luckily jammed under a cross-brace and was the only cargo that could be retrieved. [Image 1] The next day, along with the party's other non-essentials, Baltzly's 8x10 camera, tripod, portable darkroom, unexposed plates, and various chemicals—an outfit of more than 400 pounds, which (like Baltzly) had been supplied to the survey by the Notman photographic company of Montreal—was hurriedly cached ashore to be picked up by another group of surveyors the following summer. When Baltzly described railway journeys, panoramic scenery, and leisurely sightseeing in and around the Yellowhead Pass, he was imagining that area spatially and experientially reorganized by modern networks and systems of circulation. Once the east-central part of British Columbia had been drawn into a globalizing, industrializing, capitalism-driven culture of time and space, the ways in which the spaces and places within it would be looked at and thought about would be very different from the way Baltzly himself had experienced them. He was imagining that area transformed from the harsh, unforgiving, surrounding space that he had hiked and canoed through into a passive, distant, almost uni-dimensional landscape, a series of scenes or screens that when traversed seemed to form a lengthy, rolling panorama.

It is especially noteworthy that Baltzly and the editors of the *Gazette* felt confident that the urbane, metropolitan newspaper readers of Montreal would be familiar with the fusion of the vehicular and the visual that Baltzly anticipated would soon transform the mountains, forests, waterways, and valleys of east-central BC into fleeting trackside scenery. In Baltzly's narrative, it is a coalescence of the precisely-engineered route and form of the railway tracks, the rigid timetable and inhuman speed of the locomotive, and the insulation from the surroundings afforded by the architecture of the passenger car that reduces a mountain 16,000 feet high into a kind of stage prop or backdrop, the routine "opening scene" of a standardized theatrical experience of traversing the Rockies. He expected that his readers would implicitly understand that the simultaneity or con/fusion of seeing, looking, gazing, and "getting a glimpse" with the kinesthetic velocity of rushing, speeding past, hastening on, whirling through, and "stopping but a moment" would be responsible for animating the mountains, rivers, and

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[4] Christopher E. Jackson, *With Lens and Brush: Images of the Western Canadian Landscape, 1845-1890* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1989), 27.

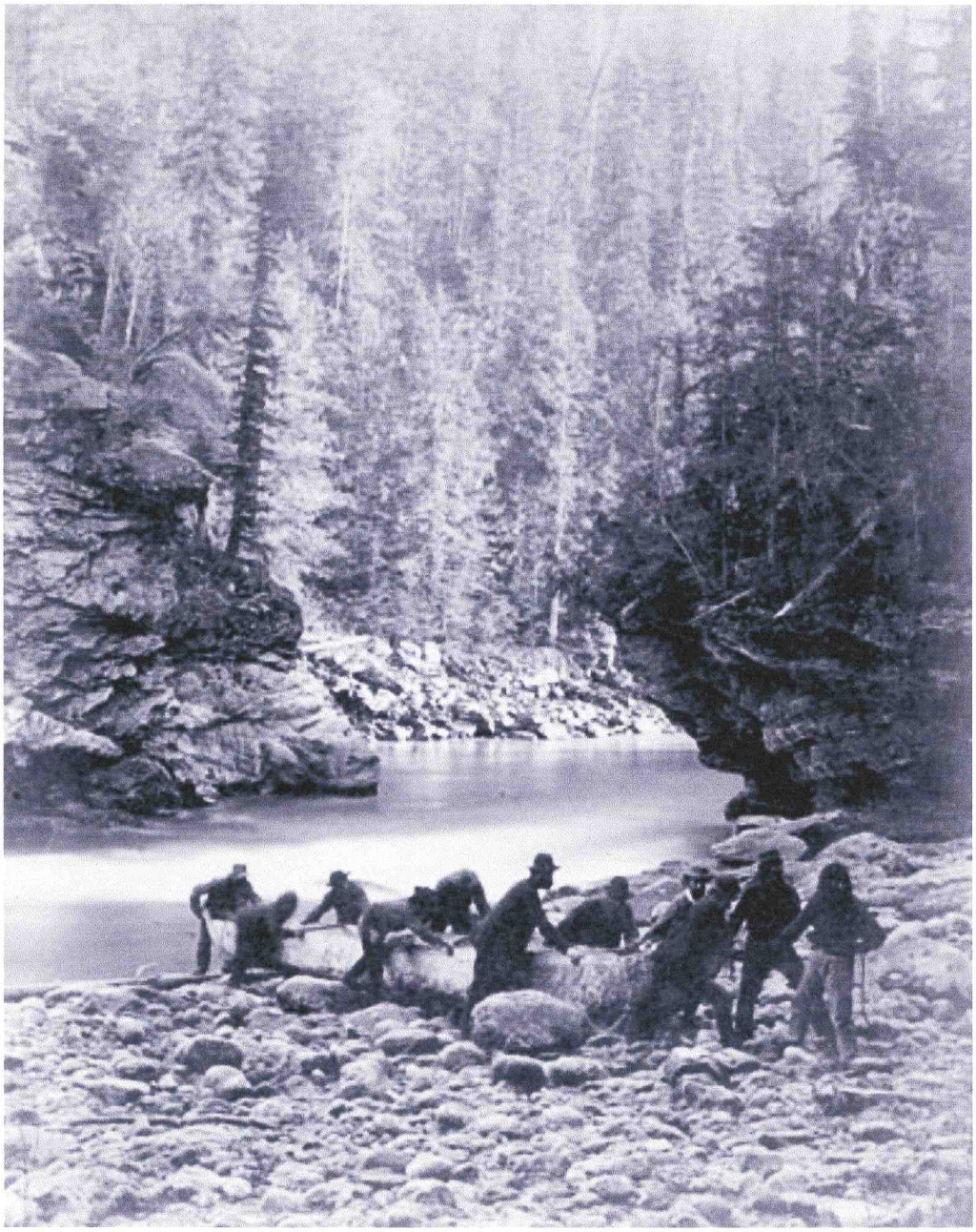

IMAGE 1 Geological Survey of Canada party portaging dugout canoe above Murchison's Rapids on the North Thompson River, November 1871. Photograph by Benjamin Baltzly. National Archives of Canada, PA-022618.

forests; for changing them from the inaccessible, imposing, and dangerous surroundings that he had experienced into the awe-inspiring and sublime yet safe, uniform, and consumable panorama of natural wonder described in his forward-looking last installment. As a kind of experiential filter, the medium of circulation—that is, the unitary mechanism of rail and locomotive—would in effect produce the message of the landscape. Baltzly recognized—and expected that his readers did as well—that with only minor variation, all train passengers who would ride through east-central BC would see the same panorama unfolding in the same sequence, by the same timetable, as it was filtered through the same visual-vehicular mechanism—unless they happened to be travelling from west to east, in which case the 'landscape narrative' would be reversed. The once-difficult-to-access space of east-central BC would become a landscape mediated or seemingly projected by the route and form of the tracks, the velocity of the locomotive, the windows and seating arrangements of the passenger coach, and the train's schedule and timetable.

That in 1872 a widely-travelled professional photographer like Baltzly treated the "panoramic perception"[5] that accompanied railway travel as an unproblematic given that did not need to be explained to the readers of the Montreal *Gazette* suggests that the space-time collapse associated with modern transportation and communication systems was becoming a culturally integrated and perceptually entrenched aspect of consciousness and everyday life in certain segments of late nineteenth century Canadian society.[6] This is broadly indicative of the emergence of *mobility* as a key structure of

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[5] The term "panoramic perception" is borrowed from the German historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 52-69. Also see John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 249-261.

[6] Though historical studies of the broad relations between circulation and Canadian culture and society was thrown into disrepute by some of the more over-enthusiastic and over-deterministic proponents of the Laurentian thesis, this theme has nevertheless continued to be touched on in a diverse array of contexts. However, this has usually been done indirectly and in a non-systematic manner, and with a marked bias towards studies of urban centres in the nineteenth century. In the context of state-formation, see Peter Baskerville, "Transportation, Social Change, and State Formation, Upper Canada, 1841-1864" in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State-Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 230-256. In the context of technologies and their users, see Michele Martin, *'Hello, Central?': Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Glen Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). Regarding urbanization and modernization, see Jason Gilliland, "The Creative Destruction of Montreal: Street

feeling in a culture of time and space which had as one of its central tenets the so-called 'annihilation' of barriers (both spatial and social) to the circulation of commodities through the interfering, intervening, inbetween space that separated important centres of production and consumption.[7] The practices of sightseeing and tourism foreseen by Baltzly and also the mechanically reproduced, pano-cinematic[8] landscape that he imagined would soon be established in the Yellowhead Pass and North Thompson River valley (as distinct from the static-photographic manner in which he himself had viewed it) were symptomatic of a historical moment in which visuality, landscape perception, and experiences of time and space were being shaped by the forces of modern capitalism, especially by changes in the mode, scope, and speed of commodity circulation.

Widenings and Urban (Re)Development in the Nineteenth Century" *Urban History Review* 31,1 (Fall 2002): 37-51; Jeremy Stein, "Annihilating Time and Space: The Modernization of Fire-Fighting Equipment in Late-Nineteenth-Century Cornwall, Ontario" *Urban History Review* 24,2 (March 1996): 3-11; "Dislocations: Changing Experiences of Time and Space in an Industrializing Nineteenth-Century Ontario Town" *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 14,1 (1999): 115-130. On native space and systems of circulation as the "capillaries of colonial appropriation," see Cole Harris's essay, "The Struggle With Distance" in *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997): 161-193. A rare instance of a Canadian historian considering the shifting relations between time, space, place, and circulation in the twentieth-century is Joy Parr's cursory examination of the relations between the residents of Iroquois, Ontario and the St. Lawrence River and Seaway in her article "Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth-Century Canada: The Timely, the Tacit, and the Material Body" *Canadian Historical Review* 82,4 (2001): 720-745.

[7] The argument that modern modes, systems, and networks of circulation has given rise to mobility as a structure of feeling (or even an emerging ontology) has been advanced most cogently in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), part three "The Experience of Time and Space"; Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Nigel Thrift, "Inhuman Geographies: Landscapes of Speed, Light, and Power" in Paul Cloke et al., *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies* (London: Paul Champan, 1994); and John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2000). Also see Marc Auge, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995); Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988); *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (London: Verso, 1995); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (London: Free Association Books, 1991); E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London: Abacus, 1985); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995); Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986); *The Vision Machine* (London and Bloomington: British Film Institute and Indiana University Press, 1994).

[8] It is worth noting that several of the very first moving pictures that were made of British Columbia (around 1900) involved bolting a camera to the front of a CPR locomotive and, from a fixed, straight ahead perspective that approximated the exclusive view of the engineer, filming the space that the train 'cut through' as it made its way through mountainous areas of southern BC. See Colin Brown, *Motion Picture Production in British Columbia, 1898-1940* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1979), 7-8; Sam Kula, "Steam Movies: Railroads and Moving Images" in Hugh A. Dempsey, ed., *The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984), 250-252.

Finally, it is significant that in the excerpt cited above Benjamin Baltzly made no mention of the people who lived in east-central BC when he had passed through it, or who he might reasonably have expected to live there in the future that he foresaw. He was perfectly aware that native people lived in the upper North Thompson River valley and at Tête Jaune Cache, near the western foot of the Yellowhead Pass. His party had encountered several Simpcw families and individuals during its reconnaissance of those areas, and had observed their graves, their camping grounds, and their (then uninhabited) log buildings beside the Fraser River at Tête Jaune Cache.[9] Baltzly was also quite familiar with the accounts of fur traders, gold seekers, and adventurous proto-tourists who had passed through the area previously, all of whom had described (and depended heavily on assistance, advice, and food provided by) the Simpcw who lived seasonally at Tête Jaune Cache.[10] Perhaps the Geological Survey party's larger mission of colonial "reterritorialization" explains the erasure of native people from Baltzly's vision of east-central BC's future—that is to say, he may have expected that Euro-Canadian spatial concepts and controls would soon be superimposed over native space, or that there would be no native people left in the area.[11] However, this would not account for the absence of non-natives from the future that he imagined, other than anonymous, speeding, gazing railway travellers. In 1871 no non-natives lived in the enormous area between Kamloops

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[9] The Simpcw were a small group of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) people. Most lived in what came to be called the North Thompson River valley, while a few families lived seasonally and/or intermittently in the uppermost reaches of the Fraser and Canoe watersheds. They frequented the area around Tête Jaune Cache in order to fish the uppermost salmon run on the Fraser, to hunt in nearby alpine areas, and to trade with the Athapaskan peoples on the eastern side of the Yellowhead Pass.

[10] For example, Baltzly and the other members of the Geological Survey of Canada party were so familiar with the journey of the so-called Overlanders, a group of Canadians who had made their way overland to the Cariboo gold fields via the Yellowhead Pass in 1862, that they actively measured their own progress (or lack thereof) against that of their predecessors. On Euro-Canadians' travels to and through the Yellowhead Pass and east-central BC prior to 1871, see Richard Thomas Wright, *Overlanders* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairies Books, 1985); Gregory L. Edwards, *Hindsight: William Hind in the Canadian West* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2002); Walter B. Cheadle, *Cheadle's Journal of Trip Across Canada, 1862-1863*. A.G Doughty and Gustave Lanctot, eds. (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1971); David Smyth, "The Yellowhead Pass and the Fur Trade" *BC Studies* 64 (Winter 1982-83): 48-73; Yvonne Mearns Klan, "...That Old Rogue, the Iroquois Tête Jaune" *British Columbia Historical News* 34,1 (Winter 2000-01): 18-21.

[11] The concept of "reterritorialization" is borrowed from historical geographer Cole Harris. On the hand-in-hand colonial processes of imaginatively reterritorializing and materially resettling the native space that eventually became British Columbia, see Cole Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*; Daniel W. Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

and Jasper House, but Baltzly anticipated the existence of stopping points along the future railroad line—at the foot of Mount Robson, for example—and even made specific reference to a "Blue River Station" where tourists might disembark to explore the scenery at their own pace and under more intimate, proximate conditions. He knew that as part of its strategic geography of operations, and in order to facilitate the speedy, efficient, and predictable movement of passenger and freight trains, any railway company would need to build these facilities at regular intervals along the length of its line and staff them with telegraph operators, maintenance workers, and train crews.[12] This would hold true even in areas that were barren of agricultural or mineral value. Yet in his narrative he made no mention of the people who would have to live in and around the stopping places that he imagined.

In the final installment of his 1872 series for the *Gazette*, Benjamin Baltzly was anticipating the development in east-central BC of a pervasive yet banal type of power relationship that has largely eluded the attention of Canadian historians. He was describing the spatial and visual relations that he expected would be established in that area once it had been drawn into an emerging culture of time and space in which spaces, places, and people were mediated and hierarchically situated by their relations to modern networks and systems of circulation. Baltzly's anonymous, masculine, "Western bound," sight-seeing train passengers were presumed to be like himself: the active, knowing, gazing, mobile, sophisticated residents of distant eastern metropoles, such as the commercial centre of Montreal. The people who he did *not* mention, the people who would live in east-central BC—whether native or non-native—would be features of the scenery, the passive, gazed-upon, static residents of the unimportant, intervening, inbetween spaces that trains and tracks would 'annihilate' as they passed through or passed by (bypass) in the process of connecting important centres of production, consumption, and population. Just as spaces and places in east-central BC would become illusory, evanescent, and seemingly dematerialized scenes in a landscape of condensed geography when viewed through the mechanism of the modern railway system, so too would the people who resided within those spaces and places. Unseen or glimpsed only

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[12] In his journal Baltzly described similar stations that he passed by during the Geographical Survey party's westward journey across the United States aboard trains of the Union Pacific Railroad company.

momentarily in the fleeting manner mandated by tracks, trains, and timetables, the people living along the rail line would appear to be not as real, as important, or as powerful as the passersby who materially and imaginatively cut through their communities while piggybacking along the "metropolitan corridors" of commodity circulation.[13]

In his study of railways' role in the industrialization of time and space in western societies during the nineteenth century, the German historian of modernity Wolfgang Schivelbusch succinctly observed that "(t)he formula is as simple as can be: *whatever was part of circulation was regarded as healthy, progressive, constructive; all that was detached from circulation, on the other hand, appeared diseased, medieval, subversive, threatening*. [emphasis added]"[14] The British historian Eric Hobsbawm has similarly pointed out the paradoxical and relational nature of extensive and intensive improvements in circulation during the late nineteenth century: as any one locale or region became 'progressively' more connected, opened up, and integrated into an emergent world system that was held together by networks of transportation and communication, places, regions, and people who were separated from these networks seemed to become commensurately more disconnected, isolated, and distant.[15] The idea that the tensions between centrality/marginality and connection/disconnection have been of central importance to experiences of and everyday life under conditions of modernity is the theoretical key to this thesis. It is the structural bases of the 'tourist gaze' and of modern North American culture's numerous derogatory colloquialisms about the relations between circulation and rural areas, small towns, and the people who have lived there, including 'one horse towns,' 'one light towns,' 'dead end towns,' 'widenings in the road,' 'the end of the line,' 'off the beaten track,' 'on the wrong side of the tracks,' 'just a name on the map,' 'don't sneeze or you'll miss it,' and so forth. Under conditions of modernity, circulation, mobility, and the modes of visuality associated with them have become integral aspects of place, and central to the production and reproduction of complex *hierarchies of place*.

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[13] Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor*, 3.

[14] Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 195.

[15] Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 77-78.

Hierarchy of place is a socio-cultural cleavage inextricably tied up with politics, economy, regionalism, rural-urban differences, and core/periphery, centre/margin, and metropole/hinterland relations.[16] It is an entrenched and pervasive yet subtle, diffuse, and highly particularistic cleavage that is similar to status, distinction, and social capital, and operates on the vague discursive-ideological level of so-called 'common sense.' For example, it is by an internalized 'common sense' that Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver are today acknowledged as implicitly more important places than Moose Jaw, Kingston, and Fredericton. And by the same logic Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver are marginal places compared with London, Paris, and New York, while Moose Jaw, Kingston, and Fredericton are more important than Lucerne, McBride, and Tête Jaune Cache, BC.

A place's situation within these complex hierarchies is the result of a whole series of factors, including population, size, urbanity, political power, production and consumption, command functions, religious and cultural activities, and so forth. Through representation, reputation, and lived historical experience, the hierarchical situation of a place comes to be internalized by its residents and those who otherwise identify closely with it. Thus 'knowing your place' is a crucially important aspect of subjectivity, self-identity, and interpersonal interactions. As a crude example, one might consider the convoluted interpersonal power relations that might exist between a poor, working-class Parisian woman and a wealthy, white, male mill-owner from some small community 'beyond Hope' in British Columbia. For an example of the extent to which place-based hierarchies can be internalized, one might also consider those instances when, after being asked "Where are you from?" (a significant question in and of itself, especially considering its sheer ubiquity), someone gives the reply "Oh, I'm sure you've never heard of it..."

Rather than focusing narrowly on the political economy of a certain mode or system of transportation or communication; or examining how it might have affected the

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[16] Thrift, "Inhuman Landscapes," 220-222. Hierarchy of place is a concept that has most often been pursued in the context of clear-cut divisions between rural and urban places and people. See Gerald W. Creed and Barbara Ching, "Recognizing Rusticity: Identity and the Power of Place" in Ching and Creed, eds. *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy* (London: Routledge, 1997); Paul Cloke and Jo Little, eds. *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalization, and Rurality* (London: Routledge, 1997); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). In a Canadian context, see R.W. Sandwell, "Finding Rural British Columbia" in R.W. Sandwell, ed., *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 3-14.

development of one or more industries and/or communities; or considering how people, places, and regions have been represented in tourist-oriented publications, this thesis explores the broader connections between circulation, visuality, and hierarchy of place in east-central British Columbia during the greater part of the twentieth century. By examining important aspects of what is a little-known part of the province, this thesis is also meant to make a contribution to the history of modern BC. Furthermore, it is intended to demonstrate the value of critically studying how circulation, mobility, and 'seeing and being seen' have run through the social and cultural history of everyday life in modern Canada.

There can be little doubt that shifting cultures of time and space and ephemeral, transient, even invisible phenomena like vision, speed, and movement have been very real and very powerful forces in experiences of modernity. But in order for the significance of these immaterial phenomena to be appreciated, ways have to be found to study their local intricacies and impacts on the everyday life of 'ordinary people' in addition to their changes on a structural level. This thesis studies the networks of circulation that have passed through a relatively large area—east-central British Columbia—over a period of more than half a century. The decision to select this subject and scope is based on the belief that the broad significance of circulation and mobility in modern societies can best be understood by examining the relations and tensions that existed between seemingly abstract structures and systems and specific, concrete, local situations. This thesis takes as given that space-time and vision are not neutral, natural, or fixed phenomena, but rather historically contingent and intrinsically bound up with power[17]; that place has been an important, meaningful aspect of people's lives, identities, and subjectivity[18]; and that under conditions of modernity, mobility, as an emergent

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[17] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*; David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Viking, 1972); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observor: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press and October Books, 1990); *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press and October Books, 1999); Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: Sage, 1998).

[18] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); J.E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999); J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith,

structure of feeling, has been in tension with fixed notions of place, so that modern spaces and identities have to be considered through what British sociologist John Urry has called a "dialectic of roots and routes."[19]

It is difficult to study movement, speed, and vision in a systematic manner because these very real yet immaterial phenomena do not generate the kinds of sources and types of evidence that historians are accustomed to dealing with. Nor is there a government record group or dedicated private archive one can go to if studying the broad historical connections between, for example, circulation, society, and culture. The contemporary observations of people like Benjamin Baltzly allow valuable insights, but are of only limited utility when the subject being considered is a highly diffuse one that changed over the span of decades rather than over the course of a summer. To study these connections and relations historically, it is necessary to sift through a wide variety of scattered, fragmentary, and banal sources; to draw evidence from references that might seem to relate only indirectly or obliquely to the subject at hand; and to give as much consideration to absences, the lack of change, and what did *not* happen as to presences, changes, and what did happen. This thesis does this by comparing, contrasting, and colliding—or setting in juxtaposition—evidence drawn from guidebooks, timetables, promotional and vernacular photographs, travel narratives, and other non-traditional sources against that contained in more familiar sources, like government records, newspapers, and the few existing local histories that relate to east-central BC.

The awkward label 'east-central British Columbia' used in this study refers to the geographic corridor that stretches from Prince George in the west to the summit of the Yellowhead Pass on the BC-Alberta boundary in the east. Were the regional centre of Prince George and the half-dozen places due south of it excised, the Province of British Columbia's 1999 Prince George-Mount Robson electoral district would correspond exactly with the area being studied here. [Map 1] As can be seen in this map and the more detailed, two-part map that shows most of east-central BC in the early 1980s, the

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Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

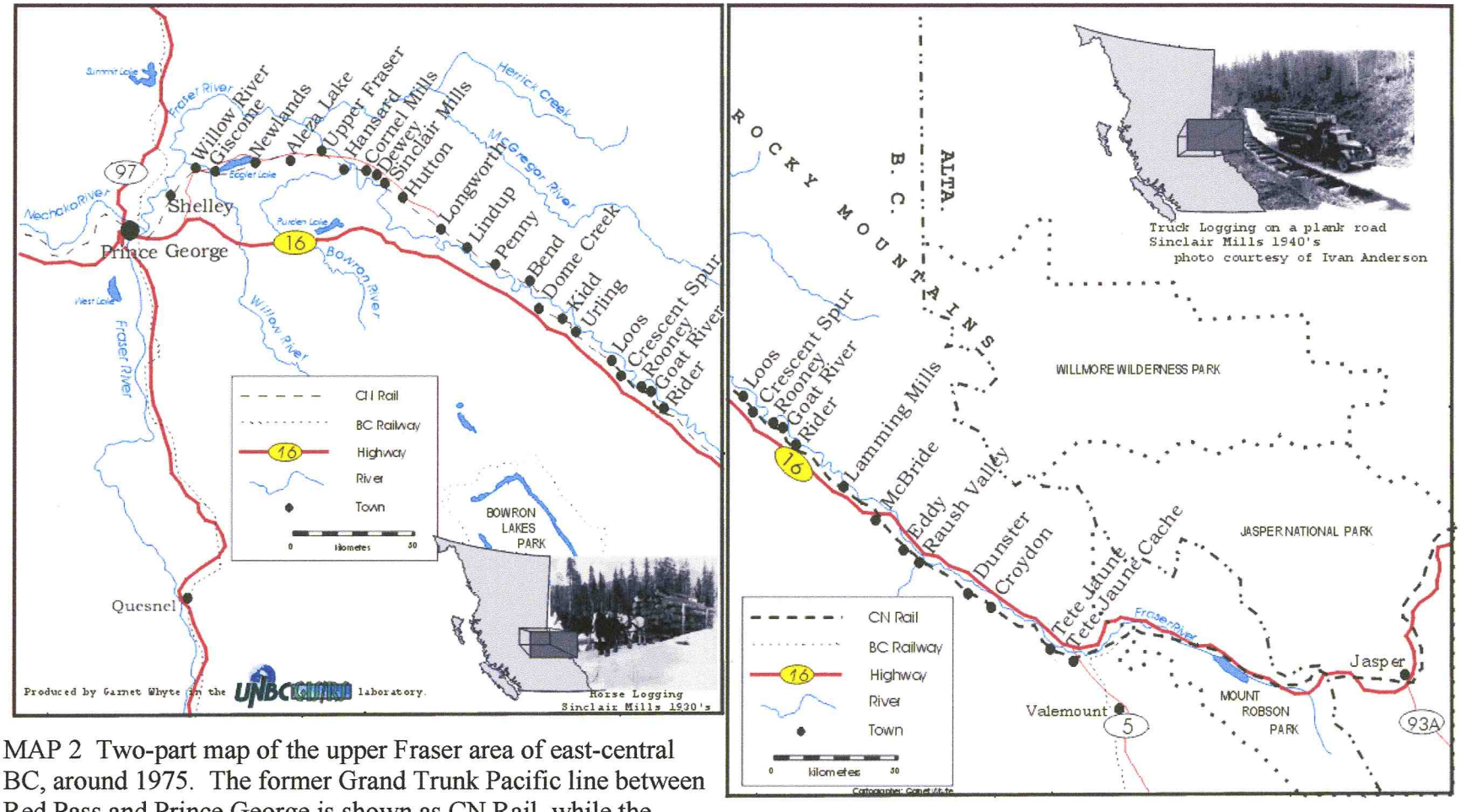
[19] See n.7 above, especially Thrift, "Inhuman Geographies," and Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*. Quote is from *Sociology Beyond Societies*, 133.

MAP 1 East-central Britsih Columbia, 1999

upper Fraser River's meandering course through the Rocky Mountain Trench forms the area's linear core. [Map 2] The vicinity of Tête Jaune Cache—which is the uppermost limit of navigation (and salmon migration) on the Fraser—represents a kind of natural junction, intersection, or crossroads. To its east, the Fraser descends from its headwaters in the Yellowhead Pass, while only a few miles to its south (down the continuation of the Trench) are located the headwaters of the Canoe River, which flows into the Columbia, and, a little further on, of the Albreda River, which flows into the North Thompson.

This large area has contained more than fifty identifiable places where people have lived in the twentieth century. Portions of it have been grouped together as nominally distinct regions, including the Yellowhead Pass, Robson Valley, Upper Fraser, and East Line regions. However, these locally-recognized regions can only be hazily defined, and sometimes overlap. For the sake of clarity, reference to them will be avoided in this thesis except in a few instances where doing so will not overly complicate the narrative. While the size of this area and the many places that have existed within it might at first seem to make it an unwieldy, disunited subject of inquiry, these features and this complexity are in fact positively beneficial—the intention is to emphasize east-central BC as a *corridor*, an area that has historically been constructed and kept in a tension between fixity and flow by various networks, systems, and modes of circulation. It would be a very different thing to study the connections between circulation, visuality, and hierarchy of place in the context of an island or a single town because analysis would tend to revert to the artificial level of 'inside' and 'outside,' thereby jettisoning many insights that can be gained through an approach based on a dialectic of roots and routes. That is to say, as the concretely-tangible and fixed site where people reside, Island ABC or Town XYZ would be privileged as the locus of attention, or the spider in the centre of the web, despite the fact that under conditions of modernity the residents of those places' lived experience occurred as much within immense networks of transience, mobility, and circulation as they did within neatly-bounded locales and static sites of re/production and consumption.

The rest of this thesis is divided into three large chapters, each of which is further divided into sections. The first chapter is about railways, the first modern systems of



MAP 2 Two-part map of the upper Fraser area of east-central BC, around 1975. The former Grand Trunk Pacific line between Red Pass and Prince George is shown as CN Rail, while the former Canadian Northern line from Red Pass south is misidentified as the BC Railway—it too is CN Rail. Courtesy of UNBC's Upper Fraser Mill Towns Historical Geography Project [http://web.unbc.ca/upperfraser].

circulation to traverse east-central BC. The second chapter examines the geographical and socio-cultural 'gaps' in circulation and mobility that existed in east-central BC during the period when roads and automobiles supplanted railways as the dominant means of moving around in British Columbian, Canadian, and North American societies. The third chapter examines the long-awaited construction and much-delayed completion of an automobile highway across the east-west length of east-central BC.

Before moving on to the main body of this thesis—and to the twentieth century, with which it is primarily concerned—it should be pointed out that Benjamin Baltzly was not some kind of visionary, the only person to have thought about how railway travellers would experience the spaces, places, landscapes, and communities that they would pass through (and pass by) and see (and not see) in east-central BC during the period when it had seemed certain that Canada's first transcontinental railway would cross through the Yellowhead Pass. Though his 1872 prognostications on the subject are especially pertinent because of their widespread publication and his expertise in optical technology and visual practices, it is also worth considering, for example, the drawing that was made by an anonymous member of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Survey's M Division, which wintered at Tête Jaune Cache in 1876.[20] [Image 2]

Less optimistic than Baltzly was, the snow- and ice-bound creator of this image apparently felt as though a hundred years would pass before a railway would run through the Yellowhead Pass and past the site of the surveyors' cabin on the banks of the Fraser. Looking a century further into the future, to the year 2076, the unknown artist also imagined airships shuttling travellers through the skies above the valley at the same altitude of nearby mountain peaks. This drawing appears to have been suggesting not only that future shifts in how the space of east-central BC would be traversed would be accompanied by shifts in how that space would be perceived and experienced, but also that there would be a hierarchical relationship between the different modes of both circulation and perception. As each 'progressive' improvement in transportation facilitated the faster, more efficient, and more direct circulation of commodities,

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[20] Neither the author nor Glenbow Archives staff have been able to learn the origin or provenance of this drawing, which came to the Archives as part of a large collection of undifferentiated images and ephemera.

IMAGE 2 Unknown artist's vision of the future of transportation in the Yellowhead Pass area, 1876. Glenbow Archives, NA-944-14.

passengers travelling aboard the necessary vehicles would be increasingly insulated and alienated from the physical space they were being projected through. The floating, dreamlike separation from an abstract, thoroughly 'annihilated' physical landscape that would result from lighter-than-air travel was a logical extension of the perceptual-experiential realignment that would accompany the shift from travel by canoe and snowshoe to the straight, flat railway that mechanically struck its way through the vagaries and irregularities of the natural terrain.

Because 1876 and showshoes, 1976 and railroads, and 2076 and dirigibles simultaneously occupy the same space in this drawing, the implication is that each supposedly 'progressive' shift in the mode of circulation would not result in the complete supercession or disappearance of earlier routes, systems, technologies, or ways of seeing. Instead, the infrastructure of 'outdated,' no-longer-cutting-edge ways of moving through space would be incorporated as scenic features of the landscape visible to those who can afford to travel by the most modern conveyances. Just as the surveyors' static riverside cabin and fragile canoes would become a rustic scene to be fleetingly glimpsed from passenger coaches as trains burst across openings in the forest, when viewed from high above its route through mountains and forests, long stretches of the undeviating, imperiously-rational railroad line would be reduced to mere condensed geography, a nostalgic abstraction, a miniaturized series of geometric tangents and whimsically meandering curves.

CHAPTER ONE: RAILWAYS

In the summer of 1910 the British writer Frederick Talbot toured the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway's route across Canada in his role as the company's unofficial publicist. Much of the railroad had been completed by then, but there remained several sections where construction was ongoing and a large 'gap' where it had yet to begin. This trackless expanse stretched from the Alberta foothills in the east to British Columbia's upper Skeena River valley in the west. No rails had been put down when Talbot and his company-supplied guides hiked through the Yellowhead Pass and rafted down the upper Fraser River. No clearing had been done, no work camps had been assembled, no machinery had been brought up, no materials had been stockpiled, and no grading was underway. Nor would they be for another eighteen months, as the heavy rockwork and blasting needed throughout the Yellowhead Pass would prevent the 'end of steel' from reaching the vicinity of Tête Jaune Cache until late 1911. The GTP's surveyors had not even established the precise line that the railroad would follow in east-central BC when Talbot passed through that area. Yet despite the absence of tracks, a grade, or even survey markers, Talbot—like Benjamin Baltzly forty years before—felt confident making pronouncements about how the visual-vehicular mechanism of the railway would mediate future train passengers' experiences of landscape in east-central BC.

In 1912, Talbot's photographically-illustrated, 350-page book about his 1910 trip—titled *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway*—was published in London, the home to most of the GTP's financiers. In it Talbot lauded the company's most senior officials for the incomparable wisdom, ingenuity, and determination that they had demonstrated by their adamant insistence that their transcontinental railroad would be built to standards of gradient, curvature, and permanence so high that the entire line would be, as the railway's 1908 statement of incorporation put it, "not inferior to the main line of the [parent] Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada between Montreal and Toronto."[1] Talbot argued that the implementation of these standards would provide the GTP with unassailable advantages over its competitors; he also suggested it would

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[1] Cited in G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938), 331.

have implications for how future travellers would view the spaces they passed through. He predicted that in most instances the railway's standards of construction would have a positive effect on passengers' experiences of landscape. For example, he suggested that the existing 186 miles of relatively flat track "devoid of spectacular constructional feats" between Prince Rupert and Hazelton would allow "beautiful unobstructed vistas of mountains, forest and waterfall to be obtained from the grade for mile after mile, rendering this railway journey the foremost scenic route through the [Coast] mountains of North America."[2] However, in one important instance he let slip that the materialization of the GTP's time- and space-annihilating standards might actually make sightseeing from its passenger trains somewhat dull in certain areas; a less sublime and less picturesque landscape experience than could be purchased from other transcontinental railways. Referring specifically to the Yellowhead Pass through the Rocky Mountains (to which no tracks had come within sixty miles when he had been there in 1910), Talbot wrote almost apologetically that

> the adoption of this route [through the Rockies] has robbed the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific of spectacular engineering achievements. One looks in vain for those wonderful loops and spirals by which other lines ascend and descend the mountain chains. Yet the most impressive feature of this railway is the fact that it crosses the awe-inspiring Rocky Mountains at a lower altitude and with a greater ease than many other competitive lines span the rolling desert, and that without recourse to prodigious, costly, or picturesque works.[3]

As a publicist, an experienced railway traveller, and someone who was interested in modern ocular and transportation technologies[4], Frederick Talbot realized that the routing decisions and standards of construction that were going to make the GTP's completed railroad technically superior to those of its rivals might also make the spaces

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[2] Frederick A. Talbot, *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway*... (London: Seeley, Service, and Co., 1912), 287, 289.

[3] Talbot, *Making a Great Canadian Railway*, 200.

[4] Talbot was not a photographer like Baltzly, but his interest in modern visuality is evidenced by his two publications that followed his book about the GTP: *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked* (1912), and *Practical Cinematography and its Applications* (1913). Subjects subsequently covered in Frederick Talbot's large portfolio of 'progress'-oriented monographs included: submarines, lighthouses, *Aeroplanes and Dirigibles at War* (1915), the Canadian Pacific Railway, railway wonders of the world, electrical wonders of the world, *The Romance of Modern Scientific and Mechanical Achievements* (1918), and a trilogy about the tripartate "Conquest of the World" by oil, steamship, and railway.

that it traversed and mediated as landscape comparatively less scenic, less exciting, and less attractive for its passengers. This would especially be the case amidst the Rockies, the high point of any transcontinental railway journey in North America. The absence of long tunnels, tall bridges, precarious trestles, switchbacks, deep cuts, steep grades, and sharp curves on the GTP's line through British Columbia would provide few of the kin-aesthetic thrills that were generated by the Canadian Pacific Railway's in/famous feats of spectacular engineering, like the Big Hill, Glacier Loop, Spiral Tunnels, Rogers Pass snowsheds, and Stony Creek bridge—all of which were material expressions of a tension between the CPR's business philosophy and the difficult transmountain route that it had chosen.[5]

This chapter examines the role of railways in creating, mediating, and destroying landscapes in east-central BC, and in making some spaces and places important while marginalizing others. It focuses primarily on the period from 1910 to the 1940s, and is divided into four sections. The first explores the ideology that lay behind the GTP's philosophy of railroad building and, by extension, its techniques and standards of construction. It considers how a dominating logic materialized—quite literally—as structures that would subsequently mediate, frame, and structure railway travellers' views and experiences of east-central BC, even long after the GTP had ceased to exist as a corporate entity. The second and third sections both look at examples of how this visual-vehicular mediation of landscape worked, and consider how some spaces, places, and people were given an enhanced depth of reality while others were seemingly 'annihilated.' The second section shows how specific *sites* visible from the tracks were transformed into *sights*: differentiated yet integral components within larger panoramic landscapes. The third section examines how railways' changing infrastructure and shifting operations had the effect of eliminating certain sites/sights that they had established previously, ranging from specific landmarks to corridors hundreds of miles long. After touching on how railways fit into everyday life for residents of east-central BC, the fourth section looks at how those people and the places that they lived in were

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[5] Dozens of examples of how these structures and stretches of right-of-way became prominent features in train passengers' experiences of the Rocky and Selkirk mountains can be found amongst the travel accounts, illustrations, and photographs reproduced in E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism* (Banff: Altitude, 1983).

hierarchically situated by their relative connection to and disconnection from the dominant network of circulation. It considers this not only in terms of residents' relations to the materially-tangible reality of the railroad, but also in the contexts of representation and visuality; of seeing, being seen, and not being seen from the train.

1.1 Constructing a Through-Way

The Grand Trunk Pacific was one of the last transcontinental railways built in North America. Its 'metropolitan corridor' across Canada was predicated on the 'annihilation of time and space' to an extent unsurpassed by any of its national or perhaps even continental rivals. This included the section through central British Columbia. As noted above, the standards of gradient, curvature, and permanence that the GTP's senior management insisted be applied to the entire railroad were equal to those then existing on the line between Canada's two largest centers of population, commerce, and industry. Deviation from these exacting standards was to be permitted in only the most extraordinary circumstances. The power of this enormous, monopolistic corporation seemed to be materially embodied in the nature-defying form of its right-of-way.

In his study of the GTP in British Columbia, the business historian Frank Leonard has shown that that company's approach to railroad construction was very different from those of its national rivals, the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern railways.[6] The established business model for profitable (or at least minimally unprofitable) railroading on the Pacific slope demanded a long-term strategy. Initially, the line between the prairies and the Pacific was to be constructed using very flexible standards because the intervening 'sea of sterile mountains' was bound to be the most difficult and expensive section to build, maintain, and operate in, as well as the least remunerative. Once the line across BC was completed, the slow but steady growth of revenue-generating local traffic was to be encouraged by the provision of branch lines, good service, and general support for settlement and development. The infrastructure of the railroad would then be gradually improved. Grades would be reduced, curves straightened, and bridges

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[6] Frank Leonard, *A Thousand Blunders: The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and Northern British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 10-11.

reinforced only as justified by increases in traffic and revenue, and by the paying down of the heavy debts that had accumulated during construction.[7]

The approach taken by GTP management differed radically from this business model. Their plan was to immediately build a railroad of singularly high standards—and, necessarily, of great expense—all the way across Canada, including through the Rocky Mountains and the forested valleys of central British Columbia. Senior GTP managers believed that the competitive advantages of rapid movement and operational efficiency provided by an express-standard railroad would allow the company to quickly and in an almost magnetic manner attract the existing and nascent markets for high-speed, long-distance through-traffic between the metropoles of eastern North America and the eastern metropoles of Japan and China. In a sense, the GTP was envisioned as a kind of modern-day Northwest Passage.

With this short-term, high-speed, long-distance approach to the railway business, the GTP intrinsically disdained the cultivation of local communities, industries, and traffic along its line. Most of the spaces and places that the company's railroad passed through mattered to it only in terms of how quickly and inexpensively they could be traversed. Frank Leonard has shown that the GTP took a high-handed approach—and in a few instances was even outright hostile—towards the communities and industries in central BC that might have generated traffic which would have helped pay down the enormous debts the railway had accumulated during construction. He has concluded that "(t)he railway company's patent lack of interest in generating and increasing traffic [within BC] suggests that GTP officers practically disregarded not only development requirements in the region, but also the railway axiom for financial survival of a new line."[8]

What lay behind the GTP's highly atypical approach to the railway business—and, by direct extension, behind the route and form of its line through BC—were ideologically-based assumptions, rather than evidence-based calculations, about the

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[7] For an example of how the decision was made to go ahead with a major infrastructure improvement in BC under this business model, see Gary G. Backler and Trevor D. Heaver, "The Timing of a Major Investment in Railway Capacity: CPR's 1913 Connaught Tunnel Decision" *Business History* 14,2 (November 1982): 300-314.

[8] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 243.

viability of a high-speed transportation system whose key feature was the ability to shave a few days off the time needed to move commodities between the metropolitan markets and manufacturing centres of North America and Asia. While Leonard has demonstrated in a series of case studies that "a harmful obsession with territoriality" permeated the corporate structure of the land-starved GTP from president Charles M. Hayes down through upper management to its local agents and representatives, this corporate territoriality fails to explain some of the most important aspects of the GTP, such as the origins of its extremely high and self-imposed standards of construction.[9] Although the importance of revenue-generating townsite development for a railway company that received no land grants can not be denied, by focussing on the tensions and conflicts between the GTP and fixed sites in BC (like towns and mines), Leonard has perhaps overlooked a less tangible corollary to and possible explanation for elements of the GTP's corporate territoriality—that is, a dominating ideology of *pure* or *immanent circulation*.

In a capitalism-driven culture of time and space in which time equaled money and the intervening, inbetween spaces that separated producers and consumers were impediments to the realization of profit, logic seemed to dictate that shippers from around the world would beat a path to the Grand Trunk Pacific's completed transcontinental railroad (and also to its planned transoceanic shipping line) in order to take advantage of that transportation system's ability to reduce what Marx referred to as the "wandering time" of commodities.[10] By moving commodities between sites of production and consumption more rapidly, the GTP would be able to accelerate the turnover of other companies' capital investment, thereby increasing their profits—and of course a share of those profits would be taken by their actualizer through freight rates, tariffs, and various other charges.

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[9] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 243. On railways and corporate territoriality, also see Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 149-162.

[10] Cited in David Harvey, "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of Marxian Theory" in *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (London: Routledge, 2001), 244. In fact, Marx argued that it was the very process of circulation between geographical locations that transformed an object or *product* into a *commodity*. Until it reaches its destination market, a product actually represents a monetary loss for its producer. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations for the Critique of Political Economy* (London: New Left Review, 1973), 534.

While accelerating the turnover of investment by only a few days might at first seem insignificant, the business logic of a period that saw the emergence of mass production and economies of scale suggested that considerable profits could be realized if a sufficient volume of goods was shipped across North America and the Pacific by way of the GTP's terminal and port at Prince Rupert. In conjunction with the prominent discursive position then being given to various space-time compressing technologies, and with the emergence of mobility as a structure of feeling, this kind of reasoning gave rise in some quarters to what can be called an ideology of pure circulation, wherein seemingly logical expectations and assumptions about the power of speed obscured and outstripped pragmatic realities. In such an ideology, power, profit, and importance were felt to stem from the rapid, efficient, and predictable traversal of space, or the so-called tearing down of spatial barriers, as much as (or even more than) from the production of goods or the ownership of static parcels of space.[11]

That immanent circulation was a dominating logic behind the conceptualization, construction, and operation of the Grand Trunk Pacific helps to explain a whole series of features and events that were associated with that railway company. It would explain the outlandishly high estimates of future traffic that its planners employed—apparently at the behest of president Charles M. Hayes (who on this matter Leonard has referred to as "the 'believer'")—when they made projections about future operating costs and returns on investment on the GTP's line between Prince Rupert and the Alberta foothills.[12] Between 1906 and 1912 GTP planners variously calculated that fourteen, sixteen, and twenty through-trains *per day* would traverse the completed mainline through BC. By these wildly optimistic numbers, the GTP was expecting to handle almost double the amount of traffic that was then passing over the CPR's well-established railroad across BC and through its terminal city on the Pacific, Vancouver.[13]

A dominating logic of pure circulation would also help explain why the GTP decided to establish its Pacific terminus at isolated Prince Rupert, a point that was 400

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[11] Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, chapters five, six, and eight.

[12] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 65.

[13] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 65-67.

miles and 700 miles closer to Yokohama, Japan than were Vancouver and San Francisco, respectively. It would explain why the decision was made to build the line through the Rockies via the relatively barren Yellowhead Pass and upper Fraser corridor, which offered good grades and a fast, direct route towards the Pacific but held few prospects for settlement or industry, instead of via the Peace River route, which traversed an area with immense potential for agricultural development but was less direct and involved slightly steeper grades.

It would explain the GTP's lack of interest in encouraging development along its completed line through BC. In the corporate culture of that company, the speculative value of the imagined high-speed, long-distance through-traffic that would surely patronize its railroad outweighed the more realistic value of the scattered and diffuse dribs and drabs of traffic that could have one day been generated by many smaller mills, mines, and farms in BC. From a perspective of pure circulation, the collection of any such local traffic would actually have represented a complication or interruption to the rapid movement of high priority through-trains, a kind of clogging-up of the arteries of commodity circulation.[14]

It would even help explain the untimely death of GTP president Hayes in April of 1912. Given the array of transatlantic liners that he, as a very wealthy man, could have selected to board for a return trip from London to Canada, Hayes' presence aboard the inaugural voyage of the *Titanic*—touted far and wide as the biggest, most luxurious, and above all *fastest* transoceanic steamship ever built—should be considered significant, rather than discounted as merely an unfortunate coincidence.[15] This event in the history of the GTP stemmed from its President's fixation on speed, mobility, and the potential for the realization of profit by the annihilation of time and space; a fascination that was shared by many of his contemporaries, including, apparently, many of his colleagues and underlings at the Grand Trunk Pacific railway company.

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[14] In conjunction with the spiteful territoriality discerned by Frank Leonard, this would help to explain the GTP's unwillingness to add new stations or provide special timetable interruptions for its would-be customers in the Hazelton district of west-central BC. *Thousand Blunders*, chapter eight.

[15] On the *Titanic* as a paradoxical modern avatar of speed, see Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 65-67, 109-111.

This ideology of pure circulation deposited or inscribed many materially-tangible expressions of itself on east-central British Columbia. On a system-wide level, the GTP management's strategic decision to run its line through the Yellowhead Pass and upper Fraser corridor instead of by some other route is the most obvious example of this. On a more experientially-comprehensible level, the materialization of this ideology and business philosophy occurred primarily in the form of spaces and structures, by way of the standards of engineering the company had applied when constructing its railroad.

The abstract, theoretical principle that all railways strove for was to build a line that was "absolutely smooth, absolutely level, absolutely hard, and absolutely straight."[16] Thus the ideal railroad between, for example, Quebec City and Prince Rupert would be perfectly direct and frictionless—a veritable vacuum tube. Any deviation from this principle represented a compromise with the technical and financial limitations of building such a line through the innumerable irregularities of natural terrain. Grade was the most important physical attribute of a railroad because ascent was the slowest, most difficult, and most expensive kind of movement for trains. At a time when the generally accepted standard of ruling grade for North American transcontinental railways was 2%, the GTP's self-imposed standard was four tenths of one percent, or 0.4%, which meant that the maximum difference of elevation in any given mile of mainline track would be twenty-one feet. Thus a single GTP locomotive and crew would be able to haul a train through the Rockies that would have required multiple locomotives and crews on steeper rival railroads. Frederick Talbot opined that the GTP's advantage over its competition was like that of an army "secure in an impregnable fortress, resisting an assault delivered over open country where the besiegers are exposed on all sides. Firmly entrenched as this railway is behind its low grades, it has nothing to fear from rate-wars. This physical advantage [of such low grades] is too overwhelming to be overcome by such methods."[17]

The GTP's other standards of railroad construction were similarly high. Track curvature was to be held below a gently sweeping six degrees. Heavy-duty eighty-pound steel rails were to be used all along the mainline, thereby allowing the rapid passage of

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[16] Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 21.

[17] Talbot, *The Making*, 327.

heavier-than-usual trains. And even in the most difficult-to-access areas of central BC, all major bridges and trestles were to be built of steel, stone, and reinforced concrete instead of locally available but weaker, 'slower,' and less permanent timber.[18]

So how did these standards played out on the ground in the Yellowhead Pass and the upper Fraser River valley? To get from the summit of the Yellowhead Pass to Prince George as directly as possible while meeting the required standards in a cost-efficient manner, the GTP's surveyors set out a route that required four large steel and concrete bridges across the Fraser River. From east to west, these spans were located at Tête Jaune Cache (Mile 50 west of the Yellowhead Summit), Dome Creek (Mile 141), Hansard (Mile 183), and just outside Prince George (Mile 230). These bridges were expensive, but having the railroad cross back and forth between the south and north sides of the Fraser allowed even more expensive rockwork through difficult terrain to be avoided. Except for unstable bluffs near what became Shere, a few short tunnels through frangible rock that were needed between what became McBride and Crescent Spur, and the frequent occurrence of blue clay-type soils, which were rock hard when dry but mud-like and prone to slippage when wet, the GTP and its contractors encountered few engineering difficulties when building its line through east-central British Columbia. However, in all three of these instances GTP managers demonstrated a complete lack of flexibility regarding their construction criterion. Their unwillingness to relax their standards of gradient and curvature in these areas avoidably drove up the cost of construction, and their failure to make adjustments in the presence of obvious natural hazards was the root cause of many maintenance problems and accidents that occurred in those locations over the following decades.[19]

In some parts of the narrow and relatively steep terrain of the Yellowhead Pass, the tracks ran on shelves cut from exposed rock faces, but more often were set close to the tumbling headwaters of the Fraser River. [Image 3] From Tête Jaune Cache to the

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[18] On the GTP's standards of construction, their costs, and technical and logistical intricacies of their implementation in British Columbia, see Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, chapter three; Geoffrey W. Taylor, *The Railroad Contractors* (Victoria: Morriss, 1988), chapters five to seven.

[19] See Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 77-83; Marilyn Wheeler, *The Robson Valley Story* (McBride: McBride-Robson Valley Story Group, 1979), 15, 139, 142. For one example of the perennial slides and washouts around Shere, see *McBride Journal*, 15 April 1932, 4; 29 April 1932, 1.

IMAGE 3 Grand Trunk Pacific railway rock-cut in the Yellowhead Pass, October 1911. Photograph by H.J. Green. Glenbow Archives, NA-915-18.

vicinity of what became Penny, the tracks were also located close to the Fraser, rarely more than a quarter mile from its winding course. In this long corridor the tracks typically followed the 'zero grade' of the valley bottom, but in a few places where the river had cut a channel through rocky bluffs the line was diverted around them by going up onto river benches. West of Penny the Rocky Mountain Trench gradually widened into a large, flat, forested plateau, and so for long stretches between Penny and Sinclair Mills, and again between Hansard and Giscome, the tracks were routed overland, so that at some points they were located almost twenty miles away from the Fraser River.

As components in a complex but unitary system that was predicated on commodity circulation, the general route of the GTP line, the four bridges over the Fraser, the numerous tributary-crossings, the eighty-pound rails, and innumerable other concretely-tangible structures in east-central BC combined to form a *standardized experiential corridor*. That is to say, all GTP trains and all the passengers riding aboard them would travel along the same set of tracks in one of only two directions. They would slow down, speed up, and stop at prearranged points; tilt at the same angles on the same curves; pass through the same tunnels and stations, over the same bridges, and beneath the same bluffs and peaks. The sequence in which the railway's stations would be passed through would be fixed, as would the spatial distance between them. The temporal distance between these same stations would depend on each train's speed, but those too would be regulated (though never wholly determined: hence the existence of delays) by the quality of the line, by the engineer's ability to see the track ahead, and by the timetables that were established in the railway company's national and regional centres of administration and operations. Thus, as can be seen in the GTP's railway timetables, the distance between, for example, Dunster and Croydon stations was measured in both miles and minutes. Spaces that the railroad did not pass through and that could not be seen from the moving train seemingly did not exist. These included the 'backside' of the continuous chain of mountains that made up the Rocky Mountain Trench, the valleys behind those peaks, the forests on the opposite side of the river from the right-of-way, the thin strips of space immediately beneath bridges and trestles, and anywhere else that was screened from view by tunnels, ridges, and trackside stands of timber.

Because no road, track, or trail preceded the GTP through the upper Fraser corridor, prior to 1914 the distance between Tête Jaune Cache and Fort George—the navigational 'bookends' of the upper Fraser—had always been 316 miles. This had not been an abstract distance measured on a map, or calculated 'as the crow flies.' Rather, it had been the experiential distance of travel on the river. But because, as Frederick Talbot observed, the upper Fraser meandered "in the most bewildering manner, doubling and redoubling on itself to an amazing degree," the GTP's line as it was initially surveyed in 1911 was able to 'annihilate' almost one third of the traditional experiential distance of 316 miles.[20] More refined surveys subsequently allowed the distance between Tête Jaune Cache and Fort George to be further rationalized away, until it was reduced to 180 miles, "owing," as Talbot put it, "to the iron road describing practically a bee-line through the valley."[21] It was the GTP's metropolitan corridor in its entirety—the cuts, fills, bridges, tunnels, tracks, stations, water towers, coal docks, standardized depots,[22] telegraph lines, and most of the other buildings and structures that the railway would build in east-central BC—that allowed 140 out of 316 miles to be bypassed, made redundant, or seemingly 'annihilated.'

That this 'annihilation' of time and space was in fact the superimposition of a dominating, modern order of time and space in which networks of circulation set places and people in hierarchical relations is demonstrated by the spatial-visual relationships that existed between the completed railroad and the Fraser River. The marginalized corridor that was the river's meandering course through the Rocky Mountain Trench became an important part of the panoramic landscape seen by railway passengers—an irrational, temperamental, uni-directional flow that could be viewed from within a

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[20] Talbot, *Making a Great Canadian Railway*, 205; *Fort George Herald*, 13 April 1911, cited in Jack Bourdreau, *Crazy Man's Creek* (Prince George: Caitlin, 1998), 179.

[21] Talbot, *Making of a Great Canadian Railway*, 205.

[22] With only one exception—the divisional point depot at McBride—all of the GTP's depots between the BC-Alberta boundary and Prince George were of the standard Type E pattern. Recognizable by their hexagonal bay window and dormer, bell cast roof, and large roof overhangs which made them appear larger than they were, almost all of these depots were situated on the north side of the tracks with their waiting room facing east. In addition to expressing corporate territoriality and efficiency, these depots also generated what has been called a "monotonous sameness" for the sight-seeing train passengers who looked out on the built environment along the GTP's right-of-way. Charles M. Bohi, *Canadian National's Western Depots* (Toronto: Railfare, 1977), 46.

predictable, rationally-organized, reversible flow. When Tête Jaune Cache and Fort George were first connected by rail in early 1914, the river that had been so central to the human history of the area[23] was abruptly transformed into a veritable backwater, a scenic, subordinate, and seemingly tamed presence that ran roughly parallel to the railroad. In relation to the dominant new mode of circulation, the unpredictable, irregular, fluctuating, and hazardous river appeared to be a bypassed, avoidable, and distinctly un-modern route and mode of circulation. Furthermore, many parts of the river were invisible to train passengers. As noted above, the tracks and river diverged for several long stretches, and even in those areas where the tracks ran parallel and in close proximity to the Fraser, dense stands of timber intervened between the tracks and the river, screening the watercourse from passengers' view, or allowing only fleeting, flickering glimpses.

For example, the Giscome and the Goat River rapids had long been (and remained) dangerous stretches of water for anyone who had reason to ply the upper Fraser. But neither was visible from the tracks. An even more prominent absence that illustrates the intermittent visual-vehicular connection between the rails and the river was the Grand Canyon of the Fraser. With its jagged underwater rocks, boiling rapids, and enormous whirlpool, this dark, roaring, steeply walled, and 'S' shaped constriction had long been the terror of those who travelled the river, and a location where many had been killed in mishaps.[24] Yet this imposing site was not visible, audible, or otherwise sensible from any point along the railroad tracks because it happened to be located between what became Longworth and Sinclair Mills stations, where the line ran overland, apart from the river. The Grand Canyon of the Fraser was just one of many invisible, absent, annihilated spaces that did not exist for railway travellers, but it is atypical from most other such spaces in that its disappearance can be traced. Prior to 1914 the Grand Canyon had been an inescapable feature of narratives about travel through east-central BC, including Frederick Talbot's book. After the completion of the railroad in 1914, the

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[23] See chapter one, n.10.

[24] For example, in the late summer of 1862 three members of the Cariboo-bound Overlander party were drowned after unwittingly paddling their canoes into the Canyon. Half a century later, during the summers of 1912 and 1913, more than fifty boatmen working on the construction of the GTP were killed when their clumsy, heavily loaded scows were wrecked or swamped in the Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon of the Fraser appeared in no guidebooks, travellers' journals, published accounts, or photographic records about passage through the same area.

Here it must be emphasized that people had lived in the 140 miles of space that were seemingly annihilated by the GTP's direct route through the upper Fraser corridor. After 1908 dozens of would-be homesteaders had established small 'bush ranches' on the banks of the river with the intention of getting a jump on the land boom that was expected to occur after the railroad had 'opened up' the area. However, the precise route that the railroad would take through the valley was not known until 1912, and once construction began many of these people discovered that they had built their cabins and cleared land on what had suddenly become the 'wrong' side of the river—i.e.: on the opposite side from the modern network of circulation. This would not have been an insurmountable problem if sternwheel steamship service had remained available on the upper Fraser, as it had been between 1911 and 1913, and then was on many of the province's inland waterways. But in the summer of 1913 the GTP—disdainful of local traffic, yet as a monopoly unwilling to countenance competition—intentionally built its trans-Fraser bridges at Hansard and Dome Creek with illegally low spans that prevented the vessels of its more flexible riverine competitors from plying the upper reaches of the Fraser.[25] As a result, the people who had purchased, pre-empted, or squatted on land on the 'wrong' side of the Fraser River had little choice but to move to locations closer and/or more accessible to the railroad.[26] For the future residents of east-central BC, the deserted homesteads on the wrong side of river from the tracks would act as visible reminders that, as one put it, "broken dreams [...] are often the price paid for monopoly"—and also for being apart from the dominant network of circulation.[27] However, for the train passengers who sped along the sections of the GTP's right-of-way where the opposite bank of the Fraser was within view, the same abandoned cabins and

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[25] This action was taken in direct contravention of provincial and federal laws, and against the specific instructions of the federal government's representative who was overseeing the GTP's construction in BC. Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 212-215; R.G. Harvey, *Carving the Western Path: By River, Rail, and Road Through Central and Northern B.C.* (Surrey: Heritage House, 1999), 38-48.

[26] For example, see Jack Boudreau's account of the Jensen family in *Crazy Man's Creek*, 130-147; and the Sykes family's story in Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts: A History of Penny British Columbia* (Prince George: Penny Reunion Committee, 1995), 165-168.

[27] Boudreau, *Crazy Man's Creek*, 20-21.

overgrown patches of cleared forest were mere scenery to be glimpsed momentarily as part of a larger panoramic spectacle projected by the modern system of high-speed commodity circulation that they were piggybacking along.[28]

1.2 Kin-Aesthetic Landmarks of the "New British Columbia"[29]

Finding a way to emphasize the significance of similarity and the mundane sensuality of seriality, sequentiality, and repetition is a problematic endeavour for the historian, especially because historical practice is oriented towards the study of change over time, rather than the absence of change. This makes it difficult to describe the mediating effect of the GTP's tracks and trains on east-central BC as a whole, and to appreciate how the completed railway transformed the length of the Yellowhead Pass and upper Fraser River valley into a standardized experiential corridor. To get around this conceptual or cognitive problem, it is helpful to consider how railways mediated and structured travellers' views of specific sites, such as the Grand Canyon of the Fraser. This section considers two such sites—Mount Robson and Mount Rider—and puts particular emphasis on their transformation into *sights*, nodes of differentiated scenery that were constructed by and experienced through the visual-vehicular mechanism of the railways that traversed east-central BC.

Useful evidence for how the mechanism (or medium) of track and train made east-central BC into a standardized experiential corridor can be found in the array of guidebooks, booklets, pamphlets, timetables, system maps, and other ephemera that was produced by the railways whose rights-of-way traversed the area. These prosaic publications simultaneously represented and reinforced what, where, and who was important in the hierarchically arranged space of the metropolitan corridor. They did this in a manner that presented the railway's business philosophy, structures, and operational imperatives as neutral, common sense factors that had no impact on passengers' views or the spaces beyond the right-of-way. Such efforts to naturalize the means and the

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[28] On railroad travellers' fascination with trackside ruins and desolation, see Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor*, 339-345.

[29] The title of Frederick Talbot's fifteenth chapter in *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway* was "An Empire of Tomorrow, and the Dormant Riches of New British Columbia."

mechanism of circulation can be seen in the 'instructions' that were included in a later guidebook, significantly titled "Through Your Picture Window," which matter-of-factly explained to readers/riders that

> (t)his booklet is a guide on your journey, an interpreter of your private passing parade. From your snug seat you will see a tableau of towns and cities, lakes and forests, prairies and mountains… those natural and man-made features that make up the face of Canada. […] This booklet is a perfect travel companion, a silent partner who never intrudes on your privacy. Pick it up when some sight or scene attracts your attention, enticing you to know more. Put it aside when other matters take up your time. You will enjoy a more meaningful trip and reach journey's end a wiser traveller.[30]

As the tallest mountain in the Canadian Rockies and one of the most prominent due to its isolation from surrounding peaks, Mount Robson stands out as deserving particular attention in the context of views from the rails. The GTP's General Passenger Department had made that peak one of the central features of its earliest promotional booklet to describe the landscape of British Columbia. The 1912 booklet titled "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Pass Route. Two Hundred Miles of Majestic Mountain Scenery" was intended to draw sightseers, climbers, and "sportsmen" to Jasper and Mount Robson, the huge, newly accessible 'wilderness' areas that straddled the BC-Alberta boundary.[31] The GTP was extolling the scenic wonders freshly available to its passenger clientele two years prior to Jasper becoming a national park, a year before Mount Robson was set aside as BC's second provincial park, and in spite of the fact that westward travel by rail beyond Mount Robson was limited to the fourteen miles of track that led to the massive construction complex and coarse tent city at Tête Jaune Cache.

Lavishly laid out and illustrated with numerous photographs, most of "The Canadian Rockies" described backcountry areas away from the railroad that visitors

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[30] Canadian National Railways, "Through Your Picture Window: Along the Trans-Continental Route of the CNR—Montreal and Toronto to Vancouver" (Montreal, 1956), 3.

[31] Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. General Passenger Department, "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Pass Route. Two Hundred Miles of Majestic Mountain Scenery. The Mecca for the Tourist, Alpine Climber, Angler, and Sportsman" (Winnipeg, 1912). On the GTP's 'opening up' of Jasper Park and the subsequent construction of an infrastructure for 'wilderness' viewing and recreation, see I.S. McLaren, "Cultured Nature in Jasper Park" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34,3 (1999): 7-58. For a broader study of North American railways historical relations with wilderness parks, see Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks* (Niwot, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1990).

would have had to hike or travel on horseback to, including Berg Lake and Rearguard Falls. This indicates that the target market of the booklet were tourists who possessed the time and the money to hire a guide and outfit for several days of leisurely camping and exclusive sightseeing high in the alpine. However, the booklet also contained numerous references to how certain spaces in the Yellowhead Pass would appear to *all* travellers who would ride through that area aboard the GTP's trains, whatever their income or motive for doing so. For example, the booklet announced that along one stretch of track, "(v)iewed from the grade, the Rainbow Mountains have a gorgeous appearance"; that at another location "the outlook from the train looking south is an imposing one"; and that from a point of the grade near the foot of Mount Robson is seen "the grandest view on the whole route."[32] As had been anticipated by Frederick Talbot in 1910 and Benjamin Baltzly in 1871, east-central BC was rapidly being reorganized as a landscape to be experienced through the panoramic perception generated by the structural rigidity, fleeting speed, and sensory insulation of railway travel.

Alone, each of these banal, fragmentary statements is of little significance. And perhaps, by some then-prevalent aesthetic standard, there actually did seem to be a single point along the railroad from which the grandest view of the whole route was to be obtained. But when one realizes that similar statements were to appear over and over and over again, arranged in a reversible but otherwise rigid sequence in dozens of similar guidebooks and pamphlets, one begins to discern how the relations between travellers and landmarks like Mount Robson were mediated on the most mundane level by the route and structures of the GTP's railroad through east-central BC, and by the standards, business principles, and ideology that they were manifestations of. Passengers must have had many different interpretations of their view of the landscape. Some might have found it sublime, and others picturesque; some might have found it especially exciting while others might have been unimpressed, or repelled, or bored, or uncertain of how the scenery compared against that which was visible along the CPR's line through the Rockies. These different interpretations could be studied by examining tourists and travellers' diaries and journals, published accounts, and photographic collections.

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[32] Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Route," 25.

However, the point that is being emphasized here is that these interpretations were based on a shared or common view, one that was very much framed, serialized, standardized, and mechanically reproduced by the structures, vehicles, and operating principles of the railways that transported travellers through space and time.

For example, westbound GTP passengers' would *always* get their first view of Mount Robson at a point three miles beyond Red Pass station.[33] An array of impressions might have been made by this much-anticipated first view, but—making allowances for variables like the season, weather conditions, and seating position within the train (the latter being dependant, to an extent, on how much a passenger had paid for their ticket)—the view of the mountain was the same. However a passenger might have felt about their first sighting of the mountain, and regardless of whether they chose to gaze intently or to look away disinterestedly, they had no power to stop the visual-vehicular mechanism of the train, or to have it back up, slow down, speed up, or leave its tracks and right-of-way. Their views of Mount Robson lasted until the trains that they were riding aboard went around whichever curve or through whatever stand of trees that cut their view off, and the mountain would then reappear on schedule at the next point in time and space that it was brought it back into sight by the route of the rails, the speed of the train, and the form of the passenger coach. [Image 4] The reverse held true for eastbound passengers, so that their first glimpse of Mount Robson was the westbound passenger's last, etc. Every other space and place in east-central BC was similarly situated by the lines of circulation that traversed them.

Though often lumped together with the mountain vistas in nearby Jasper park, Mount Robson was quickly established in guidebooks and also in railway operations as one of the high points of a trip across Canada aboard the trains of either the Grand Trunk Pacific or Canadian Northern companies—the two rival railways' lines ran parallel and in close proximity to each other through the length of the Yellowhead Pass, including past Mount Robson. As a landmark Mount Robson became a kind of construct, trademark, or visual commodity of the railways, a sight that was 'brought to you by' (or that 'you were brought to by') a transportation company and the magnificent, landscape-mediating

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[33] Canadian National Railways, "Scenic Canada: Across Canada By Way of Canada's Great Scenic Route" (Montreal, 1924), no pagination.

IMAGE 4 Canadian National Railways passenger train near Mount Robson and Alpland stations, with Mount Robson in the background, 1920s. National Archives of Canada, PA-049847.

railroad that it had built. Every other space, place, and landscape that was visible from the train in east-central BC and the Alberta foothills was compared against and spatially and temporally related to Mount Robson and to Jasper. For example, even when describing locations dozens of miles away, guidebook writers made Mount Robson into a kind of 'coming attraction' by inserting hints about its looming approach in the scenic panorama projected by the train.[34]

When the GTP's publicists and guidebook writers wrote that photographs that had been taken of Mount Robson in the past "do not give any conception of its beauty, magnitude and grandeur," the obvious implication was that those qualities *could* in fact be appreciated, if not captured, when the mountain was experienced as a part of an evanescent panorama viewed from a rapidly moving train.[35] Only the inhuman speed of the locomotive and the rigidly fixed curves of the track could put that mountain into a proper perspective and comprehensible scale. But since the 1890s photography had became very popular, and much less logistically difficult than it had been in 1871 for Benjamin Baltzly, with his 400 pounds of equipment. As the Kodak-style snapshot camera became standard equipment in the baggage of many travellers and tourists, large numbers of train passengers desired to try their hand at making images of prominent and famous scenes along the routes of Canadian railways, rather than (or in addition to) purchasing the mass-produced memories contained in booklets and postcards.[36] As one of the signature (or trademark) landmarks of the railways that traversed the Yellowhead Pass, Mount Robson was one such site/sight. But despite its immensity and immobility, and the fact that it could be seen from moving trains for a relatively long time, Mount Robson proved an elusive subject for photographers. Not only did its glaciers generate

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[34] One guidebook from the 1920s, as if barely able to restrain its author's desire to come into view of Mount Robson and unleash a torrent of colourful superlatives, began mentioning that peak in the area of Penny, a station that was located more than a hundred miles and almost six hours' travel to the west. Canadian National Railways, "Canada: Pacific to Atlantic" (Montreal [1920]), 45.

[35] Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Route," 25.

[36] On the rise of amateur photography, of which tourist photography was an important component, see Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000). On how the proliferation and technical limitations of Kodak-style cameras directed railway passengers' attention towards certain types of sites and sights but away from others, see Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor*, 255.

weather patterns that tended to obscure the peak with clouds even when all around was clear and sunny, but the velocity of locomotives and the slow shutter speed and crude lens of most Kodak-style cameras made it almost impossible for amateur photographers to capture the distant landmark while moving. When shooting against a backdrop of clear sky or light clouds, overexposure and blurring were the most common result of attempts to shoot "the Monarch of the Rockies" from a rolling train.[37]

Sometime prior to 1920 an elevated viewing platform was built at the GTP's Alpland station, which was located on the south side of the Fraser River, directly across from Mount Robson. All passenger trains paused at that point for five minutes to allow passengers the opportunity to disembark and absorb—and photograph—the mountain in all its stable, non-blurry glory.[38] Luck, however, remained a prerequisite for a view of the entire mountain, which was usually obscured by clouds for all but a few weeks of the year. Alpland station was in the same vicinity where in 1872 Benjamin Baltzly had anticipated trains "stopping but a moment" so that their sightseeing passengers could "note the beauties."[39] It was also near the location where GTP management had originally planned to build the Chateau Mount Robson, an "imposing" 500-guest hotel that was to have resembled the Empress in Victoria. Though it was never built, the Chateau had been designed by the Empress's famous architect Francis Rattenbury to include an observation gallery situated so as to allow "marvellous views of Mount Robson." It was also Rattenbury's intention that all of the hotel's main rooms would have, as he put it, "a fine outlook over the surrounding country."[40] While a hotel near the foot of Mount Robson would not have been a component of the GTP's system of

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[37] See for example the two small duplicate snapshots labelled "Mt. Robson, B.C" in File 2.2 of the F.C. Stephenson fond, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA).

[38] The first record this author has found which mentions the Alpland viewing platform is the Canadian National Railways' 1920 guidebook, "Canada: Pacific to Atlantic" (48). Although it was not mentioned in either of the GTP's 1912 or 1916 guidebooks, given that the GTP was only absorbed into the Canadian National Railways in 1919 it is quite possible that the former company did in fact build the structure. The platform was also mentioned in the *Prince George Citizen* 13 September 1921, fair supplement, 2.

[39] Benjamin Baltzly, "Reminiscences of the Expedition," 155.

[40] Anthony A. Barrett and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *Francis Rattenbury and British Columbia: Architecture and Challenge in the Imperial Age* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983), 245, 319. Rattenbury's commissioned sketches of the hotel and special depot the GTP had planned for Mount Robson, and illustrations of how those buildings would have fit into their settings, are reproduced on pages 321-344.

operations and structures in the same way that bridges, rock cuts, and telegraph lines were, guests still would have had to arrive and depart via the railway's regularly scheduled passenger trains, which passed along the same route and over the same right-of-way that all other travellers would have moved along.[41] Thus the Chateau Mount Robson was to have been, in effect, a larger, more prestigious, and exponentially more expensive version of the stationary, elevated viewing platform that was erected at Alpland station. The key difference between the ornate hotel and the simple lumber platform would have been that patrons of the former subscribed to a kind of pay-per-view scheme whereby they purchased a longer layover in an exclusive and luxurious structure that had been more carefully designed for the extraction of Mount Robson's scenic natural resources.[42]

Here it should be noted that Alpland station was not the only railway stopping point in the Yellowhead Pass from which a view of Mount Robson could be attained. In order to facilitate track maintenance in the difficult terrain of the pass, both the GTP and the Canadian Northern established stations there in closer-than-usual intervals, and because trains occasionally paused at these stations to take on water, receive instructions, or pick up and drop off passengers, they created points for momentarily stationary views. These stops were most frequently made at the nearby Mount Robson (GTP) and Emperor (CNoR) stations, because it was at these points that wealthy vacationers embarked and disembarked from passenger trains when making their way to and from the handful of exclusive guest ranches that had been set up for backcountry tours and trophy hunting trips in the Mount Robson area.

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[41] The American historian Anne Hyde has argued that most North American transcontinental railways did not expect to realize profits on their Rocky Mountain resorts and hotels, but instead built and operated them for reasons of prestige. *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), chapter six.

[42] Arguing that Mount Robson was "an asset the importance of which is as yet only vaguely realized," in 1921 the *Prince George Citizen* suggested that a large hotel and the replacement of the horse trails that led into the backcountry with automobile roads were still needed if the park was to become a major tourist resort. Trying to find some connection between Prince George and the prominent scenic asset located almost 200 miles away by rail, the newspaper reported that "a train leaving here in the morning will deposit the passenger at Mount Robson, in the park, that afternoon." Timetables from the late 1920s show the two points being more than nine hours apart by passenger train. *Prince George Citizen* 13 September 1921, fair supplement, 2.

It is difficult to say to what extent the momentary brake on passengers' fleeting landscape experiences at Alpland station was motivated by corporate recognition of the popularity of vernacular photography and the limited optics of the Kodak, and to what extent this scheduled break for stationary photo opportunities was meant to give train crews a chance to water up the tender, inspect brakes, and receive instructions from the station's telegrapher before beginning the relatively steep eastward ascent or westward descent towards the Yellowhead summit or Red Pass station, respectively. Most likely it was a happy combination of the two. Whatever the origin of the scheduled pause and the viewing platform at Alpland station, both of which were singular in east-central BC, the result was a superabundance of photographic images taken from the same perspective and approximate times of day. [Image 5. Compare with Image 12.] The stereotypical image of Mount Robson as seen from Alpland station can be found inserted in more photo albums and reproduced in more promotional pamphlets and booklets than can be listed here.[43] Some might interpret these clichéd images as evidence of tourists and travellers having been sheep-like dupes satisfied with being herded along the well-trodden 'beaten path,' or of customer-friendly railway companies slavishly responding to the commodifying, place-consuming 'tourist gaze.' However, a more modest, structurally-grounded interpretation of these stereotypical photographs as a collective body would conclude that they show that even in the rare instances when a railway seemed to go out of its way to accommodate its customers' visual practices (in this case the desire for a few static moments for taking snapshots), the resulting views and images were nevertheless mediated by the railway's material infrastructure (a viewing platform and

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[43] For quick access to several of these images of Mount Robson, see the wraparound cover of Wheeler, *The Robson Valley Story*; the inside back cover of Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass and its People*; and the back cover of the Winter 1969 edition of *Beautiful British Columbia*. Multiple examples of this view can also be found amongst the postcards and publicity shots (File 1.2) and vernacular photographs (File 2.2) contained in the F.C Stephenson fond at the BC Archives. Probably the most famous, most reproduced image of this view of Mount Robson is the 1927 Canadian National Railways publicity photograph of two chained black bear cubs sitting atop a trackside signboard that indicated the mountain and its elevation. One of the original press photographs of this image is contained in Accession 1997-164, Box 1, File 39 of the Howard O'Hagan fond at the University of Victoria Special Collections. O'Hagan's description of the sorry origins of this image and of its subsequent reproduction and proliferation can be found in "Cubs from the Swiftwater," a chapter of his unpublished autobiography, which is contained in Accession 82-50, Box 2, File 7, pages 54-67.

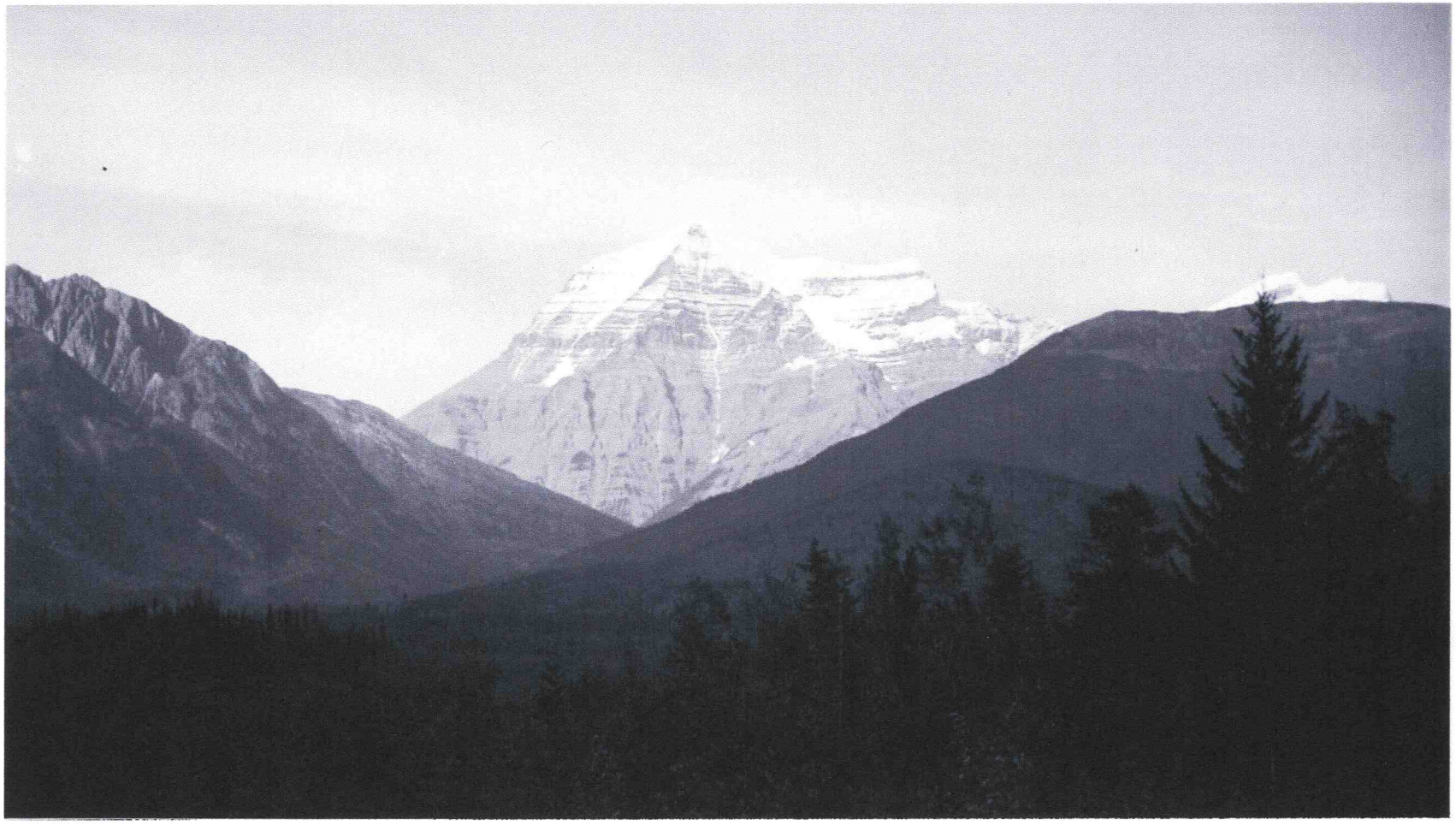

IMAGE 5 Stereotypical view of Mount Robson from the Canadian National Railways' Mount Robson or Alpland station, as photographed with wide-angle lens, 1939. Photograph by Frank C. Swannell. BC Archives, I-33446.

signboard at a pre-existing station) and its operational imperatives (a pause of only five minutes, rather than for as long as passengers desired).

Because it was considered by many to be "without question the finest mountain scene on the American Continent, and equal to any in the world," and because it was the only site/sight in east-central BC that railways treated as meriting a regular interruption in the schedules of their passenger trains, it is hard to ignore Mount Robson when one is considering the connections between vision, circulation, and landscape.[44] And yet because railway companies treated that landmark as if it "dominate[d], both in its massiveness and rich and varied color effects, all neighbouring mountains" as well as all the other spaces and places that were visible along the line, it is the *atypicality* of the "Monarch of the Canadian Rockies" that must be stressed here.[45] That Mount Robson was very much the exception to the norm was made abundantly clear, for example, in the GTP's 1912 booklet "The Canadian Rockies." After dozens of pages that described the Jasper and Mount Robson areas in intimate detail, the fourteen miles of space between the latter landmark and the 'end of steel' at Tête Jaune Cache were discounted—or even disparaged—by a terse statement that explained that in that stretch "the scenery does not lose any of its grandeur. Snow-capped mountains in every direction." At Tête Jaune Cache, the guidebook stated, "there is nothing of particular interest outside the scenic attractions."[46] Yet no further elaboration on those scenic attractions was made. The copious amounts of attention, ink, and images that were devoted to a single, singular peak emphasized the generally undifferentiated character of the rest of the upper Fraser corridor as it was mediated by trains and tracks, speed and schedules. It also illustrates how railway-produced guidebooks endowed certain sites and spaces with a enhanced depth of field, or a kind of reality effect, while leaving the rest of the landscape unnamed, unmentioned, undifferentiated, and unimportant.

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[44] Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Route," 25.

[45] Canadian National Railways, "Scenic Canada." Of the four pages of text in this sixty-five page booklet (the rest consisted mostly of photographic illustrations), almost one full page of text was devoted to Jasper and Mount Robson, whereas less than a quarter of a page to the rest of line between the Yellowhead summit and Prince Rupert.

[46] Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, "The Canadian Rockies: Yellowhead Route," 29.

Hence the unintentional disclaimer that followed a lengthy description of Jasper and Mount Robson in a 1924 railway booklet: "(t)he rail route to Prince Rupert after leaving Mount Robson platform lies through four remarkable valleys—the Fraser, the Nechacko, the Bulkley and the Skeena—each of which has its own distinctive features, except in one respect—mountain ranges flank them all."[47] This can be interpreted as implying that the experience of travelling through central BC went downhill scenery-wise after departing Alpland station. Though this and other guidebooks assigned each of the four valleys its own trademark sight/site that was visible from the railroad—such as the Bulkley Gate and the totem poles at Kitwanga—none of these, except perhaps the Skeena valley totem poles, received a fraction of the detailed, differentiating description that was devoted to Mount Robson.[48]

This was especially the case for the upper Fraser corridor, which contained many of the fastest, flattest, and straightest stretches of the GTP's railroad across British Columbia. The GTP's publicity writers of the 1910s and 1920s apparently felt that this area was barren of interesting sights. This is reflected in the many diversionary descriptions and often spurious or bastardized tales about subjects like tree moss, Simon Fraser, Alexander Mackenzie, the Cariboo gold rush, and the 'legend' of Tête Jaune that they frequently inserted into the guidebook sections that dealt with east-central BC.[49] Or

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[47] Canadian National Railway, "Scenic Canada."

[48] In May 1925, Montreal's *Gazette* newspaper claimed that after Niagara Falls the totem poles at Kitwanga were the most photographed spot in Canada. Cited in David Darling and Douglas Cole, "Totem Pole Restoration on the Skeena, 1925-1930: An Early Exercise in Heritage Conservation" *BC Studies* 47 (Autumn 1980), 32. Aware that totem poles were popular with tourists, and that Kitwanga was "the only convenient spot on the line where poles could be seen in their original location," in the late 1920s Canadian National Railways pressed for and contributed to the restoration and preservation of totem poles in the Skeena valley—but only those that would be visible from its trains. The CNR later produced a film that advertised itself as "the railway to totem pole land," and—further demonstrating the extent to which railways were aware of how they mediated passengers' views of the spaces and places they traversed—was advised by a consultant to slow its passenger trains as they passed by the poles (which were on the opposite bank or 'wrong' side of the Skeena), erect explanatory trackside signs, cut down trees that obstructed passengers' views, develop souvenirs, and display information about the poles on its dining car menus and elsewhere in its passenger cars. (Darling and Cole, "Totem Pole Restoration," 37-38)

[49] The GTP similarly cast the upper Fraser corridor in a marginal position in its few attempts to encourage settlement and development in central BC. For example, in an information pamphlet for "intending settlers," the Nechacko, Bulkley, and Skeena valleys were each described in detail, and a resident from each of these areas provided a testimonial. However, there was minimal information about the upper Fraser River valley, and no personal endorsement. Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Industrial and

perhaps these writers believed that many of the train passengers who sped smoothly through the seemingly endless and undifferentiated forests and mountains of the upper Fraser corridor already felt this way.

Happily, the GTP managed to break up its customers' monotonous passage through east-central BC by establishing a highly visible landmark halfway between Prince George and Mount Robson, one that possessed several features that tied it closely to the views available from the railroad grade and made it of interest to train passengers. Until 1916 there had been nothing especially distinctive about the station named Knole, which was located 110 miles west of the Yellowhead Pass and 120 miles east of Prince George. Nor was there anything that distinguished the large, unnamed mountain and glacier across the Fraser River from that station. However, while travelling eastward across Canada in July of 1916 the famous British novelist and proponent of empire Henry Rider Haggard vaguely discerned—from a moving train—the shape of a lion in the form of that mountain. Rider Haggard's GTP hosts leapt at the opportunity to associate a great literary celebrity with an unusual site that was visible from the company's trains, and also to establish an interesting sight in the otherwise undifferentiated scenery of the upper Fraser corridor.[50] "The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company wants, if the Geographical Board of Canada consents, to name a great Alp in the Rockies after me—Sir Rider Mountain and Haggard Glacier, a great and unusual compliment!," the author of *King Solomon's Mines* recorded in his diary while bound for Edmonton. "It is a wonderful and magnificent Alp, some ten thousand feet high and measuring many miles around its base. Snow lies on its summit even in summer and it has deep, ribbed glaciers and fir-clad ravines on its flanks."[51] Although it took the GTP the better part of a year to

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Colonization Department, "Plateau and Valley Lands: Central British Columbia: General Information for the Intending Settler" (Winnipeg, 1919).

[50] Two years before Rider Haggard's passage through western Canada, the GTP had invited another literary celebrity—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—to ride aboard its inaugural passenger train between Winnipeg and Prince Rupert. Conan Doyle also attended the official opening of Jasper National Park. During his stay in Jasper, the famous author and golf enthusiast was invited by the GTP publicity department to lay out a nine-hole golf course for the grounds of its planned hotel. The railway company also outfitted the Conan Doyle party with a private rail car during a sight-seeing excursion to the Mount Robson area. Gerald F. O'Hara, "Sherlock Holmes: The Alberta Connection" *Alberta History* 54 (Summer 1988): 11-14.

[51] H. Rider Haggard, *The Private Diaries of Sir H. Rider Haggard, 1914-1925* D.S. Higgins, ed. (London: Cassell, 1980), 70-71.

convince the Geographic Board of Canada that the British novelist's name deserved to be officially bestowed on the natural features of British Columbia, the railway wasted no time in changing the name of its own station at Mile 110 from Knole to Rider, and in making these new names fixtures in its timetables, guidebooks, and system maps.[52]

From 1917 to 1931 Mount Rider was presented as the signature landmark of railway travellers' visual-vehicular passage through the upper Fraser corridor. No viewing platform like those at the Bulkley Gate or near Mount Robson was built at Rider station, but on the north side of the tracks near the depot a large signboard pointed out the mountain and glacier and indicated their names and the mountain's elevation. Railway guidebooks supplemented this with explanations of the origins of the names, and made passengers aware that "(a)mong the striking mountains to be seen in the valley of the Fraser is Mount Rider Haggard." Except for Mount Robson, which was usually treated as an autonomous landmark separate from the rest of east-central BC, no other mountain in that area was differentiated to the extent that Mount Rider was.

Perhaps the reason for this was that there were so many unusual features about its visual relations to the GTP's right-of-way and the trains that moved along it. Because long stretches of track to both the east and west of Rider station were relatively straight and flat, and because Mount Rider jutted out from the north 'wall' of the Rocky Mountain Trench, the peak was visible from and for a very long distance. As a guidebook from around 1920 (mis)informed its readers, "(f)rom Kidd a splendid view may be obtained of Mount Rider, although this mountain is some forty miles away."[53] Kidd and Rider stations were in fact only thirty miles apart by rail. Travellers who read these guidebooks or listened to conductors' rolling narratives could strain to discern the lion-like shape that Rider Haggard had seen in the mountain, although railway guidebooks did not mention that he had conjured up the imperial beast while approaching the mountain from the west. Furthermore, an optical illusion was created by the movement of the train and by the tracks' position relative to the mountain. As one

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[52] On the slow pace for the addition of Mount Rider and the Haggard Glacier to the official map and gazette of British Columbia, see the entry for Mount Rider in the British Columbia Geographical Names Information System, http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/bcgn-bin/bcg10?name=19836 [accessed 22 June 2003].

[53] Canadian National Railways, "Canada: Pacific to Atlantic," 46.

guidebook explained it, "when viewed from the observation car of westbound trains [Mount Rider's] height apparently increases as the intervening space is lengthened."[54] Like the hotel planned for the foot of Mount Robson, the observation cars from which this optical illusion could only be experienced were also instances of the pay-per-view principle. Observation cars were the opulently furnished, glassed-in last car in any passenger train, and the rear decks of these "Sun Rooms on Wheels" provided unobstructed and exclusive views of the space being traversed—that is, to those customers who could afford the extra charge for entry.[55]

1.3 The Aesthetics of Disappearance

Though sequential, serialized, standardized, and relatively stable, the experiential corridor that the Grand Trunk Pacific had constructed through east-central BC was never perfectly static. It shifted over time, and each structural or operational change had an impact on travellers' views of spaces and places. The reduction of a curve, the elimination of a tunnel, the reinforcement of a trestle, or any other improvement that was made with the intention of allowing train traffic to traverse east-central BC more rapidly had the effect of further insulating railway travellers from the physical space that they passed through. Strengthening the large trans-Fraser bridges, for example, allowed trains to pass over them without slowing, thereby abbreviating the broad vistas that were briefly available to passengers as they crossed perpendicularly over the open channel of the river. By dampening vibration and reducing rocking, even routine maintenance practices like replacing worn ties, re-spiking rails, and tamping the rail bed affected passengers' perceptions of the panoramic landscapes beyond their windows.

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[54] Canadian National Railways, "Canada: Pacific to Atlantic," 46.

[55] Canadian National Railways advertisement, *Kamloops Standard* 20 February 1923, 1. The open rear deck of observation cars was a favourite perch for travelling photographers. For examples from east-central BC, see the snapshot photograph of Mount Robson made in the late 1920s and contained in Accession 82-50, Box 6, File 3 of the Howard O'Hagan fond; and also the snapshot labelled "Canada Between Jasper and Prince Rupert," File 2.2 of the F.C. Stephenson fond, BCA. On the architecture of the railway passenger car generally, see John H. White, *The American Railroad Passenger Car* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). On the evolution of the furnishings and seating arrangements inside those cars, see Siegfried Giedeon, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), 439-468.

Numerous specific examples could be cited here, such as the elimination of several tunnels between McBride and Crescent Spur, or the fact that in 1924 the former GTP line from Red Pass to Prince Rupert—which by then had been absorbed into the Canadian National Railways system—was downgraded to the status of a branch line, and was therefore given a lower priority for infrastructure improvements and general maintenance, resulting in the verges of the right-of-way becoming more crowded with trees and overgrown with view-blocking brush than would be acceptable on a mainline right-of-way.[56] But it is difficult to describe or appreciate the effects of these shifts and changes on the system-wide level at which their cumulative impact was most significant. So whereas the previous section looked at how specific spaces, landmarks, and places *appeared* when filtered through the visual-vehicular ensemble of train and track, this section focuses on how spaces, places, and even entire landscapes *disappeared* because of structural and operational shifts along the metropolitan corridor.

The first example is the rather complicated story of Lucerne, a Canadian Northern Railway divisional point station that was established in 1913, abandoned in 1923, and later deemed a "menace" and an "eyesore." Instead of railway guidebooks, in this instance government records are used as evidence. Provincial government agencies' attempts to 'clean up' the site/sight of Lucerne demonstrate a keen awareness of how railways visually mediated travellers' experiences of British Columbia. The second example is the abrupt disappearance after 1931 of almost the entire 180-mile-long upper Fraser corridor from train passengers's views and from the guidebooks and other publications of Canadian National Railways, into which the Canadian Northern and GTP had been absorbed by 1920. This instance shows how even the most mundane change in the day-to-day operations of a railway could have significant impacts on views and experiences of places and landscapes.

The Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR) built its railroad westward through the Yellowhead Pass between 1911 and 1913, about a year behind the GTP's construction in the same area. The CNoR's completed railroad through the pass was noticeably inferior to the GTP's in terms of both gradient and curvature because it had been guided by the business model that encouraged flexible standards and minimal outlay during

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[56] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 256.

construction, and also because it had been stuck with second pick of routes through the steep, narrow terrain of the pass.

The GTP and CNoR rights-of-way ran roughly parallel in the 300 miles between Edmonton and their diverging point near Tête Jaune Cache, rarely more than four miles apart and in some places so close that they were within view of each other. Yet each was totally independent and separate—these duplicate systems were expressions of the rival railways' corporate territoriality, wherein space was paradoxically annihilated *and* compartmentalized. That the logic of competition trumped the illogic of building and operating two railroads in such proximity was plain to see for the passengers who rode aboard either company's trains, especially in the confines of the Yellowhead Pass, for in the sixty miles between Jasper, Alberta and Tête Jaune Cache the two sets of track were almost constantly within sight of each other.[57]

The CNoR established an important divisional point station on the south side of Yellowhead Lake, five miles west of the continental divide and BC-Alberta boundary. The GTP's tracks ran on the north side of the lake (this is a key point). The divisional point was named Lucerne, perhaps by a company official who believed that a Swiss theme would one day help lure tourists away from the Canadian Pacific Railway and the mountains that it had branded the "Canadian Alps."[58] However, the reason why Lucerne was established at that location had nothing to do with views of the impressive surrounding mountain scenery: a divisional point was needed near the summit of the Yellowhead Pass because the CNoR's strategic geography of operations dictated that these stations be situated along the mainline at intervals of 120 to 150 miles. The site on the south side of Yellowhead Lake was the first inside BC that had the physical features required for a divisional point station: a large, flat tract of land for sidings and yards that was proximate to a large, steady source of water to fill the towers that replenished steam locomotives' tenders.

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[57] Because they traversed a part of the country that was sparsely populated, contained few accessible resources, and would therefore be incapable of generating much in the way of local traffic for several years, one historian has concluded that the rival railway's parallel lines were the "most foolish, unnecessary and useless mileage of railroad in Canadian history." Taylor, *The Railway Contractors*, 58.

[58] On the Canadian Pacific Railway's helveticization of the mountain ranges that its line passed through in Alberta and BC, see Hart, *The Selling of Canada*, chapter five.

Although the location where Lucerne was established fell within the boundaries of Mount Robson Provincial Park, which had been legislated into existence in early 1913, the station and railway were largely beyond the jurisdiction of the statutes that restricted development and activities inside the park. As part of its federal charter, the CNoR's right-of-way extended a distance of 100 feet in each direction from the centreline of its mainline track, and within that linear corridor the railway was largely free from local constraints on its operations. For example, within its right-of-way the company did not need to apply to Victoria for permission to cut down trees and clear brush beside the tracks, realign or draw from watercourses, upgrade its bridges, and so forth. This was the case even in a provincial park. Housing the employees who did this work and who ran and maintained the trains also fell within these parameters. As a vital node on the CNoR's metropolitan corridor, Lucerne, with its sidings, roundhouse, turntable, machine shops, water towers, depot, and bunkhouses clustered around the centre of the station, was a small but bustling outpost of modern corporate enterprise in the middle of British Columbia's second provincial park.

As a divisional point station, Lucerne was an important—and therefore seemingly permanent—place in the operational hierarchy of the CNoR's system. The structures, buildings, facilities, equipment, and staff that the railway built and stationed there were markers of this, as was the fact that all trains had to stop there for crew changes, inspection, and refueling. A population of 250 made Lucerne the second largest centre in east-central British Columbia in 1915.[59] It was very much a company town: all but a handful of its residents were CNoR employees and their families. A few trappers also lived there, and there were two stores, a boarding house, a pool hall, and a building that acted as school, church, and community hall.

Except for a lakeside pump house that delivered water from Yellowhead Lake to storage towers, all of the railway's buildings and facilities were situated within its 200-foot wide right-of-way. So too were the bunkhouses that the CNoR paternally set up to accommodate many of its employees. [Images 6 and 7] There were also several dozen non-railway buildings in Lucerne—about fifty in total, not including outbuildings. These

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[59] The town around the GTP's McBride divisional point had a population of approximately 300, and was located on the upper Fraser river eighty-five miles west of Lucerne, at Mile 90 of the GTP's BC line.

IMAGE 6 Former Canadian Northern railway depot at Lucerne station with Yellowhead Mountain in the background, 1919. Photography by F.E. Runnalls. Courtesy of Marilyn Wheeler and *The Robson Valley Story* (1979).

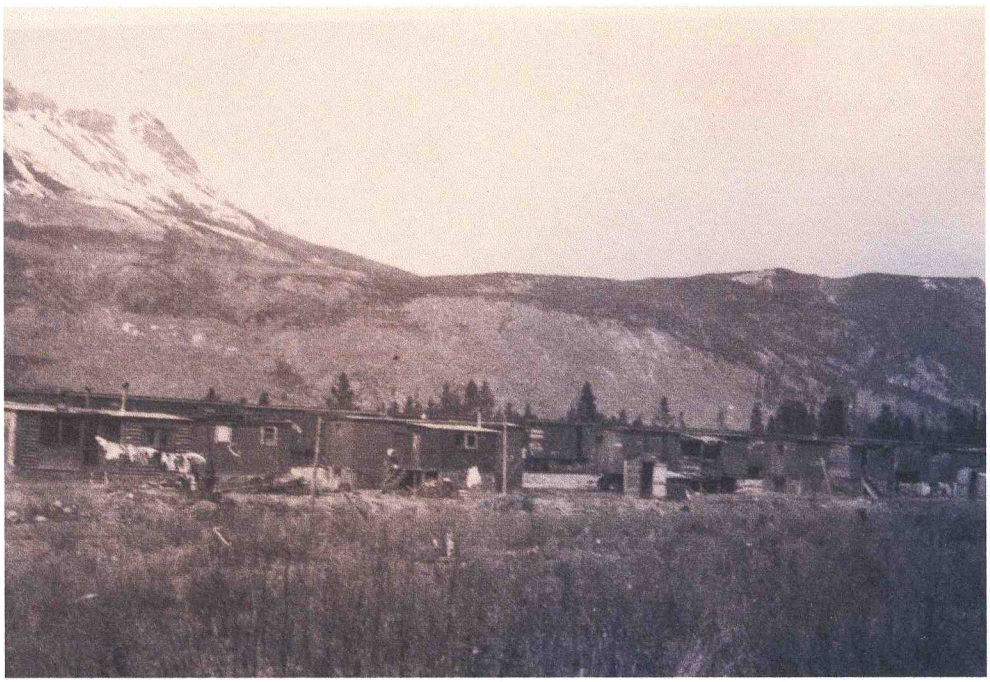

IMAGE 7 Train yards and boxcar bunkhouses at Lucerne, 1919. Photograph by F.E. Runnalls. Courtesy of Marilyn Wheeler and *The Robson Valley Story* (1979).

houses and cabins, as well as the town's stores, boarding houses, pool hall, and school were located on the two streets that extended northward from the station towards Yellowhead Lake. These were the homes of non-railway employees and of those CNoR staff who had families and/or enough seniority that they did not have to worry about being transferred away at the whim of the company. For these employees it made sense to build homes at Lucerne instead of paying a monthly fee for the crowded, homosocial, and ethnically and occupationally mixed bunkhouse accommodations that were provided by the railway.[60] Such an investment of time, money, and labour was justifiable because Lucerne station seemed to be a stable, permanent fixture in one of Canada's newest and largest railway systems.

None of the homes or other buildings that lined the two-street 'town' of Lucerne actually fell within the CNoR's right-of-way, and they were therefore trespassing on the Crown lands of Mount Robson Provincial Park, where residence was forbidden by statute except with special ministerial permission. However, as long as the railway continued operating its divisional point at Lucerne the buildings trespassing in the park were protected by an economically and politically powerful patron, and the province turned a blind eye to these encroachments.

As the dozens of private buildings illegally built inside Mount Robson Provincial Park demonstrated, Lucerne was not a planned company town. The Canadian novelist and short story writer Howard O'Hagan grew up in the Yellowhead Pass area, and in his story "The Woman Who Got On at Jasper Station" a train passenger seeing Lucerne for the first time through the coach window describes it as a "squalid" collection of tarpaper shacks.[61] The woman of the story's title—its protagonist and one of Lucerne's few non-railway-affiliated residents—similarly describes the place in unflattering terms.

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[60] One of the few existing photographs of Lucerne shows that most of these company bunkhouses were in fact semi-permanent, semi-mobile homes, or hybrid vehicle-structures—old box cars that had been parked on a siding and to which had been added windows, staircases, outhouses, and kitchen annexes. Lacking features that fixed a structure (like cellars, plumbing, or stone chimneys), these box cars were where single men and men away from their families stayed as semi-transient residents of both Lucerne and the 'inbetween' space of the metropolitan corridor. Rev. F.E. Runnalls photograph (1919), reproduced in Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 5.

[61] Howard O'Hagan, "The Woman Who Got On at Jasper Station" [1963] reprinted in *Trees Are Lonely Company* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993), 318.

"Apparently in Switzerland," she thinks to herself when contrasting Lucerne, BC with its European namesake,

> unlike the Canadian Rockies there were no roundhouses belching steam and smoke, no rundown cabins and one storied frame houses with laundry strung up behind, no pool hall with lounging men outside its door, no tilted outhouses, no railroaders in oil stained overalls, no bearded trappers sitting jack-knifed on the rail of the station platform spewing tobacco juice [...] no locomotives so close that, as the engineer waited for his "orders," they seemed to be panting in her own backyard—a backyard whose only fence was the jack pine forest. [Lucerne] was not so much a town as a boulder strewn street laid out in the wilderness stretching the quarter mile from the railroad tracks to Yellowhead Lake.[62]

Photographs of Lucerne taken in 1919 by the Reverend F.E. Runnalls of Prince George confirm these descriptions—if not their judgmental tone—as accurate. [Images 8 and 9] Though Lucerne was "hemmed in by the most beautiful mountains," as one newspaper described it, the first priority for both the CNoR and the residents of the town appears to have been everyday functionality.[63] Projecting a respectable image or aesthetically-pleasing appearance of station and town to the passers-by riding aboard the CNoR's trains were not major concerns. Aside from erecting a signboard near the depot platform to identify the surrounding mountain vistas to passengers pausing while their trains were inspected and refueled, the CNoR made no active effort to manage, manipulate, or manufacture its customers' views of or views from Lucerne. Nothing that indicates that the CNoR ever considered building a resort, hotel, or other tourist accommodations in that vicinity has come to light.

By 1917 both the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific railways were on the verge of insolvency. The large volumes of long-distance, high-speed intercontinental traffic that senior GTP managers had anticipated—or imagined—had failed to materialize. By an astounding oversight, they had failed to recognize that most shippers would choose to continue transporting bulk commodities through Vancouver or San Francisco, which allowed more use of slow but relatively inexpensive sea lanes, rather than via Prince Rupert, which was faster but more expensive because the extra time and

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[62] O'Hagan, "The Woman Who Got On at Jasper Station," 315, 317.

[63] *Prince George Citizen* 25 October 1921, 7.

IMAGE 8 Lucerne as seen from grade of the Canadian National Railways mainline, 1919. Note the two-story building on the right. Photograph by F.E. Runnalls. Courtesy of Marilyn Wheeler and *The Robson Valley Story* (1979).

IMAGE 9 View of Lucerne from the grade of the Canadian National Railways mainline, 1919. Note the two-story building on the right. Photograph by F.E. Runnalls. Courtesy of Marilyn Wheeler and *The Robson Valley Story* (1979).

distance being covered by rail.[64] Frank Leonard has calculated that instead of the fourteen trains per *day* that GTP officers had conjured up to justify the route and construction standards of their railroad, the completed line through BC was traversed by an average of less than eight trains per *week* in the period 1914-1917.[65] The Canadian Northern did not perform quite so poorly, but because its financing was more tenuous than the GTP's it too was flirting with default on its loans. Because much of their debt was held or guaranteed by the Canadian government, the two company's operations increasingly came to be dictated from Ottawa. In May of 1917 neither company could refuse the government's order that they share track rights between Edmonton and the Yellowhead Pass, and pull up long stretches of their redundant parallel tracks so that the surplus rails could be shipped to France for use in wartime supply and artillery railroads.

From a strictly operational standpoint only the GTP's line should have been retained, as its route to and through the pass was more direct, and its line had gentler grades, less curvature, and ran across steel bridges on cement pillars whereas the CNoR's ran on weaker, less durable wooden trestles. But to completely eliminate several hundred miles of only one railway company's mainline prior to its official insolvency was politically impossible for an array of reasons, including the fact that several towns that were economically dependent on the continuation of rail traffic (such as Lucerne) had developed along each line. In a compromise that overruled many concerns about operational efficiency, each railway had approximately half of its mainline between Edmonton and the GTP's Red Pass (Mile 17) station removed. In the relatively steep, twisting terrain of the Yellowhead Pass, where it had been the most pointless to have two tracks in the first place, and where it made the most sense to retain only the Grand Trunk Pacific line, the GTP's tracks were removed in the vicinity of Lucerne and the CNoR's rails were pulled up in the vicinity of the GTP's Jasper divisional point. Both railway companies' Rocky Mountain divisional point stations were retained, even though they were located barely twenty miles apart. As it had become the point at which trains

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[64] In only one year between 1912 and 1919 did the GTP manage to meet its operating expenses, let alone make a dent in the astronomical fixed charges that it had accumulated during construction. Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, chapter nine.

[65] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 276.

travelling west on the unified line diverged for either Prince Rupert or Vancouver, the name of Red Pass station was changed to Red Pass Junction.

The Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific were absorbed into the federally-owned Canadian National Railways (CNR) in 1918 and 1919, respectively. With competition between the two rivals eliminated (along with their political machinations), there was little reason to retain duplicate, proximate divisional points to facilitate the movement of trains through an area that had a surfeit of both population and traffic-generating businesses. As the federal Board of Railway Commissioners would later report, "(w)hen the two roads became merged under the ownership of the Canadian National Railways, it became evident to all parties concerned that either one or the other of [Jasper and Lucerne] must be abandoned because there would be no justification from an operating standpoint for maintaining the two."[66] The process of determining which divisional point should be abandoned was drawn out and anxiety-inducing for residents of both Lucerne and Jasper, but finally in March 1923 F.B. Carvell, Chief Commissioner of the Board of Railway Commissioners, handed down a decision. He ordered

> the divisional point to be consolidated at Jasper, in the province of Alberta; the work to commence not later than the 1st day of April, 1923, and to be completed not later than 1st day of October, 1923; the financial loss, if any, involved by the removal of employees from Lucerne to Jasper to be paid by the applicant company [Canadian National Railways].[67]

The 1924 edition of the *Wrigley-Henderson British Columbia Directory* recorded that Lucerne had had a population of 300 in 1923. Only sixteen of the 200 residents who were listed in the directory were not employed directly by Canadian National Railways. During the summer of 1923 the CNR salvaged all the machinery and materials at Lucerne that were worth transporting to Jasper, and demolished the structures that it no longer needed. Only a small bunkhouse, a water tower, the lakeside pump house, a few sheds, and the old Canadian Northern depot remained. Stripped of its divisional point status, Lucerne was demoted to a 'section hand' or 'flag stop' station, meaning that it would

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[66] Board of Railway Commissioners, Order No. 33402, File 28025 (hereafter Board of Railway Commissioners), 376. Contained in National Archives of Canada, RG 43, Railways and Canals. Series A-1-2, Vol. 624, File 19926.

[67] Board of Railway Commissioners, 379.

henceforth be staffed by only a few track maintenance workers, that transcontinental passenger trains would not stop there, and that lower-priority local service trains would have to be flagged down. In 1925 the *Wrigley-Henderson British Columbia Directory* reported that in 1924 Lucerne's population had dropped to sixteen, half of whom were CNR track maintenance workers. The town had essentially been abandoned.

As had been ordered by the Board of Railway Commissioners, the CNR compensated all of the home-owning employees who had been transferred out of Lucerne in 1923 with generous cash settlements and parcels of land in the Jasper townsite. There was no incentive to salvage or demolish the buildings that lined the boulder-strewn streets of Lucerne, and most were left as they stood on the day each family or business moved away. Only a few property owners even bothered to board up their buildings.[68] Although the land beneath those structures legally belonged to the Crown and was part of Mount Robson Provincial Park, in the compensation process the CNR made no mention of the issue of trespass, thereby giving the impression that each building continued to belong to its owner.

The first official query about the status of the residences at Lucerne came in early 1925, when the Government Agent at Prince George—225 miles west of Lucerne—wrote to the provincial Superintendent of Lands asking how to assess the buildings for taxation purposes now that the town was "almost entirely deserted."[69] Aware that some buildings at Lucerne were probably trespassing on Crown land, the BC Surveys and Lands Records Branch (hereafter the Lands Branch) requested detailed information about the situation from the Forest Branch, which was responsible for provincial parks. "Seeing that these vacated buildings are within Mount Robson Park," the assistant to the Superintendent of Lands explained to the provincial Forester,

> it is not deemed advisable to allow them to remain on the premises as they *will possibly become a menace in many ways*. [...] Have one of your Rangers make a careful investigation on the ground and report giving all particulars as to the

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[68] Examination of the various inventories subsequently made of the buildings at Lucerne shows that at least five of the seven that were boarded up had belonged to residents who were not CNR employees, and who had therefore received no compensation for the removal of the divisional point to Jasper.

[69] BCA, GR-1088 British Columbia Surveys and Lands Records Branch. Box 34 (hereafter BCSL). File 21. Government Agent, Prince George to Superintendent of Lands, 10 February 1925.

> conditions as they exist, and at the same time recommend what he considers the *best method of disposing of the buildings*. [emphases added][70]

That the Lands Branch so quickly jumped to the conclusion that the buildings at Lucerne should be disposed of is not surprising, as it was the government agency charged with protecting Crown lands against intrusions and encroachments. However, from the Lands Branch's point-of-view in the summer of 1925, the buildings at Lucerne were only "menacing" on grounds of general principle—no representative of the Branch had visited the site (more than 600 miles and two full days travel from Victoria), and little was known about the area. There were issues of public safety and liability relating to structures illegally present on Crown land, and there was also the possible problem of squatters living there rent-free and without the special ministerial permission required for residence the park. With their indeterminate position between the two special zones of provincial park and railway right-of-way, the buildings at Lucerne also represented a complication, disruption, or interference in an orderly system of administration devoted to mapping, recording, and archiving the legal ownership of carefully delineated parcels of space.

In mid-May the Forest Branch delivered a list of more than sixty buildings found within the confines of Mount Robson Park, including fifty-one that were located in the vicinity of Lucerne. Contrary to instructions, the Forester who compiled the inventory offered no recommendation on how to destroy these buildings and provided no map of the area. Though unsatisfied with the geographical vagueness of this inventory, and perhaps also by the Forest Branch's failure to provide a quick and permanent solution for the potentially 'menacing' structures at Lucerne, the Lands Branch was now aware that there were in fact numerous buildings inside the park. It was also aware that the precise location of the CNR right-of-way would be an important factor in any action regarding these structures.

In July 1925 the Lands Branch sent another memo to the Chief Forester, requesting "more details regarding the exact location of buildings in [Lucerne], the intention being to ensure which buildings were and were not within the railway right-of-

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[70] BCSL, File 21, Assistant [to Sup't of Lands] to Forester, 31 March 1925. Also Sup't of Lands, memorandum for the Forest Branch, 28 March 1925.

way, which is beyond the [provincial] Government's purview."[71] The Forest Branch politely declined to do this work which rightly belonged to its Lands Branch colleagues, and because Lucerne was so far from BC's major centres and the situation there was not deemed a high priority no detailed survey was done in 1925. However, a BC Land Inspector travelling through the Yellowhead Pass did visit the site during the winter of 1925-26. Although this Inspector departed upon determining that heavy snow cover made it impossible for him to survey the position of the right-of-way, he opined in his perfunctory report that since the Canadian National Railways' divisional point had been moved to Jasper, "Lucerne no longer has an excuse to exist. As this point is also in Mount Robson Park, it is anticipated that the Government will *destroy the old buildings before they become an eyesore in the park.* [emphasis added]"[72] Despite his failure to do the requested survey, this first representative of the Lands Branch to visit the mostly abandoned site of Lucerne had nevertheless managed to discern a specific argument in favour of destroying the intruding buildings there: in the eyes of travellers (i.e.: passengers riding aboard CNR trains), Lucerne's appearance was incommensurable with its park setting. It was a disorderly, man-made blemish situated halfway between Jasper and Mount Robson, smack in the middle of the visual-vehicular narrative of nature's majesty and inherent 'order' that was being presented to park visitors/train passengers. Yet except for the absence of divisional point facilities and signs of habitation (like laundry strung out to dry), the look of Lucerne in the winter of 1925-26 was essentially the same as it had been in 1923 or 1919. The main difference was that in 1926 the political and economic clout of a transcontinental railway company no longer protected the offending buildings that strayed beyond the old Canadian Northern right-of-way.

Here it must be emphasized that the Land Inspector undertook this cursory examination somewhat spontaneously, while returning to British Columbia from

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[71] BCSL. File 21. J.M. Gibson, District Forester to Chief Forester, 14 May 1925; Sup't of Lands, Memorandum to Chief Forester, 3 July 1925.

[72] BCSL. File 21. Quotation of undated Inspector's report in Surveyor General to Sup't of Lands, 2 March 1926. Regarding the Inspector's assertion that Lucerne no longer had an excuse to exist, as well as the idea that the buildings there were a "menace," it is worth repeating Schivelbusch's observation that in a modern culture of time and space "whatever was part of circulation was regarded as healthy, progressive, constructive; all that was detached from circulation, on the other hand, appeared diseased, medieval, subversive, threatening." *The Railway Journey*, 195.

Christmas holidays in Edmonton. Because the only way through the area at that time was by rail, the Inspector who deemed Lucerne a potential "eyesore" must have received his first impression of the site/sight as it had been presented to him by and filtered through the kinesthetic-scenic medium of a moving passenger train. Nowhere is it explicitly stated in the Branch's files that he or his supervisors recognized that this view of Lucerne was being mechanically reproduced for all passengers riding aboard the CNR trains that traversed the pass in daylight. However, this was almost certainly the case, especially given that the Branch's files show its staff to have been extensive users of BC's railways before, during, and after the 1920s.[73]

As it was being framed by the passenger car window, projected by the route and positioning of the rails, and animated by the direction and speed of the locomotive, the site/sight of Lucerne was briefly but plainly and unavoidably visible. Because of its situation within Mount Robson Park and its proximity to Jasper Park, Lucerne was a prominent and intrusive trackside reminder of human industry and history in a visual-vehicular narrative of supposedly pristine wilderness. Furthermore, Lucerne was the first collection of buildings that train passengers glimpsed upon entering British Columbia from the east, and the last that westbound travellers would see before entering the province of Alberta and the federally-managed landscape of Jasper National Park. Poor impressions of not only Mount Robson Park, but also, by extension, the entire province, were being mass produced as long as a collection of empty, dilapidated buildings was the first and last sign of human activity in BC that was seen by the tourists, businessmen, prospective investors and settlers, and all other travellers who rode aboard the CNR's trains—all of whom were in a sense surveyors, inspectors, and judges. For agencies like the Lands and Forest Branches, to have this gateway to the province marked (or marred) by a collection of recently abandoned cabins and houses must have been especially galling because spatial-visual disorder within a 'natural' park area suggested lax standards, poor management practices, and a general lack of competence and control by the bureaucratic state. And for the Canadian National Railways, the buildings at Lucerne

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[73] American landscape historian John Stilgoe has suggested that by the late 1920s the speeding, fleeting pano-cinematic form of visual perception that was generated by railway travel had become so thoroughly incorporated into ways of seeing and thinking about spaces and places in North America that it no longer elicited much comment or consideration. *Metropolitan Corridor*, chapters five and nine.

must have represented a flaw in the 'crown jewel' of panoramic landscapes visible from its passenger trains. In sum, the buildings at Lucerne had to be dealt with because they made the province of British Columbia look bad in the eyes of railway travellers.

After 1925 the Lands Branch's point-of-view regarding the situation at Lucerne became increasingly focused on specific aesthetic concerns, and only legal niceties prevented the buildings from being summarily razed. As the summer tourist season of 1926 approached, a second BC Lands Inspector was directed to investigate the situation in Mount Robson Park. Inspector J.W. Smith was instructed to find out how federal parks officials in Jasper dealt with squatters and with the CNR right-of-way; to determine the best possible means of disposing of the buildings at Lucerne; and to ascertain "whether there is any demand for the material in these buildings so that if considered advisable they might be sold by tender and removed, otherwise they will have to be destroyed."[74] The important matter of the right-of-way boundary had either been forgotten or put aside temporarily, as no survey was ordered.

Significantly, Smith did not even bother to visit the site of Lucerne. Based on his fleeting views of it from trains moving from west to east and from east to west, he wholly concurred that the offending buildings had to be removed. He also reported that the superintendent of Jasper Park had told him that all the buildings in Lucerne would be destroyed if Mount Robson Park were under federal jurisdiction. But rather than rush to impose federal standards of territoriality and orderly natural aesthetics in the provincial park, Smith advised caution. Having learned in Jasper that the CNR had given its employees previously stationed at Lucerne the impression that they retained ownership of their former homes, he recommended that no action be taken until notices could be posted to make those people aware that their houses and cabins were trespassing and would soon be demolished.[75]

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[74] BCSL. File 21. Sup't of Lands, memorandum to J.W. Smith, Inspector of Lands, 31 May 1926. In the original memo the typewritten word "burnt" was struck out and replaced with the handwritten word "destroyed." Whether the intention was to avoid influencing Smith's recommendation of a method of destruction or to subtly guide him towards a particular method is unclear.

[75] BCSL. File 21. J.W. Smith, Inspector of Lands to H. Cathcart, Sup't of Lands, 15 June 1926. Notices advising that "dwellings and other buildings at Lucerne" were to be removed within ninety days ran in the *Prince George Citizen* from 25 August through to 18 November 1926, and were also posted at stations along the CNR mainline.

By early July of 1926 several letters had been received in response to these notices, in which the Lands Branch's intention to remove the buildings at Lucerne had been explained in legalistic and territorial, rather than aesthetic, terms. Most were from former Lucerne residents stationed at Jasper. A few also came from members of the section crew at Lucerne, chagrined to learn that they were squatting in homes slated for demolition yet had been paying rent to the owners of those buildings. The Lands Branch replied to all but one of these responses with terse form letters that stated that because the buildings were trespassing in Mount Robson Park where any residence or development required special permission, the 'owners' of those buildings had ninety days in which to remove their property before it would revert to the Crown and be dealt with by its agents.[76] These form letters also ordered that after any structure was dismantled by its owners, the site was "to be left in a safe and sanitary condition and properly cleared and all holes or excavations to be filled in."[77] No unsightly traces of past habitation were to remain.

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[76] The only response to the notices that did not receive such a form letter in reply came from Rev. Dr. George Salton of Melville, Saskatchewan. Salton was the only correspondent to use arguments based on visuality, views, and publicity when appealing for the Lands Branch to not demolish buildings at Lucerne—specifically, the former boardinghouses, which he had been using for a summer camp for high school children. According to Salton, his camp was not run as a moneymaking operation, nor was it merely an opportunity for fun and games; that it was also educational was one of its key aspects—"(m)y work in the Winnipeg schools as Superintendent of Visual Education assures me of this," he wrote. Salton's expertise in visual pedagogy leant extra credence to his argument that "(t)he glories of the B.C. Mountain scenery are absolutely unknown to our Prairie children, and every Government must feel, as I do, that to make patriotic Canadians our children should know and love their own country."

Furthermore, Salton cited the value of the publicity that photographic representations of the camp and surrounding vicinity had generated for the province of British Columbia as reasons in favour of its continued operation, and enclosed several photographs and the following undated clipping from "today's [*Melville*] *Canadian*": "In the Heart of the Rockies: Dr. Salton's lecture last Friday on the above subject was a revelation to many of us 'Prairie' people. In nearly one hundred exquisitely colored lantern slides we saw Rocky Mountain scenes the beauty of which cannot possibly be exceeded in any other country. [...] We came away with one expression on every lip: 'Marvellous! Wonderful! Our next holiday must be to the Jasper Park and Mount Robson district!'" (BCSL. File 21. George F. Salton to the Honourable Minister of Lands, 23 September 1926)

While all other requests for exemption from the Lands Branch's plan to remove the offending buildings at Lucerne were rejected during the fall of 1926 (including those from longtime and/or year-round residents like trappers and section workers (though on appeal some trappers' cabins were allowed to stay)), Salton's was given special consideration. The Lands Branch looked the other way regarding the buildings used for Salton's summer camp until it ceased operation in 1928.

[77] This qualifying passage was drawn directly from a revision that the Superintendent of Lands had tried to have inserted into the notice published in the *Prince George Citizen*, but missed the deadline for. BCSL. File 21. Sup't of Lands to Gov't Agent, Prince George, 3 August 1926.

At the end of 1926 the Lands Branch still did not know precisely where the intruding buildings and railway right-of-way at Lucerne were located, or exactly who had legal claim to which buildings. This led to another delay in the buildings being demolished, despite the expiry of the ninety-day reprieve that had been given in the notices posted that summer. It also led the Lands Branch to again dispatch BC Lands Inspector J.W. Smith to Lucerne in the summer of 1927. Smith introduced the report summarizing his second inspection of (and first visit to) Lucerne with the observation that the abandoned town had experienced significant structural-aesthetic deterioration during the past year. "I found conditions had changed to quite an extent," he wrote, "there being no recent sign of occupation, several other buildings being demolished, others partly wrecked, presumably by owners, and in instances some apparently looted of doors, windows, etc." Rather than leading to an orderly cleanup of Lucerne, the notices that had been posted in the fall of 1926 had inspired a free-for-all of pilfering and vandalism that left the site looking worse than ever.[78] Smith made a detailed inventory of the structures at the site, noting their condition, state of occupancy, and owner (if known), and evaluating which of three options the Lands Branch should pursue with each of them: try to lease it, "salvage and destroy," or simply "destroy." Smith deemed only a handful of the remaining buildings suitable for occupation, and closed the written portion of his report by recommending that the rest be "salvaged at once for what little they would bring and destroyed at the end of fire season."[79]

To provide objective testimony about conditions on the ground, Smith attached several snapshots to his second report on Lucerne.[80] Amongst these photographs were images of the best preserved and worst damaged buildings, but for this thesis the most interesting images were those that Smith made looking up the two streets of Lucerne. These photographs were taken from the grade of the railroad, thereby approximating—albeit in a stationary manner—the points-of-view held by train passengers as they traversed the site and surveyed the scene. [Image 10. Compare with Image 8.] Here, the

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[78] George Salton reported in the fall that "thieves twice broke in since last camp, and have stolen blankets, tools, etc worth $300." BCSL. File 22. George F. Salton to Sup't of Lands, 15 October 1927.

[79] BCSL, File 22, Smith to Cathcart, 30 July 1927.

[80] The snapshots held in BCSL File 21 are clearly meant to accompany the 30 July 1927 report in File 22.

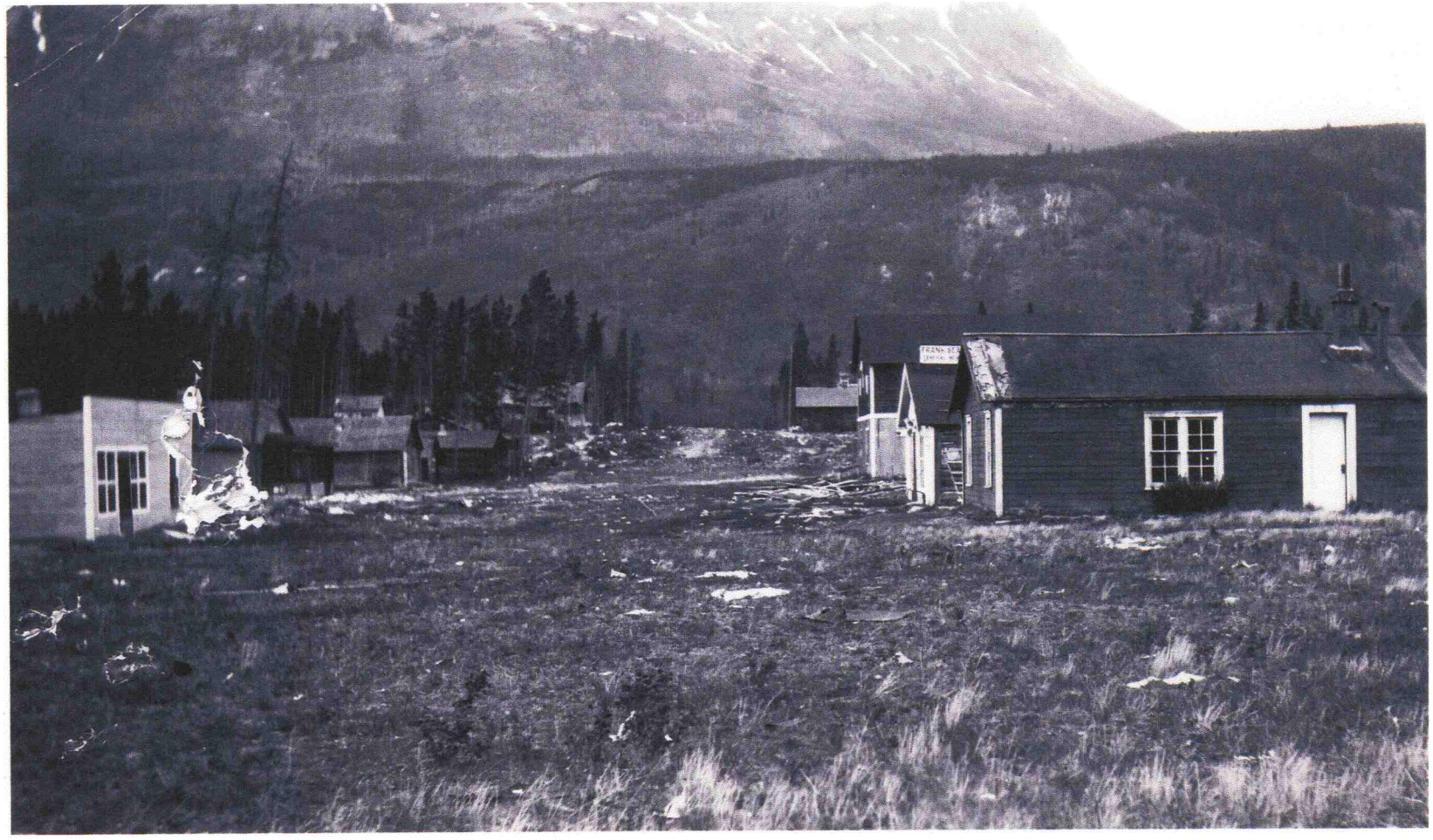

IMAGE 10 Lucerne three years after being abandoned as a divisional point, as seen from the grade of the Canadian National Railways mainline, 1927. Note the two-story building on the left. Photography by BC Land Inspector J.W. Smith. BC Archives, GR-1088, Box 34, File 21.

photos were apparently intended to demonstrate in an emphatic manner, is exactly how Lucerne looks to everyone who travels through Mount Robson Park. Smith's 1927 report, inventory, and photographs conveyed an impression of accelerating decay at Lucerne. In his estimation, only procedural technicalities like identifying the former CNoR right-of-way boundary were keeping the Lands Branch from razing the entire site.

Whatever the reasoning behind Smith's supervisors' decision to consider leasing out the buildings at Lucerne that were structurally sound (and visibly acceptable), the result was that the plan to clear the sight/site was formally put in abeyance while the complicated lease issue was being dealt with. Thus for the second consecutive year no one from the provincial government got around to 'cleaning up' (i.e.: destroying) the intruding, eyesore structures at Lucerne.

In the late spring of 1928 the Forest Patrol officer who was responsible for the Yellowhead Pass area reported that while in Lucerne he had seen signs of recent scavenging, and noted that "practically all the glass in the doors and windows of houses remaining were broken" by children from Jasper during the spring. In his estimation this "wholesale wreckage" reduced the value of the remaining buildings to "nothing."[81] Strangely, however, this account of still further structural-aesthetic decline at Lucerne elicited neither response nor comment from the Lands Branch. Indeed, no further expressions of concern about the appearance of that site/sight were to appear in the Branch's files.

What explains the abrupt evaporation of concern about Lucerne as "menace" and "eyesore" after 1927? The abeyance had not led to a longer-than-usual case of bureaucratic forgetfulness, for Lucerne did not fade from the administrative eye of the Lands Branch—the convoluted process of allowing a few leases dragged on throughout 1928 and 1929, and during the late 1920s and 1930s both the Lands and Forest branches of the BC government received numerous inquiries from people who wanted to establish cabins, camps, and hotels around Yellowhead Lake, which many would-be entrepreneurs judged to be a 'natural' stopping-place.

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[81] BCSL. File 22. Quotation of A.F. Leach, Forest Patrol, Red Pass to Gov't Agent, Prince George, in G. Milburn, Gov't Agent, Prince George to Sup't of Lands, 23 June 1928.

The reason for the Lands Branch's sudden lack of interest in the presence, the condition, and above all the appearance of the trespassing, abandoned, and ransacked buildings at Lucerne was an infrastructural shift made by Canadian National Railways during the late 1920s.[82] In order to improve efficiency in the steep, twisting terrain of the Yellowhead Pass, the CNR decided to relocate its mainline back to the old GTP right-of-way, which had better grades than the former CNoR route that had been retained in the vicinity of Lucerne since 1917. The abandoned GTP right-of-way ran the north side of Yellowhead Lake. After the new tracks for the realigned mainline had been laid down, the old CNoR rails and telegraph line that ran through Lucerne were removed. Located on the north side of the lake, the CNR now mainline bypassed both the site and the sight of Lucerne, which was thereafter screened from the view of train passengers by fringes of lakeside forest.[83]

That the Lands Branch's initial territorial interest in Lucerne had been almost entirely eclipsed by anxieties relating to the aesthetics of speed and travellers' views from moving trains is illustrated by its policy regarding Lucerne after 1928, which ran along the lines of 'out of sight, out of mind.' The best example of this was the Branch's turning of a blind eye to a short-lived 'hobo jungle' and several instances of long-term squatting at Lucerne during the Depression years of the 1930s.[84]

It was during the winter of 1931, a few years after Lucerne had disappeared from the view of railway travellers, that almost the entire upper Fraser corridor disappeared. But whereas the disappearance or 'annihilation' of the relatively small site/sight of

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[82] The exact date of this shift remains unknown to this author, but a convoluted comparison of maps, railway timetables, guidebooks, and photographs and first-hand accounts contained in the Valemount Historic Society's local history *Yellowhead Pass and its People* suggests that the tracks must have been removed to the north side of Yellowhead Lake sometime during the period 1927-1929.

[83] What, if any, role the CNR played in encouraging the structural-visual sanitization of Lucerne is unknown. Though the scenic corridor between Jasper and Mount Robson represented the crown jewel of the CNR's tourist and sight-seeing business, no correspondence contained in the Land Branch's files indicates direct involvement by the railway company. However, there are hints throughout BC Lands Branch and Forest Branch files suggesting that until at least the late 1950s the province and CNR negotiated the railway's place in Mount Robson Park by a series of 'gentlemen's agreements,' and other historians have documented instances in which that railway worked with government agencies to manipulate and manufacture views along its western Canadian lines. See Darling and Cole, "Totem Pole Restoration"; MacLaren, "Cultured Nature in Jasper."

[84] See for example BCSL. File 22. Sup't of Lands to P. Brewski [squatter at Lucerne], 28 November 1936.

Lucerne had been caused by a physical realignment of infrastructure that had been made with the intention of improving the speed and efficiency of train movements and commodity circulation, the disappearance of the better part of a corridor 180 miles long involved no such structural change, only a minor tweaking of operational procedure.

As noted previously, Canadian National Railways had downgraded the former GTP line between the Yellowhead Pass and Prince Rupert to the status of a branch line during the mid-1920s. For the rest of that decade the guidebooks and promotional pamphlets that were published by the CNR tended to focus on the spaces and scenery of British Columbia that would be experienced by the large majority of its passengers: those who travelled along its mainline between Red Pass Junction and Vancouver. The few publications that described the experience of travelling the line to Prince Rupert tended to focus on the same sights/sites as before, including, in the east-central part of the province, Mount Robson (inevitably), Mount Rider, the Fraser River, the mandatory stop for refueling at McBride, and so forth.

One would expect this to have remained the case in the large body of promotional literature that was published as part of the CNR's "Triangle Tour" campaign of the early and mid-1930s. This three-legged package tour consisted of a train trip between Jasper and Vancouver, a sea-cruise between Vancouver and Prince Rupert, and a train trip between Prince Rupert and Jasper. It could be started from any of these points and done in either direction. The many guidebooks and pamphlets that were produced for this tour included the usual effusive descriptions of Jasper and Mount Robson, as well as of Vancouver, Prince Rupert, the Skeena and Bukley valleys, Prince Rupert, and Prince George. But in fact there were only a few brief, generic, almost punctuative references made to the upper Fraser corridor between Prince George and Mount Robson. The presence of the Fraser River and the existence of undifferentiated mountains and forests were all that was noted.[85] No mention was made of the divisional point town of McBride, the dozens of other stations and communities in the upper Fraser corridor, or even Mount Rider, which seemed to have been solidified as a prominent visual landmark

[85] The CNR published many posters, guidebooks, brochures, and fold-out maps promoting and describing the scenery to be found along the lines of its Triangle Tour. The lengthiest and most elaborately detailed of these was "The Triangle Tour: Jasper, Mount Robson and the Fiords of the North Pacific" (Montreal, 1934).

during the preceding fifteen years. In effect, east-central BC beyond Mount Robson had disappeared.

What explains this vanishing act, this reversion of 180 miles of railway-generated panoramic landscape into blank, undifferentiated space? One might expect to find the answer in the formal constraints on the production of the guidebooks and promotional materials themselves. After all, with three lengthy tour legs to deal with and only so much room in a guidebook, it would have made sense for publicity writers to focus on a handful of key landmarks and destinations, like Jasper and Vancouver. Yet all of the railway-generated landmarks (or trademarks) of the Skeena, Bulkley, and Nechacko valley corridors remained in Triangle Tour guidebooks: the totem poles at Kitwanga, the Bulkley Gate, and Hudson Bay Mountain were described in the same way and to the same extent that they had been prior to the 1930s. Only Mount Rider had fallen off the roster of interesting sites visible from the right-of-way, along with the rest of the valley in which it was located. Had the upper Fraser corridor proven too difficult for the CNR's publicity and promotional department to make exciting because of the undramatic manner in which it was rapidly and directly traversed? Were the passengers who rode aboard the trains that moved between Jasper and Prince George left to stare out on an uninformed, de-featured landscape from the moment they were out of sight of Mount Robson? Were they expected to read novels, play cards, make conversation, or take naps as they travelled through this part of east-central BC?

The lead story of the November 6, 1931 edition of the *McBride Journal* points towards the simple explanation for the disappearance of the upper Fraser corridor. Rhetorically titled "Night Trains?," the story advised residents of McBride and the surrounding area of a major impending shift in the Canadian National Railways' operations in east-central BC. "A change in the train service of unusual importance is scheduled for November 22nd [which] will result in both east and west bound trains arriving in McBride late at night or very early in the morning," it announced. "This change will not be popular here, but may result in a general betterment of the service."[86]

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[86] *McBride Journal* 6 November 1931, 1.

Comparing GTP and CNR timetables from before and after the winter of 1931 illustrates this change in detail. From 1914 to 1931 passenger trains had passed through most of the upper Fraser corridor during hours of daylight. For example, in 1930 westbound transcontinental passenger trains departed the divisional point at Jasper at 7:40AM. They left McBride at exactly 12 noon after a twenty minute layover for refueling, inspection, and crew changes, and pulled into the Prince George yards at 5:35PM. Trains travelling in the opposite direction left Prince George at 9:40AM, McBride at 3:50PM, and arrived at Jasper at 10:50 at night.[87] By this schedule, it was probable that eastbound passengers would miss seeing Mount Robson during the winter months. Otherwise, almost the entire eleven-hour westbound trip between Jasper and Prince George and ten-hour eastbound trip from Prince George to Jasper (the gradual climb towards the Yellowhead summit explaining the one-hour difference) occurred during times when train passengers would have been able to clearly see the scenes that comprised the panoramic landscape they were being carried through.

After the CNR's operational shift in late November of 1931, the timetable of the passenger trains that traversed east-central BC became almost the opposite of what it had been previously. The 1933 CNR system timetable reported that trains bound for the Pacific coast pulled out of Jasper station at 1:05AM, departed from McBride at 6:00AM, and arrived at Prince George at 12:50 in the afternoon.[88] While early-rising passengers' breakfasts would have been accompanied by the views provided by traversal of the trans-Fraser bridges at Dome Creek and Hansard, no one travelling towards Prince Rupert (except perhaps insomniacs) would have seen Mount Robson, Mount Rider, the Haggard Glacier, or the signboards at Alpland and Rider stations that indicated their names and elevations. Trains heading eastward were set to leave Prince George at 7:45PM, depart McBride at 2:45AM, and arrive at Jasper station at 8:00AM, again keeping Mount Rider in the dark, but allowing earlybirds the opportunity to see the sun rising on Mount Robson during the summer months.

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[87] Canadian National Railways, "Canadian National Railways System Timetable" (Montreal, 1930). Also see the Tête Jaune Cache-McBride-Prince George timetable from the "Grand Trunk Railway Time Table" (Winnipeg, 1914), reproduced in Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 104.

[88] Canadian National Railways, "Canadian National Railways System Timetable" (Montreal, 1933).

Mount Rider, McBride, and the rest of the upper Fraser corridor disappeared from Triangle Tour and other CNR guidebooks and literature after 1931 simply because there was no reason to waste precious pages of promotional print on spaces and places that no customers of the railway would see. The stretch of railroad between Jasper and Prince George and the panoramas and differentiated landmarks that had been constructed along it by the GTP and the CNR would no longer be visually experienced by train passengers because they would be asleep while they were carried through that space. For those who could not sleep or for the very few who were awake planning to exit the train at some station in east-central BC, the scenes and landscapes beyond their windows would be darkened and undiscernable, although every five to ten miles along the line semaphore lights could be seen at station depots, and the space that was illuminated by the locomotive's forward-looking headlight could briefly be made out on stretches where the train rounded a curve in the tracks.

The exact reason for the 1931 timetable change is unclear, but as was indicated in the story in the *McBride Journal* the decision to make it came from afar, and the broader goal was "a general betterment of the service." This might have meant that trains would thereafter traverse central British Columbia more quickly, cost-efficiently, predictably, and profitably, but it could just as easily have meant that some type of system-wide realignment of service priorities was being implemented. Over the following decades many minor adjustments would be made to the timetables of the passenger trains that passed through east-central BC, but night passages remained the standard form of service in the upper Fraser corridor until the mid-1990s.[89] In the meantime, the CNR's timetables for the Continental and SuperContinental express passenger trains that traversed its mainline between Vancouver and Jasper were carefully arranged so that they would always pass "Through the Majestic Canadian Rockies in Daylight," as a company publication from 1952 prominently advertised.[90]

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[89] See the "Canadian National Railways System Time Tables" for 1938 and 1952. Also the CNR's "Mountain Region Time Table 4" for 1985. Only in 1995 did VIA Rail 'daylight' the schedule of its passenger trains which traversed the CNR's line through the upper Fraser corridor. The decision to do so was part of a program aimed at making its Jasper to Prince Rupert service more attractive for sightseeing tourists. "The *Skeena*: A Neighbourhood on Wheels" *Beautiful British Columbia* (Winter 1997), 15.

[90] Canadian National Railways, "Canadian National Railways System Time Tables" (1952), cover page.

1.4 "The station was a focal point of the community"[91]

The handful of histories that have been written about communities in east-central BC are replete with references to how many aspects of their residents' everyday lives revolved around the railways that passed through the area. With the exception of some foodstuffs that were grown locally, little of what was produced in east-central BC was consumed there, and little of what was consumed there was produced there. Lumber, railroad ties, fence posts, plywood veneer, and telephone and electrical poles produced by the area's mills and logging operations were all loaded into boxcars and onto flatcars for shipment to points afar. Machinery, parts, draft horses, feed, trucks, bulldozers, gasoline, oil, the better part of the food, and most of the labour needed for these businesses were brought in by the railway. The dairies and mixed farms in the area between McBride and Croydon were more than able to meet the various mill towns' demand for fresh produce, but were effectively barred from further development because they were cut off from the larger Prince George and Jasper markets by the CNR's prohibitively high freight costs and inconvenient timetables. Sugar, bananas, cloth, windows, wash basins, ice cream machines, kerosene, coal, tractors, and anything else that could not be made locally was brought in by the railway, regardless of whether it was subsequently sold through a local store or had been mail-ordered direct from Vancouver, Winnipeg, or, most often, Edmonton. Even fur trappers, who were the only residents of east-central BC who did not spend the large majority of their time within a mile or two of the metropolitan corridor, had to make occasional trips to the railhead. Longworth, Dome Creek, Penny, McBride, and Red Pass Junction were the places that most trappers would come down from the mountains to in order to ship their accumulated catches out to the markets in Prince George and Edmonton.[92]

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[91] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 37.

[92] On the trappers of the Longworth-Dome Creek-Penny area and their intermittent relations with the communities that had developed along the railway line, see Boudreau, *Crazy Man's Creek*, passim.

The railways took out and brought in mail, including parcels and newspapers.[93] Until the mid-1950s, the railways' track-paralleling utility lines provided the area's only telegraph and telephone service, which in most places was limited to a single commercial line that was accessible at the station depot. McBride's electricity and water were drawn from the Canadian National Railways' generator and water towers until the mid-1950s. Except for some of the so-called 'East Line' communities between Prince George and Sinclair Mills, nowhere in east-central BC was connected to the province's electrical grid until the early 1960s.

Assize judges, lawyers, police officers, tax collectors, priests, veterinarians, dentists, doctors, public health nurses, teachers, forest wardens, wildlife officers, agriculture inspectors, land surveyors, salespeople, big game hunters, union organizers, campaigning politicians, friends, and family came and went by the railway. A favourite pastime (or pass-time) for residents of east-central BC was to keep track of these comings and goings from the vantage point of the local station depot.[94] This surveillance was usually consisted of watching who (and what) was getting on or off of the train, but at other times it might be aural. Andy Oraszuk, whose father Frederick was the section boss at the Canadian Northern's Valemount station from 1914 to 1920, remembered that "in those days when the phone [in the depot] rang it didn't matter who it was for; from Lucerne to Blue River, everybody on the line picked up the receiver. You got to know the people along the line, even those on the Grand Trunk [Pacific] line."[95] This habit had not faded—and the area's telephone service was still controlled by a railway company—

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[93] In most places they did not bother to slow down, let alone stop for pick up and drop off—outgoing mail bags were snatched from high on an iron post located beside the depot, and incoming mail bags were unceremoniously tossed onto the station platform from the open door of the mail car. On the GTP and CNR's rolling post office systems, see Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, *Postscript '90: Commemorating 75 Years of Postal History in the Fraser-Fort George Region* (Prince George: Frasr-Fort George Regional Museum, 1990), 6-7.

[94] For example, see Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 37, 45, 140; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 90, 128-129; Dunford, *North River*, 225. The local station platform exerted an especially magnetic draw over many young people, who were fascinated by the bustle and activity of loading and unloading, or simply by the speedy passage of express passenger trains. See *McBride Journal* 12 August 1932, 1; Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 142.

[95] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 533.

forty years later, when Art Scully was the RCMP constable stationed at Red Pass Junction. He recalled that

> (t)he telephones on the CNR were really the only means of communication that I had. When I would try to phone someone, everyone along the line would pick up their phone and listen. As each person picked it up the voice got fainter and fainter and you would have to yell louder and louder. It was very frustrating. [...] The people along the CNR had little to do in the evenings and this was a way to pass the time.[96]

During the 1940s the CNR's parcel service delivered films from Vancouver to Penny for Friday nights' entertainment in the community hall. This was also the means by which booze was brought in for the Saturday night dances that were held in the same building, events which residents recalled could not "truly begin" until after the midnight train had arrived.[97] In some winters the railway also delivered free fresh meat to residents of Penny. The surrounding vicinity was part of a snowbelt, and when the snow was deep moose and deer were attracted to the railroad tracks, which were easy to walk on because they were regularly plowed. Many of these animals—which at night were transfixed by locomotives' powerful headlights—were struck and killed by trains coming around a bend, or whose tight schedule did not allow crews time to slow down and chase them off the tracks. These trains would usually pause at Penny so that any carcasses caught up on or entangled beneath the locomotive could be cleared away.[98] What the railway unexpectedly gave to some people, it took away from others. At Mount Robson, Tête Jaune Cache, Valemount, Dunster, Bend, and numerous other places farmers' and ranchers' cows and horses, lured by grassy verges or grain spilled from hopper cars, strayed into the unfenced right-of-way and were struck by speeding trains.

In an area that had few trails or roads (and poor, disconnected ones at that), the railroad tracks also provided a free, dry, level, and direct route for people to walk

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[96] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 89. Also see Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 172.

[97] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 37, 45, 105. In the late 1940s the Monday morning eastbound train, which pulled into Penny station just in time for a passenger to make the day shift in the mill, was known as the "hangover express" because it carried so many of the community's weekend visitors to Prince George.

[98] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 130.

between homes and communities, even though this was technically an act of trespass. The attraction was especially strong during winter and spring, when the plowed, well-drained tracks were the only route free from snow and mud. Travelling on foot along the tracks was a commonplace practice, so that the awkward gait of walking on ties nine inches wide spaced nine inches apart became almost second nature for many. In order to get to and from school, some children had no choice but to walk along the tracks and even across bridges and trestles. Walking on the tracks could be very dangerous, especially for those who were unfamiliar with the pattern of train movements, and when extra traffic was traversing the line. For example, two long-time residents of Penny who had been visiting a neighbour were making their way home via the tracks one winter day when they were surprised by an unscheduled rotary plow speeding around a corner. Luckily, the engineer happened to notice the women in the train's path and braked enough that they had time to scramble up the steep snowbanks that had accumulated trackside, avoiding almost certain death.[99]

If the railway was potentially a killer of inattentive or slow-moving wildlife, livestock, and pedestrians, it was also a vital lifeline for people in need of medical attention. From the time of railway construction until the late 1930s, the Grand Trunk Pacific, Canadian Northern, and Canadian National railways paid for a company doctor to live in each of the communities that developed around their divisional point stations, including Jasper, McBride, Lucerne (until 1919), and Blue River (half way between Jasper and Kamloops). During the 1930s these individual doctors were replaced by small Red Cross 'outpost' hospitals staffed by two or three nurses and a doctor. But the closest hospitals where complex medical procedures could be carried out were in Prince George, Kamloops, and Edmonton. In the case of a medical emergency, how quickly an ailing person in Sinclair Mills, Crescent Spur, Tête Jaune Cache, Valemount, or a nameless logging camp inbetween stations would receive care depended almost entirely on the railway companies' communication systems, timetables and schedules, and train speeds. The railway's telephone lines would be used to contact nearby doctors and hospitals,

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[99] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 175. On the hazards of walking along east-central BC's railroad rights-of-way, also see Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass and its People*, 88, 468-469; Boudreau, *Crazy Man's Creek*, 92-94; Cliff Kopas, *Packhorses to the Pacific* (Sidney, BC: Gray's, 1976), 66-69.

which, along with police detachments and large mills, were for a long time the only parties in east-central BC to have their own telephones. Were a train due to depart one of the divisional points heading in the direction of the accident, the local doctor would climb aboard and travel to the patient. If the train had already passed through the divisional point and the sick or injured person was transportable, he or she would be lifted into the train's caboose or a passenger car and looked after as best as possible while being sped towards the next town with a doctor and/or hospital. In instances where no train was due to pass by the location of the emergency for some time, a gasoline-powered speeder or even a spare locomotive and tender might be commandeered to bring the doctor in and/or the patient out. Conflicting traffic—even high priority trains that usually had precedence, like express passenger trains—would be shunted off the mainline and onto sidings in deference to the train that carried the doctor and/or evacuee.[100]

Further examples of how many cycles, routines, and rhythms of everyday life in east-central BC involved or revolved around trains, tracks, telephone lines, and timetables could be cited here, and the significance of those already cited could be elaborated on at length. However, the point being driven home is simply this: the people who lived in the Yellowhead Pass and upper Fraser and upper North Thompson river valleys during the first half of the twentieth century were aware—whether acutely or only vaguely—that the railways were a kind of lifeline, and that the places they lived in were hierarchically situated through their relations to and visual-vehicular mediation by those modern modes, networks, and systems of transportation and communication. The residents of east-central BC did not have to be employees or even frequent customers of the companies whose lines of circulation passed through their communities in order to know this, and they were reminded of the fate of places that were cut off from the dominant network of

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[100] Most expectant families in east-central BC tried to ensure that women in the later stages of pregnancy were safely ensconced in a hospital well in advance of the onset of labour—preferably in Edmonton, it seems. Local midwives usually assisted those who chose not to do this, or could not afford to, or who were surprised by the early onset of labour. Jean Humphreys' mother was a first aid attendant at Penny Spruce Mills in the late 1940s and also acted as the local midwife, and she recalled that her mother delivered fourteen babies there: "some at home, some on the way to the station, some in the station, and some on the train." (Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 108) However, when there was no midwife available or when there were complications, a doctor might be brought in, the woman might be brought to the nearest doctor, or, in some instances, a doctor's instructions might be relayed over the railway's telephone lines.

circulation wherever they could see empty, overgrown homesteads moldering on the 'wrong' side of the Fraser and whenever they passed through (or by) the abandoned site/sight of Lucerne, which was a visually prominent 'eyesore' after 1923 and an invisible absence after the realignment of the mainline in the late 1920s.

It is difficult to pursue this most important point in a systematic manner, mostly because it is rare to find explicit statements like those of Alice Wright, who remembered that in the 1940s the settlement at Mount Robson was, for all its highly scenic setting, "a mere flag stop for the train," a place where the mail was delivered "by the transcontinental trains passing three times a week—not stopping of course."[101] Or that of Dartha Kimmel, who began her account of growing up in Albreda in the 1920s and 1930s by flatly stating that "the settlement wasn't much, but it was a lot more important than it is now":

> It was the inspection point for the Blue River-Jasper subdivision, and was the largest station between these towns. All trains stopped at Albreda to be thoroughly checked for impending 'hot-boxes' and whatever ailments a train might develop. Even the Royal Train, in 1939, stood there for fifteen minutes or more. Trains also took on coal and water at Albreda.[102]

The relative scarcity of these observations which explicitly link the importance of a place to its position within a railway's system of operations and structures can actually be interpreted as indicating the extent to which the people who lived in east-central BC internalized the railway companies' logic of time, space, place, and power as normative or 'common sense.' After all, the railways' tracks, rights-of-way, and stations were the pre-existing structures around which these residents' communities had developed both spatially and socially. Almost every person who lived in east-central BC after 1914 had moved there *after* the completion of the railways—indeed, as the dozens of references in a local history of Penny to first arriving in that place during the middle of the night make abundantly clear, they moved in by way of the railways' tracks, trains, and timetables. They lived in communities that were named after and centered around the nearest railway station, which had been established at its location in order to serve the technical needs of

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[101] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 96, 97.

[102] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 491.

the unitary rail-locomotive mechanism, which in turn was predicated on the circulation of commodities along metropolitan corridors.

This is not to suggest the existence of some kind of deterministic relationship. It does not mean that *everything* that the railway companies did was taken-for-granted, or that their decisions were always passively accepted by local residents. For example, in October 1914, just a few months after the GTP's completion, homesteaders who had purchased land five miles to the west of McBride complained vigourously about the "great inconvenience" that had been caused by the railway's deletion of "their" flag stop station—Cariboo Siding—from the list of points at which passenger trains regularly stopped. They lobbied the McBride area's top GTP officer for its re-inclusion on the timetable, for without access to regular train service, their recently-purchased land was worth much less than they had acquired it for, and it would be very difficult and time-consuming for them to do simple tasks like picking up and sending mail, buying groceries, delivering goods to market, and any number of similarly routine activities, what with there being no road into McBride.[103] However, this example of residents' 'resisting' decisions made by the railway serves to emphasize the large imbalance of power that existed between the company and the people who lived in the places situated along its line. Despite residents' strenuous protestations, the GTP simply refused to reinstate the stop at Cariboo Siding—that place served no purpose in the railway's larger system and was too close to the divisional point station at McBride for an extra pause in the timetable be justified. It was not until the large Lamming Bros. sawmill was established five miles west of McBride in 1945 that regular passenger train service was again made available at that point.[104]

The communities and residents of east-central BC were intrinsically situated within a hierarchy by the fact that the GTP and the route and form of its railroad were predicated on high-speed, long-distance circulation between metropolitan centres, rather than on providing service to local producers and populations. McBride was the location of a divisional point station, a node of maintenance, communication, and command that

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[103] *McBride Journal*, 22 October 1914, 1; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 32-33.

[104] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 33-37.

was strategically vital within the larger system. All trains had to stop there—even the high priority express trains that carried soldiers, members of royalty, or highly perishable goods like halibut and silk. Hence, McBride was an important place. Though just a few miles away, Cariboo Siding was merely a flag stop station, without even a water tower. For more than thirty years after October 1914 no passenger trains were scheduled to stop at that point. In spite of its physical proximity to both the dominant line of circulation and the largest community in east-central BC, Cariboo Siding was therefore marginal, unimportant, and insignificant when compared to connected, integrated McBride. Looked at this way, it can be argued that local historian Muriel Dunford had put the proverbial cart before the horse when she matter-of-factly stated that "(t)he fast transcontinental passenger trains or 'flyers' sweeping through after dark stopped regularly only at important places."[105] In the prevailing culture of time and space, a key factor in where places and people fit into socio-cultural hierarchies of place was precisely the degree to which they were connected to modern modes and networks of circulation. As previous sections of this chapter have shown, in the case of railways that level of connection was determined primarily by railway companies' technical-operational imperatives and the structures (water towers, coal docks, telegraph offices, maintenance shops) that they established as components in larger systems.[106] Important places were important precisely because it was at those places that trains regularly stopped.

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[105] Muriel Dunford, *North River: The Story of BC's North Thompson Valley and Yellowhead Highway 5* (Merritt, BC: Sonotek, 2001), 228.

[106] This point is expanded on at length in Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 16-44; Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor*, chapters five and seven. Here one might consider the case of the depots at Penny and Lindup stations. These two stations were only a few miles apart on the GTP's railroad. When the two stations were established, Lindup was made the site of a maintenance crew bunkhouse, a water tower, and a standard Type E depot that housed a telegraph and telephone operator, who relayed orders to passing train crews. Penny, on the other hand, had none of these facilities—only a tiny, unheated, unstaffed, shed-like shelter. But while the population at Lindup never grew much beyond the number of railway employees who were stationed there, by the 1920s Penny had become home to more than 200 homesteaders, loggers, and millworkers. In the early 1940s it was a sizeable mill town with a population of more than 300. Yet Lindup, because of its technical function within the CNR system, remained a regular railway stop and was the station with a depot, telegraph operator, and station agent. Only in 1947 did the CNR acknowledge the reality of the situation and take steps to improve service for the people living at Penny: the Lindup depot was lifted up onto a flatcar, transported five miles west, and re-installed, along with its agent and telegraph operator, at Penny. Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 37-45, 177, 179.

Conversely, unimportant places were those that were passed through (or by) at full throttle.

While this con/fusion or conflation of a place with its situation or role within a corporate-technical system of circulation would have most often been experienced in the context of a specific station and/or community, the principle also applied to entire stretches of corridor. Frank Leonard has suggested that the collapse of the Grand Trunk Pacific linked the communities along it in a "corridor of corporate failure" held together by a railroad that was, at least in BC, "almost empty with unused capacity," and cites the humorist Stephen Leacock's description of the GTP as a railway that led "from nowhere to nowhere, passing nowhere."[107] It is difficult to guess at exactly how the residents of east-central BC reacted to and felt about the failure of the 'pioneering' corporation—in fact, it is almost impossible, given that no newspaper was published in McBride between 1917 and 1931. However, it is interesting to note that all of the local histories that have been written about the Yellowhead Pass and upper Fraser corridor gloss over both the downfall of the GTP and its subsequent absorption into the federally-owned Canadian National Railways, a giant agglomeration of the country's various bankrupt and unworkable railways, a veritable hydra of corporate failures. These local histories also avoid discussing the CNR's decision during the mid-1920s to downgrade the former GTP line to the status of a branch line, which led to the communities in that corridor receiving less than half of the passenger train service that was then being scheduled on the mainline to Vancouver.[108] Furthermore, they also fail to mention the system-wide timetable and schedule changes made by the CNR in 1931 which resulted in the inconvenience of passenger trains traversing the upper Fraser corridor during hours of darkness for the next sixty years.

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[107] Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 277; Stephen Leacock, *My Discovery of the West: A Discussion of East and West in Canada* (Boston, 1937), 224, cited in Leonard, *Thousand Blunders*, 276.

[108] From the 1920s until the 1960s, places on the CNR's branch line to Prince Rupert—like McBride—were traversed by three passenger trains in each direction *per week*. There was no service on Sundays. One or more passenger trains traversed the CNR mainline to Vancouver in each direction *per day*, every day during the same period. Being downgraded to branch line status also meant that older engines and running stock were used on the Red Pass Junction-Prince Rupert run, and that the right-of-way, railroad, and associated structures were not maintained to the same standards that those on the mainline were.

The downplaying or elision of these important events suggests the existence of an attitude of resignation regarding past, present, and future decisions made by the railway companies' anonymous yet powerful planners, accountants, and managers who were headquartered in distant centres; a kind of tacit acknowledgement that little could be done to contest decisions that were informed by the central logic on which these dominant networks of circulation were based—that is, the rapid, efficient circulation of bulk commodities between major centres of production and consumption. Shifts and changes that were only minor, efficiency-improving adjustments within a railway's larger system had widespread, deep, and long-term impacts on the people living in and around places like Lucerne, McBride, Cariboo Siding, Penny, Dome Creek, and Hansard. But how could residents of east-central BC effectively challenge those shifts and changes when the places that they inhabited and so many aspects of their everyday lives revolved around the very logic on which those shifts and changes were based?[109]

Representation and visuality intertwined with how places and people in east-central BC were situated in hierarchies by the networks of circulation that passed through or passed by them. The people who lived in the upper Fraser corridor, the Yellowhead Pass, and the upper North Thompson valley were quite aware of how their communities were seen—or not seen—by the travellers who were carried aboard the trains that traversed them. For example, they would have recognized that when east-central BC was represented in folding, two-dimensional system maps, the relative 'ranks' of the places in the area were being graphically communicated in a perfectly 'common sense' manner. The presence of a divisional point station like Jasper, McBride, and Prince George would be indicated by the use of bold lettering and stars or large circles; stations where passenger trains would make regular stops were indicated in plain text and with smaller

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[109] It is interesting to note that between 1919 and 1923, when the fates of the CNR divisional points at Lucerne and Jasper were being decided, each of those communities established delegations for the purpose of lobbying the company, the provincial and federal governments, and the Board of Railway Commissioners on their behalf. These delegations—which were comprised mostly of railway workers—consistently employed the logic of railway operations when arguing for the retention of their respective divisional points. In his written decision ordering the CNR to abandon Lucerne in favour of Jasper, Commissioner F.B. Carvell praised the residents of both towns for having not submitted to him arguments that were based on intangible, 'irrational' qualities like attachment, aesthetics, or quality of life. "I was particularly pleased," Carvell wrote, "that the representatives of the two communities [...] confined their arguments purely to the operating question involved, and made no comparisons between the two places from any other standpoint." (Board of Railway Commissioners, 376)

circles or dots; and the many of the flag stop stations which were serviced only by slow moving, low-priority, mixed-cargo trains known as way freights were not shown at all. Whether or not a place appeared in these maps depended as much on how it fit within the railway's system of circulation as it did on the size of the local population or their economic activities. Along with timetables, copies of these system maps would have been available and prominently displayed at every station depot along the line.

Railway publications never explicitly stated that places—and by extension, their residents—were of marginal importance because passenger trains did not stop there regularly, or at all. Promotional pamphlets did not claim that certain locations did not matter because they happened to be located on the 'wrong' side of the Fraser River from the railroad, or in an area of 'boring,' undifferentiated scenery. The introductions to illustrated booklets did not bother to explain that many spaces and places were not being mentioned or described because they could not be seen from moving trains. Instead, these publications represented and reproduced the 'common sense' of circulation-based hierarchies of place: that is to say, they helped to put and keep communities and people in their proper place. They described only phenomena which seemed—or that which had been deemed—to be appealing or of interest to travellers, and only phenomena that could be seen during the railway journey. These supposedly neutral, natural visual-vehicular narratives, as has already been shown, were largely a product of the unitary mechanism formed by the tracks and the train, and the business philosophy and ideology which lay behind it.

Except for a thin gloss about appearances, these kinds of sources told (and tell) very little about the communities or residents of east-central British Columbia. They were designed to inform, entertain, and alleviate the boredom of travellers riding aboard the passenger trains of the GTP, CNoR, and CNR, and to help them situate themselves within the larger tableau of panoramic scenery that they were being conveyed through. Thus, in a CNR guidebook from the early 1920s, Giscome, Aleza Lake, Hutton, Dome Creek, Croydon, and Shere were represented as generic signs of the forest industry, as was perfectly evident "from the large saw mills to be seen" while the train speedily traversed those points. Similarly, the homesteads located around McBride were fleeting markers of agricultural settlement and development. "Across the Fraser from Raush

Valley [station]," the guidebook explained, "are to be seen some pleasant settlements where mixed farming is gradually coming into vogue." Other places, if mentioned at all, merely provided context for the unfolding scenery. For example, Penny was "a point where, owing to the elevation of the railway, the eye is able to scan a vast forest country lying to the right." For westbound travellers the Red Pass Junction station marked the impending site/sight of Mount Robson, while at Kidd "a splendid view may be obtained of Mount Rider." Even McBride, in addition to being described as an important divisional point, was a place where "mountains greet the eye in every direction."[110]

Only the visceral, kinesthetic experience of speed separated these static print representations from the visual-vehicular mediation—or projection—of landscape that was generated by the unitary mechanism of train and track. Indeed, it could be argued that the two types of narrative were perfectly complementary. But whereas there was no way for residents of east-central BC to assert the existence or contest the representation (or non-representation) of their communities in railways' maps, guidebooks, and pamphlets, it *was* possible for them to insert themselves into the landscape narratives that were 'authored' by the railways' sequential, serialized, structured, and largely standardized experiential corridors.

The ways in which people did this ranged from the banal to the bizarre. For example, in the late 1930s the owners of one of the guest ranches located in the meadows between the railroad tracks and the base of Mount Robson erected a signboard ten feet high and twelve feet long that advertised "Berg Lake Camp Bungalows" to passers-by from a visually-prominent location on private property beside the CNR's right-of-way at Mount Robson station.[111] Prior to being absorbed into the CNR, both the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways had made exclusive arrangements with one or two of the Mount Robson guest ranches whereby wealthy tourists who were desirous of a few stationary days' worth of sight-seeing, hunting, and climbing in the vicinity of 'The Monarch of the Rockies' would be preferentially directed towards them.[112] Advertising

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[110] Canadian National Railways, "Canada: Pacific to Atlantic," 44-47.

[111] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 93, 94 (upper left and centre right photographs).

[112] For example, see the listings of guides and guest ranches in east-central BC in Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, "The Canadian Rockies"; Canadian National Railways, "Hunting in Canada" (Montreal, 1923).

had not been necessary under these conditions, but in the late-1920s the CNR chose to terminate these business links.[113] This pushed the guest ranches to find a way to make their presence known to passing railway travellers. The large signboard at Mount Robson station—which veritably leapt out at passers-by—was not just a commercial necessity; by interrupting the CNR's narrative of supposedly pristine, untouched 'wilderness,' it was also a way of getting back at the company that had made such eye-grabbing place-promotion necessary in the first place.

Several other examples from the Yellowhead Pass illustrate the extent to which the residents of the communities in that area were aware of the importance and power of the view from the train as it passed through the Rocky Mountains. In the spring of 1922, two members of the Hargreaves family (which owned one of the guest ranches near the base of Mount Robson) were out hunting when they found two small black bear cubs. Deciding that the mother bear had probably been killed by a big game hunter, they brought the cubs home in their backpacks. During the summer the cubs were fed and looked after so that they became quite tame, a member of the Hargreaves family later recalled. Each bear cub "had a collar with a chain attached. Every day they were taken to the [Alpland and/or Mount Robson] station to meet the trains which stopped to allow passengers to view Mount Robson. Porters from the dining cars always had scraps of food for the cubs. The cubs [were] often posed on the Mount Robson sign for photos."[114] [Image 11] During the winter of 1922-1923 these bear cubs were allowed to hibernate beneath one of the ranch's outbuildings, but when they emerged the following spring they were too large and cantankerous to be kept as attention-grabbing pets, and were "returned to the wilds," according to the Hargreaves family's account in a local history.[115]

A similar scenario occurred just a few years later, in 1927. At that time the future novelist and short story writer Howard O'Hagan was working in the Yellowhead Pass area as a guide for tourists and mountaineers. He was with two employees of the

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[113] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 283, 391.

[114] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 391.

[115] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 391.

IMAGE 11 Black bear cubs on signboard at Canadian National Railways' Mount Robson or Alpland station, 1922. Courtesy of the Valemount Historic Society and *Yellowhead Pass and Its People* (1984).

Hargreaves guest ranch when, while hunting in the Swiftwater valley, they found another pair of tiny orphaned black bear cubs. Like the bears found in 1922, these cubs were brought home in backpacks to be kept for the amusement of passing railway travellers and the guest ranch's clientele. In his unpublished autobiography, O'Hagan recalled that it was not long before the black bear cubs were put to work promoting the Hargreaves family's business:

> Within weeks, broken to collars and chain, they were taken up to the platform beside which the transcontinental trains made their daily stops, eastbound in the morning, westbound in the afternoons. The metallic, pounding monsters, plumed with smoke, hissing steam, bells tolling, passed within ten feet of the cubs, this being the width of the platform. The cubs, well-taught by their mother up the Swiftwater, took the only escape available to them: they climbed the sign-post by the platform which pointed to Mount Robson, 'Elev. 12972 feet.' The terror and panic of the small creatures so lately plucked from their native silence was extreme.

Like the cubs in 1922, these bears were also used as a kind of photographic prop to adorn the signboard that indicated the presence and elevation of Mount Robson, including for what would quickly become a famous CNR publicity shot. [Image 12. Compare with Image 5.] Writing in the early 1970s, O'Hagan recalled that

> (o)ne day, while the bears clung to the top of the sign-post, below them the up-turned and mocking faces of passengers from the train, Bill Robinson, the railroad photographer, took their picture with Mount Robson towering in the background. The Canadian National Railways publicity department distributed it to newspapers and magazines across the continent and overseas. In later years, when I was the publicity man for the railroad I sent out dozens of copies and each cost me a stab of remorse. I was to see the picture in London, in Sydney, NSW, and in Buenos Airies. Even today newspapers and magazines occasionally use it…

By the end of the summer one of the attention-grabbing bear cubs had become "crazed by the horror of belching steam, the throbbing of pistons, and the teasing of tourists," and had to be shot by its captors; the other "escaped from his pen the following spring."[116]

As the point in the CNR system where westbound trains diverged for either Prince Rupert or Vancouver, Red Pass Junction station was another place in the Yellowhead Pass where passenger trains regularly stopped for a few minutes. There was even a small

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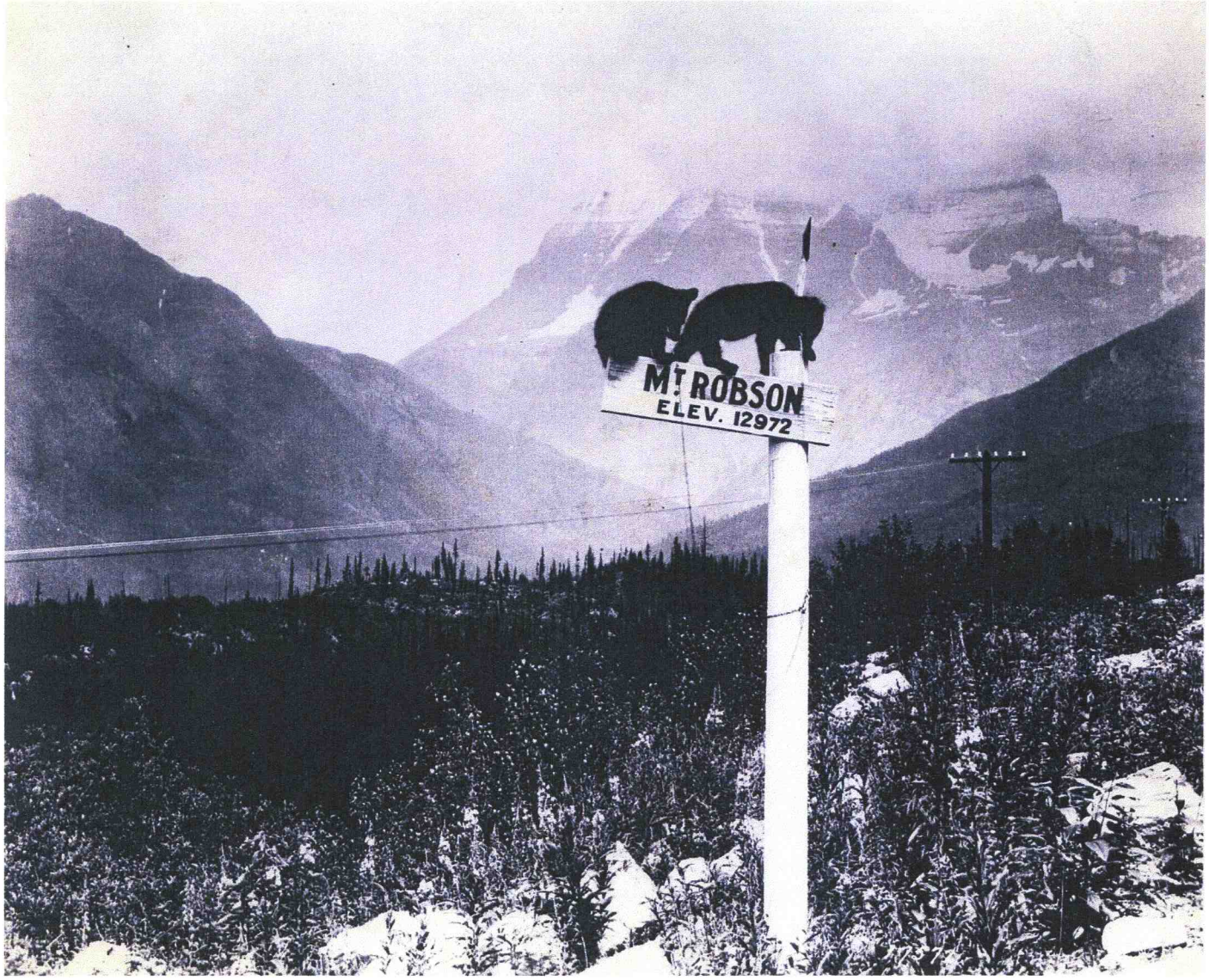
[116] Howard O'Hagan fond. Accession 82-50, Box 2, File 7, page 67. See n.43 above.

IMAGE 12 Canadian National Railways publicity photograph of black bear cubs on signboard at Mount Robson or Alpland station, with Mount Robson in the background, 1927. Photograph by Bill Robinson. Courtesy of Canadian National Railways and the University of Victoria Special Collections.



hotel in Red Pass to serve travellers making connection between the mainline and Prince Rupert branch line. Railway travellers were often allowed a few minutes to walk around the vicinity of the station, and on at least one occasion residents of Red Pass kept bear cubs for the entertainment of these passers-by. Felix Sivecki was a CNR section maintenance worker who was stationed at Red Pass, where he lived with his wife Maria and their four children. Growing up in Red Pass with their father an employee of the railway, the Sivecki children became very familiar with trains, tracks, timetables, and the gaze of tourist and travellers. One of the Sivecki children recalled that "on summer afternoons they met the trains and enjoyed talking to the passengers. They laughed but were a little surprised whenever asked, 'But what do you do in this God-forsaken place?'" In the summer of 1938, the Siveckis somehow came to possess a pair of small black bear cubs. These were kept chained to a post in their yard, which was located a short distance from and within view of the station depot. Exactly what use the Sivecki family made of the cubs—which they referred to as their "pets"—is unclear, but it is probable that they were made available for viewing by railway passengers. When the bears at Red Pass became too large to be handled in the company of sight-seers, they were disposed of: a snapshot from 1939 shows Felix and Maria Sivecki, the latter holding a hunting rifle, standing over one of the dead bears.[117]

It was feasible for residents of Red Pass and the Mount Robson meadows to advertise their businesses and display wildlife to a captive audience of railway travellers because the Yellowhead Pass area was traversed by a large number of trains, most of which passed through during hours of daylight. However, the situation was quite different in places like McBride, where most passenger trains rumbled through during hours of darkness even though McBride was a divisional point station, and the largest town in east-central BC, where all trains had to pause for between twenty and thirty minutes. After 1931 the timetable of the CNR made it impossible for the local businesses to profit from the passage of travellers, almost all of whom would be asleep when their trains' pulled into and out of McBride's railway yard. None of them would see the surrounding farming district or the mountainous walls of the Rocky Mountain Trench that

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[117] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 567-569.

hemmed in the town. How could local merchants hope to attract settlers, investors, or tourists if the town was effectively invisible? How to differentiate their community from the hundreds of other named places that a transcontinental train trip would take a traveller through?

One solution to this problem was to establish a place-boosting civic presence around the platforms and large depot at the McBride station, for it was in this area that any leg-stretching insomniacs would stroll around while waiting for the short whistle that signaled the impending departure of their train. There was also a restaurant called The Beanery in the McBride depot, and even late at night this opportunity for a meal would attract those travellers who were riding aboard a train that did not include a dining car.[118] In the early 1940s the McBride Board of Trade sponsored the beautification of an unused lot located right next to the CNR depot. Flowers and shrubbery were planted every summer, a garden path was cultivated, and several benches were set out. This neatly-arranged, carefully-maintained garden was ringed by a lawn and white fence, and was illuminated at night by the flood lamps that lined the station's main platform.[119] Also in the early 1940s, the McBride Farmer's Institute wrote to the CNR's regional superintendent, requesting "that a display case be placed in the station to exhibit local [agricultural] products."[120] Whether or not the railway granted this request is unclear. However, even in the late 1950s the merchants and businesses of McBride were still striving to make their town stand out in the eyes of railway travellers and project a respectable, modern image. For example, under the headline "McBride is Pretty from the Trains" the McBride *Valley Echo* reported that visitors, residents, and especially the travellers "passing through the village on the late trains" must have appreciated the local Board of Trade for having gone to the effort of putting up a large Christmas tree with

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[118] Whereas all passenger trains on the mainline to and from Vancouver were equipped with dining cars, some that traversed the low-priority branch line to Prince Rupert did not.

[119] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 88. Compare page 88 (lower left) with page 134 (upper left). On the move by railways and/or communities to beautify their stations and depots with gardens and fountains, see Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor*, chapter eight.

[120] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 88.

strings of coloured electric lights in a prominent location across the street from the CNR depot.[121]

The eye-catching advertisements, wildlife entertainments, and trackside signs of respectability cited above demonstrate that residents of east-central BC were aware that travellers saw their communities in a manner that was mediated by the visual-vehicular mechanism of tracks and trains, and also that their communities were set in hierarchies of place by the structures, operational imperatives, and criteria that had been established by railway companies. These examples were earnest attempts to create some kind of positive impression that would serve to distinguish particular places and people in east-central BC from the endless blur of anonymous, insignificant whistle stops that interspersed the fleeting, panoramic landscapes experienced by railway travellers. However, one last example suggests that in some instances residents of east-central BC inserted messages into the landscape narratives projected by tracks and trains as a means of expressing resentment over their situation within a railway's operational hierarchy of place, and over their status as static, gazed-upon subjects. During the late 1940s and early 1950s it was an annual Halloween tradition for the young people living at Red Pass Junction to white out the black 'P's on the trackside signboards that identified the station to people riding aboard the passing trains.[122]

These harmless, repeated acts of vandalism to the property of the railway around which so much of everyday life in Red Pass Junction revolved suggest not only a contesting of the 'rank' assigned to that place through the subversion of the scenery generated by the CNR. Such youthful pranks can also be interpreted as a kind of protest against the very notion of everyday life in a 'railway town' being truly 'modern' and 'with the times' during a period when automobiles and highways were rapidly eclipsing railways as the dominant mode of circulation in most of Canada and British Columbia—but not in the Yellowhead Pass area of east-central BC.

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[121] *Valley Echo*, 9 December 1957, 4.

[122] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 228-230, 568.

CHAPTER TWO: GAPS

As the summer of 1940 neared, the British Columbia Government Travel Bureau placed an ironically inappropriate advertisement in McBride's weekly newspaper as part of a province-wide campaign that promoted 'internal' tourism. Beneath an image of the aerial tram that ferried cars and drivers between the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways' Fraser Canyon divisional points in southwest BC, the text of the advertisement exhorted readers to

> (s)ee the mighty Fraser in full flood pouring through the stupendous gorge of the Fraser Canyon. Cross from Boston Bar to North Bend by the new aerial tramway, suspended 90 feet above its broad yellow current. Peer into the depths of the Chasm on the Cariboo Road. Take the new Big Bend section of the Trans-Canada Highway from Revelstoke to Golden, and see what has 'til now only been seen by the hazardous running of the chutes and rapids—the surging grandeur of the Big Bend of the Columbia. This Year See British Columbia—The Vacationland that has Everything![1]

In 1940 it was physically impossible for residents of McBride, the largest town in east-central BC, to drive beyond their immediate confines in the upper Fraser corridor. McBride and the surrounding area formed a kind of automotive island that had no road connection to the Cariboo, Big Bend, or any other provincial highway. A logging road ran three miles west of town, and a winding, muddy, thirty-mile-long dirt road allowed drivers to travel between McBride and the small farming community of Croydon, twenty-two miles to the east. But the only 'ferry' that could bring people or commodities like agricultural products and automobile parts onto or off of this island was Canadian National Railways. The Government Travel Bureau's advertisement was a reminder for residents of this area that they were unable to drive to the vacationland that had everything, and that, by the same token, they were not a part of the vacationland that had everything because the part of the province that they lived in was inaccessible and invisible to those who chose to see BC by automobile.

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[1] *McBride Bulletin* 20 May 1940, 8. On the complexities of marketing tourism, travel, and 'seeing BC' during wartime, see Mike Dawson, "From 'Business as Usual' to 'Salesmanship in Reverse': Tourism Promotion in British Columbia During the Second World War" *Canadian Historical Review* 83,2 (2002): 230-254.

Between the 1920s and the 1960s many aspects of Canadian society, including people's ways of moving through, looking at, and thinking about space, place, and landscape were being reorganized by automobility, the constellation of social and cultural practices and phenomena associated with the increasingly ubiquitous automobile. But during the period when the automobile was becoming entrenched as normative or commonplace, large parts of Canada, including the east-central portion of British Columbia, were either totally isolated from or only marginally connected to networks of automotive circulation, and were therefore experientially separated from the evolving provincial and national landscapes that were being generated by the passage of motorists and motor vehicles over public roads and highways. This chapter examines the automotive 'gaps' that existed in east-central BC from the 1920s to the mid-1960s.

Geographically, it might be better to speak of multiple gaps, with several large roadless spaces interspersed here and there with short, fragmented segments of rough logging or farm road. In 1940, for example, there were no contiguous stretches of road more than a mile or two long in the seventy miles between Sinclair Mills and McBride, or in the thirty-five miles between Croydon and Red Pass Junction.[2] For the residents of east-central BC there also existed a social and cultural gap, a 'mobility gap,' a feeling of being 'not up to speed' and 'behind the times' that stemmed from their marginal relations to or complete disconnection from what had become, or were becoming, important new networks and modes of circulation. These included telephones, radio, electricity, television, and, above all, automobile roads and highways. This feeling of being detached, second-class citizens cut off from the rest of the province and disqualified from many economic opportunities and social and cultural activities became especially intense after the late 1940s, when the relative quantity and quality of the roads in east-central BC was rapidly outstripped by the expansion and improvement of the public highway network that seemed to concretely embody the post-war modernization of British Columbia.[3] A triumphalist enthusiasm for faster, safer, and more direct roads and a

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[2] The CNR's abandoned GTP and CNoR grades formed a rough but physically passable route from Jasper west through Lucerne to Red Pass Junction. However, this was not officially recognized or maintained as a provincial road on either side of the BC-Alberta boundary.

[3] On the expansion of BC's road and highway network after 1945, see retired Highways Department official R.G. Harvey's *Carving the Western Path: By Rail, River, and Road Through Central and Northern*

fetishization of the 'democratized' automobile permeated North America after 1945. For any region, town, community, or individual's everyday movements to remain dependent on irregular rivers, inflexible railways, or slow, seasonally-open, dangerous, dirt-surfaced, dead-end roads was tantamount to being excluded from some of the most important features of what was being called "the good life" or "the abundant society."[4]

That the absence of road connections served to separate the east-central portion of BC from the rest of the province was brought home again and again to residents of that area. This occurred primarily through the juxtaposition of the routines, constraints, and possibilities of their everyday life with powerful and pervasive discourses that conflated automobility with modernity and prosperity. For example, during the late 1940s and early 1950s many of the movies that were projected in the Penny community hall on Friday nights would inevitably have involved highway travel, car chases, and other representations of automobility (or at least of stagecoaches, given the popularity of Westerns). Yet these films could only be delivered from their Vancouver distributor in a roundabout manner via the CNR's delivery service.[5] It also occurred through banal representations, misrepresentations, and non-representations of the spaces and places that residents of east-central BC lived in, such as in road maps and promotional guidebooks. For example, until the early 1950s the upper Fraser corridor, Yellowhead Pass, and upper Canoe and North Thompson valleys were not included in the provincial government's numerous booklets and pamphlets about British Columbia's road network and the attractions accessible and visible from it. Even in 1962 the province-boosting, vacationing motorist-oriented government publication *Beautiful British Columbia* introduced a rustic article about sheep herding in east-central BC by matter-of-factly describing McBride and Dunster as places that would "never be lauded as geographically

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B.C. and *Carving the Western Path: By River, Rail, and Road Through B.C.'s Southern Mountains* (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 1998). Also see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 271-282.

[4] On discourses of material abundance and 'the good life' in post-war British Columbia and Canada, see Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 270-296; Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[5] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 107-108.

prominent."[6] However, such ephemeral sources are of only limited utility when studying the historical relations between circulation, visuality, and hierarchies of place. Often they were inaccurate, not showing existent roads either because they had been overlooked or deemed unimportant, or mistakenly indicating impassable trails to be gravel roads. And although the places and people of east-central BC were in/conspicuous by their omission from dozens of roadmaps, tourist pamphlets, travel films, and promotional brochures, this elision or non-appearance can only be pointed out so many times before doing so loses its mundane significance.

Further complicating the question of how to study the 'gaps' that existed in east-central BC is the fact that the residents of that area who have contributed to local histories have tended to fixate on presence and positive change while downplaying the importance of absence and the lack of change, or "the forward retention of tradition."[7] That is to say, when roads, automobiles, automobility, and mobility in general are discussed in these histories, the focus is typically directed towards the building of roads, their poor condition, the acquisition of vehicles, and the uses made of them, but rarely towards the non-presence of roads or the pointlessness of owning automobiles in places where there was nowhere to drive them. Just as residents of east-central BC rarely complained—at least in writing—about the 'common sense' fact that the spaces and places that they lived in were not mentioned in highway maps and tourist brochures because there were no highways or established roadside tourist attractions there, they have apparently discounted the historical significance of their geographically and experientially marginal relations to automotive networks of circulation.

This chapter seeks to draw out the significance of the absence of roads, the presence of bad roads, and the existence of socio-cultural mobility gaps by exploring the uneven manner in which various people, places, and parts of east-central BC were connected to automotive networks of circulation. It relies largely on traditional sources of evidence like newspapers and government records, and is divided into three sections. The first looks at the period from the 1910s to the early 1940s when there were relatively

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[6] "Pioneer Sheep Drive," *Beautiful British Columbia* (Winter 1962), 34.

[7] Citation of Francis Bacon's treatise *On Innovation* in E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961), 102.

few roads or automobiles in east-central BC, and when calls for more and better roads were predicated primarily on improving producers and merchants' access to markets. The second section considers the period from 1944 to the early 1960s. It was during this period that traffic, travel, auto-tourism, sightseeing, and the motorist's view from the road became factors in arguments and desires for the expansion and improvement of roads, almost to the point of overshadowing factors like improved access to markets and increased resource extraction. The third section examines the mid-1960s, and also acts as a transition to the next chapter. Illustrating the relational nature of connection-disconnection *vis-à-vis* networks of circulation, during this period the 'mobility gap' widened for many residents of east-central BC even though the improvement of one stretch of road into a highway served to eliminate one of the area's major geographic gaps.

2.1 "An outlet to the outside world": 1910s to 1940s

The Malahat road on Vancouver Island was being constructed as one of British Columbia's first scenic drives around the same time that the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railway companies were building their lines through the Yellowhead Pass.[8] Newspapers and local histories, however, indicate that the residents of east-central BC had little use for automobiles and showed minimal interest in roads during the 1910s and 1920s. Without roads, there was little use for automobiles. Dick Downey, who lived at Croydon during the mid 1920s, recalled that "(a)t that time there was no road in the area except for a short stretch on the far side of the river that started nowhere and ended nowhere. The only means of communication was the railway track that served the train and pedestrians." And, in an aside that appears frequently in accounts of pedestrian life in east-central BC during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, he added: "(o)nce I was nearly caught on a trestle by a freight train."[9] Around the same time, Otto Bruning lived at Shere, the next community/railway station to the east of Croydon. Other than the Fraser River and the railway right-of-way that the CNR had taken over from the GTP, there was

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[8] On these earliest years of automobiling and automobile road building in British Columbia, see G.W. Taylor, *The Automobile Saga of British Columbia, 1864-1914* (Victoria: Morriss, 1984).

[9] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 156.

no transportation or communication connection between Shere and Croydon, which were nine miles apart by rail. Otto Bruning recalled that during the 1920s "the railway was the only means of traveling west or east. There was no road west of Jasper for 45 miles, and except for a few miles in the McBride area, none to Prince George." However, as a forest patrolman Bruning was far more mobile than his neighbours—the BC Forest Service provided him with a gas powered speeder for travelling up and down the railway line between McBride and the Mount Robson area. Bruning also recalled that because the mill, school, community hall, post office, and ferry crossing at Shere were all clustered close to the railway station, there was a "rough wagon road" that connected them, but "the only means of transportation for people living outside of that localized area was either walking or using the section crew's speeder. The [passenger] trains running only three times [per week in each direction] was not satisfactory."[10]

In the mid-1920s Prince George merchants began lobbying the provincial and federal governments for the extension of public telephone lines from their city eastwards to McBride. By doing so they hoped increase their trade with the more than twenty sawmills that were then located along the so-called East Line of the railroad between those points, many of which were then doing their business with distant Edmonton firms in spite of their proximity to Prince George.[11] But for this scheme to be fiscally plausible the telephone lines would have needed to run along the CNR right-of-way. Given that its telegraph service was collecting handsome profits from its privately-owned commercial telephone and telegraph lines that connected the railway stations near which those mills were located, it is not surprising that the railway company was cool to the Prince George Board of Trade's proposal for improved communications in east-central BC.

By 1928 the plan to draw the sawmills and communities to the east of Prince George closer into that city's sphere of commercial influence had evolved into demands

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[10] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 275-279.

[11] *Prince George Citizen* 23 July 1925, 1; 18 November 1926, 4; 23 February 1928, 4; 11 April 1929. Many sawmills in the East Line area between Prince George and McBride used Edmonton for their supplies because goods were cheaper from there, even with transportation cost, and also because those mills had close familial and business links to the northern Prairies. See Gordon Hak, "Prairie Capital, Prairie Markets, and Prairie Labour: The Forest Industry in the Prince George District, 1910-1930" *Prairie Forum* 14,1 (1989): 9-22.

for the construction of a public right-of-way that would end the CNR's monopoly over communication and transportation in east-central BC. The desired line of circulation was to have been an automobile road that would run roughly parallel to the railroad through to McBride and eventually on to Jasper, which was expected to soon be connected to Banff by a scenic parkway.[12] A seasonally passable road already led thirty miles east to the large mills at Giscome, and clearing and grading was underway between that point and Aleza Lake, eight miles further on.[13] As Prince George businesses considered how the desired highway would fit into the existing road network of western Canada, their plans gradually began to place less emphasis on the tangible value of trade with the nearby East Line mills and communities and more emphasis on the less tangible, less fixed value of sightseeing, tourism, and automobile travel in general. The recent completion of the Cariboo highway between Hope and Prince George had demonstrated that automobile traffic in and of itself could create opportunities for commercial development, because motorists needed to purchase fuel, food, accommodations, and other goods and services. If the existing road to Giscome and Aleza Lake were extended through to McBride and then Jasper, Prince George would be fixed as central BC's highway hub, the crossroads for extensive road networks to the south, west, and east. Furthermore, it was believed that by facilitating 'loop tours' an automotive "outlet" from Prince George to Alberta via Mount Robson and Jasper parks would lead to an increase in the number of auto-tourists travelling through Prince George, many of whom were then unwilling to drive north from Vancouver on the Cariboo highway only to reach a 'dead end' and have to double back over 300 miles of road (and through 300 miles of scenery) that they had already traversed.[14]

While it is possible to trace Prince George merchants' growing enthusiasm for improved connection with points east, and also the gradual dematerialization of their

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[12] *Prince George Citizen* 21 June 1928, 1.

[13] *Prince George Citizen* 21 June 1928, 1; Ethelwynn MacArthur, *The Way It Was: A History of Aleza Lake* J. Kent Sedgewick, ed. (Prince George: Fraser-Fort George Museum Society, 1983), 16-17.

[14] *Prince George Citizen* 18 April 1929, 1. Such a loop tour would finally allow Prince George merchants to realize faraway Mount Robson as an economic asset, just as had been predicted in the pages of the *Citizen* during the early 1920s. See *Prince George Citizen* 13 September 1921, fair supplement, 2.

reasons in favour of such a project, it is not so clear what role the mill owners and other residents of the communities between Prince George and McBride (and Jasper) played in this scheme for the economic expansion and circulatory centralization of the province's so-called 'northern capital.' These people and places received scant attention from the Prince George daily paper, and no newspaper was published in east-central BC from 1918 to 1930. However, the merchants of Prince George lost most of their zeal for these projects after the onset of the Depression forced the closure of many of the tenuously-capitalized, 'petty producer' mills along the East Line and elsewhere in the upper Fraser corridor.[15] Throughout the 1930s it fell largely to residents and businesses of those places to press for more flexible, more accessible systems and networks of circulation in east-central BC.

An editorial about-face in late November 1931 by the recently resurrected *McBride Journal* suggests that the operational change by the CNR which caused passenger trains to traverse McBride and most of the upper Fraser corridor during hours of darkness served to galvanize local interest in the construction of a through-road. In the same edition that had announced the impending timetable change, the editor of the *Journal* had rhetorically asked in a column warning the community against 'keeping-up-with-the-Jones' syndrome: "(b)ecause older established, more populous and wealthier provinces, states and countries have, through the expenditure of millions of dollars, created great systems of permanent, all-weather roads, why must we do the same, although still young, weak and not yet wealthy as a community?"[16] Only two weeks later, just days before the unwanted, inconvenient railway timetable change was to go into effect, the *Journal*'s headline heralded a complete turnabout, urging that everything possible be done to "Complete the Highway!" "Unemployed men need the work, and this part of the country has been held back for fifteen years by lack of roads," the accompanying story complained, pointing out that the few roads that existed in the upper Fraser corridor were "worthless, disconnected stretches which lead nowhere in

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[15] See Gordon Hak, "On the Fringes: Capital and Labour in the Forest Economies of the Port Alberni and Prince George Districts, British Columbia, 1910-1939" Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University (1986), 82-86.

[16] *McBride Journal* 6 November 1931, 3.

particular." "Completion of the highway to give settlers an outlet east and west," the story concluded, "is the real need of this section of the country."[17] A through-road between Prince George and Jasper—via McBride, of course—would free residents of east-central BC from their dependence on the inflexible, monopolistic railway that showed so little regard for so many of the places that its lines cut through.

During the first years of the Depression several work camps were established on the north side of the Fraser between Hansard and Penny, nominally for the purpose of clearing and grading the western portion of the proposed highway. However, these camps were run largely as internment camps for unemployed forestry workers and desperate homesteaders.[18] Showing where a road from Prince George to the Alberta border ranked amongst its infrastructure-building priorities, the provincial government allotted these work camps no construction machinery, little in the way of dynamite or hand tools, and barely enough food, clothing, or shelter to sustain their 'employees.' Police stationed at Prince George, McBride, and Red Pass Junction monitored and patrolled the CNR's lines in order to prevent the men in these so-called road building camps from travelling towards the urban centres of BC's interior, to keep organizers and agitators under surveillance, and to prevent unemployed, freight-riding transients from entering the province from the east.[19] When after eighteen months several of the idle, isolated work camps became centres of unrest (with some flying red flags in place of the Canadian), they were abruptly shut down and the Prince George-McBride-Jasper highway scheme was shelved, much to the dismay of the *McBride Journal*'s editor. All that was needed, he wrote, "and needed badly," was to connect all the short stretches of

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[17] *McBride Journal* 20 November 1931, 1.

[18] The largest such camp was located close to Lindup station, west of Penny. Very few local histories mention let alone describe life in this or any other of the camps. One rare example that does is the Chambers family's account in Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 90-91.

[19] Hak, "On the Fringes," 294. Because it was the dividing point for the CNR's lines to Vancouver and Prince Rupert, Red Pass Junction was an important location for these types of police operations. Shere resident Otto Bruning left a first-hand account of being observed and interrogated at that station by both the BC provincial police and RCMP during the 1930s. Lionel Deforge, a CNR section worker stationed at Red Pass Junction, also recalled "seven policemen on horses chasing bums off trains. They would walk the bums up the track as far as Rainbow [station, nineteen miles west of the provincial boundary] and send them back to Alberta." Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 277, 335.

existent road between Hansard in the west, Red Pass Junction in the east, and Albreda in the southeast.[20]

The initial proliferation of automobiles in east-central BC actually occurred during the 1930s, in spite of the poor economy and the fact that there were few roads on which to drive them. The numerous accounts in local histories that describe the purchase and shipping in (by rail of course) of used trucks from points afar suggests that the availability of cheap used vehicles is the explanation for this. In 1931, for example, the Clausen family bought and shipped in the first truck in Valemount, a battered, stripped-down half-ton Ford with no cab, and began using it to haul logs and railway ties.[21] In 1932 the government agent at McBride acquired an automobile and much to the amusement of locals did not bother to equip it with a license plate because, he argued, there were no officially recognized roads in McBride and no way to drive beyond the immediate vicinity.[22] That same year the *McBride Journal* suggested that 300 crossings a month was enough traffic to justify replacing the ferry across the Fraser River at Croydon with a bridge (it never happened). How many of those crossings involved wagons and how many automobiles is unknown, but a photograph from 1934 shows the ferry loaded with a four-door sedan and a light truck.[23]

In mid-May of 1933, the first automobile-related advertisement appeared in the pages of a McBride newspaper. The nearest garage, located in faraway Jasper, was promoting Firestone Tires to the farmers, mill owners, and townspeople of McBride and east-central BC.[24] The advertisement noted that shipment of these and other parts could be arranged to all points that were serviced by the CNR. One week later, the *Journal* reported with a mixture of disgust and admiration that two young men travelling westward from Saskatchewan had managed to drive their car the 120 miles from Jasper to

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[20] *McBride Journal* 15 July 1932, 1.

[21] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 298-299.

[22] *McBride Journal* 1 April 1932, 1.

[23] *McBride Journal* 29 July 1932; Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 155.

[24] *McBride Journal* 12 May 1933, 4.

McBride in six *days*.[25] The editor's disgust over the absence of a passable road between the two points (the men had followed abandoned railway grades part of the way, and been forced to build bridges and cut trail in many places) was tempered by admiration for the fact that they had actually managed to get through. Only the previous summer, two unknowing American motorists coming to visit family in McBride had been forced to leave their car in Jasper and continue west by train, which had prompted the *Journal* to criticize the *Vancouver Sun*'s recent publication of an inaccurate provincial roadmap that showed an automobile road linking Jasper and McBride. In fact, the *Journal* complained, from McBride "(t)here is a good road to Dunster, and a wagon road from there to a point four miles east of Croydon, [but] the rest of the way to Red Pass is only a pony trail, and a rough one at that."[26] Until 1944 all but the most adventurous of motorists travelling to east-central BC chose to deposit their cars at Jasper and make their way to points west of the Yellowhead summit by train.

Most of the motor vehicles owned by residents of east-central BC during the early 1930s were used for hauling poles, ties, lumber, and produce from mills and farms to railway sidings and stations.[27] It is not surprising, therefore, that there are few indications of local businesses and communities having been especially interested in the opportunities that auto-tourism, leisure travel, and through-traffic in general might have provided. The 1932 report that the Associated Boards of Trade of British Columbia had resolved that a road from Prince Rupert through to the Alberta boundary should be first priority in the provincial government's road building programme, and that this road should be well-gravelled "in order to encourage tourist traffic" stands out as incongruous

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[25] *McBride Journal* 19 May 1933. One wonders if these Prairie residents had selected this means of travel through the Yellowhead Pass as a way to avoid the police checkpoints that inspected CNR trains for transients in the stretch between the BC-Alberta border and Red Pass Junction.

[26] *McBride Journal* 5 August 1932, 4; 12 August 1932, 1. It was possible to drive part of the way between Jasper and Red Pass Junction by following the abandoned Canadian Northern grade, but to do so involved two extremely dangerous crossings over the existing CNR mainline, and because the old railway spans had been removed for salvage, also required detours over precarious log bridges.

[27] Local histories of east-central BC also contain several scattered references to and snapshot photographs of residents using the drive belts and axles of their automobiles to power washing machines and buzz saws. On the development of these vernacular practices, see Ronald Kline and Trevor Pinch, "Users as Agents of Technological Change: The Social Construction of the Automobile in the Rural United States" *Technology and Culture* 37,4 (1996): 763-795.

in the pages of the *McBride Journal*.[28] However there were entrepreneurial individuals and government agencies anticipating that sooner or later the passage of private automobiles over public roads would reorganize how spaces and places in east-central BC were visually and vehicularly mediated as a scenic landscape. This was clearly demonstrated in 1934, with the sudden reappearance (and re-disappearance) of Lucerne as an aesthetic concern in Mount Robson Provincial Park.

British Columbia's Forest and Lands Branches received dozens of inquiries during the late 1920s and early 1930s from people who wanted to establish recreational facilities and/or accommodations in Mount Robson Park. Many of these inquiries made direct reference to purchasing or leasing property and/or the remaining buildings at the site of Lucerne, which with a railroad no longer running right through it had become a more secluded and attractive spot. These requests had invariably been turned away during the 1920s with terse notification of the park's special status. But in the early 1930s the growing volume of these requests and the possibility that some kind of road would soon be pushed westward from Jasper National Park prompted the BC Lands and Forest Branches to re-evaluate the possibility of allowing limited development inside the park, including at the site of Lucerne.

In the winter of 1934 the Superintendent of Lands requested information about Lucerne's current status from the Forest Branch. He explained that "(i)t was originally intended to thoroughly clean up this location which lies within the boundaries of Mount Robson Park [...] but up to this date there does not appear to have been any satisfactory and final disposition of the remaining dilapidated structures."[29] Just two months later, before the Forest Branch had reported back, a short letter from a Mr. Fred Williams of Edmonton set off alarm bells in the Lands Branch. Williams' exact words were: "Can the abandoned townsite of Lucerne be leased? Here is the idea, there about to start on a automobile road next summer from Jasper to Lucerne. I want to put a licensed hotel, garage, a filling station, a bungalow camp, etc."[30]

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[28] *McBride Journal* 19 August 1932, 1.

[29] BCSL. File 22. Sup't of Lands memorandum to Chief Forester, 23 November 1934.

[30] BCSL. File 22. Fred Williams to Sup't of Lands, 21 January 1935.

The route of any such road through the park would presumably follow the former Canadian Northern grade that had recently been abandoned by the CNR, and this meant that it would pass along the south side of Yellowhead Lake and right past the site of Lucerne. If this were the case, the attention of future automobilists driving between Alberta and BC (and Jasper and Mount Robson parks) would inevitably be drawn to the collection of run-down, looted, semi-collapsed buildings that had been allowed to remain at trespass in the park. Suddenly the abandoned structures located at Lucerne again presented a visual-vehicular aesthetic problem, one that could no longer be left to molder away out of view.

Rather than rebuff Williams' proposal, Lands Branch staff asked for more detailed information about his plans. They also requested the Forest Branch to expedite its evaluation of the situation at Lucerne, and began investigating the accuracy of Williams' assertion that an automobile road that would inevitably prove popular with tourists was going to be pushed westward into Mount Robson Park. This assertion was entirely realistic because during the 1930s the federal government was employing relief workers on an array of well-publicized public works projects that included road building in several national parks, one of which was Jasper.[31] When the Forest Branch's report finally arrived, it contained yet another inventory of the structures remaining at Lucerne, and the Forester who undertook the inspection of those buildings stated that with the exception of four trapper's cabins that were under lease, "all if not totally destroyed or removed are in such a poor state that any wrecking value left is scarcely worth the labour." He recommended that "all such buildings should be destroyed as they are a menace to a community, both as to health and fire danger. The best method would be to burn during the winter or spring before the snow leaves. *Now would be an ideal time if immediately carried out.* [emphasis in original]"[32]

Aside from the question of just what community Lucerne might have been a menace to, given that there were barely fifty people living within a twenty mile radius of that locale (perhaps the travelling public?), that someone in either the Forest or Lands

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[31] See Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 71-73, 81-84.

[32] BCSL. File 22. District Forester, Prince George quoted in Chief Forester to Sup't of Lands, 5 April 1935.

Branches underlined the Forester's last sentence in blue crayon indicates that cleaning up Lucerne was again felt to be a pressing matter. Scavenging, a short-lived hobo 'jungle,' and six winters of crushing snow had made the long out-of-sight site looking much worse than at the end of the 1920s. Unlike the train, with its rigidly fixed route, timetable, and schedule, a key part of the automobile's appeal to the tourists and travellers who visited Mount Robson Park would have been that it allowed them ample opportunity to pull over, pause, park, look around, back up, get out, walk around, and camp overnight wherever and whenever their curiosity or whimsy might lead. A lakeside eyesore—or 'ghost town,' depending how one looked at it—surrounded by mountain vistas was sure to become such an attraction.

Fred Williams' replied with vague statements about his plans, and the only intelligence forwarded by the Government Agent at Prince George was an accusation from the police constable stationed at Red Pass Junction that Williams' real intention was to set up a beer hall at Lucerne (why he would want to do so at that abandoned, isolated location was not explained). The Superintendent of Lands scolded the Government Agent, explaining that the Branch was "not specifically interested" in beer halls, liquor licenses, or even Fred Williams and his proposal *per se*, but required information about the likelihood of an automobile road being built between Jasper and Mount Robson parks.[33] If a road was going to allow tourists to drive into the park and take them along the south side of Yellowhead Lake, then the sight of the buildings at Lucerne would finally have to be 'cleaned up' regardless of whether accommodations were to be established there or not.

Upon further inquiry, the Lands Branch learned that in fact no officially sanctioned road came within twenty-five miles of Lucerne, and none was likely to for several years. A letter was sent to Williams informing him that because "there is no present communication with this vicinity except by rail," and because trains no longer stopped anywhere near Lucerne, "the necessity for tourist accommodation is not apparent."[34] Nor was the necessity for any cleanup, so the plans that had been hastily

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[33] BCSL. File 22. Gov't Agent, Prince George to Sup't of Lands, 22 May 1935; Sup't of Lands to Gov't Agent, Prince George, 29 May 1935.

[34] BCSL. File 22. Sup't of Lands to Fred Williams, 24 June 1935.

arranged for dealing with the abandoned, decrepit, 'menacing' eyesore at Lucerne were deferred for the fourth time in ten years. The summer of 1935 marked the last time that agents of the BC Lands Branch had to concern themselves with travellers' vehicle-borne views of the structures on the south side of Yellowhead Lake that were intruding in Mount Robson Park.

As economic conditions improved in the late 1930s more people living in east-central BC acquired cars and trucks, and as these vehicles became more numerous and more commonplace their owners and other residents' interest in and enthusiasm for the expansion and improvement of the area's roads increased. In 1939 this shift could be seen reflected as much in the features that appeared in McBride's weekly newspaper as it was by the accompanying stories and editorials. For example, advertisements placed in the paper indicated that two garages were open in McBride, each acting as local distributor for competing lines of oil, parts, tires, and other automotive products. In May of 1939, McBride Transfer—the town's long-established livery and cartage business—announced that it had become the local distributor for Imperial Oil. By the late summer it was advertising itself only under the Imperial brand, making it the first automotive franchise in east-central BC.[35] Every few issues a half-page advertisement promoting some new car or truck would appear, while small classified ads offered used vehicles, parts, and accessories for sale or trade.

In the spring of 1939 an occasional column titled "All for the Highway" began to appear in the *Bulletin*.[36] It contained news, opinion, and advocacy relating to the construction of a highway through east-central BC. For example, the first installment of this column announced that the McBride Board of Trade was sponsoring a local meeting and field day in support of the extension of the highway. Many others installments relayed information about the Yellowhead Highway Association, a recently-formed organization of western Canadian cities, municipalities, boards of trade, and businesses that had banded together to lobby provincial and federal governments for the construction of a northern transprovincial highway between Prince Rupert and Winnipeg via the

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[35] *McBride Bulletin* 5 May 1939, 1. This remained the only gas station in McBride until the 1950s.

[36] The first "All for the Highway" column appeared on the front page of the 20 April 1939 edition.

Yellowhead Pass (as well as several branch roads, including one down the North Thompson River valley to Kamloops). According to the elaborate letterhead of the association's British Columbia branch, in 1938 its executive committee included mill owners, hoteliers, lodge operators, merchants, and James Mewhort, editor of the *McBride Bulletin*. Its president was Arthur O. Read, a merchant and lodge proprietor from Longworth, a community located on the East Line. Other places in east-central BC were also represented in the BC branch of the association, with executive committee members coming from Shelley, Willow River, Giscome, Aleza Lake, Dewey, Sinclair Mills, Bend, Penny, Dome Creek, Snowshoe, McBride, Dunster, and Red Pass Junction.

At its convention in Prince George in May of 1938, the Yellowhead Highway Association resolved to send a petition to the federal government requesting that it negotiate with the province of British Columbia to take over Mount Robson Provincial Park, and, once the park was transferred over, proceed to construct a parkway through it along the abandoned route of the Canadian Northern railway. The Association seemed to expect—or at least magine—that in exchange for relinquishing the park, the provincial government would agree to complete a highway link between Prince George and McBride, and thence to the western boundary of the newly-federalized park. The petitioners argued that the cost of nationalizing Mount Robson Park and building the parkway "would be small compared with the financial returns to Canada of the tourist trade they would produce, to say nothing of the provision of an outlet to the outside world made available to the people of central British Columbia."[37] Though trading the federal government land for national parks in exchange for investment in road building and other public works was a well-established ploy by which provinces sought to gain federal expenditures on improvements to regional infrastructure, the Yellowhead Highway Association's 1938 petition went nowhere.[38] Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the petitioners had held out increased auto-tourism and through-traffic as the primary benefits to be realized through such a scheme; the connection of east-central BC "to the

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[37] BC Archives. GR-1991 British Columbia, Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division (hereafter BC Parks). Reel BO-1757. Arthur E. Read to The Hon. T.D. Patullo, Premier, 1 June 1938.

[38] See Allan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001)

outside world" was to have been a happy but coincidental side-effect of this, rather than the other way round.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there was still no way to drive through east-central BC in 1940. None of the communities located between Sinclair Mills and Red Pass Junction had a connection to BC or Alberta's existing networks of roads and highways. Helen Brooks worked at the only garage in Valemount in 1942, and she recalled that there were only six cars in the vicinity at the time—all the other vehicles were logging and utility trucks.[39] At this time Penny was the location of one of the largest sawmills in the BC interior, yet few residents purchased cars, and those who did tended to keep their vehicles permanently 'boarded' with friends or relatives living in faraway Prince George.[40] Even in the late 1940s the only motor vehicles in Penny that were not owned by the mill were a Model A and a Model T Ford. There was little use even for these because, as one resident remembered it, "(t)he road from the station to the mill was not much over a mile in length. You could not drive out of town unless you used logging roads, and that was not allowed during the week. Even then, the logging roads did not take you anywhere except off in the bush."[41]

2.2 "The proper psychological location to impress visitors": 1940s to 1960

While the fuel restrictions of the Second World War curtailed automobile use in BC's urban centres, the extra gasoline ration and food coupons that were available to those forestry workers who had to drive on logging roads actually encouraged many residents of east-central BC to purchase their first truck.[42] And although the Yellowhead Highway Association was as unsuccessful in arguing that a highway from Prince George to Jasper was of vital strategic importance for Canada's war effort as it had been in prodding Ottawa to take over Mount Robson Park, there was one important improvement to the area's road network during the war. The provincial and federal governments'

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[39] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 273.

[40] See for example Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 164.

[41] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 16, 80.

[42] For example, see the Blackman family's account in Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 269.

decision to forcibly relocate so-called 'enemy aliens' away from coastal areas and major cities resulted in the completion of a few long-awaited, low-priority road building projects in the BC interior. One of these was a road through the Yellowhead Pass. In 1942 all of the abandoned structures at Lucerne were summarily razed, including those that remained in the disused, trackless CNoR right-of-way. This clearance was done not at the behest of the Lands or Forest Branches, but in order that an internment/labour camp could be established on that site to house male Japanese-Canadian 'evacuees' who had been conscripted into road construction.[43] However, even though most traces of the former divisional point station and town had been erased from the landscape, 1942 did not mark the end of Lucerne as an aesthetic irritant in the eyes of BC government agencies.

By the summer of 1944 it had been made possible to drive all the way from Jasper through Mount Robson Park to Tête Jaune Cache, thereby connecting McBride in the west and Valemount in the south with the provincial road network of Alberta. That a significant portion of the labour needed for the elimination of this eastern 'gap' had come from the Japanese-Canadian internees received no acknowledgement in area newspapers.[44] The new single-lane, dirt and gravel surfaced road followed the abandoned Canadian Northern right-of-way through much of the Yellowhead Pass, just as the BC Lands Branch had anticipated it would in 1934. Generally the road was as straight and level as the Canadian Northern's grade had been, but in a few stretches where the abandoned line had been obliterated by large rockslides the road climbed steeply and wound gingerly around bluffs. It also took several rough and roundabout detours to reach suitable river crossings, since the steel from the railways' duplicate bridges had also been salvaged during the First World War. Beyond Red Pass Junction there was no abandoned railroad grade to follow, so between that point and Tête Jaune Cache the road—including the stretch that passed Mount Robson—was narrow, dirt-surfaced, and closely followed the irregular contours of the terrain, which resulted in

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[43] Waiser, *Park Prisoners*, chapter five; Yon Shimizu, *The Exiles: An Archival History of the World War II Japanese Road Camps in British Columbia and Ontario* (Wallaceburg, ON: Shimizu Consulting, 1993).

[44] This fact has also been downplayed or ignored some local histories. Compare Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 335-338 with Valemount Historic Society, 147-151.

many tight curves and steep grades. Between Tête Jaune Cache and both McBride and Valemount the road was straighter, flatter, wider, and better-surfaced than it was in the pass. The Jasper to Mount Robson portion of this road was not plowed during the winter, and was all but impassable because of mud during much of the spring, and so for the rest of the 1940s and the early 1950s it was closed to traffic during these periods, as was indicated by warning notices and by a padlocked chain across the road just west of Jasper.[45] For the six to eight months per year that it was open, this road through the Yellowhead Pass was driven mostly by area residents, but after the end of the Second World War a trickle of hardy sightseers began to drive across the BC-Alberta boundary into Mount Robson Park during the summer months. Almost none of these tourists, however, drove west beyond the meadows below Mount Robson, a large natural clearing which provided the most dramatic viewpoint of that landmark, one that was very similar to the 'classic' view that railway travellers obtained from trains and tracks between the Alpland and Mount Robson stations.

In addition to a small volume of post-war auto-tourism, the completion of this road also stimulated another stream of proposals for the establishment of modern, motorist-oriented accommodations inside the provincial park.[46] Many of these again referred specifically to the area around Lucerne, with established Jasper hoteliers and demobilized soldiers proposing to establish businesses similar to those that had been suggested by Fred Williams ten years before. Throughout the 1940s the Lands Branch deflected all such proposals, and the Forest Branch followed suit—except in one early instance. In 1944 it granted retired BC Provincial Police officer George Crate a lease to a lot on the south shore of Yellowhead Lake, just west of the site of Lucerne. Crate and his son built a dock, a boathouse, and a log lodge, and added several guest cabins salvaged from the Japanese internment/construction camp after the War Assets Corporation had divested it.[47] They recognized that business would be slow for the foreseeable future, but

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[45] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 33.

[46] The preferred location for most such proposed enterprises was within view of Mount Robson, but several guest ranches and backcountry outfitters had already been established on the few alienated lots in that area.

[47] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 317-318.

expected it to increase exponentially with each improvement to the area's accessibility by road.

The Crates' Lake Yellowhead Lodge became a regular stopping point on the route of the annual highway-boosting caravans that were initiated in the late 1940s. These summer caravans were organized and sponsored by the McBride and Jasper Boards of Trade, and sometimes also by the Edson, Alberta Board of Trade and/or the Yellowhead Highway Association. They involved groups of residents from these towns (and sometimes points further afield) motoring towards each other while pausing here and there to clear fallen trees, remove loose rock from the road, and make other minor repairs and improvements. They would then meet up for a cookout, games, speeches about progress, potential, and the need for more and better roads, and an overnight camp. Most often the mass meeting and camp were held on the grounds of the Dennison guest ranch, located in the valley-bottom meadows near the base of Mount Robson, on the opposite side of the Fraser River from the CNR's Alpland and Mount Robson stations. The summer caravan quickly became very popular. In 1953 it attracted almost 700 people, who arrived in 165 cars, jeeps, and trucks. Participants who lived west of McBride or to the south of Valemount had to come by CNR passenger train.[48]

These yearly displays of neighbourliness, stewardship over the rough and poorly maintained existing road, and support for the expansion and improvement of the still relatively disconnected road network in and around the Yellowhead Pass were a way for the merchants, hotel and lodge operators, sawmill owners, and other highway promoters who organized the caravans to simultaneously mobilize *and* reinforce local residents' sentiments of being isolated and disenfranchised because of their marginal relations to what was becoming the dominant mode of circulation in Canadian society. Thus the caravans provided a prominent platform for the application of public pressure towards political representatives. Attendance by area MPs and MLAs was considered mandatory by caravan organizers, and a provincial cabinet minister who represented a central or northern BC riding was also occasionally present. Depending on their own situation, these politicians alternately commiserated about the abominable conditions of the roads,

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[48] *Prince George Citizen* 14 May 1953, cited in Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 340.

promised to champion the cause of speedy improvements, or simply promised speedy improvements. In 1955, for example, the local MP announced to caravan participants that he felt he could promise "beyond a doubt that we would be riding over the new highway in less than three years."[49]

It is significant that the culmination of these weekend festivals of bridled automobility took place in the meadows near the foot of Mount Robson. Intentionally or not, the site/sight of the towering landmark whose railway-constructed reputation had already established it as the single greatest scenic resource along the road through the Yellowhead Pass was being invoked as a tangible marker of how the poor quality of that road constrained communities and residents' opportunities for traffic- and tourism-related development. The only convenient, comfortable, safe, year-round way for tourists to view that landmark remained the trains of the Canadian National Railways, and except perhaps for the guest ranches located right near Mount Robson, the entrepreneurs of east-central BC received negligible benefit from the passage of sightseers and travellers aboard that high-handed, inflexible transportation system. During the summer months a small number of adventurous motorists might drive west from Jasper to see the tallest mountain in the Canadian Rockies, but this meant nothing to McBride or Valemount. It was clear that McBride and Valemount would not profit from the area's scenic resources—as epitomized by Mount Robson—until the road west from Jasper no longer terminated in 'dead ends,' and until those who drove it did not have worry about having their vehicle get stuck up to its axles in a mud hole, ripping its oil pan open on rocks, shaking a muffler loose from potholes and ruts, getting side-swiped by a train in one of the short stretches where the road ran right next to the railroad tracks, or colliding head-on with another automobile on a blind curve on one of the road's many steep, narrow stretches.

While the annual caravans to Mount Robson allowed highway boosters to ritually gather within view of the best-known sight/site along the route of the existing road (and any future highway), an interesting publication that was designed to inform people unfamiliar with east-central BC about the local road conditions and the motorist's view from the road was put together by the Yellowhead Highway Association. In 1948 the

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[49] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 342.

Edmonton-based Association published eleven thousand copies of an illustrated book with the awkward title *The Saga of the Re-opening of the Trans-Canada Highway Yellowhead Route*.[50] This forty-page book was divided into two sections, which were separated by a centerfold map. One section described the association's 1947 convention in Blue River, BC, outlined its diverse membership, and reiterated that its primary aim was to lobby provincial and federal governments for the construction of a hard surfaced, two-lane, all-season transprovincial highway between Winnipeg and the Pacific coast by way of the Yellowhead Pass. The centerfold map provided up-to-date information on the state of the proposed 'Yellowhead Route.' East-central BC was the most important part of this map by virtue of its containing long stretches of road classified as "Unfinished" as well as the sixty-four-mile-long "Missing Link" between Sinclair Mills and McBride.[51] In the same manner that the map indicated natural resources like oil sands, potash deposits, and uranium mines, it also pointed towards the upper North Thompson River valley, the vicinity of Mount Robson, and the roadless 'gap' between Sinclair Mills and McBride as the locations of untapped "Magnificent Tourist Attractions."

The book's other section was titled "Pictures Tell the Story," and comprised an elaborate photo-automotive survey of the road conditions that existed between Jasper, Valemount, and McBride.[52] A disclaimer stated that this portion of the book was not intended to promote auto-tourism, but rather to demonstrate that "practically no engineering problems" prevented the existing dirt and gravel road from being upgraded to a high-quality highway. However, in the process of conducting this "pictorial survey" by 35mm camera and army-style jeep, those responsible for the project also created a significant record of how the landscape experiences of the few travellers who drove

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[50] Trans-Canada Highway Association Yellowhead Route, *The Saga of the Re-opening of the Trans-Canada Highway Yellowhead Route* (Edmonton, 1948).

[51] Specifically, the map indicated that there were: thirty miles of gravel road between Prince George and Giscome; twenty-six miles of unfinished road between Giscome and Hansard; twenty-nine miles of gravel between Hansard and Sinclair Mills; a roadless gap sixty-four miles long between Sinclair Mills and McBride; 122 miles of unfinished road and ten miles of gravel road between McBride and Jasper; and 209 miles of unfinished road between Birch Island (on the North Thompson River) and the junction of the Jasper-McBride road at Tête Jaune Cache.

[52] A poorly reproduced copy of this portion of the book can be perused online through the Yellowhead Highway Association's internet site. See http://www.yellowheadhighway.com/historybook.html [accessed 4 July 2003].

through the Yellowhead Pass and nearby areas of east-central BC during the late 1940s were mediated through a conjunction of their vehicles, the linear route and physical structures of the road, and, to a lesser extent, optical apparatuses like the snapshot camera.

Fifty-one of the eighty photographs that comprised this survey were taken of the road from the road—that is, from an angle that indicates the photographer had been standing in the road. Most of these were shot from a slightly elevated perspective near the centerline of the road, which suggests that the photographer was standing either in front of or on top of the open-top jeep; the rest were taken from the verge of the road. These forward-looking images approximated the point-of-view of driver and passenger in a moving automobile. [Image 13] Of the twenty-nine photographs that were taken from other perspectives, all except for a handful that depicted river crossings and ongoing road improvements near Valemount showed spaces and places that were visible and/or accessible from the road. These included scenery (like Yellowhead Lake, a waterfall near McBride, various rivers, the continental divide sign beside the railroad tracks at Yellowhead summit, and the soon-to-be 'classic' view of Mount Robson from the meadows); recreational attractions (climbing, fishing); embryonic motor-tourist accommodations and services (Lake Yellowhead Lodge, the store at Red Pass); and other signs of economic development and future promise (a sawmill, "an adventurous tourist from Oklahoma" fishing in the Fraser near Moose Lake). [Image 14] These images approximated—or anticipated—the point-of-view of the sightseeing motorist who had stopped his or her vehicle and momentarily disembarked in order to savour—and take photographs of—roadside sights/sites.

These groups of photographs, the points-of-view that were used to create them, and the editorial decision to include them in *The Saga of the Re-opening* suggest that the Yellowhead Highway Association, as boosters of a highway through the Yellowhead Pass, believed that the road and its improvement were inextricably linked with the view from the road and an increase in the number of sightseeing auto-tourists. In 1948 the scenery that was visible to motor-tourists was the road's most important feature. There was no hope for encouraging long-haul truckers or business travellers to use that 'dead end' gravel road. At the same time, the poor condition of the road and its relative

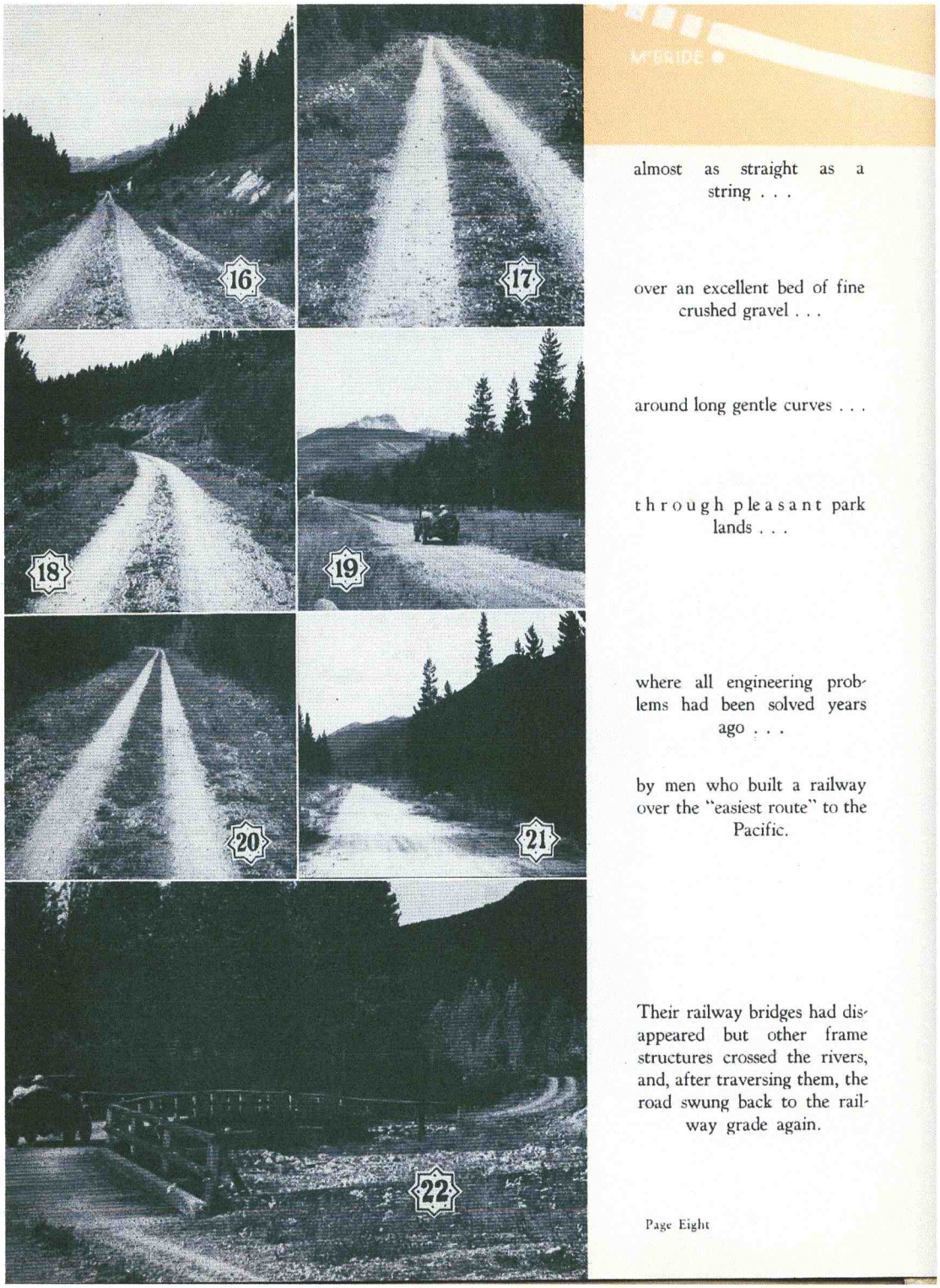

IMAGE 13 A page from the illustrated booklet *The Saga of the Reopening of the Trans-Canada Highway Yellowhead Route* (1948). Courtesy of the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association.

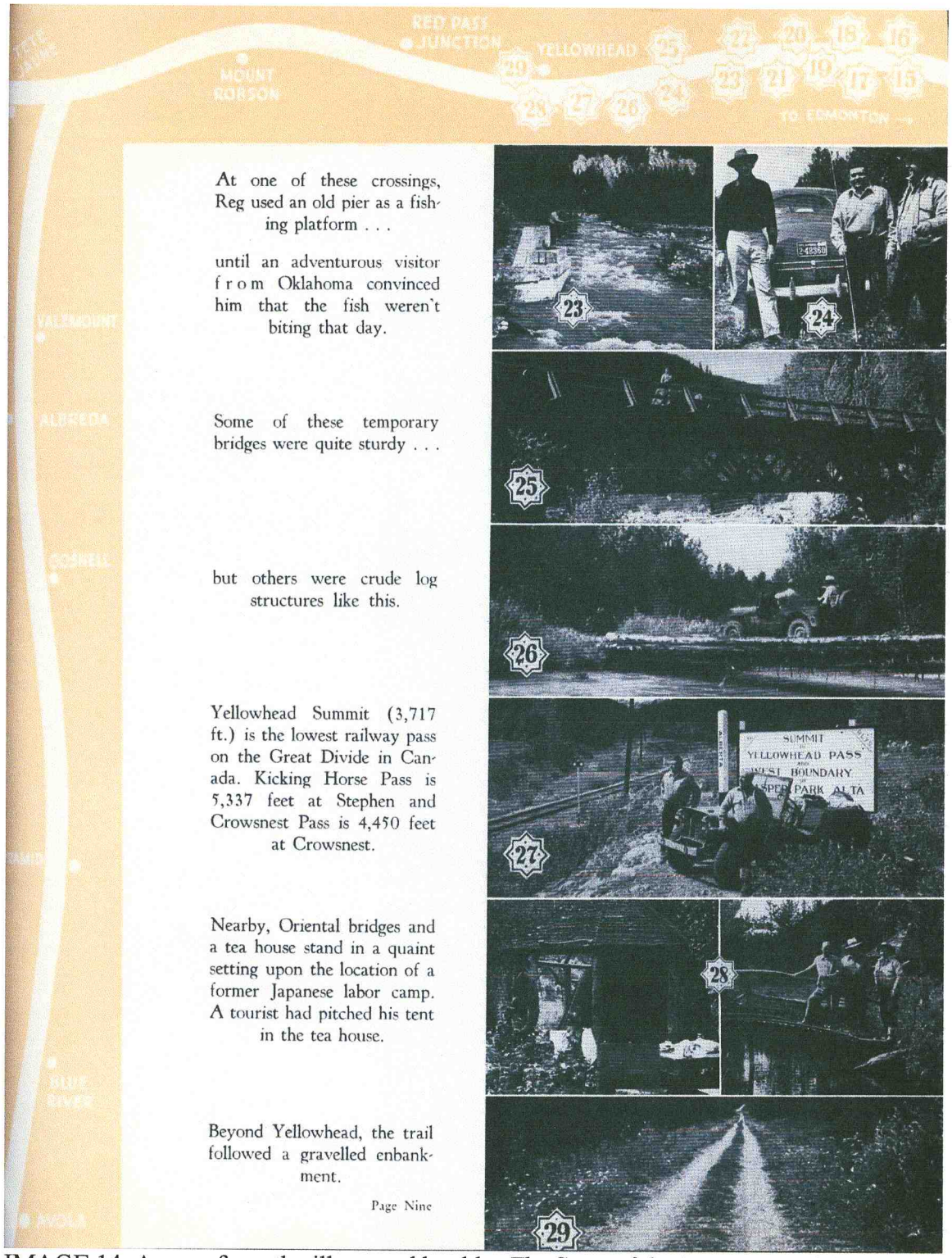

IMAGE 14 A page from the illustrated booklet *The Saga of the Reopening of the Trans-Canada Highway Yellowhead Route* (1948). Courtesy of the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association.

marginality to larger highway networks were responsible for keeping the scenery from being developed into a greater asset, one that could support more, larger, and more prestigious sightseeing-related businesses than the rustic Lake Yellowhead Lodge and the guest ranches around Mount Robson. The visibility, accessibility, and profitability of the area's scenic resources were thought to be closely tied up with the possibility of improving the area's relation to what was becoming the dominant network and mode of circulation in Canada.

Just as significantly, as representations of space these photographs are highly indicative of the emergence of a mode of visual-vehicular perception linked with motorization, one with important differences from the panoramic mode of perception that arose from railway travel. The rigidly-fixed railroad tracks, the uncontrollable speed of the train, its predetermined timetable, and the sideways-looking view mandated by the form of the passenger coach had resulted in railway travellers being separated and heavily insulated from the spaces they traversed. There was no way for train passengers to stop when and where they might desire to shoot photographs, or for them to convince the locomotive engineer to turn the train around so that they could try fishing from a riverbank recently passed by. The more flexible relation between automobile and automobile road allowed (and necessitated) a much broader range of individual decisions to be made. The driver's attention had to be directed forward in a relatively narrow angle, focussed on the road and what was happening on it. Only passengers, who had a wider angle of vision, could afford prolonged distraction (scenic or otherwise) while moving along the road. Because of the forward direction of travel and the need to focus on the conditions of the road, most things located close to the side of the road were viewed from moving automobiles at an oblique angle, rather than to the side or behind the line of travel.[53] However, the tradeoff for these added responsibilities was that the automobilist had more opportunities to stop, explore, change speeds, and choose paths than did people who travelled by railway.

This is not to say that the route, the general form, and the specific structures of an automobile road did not mediate motorists' views or structure their experiences. The

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[53] See Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch, and John R. Meyer, *The View From the Road* (Cambridge: Joint Center for Urban Studies of MIT and Harvard University, 1964), 3-5.

'freedom' allowed by the automobile was largely an illusion.[54] Even an 'off road' vehicle like the army-style jeep used as the moving photographic platform for the 1948 pictorial survey was really just a 'bad road' vehicle that provided a wider range of choices to the driver. It still needed gasoline, and thus stops at gas stations; it could only be safely driven at certain speeds on narrow, bumpy, gravel roads that had tight corners and steep climbs; and it had to cross large rivers at locations where bridges had been built, just like every other automobile would have had to.

Finally, to close out the 1940s, it should also be noted that in 1948 responsibility for the management of property rights, development, and the management of visual-vehicular aesthetics in Mount Robson Provincial Park was transferred away from the BC Lands and Surveys Records Branch. The regulation of appearances in the park thereafter fell entirely under the jurisdiction of the recently established Provincial Parks Branch. Like the Lands Branch, Parks Branch staff and officials were acutely aware that travellers' experiences of the park landscape would be mediated by the vehicles and routes that they moved in and on, and that travellers who saw disorderly, 'unnatural' sites/sights could take away (and spread) negative impressions about the park, the province, and the provincial bureaucracy. Compared with the Lands Branch, however, representatives of the Parks Branch were to have far more firsthand contact with the park and the networks of circulation that ran through it.

In the first week of 1950 an internal memorandum was circulated amongst senior staff of the BC Parks Branch. It effectively proposed a revision to the boundaries of Mount Robson Provincial Park. The reasoning was that the Branch had to ensure future control over the point at which Mount Robson first came into the view of motorists driving eastward towards the park from the vicinity of Tête Jaune Cache. That viewpoint, which was described as being "the proper psychological location to impress visitors," was surrounded by Crown land, which was at risk of being alienated, logged, or developed if it was not controlled by an agency aware of its present and future visual-

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[54] On post-war automobility and the illusion of freedom in what were referred to as the West's "affluent societies," see especially Wolfgang Sachs, *For the Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press and October Books, 1995), 20, 38-40.

vehicular importance. The memo noted that this idea had actually been discussed by staff of the Forest Branch as early as the summer of 1945, when in the process of "making a reconnaissance" of the newly completed road through Mount Robson they had realized that

> to create an appropriate entrance to this park it would be advisable to move the Park boundaries westward so that the entrance would be located at that spot where Mount Robson itself is first seen when approaching from the west. This point, located in the western part of Lot 5681, is located at a considerable distance from the present boundary. It is, however, a very startling sight and a very appropriate place for a park entrance. From this technical and psychological point of view, it is very desirable. [....] It is suggested that instead of extending the park boundaries [...] that we reserve under a different status a strip of land one mile wide lying north of the Fraser River. This would run from the present boundary west to and including Lot 5681. The future highway will run through this strip and it should be reserved not as part of Mount Robson Park but as a separate park under our classification of parkways. That the Park entrance will be located at the beginning of this parkway and not actually in the park is a mere technicality of no consequence.[55]

As corroborative evidence, a snapshot photograph that had been taken from the centreline of the road's route through Lot 5681, and captioned "the first glimpse of Mt. Robson when approaching from the west," was glued onto the second page of the memorandum. This parkway reserve was approved later in 1950; however, no action was taken at that time to construct a viewpoint or erect signage that would indicate to passers-by the realigned entrance to the park.

If the staff who were responsible for Mount Robson Provincial Park had first contemplated rearranging the park's effective boundary in order that it would be coordinated with motorists' views of Mount Robson in 1945, a year after it had become possible to drive through the western boundary of the park, then why was a proposal to do this delayed until 1950? The delay is probably best explained by the small volume of automobiles that were entering the park from Alberta during the late 1940s, and the even smaller number that travelled west past Mount Robson meadows and through the park's western boundary. There had been little reason for staff of the Lands or Forest Branches to concern themselves with control over the site and sightline so long as they were being

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[55] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. D.M. Trew to E.G. Oldham, Chief Forester, 4 January 1950.

traversed almost exclusively by local traffic from 'dead end' communities like McBride, Dunster, Valemount, and Tête Jaune Cache. However, the 1950 memorandum's mention of a "future highway" running through the proposed reserve suggests that the Parks and Recreation Division had been made aware of forthcoming road building in the Yellowhead Pass area. This would surely lead to a substantial increase in the volume of automobile traffic traversing both the eastern and western boundaries of the park, and make the first view of Mount Robson from the west an attractive location for both motorists and roadside developers.

The road through Mount Robson Park—and management of the views that were available from it—became more important to entrepreneurs and provincial agencies after 1952, when a dirt and gravel road connection was established between Valemount and Kamloops.[56] Completion of this project finally gave the Yellowhead Pass and McBride areas of east-central BC a direct road outlet (albeit a rough and slow one) to southern BC. It also allowed travellers from northern Alberta to enter British Columbia directly, instead of via Calgary. And it opened up an array of 'loop tours' to motorists holidaying in western Canada. For example, in one giant loop tour it was now physically possible to visit Mount Revelstoke, Yoho, and Banff National Parks in southern BC and Alberta, drive north on the Icefields Parkway to Jasper, then west to Mount Robson, then southwards to Kamloops by way of Wells Gray Provincial Park (located near Clearwater in the North Thompson River valley), and east again to arrive back in Revelstoke.

The completion of this first through-connection in east-central BC encouraged several new sawmills to open around Valemount during the late 1950s, which led to considerable population growth there. But aside from a small volume of automobile traffic passing through for the first time, the new road did not have much of an immediate impact on the town. For example, Esser Blom, who moved from Alberta to Valemount in 1953 in order to take over the village's only gas station (located on Fifth Street, near the train tracks) recalled that "when we arrived few people bothered with drivers licenses or

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[56] The motivating force behind the construction of this road was to facilitate the construction and maintenance of the Bechtel Corporation's transmountain pipeline, which ran through the Yellowhead Pass and down the North Thompson River valley on its way from the Alberta oilfields to the refineries and loading facilities in the Vancouver area's Burrard Inlet.

license plates." There was no police detachment in Valemount, and "everyone knew that Constable Roberts came from [the nearest police detachment at] Red Pass on Fridays."[57]

Though directly connected to BC's provincial road network after 1952, McBride—the largest town in east-central BC, with a population of almost 400—nevertheless remained a 'dead end,' with no outlet to Prince George in the west. Minimal maintenance was done on the lightly-travelled Tête Jaune Cache-McBride section of the road, and despite numerous promises from politicians there was little concrete evidence that work would begin any time soon on 'bridging' the western gap that remained between McBride and Sinclair Mills.

A promotional pamphlet put together by the local Board of Trade in 1953 gives some insight into how residents of McBride saw themselves and imagined their community's future at that time.[58] The photograph on the cover of "Facts About McBride, British Columbia" depicted a herd of dairy cows, and the back cover enticed interested parties thus: "Come to McBride District: Good Land. Easy Clearing. No Crop Failures." The rest of the folding pamphlet had a decidedly agricultural focus, but did contain a few points about the town's relations to other regional centres and to networks of circulation. "There is a very bright future for the district," one section explained, "what with being only four hours by car to Jasper and promise that construction of the Prince George-McBride highway will begin in 1955."[59] New schools, a sewer extension, more electricity, a new public telephone exchange, and, above all, a through-highway were pointed to as important upcoming developments in McBride, as was the fact that "paving on the main village roads will be completed by September of 1954." Aside from the reference to Jasper and a claim that "the district has long been known as a hunter's paradise," this pamphlet indicates that in the early 1950s even the boosterish McBride Board of Trade, which was a co-sponsor of the annual Yellowhead-Mount Robson caravans, placed little value on auto-tourism, sightseeing, or scenic attractions, and did not consider the development of restaurants, motor courts, and other road and

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[57] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 271.

[58] McBride and District Board of Trade, "Facts About McBride, British Columbia" (1953)

[59] In response to the four-hour-drive-to-Jasper claim, local historian Marilyn Wheeler sarcastically noted, "(t)hat surely must have been at the height of a dry summer." *Robson Valley Story*, 343.

automobile-related businesses to be a realistic possibility. Though the Board of Trade was one of the biggest promoters of an east-west highway through east-central BC, it apparently concluded that the most important facts about the McBride area still pertained to the cultivation of fixed parcels of land, and not to travel, tourism, traffic, and scenery—at least until the long-awaited, much-anticipated highway to Prince George was finished.

In the late 1950s McBride's local newspaper and Board of Trade regularly chastised the BC Highways Department for not properly maintaining the road to Jasper in the summer, thereby dissuading auto-tourists from venturing beyond Mount Robson and possibly turning in a northwesterly direction at the Tête Jaune Cache road junction.[60] They complained that not enough gravel, grading, ditching, clearing, or oiling resulted in an irregular, uneven, potholed surface that in places was littered with fallen rock, that when wet spawned deep, wide mud holes, and that when dry gave off huge clouds of choking, vision-obscuring dust behind every passing vehicle. The southerly connection to Kamloops was better maintained than the stretch to McBride because it was a through road—the fact that it led to a major centre that contained the riding of the Social Credit government's Highways Minister Phil Gaglardi may have helped too. Nevertheless, according to one Jasper resident who regularly drove to Kamloops, by 1958 long sections of the road through Mount Robson Park and to the south of Albreda had deteriorated to the point that they "gave the motorist a sense of insecurity."[61] Far to the west, the East Line road from Prince George to Sinclair Mills had also been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, especially the stretch between Giscome and the Fraser River ferry at Hansard. Sections of this road were so bad that in the spring months it was extremely difficult for even the Highway Department's multi-axle graders and broad-tired dump trucks to travel between those points.[62]

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[60] See for example *Valley Echo* 7 October 1957, 1.

[61] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 345.

[62] One photograph taken in 1955 shows a large grader sunk up to its axles in mud. Prince George Public Library. "Historical Photo Contest Collection, 1985," image P 985.26.13. Regarding the terrible road conditions around Aleza Lake during the late 1940s and 1950s, see MacArthur, *The Way It Was*.

In the 1940s and 1950s the small communities located in the 'gap' between McBride and Sinclair Mills—the 'largest' of which were Longworth, Penny, Dome Creek, and Snowshoe-Crescent Spur—remained isolated islands of automobility. A mile or less of road centred on the local railway station and a dense web of crude logging roads radiating away from the local sawmill was the extent of the road networks in these villages. Besides logging trucks, lumber forklifts, and a few caterpillar-type bulldozers, there were usually only a handful of automobiles in these communities. Ralph Hart, a resident of Dome Creek, recalled that "(i)n the fifties and early sixties there were a number of cars of ancient vintage travelling on roads throughout the area which didn't require a license or insurance. This gave all the young people a chance to learn to drive." This was possible, Hart noted, because "there was no policing at Dome Creek."[63]

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to learn much more about these places where, by the late 1950s, the populations ranged between twenty-five and one hundred people, approximately half of whom would have been transient loggers, sawmill workers, and railway maintenance crews.[64] Except for Penny, none of these places has been the subject of a local history. Frustratingly, the reasons for these historical omissions are tied up with the very factors that make these places so pertinent to this thesis: their doubly peripheral location midway between Prince George and McBride; their small and transient populations; the ever-shifting array of small and large sawmills that leapfrogged back and forth between them; their everyday isolation from many social and state institutions; the poor passenger train service that they received from the CNR; and, most importantly, their continued and complete disconnection from any larger network of roads and highways. To give a sense of how the residents of these places must have felt about this situation, all that can be pointed to is the frequent repetition in the accounts collected in the local history about Penny that "there were no roads," that "everything came and went by train," that "the train in winter and Fraser River in summer were

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[63] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 44.

[64] The occupations of the population, or at least the adult male population, of these communities were broken down in the Canadian Post Office Department's *Householder Directories* for the federal electoral districts of Cariboo (1960s) and Prince George-Peace River (1970s).

everyone's highway," that "we had a continuing problem called isolation," and that "even cars and trucks came by train."[65]

While residents of Dome Creek, Crescent Spur, and Penny were free to drive around their immediate environs without licenses or insurance, in the fall of 1957 arrangements were made to have visiting examiners available for driver testing one day per month in McBride. The same issue of McBride's *Valley Echo* in which this was announced also contained news of the first traffic fatality in many years—a man was killed when his car went over a steep embankment seventeen miles east of McBride. In addition, it reported on the local Board of Trade's request to the RCMP to crack down on "speeding and general disregard for highway regulations," contained a full-page photographic advertisement of a four-door sedan made by General Motors, and noted the installation of street signs on the main streets of McBride, including Stop, No U-Turn, and 15 Miles Per Hour.[66] In the spring of 1958 the McBride RCMP detachment issued a public warning to residents of east-central BC that, as part of a province-wide enforcement blitz, heavy fines would be handed out to those who were caught littering and dumping garbage on the side of the area's "highways," and one month later, locals were also being urged not to eject cigarettes from their vehicles when driving along "the highway" because of the summer forest fire risk.[67] Not only were efforts underway to bring the driving habits of the people who lived around McBride in line with social norms and provincial standards. As illustrated by the litter and cigarette edicts, attempts were also being made to inculcate the 'common sense' of maintaining the roadside verges and scenery in and around their communities in neat, orderly, unblemished, 'natural' condition that would be attractive (or not distracting) to passing motorists.

A sufficient flow of traffic was passing over the road through Mount Robson Park that in 1956 Tête Jaune Cache residents Tom and Norene Carr leapt at the opportunity to acquire the Dennison ranch, one of the handful of alienated lots at Mount Robson meadows, and the site where the annual Yellowhead highway caravans met. That spring

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[65] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*.

[66] *Valley Echo* 7 October 1957, 1, 3.

[67] *Valley Echo* 21 April 1958, 1; 26 May 1958, 4.

they built a roadside coffee shop and operated it during the tourist season, from May until October. Two years later they formed Mt. Robson Motor Village, Ltd., and with the financial backing of several outside investors expanded their operation to include a few cabinettes, campsites, a store, and a gas pump.[68] Guest ranches and bungalow camps had been operating in that vicinity since the early 1910s,[69] but had always been run as destination resorts for the wealthy hunters, climbers, and sightseers who purposefully made their way to Mount Robson meadows by railway, and usually from afar. Mount Robson Motor Village provided the first accommodations located within view of Mount Robson that were intended for motoring tourists and also for casual travellers.

Even though the Carr's roadside business was located near the long-established visual-vehicular 'heart' of Mount Robson Park, the BC Parks Branch was limited in how it could respond to the development because it was being done on private property within the park. However, concurrent events at Lucerne, thirty-five miles to the east, suggest that if it had been within that government agency's power to prevent it, the Carr family's motorist-oriented developments would never have been allowed to occur.

The Parks Branch took a dim view of the Crate family's tourist camp and Lake Yellowhead Lodge, the leasing out of which was an arrangement that had been inherited from the Forest Branch. The camp was situated right next to the road, and several aspects of its appearance drew critical comment from Parks staff. Some of the buildings were made of logs while others were of salvaged lumber, and their irregular appearance and the resulting impression of shoddiness and disorganization (i.e.: undercapitalization) was aggravated by the numerous utilitarian (i.e.: ramshackle) sheds and lean-tos that had been built around the grounds. Also, several bright and gaudily hand-painted, attention-grabbing roadside signs pointed passing motorists towards the camp's driveway.[70] The Crates' intention had been to gradually improve the lodge as traffic and business justified, but the shabby look of the camp in the mid-1950s did not meet the Parks Branch's structural or visual criteria for development within the park. When the lot lease came up

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[68] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 286-288, 337.

[69] See Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 90-128, 292-294, 302-314, 337, 389-405.

[70] See Trans-Canada Highway Association (Yellowhead Route), *Saga of the Re-opening*, photograph #30; Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 318 lower right.

in May 1956, the Parks Branch exercised its option to purchase the 'improvements' at Lake Yellowhead Lodge. Over the next two months minor renovations were made to the larger structures, and several of the more unsightly outbuildings were demolished. In July 1956 the Crates were selected—by default—to run the government-owned camp as a concession.[71] Their annually-renewable Parks Use Permit stipulated that the Crates had to "care for and maintain in a neat and orderly condition the premises and fixtures" at their own expense; submit all roadside signage and promotional materials to be approved of by the Parks Branch; and surrender the camp to the government in a "neat and orderly" condition upon termination of the concession.[72]

One month after the Crates took on this concession, an agent from the BC Government Travel Bureau did an accommodations inspection of the now provincially-owned Lake Yellowhead Lodge. The method by which the camp's rating out of a maximum four stars was determined was based on the accumulation of demerit points, which were calculated on criteria of comfort, services, cleanliness and sanitation, and general appearance. Less than nineteen demerits were needed to receive a four star designation, while a score of less than seventy demerits was required to be given a single star. Of the buildings at Lake Yellowhead Lodge, the four guest cabins received demerit tallies of eighty, ninety-two, ninety-four, and one hundred and twenty. The operation as a whole was evaluated as deserving zero stars.[73]

The Travel Bureau forwarded these lacklustre results to the Parks Branch. As the Crate family could not afford the upgrades needed for the camp to receive a better rating, and because the Parks Branch was as unwilling to let Lake Yellowhead Lodge remain open in such condition as it was to fund the necessary improvements to its own property, the park concession for tourist accommodations at Lucerne was terminated in 1958.[74] The roadside signs advertising the camp to passers-by were removed, an iron gate was

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[71] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 318.

[72] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Parks Use Permit contract for Lake Yellowhead Resort, May 1957.

[73] BC Parks. Reel B0-1757. BC Gov't Travel Bureau to Provincial Parks Branch, 24 August 1956; Forester, Parks Branch internal memo to H.G. McWilliams, Forester, Parks Branch, 21 August 1957.

[74] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 318; BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Director, Parks Branch, outward correspondence, 1 February 1963.

put across the driveway, several of the cabins closest to the road were demolished, and view-obscuring brush was allowed to grow up between the road right-of-way and the remaining buildings. The Parks Branch used the out-of-sight lodge as summer accommodations for its employees and for road building crews until the mid-1960s.

In the summer of 1959 four separate petitions were delivered to the provincial government by businesses, boards of trade, and residents from several communities in the upper Fraser corridor area, as well as Prince George. One of these requested the improvement of the existing roads that ran close to the Fraser River; the other three pressed for the construction of a "first class arterial highway" to eliminate the roadless gap—or 'missing link,' as the Prince George Board of Trade referred to it—that existed between Prince George and McBride. Exactly what each of these petitions asked for and how their arguments in favour of the highway were prioritized illustrate how, even before any construction contracts had been let or information about the precise route to be followed by such a highway had been made public, the communities in the upper Fraser corridor were expecting an uneven distribution of the benefits to be had from the long-awaited, much anticipated new line of automotive circulation.

Consider the similarities and dissimilarities between the petitions of David Leboe and the Prince George Board of Trade's highway and transportation committee. Leboe owned the sawmill at Crescent Spur, a village of seventy people located in the 'gap,' with no road access whatsoever. He argued that the immediate extension of Highway 16 eastward from Prince George to McBride was a good idea for several reasons, the foremost of which was, in his opinion, that such a road would allow local loggers access to large amounts of previously inaccessible timber, including valuable stands of spruce and "decadent cedar." Optimistically, and displaying a belief that prosperity in east-central BC (or at least in Crescent Spur) would continue to be linked primarily to the ownership of fixed parcels of space, Leboe also predicted that the highway would create a demand for agricultural land "second only to the Fort George rush of [railroad] construction days." Leboe's final reason in favour of highway extension—which he did not elaborate on as he did for forestry and agriculture—was that a road connection between Edmonton and Prince George would allow traffic and tourists going to and from

Jasper to pass through.[75] The expectation was that Crescent Spur would benefit from the highway by gaining better access to resources, rather than from traffic, travel, or automobility in and of themselves.

The Prince George Board of Trade cited the exact same merits of the proposed highway, but prioritized them in a different order. They introduced their petition with a preamble stating that Prince George was historically and geographically the "crossroads" of the province, and that "(t)he economic life of British Columbia depends upon adequate, modern transportation by road, by rail, and by air." They went on to detail how the opening of the John Hart highway in 1954 had provided great benefits to Prince George and to other, unspecified "regions to the north," including the doubling of Prince George's population, the doubling of the number of gas stations and volume of gas sales in Prince George, the 500% increase in Prince George's motel accommodations, and—almost as an afterthought—the doubling of the cubic footage of timber being processed at Prince George's sawmills.

From these indicators of growth and progress, the petitioners concluded that "opening the east-west highway route, specifically the 'missing link' from Prince George to McBride, will be followed by a similar and perhaps greater upsurge of business activity in North Central British Columbia." The John Hart highway statistics clearly demonstrated that increasing the circulation of truck and automobile traffic through an established regional service centre like Prince George had the effect of creating growth and profits as much or even more than increasing the extraction of resources and production of commodities for export. Because a large volume of automobiles passed through the eastern gate of Jasper Park, but only 2% of those carried on across the BC-Alberta boundary, their inability to continue westward through east-central BC represented lost opportunities for profits for Prince George businesses. Thus it was vitally important for the provincial government to "consider completion of Highway 16 not as a local project affecting only a small part of our population [i.e.: the residents of east-central BC, and petty producers like David Leboe]; but as a project which will give a marked impetus to the entire provincial economy." Thus the Board of Trade's

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[75] Crescent Spur, BC [signed David B. Leboe], "Brief Presented to the Provincial Cabinet re: Highway 16 from Prince George east to McBride" (1959)

unhappiness at rumours that the technical specifications for the proposed route had been reduced to a level that indicated only a 30-foot wide gravel road, a "second class highway" was going to be built. And thus the relative lack of importance that the Prince George Board of Trade placed on access to 21,000,000 cubic feet of timber and 150,000 acres of agricultural land being 'opened up' by a highway to McBride.[76]

The petition that the BC government received from the McBride and District Board of Trade in 1959 repeated the same arguments in favour of completing the highway as were presented by David Leboe of Crescent Spur and the Prince George Board of Trade. Special emphasis was placed on the fact that a highway through the upper Fraser corridor would be "the most Direct, Logical, Geographical East to West Trade Route across Central British Columbia." A highway would allow McBride area farmers to distribute their dairy products and other produce to both Jasper and Prince George, which were then difficult to serve because of inconvenient train timetables and expensive freight costs. "Economic progress in the McBride area is being seriously retarded as a result of their being no highway link between McBride and Prince George, BC," the petition stressed.[77]

Unlike the petitioners from Prince George, McBride, and Crescent Spur, those from Aleza Lake, Hansard, and Sinclair Mills showed no enthusiasm for the construction of a highway through the 'gap' that existed between Prince George and McBride. Instead, residents and mill owners from the communities on the upper Fraser River east of Prince George complained about enduring "extremely difficult and hazardous access to Prince George."[78] This was because by the late 1950s it had become apparent that, based on the findings of aerial surveys, the provincial government was leaning towards building the Prince George-McBride highway on the south side of the Fraser by an overland route that ran parallel to but far away from the course of the Fraser, thereby

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[76] Prince George Board of Trade, "Brief Submitted in support of the early completion of Highway 16 (Prince George to McBride)" (July 1959)

[77] McBride and District Board of Trade, "Brief re: Highway 16" (July 1959)

[78] "To the Prime Minister the Honourable W.A.C Bennett and Cabinet of the Government of the Province of British Columbia, A Petition Concerning Access to and from Prince George to the Fraser River Area, respectfully submitted on behalf of the residents and organizations of the area affected" (1959)

bypassing the above communities as well as Giscome and Newlands (located closer to Prince George) and Hutton, Longworth, and Penny (located further away).[79]

Even though Sinclair Mills was the nearest road-accessible point to the west of McBride, in 1959 it was clear that that small community would remain a 'dead end' for the foreseeable future, and that Hutton, Longworth, and Penny would remain isolated 'islands' completely cut off from road networks. In fact, if the planned highway between Prince George and McBride was built overland on the south side of the Fraser, residents of Sinclair Mills would actually be sixty-odd miles *farther away* from McBride than residents of Prince George, despite the fact that they lived closer to McBride by river, by rail, and as the crow flies. This was because they would have to backtrack west in order to travel east. Furthermore, the existing road that connected the East Line communities to Prince George was in terrible shape, and was likely to remain neglected when the through-highway to McBride became the government's first priority in east-central BC. The petitioners from these communities collected a large number of letters from mills, the school district and health board, and other businesses, organizations, and institutions who supported their requests. They included maps and photographs to illustrate their arguments. They asked the government to "recondition" the road between Giscome and Hansard, and build a road bridge across the Fraser River at Hansard. They complained that the ferry located at that point was very slow, available only half the day, and frequently inoperable because of wind, high water, low water, and ice. Driving across the frozen Fraser in winter was emphasized as being "*extremely dangerous*," and even then only rarely possible because of the river's strong current at that point. From October to March, when driving to and from Prince George was not feasible because there was no way across the river, travelling to Prince George and back by the Canadian National Railways was expensive and, because of the passenger trains' timetables, "generally involves going with very little sleep for 24 hours to travel a distance of 60 miles."

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[79] A route along the south side of the Fraser had been suggested as early as 1955. See Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 342-343. Aleza Lake resident Ethelwynn MacArthur recalled that until the late 1950s, "(e)veryone was sure the road [through Aleza Lake] would some day reach McBride as part of the Yellowhead Highway, but this was not to be, as the highway to McBride [...] branched off before Willow River, completely missing Aleza Lake." MacArthur, *The Way It Was*, 17.

2.3 "McBride, 113 Miles West of Jasper" and "Valemount, a Jet-propelled Village": early and mid 1960s

In terms of shifting networks of circulation and hierarchies of place, the early and mid-1960s were a period of rapid change in some parts of east-central BC and of stasis or minimal change in others. In a period in which talk of the 'jet age' was being supplanted by talk of the 'space age;' in which Canadian society appeared to have become almost entirely automobilized; and in which the provincial government's program of infrastructure mega-projects had shifted from highway building to dam and university building, to live in a place that was accessible from only one direction by way of a dusty, bumpy, gravel road was akin to voluntarily living in a cave or being forcibly shackled in a prison. In the Yellowhead Pass area and around Valemount the existing dirt and gravel road was upgraded into a highway, and this resulted in an enormous increase in traffic volume in that area and also the appearance of developments that were designed to capitalize on auto-tourism, sightseeing, and highway travel. In 'dead end' McBride, demands for improved connection to the province's rapidly expanding highway network and an end to delays in the initiation of construction of a through-road to Prince George became almost frantic, while places like Dome Creek, Penny, and Crescent Spur remained isolated 'islands' completely separated from the provincial road network. Up to this point it has been possible to give a fairly comprehensive account of how different people, places, and portions of east-central BC related to automobility as a mode of circulation, but it becomes increasingly difficult to do so when examining the early and mid-1960s. Therefore only a few especially pertinent and representative events, instances, and examples will be cited here. Much of the focus will be on the eastern portion of east-central BC, especially the area between Mount Robson Park and the vicinity of Valemount. However, the first example is drawn from McBride.

In 1962 the McBride Chamber of Commerce collaborated on the production and distribution of another place-promoting brochure. Whereas their 1953 brochure "Facts About McBride, British Columbia" had focussed on encouraging agricultural settlement in what was described as "a no crop failure country," most of the 1962 publication—which was significantly titled "McBride, 113 Miles West of Jasper on Northern Trans-Provincial Highway No.16, British Columbia, Canada"—was dedicated to describing the

rugged natural scenery, recreational activities, attractions, and accommodations to be found in the vicinity of McBride.[80] "This brochure is to visit our mountainous and superb valley just west of the Canadian Rockies," the first page awkwardly explained. It had been produced "in the hope that many of the questions asked by visitors may be answered even before your departure from home. Its main purpose is to assist you in the planning of your trip and to acquaint you with our wilderness and luxurious facilities and services." Describing McBride as "a modern village with a picturesque mountain setting [...] situated approximately halfway between Jasper and Prince George," the brochure listed hunting, mountain climbing, the municipal picnic grounds, a local sawmill owner's private "nature museum" (stuffed with his hunting trophies), and a new drive-in movie theatre as the area's most important recreational and entertainment attractions. One of the folding brochure's six panels was entirely taken up by a map and instructions on how people coming from Vancouver and Edmonton could reach McBride by train or by "highway." The newly-opened Log-Tel Motel and Trailer Park also received one of these panels to itself, as well as several other mentions in the brochure—this was no surprise, given that the Log-Tel was the co-sponsor of its preparation and publication. The influence of this single business over the content of the brochure prevents it from being interpreted as indicating a complete turnabout since 1953 in how people in the McBride area saw themselves and/or their relations to tourists, automobile travellers, and networks of circulation. After all, only a small number of area residents (i.e.: local merchants and business owners) had any input in the content of such a publication. However, the opening of a motel (motor hotel) in McBride and the local Chamber of Commerce's willingness to help publish a promotional brochure that made no mention of farming, logging, or other local industries suggest that by the early 1960s key aspects of being (or becoming) a "modern village" were felt to be wrapped up with automobile traffic, scenic attractions, roadside services and accommodations, and the presentation of information about the community and surrounding area to tourists and travellers. McBride was no longer being kept entirely in the dark by the schedules of the inflexible Canadian National Railways.

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[80] Log-Tel Motel and Trailer Park and McBride Chamber of Commerce, "McBride, 113 Miles West of Jasper on Northern Trans-Provincial Highway No. 16, British Columbia, Canada" [1962]

Although the "McBride, 113 Miles West of Jasper" brochure described McBride as being located halfway between Jasper and Prince George on Highway 16, there was still no road link between these two points—the short portion of BC Highway 16 that ran between McBride and the BC-Alberta border was disconnected from the longer section of Highway 16 that ran through west-central BC between Prince George and Prince Rupert. Thus any automobile traffic that the Log-Tel Motel and Trailer Park and the McBride Chamber of Commerce hoped to entice to 'dead end' McBride would have to be lured west from the Edmonton-Jasper-Kamloops through-road at the Tête Jaune Cache intersection. In the early 1960s the volume of traffic travelling this interprovincial route was growing rapidly, despite the fact that the existing road was "completely worn out," according to Tom Carr of the Mt. Robson Motor Village. In a 1962 letter to BC's Minister of Recreation and Conservation, Carr urged the minister responsible for parks to press the Highways Department for improvements to the section of the road that traversed Mount Robson Park.[81] Extrapolating from traffic statistics provided by the Superintendent of Jasper Park, Carr estimated that at least 10,000 automobiles had visited or travelled through Mount Robson Park between June and September of 1961, and he predicted "(t)he amount of visitors to Mt. Robson Park will no doubt increase sharply in the next few years." This, he wrote, was because

> (t)he easily accessible areas of Jasper Park are now crowded to about their limit during the summer season, and many Edmonton people are looking for just what Mt. Robson Park has to offer. A first class paved highway has now been completed from Edmonton to the eastern Jasper Park boundary, some sections being four lanes divided. This puts one of Western Canada's largest centres an easy 7 hours drive from us here.

In addition to asking for support from the ministry responsible for parks for improvements to the road, Carr also noted that many motorists who passed through were unhappy about "the complete absence of any mileage or point of interest signs on the road within the park." He cited an instance when a journalist who had come to write an article about the area had complained to him: "(a)ll those beautiful rivers, lakes and mountains and no way of knowing their names." He requested that the Highway

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[81] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. T.F. Carr to The Hon. E.C. Westwood, Minister of Recreation and Conservation, 19 February 1962.

Department be asked to install directional, mileage, and point of interest signs at suitable sites/sights "for the use of those adventurous enough to travel the road, regardless of its condition."

Tom Carr was not aware in early 1962 that extensive plans had already been drawn up for the gravel road through Mount Robson Park to be upgraded to highway standards. As early as 1960 the Parks Branch, anticipating that the government and Highway Department's construction priorities (efficient engineering, minimizing costs, selecting the best/easiest route) might clash with "Park values" (aesthetics; views; conservation), had begun making preparations for the regulation and negotiation of the new highway's spatio-visual relations with the spaces and places that it would simultaneously pass through and construct as a complex experiential corridor.

A 1960 internal Parks Branch report on the proposed location of the new highway was deferentially introduced with the statement that "(i)n any recommended alteration [to the highway] we will have to realize that *the primary function of this route is as a through highway and not a park road.* [emphasis added]"[82] The planned highway was expected to closely follow the route of the existing road, much of which was based—quite literally—on the Canadian Northern railway's long-abandoned right-of-way. However, the new highway would be considerably wider than the existing road, and this would necessitate extensive clearing as well as some excavation and filling. Also, the steep sections and tight curves of the existing road would be eliminated by rock scaling, blasting, and, in a few locations, by shifting the entire route of the road right-of-way. The Parks Branch's 1960 report drew up four general recommendations for the maintenance of "Parks values" in Mount Robson Park. First, wherever possible the highway was to run parallel and in proximity to the CNR's rail lines "so as to confine travel routes to one strip of land." Second, the road was not to be routed alongside lakefronts or riverbanks because this would alienate valuable recreational space. Third, the gravel and rock pits needed for fill and for road surfacing material were to be "kept out of view of the general public" and away from areas designated as deserving "special consideration." Fourth, the

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[82] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Provincial Parks Branch report, "Highway Location: Mount Robson Park," September 1960.

report stated that "scenic lookout points should be exploited and plans made for their development in the initial highway construction."

In addition to these recommendations, which were to be applied to the length of the highway corridor through the park, several specific areas were singled out as deserving "special consideration" in regards to the precise route and form of the highway. For example, the south shore of Yellowhead Lake, including the former site of Lucerne and the site of the former Lake Yellowhead Lodge, was deemed to be the second most important such area due to its proximity to the eastern entrance to the park, its being "a natural stopping place," and its containing "the only good lake front land" along the highway ("(t)he loss of value to the park by a lake-front road through this area is impossible to assess," the report concluded).

Not unexpectedly, the highest priority area of "special consideration" was the "Confluence Area," which included the Mount Robson meadows and the Robson River's confluence with the Fraser. The report's author designated this to be "the most important area in the park," and argued that it was at that point, from where the 'classic' frontal view of Mount Robson was to be obtained, that the official western park entrance should be built, rather than at the mere first-glimpse "lookout point" located three miles to the west, which had been reserved for such purposes in 1950. He went on to recommend that when the highway was built through the Confluence Area the expected new bridge over the Robson River should be built with a pedestrian sidewalk on its north side because "the present bridge is commonly used by photographers [to view Mount Robson] and with increased public use around the confluence area the [new highway] bridge will be a scenic attraction."[83] He also proposed that an attempt be made to purchase the Carr family's Mt. Robson Motor Village because the lot it was located on straddled the existing road, which in that vicinity was the only suitable route for the future highway to follow. The Motor Village was also the only commercial development on the north side of the Fraser River; the other, older guest ranches were located on the south side, close to the railroad tracks. If the Carrs' could be persuaded to sell, all development around the

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[83] An easily-accessible postcard image from a photograph taken from this road structure/viewpoint can be found in Peter White, *It Pays to Play: British Columbia in Postcards, 1950s to 1980s* (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery and Arsenal Pulp Press, 1996), 37.

most important area for viewing Mount Robson "would lie on the south side of the highway, thus reducing the access hazard and giving a continuous strip of park land along the Fraser River from the [Robson River] crossing east." That is to say, if the Motor Village was purchased and demolished, the only roadside development in the park would be eliminated and all accommodations within sight of Mount Robson would be screened away from the view of highway travellers. When approached, however, the Carrs would not sell, and throughout the 1960s their campgrounds continued to be the meeting place for the annual caravans boosting completion of a link to Prince George. The 1962 Caravan, for example, involved more than 1000 people who travelled to Mount Robson in 227 automobiles.[84]

The construction of the new highway from the summit of the Yellowhead Pass through Tête Jaune Cache and Valemount towards Kamloops began in the summer of 1965 and was essentially finished two years later. The same physical features that had made this route through the Rockies so attractive to railroad surveyors and railway companies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made the job of the Highways Department and its various contractors relatively straightforward.[85] They encountered few engineering problems, and were able to survey, clear, grade, and pave a two-lane highway that had much gentler grades and curves than the other interprovincial highways that crossed the continental divide between BC and Alberta.

The Fraser was easily spanned at several points, and there were also two crossings of the Canadian National Railways' tracks: one over the mainline at the east end of Moose Lake, near Rainbow station, and the other over the line to Prince Rupert south of the highway intersection at Tête Jaune Cache. The highway ran within a few hundred feet of the railroad through most of the pass, except along Yellowhead Lake, where the highway was located on the south side and the rails on the north, and in the (relatively) steep and narrow terrain between Mount Robson meadows and Tête Jaune Cache, where they were on opposite sides of the Fraser. However, except in a few locations, the CNR's lines were practically invisible to the drivers who travelled the completed highway. To

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[84] *Valley Echo* 16 May 1962, 1. As an aside, it is worth noting that the CNR eliminated the five-minute pause that its passenger trains made at Mount Robson and Alpland stations in 1963.

[85] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 28-29.

an extent this was because of differences in how the technologies associated with the two modes of circulation related to the physical terrain. Because automobiles could easily handle grades far steeper than locomotives could, for several stretches west of Red Pass the highway had been located on benches and slopes high above the 0.4% ruling grade that had been laid out by the Grand Trunk Pacific railway's surveyors more than fifty years before. In several other stretches where the highway and the railroad ran at the same elevation and in close proximity, they were visually separated by intervening screens of brush and forest.

The CNR's lines through Mount Robson Park were not the only things that were hidden from the view of the motorists who drove the new highway during and after the mid-1960s. The new and improved automobile route that traversed the eastern part of east-central BC was a 'limited access' through-highway, meaning that it had been designed and engineered so that motorists could travel without interruption at an average speed of sixty-five miles per hour. Whereas the route and design of the old road had been arranged so as to provide motorists with direct, convenient access to the communities in the Yellowhead Pass area, the route and form of the upgraded, realigned highway were intended first and foremost to facilitate the speedy, simple, and safe passage of cars, buses, and transport trucks over long distances between major metropolitan and regional centres. Thus the new highway was re-routed so as to pass by—rather than pass through—Mount Robson, Red Pass Junction, Tête Jaune Cache, and Albreda. A roadside sign or two, a short paved turnoff onto a gravel access road, and perhaps a left-turn bay were left the only indicators of those places' existence to passers-by. Except perhaps for a few buildings located close to the right-of-way, no other signs of these communities were visible from the highway. With no traffic passing through anymore, and with local residents now able to quickly drive into Valemount for groceries and gasoline, the small, independently-owned store and two-pump gas station at Red Pass Junction closed in 1967, followed soon after by the store and gas station at Tête Jaune Cache.[86] Both of these businesses had been established less than ten years before, with the intention of serving the traffic that traversed the old road.

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[86] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 422, 602-603.

The new highway also bypassed Valemount's T-shaped town centre. The old gravel road had run right through Valemount, thus leading motorists past the railway station, hotel, garages, and other businesses that had been established along the railroad frontage road, and also past the foot of Fifth Avenue, which ran perpendicular to the railroad tracks and was the location of Valemount's school, post office, grocery store, restaurant, single gas station, and other merchants. The new highway, on the other hand, was routed through lightly-timbered land three-quarters of a mile west of the railroad tracks, thereby avoiding both the expense of property expropriation and the circulation-clogging effects of local traffic. The point of access between Valemount's town centre and Highway 5 was where the latter sliced across Fifth Avenue. There were no on or off ramps or traffic control signals at this intersection, only stop signs on Fifth Avenue where it met the highway. Access to the high-speed corridor of automotive circulation was strictly controlled. Just as the few area residents who suddenly found themselves living beside the right-of-way could not simply cut a new driveway from their front door directly to the highway at whatever point was most convenient for them, nor could the village of Valemount (at it was officially incorporated in 1962) add new highway access points or adjust the existing one on its own initiative. All proposals for such connections had to be examined, approved, and authorized by the BC Highways Department, whose chief priority was to facilitate the safe and speedy passage of through-traffic, not the convenience of local residents or the viability (and visibility) of businesses now located far from what had become the area's new main road.

Within five years, new gas stations, restaurants, motels, campgrounds, and other motorist-oriented businesses were being developed in linear clusters at several points where access roads intersected with the highway, especially at the intersection with Valemount's Fifth Avenue. Many of the new structures housed franchised businesses, and incorporated iconic "televisual" architectural features that were intended to catch and hold the attention of rapidly approaching motorists from long distances without causing undue distraction.[87] The most prominent of these were the large, three-story high

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[87] Kent MacDonald, "The Commercial Strip: From Main Street to Television Road" *Landscape* 28, 2 (1985): 12-19. Also see Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1985).

illuminated signs of the new Esso and Chevron stations that flanked the highway at its intersection with Fifth Avenue. A non-franchise example was the tall illuminated signboard outside the Tete Jaune Motel, which was located beside the highway just south of the Valemount-McBride junction. [Images 15, 16 and 17] In 1968 Esser Blom was no longer able to compete with Valemount's new multi-pump franchise stations, and closed his now 'off the beaten track' two-pump gas station and garage on Fifth Avenue next to the railroad tracks.[88] Valemount and other communities in the eastern part of east-central BC had lbecome better connected to an interprovincial network of high-speed, long-distance automotive circulation, but in the process they had had their established local road networks disrupted or closed off, and had been 'put in their proper place' by way of the carefully regulated manner in which they were allowed access to the new highway right-of-way. It was the ideologically-rooted logic behind the route and form of the new automobile highway—which will be discussed at length in the next chapter—that caused certain people, places, spaces, and pre-existing lines of circulation like the CNR's railroads and the streets of Valemount to be invisible or poorly visible to passing motorists.

The Spring 1969 edition of the province-boosting *Beautiful British Columbia* magazine contained a sixteen-page story titled "Highway 5 and the Yellowhead Route." It was illustrated with three photographs of Mount Robson, two of the freshly paved highway through the Yellowhead Pass, and even one of Jasper, Alberta, taken from a mountaintop viewpoint. Illustrating how east-central BC's new "first class" highway served to speed motorists between what were designated as important centres and sites/sights, the article that these photographs accompanied made no mention of Valemount, Red Pass Junction, or Tête Jaune Cache, aside from indicating that the latter was in the vicinity of Highway 5's intersection with the road that led to McBride. The communities of Valemount, Red Pass, Mount Robson, and Albreda did not even merit inclusion in the half-page map that accompanied the article.[89]

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[88] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 270.

[89] "Highway 5 and the Yellowhead Route" *Beautiful British Columbia* (Spring 1969), 19-35.

IMAGE 15 BC Highway 5 at Valemount, looking south towards its intersection with Fifth Avenue and showing three recently opened gas stations, 1971. Photograph by Stephen Bathy. Courtesy of the Valemount and Area Museum's Regional District Collection.

IMAGE 16 Downtown Valemount looking east along Fifth Avenue towards the railway tracks, showing Valemount's first, 1950s era gas station, 1971. Photograph by Stephen Bathy. Courtesy of the Valemount and Area Museum's Regional District Collection.

IMAGE 17 View from Highway 5 between its junction with Highway 16 and Tête Jaune Cache, showing the recently opened Tete Jaune Cache Motel, 1971. Photograph by Stephen Bathy. Courtesy of the Valemount and Area Museum's Regional District Collection.

There were also more active campaigns to hide certain spaces, places and people from the view of highway travellers while making others more prominently visible in the Yellowhead Pass area during the mid-1960s. At the beginning of highway construction in 1965 senior Parks Branch officials decided that it would be "to the distinct advantage of the Branch to have a representative on the ground during the heat of battle." The Branch's general concerns, as had been outlined in the report of 1960, had been communicated to the Highways Department, but it was expected that a representative on the ground would closely liaison with and "effect some kind of control over various contractors and highway and other personnel bent on exercising a free hand in their use and abuse of Mount Robson Park."[90] A problem that quickly emerged was the visibility of the numerous rock quarries and gravel pits. The Parks Branch requested that the Highways Department try to locate thee pits away from the highway. Where doing so was logistically impractical, "tree fringes" and "tree cover screens" were to be retained to keep the pits out of sight, or, for those that could not be hidden from the view of passing motorists in this manner, the Branch requested cosmetic remediation: "dress-grading" with bulldozers and "hydroseeding" with fast-growing grasses. No such remediation was called for on the pits that were sure to be out of view.[91]

Though often conducted 'on the fly' and always dominated by the fact that the new highway was intended primarily as a fast, safe through-road, the negotiations between the Highways Department and Parks Branch over engineering and aesthetics were amicable. In some instances where the technical requirements of the highway necessitated damage to the natural environment, Parks Branch staff even managed to find silver linings and unexpected visual side-effects. For example, at one location tons of rock had to be dumped into the Fraser River in order to stabilize a bank in preparation for bridge building. In the report advising senior Branch officials of this, one of their representatives 'on the ground' explained that, "(i)n some senses it would appear regrettable that rock fills must intrude into the clear green waters of the Fraser River.

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[90] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. D.G. Podmore, District Parks Officer, Kamloops to Director, Parks Branch, 12 May 1965.

[91] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Podmore report and map to Director, 12 May 1965; H.G. McWilliams, Director to E.C. Webster, Director of Construction, Department of Highways, 19 May 1965; McWilliams to D.E. Green, Regional Park Supervisor, 20 May 1965.

However, from an engineering standpoint such fills are unavoidable; they have been kept to a minimum, and they will *open scenic vistas*. [emphasis added]"[92]

Once highway construction was underway and the volume of traffic began to rapidly increase, a whole series of unanticipated concerns and complications related to aesthetics, vision, moving vehicles, and right-of-ways arose for Parks Branch staff. Irate auto-tourists sent angry letters about having seen moving CNR passenger trains dumping sewage, litter, and dining car waste along Moose Lake, where the highway and railroad ran right beside each other. There were also worries about the aesthetic impact of the access roads that the CNR had the right to build so that its maintenance crews could access the railroad tracks from the new highway.[93] A prolonged chain of correspondence was set off after the Parks Branch realized that the Trans-Mountain company, over whose oil pipeline the new highway zigzagged, was entitled to spray plant-killing herbicides along its right-of-way, and that the unsightly results would be prominently visible from many points along the highway.[94] A similar (though friendlier) series of internal correspondence was generated over the question of whether several series of old bridge pillars that had once supported the Grand Trunk Pacific railway's bridges over the Fraser River were roadside eyesores that should be "blown and cleaned up," or items of historic interest that deserved to be preserved and interpreted to curious passers-by.[95] This led to a debate over whether the ruins of a railway company that had failed barely fifty years before could even be considered historic yet. The railroad buffs and Historic Sites Officer of the Parks Branch adamantly insisted that yes they could be, or at least would

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[92] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Podmore report and map to Director, 12 May 1965.

[93] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Podmore to V.G. Johnson, Maintenance Engineer, Canadian National Railways, 26 August 1965; Podmore to Johnson, 2 September 1965.

[94] Especially pertinent amongst this body of correspondence are: BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Podmore to Director, 1 September 1965; Green to Director, 15 November 1965; McWilliams to Green, 30 November 1965; McWilliams to G.H.L. Dempster, Regional Supervisor, Western National Parks, 30 November 1965; B.I.M. Strong, Regional Director, National Parks Branch to McWilliams, 3 December 1965; and McWilliams to Podmore, 4 January 1965.

[95] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. Podmore to Director, 28 January 1966; C.J. Velay, Chief, Engineering Division, Department of Highways to R.H. Ahrens, Chief, Planning Division, Parks Branch, 1 February 1966; Ahrens undated internal note to [?] York; R.Y.E. undated internal note to Ahrens; Ahrens undated internal note to J.R.B,; Ahrens undated internal note to Charles [?]; R.B. Roadland, Historic Sites Officer, Parks Branch to Ahrens, 9 March 1966; McWilliams to Webster, 16 March 1966; Webster to McWilliams, 28 March 1966.

be soon, and eventually the Highways Department was requested to not dynamite the pillars.

The volume, variety, and specificity of these visual-vehicular issues increased as completion of the highway neared. Requests were received in the spring of 1967 for the researching, fabrication, and erection of interpretative signs that would identify and explain the landscapes that could be seen from the highway pullouts, parking lots, and roadside recreational sites within Mount Robson Park.[96] [Image 18] It was proposed that a Tourist Bureau booth be built at the eastern entrance to the park in order to welcome visitors driving into BC from Alberta, and to provide the curious with road maps and information about scenery, attractions, and accommodations.[97] The most recent incarnation of the Yellowhead Highway Association expressed a desire to put up a small plaque somewhere beside the highway in the immediate vicinity of the Yellowhead summit in order to commemorate the 'completion' (i.e.: the widening, straightening, two-laning, and paving) of the road.[98] The Highways Department had to be reminded that a five-foot wide sidewalk was required on the north side of the new bridge over the Robson River because "as one of the most photogenic views of Mount Robson will be from the bridge, the sidewalk would provide a safe place for taking pictures."[99] The design, production, location, and setup of elaborate "Welcome to British Columbia" and "Mount Robson Park" signs for the two park entrances was initiated during the summer of 1967, but was only completed two years later. In June 1970, less than a year after it had been put up, the gigantic carved wooden mountain goat at the eastern entrance to the park was cut down from its stand by some "chainsaw-wielding vandal."[100] [Image 19]

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[96] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. McWilliams to J.A. Dennisson, Senior Maintenance Engineer, Department of Highways, 15 May 1967; McWilliams to R.T. Edwards, Park Officer, Interpretation and Research, 15 May 1967; McWilliams to L. Edgeworth, Chief Engineer, Federal Dept. of Fisheries, 26 September 1967.

[97] BC Parks. McWilliams to Dennisson, 15 May 1967.

[98] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. William Hawrelak, President, Trans-Canada Highways Systems Association to The Hon. P.A. Gaglardi, Minister of Highways, 3 July 1967; Gaglardi to Hawrelak, 19 July 1967.

[99] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. D.B. Turner, Deputy Minister, to H.T. Miard, Deputy Minister, Department of Highways, 10 October 1967; Miard to Turner, 26 October 1967; Turner to Miard, 13 November 1967.

[100] *The Province* 11 June 1970, 6.

IMAGE 18 'Stop of Interest' interpretive marker at the east entrance to Mount Robson Provincial Park, 1969. BC Archives, I-21584.

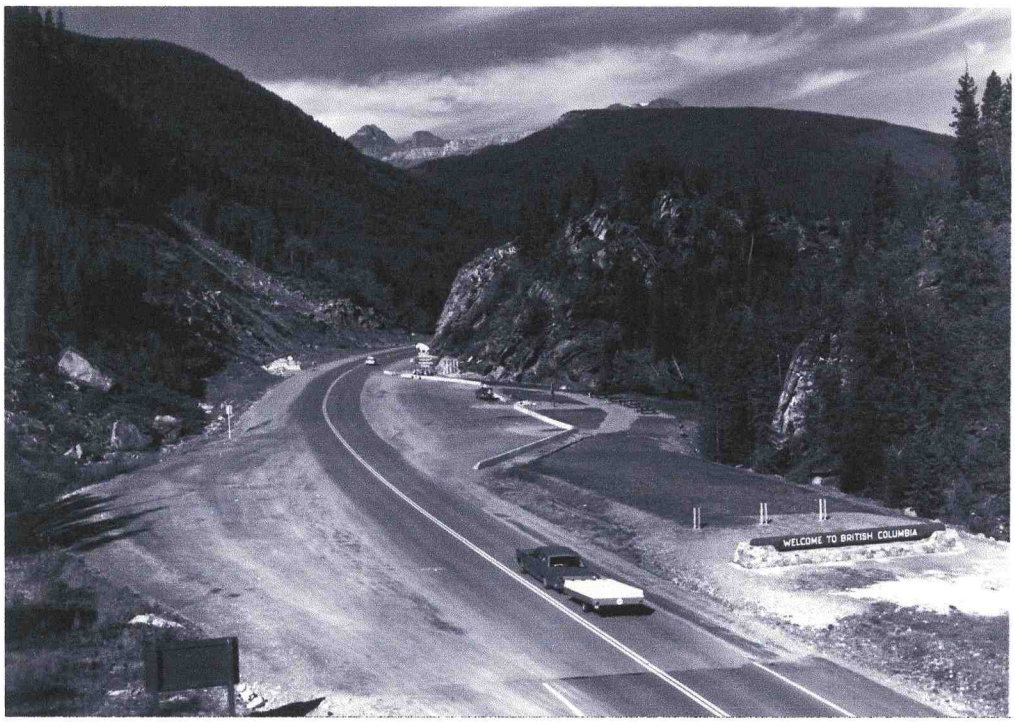

IMAGE 19 Highway 16 at the BC-Alberta boundary, looking westward at the east entrance to Mount Robson Provincial Park, 1967. BC Archives, I-21572.

The upgrading of the road through the park into an interprovincial highway also led to yet another round of bureaucratic anxiety (and action) over aesthetic "park values," travellers' views, and a lack of visual-structural orderliness in the vicinity of Lucerne. After the closure of Lake Yellowhead Lodge in 1958, only a few stray structural 'eyesores' were left in and around Lucerne. During the late 1920s two or three leases at that site had been granted to trappers whose rights in the area predated the creation of Mount Robson Park. Located at a distance from the old Canadian Northern right-of-way and apart from the abandoned two-street townsite, these cabins were the only buildings left standing when the rest of the 'eyesore' buildings at Lucerne were razed in 1942. When the first road through the park had been constructed in 1944 these cabins were left screened from motorists' view by stands of timber and dense brush. But the expansion of the slow, narrow gravel road into a faster, two-lane paved highway in 1965 required the widening and realignment of the right-of-way around Lucerne. The new sightlines that were opened up by the clearing of ground cover exposed several previously unnoticed and unproblematic cabins to the highway-travelling public, much to the consternation of Parks Branch staff.

In the mid-1960s the Parks Branch was also involved in campaigns of aesthetic, territorial, and administrative 'clean up' in the park. Long-established trapping rights were being gradually phased out because they conflicted with the emerging ethos of wildlife conservation in parks. Also, in early 1966 the Director of the Provincial Parks Branch notified his staff that "(t)his office would like to eliminate all Parks Use Permit holders for private dwellings in Mt. Robson Park."[101] The trappers' cabins near Lucerne fell within the realm of all of these campaigns. By January 1967 Parks Branch staff had identified three candidates near Lucerne for demolition: a "very old log cabin in rather dilapidated condition" which was located in the "old Lucerne Townsite"; an abandoned cabin between Lucerne and Yellowhead Lake; and an "old log cabin [that] was part of the Japanese detention camp," which, it was emphasized, "is very unsightly as it can be

[101] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. McWilliams to Podmore, 18 January 1966. Highway construction seems to have provided much of the impetus for these 'clean up' campaigns. See J.C. Leman, Dist. Parks Officer, Prince George to Director, 20 May 1966.

viewed from the highway."[102] The Parks Officer responsible for Mount Robson Park recommended that these three buildings be destroyed "due to their dilapidated and unsightly condition," and requested expeditious authorization to do so from his supervisors on the grounds that it would be best "to burn the remains of these buildings while there is snow on the ground."

The two latter structures were quickly disposed of by the Parks Branch because they were unoccupied and not covered by a Parks Use Permit. The first, however, proved to be occupied by an active trapper who still possessed a valid Parks Use Permit. In the fall of 1967 this building again drew the attention and condemnation of Parks Branch staff. "(W)e feel that this cabin should be burned," a report to the Branch Director explained, because

> (t)he cabin is in a disgraceful condition and the area surrounding it resembles a garbage dump. It poses an administration problem in that when [Parks Branch staff] request other P.U.P. holders to keep their cabins and surrounding areas in a clean and tidy condition they point out this eyesore and ask what we are going to about the condition of this cabin. [...] While [the trapper] has agreed to clean up the cabin area this will not improve the unsightly condition of the building. Would it be possible to have [the trapper] advised to vacate the cabin by a certain date, after which [staff] would dispose of it by burning?[103]

A pair of snapshots were submitted with this report, as if to provide conclusive visual evidence for the Parks Branch Director's consideration. Both were taken from a point-of-view that was very close to the cabin, thereby capturing its appearance from only a single angle and not contextualizing its broader setting. What, if any, action the Parks Branch Director authorized his staff to take in 1967 cannot be traced through the available archival records. However, today there is no trace of the structure that was being discussed, just as there are few discernable traces of Lucerne ever having existed.

Many other examples could be cited of the Parks Branch's attempts to screen, hide, and obscure some spaces and places in Mount Robson Park, and their simultaneous

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[102] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. District Park Officer, Prince George to Director, Parks Branch, 31 January 1967.

[103] BC Parks. Reel BO-1757. District Park Officer to Director, Parks Branch, 26 October 1967. Because there is an appearance that the aesthetic judgement call(s) made by Parks Branch staff in this instance may have gone beyond what was required in their usual duties, I have deleted the names of all involved.

efforts to differentiate, emphasize, and highlight others.[104] However, a sufficient level of detail has been presented here to illustrate the two key points of this last section. The first is that although the upgrading of a rough, narrow gravel road into a paved two-lane highway might typically be considered an example of straightforward, unproblematic 'progress,' the benefits that accrued from this improvement in circulation were not distributed evenly. Inherent biases and implicitly political decisions rather than some kind of neutral, natural 'common sense' were behind the form, route, and structures that comprised the new highway through the Yellowhead Pass and Valemount area. These biases and decisions were based on and reinforced existing hierarchies of place. The conclusion in one local history that "being situated on the Yellowhead Highway gave Valemount all the benefits of today's technology and advancement" overlooks the highway's negative impact on established automobile traffic-related businesses in that and other nearby communities.[105] Access to the highway did encourage several sawmills to relocate to the Valemount area, but this meant that several communities further down the North Thompson valley lost theirs. Furthermore, the precise route of the highway excised communities like Tête Jaune Cache, Red Pass, and even Valemount from the visual narrative provided to those who drove along the new corridor of circulation. For example, the various travel guidebooks, newspapers, and magazines that described and reviewed the new experience of driving the Yellowhead Highway referred to Tête Jaune Cache—which the old road had passed right through, but which was bypassed by the new highway—as a place "which the unwary traveller might miss completely if he blinks an eye," and a "forgotten ghost lying in desolation among the forests beside the Fraser."[106]

The second key point is that no changes like those that occurred in the Yellowhead Pass and Valemount area occurred elsewhere in east-central BC during the

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[104] Only until 1971, these include: crowded parking lots, litter at campsites, overflowing toilets at roadside rest stops, the building of a public information centre at the Mount Robson meadows, the Highways Department's use of herbicides on its right-of-way through the park, and the problem of how to bring electricity to park facilities as well as Red Pass Junction and Mount Robson meadows without having elevated powerlines intruding on motorists' view.

[105] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 175.

[106] "Unspoiled Beauty Unfolds," *Victoria Daily Colonist* (*The Islander* weekend magazine) 17 November 1968, 16; "The Yellowhead Route," *Western Homes and Living* (June 1969), 48.

early and mid-1960s. Other places in east-central BC actually became relatively more isolated, separated, disconnected, and marginal as the eastern portion of that area became more closely integrated into the provincial highway system. While Valemount was being touted in the Vancouver dailies as a "jet-propelled village" with a bright future by virtue of its connection to this network of circulation, the continued absence of a through-connection to Prince George consumed the attention of McBride residents and businesses.[107] It is difficult to capture the widespread feeling of being 'behind the times' and cut off from 'the good life' that ran through the various newspapers that were published in McBride during the early and mid-1960s. The editor of the *McBride Courier* probably put it best (and most succinctly) in 1968, when, after reviewing a decade's worth of back issues of those papers she wrote that "(o)ne ever-recurring theme beat like a metronome through issue after issue: the road; Highway 16; the stretch of provincial highway between Prince George and Jasper."[108] Numerous editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor complaining about the 'gap' to the west and the lack of a proper 'first class,' highway-standard link to the east were interspersed with full-page photographic advertisements for new cars, envious news about the elaborate opening ceremonies in 1962 for the Trans-Canada Highway's new route through the Rogers Pass in southeastern BC, and even more envious weekly updates about the ongoing highway construction in Mount Robson Park, the Valemount area, and the upper North Thompson valley.

The history of the geographical 'gaps' and the 'mobility gap' that existed in east-central British Columbia from the 1920s to the mid-1960s could easily be twisted around into a narrative of progress. Such a narrative would go something like this: slowly the number of automobiles increased, the road network expanded and was improved, and gradually much of east-central BC was drawn into networks of democratized, egalitarian, flexible, and convenient automobile-based circulation. There were no automobiles or roads in the 1910s; a few short, disconnected stretches in the 1920s; and a few short stretches of contiguous road over which a growing number of cars and trucks could travel

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[107] *The Province* 17 November 1964, 33.

[108] *McBride Courier* 25 April 1968, 2.

in the 1930s. By 1944 both McBride and Valemount were connected to Alberta's highway network. As shown by the caravans to Mount Robson and the activities of the Yellowhead Highway Association, the 1950s were a time of community-mindedness (or 'we are all in this together'-ness) and political lobbying which eventually convinced the BC government to approve the construction of a modern highway between the Yellowhead summit and Kamloops via Mount Robson Park, Tête Jaune Cache, and Valemount. All the people who lived in these communities were given fair and equal access to the safe, speedy, and scenic new highway.

Such a narrative, of course, would require one to ignore the small quantity, poor quality, and disconnected nature of the roads in east-central BC relative to other parts of British Columbia, as well as further afield. During the early and mid-1950s BC's Social Credit government spent more on the expansion and improvement of the provincial road and highway network than had previously been spent in the entire history of the province.[109] Many existing roads were widened, straightened, and paved, and several entirely new highways were built into the resource 'hinterlands' of central and northern BC, better tying them into an integrated provincial economy. Yet during that same period, the only significant change in the road network of east-central BC was the completion of a narrow, winding dirt and gravel road between Valemount and Kamloops—a rather modest infrastructure project that had been planned on and off for almost a decade. And until 1961 the sixty-mile stretch of gravel road between Tête Jaune Cache and Jasper was always officially closed during the winter. It was left to people who lived in places located between those points to plow snow off the road in order maintain their connection to the nearest post office, in Red Pass Junction, and publicly accessible long-distance telephone, in Jasper.[110]

It would also require ignoring the fact that in the mid-1960s McBride was still a 'dead end' town accessible from only one direction by way of a gravel road, and the fact that hundreds of other people who lived in the small communities of the upper Fraser

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[109] Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West,* 281-282.

[110] Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 80-84, 223, 287. The first long-distance telephone service in Mount Robson Park not owned and controlled by the CNR was a booth installed at Red Pass Junction in October of 1965. *Yellowhead Pass*, 87.

corridor between McBride and Sinclair Mills still had no connection whatsoever to the provincial network of roads and highways (or the electricical and telephone grids). This situation only began to change in the summer of 1968, just a few months prior to the beginning of regular jet aircraft passenger service at the Prince George airport.[111] The elimination of the automotive 'gap' or 'missing link' between McBride and Prince George forms the subject of the next chapter.

[111] "Prince George Enters Jet Age," *Prince George Progress* 14 September 1968.

CHAPTER THREE: HIGHWAYS

In the summer of 1964 staff from the BC Parks Branch were instructed to inspect several parcels of land located on the south side of the upper Fraser River between Prince George and McBride. They were to determine whether the sites were of significant recreational value to the general public, and whether or not the Branch should place land reserves on them so that they could not be alienated, logged, or otherwise developed. The archival records associated with this planning process show that the driving force behind the evaluation, location, and creation of these reserves was the anticipated construction of a highway that would finally eliminate the automotive 'gap' between Prince George and McBride. Whereas Benjamin Baltzly and Frederick Talbot had made prognostications about how future travellers' experiences of landscape in east-central BC would be mediated or narrated by the railways that carried them through that space, in the mid-1960s the provincial state took an active, forward-looking approach towards the authoring—or authorizing—of new landscape narratives, ones that were calibrated towards a different medium or mechanism of circulation than had been imagined by Baltzly or Talbot.

One of the twelve sites inspected in 1964 consisted of two small waterfalls and a fishing hole in a canyon of Snowshoe Creek, about one mile southwest of Crescent Spur. This site was located high above Crescent Spur, part way up one of the numerous ridges, benches, and plateaus that were contained within the Rocky Mountain Trench, and was accessible from that community only by a disused, overgrown logging road that Parks Branch staff described as being best travelled either on foot or horseback. When they evaluated the existing recreational uses of Snowshoe Creek canyon, Parks Branch staff recorded that local residents occasionally fished there but that wider public use was "restricted due to lack of access."[1] This latter point was something of an understatement. Crescent Spur was in the middle of the sixty-five mile 'gap' between Sinclair Mills and McBride, and thus completely isolated from the provincial road network. Yet despite the limited recreational uses then being made of Snowshoe Creek and the fact that it was

[1] BCA. GR-1614 BC Lands, Parks and Housing. Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division. Public Reserves (hereafter BC Lands). Box 9. File 1-4-1-96 (Snowshoe Creek). Recreational Site Report, July 1964.

impossible for the wider public (i.e.: motorists) to get there, the report strongly recommended that a reserve be placed on the site. "The waterfalls offer an unusual amenity not easily found in many localities. Add to this the fishing potential and the site offers a natural park area," it concluded. The provincial Lands Branch formally registered the Parks Branch's Snowshoe Creek reserve in the fall of 1965.

Hundreds of similar recreational reserves had been placed on Crown lands during the 1950s and 1960s. These relatively small parcels of land were not part of the provincial park system in the same way that Mount Robson Park was, even though it was the Parks Branch that evaluated and applied for them. They were off limits to logging and private development, but were not actively maintained or managed. The intention was to turn most of them into picnic areas, rest stops, pulloffs, walking paths, campsites, and access routes to existing parks at some later date. A few reserves were placed in backcountry 'wilderness' areas, but the large majority were closely tied to British Columbia's rapidly expanding network of roads and highways, as Snowshoe Creek and the following two examples from east-central BC demonstrate.[2]

A stretch of riverfront located at the Goat River's confluence with the upper Fraser River was another site that was inspected during the summer of 1964. Earlier that year the BC Forest Service had announced that it would be cancelling its longstanding reserve there as part of a consolidation of its operations in east-central BC. Only a handful of people lived in the roadless vicinity around the CNR's Goat River flag stop station, and so it had been decided that the cost of maintaining a speeder shed and caches of gasoline and forest fire-fighting equipment at that isolated location was no longer justified. During their inspection Parks Branch staff discerned even less recreational use or potential at the Goat River Mouth than they had at Snowshoe Creek, and noted that it too was inaccessible to the wider public. Nevertheless, they concluded that a reserve should be established there also. When Parks Branch Director H.G. McWilliams informed the Lands Branch that his agency wanted to take over the reserve, he explained that "we are interested in retaining this area for recreational purposes primarily because

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[2] Similar reserves had been made during the late 1950s in the Yellowhead Pass and upper North Thompson River valley areas as part of the Parks Branch's preparation for the Jasper-Kamloops road being upgraded to highway standards. For example, see BC Lands. Box 11. Files 1-4-3-4 (Valemount); 1-4-3-5 (Tete Jaune Crossing); and 1-4-3-13 (Rearguard Falls).

of its location. *It will no doubt soon be accessible by road and will serve as a wayside rest area.* [emphasis added]"[3] As with Snowshoe Creek, the Parks Branch's decision to establish a reserve at the Goat River's mouth was based on the assumption that a highway would soon traverse the space between Prince George and McBride, thereby making these and other reserves accessible by the driving public and of recreational value to them as rest stops and picnic sites. Even though the precise route that the future road would follow remained uncertain in 1964, arrangements were being made for the imminent arrival of automobile traffic and for the wants, needs, and caprices of highway travellers.

That the provincial Parks Branch's policy of establishing reserves in east-central BC was driven by the prospect of a future highway link is illustrated by the fact that all of the reserves made between Prince George and McBride were located on the south side of the Fraser, where it was widely expected that such a highway would be built. That the manner in which future motorists would look at the spaces and places that they travelled through was also being taken into consideration during the establishment of these reserves is reflected by the unusual shapes that some of them took. The best example of this was the Willow River Crossing reserve, located approximately twenty-five miles north-east of Prince George.[4] This reserve had been established in 1961, when it had still seemed possible that a future highway to McBride might incorporate parts of the old upper Fraser road that led towards Sinclair Mills, before diverging to run across the forested plateau that lay to the south. If this had been done, the extensive network of forestry roads that branched off from the upper Fraser road at a point just east of the Willow River would have provided auto-borne tourists, campers, anglers, and hunters easy access to a veritable backwoods playground that contained dozens of small lakes, streams, hunting areas, and campsites. The only way to enter to this area by automobile in 1961 was to cross over a long logging bridge that spanned the Willow River.

Aware of the strategic visual-vehicular importance that this 'gateway' would have if the highway were to pass nearby, the Parks Branch applied for a narrow, linear reserve that ran along both banks of the river. The intention was to ensure that only a screen of

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[3] BC Lands. Box 9. File 1-4-1-94 (Goat River Mouth). H.G. McWilliams, Director, Parks Branch to D. Berthwick, Sup't of Lands, 1 February 1965.

[4] BC Lands. Box 8. File 1-4-1-67 (Willow River Crossing).

natural scenery would be seen by the motorists who drove across the bridge. When the surveyed shape of the reserve as marked out on a map is compared against the upstream- and downstream-looking snapshot photographs that Parks Branch staff took from the bridge's approaches and mid-span, it is obvious that the Willow River Crossing reserve was carefully designed to preserve all of the riverbank and tree cover that was visible from the bridge, but nothing more. The upstream and downstream bends in the river marked both the end of automobile travellers' lines of sight and the boundaries of the reserve. Riverside development, evidence of logging, and unauthorized signs and campsites were thus barred from intruding on future visitors' first views of what might have become the Prince George area's premier outdoors recreational area.

The precise route that was eventually decided on for the highway that eliminated the 'missing link' between Prince George and McBride ended up being located between one and fifteen miles south of the Parks Branch's reserves at Snowshoe Creek, Goat River Mouth, and Willow River Crossing, thus bypassing them all. However, this does not take away from the key point that is being emphasized here: even prior to the initiation of construction on the new east-west through-road, agencies of the provincial state were taking steps to differentiate specific scenic attractions along the new corridor of circulation in order to accommodate and regulate automobilists' visual and vehicular practices, and to structure their experiences of the spaces and places that they would pass through and pass by.[5]

This chapter examines the role of automobiles and highways in the construction, destruction, maintenance, and realignment of views and visual practices, landscape experiences, and hierarchies of place in east-central British Columbia during and after the

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[5] Several historians of tourism, technology, and the environment have examined the role of the state in constructing and regulating roadside spaces and motorists' view from the road. However, most of these studies deal with the first half of the twentieth century, and are concerned primarily with the interface between nature, culture, and politics—especially fascist politics. For example, see David Louter, "Glaciers and Gasoline: The Making of a Windshield Wilderness" in David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism and the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001): 248-270; Edward Dimendberg, "The Will to Motorization: Cinema, Highways, and Modernity," *October* 73 (Summer 1995): 91-137; William H. Rollins, "Whose Landscape? Technology, Fascism, and Environmentalism on the National Socialist Autobahn," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 85,3 (Sept 1995): 494-520; Thomas Zeller, "'The Landscape's Crown': Landscape, Perceptions, and Modernizing Effects of the German Autobahn System, 1934 to 1941" in David E. Nye, ed., *Technologies of Landscape: From Reaping to Recycling* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999): 218-238.

late 1960s. Like the chapter on railways, it begins by tracing the intersections between broad socio-economic forces, ideology, ways of seeing, and the route and form of the stretch of Highway 16 that was built between Prince George and McBride at the end of the 1960s. The second section sketches out some especially salient details about this new corridor of automotive circulation, and then looks at how spaces and places along it were mediated as landscape by the oft-overlooked linkages that existed between the highway and the vehicles that travelled along it. This section places particular emphasis on what was *not* visible to drivers as they traversed Highway 16 through the Rocky Mountain Trench. The third section looks closely at the town of McBride, and considers how the completed highway—and the ways of seeing and moving that were associated with it—disrupted the order of space, time, and place that had been established in that community by railways and 'dead end' roads. The final section considers how the extension of an automotive network of circulation all the way through east-central BC realigned long-existing hierarchies of place in other parts of that area, and how it affected residents' everyday lives and their internalized, place-based identities.

3.1 "Highways are for the people," or "Wheels of Industry"?

Just as railway travel and the fleeting, rigidly structured, panoramic mode of perception that was associated with it had become taken-for-granted aspects of modern life for many Canadians by the time the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways were being built through east-central BC, so too had automobiles, highways, and the ways of looking at and thinking about space, place, and landscape that were associated with them by the time a highway was being constructed across the forested plateaus and valley ridges between Prince George and McBride. Both the concept and the reality of automobile ownership and driving on paved streets and multi-lane, high-speed public highways had become thoroughly commonplace for the large majority of British Columbians, Canadians, and North Americans by the late 1960s.[6] By that time,

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[6] The ratio of privately owned cars to population provides a crude indicator of the growing ubiquity of the automobile in BC after the Second World War. In 1951 there were 153,000 cars, or approximately one for every seven of BC's 1.1 million residents. In 1961 there were 330,000 cars, approximately one for every five of BC's population of 1.6 million. By 1971 there were 544,000 cars, or about one for every four of BC's 2.1 million residents. Private car figures cited in Veronica Strong-Boag, "Society in the Twentieth Century" in Hugh J.M. Johnston, ed., *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia* (Vancouver:

the completion of yet another highway to or through some hinterland area of British Columbia no longer grabbed the attention of the public or the headlines of the provincial press in the way it would have just a few years previously.

For some British Columbians this stemmed from a broader reevaluation of the 'progress' and the 'good life' that the highways were supposed to materially facilitate and concretely represent. For many other BC residents, however, the wavering of what one historian has called their "worship" of "highways, by-ways, and thru-ways, things of brick, mortar and asphalt" was more a case of flagging interest in the face of ubiquity and normalization.[7] Indeed, it is precisely because of the material and discursive omnipresence of automobiles and automobility by the late 1960s that it is difficult for the historian to delve directly into the social and economic foundations of a highway like that which was built between Prince George and McBride.[8] It is easier to begin such an inquiry indirectly, by first examining the party that was responsible for the completion of Highway 16 through east-central BC.

After it came to power in 1952 under the premiership of Kelowna merchant W.A.C. Bennett, British Columbia's first Social Credit government initiated an enormous modernization program of expanding and upgrading the province's infrastructure. As cited in the previous chapter, between 1952 and 1958 the provincial government spent more on roads than it had in the previous eighty years combined.[9] These massive expenditures of public money were intended to attract international capital investment in

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Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 288. Population figures based on Census of Canada information as cited in Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 364.

[7] Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 194. Peter White, a historian of art and popular culture in postwar Canada, has suggested that the opening of the Trans-Canada Highway's new route through the Rogers Pass in 1962 marked the nadir of British Columbians' 'worship' of automobiles and highways. *It Pays to Play*, 18-21.

[8] On the seemingly paradoxical situation whereby the automobile became thoroughly ubiquitous in post-war western societies yet has remained largely overlooked by and resistant to critical historical inquiry, see Henri Lefebvre's chapter on "The Bureaucratic Society of Controlled Consumption," in *Everyday Life in the Modern World* Sasha Rabinovitch, trans. (London: Transaction, 1990), especially 100-109; Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 15-22.

[9] Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 281; Robin, *Pillars of Profit*, 193-194.

large-scale resource extraction and industrial development in BC.[10] In effect, big businesses were being encouraged to locate in the Pacific province through indirect public subsidies.

According to political and economic historians John Belshaw and David Mitchell, the Social Credit government's program of investment- and development-stimulation had two main prongs, both of which involved commodity circulation.[11] The first was the generation and delivery of cheap electricity through the construction of hydroelectric dams and the transmission lines that would connect them to mines, mills, smelters, and other industrial centres. The second was the improvement and expansion of transportation networks—especially the provincial highway network. While many existing roads and highways in the south of the province were upgraded, the most dramatic changes occurred in northern and central BC. Several entirely new highways were constructed there in order to better integrate into the provincial (and international) economy resource-rich areas that were separated from or only marginally connected to the existing rail and/or road networks, or that were connected more closely to the economy of northern Alberta.[12] As Bennett's long-time minister of highways Phil Gaglardi put it, the government built highways even "in places where there was absolutely nobody because we knew that they would be the arteries that would carry the wheels of industry to all four corners of the province."[13]

While highway construction was of central importance in the government's policy of using public funds to provide businesses with the expensive fixed infrastructure of commodity circulation, a happy side effect of all the road building, according to Belshaw

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[10] Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 283-287; David Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1995), 260-262.

[11] John Douglas Belshaw and David J. Mitchell, "The Economy Since the Great War" in Hugh J.M. Johnston, ed., *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 328-329.

[12] While the important road and highway building component of this 'prong' has not received the attention it deserves from historians, there has been some research into the role played by the provincially-owned Pacific Great Eastern railway (today's BC Rail) in the Social Credit government's development plans. See Stephen G. Tomblin, "The Pacific Great Eastern Railway and W.A.C. Bennett's Defence of the North" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24,4 (Winter 1989-1990): 29-40.

[13] Cited in Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 261.

and Mitchell, was that it "ensured that virtually every British Columbia community would be served by a modern highway."[14] By the 1960s access to a paved, all-weather, through connection to the provincial highway network had become 'normal' even in the central and northern parts of the province. Belshaw and Mitchell's statement also points towards highway construction as a very important tool in the populist politics of the postwar period. As much was evident by Premier Bennett's prominent presence at numerous ceremonies that marked the opening of some new stretch of blacktop, where he would make pronouncements to the effect that "highways are for the people."[15] According to his leading biographer, building infrastructure allowed Bennett to cultivate the apolitical image of a 'common sense' leader who simply got things done, a Premier who "produced for the public visible, dramatic results [like] highways, bridges, tunnels."[16] It was especially easy to present the province's highway network as an asset that collectively belonged to and benefited all British Columbians. After all, the ownership (and maintenance costs) of the public roads and highways that led to processing plants, open pit mines, hydroelectric dams, and 'instant towns' like Cassiar was not turned over to the large companies that used those lines of circulation to draw in raw materials and send out commodities, and thus drew disproportionate benefits from them. Everyone was free to drive around on BC's highways—that is, everyone who could afford to, who could get licensed to, and who subscribed to the practices mandated by the highway code and enforced by the highway patrol.[17]

To encourage residents of British Columbia to take pride in the new highways and the landscapes that were visible and accessible from them—and/or to dissuade them from thinking critically about for what purposes and to whose advantage the publicly-financed

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[14] Belshaw and Mitchell, "The Economy Since the Great War," 329.

[15] Indeed, these were the very words that Bennett used at the 1970 ceremony that "dedicated" the routes of Highways 5 and 16 through east-central BC. *Prince George Citizen* 17 August 1970, 3.

[16] Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 259.

[17] Except for minors, very few Canadians were formally barred from owning or using automobiles in the postwar years. However, coercive restrictions on automobility had been placed on some Canadians in earlier instances. For example, in Ontario single mothers who received state assistance—and who by dominant conceptions were seen as not contributing to either production or consumption—were not allowed to own automobiles. See Margaret J. Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

transportation network was being shaped—the provincial government ran a low-intensity but sustained and pervasive propaganda campaign that presented these networks of commodity circulation as 'democratized' playgrounds of sight-seeing, leisure, recreation, conspicuous consumption, communion with nature, and automobility in and of itself. For example, the Department of Recreation and Conservation began quarterly publication of the colourful, province-boosting, automobile-centric magazine *Beautiful British Columbia* in the summer of 1959.[18] Hundreds of promotional films, booklets, and brochures were produced during the 1950s and 1960s. And in 1964 "Beautiful British Columbia" was made the pseudo-official slogan of the provincial state, to be stamped on every single automobile license place.

W.A.C. Bennett's biographer has observed that highway infrastructure was especially important to the Social Credit government's populist politics on a symbolic level because "the automobile exemplified the tremendous economic and social changes of mid-century North America."[19] These economic and social changes have been broadly referred to as Fordism.[20] Fordism was closely connected with Keynesian economic theories that argued that the state had to take an active role in flattening out business cycles and reducing the propensity towards periodic crises that were intrinsic to a capitalist economy. Fordism was not entirely an abstract economic theory; nor, as many have mistakenly used the term, was it merely a technique of mass production and worker control, like Taylorism. As geographer David Harvey has pointed out, Fordism was largely experienced as "a total way of life."[21] Its central tenet was that governments, businesses, and above all the public had to learn to treat mass consumption as the necessary complement to mass production if industrial capitalism's cyclical crises of

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[18] The first issue of *Beautiful British Columbia* included features about the new Upper Levels Highway in North Vancouver and West Vancouver, the Williams Lake rodeo, the heritage site at Barkerville (recently made accessible by a paved highway), and the expanding system of roadside picnic sites and campgrounds in the Okanogan . During its first two decades of publication, every issue of *Beautiful British Columbia* contained salutary statements from and photographic portraits of the Premier and whichever cabinet minister then happened to be responsible for recreation and tourism.

[19] Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 259, 261.

[20] A succinct description and critical evaluation of Fordism is contained in Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, chapter eight.

[21] Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 135.

overaccumulation (or underconsumption) were to be kept from spiralling out of control as they had during the 1930s.

This was the prevailing logic behind 'the good life' in post-war British Columbia, and the socio-economic basis of more than twenty years of steady increases in industrial output, in workers' wages and benefits, and in expanded social services. It is only when the Social Credit government's seemingly paradoxical pro-big business stance and interventionist activism are considered within the context of Fordism that they can be recognized as having been perfectly complementary. What has been referred to as the Socreds' "secular faith in never-ending material progress" epitomized the Fordist logic of achieving strong, stable, and perpetual growth by maintaining a careful balance between mass production and mass consumption.[22] So too did many of the developments that their circulation-subsidizing policies encouraged to locate in the province. The aluminum that was produced at Alcan's Kitimat smelter was exported for use in the aerospace and automotive industries. Huge new pulp mills ground up timber to make paper materials for the publishing and packaging industries, which were tied to advertising, product differentiation, and the stimulation of consumer desire. The lumber and plywood produced by the forest industry was exported for use in the construction of suburban housing. And the oil and natural gas that was transported through pipelines from Alberta and northern BC to points along the Pacific coast was used to run power plants, heat homes, and fuel automobiles.

If panoramic perception was the way of seeing space that had been associated with travel along railway networks of commodity circulation during what can loosely be referred to as a period of monopoly capitalism, then what was the equivalent for automobile travel during the Fordist moment of late capitalism? Several historians of twentieth-century technology and tourism have described how early motorists compared and contrasted the manner in which they traversed space and viewed landscapes against the then taken-for-granted panoramic mode of perception.[23] Prior to the 1920s,

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[22] Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 257.

[23] See for example Sachs, *For the Love of the Automobile*; Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Auto-camp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979); John A. Jakle, *The Tourist in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

automobiles had provided a nostalgic alternative to rail travel. For those who could afford them, cars and trucks represented liberation from the impersonal authority and overbearing efficiency of the enormous railway companies, and from set schedules, fixed routes, disorienting night travel, and the rigid, fleeting, sideways-looking point-of-view generated by the speed of the train and the architecture of the railway carriage. According to the German cultural historian Wolfgang Sachs, the automobile not only freed travellers from being "conducted from place to place like a piece of freight"; it also

> broke the rigid perspective as seen through the train window because, freed from the tracks, it *could* change direction and speed at the driver's will. The landscape became accessible from all angles, so that fixed perspectives dissolved into an abundance of views, a multitude of vantage points. Moreover, the automobile transformed the traveler into a *potential* explorer, who *could* set new goals and approach the old in a fresh manner. Now, with active probing, the tourist's gaze *could* penetrate even the most distant corners. [emphases added][24]

At this point, two qualifiers have to be made. First, like Sachs, most historians who have touched on the connections between automobility and visuality have concerned themselves primarily with the emergence and novelty of this auto-perceptive way of seeing, rather than with its normalization. It is probably safe to say that by the late 1940s a scopic regime based around automobile travel had largely superceded panoramic perception as the predominant, most powerful mode of visualizing spaces and places in North American societies. Second, it must be emphasized that in the above quote Sachs, like many of the early motorists he is describing, seems to have been swept up by the rhetoric of how automobiles *could* be used, rather than how they actually *were* used. In fact, when travelling by car or truck the landscape could *not* be accessed from all angles, and the auto-tourist's gaze could *not* penetrate even the most distant corners of the regions they drove through. Just as rail and locomotive formed an inseparable mechanism, so too did road and automobile—the latter relationship was simply more diffuse, flexible, and personalized than the former. In the shift from railways to automobiles as the dominant mode of circulation, the publicly-financed bureaucratic state had replaced enormous, internationally-financed corporations as the designer, builder, manager, and owner of lines and networks of circulation, and most citizens were able to possess and exercise personal control over the vehicles that traversed those lines. But at

their roots, the relationship between vehicle and route in the two modes of circulation was the same. Cars and trucks did *not* allow freedom from the routes, physical structures, or operational imperatives of the automotive network of circulation: they simply permitted—and demanded—their owner-operators to make more choices and pursue more options. Motorists *could* choose to travel down the wrong side of the road, or to abruptly throw their vehicle into reverse amidst heavy traffic just for the sake of getting a better view. But they rarely did. Similarly, drivers *could* choose to fix their gaze on the scenes visible through their side windows without returning their eyes to the road ahead of them, but rarely did. They *could* try to drive their cars, trucks, motorcycles, and even so-called off-road vehicles (like jeeps) across a river, over a glacier, through a dense forest, or to the top of a mountain without some kind of a way over the earth's surface having been prepared for it, but rarely did. The point being made is that the intentions and biases held by the builder of the fixed infrastructure of automotive circulation inevitably materialized in its route and form, and had a structuring affect on exactly how and what spaces and places were seen by the people who traversed those roads and highways.

In adopting the forward-looking, non-panoramic point-of-view that had previously been held only by locomotive crews, every automobile driver was obliged to take on many of the responsibilities held by those railway employees. These included remaining vigilant for obstructions and other hazards; keeping the climatic conditions in mind; being aware of nearby traffic patterns; observing and obeying coded signals and signs; monitoring fuel levels and engine conditions; and regulating speed. In fact, because the automobile driver was not kept on a track or closely supported by (and constrained within) a top-down system of operations and management, he or she had to take on extra responsibilities that did not weigh heavily on the locomotive engineer or train conductor. Was there enough fuel to make it to the next service station? Exactly where *was* the next service station? Was the automobile moving in the correct direction? How far and for how long was it safe to drive without a taking a break to relieve the strain on legs, back, shoulders, neck, eyes, and brain?

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[24] Sachs, *For the Love of the Automobile*, 93, 155.

Historians of automobility agree that automobile travel quickly went from fad to institution, and that as it did many of the 'freedoms' that travellers were supposedly given by the new technology were recognized as having compulsory and even irrational aspects to them. Frenzied driving styles began to appear, caused by inexplicable desires for speed and 'making miles.' As the American historian of popular culture Warren Belasco has pointed out, "(a)uto-tourists noticed almost immediately that driving seemed to impose its own special momentum." This internalized drive, he has argued, was a perceptual holdover from railway travel: while strict schedules and impersonal timetables had seemed stifling, delay and prolonged immobility now seemed unbearable.[25]

The theorist of twentieth-century architecture, technology, and visuality Paul Virilio has referred to automobile driving in the postwar period as a new art, "the art of the dashboard," and to the mode of visual-kinesthetic perception that was associated with it as "dromoscopic."[26] Dromoscopy, according to Virilio, allows automobile travellers to see inanimate objects (mountains, forests, towns) as if they were animated by violent movements. By the attacking and parrying manipulation of accelerator pedal and steering wheel, the driver or "author-composer of the trip" effects a kind of personal control over the landscape scenes that briefly come into view on the vehicle's windscreen prior to their inevitable disintegration as glimpsed through side windows and rear-view mirrors. In this mode of perception "the consistency of places has disappeared in the aesthetic of rapidity, an optical phenomena." Landmarks, communities, and entire regions are reduced to inanimate, powerless images, "the theatrical sets of traversed space."[27] The insulating, ensconcing automobile acts as a kind of vehicle for the simulation of landscape, what with all of its navigational instrumentation and optical architecture, such as cruise control, convertible tops, high-beam headlights, a profusion of mirrors, and ever-larger windows. Car radios—and by the early 1970s, eight-track players and cassette decks—even gave motorists the option of choreographing landscape experiences to their own personalized soundtracks.

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[25] Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, 85-88. Also see Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile*, 153.

[26] Paul Virilio, "Dromoscopy, or The Ecstasy of Enormities" Edward R. O'Neill, trans., *Wide Angle* 20,3 (July 1998), 12.

[27] Virilio, "Dromoscopy," 17.

This dromoscopic way of looking at spaces and places was more than just the result of a new of technology of transportation and travel: it was a mode of visual-vehicular perception that was intimately wrapped up with *spectacle*.[28] The illusion of personal control and unconstrained freedom (the absence of (social) structure) was the key factor that distinguished dromoscopy from the panoramic perception of railway travel. The expanded number of individuated choices and decisions that were made available to the motorized citizen-consumer masqueraded as freedom while simultaneously serving to obscure the structured and structuring nature of the corridors of commodity circulation, state building, internal security, and military logistics that they piggybacked along.[29] In the consumption-driven, Fordist moment of late capitalism, the 'freedom' of leisure time and disposable income generally and 'democratized' objects and activities in particular did not simply hide compulsion and power—they transformed many of the structures, spaces, and discourses by which social, cultural, and economic power was exercised and reproduced into spectacular displays of progress, abundance, and the good life.

Many types of fragmented, localized spectacles were visible and accessible from the highway networks of British Columbia, Canada, and North America. These included unusual natural landmarks and state-managed parks; the birthplaces, homes, and graves

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[28] Indeed, for a brief period in the late 1960s Virilio was affiliated with the Paris-based, ultra-leftist political-cultural group the Situationist International. Many of the Situationists' critiques of postwar Fordist society revolved around the concept of *the spectacle*: not a fragmented series of short-lived spaces, practices, or events, but a kind of pervasive social totality in which the commodity form had invaded almost every corner of daily life. According to Situationist thinker Guy Debord, in late, consumption-driven (i.e.: Fordist) capitalism "the real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions. The commodity is the factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation." *The Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Books, 1987), 47. On the continued relevance of Situationist critiques since the 1960s, see Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in the Postmodern Age* (London: Routledge, 1992). Much of Paul Virilio's work has probed the intricacies of the "society of the spectacle," especially the politics of the vehicle and the cultural connections between visuality, speed, and militarism.

[29] John Stilgoe has pointed out that the Constitution of the United States explicitly forbids its federal government from building roads, the idea being to prevent the 'tyrannical' centralization of state power. The gigantic, federally-funded network of limited access, commerce-facilitating highways that have been built in that country since the late 1940s actually exist under the legal designation "Military and Interstate Highway System." As well as being designed and engineered so as to be largely impervious to either nuclear or conventional attack, this most massive of Cold War weapon systems also included features like five-mile-long stretches of broad, straight highway that doubled (and continue to double) as alternative landing strips for long-range strategic bombers. Stilgoe, *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places* (New York: Walker, 1998), 89-99.

of the wealthy, powerful, and famous; the locations of past battles; the ruins of ancient fortifications and industries; and all manner of heritage sites, ghost towns, and historical precincts.[30] The BC government even built visitors' centres at many of the enormous hydroelectric dams that it constructed in the 1960s. Each of these sites/sights might have imparted specific messages, but what animated them and unified them into a system of spectacular mystification was the logic of Fordism, foremost amongst the trappings of which ranked mobility, highways, and the automobile. The products and the practices associated with automobility—especially highway driving—appeared to materially and discursively embody the dominant ideals of Fordist society: a benevolent, populist state that worked impartially to advance the 'common good'; consumer egalitarianism; unlimited material abundance; technological progress; and a surfeit of 'free time' and disposable income to be spent on intangible things like entertainment, travel, tourism, and sight-seeing—which, as sectors of the economy that seemed to be immune to crises of overaccumulation, were integral components of a consensus- and consumption-driven economy, society, politics, and culture.

So how exactly did the construction, the route, and the form of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride fit within the broader framework of Fordism, spectacle, and the 'good life' in postwar British Columbia? The Social Credit government did not build an east-west through-road in east-central BC during the 1950s or the early and mid-1960s because there were no schemes to develop open pit mines, dams, smelters, pipelines, pulp mills, or other mega-projects there, and thus no need for the expensive fixed infrastructure of commodity circulation. But no such schemes had materialized in the late 1960s, when Social Credit was still in power and when the highway actually *did* get built. This should not be taken to imply that the elimination of the 'missing link' was merely a kind of afterthought or an altruistic attempt to improve the lives of the people who lived in railway-dependant, automotively-isolated places like

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[30] There is an extensive literature on the interconnections between memory, identity, tourism, and historical markers and recreations in twentieth century Canada. However, very few of these have given consideration to the means of travel by which tourists arrived at, moved through, and departed from heritage sites, historical landscapes, and so forth. A partial exception to this is Owen Thomas's short essay on how the African-Canadians and their place in history have been represented in plaques and markers—many of them located beside provincial roads and highways—in the Maritimes. "Cultural Tourism, Commemorative Plaques, and African-Canadian Historiography: Challenging Historical Marginality" *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 29 (58) (November 1996): 431-439.

Longworth, Penny, Dome Creek, Crescent Spur, and—to a lesser extent—McBride. Far from it. This infrastructure project was a strategic necessity for the completion of an east-west belt of automotive circulation all the way across the central portion of the province. It was also intended to facilitate large-scale industrial development, but not in east-central BC, and not for the benefit of that area's communities or residents.

There had been many dozens of sawmills and logging camps in east-central BC since the Grand Trunk Pacific had been completed in 1914. A few mills had been very large, but the majority were small, tenuously capitalized, often family-owned operations that were highly susceptible to variables like increased transportation and labour costs, and fire (at the mill site or in the woods).[31] Because they were totally dependent on railways for the shipment of their products, these mills had always been established next to railroad right-of-way that ran along the valley floor and, in most areas, in close proximity to the Fraser River—no mill had ever been built on what the Grand Trunk Pacific railway had constructed as the 'wrong' sides of the river. By the early 1960s it was becoming apparent that these mills had exhausted most of the easily-accessible timber in the upper Fraser corridor—that is, the timber that was located in or close to the valley bottom and could therefore be transported from the forest to the mills in an inexpensive manner. Also in the early 1960s, BC's interior forest industry was being radically transformed by the Social Credit government's tenure and licensing policies, which strongly favoured consolidation in the hands of a few large, often multinational corporations.[32] In 1955 there had been more than 700 sawmills in the enormous Prince George forest district that east-central BC was a part of. This fell to 450 in the mid-1960s, and to 135 in 1971.[33] Many of the small mills in east-central BC simply went out of business, but most of the large ones were bought up—along with their timber

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[31] Hak, "On the Fringes." The University of Northern British Columbia's ongoing internet-based "Upper Fraser Historical Geography Project" is in the process of studying the connections between these mills and the communities in which they were located. For their results to date, see http://web.unbc.ca/upperfraser [accessed 25 July 2003].

[32] Barman, *The West Beyond the West,* 285-287; Belshaw and Mitchell, "The Economy Since the Great War," 322-324; Patricia Marchak, *Green Gold: The Forestry Industry in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983); Doreen K. Mullins, "Changes in the Location and Structure of the Forest Industry of North Central British Columbia, 1906-1966" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1968).

[33] Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 286.

allowance—and then shut down. For example, the larger of the two sawmills at Penny went out of business in 1959, and the other was shut down six years later after being purchased by the Northwood Mills company of Prince George. And in 1967 a combination of dropping lumber prices, increased freight costs on the CNR, and a dearth of cheaply accessible timber forced the Harstad family to sell their mill at Eddy (four miles east of McBride) to another large Prince George forestry company, which shut the mill down but retained control of its associated timber rights.[34]

The centralization of British Columbia's forest industry was geographic as well as corporate. Because of its extensive rail and road connections, the city of Prince George was one of the locations in the interior that the large timber companies gravitated towards. In addition to building ultramodern sawmills on the outskirts the province's self-proclaimed "northern capital," these companies also established several huge, automated sulfite pulp mills that could turn logs that would have provided minimal returns as lumber into a valuable commodity. Because these pulp mills operated on enormous, long-term economies of scale, and because the chemical- and electricity-intensive processes by which they transformed raw timber into pulp and paper were very expensive, low-cost access to a large and steady supply of woodfibre was vitally important if they were to churn out profits for their owners. The forestry companies that operated out of Prince George could have cheap and flexible access to the necessary tracts of forested land if the provincial government were to construct (and maintain) a high-speed, all-year public highway between Prince George and McBride. However, such a highway would pass through logged-out areas if it were designed to follow the valley floor and pass through the chain of communities that had developed close to the Fraser River and the Canadian National Railways' ex-GTP right-of-way. This would force the large forestry companies to build their own side roads from the new highway up the steep bluffs that separated the valley floor from the untouched forests on the plateaus and benches above, and thus cut into the profitability of their operations. Furthermore, if the communities in the upper Fraser corridor were better connected to the provincial road network, the economic viability of the few independent sawmills still located in them

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[34] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 21-22; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 167-168.

might improve, thereby complicating or driving up the cost of the large forestry corporations' acquisition of their cutting rights.

Conveniently, the 'common sense' logic of commodity circulation and contemporary thinking about the design and engineering of highways combined to allow the Social Credit government to build a highway that accommodated the needs of Prince George's forest industry while keeping the places and people in the upper Fraser corridor in a marginal position relative to automotive networks of circulation—and all without appearing to contradict its populist image as an administration attuned to the needs of small towns, rural communities, and the province's hinterlands. First, the intertwined imperatives of speed, efficiency, and economy of circulation argued for the shortest, most direct route to be selected between Prince George and McBride. Unlike railways, automobile technology was not bound to cling near to the 'zero grade' of the valley floor—grades were not nearly as much a problem for cars and air brake-equipped logging trucks as they were for locomotives on smooth steel rails. Climbs and descents of six, seven, and even eight percent—twenty times steeper than had been permissible under the Grand Trunk Pacific railway's standards of gradient—were perfectly acceptable for a line of circulation that was dedicated to the movement of light, rubber-wheeled vehicles. As a result, it would be possible—and desirable—for a new highway to be routed overland in a due east-west direction, in contrast to the upper Fraser River and the railway, which both approached Prince George from the north because they followed the roundabout 'hook,' 'bend,' or 'arc' of the Rocky Mountain Trench.

By planning to build the highway in a straight line that ran far to the south of the arc of the upper Fraser, the BC Highways Department's surveyors were able to rationalize transportation space in the same way that in 1912-1914 the Grand Trunk Pacific railway had 'annihilated' more than a third of the long-established experiential distance of travel on the meandering river. For more than fifty years the distance by railway between McBride and Prince George had been 142 miles. The hill-climbing, ravine-spanning, forested plateau-traversing route that was plotted out for Highway 16 managed to eliminate almost ten percent of this distance, so that McBride and downtown Prince George would be only 129 miles apart by road. The decision not to run the new highway through the existing communities located along the CNR line and the upper

Fraser River could be justified as being perfectly in step with the 'common sense' logic of providing automobile travellers with the fastest, most fuel efficient and convenient route between major centres like Prince George and Edmonton. This appearance of attending to the so-called 'greater good'—i.e.: to the interests of the motoring public—also conveniently served to spatially naturalize and politically neutralize the fact that this publicly-funded, publicly-owned, and publicly-maintained corridor of automotive circulation just happened to provide a direct link between the pulp mills of Prince George and large stands of untouched forest in east-central BC.

Furthermore, the Highways Department designed and engineered this section of Highway 16 on a 'limited access' model, just like the stretches of highway that were constructed during the mid and late 1960s in the Yellowhead Pass and the North Thompson River valley. Beginning in the mid-1950s, several surveys were made of the area between Prince George and McBride, both on the ground and through the use of aerial photography. Each time one of these surveys had been completed and a route decided on, the most important part of the project—that which involved actually clearing and grading a right-of-way, putting down a road surface, building bridges, etc.—was delayed in favour of other regional infrastructure priorities. By the time the elimination of east-central BC's 'missing link' had again been deemed a priority, the Highways Department's standards of construction had been raised to a new level that required another series of surveys to be done in order to find a more suitable route.[35] As one local historian has summarized these delays, "the longer the highway took to build, the higher were the standards required, and it always seemed to be at least one jump behind."[36]

By the mid-1960s the principle of limited access was firmly established as a norm amongst the planners and engineers who surveyed, designed, and built highways in North America, including British Columbia. Limited access was a means of controlling and

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[35] The Parks Branch's placement of the Willow River Crossing reserve in 1961 can be read as an indication of the uncertainty about the future highway's route during that period, or of the Parks Branch having been out of the loop when it came to major infrastructure decisions. Similarly, the fact that none of the Parks reserves that were inspected in the summer of 1964 were located along the upper Fraser road suggests that by that time plans calling for the highway to follow a more southerly, 'high' route had become common knowledge within government agencies.

[36] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 343.

streamlining the flow of traffic, and thereby increasing the speeds and improving the safety (or predictability) of automotive circulation. The ideal limited access road had a very wide right-of-way—at least three times wider than the actual surface of the road—and could only be entered or exited at designated points that had either been constructed or approved of by the highway authority. This was meant to reduce the hazard created by vehicles—usually driven by local residents—coming into the flow of traffic at slow speeds from right angles, such as driveways, gas stations, fruit stands, and side roads. It also helped to restrict the location and the appearance of roadside developments. No distracting, view-cluttering signs or billboards that advertised the next gas station, restaurant, motel, or scenic attraction were allowed in the right-of-way—only standardized mileage markers and symbolic representations of the services that were available at the next stopping place were permitted.[37] Annual clearing and the application of herbicides kept the broad verges of the right-of-way clear of brush and plant growth, thereby improving motorists' sight lines and discouraging animals from grazing near the road. Long, uncluttered lines of sight were an especially important feature of limited access highways because of the precarious relationship between speed, vision, and motorists' control over the trajectories followed by their vehicles. As John Jakle, the historical geographer of the American roadside has pointed out, "as speed of highway travel increases, [vehicle drivers'] concentration fixes on the approaching ribbon of road more and more. The point of concentration recedes with acceleration, the eye focusing at 25mph some 600 feet ahead, at 45 mph some 1,200 feet, and at 65 mph some 2,000 feet."[38] Therefore the minimization of curvature, rather than of gradient, was the key concern for those who constructed modern highways. A highway that rose and fell but was relatively straight was preferable to a winding, level highway because its longer lines-of-sight would allow automobiles to be driven at higher speeds and with greater safety (i.e.: predictability). Predicated as they were on increasing the speed and improving the efficiency of circulation, the technical features associated with limited

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[37] John Robinson, *Highways and Our Environment* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 51-55, 128-136. On the role of speed, the view from the road, and streamline aesthetics in the early development of limited access highways on the west coast of North America, see Matthew W. Roth, "Mulholland Highway and the Engineering Culture of Los Angeles in the 1920s" *Technology and Culture* 40,3 (July 1999): 545-575.

access highways provided a whole series of reasons to avoid places like Aleza Lake, Hansard, Sinclair Mills, and Longworth when building a highway to McBride. And how could residents of those places have argued against the 'common good' of speed, safety, and cost-efficiency?

If the provincial government and Highways Department had been pressed for even more justifications for why the new highway did not go to, through, or even close to those communities, they could have also pointed out that by avoiding peopled places many of the costs, disputes, and delays related to the expropriation of property for new or improved rights-of-way would be eliminated. By designing the route of the Prince George-McBride highway link so that it was located far away from almost every existing centre of population or historical settlement, almost its entire 129-mile length would traverse unalienated, undeveloped, unlogged, and 'free' Crown lands that the provincial government could retain control over.

The needs of the large forest corporations with interests in Prince George, the political ideology of the Social Credit government, and the institutional culture of the provincial Highways Department neatly meshed together. This happy overlapping of interests subsequently materialized in the route and form of the highway that came to bridge the 'gap' between Prince George and McBride. That portion of Highway 16 was not conceived, designed, or constructed with the intention of providing a connection to the provincial highway network for the residents, communities, and businesses of east-central BC—far from it. Nor were its route and form neutral, natural, 'common sense' things that just conveniently happened to turn out the way they did. Although the provincial government never made an announcement that explained exactly why the stretch of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride was to be constructed, or why it followed a specific route and took a certain form, it seems abundantly clear that it was imagined, designed, and constructed to serve dual purposes. The first was to facilitate the movement of high-speed, long-distance automobile traffic *through* the intervening, in-between space of east-central BC, much as the parallel-running Grand Trunk Pacific railway had been meant to, more than fifty years before. The second, less

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[38] John A. Jakle, "Travelers' Impressions of the National Road" in Karl Raitz, ed., *The National Road* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 253.

obvious purpose was to facilitate—and indirectly subsidize—the extraction of large volumes of timber from east-central BC's previously inaccessible forests and the delivery of this woodfibre to the large, new pulp and saw mills in Prince George. Through both of these purposes, the long-awaited highway was to have a negative impact on the more than a dozen small but long-established communities located along the valley bottom in the upper Fraser corridor.

The provincial government in February 1967 let the contracts that authorized construction to finally begin on the elimination of east-central British Columbia's automotive 'missing link.' Clearing of the designated right-of-way was to begin in the spring of that year.[39] Just a few weeks after the road building contracts were formally approved, Northwood Mills of Prince George bought out the four largest sawmills that were still operating in the 'gap'—three at Dome Creek, and the Leboe family's mill at Crescent Spur. All of these mills were permanently shut down after progress in the construction on the highway right-of-way made it feasible for logging trucks to haul timber from the previously inaccessible forests covered under the Dome Creek and Crescent Spur mills' timber licenses west to Northwood's Prince George mills.[40]

3.2 "No Communities to be Served Along the Dream Road"

Canadian topographical survey maps that were produced in the early 1970s by a combination of aerial photography and on-the-ground inspections provide a way to examine the spatial relations between the communities of east-central BC and the three corridors of circulation that ran through the Rocky Mountain Trench: the Fraser River, the railroad built by the Grand Trunk Pacific and now owned by the CNR, and new highway.[41] On a scale of 1:50,000 and from the geo-strategic perspective of a high-altitude airplane, these places and corridors at first appear to be situated in close proximity to each other, crowded together around the floor of the Trench. But closer

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[39] *Robson Valley Echo* 1 March 1967, 1.

[40] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 38, 44.

[41] Canada. Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Surveys and Mapping Branch, "Topographic Maps 1:50,000." From west to east, see sheets: 93 H/13 (Hutton); H/14 (Penny); H/11 (Dome Creek); H/10 (Loos); H/7 (Goat River); H/8 (McBride); H/1 (Eddy); 83 E/4 (Croydon).

inspection shows that this was not actually the case. The sweeping, undulating route of Highway 16 was located high above the valley floor, and avoided every community in the upper Fraser corridor except for McBride—and a bypass was eventually built around it too. But whereas this bypass ran only a few hundred feet from McBride's town centre, at no other point did the highway come within two miles (as the crow flies) of any other existing community. This might seem like an insignificant distance, but the intervening space was comprised steep bluffs and impenetrable, old-growth spruce forests crisscrossed by creeks, ravines, and gullies, rather than rolling hills, cleared farmland, or even old clearcuts. As many as twenty-five miles of this type of terrain separated the highway from the arc of the upper Fraser River in the area due east of Prince George.

From the eastern outskirts of Prince George all the way to a point three miles west of McBride, the new highway right-of-way only traversed existing lots at Purden Lake, thirty-five miles east of Prince George, where an entrepreneur had begun to develop a ski hill, fishing lodge, and campgrounds that were oriented towards passing auto-tourists, and where the Parks Branch had established several roadside recreational reserves.[42] It was physically possible for residents of the East Line communities that were connected by the old upper Fraser road to drive southwards to the new highway. They could do this by traversing the extensive, maze-like networks of logging roads in the Willow and Bowron river watersheds. However, except on Sundays when logging operations were usually at a standstill it was risky for residents to drive on these narrow, winding, and extremely rough roads because they were also travelled frequently and at unpredictable intervals by fast-moving, heavily loaded logging trucks, whose movements between cutting areas and the highway to Prince George were coordinated from afar by shortwave radio. If someone from Willow River, Aleza Lake, Hansard, or Sinclair Mills had the need or desire to travel eastwards on the new highway, it was safer and often faster—though far from fuel efficient—for them to backtrack west to Prince George by way of the old upper Fraser road, and then head east after they reached the junction with the new highway.

The small communities of Hutton, Longworth, and Penny remained entirely disconnected from the provincial road network, even though the route of Highway 16 ran

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[42] BC Lands. Box 8. Files 1-4-1-50 through 1-4-1-54 (Purden).

just a few miles to the south of them. Sometime during the mid-1960s the BC Highways Department struck a deal with Canadian National Railways that allowed the hated ferry crossing at Hansard to be eliminated.[43] Timber decking, a battery of warning lights, and traffic control signals were added to the railway company's large span across the Fraser at that location, thus allowing automobiles to cross between the north and south side of the river during times when there was no approaching train traffic. [Image 20] However, the upper Fraser road still terminated at Sinclair Mills—it had not been extended further east along the north bank of the river since the 1940s. And whereas the Grand Trunk Pacific had built its railroad on the north side of the river between Hansard and Dome Creek in order to avoid the steep terrain on the opposite side, the entire length of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride was located on the south side, high above the valley floor. Thus the communities along the GTP/CNR line between Sinclair Mills and the trans-Fraser railway bridge at Dome Creek were completely isolated from the highway, on what had abruptly been made into the new 'wrong' side of the river, where an impersonal, inflexible railway that was in the process of phasing out many of its locally-oriented services provided the only access to modern networks of transportation and communication.[44] The few families who were still farming at Hutton remained totally cut off from the highway and entirely dependent on the CNR. Hutton was several miles overland north of the Grand Canyon of the Fraser, which was as invisible from the new highway as it had been from the GTP/CNR's railroad line. The high bluffs along the river upstream and downstream of that tortuous constriction made it impossible for access roads to be built to the riverside. However, abandoned skid roads from past logging operations were repaired and extended southwards on the opposite side of the wide,

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[43] See above, pages 144-146.

[44] With the introduction of diesel locomotives, radio communications, remote signal, computerized traffic controls, and other technologies and systems during the 1950s and 1960s, many of the railway stations that had been built at regular intervals to serve the technical needs of the rail-locomotive mechanism became redundant, which resulted in a decrease in passenger service for the communities that had developed around those stations. For example, all of the water towers, coal docks, and telegraph operators—and most of the station depots and agents—along the CNR's lines in east-central BC were removed during the late 1950s and early 1960s. On the branch line to Prince Rupert, the depots at Giscome, Dewey, Longworth, Bend, Crescent Spur, Legrand, Raush Valley, Croydon, Tete Jaune, Morey, Rainbow, and Yellowhead had been removed from the railway right-of-way by 1968. Bohi, *Canadian National Depots*, 85-119; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 143-144; *Robson Valley Echo* 26 Sept 1962, 4.

IMAGE 20 Looking west over the dual-use bridge that carries both the Upper Fraser road and the Canadian National Railways line across the Fraser River at Hansard, 1976. Photograph by Kent Sedgwick. Courtesy of Kent Sedgwick and UNBC's Upper Fraser Mill Town Historical Geography Project.

meandering course of the Fraser from both Longworth and Penny, so that they intersected with Highway 16. Many of the remaining residents of Longworth and Penny acquired cars and trucks, and would park them on the south side of the river at these access roads' 'landings.' When the unpredictable, fluctuating Fraser was ice-free and not in flood, they used powerboats and canoes with outboard motors to get back and forth across the river between their vehicles and their homes. In winters that were cold enough, an ice bridge would be built across the Fraser River between Penny and Penny landing. For a few months this would allow the bravest residents to drive all the way from their front doors to Prince George in order to pick up groceries—the stores in Penny, Longworth, Dome Creek, and Crescent Spur having closed along with the last local sawmills.[45] However, when the ice was forming or breaking up, and in winters when the temperature did not drop low enough long enough for the river to freeze solid, the people who lived in Penny and Longworth had to depend entirely on the CNR for their connection to 'the outside world.'[46]

Further to the east, the sixty or so farmers, retirees, truck loggers, and railway maintenance workers who remained in Crescent Spur and in Dome Creek after the local sawmills and stores had been shut down were allowed access to Highway 16 by very steep gravel roads that were three and four miles long, respectively. The provincial Highways Department had not specifically requested the construction of these connecting roads, even though these communities were still two of the larger centres of population in east-central BC. Instead, they had been built by the Highway 16 construction contractors, who had needed a way to get machinery, materials, and workers from the trackside supply dumps that they had assembled in Crescent Spur and Dome Creek up to the designated stretches of right-of-way that they had been paid to clear, grade, or pave. To

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[45] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 156, 194-196. Ice bridges were being built in Penny as early as 1972, but whether or not they were ever built at Longworth is unknown. Sometime in the early 1990s the upper Fraser road was pushed through to Hutton, and in the mid 1990s to Longworth. However, as of the summer of 1999 the road had still not reached Penny.

[46] Figures that the CNR submitted by as part of a 1976 proposal to eliminate the station at Penny show the extent to which that community remained dependant on the railway and, by extension, disconnected from the highway. Perhaps most strikingly, in the period 1973-1975 the forty residents of Penny purchased 217 passenger tickets, a quarter the number (857) that the 650 residents of McBride did, even though McBride's population of was fifteen times larger than Penny's. Canadian National Railways, "Proposed Agency Closings Under the Servocentre Concept, Prince George Territory" (1976), no pagination.

speed up the construction process, reduce costs, and spread public money around amongst the companies of the highway building industry, the provincial government had divided the surveyed, 129-mile-long route of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride into many sections of between nine and fifteen miles in length, each of which represented a separate contract.[47] Had the entire length of the new highway been covered under a single contract, and construction conducted from west to east without interruption, it is quite possible that Dome Creek and Crescent Spur would not have been left with these connections to the highway. This is what had happened to Kidd, Bend, Urling, Goat River, Rider, and Legrand, all of which by the late 1960s were unpopulated or barely populated points along the railway line, identifiable to railway travellers only by a few mostly abandoned homes and fields, perhaps a decrepit, disused depot building, and trackside station signboards.

The Highway 16 right-of-way sliced through several dozen farms in the agricultural district around McBride. Many were cut in two, and for some farmers—especially those whose properties the highway ran through on a curve, rather than in a straight line—the Highways Department's application of the limited access principle subsequently made it very difficult to move animals, materials, and machinery between their divided holdings.[48] However, this situation was not as common or as complicated as it might have been. To the east of McBride the highway had been located on the north side of the Fraser River and therefore passed through the sparsely populated Beaver, Lee, and North Croydon areas instead of through Eddy, Raush Valley, Dunster, and Croydon, which were the long-established farming communities that had developed on the south side of the river around the like-named railway stations. None of these latter places ended up being visible from Highway 16, and the narrow, winding, gravel and dirt road that passed through them—the original road between McBride and Tête Jaune Cache—soon fell into disrepair beyond Croydon. By the mid-1970s it was used primarily by local hunters aiming to get off the beaten path.[49]

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[47] *Robson Valley Echo* 1 March 1967, 1; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 352.

[48] *Robson Valley Courier* 29 January 1970, 2; Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 344.

[49] A few years later, in the late 1970s, the old road was cleared and given major repairs when a sawmill near Tête Jaune Cache began drawing second-growth timber from forests on the south side of the Fraser as

Having outlined the rather tenuous, decidedly 'second class,' and even non-existent relations between peopled places in the upper Fraser River corridor and the dominating new network and mode of circulation that ran through east-central BC, it is worth backtracking a bit to examine the experiences of a few of first motorists who drove Highway 16 between McBride and Prince George. In the summer of 1968 a retired Connecticut couple undertook to travel to British Columbia's Barkerville provincial heritage site by way of the Calgary Stampede, Edmonton Klondike Days, Yellowhead Pass, and Prince George. Frank Coutant was the organizer, photographer, and recorder of this carefully planned journey, and he left behind a written account of he and his wife's trip, including a description of their passage over the not officially opened, not entirely completed route of Highway 16 between McBride and Prince George. Such a manuscript is quite rare, given that after the 1940s the photo album and slide tray had almost entirely supplanted the diary and journal as the means by which people recorded information about their travels.

For the Coutants—or at least for Frank—part of the thrill of a trip that took in so many heritage sites and historically-themed celebrations (fragmented spectacles) was the opportunity to play modern-day automotive pioneers or trailblazers along the route of the highway that would soon cut through east-central BC. Hence his referring to his written account of the journey as "an adventurous exploration [...] over a highway of the future for historical research."[50] In the process of taking a shortcut from Edmonton to Barkerville via the Yellowhead Pass, the Coutants were to be amongst the first to experience what would soon be an easily and publicly accessible visual-vehicular corridor between Tête Jaune Cache and Prince George.

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west far as Croydon. However, public access to this nominally public road was effectively restricted by its commercial usage. Large signs posted beside the road near Croydon and Tête Jaune Cache advised motorists that the flow of traffic on the narrow, winding road was directed by the forestry company's shortwave radio dispatcher, who coordinated the inward and outward movements of unloaded and loaded logging trucks. Drivers were warned that if they used the road between dawn and dusk, from Monday to Saturday and their vehicles were not equipped with shortwave radio receivers they were at serious risk of collision with a speeding logging truck.

[50] University of British Columbia Special Collections. Frank R. Coutant, "To Barkerville, B.C. via Calgary Stampede, Edmonton Klondike Days, Yellowhead Pass and Prince George: An Adventurous Exploration by Frank R. Coutant Over a Highway of the Future for Historical Research, July 1968."

Ironically, most of the Coutants' motor touring in western Canada was actually conducted by rental car and Greyhound bus. From Edmonton to Valemount, they rode aboard a Greyhound bus on a run to Vancouver that had been inaugurated only a few weeks prior to their arrival.[51] Frank Coutant described the new but still not entirely finished highway through the Yellowhead Pass and Mount Robson Park as being in "terrible condition." His main complaint was with the series of rough detours that led to temporary Bailey bridges in locations where large new steel and concrete bridges were being built to span creeks, rivers, and ravines. He noted that the Yellowhead Highway Association, which was headquartered in Edmonton, was "bursting with indignation" over the highway's "disgraceful condition," before ominously adding that "(w)e too were indignant—until we saw a lot worse farther along past McBride." However, Frank Coutant did single out the bus driver for praise, explaining that he had been "highly cooperative in pointing out scenic spots for my photographs, including pointing out where two cars that did not make the detours and crashed down into the gullies." Whether or not these scenic spots included the portals to Mount Robson Park and the pullout and viewpoint in the meadows near the foot of 'The Monarch of the Canadian Rockies' is unknown, as Coutant was far more interested in describing the conditions of the highway than in looking at the landscapes that were visible from it.

From Valemount to McBride and thence to Prince George, the Coutants travelled with a family friend, a resident of McBride who drove a truck that had "so much mud clearance that a ladder would have been a help in boarding it." The drive from Valemount to McBride was described as "somewhat uneventful." "Perhaps we were in the domain of some more energetic [road maintenance] contractor, who filled in the deepest holes and put in more Bailey bridges," Coutant sarcastically speculated. The still-under-construction highway right-of-way between McBride and Prince George, on the other hand, was a deemed the "Nightmare Trail": "165 miles of abandoned moose trail," passage along which evoked "horrible thoughts," including visions of the 1965 Hope Slide in which hundreds of millions of tons of rock had swept over the Crowsnest

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[51] This passenger service was initiated on June 27th, 1968, to be precise. Prior to that date, all Greyhound service between Edmonton and southern British Columbia had gone by way of Calgary. Valemount Historic Society, *Yellowhead Pass*, 175.

Highway east of Hope, killing four. Frank Coutant did acknowledge that the BC Highways Department officially forbade public use of the right-of-way (but did not enforce this closure), and that his party's drive to Prince George was conducted "much against the wishes of the contractors along the way," but nevertheless expressed himself aghast at how difficult the drive was.[52] In addition to being bothered by the many rough and lengthy detours that led to narrow Bailey bridges in locations where high steel bridges would one day be built, Coutant was very uneasy about the driving surface—or absence thereof—in places where there were supposed to be several lanes of paved highway. Even though he was a passenger on this journey and therefore better able to look around than his driving host, Coutant offered neither description nor evaluation of the scenery visible from the right-of-way. His eyes were firmly fixed to the road, and he only described the presence of "churning mud," "sliding mud," "walls and cliffs of mud," "mud up to the floorboards," and "millions of tons of mud." It is as though the landscape being passed through was entirely overshadowed, obscured, or muddied by the condition of the road surface and right-of-way.

Frank Coutant did make one especially significant observation about places that he did *not* see or pass through during his drive to Prince George. He wrote that "(t)here are no communities to be served along the dream road" that would become Highway 16, and added that "*a few miles to the north the Canadian National Railway serves small towns that have little prospect of becoming more than rural villages*. [emphasis added]" From the western outskirts of McBride all the way to the eastern outskirts of Prince George, not a single building, field, telephone pole, electrical transmission line, or other trace of habitation was to be seen from the highway right-of-way. At this time, the only indicators that Crescent Spur and Dome Creek even existed were the large muddy intersections with the tote roads that construction equipment and materials were being hauled up from the trackside supply dumps located in those communities. Because there were no road signs to point out the presence of Dome Creek or Crescent Spur, the

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[52] Two months earlier the *McBride Courier* had reported that Highway 16 was "passable" from Tête Jaune Cache westward to a point near Crescent Spur, but was "impassable" between that point and Dome Creek. 2 May 1968, 1.

Coutant's driver was probably responsible for informing them about these invisible, out-of-the-way places.

A few months later, in the fall of 1968, the *Prince George Progress* sent staff writer Gray Wheeler and managing editor Mel Rothenburger (who acted as both driver and photographer) to investigate the Highway 16 corridor as far east as Jasper.[53] Their itinerary called for them to drive straight through to Jasper, overnight there, and then pause in McBride to interview the mayor while making the return trip to Prince George. They were to accumulate information about the condition of the highway, opportunities for development along it, and "other interesting features of the route." On its own and when compared with Frank Coutant's rather melodramatic account, the illustrated two-page "traveler's guide to McBride Highway" that was published in the *Progress* provides more insight into the relations between the route and form of the new highway, the views that were available from it, and the communities that it did and did not pass through

Revealing as much about Gray and Rotherburger's priorities as it about did the conditions that they encountered, the *Progress* article ran with the byline: "Pavement, gravel, pavement, detour, gravel, detour, detour, gravel… that's the situation on the McBride Highway 16." The first half of their article was devoted to a detailed description of the highway. They even included a small odometer-based chart that divided the 241-mile drive into four sections and calculated how many miles of gravel and how many miles of pavement were traversed in each. By their numbers, more than half of the 129 miles of pavement that they drove on while making their way east were located in the previously upgraded stretch of Highway 16 between Tête Jaune Cache and Jasper.

As in Frank Coutant's account, a pattern discernable in the *Progress* report suggests that the route and the form of the still yet-to-be completed highway played an important role in both how and what motorists saw as they travelled through east-central BC. The article began by explaining that when departing from Prince George, thirteen miles of paved highway led "the *enthusiastic* traveller to a junction, the main road being east to McBride and the other north-east to Shelley. Pavement ends abruptly at the junction and *enthusiasm wanes* at the prospect of twelve miles of rough road on which

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[53] *Prince George Progress* 9 October 1968, 6-7.

forty-five miles an hour is pretty well top speed. [emphases added]" After "grinding along for awhile" through an area which merited no differentiating description, a detour brought the motoring journalists to a temporary Bailey bridge over the Willow River. On the other side they found themselves again driving on "smooth, heavenly blacktop." The next forty miles of highway were described as presenting "burned out but picturesque scenery, and the sweeping curves of the highway allow for very relaxed driving." After "40 minutes of blissful driving," the road surface began to alternate between gravel, pavement, and detours until it reached the intersection with the Dome Creek tote road, seventy-nine miles east of Prince George.

Construction was ongoing beyond that point, and for the next few miles automobile travellers were "forced to crawl along at five miles an hour, dodging gravel trucks and graders" on a roadbed so rough that the car had to be put into its lowest forward gear. While slowly making their way through this construction zone, the *Progress* team observed "the mountains becoming progressively more rugged as the miles go by." After several miles at this frustrating pace, the road surface again returned to gravel. The scenery visible while driving over the next forty miles of dusty gravel road elicited no comment. A few miles of paved country road on each side of McBride led drivers through the centre of that "small town with a future." To the east of McBride, the existing road to Jasper was deemed "pretty rugged, with fist sized rocks protruding from the hardened surface, but quality gradually changes until the trip becomes quite enjoyable. [...] The road continues as such for 50 miles, winding through the beautiful countryside and exposing scenic settings unmatched anywhere." At the Tête Jaune Cache highway junction, the motorist returned to a freshly paved surface for the rest of the trip. Most of the sixty-five-mile stretch of highway to Jasper was located inside Mount Robson and Jasper parks, and was judged to be "extremely scenic, nestled deep in high, rugged snow-capped mountains." "The only problem to mar a perfect drive," the *Progress* team reported, "is the fact that there are several long distances without white lines. The pavement is new and black and therefore absorbs much of the light from the car at night. With the lack of a white line for guidance, it takes quite a bit of concentration to stay square on the road."

With or without white lines to assist night drivers, the wide new lanes of blacktop allowed for "blissful driving." In addition to facilitating the use of the cruise-control feature then available on many newer cars, the high speeds, sweeping curves, and insulation from the vagaries and irregularities of the surrounding terrain that this kind of highway allowed also seems to have been conducive to a certain kind of relationship between motorists and the spaces they traversed. The stretch of highway through the Yellowhead Pass was a "perfect drive," and the landscape visible from it was "extremely scenic." In the same way, the thirteen-mile-long stretch of pavement east of Prince George had inspired enthusiasm in drivers; its termination near Shelley ended that enthusiasm. Even spruce forests and hillsides that had been "burned out" by forest fires seemed to be "picturesque" when they were viewed while speedily moving along the forty-one miles of "heavenly blacktop" east of the Willow River. On the other hand, the numerous stretches of gravel road that were traversed— including the forty-eight miles between Dome Creek and McBride—elicited complaints about constraints on driving speed rather than comments about the landscapes visible from the road. The only exception to this was on the gravel road east of McBride, where the scenery only became attractive (and noticeable) after the "rugged" stretch ended and the highway became more like "a good country road."

The type of road surface and its general condition played an important role in how much of a driver's (and to a lesser extent, a passenger's) attention had to be directed towards it when driving, and, correspondingly, how much attention could be directed elsewhere, including towards roadside scenery. In the same way that the Prince George journalists only noticed the nearby mountains "becoming progressively more rugged" when the slow pace and numerous pauses mandated by construction allowed them to look more closely at their surroundings, Frank Coutant only mentioned thinking about "scenic spots for my photographs" when he was being chauffeured by Greyhound over the new highway between Jasper and Valemount. Otherwise he made no comments about scenery, and focussed his attention on the difficulties of driving in a linear construction zone that traversed many long patches of the troublesome blue clay-type soils that had plagued the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific's line through east-central BC more than fifty years before.

Also like the Coutants a few months before them, the motoring journalists from Prince George did not bother to descend the steep, gravel tote roads between the highway right-of-way and Dome Creek and Crescent Spur, several miles to the north on the valley floor. They also did not mention the numerous other places in the upper Fraser corridor that were isolated and invisible from the new highway. The form and route of the highway and also these representations of the experience of driving along the highway implied that these invisible places and their residents were not as important as the facilitation of high-speed, long-distance through traffic. In fact, both of these 1968 accounts clearly identified McBride—the only community that the highway actually passed through—as the only truly noteworthy place in the upper Fraser corridor. Everywhere else was marginal and unseen because of their being situated far off the beaten path, accessible only by slow back roads, rough and roundabout logging roads, steep tote roads, and, in still a few cases, exclusively by railroad. Two of the photographs that were selected to illustrate the *Prince George Progress* article hinted at the future of places separated from or poorly connected to the new network of automotive circulation: they showed old abandoned and vandalized trappers' cabins, a pair of 'eyesores' that were visible—for the time being—from two of the temporary Bailey bridge detours that traffic followed while high steel bridges were under construction.

McBride, on the other hand, was considered a "small town with a future" now that the highway was nearing completion. According to Wheeler and Rothenburger, McBride was "not a 'shack town' by any means," despite their observation that many of its homes appeared to "straggle around the outskirts somewhat." They projected that because of its strategic location as the only town on the highway between Jasper and Prince George, "tourism could feasibly become one of McBride's most important industries." "With the coming of heavy traffic," they predicted, McBride would become "a natural stop-off for tourists and truckers," and this would lead to the development of new gas stations, restaurants, motels, and perhaps even a destination ski hill in the future. During their interview with Steve Kolida, the mayor of McBride, the Prince George reporters were bombarded with boosterish prognostications about future growth in population and business and also with complaints about how certain aspects of the new highway's route, form, and signage were making McBride look bad while holding back industrious local

merchants. Poorly banked curves just west of town were blamed for several recent accidents. Investment in new gas stations, motels, and other motorist-oriented businesses was being delayed because the Highways Department could not decide where to locate the bypass that would liberate drivers from having to slowly pass through McBride's town centre. And perhaps worst of all, many sight-seers and pleasure travellers had been kept away during the height of the summer tourist season by the roadside signboards located near Prince George and at the junction of Highways 5 and 16 that advised motorists that the new stretch of highway was not yet officially open to through-traffic.

These two accounts from 1968 both clearly illustrate aspects of the dromoscopic mode of visual-vehicular perception described by Paul Virilio. In each party's travelogue a fixation with high speeds can be discerned, a fixation which manifested itself as a sense of frustration whenever and wherever the achievement of what was felt to be a normal highway speed (i.e.: sixty-five miles per hour) was hindered by road conditions, detours, or some other local situation. One can also see how drivers' freedom/compulsion to control their vehicles had an affect on they and their passengers' experiences of landscape. For example, even though he was riding in the 'shotgun' position between McBride and Prince George, Frank Coutant did little service as a lookout. His attention was entirely absorbed by the clinging, churning mud that surrounded the vehicle that was transporting him through space . Except for noting the presence of deep, rocky gorges—which he worried about falling into—Coutant made no comments about the forests, rivers, and mountains that were visible along the future highway corridor. On the other hand, Wheeler and Rothenburger travelled along a line of circulation that had been vastly improved by several months of intensive construction. On stretches where they could drive at a relatively high speed, they did so, and described the evanescent landscape that they passed through as beautiful and picturesque. Conversely, the surrounding landscape either went unnoticed or was described as being rugged and sublime along those stretches where they had to slow down because of construction, obstructions, rough driving surfaces, or bridge detours

Three other significant points are raised in the accounts by Frank Coutant and the *Prince George Progress* team. First, they also demonstrate how Virilio's concept of dromoscopy overlooks the powerful mediating role played by the route, form, structures,

and general conditions of the lines of circulation that automobiles moved along. That is to say, dromoscopic experiences of landscape involved a constant tension between driver (and to a much lesser extent, passengers), vehicle, and road. Lines and networks of automotive circulation played a role in "the art of the dashboard" not only in terms of the differences between mud, gravel, and paved road surfaces, but also on the broader level of exactly which spaces and places they had been intentionally designed to connect, traverse, pass through, and pass by, and what spaces and places they had intentionally been routed away from. In 1968 Frank Coutant, Gray Wheeler, Mel Rothenburger, and everyone else who chose to drive between Jasper and Prince George via Highway 16 was *not* able to choose whether or not they would drive through McBride. Similarly, Highway 16 crossed the upper Fraser River at only one point—just east of McBride. This was the only point between McBride and Prince George at which highway travellers could actually glimpse the river. Unless they madly decided to drive their cars along the CNR's railroad tracks, or to float them down the Fraser on a raft, the motorists who travelled through the upper Fraser corridor had no choice but to follow Highway 16's route along the south side of the river between Prince George and McBride and along the north side between McBride and Yellowhead Lake. The practice and experience of travelling through spaces and places by automobile—and of seeing spaces and places *through* the automobile—were not nearly as whimsical as Virilio implies. In fact, dromoscopy had as much in common with the structured, structuring, and mechanically reproduced panoramic perception associated with railway travel as it did differences.

This leads to the second point, which needs some elaboration. To a large degree these two accounts from 1968 anticipated what would become the structured and stereotypical—but not quite standardized—experience of space, place, and landscape for the future automobile travellers who would traverse Highway 16's route through east-central BC. When the Coutants and the Prince George newspapermen drove between Prince George and Jasper they only passed through and only saw one town: McBride. With the possible exception of the clusters of roadside development at Purden and Mount Robson, no other community was travelled to or through. While it may very well have been physically *possible* to turn off the highway at various points in order to descend the slow, narrow, and often steep dirt or gravel roads that led to Red Pass Junction, Tête

Jaune Cache, Dunster, Crescent Spur, Dome Creek, Hansard, and Aleza Lake, for the vast majority of travellers doing so would have meant going far out of their way, and 'off the beaten path.' In addition to deviating from the dominant visual-vehicular narrative of east-central BC, the need to greatly reduce their vehicle's speed in order to safely move along bumpy, winding, narrow roads with dangerously short lines of sight represented a major interruption to schedules, to the internalized momentum that impelled drivers to 'make miles,' and to what had become perceptually or cognitively entrenched as the 'normal' automobile-borne experience of landscape—that is, the high-speed, long-distance dromoscopic views provided by limited access highways.

After the length of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride was made passable, the majority of the automobiles that traversed east-central BC did so not for an "adventurous exploration" of the area, but in order to pass through it; to utilize it as a corridor that facilitated speedy and efficient movement between places located beyond it, like Edmonton and Prince George. Their primary concern was the experiential 'annihilation' of the distance that separated them from their objective. The movements and stopping patterns of tractor-trailer trucks, commercial vehicles, business travellers, people seeking work in new communities, and people going to visit friends and family were not predicated on the leisurely pace and mildly inquisitive gaze of the nostalgic auto-tourist of the early twentieth century. They tended to drive quickly, directly, and for long periods of time when traversing the intervening space between their points of departure and destination, stopping for food, gas, lodgings, leg-stretches, and scenic diversions when and where it they found it convenient or necessary.

Even those automobile travellers who possessed both the time and the desire to look around and explore the side roads that branched off the new limited access highway's already well beaten path by exploiting the flexible, consumer-friendly relation between vehicle and route in the automotive mode of circulation tended to do so in a fairly predictable manner.[54] There was no need for sightseeing auto-tourists to go

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[54] According to Warren Belasco, by the 1940s automobile tourism in America had largely reverted to a fast, utilitarian, goal-oriented practice whereby motorists moved between "stereotyped spectacular sights," in a manner reminiscent of the railway tourism that the automobile had originally provided a flexible, nostalgic, and personalized alternative to. *Americans on the Road*, 88-90. Also see Jakle, *The Tourist*; Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile*, 153-154.

exploring down slow, rough, and unfamiliar side roads when they were beckoned by the predictable, easily accessible, highly visible, well-marked, and government approved system of rest stop toilets, picnic site tables, barbecue pits, bear-proof garbage barrels, photographic viewpoints, 'stops of interest,' and other roadside structures, spaces, signs, and attractions that had been thoughtfully constructed at regular intervals along provincial highway rights-of-way. [See Images 18 and 19] Perhaps part of the time mentally set aside for travel might be set aside in order that an interesting looking side road could be investigated, but such whimsical digressions and deviations were few and far between—the internalized drive to 'make miles' and the exhilaration of high speeds meant that not every single road intersected by the highway that *could* be investigated *would* be. Furthermore, auto-tourists' explorations of east-central BC's side roads were always predicated on an inevitable return to the flow of the highway, and had to be planned in a way that ensured that the car would not run out of gas and that the night's accommodations could be reached in a timely manner.

Stereotypical driving patterns shaped by the structures and operational imperatives of automobility were probably especially prevalent in east-central BC. The route and form of Highway 16 and the generally monotonous landscapes of spruce forest and mountains that were visible from it impelled motorists to hurry towards their destination. Also, McBride and the upper Fraser corridor were far from being an established auto-tourist destination—area residents and businesses had either very little or no previous experience dealing with automotive through-traffic or the capricious habits and behaviours of motorists. From Tête Jaune Cache west, none of the differentiated sights/sites that had previously been constructed and/or 'annihilated' by railway companies—such as Mount Rider, the Haggard Glacier, the Grand Canyon, and the Fraser River itself—were visible from the highway. Even the 'wildlife museum' that a big game hunting sawmill owner from McBride had put together in the mid-1960s in anticipation of the tourists who he expected would soon be driving through the area had to be accessed by a gravel side road, since the route that was decided on for Highway 16 ran half a mile south of its location. In short, it can be argued that the smooth, fast, sweeping, undulating line of Highway 16 was simultaneously the dominating feature and the key 'attraction' for those who traversed the space between Prince George and

McBride by automobile. Besides the large and growing number of clearcuts that gradually came to be visible from the highway corridor and the proliferation of new logging roads that branched off from it, there were very few visible signs of human habitation or history along what came to be referred to as British Columbia's "loneliest highway."[55] Excepting the small, family-owned gas station and campgrounds at Purden Lake, thirty-five miles east of Prince George, and the fenced-in collection of mobile homes, workshops, and garages that formed the BC Highways Department's Slim Creek highway maintenance colony,[56] located four miles west of the Dome Creek turn off, all of the drivers who traversed the 129 miles of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride saw no fields, farms, cabins, or houses (abandoned or otherwise), no gas stations or motels, no mini-golf courses or go-kart tracks, no billboards or fruitstands, no railroad tracks or level crossings, and no parallel-running utility poles, electrical wires, or telephone lines. Nor were motorists' experiences of this seemingly ahistorical and unpeopled 'wilderness' landscape strictly limited to the realm of the visual—once beyond the eastern outskirts of Prince George, no commercial frequencies could be picked up on car radios until they passed into the immediate vicinity of Jasper.

When early travellers like Frank Coutant and the journalists from the *Prince George Progress* failed to mention the existence of places that were not visible from and

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[55] "Our Loneliest Highway," *Beautiful British Columbia* 34 (Winter 1992): 30-39. McBride historian Marilyn Wheeler has observed that "to those from more highly populated areas the wonder of the road to Prince George is [...] that the traffic is sometimes so sparse that a hundred miles can be travelled without meeting more than one or two other vehicles." *Robson Valley Story*, 357. While it is difficult to quantify exactly how much lonelier than average the route of Highway 16 through the upper Fraser corridor was, the BC Highways Department's traffic numbers indicate that in the late 1960s and early 1970s an average of 800 vehicles traversed the entire length of Highway 16 between McBride and Prince George every day *during the summer months*. This means that about thirty-five automobiles would pass any given point along that stretch of highway during an average hour, or one vehicle every two minutes. Because the Highways Department's mechanical counters did not record which direction the vehicles were travelling in, the implication is that a moose, a bear, or a photographer could stand perfectly still in the centre of one of the highway's two lanes for about four minutes before being prompted to move by the high-speed approach of an automobile. It also means that during a typical week in summer tourist season, more than twice as many people would drive through east-central BC as there were living there. British Columbia. Department of Highways, "Summer Traffic Volumes for Years 1968-1971 on Provincial Highways in British Columbia" (Victoria, 1971), 57-58.

[56] The maintenance works yard and worker accommodations at Slim Creek were surrounded by a high chain link fence in order to protect the people and property inside it from the marauding grizzly and black bears of the previously inaccessible upper Slim Creek watershed, which were unfamiliar with and unafraid of the presence of humans.

not closely connected to the highway—places like Red Pass Junction, Tête Jaune Cache, Dunster, Croydon, Eddy, Rider, Goat River, Crescent Spur, Dome Creek, Penny, Longworth, Hutton, and Sinclair Mills, Aleza Lake, and the other East Line communities—they were anticipating what would become the stereotypical, structured, visually and vehicularly mediated experience of space and place in east-central BC. Their observations about these communities—or lack thereof—reflected and reinforced how a complex new set of relations between vision, landscape, and circulation contributed to a realignment of hierarchies of place in east-central BC—a realignment that is looked at more closely in this chapter's closing section.

The third and final noteworthy point about Coutant, Wheeler, and Rothenburger's 1968 accounts is that they illustrate how difficult it is to determine exactly when Highway 16 was a completed line or circuit of automotive circulation. Unlike the Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways, there was no dramatic 'last spike' that pinpointed when the construction of Highway 16 between Prince George and McBride (and by extension, between Manitoba and Prince Rupert) was finished, or a precise moment when the new road through east-central BC could be said to have opened. According to Frank Coutant it was only barely possible to drive the right-of-way of the future highway in July of 1968. According to the *Prince George Progress*, the same corridor was in fairly good condition three months later, with motorists frustratingly slowed only by bridge detours, a few areas of ongoing construction, and long stretches of unpaved road surface. Yet as early as January of 1968, residents of McBride had been driving to and from Prince George on the frost-hardened right-of-way with the assistance of snow chains and studded tires.[57] And during the winter of 1968-1969 the RCMP detachments in McBride and Prince George publicly advised that the route of Highway 16 between the latter point and Tête Jaune Cache remained officially closed to commercial traffic and had the daunting status of "use at your own risk" for all other motorists.[58]

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[57] Wheeler, *Robson Valley* Story, 353.

[58] *Prince George Progress* 20 November 1968, 1.

The Yellowhead Highways 5 and 16 were both officially "dedicated" by Premier W.A.C. Bennett in a ceremony held in the recently paved viewpoint parking lot in the meadows below Mount Robson on Saturday, August 15th, 1970.[59] Traffic on Highway 16 was stopped at that point for thirty minutes during the ceremony, which, the McBride weekly reported, resulted in "a three-mile long traffic jam at the foot of the mountain, where a dozen cars daily counted as a good crowd 10 years ago."[60] The timing was propitious: not a trace of cloud intruded on the gathering's views—and photographs and home movies—of 'the Monarch of the Canadian Rockies.' In his speech, Bennett told the assembled crowd that "some people criticize the government for building highways, but highways are for the people," and declared that his government built highways "so we can have the good life not only in BC and Alberta but in the whole world." Former Highways minister Phil Gaglardi extolled Highways 5 and 16 as "a commercial route for all of Canada leading to BC," and Alberta's Highways minister added that "highways are a unity-building force in our country."[61] Yet it would be several more years until all of the canyon-straddling bridges on the McBride-Prince George portion of the highway were completed, and only in 1973 was the last remaining gravel stretch, located east of McBride, given a blacktop surface. Indeed, while the August 1970 ceremony at the Mount Robson viewpoint was referred to as an "opening" by Vancouver, Prince George, and McBride newspapers, that term was scrupulously avoided by the politicians and bureaucrats present. When quizzed about these semantics and the still yet-to-be completed status of Highway 16 by a reporter from McBride's weekly *Robson Valley Courier*, Ray Williston—the provincial Minister of Lands and Forests and elected representative for east-central BC—acknowledged that several sections of the road

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[59] According to the BC Department of Highways advertisement for the "dedication" ceremony, the location had been selected on both scenic and political criteria. The Mount Robson parking lot was chosen "because of its beautiful setting, unequalled elsewhere on either Yellowhead Highway 16 through Prince George of Yellowhead South Highway 5 through Kamloops, but common to both." *Robson Valley Courier* 13 August 1970, 3.

[60] *Robson Valley Courier* 20 August 1970, 1.

[61] *Prince George Citizen* 17 August 1970, 3.

between the Tête Jaune junction and Prince George were still not up to first-class standards, and would probably not be for several years to come.[62]

3.3 "It Would Be Beneficial to the Local Economy if We Developed an Image"

Like McBride mayor Steve Kolida's long list of complaints to the *Prince George Progress* in October 1968, the pointed questions that the *Robson Valley Courier* put to Ray Williston at the "dedication" ceremony at Mount Robson in the summer of 1970 are indicative of the extent to which the quality, conditions, and uses of the much belated, widely anticipated automotive through-line between Prince George and McBride were a concern for many residents of the latter community. This was particularly the case for McBride's merchants, other businesses, and community boosters. Three overlapping reasons for their fixation with the condition of the long awaited highway can be identified. An important part of their concern was tied to business. There was a need to cultivate new markets for the agricultural goods being produced on the farms between McBride and Tête Jaune Cache because the closure of almost all of east-central BC's sawmills during the late 1950s and 1960s wiped out much of the local demand. If it was safe, fast, and passable all year round, the public highway would provide the cheap and flexible access to the large Prince George and Jasper markets that had so long been blocked by the Canadian National Railways' inconvenient timetables and high shipping charges.[63] The development and expansion of traffic-related businesses was also felt to be connected to the route, form, and conditions of the highway. For example, it was only after the locations of the highway bypass and intersection with McBride's Main Street had finally determined that construction began on two new gas stations and a motel (described as "fully modern throughout"); that a swimming pool and dining room were added to the existing Log-Tel Motel; and that renovations were made to the McBride Hotel, which advertised itself as "the place to which all roads lead when in McBride" despite the fact that its location on Main Street in the town centre (near the railway station) made it the most distant lodging place from the highway. All of these new and

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[62] *Robson Valley Courier* 20 August 1970, 1, 2.

[63] Wheeler, *Robson Valley Story*, 220-221.

improved, motorist-oriented businesses were front page news for the local newspaper, concretely tangible signs that McBride was finally 'getting up to speed' and 'catching up with the times' because of its first class connection to the provincial highway network.[64] However, it should be noted that there were not as many new roadside businesses in McBride as there were in Valemount, and most of them were undercapitalized, family owned operations instead of franchises of large corporations. Nor did the area around the intersection of the highway with McBride's Main Street see the proliferation of 'televisual' architecture to the extent that Valemount's Fifth Avenue did. McBride's less up-to-date appearance was a reflection (and a marker) of the relative importance of Highways 5 and 16 as lines of circulation. In the same way that the CNR had downgraded the former Grand Trunk Pacific's railroad to Prince Rupert to the status of a branch line in the mid-1920s, the new highway that ran parallel to that railroad in east-central BC was not expected to be used by the same volumes of traffic that were traversing the route that led to Kamloops and Vancouver.

A second important aspect of McBride residents' concern for the form and condition of Highway 16 was the desire to totally eliminate the geographic and socio-cultural 'gaps' that for so long had marginalized the town and surrounding vicinity from the rest of British Columbia and the postwar 'good life' that was embodied by high-speed highways and democratized automobility. The pressing desire to no longer be a 'dead end' town situated 'out of the way' and 'behind the times' because of its location at the terminus of a dirt and gravel road—a community that was "not geographically prominent," as *Beautiful British Columbia* had so generously put it in 1962—can be discerned in many of the stories, features, and even advertisements that appeared in McBride's weekly newspaper. An editorial from April of 1968 titled "Why is Our Highway Vital?" succinctly encapsulates this fixation. The paper's editor began by urging the provincial government to ensure that the existing dirt- and gravel-surfaced stretch of Highway 16 between McBride and its junction with Highway 5 would be widened, straightened, and paved as soon as possible. She argued that the area's continued connection to the provincial highway network by a second class road not only limited the economic viability of local farms, saw mills, and businesses, but was

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[64] *Robson Valley Courier* 26 March 1970, 1; 7 May 1970, 1; 6 August 1970, 1.

tantamount to treating local people and places as if they were second class citizens and communities. She wrote:

> If vitality is a measurable commodity in terms of highway traffic flow, then the vitality of a community's highway is as life-giving and sustaining to that community as the arteries and veins are to a living body. If the system in either case is slow, sluggish or cut off, the corporate body will atrophy, decline or die, regardless of other factors of health or growth. McBride has all the components of a healthy, growing community. It has civic services (fire department, hospital, schools, police, etc.) and businesses that offer generous width of choice in both goods and services. *It has so much, in fact, that after driving to McBride from Tete Jaune over 40 miles of mud-pie roads, one wonders how it could possibly have achieved its present size and modernity!* [emphasis in original][65]

One month later, the same newspaper cheered the government's announcements that contracts would soon be let for improvements on several portions of this stretch of road, and that Highways Department rock crushers would be brought in during the summer to begin producing the materials necessary for roadbed preparation and asphalt-making. Overlooking the fact that nothing had been said about upgrading the *entire* length of the McBride-Tête Jaune Cache route, the *Courier* reported "(w)ith the new surface, it can be expected that the road will no longer become a rutted mud-hole in spring, and there should be a drastic reduction in the boiling clouds of dust stirred up behind each moving vehicle."[66]

This comment about the clouds of dust that inconveniently and dangerously obscured motorists' lines of sight points toward a third reason why many people who lived in and around McBride were preoccupied with the condition of Highway 16 and its right-of-way, a reason that is inextricably wrapped up with business interests and being modern. Residents of McBride were aware that that road and its roadside would play a structuring role in how motorists looked at the community and its residents. They recognized that with the completion of an east-west through-connection, McBride would henceforth be seen in a very different manner than it previously had been. The regularly scheduled passenger trains that for almost fifty years had arrived at, paused in, and departed from the railway station during the middle of the night (and continued to) were

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[65] *McBride Courier* 4 April 1968, 2.

[66] *McBride Courier* 2 May 1968, 1.

no longer the dominant visual-vehicular mechanism or medium through which the town and the surrounding scenery would be seen—or more accurately, in light of the railway's timetables, not seen. Also, all of the automobilists who had driven to McBride since the 1940s had done so in full knowledge that the town was an automotive 'dead end' with no outlet to the west. Thus, regardless of whether they had been visiting friends and family or looking to explore one of British Columbia's scarcely travelled backroads, the people who drove the Tête Jaune Cache-McBride road prior to 1968 had thought of the latter end-of-the-road town as a kind of destination—even if only as a place where one had to turn around to head back through spaces previously traversed—rather than as an anonymous point to be passed through while *en route* between faraway centres. After 1968, this situation was completely reversed.

McBride had an almost magnetic attraction for the automobilists who travelled Highway 16. This was because of its strategic location midway between Jasper and Prince George (courtesy of the Grand Trunk Pacific) and its privileged situation as the only community in east-central BC that was located within sight of the highway (courtesy of the provincial government). At whatever time of day that drivers approached McBride, they had to take notice of the place and make a whole series of calculations. Did they have enough fuel and oil to get to the next gas station? Did they have enough time and energy to make it to the next motel or restaurant—especially before they shut down for the night? Did they have to put air in the car's tires? Visit a washroom? Make a telephone call? Purchase film? Cigarettes? Report an accident, an incident of dangerous driving, or a collision with wildlife? Walk around for a short while to rest their eyes, stretch their legs, and shake off the numbness that resulted from the long periods of personal physical inactivity associated with dromoscopic landscape experiences?

Being personally responsible for the movement of their private vehicle along a public route of circulation, each automobile driver—and many of their passengers—considered these and similar matters as they approached McBride. And if they failed to do so, they were reminded to by the large, prominent sign that the BC Highways Department had erected on the western outskirts of town, which warned drivers heading towards Prince George that no gas would be available until they reached the Purden Lake

recreation area, ninety-four miles away. If automobile travellers needed or wanted gas, food, lodging, or other goods and services they were free to pursue (or peruse) the choices available in McBride. Unless they were riding aboard a Greyhound bus or operating a commercial vehicle, they were relatively free to establish and manage their own schedules and did not have to worry about missing their ride out of town if they dawdled about and looked around for awhile. They were free from the constraints that were imposed on railway travellers by the dictatorial timetables that made passenger trains pause in McBride for only twenty or thirty minutes. They were also better able to move around and see the town than were train passengers, who rarely stirred from their stationary slumber or strayed beyond the confines of the depot and platform while locomotives were refueled and crews changed over in the middle of the night.

The same consumer- and motorist-friendly 'freedom' that stemmed from the (relatively) flexible relationship between private vehicle and public road in the automotive mode of circulation also meant that highway travellers were *not* compelled to stop in McBride. As it had in Valemount a few years earlier, a pattern very quickly emerged whereby the large majority of automobile travellers who pulled off the highway in McBride only did so in order to 'gas and go.'[67] Few automobile travellers bothered to spend much time or money in small towns like Valemount and McBride, with their limited selections, lack of attractions, and unfamiliar, non-franchise brand restaurants and motels. After all, it only took another two, three, or four hours' worth of easy driving along a broad, high-speed highway that had good lines of sight to reach a major regional centre or tourist destination like Prince George, Kamloops, or Jasper. In a sense, McBride was in the process of rapidly transforming from a divisional point town centred around a railway company's inflexible and hierarchical system of operations into a de-centred gas station town, whose relative 'rank' or importance as a place no longer seemed to revolve around any discernable central logic or set of principles. As McBride's economy and its residents' everyday lives gradually de-linked from the CNR, they became increasingly dependant on the condition of a highway designed, built, regulated,

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[67] On the 'gas and go' phenomena in Valemount and the local Chamber of Commerce's ideas about how to get tourists and other highway travellers to stay in Valemount for more than just one night, see *Robson Valley Courier* 7 April 1971, 6.

and maintained by the provincial state and travelled (and supposedly owned) by the anonymous, insulated, motorized 'people of British Columbia' to whom W.A.C. Bennett had so often referred at highway opening (or 'dedication') ceremonies. There was no longer an identifiable, monopolistic corporate power that could, by tinkering with its complex system, throw McBride and the upper Fraser corridor into darkness—at least in the eyes of travellers—in the way that the CNR had in 1931. After 1968, how McBride was seen by the 'wider public' depended largely on the route and form of Highway 16, and on the tension that existed between motorists' stereotypical driving patterns and their whimsical, nostalgic desires for exploration and sight-seeing; the tension between the fickle roving eyes of auto-mobile consumer-citizens with free time and disposable income on their hands and the hurrying 'call of the road'—the dromoscopic "ecstasy of enormities" with its violent, space- and place-annihilating momentum, its "rape of distance," and its illusion of personal control over theatrical landscapes.[68]

The trick to profiting from this tension was to simultaneously differentiate *and* standardize the appearance of a place; to make it at once predictable *and* interesting; and, above all else, to maintain a direct and uncluttered visual-vehicular connection between it and the dominant network of automotive circulation. Otherwise a community risked becoming a broken-down or abandoned backwater, as many places located just off the routes of Highways 5 and 16 materially attested to. In partnership with the local newspaper, the same association of merchants, businesses, and boosters that had contributed to the planting of gardens next to the CNR's McBride depot in the 1940s and set up illuminated Christmas trees across the street from the station during the 1950s turned its attention towards the cultivation and presentation of an attractive, enticing, respectable, and above all highly visible appearance that was tailored towards the contradictory practices and desires of the automobile travellers who traversed Highway 16's route of through the upper Fraser corridor. This effort had begun even prior to the completion of the highway between Prince George and McBride, although during that initial period the main goal was just to get McBride on the map. For example, in June of 1968 the *Courier* reported that McBride merchants and the village council intended to

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[68] Virlio, "Dromoscopy," 16.

complain to the Yellowhead Highway Association about its failure to include any mention of the town in recently published and widely distributed brochures and folding road maps.[69] Three months later, they were complaining vigourously to the Highways Department after it announced that it did not plan to snowplow the not-officially-opened stretch of Highway 16 between McBride and Prince George during the coming winter. Part of these complaints involved a fear that motorists who learned of this might get the idea that the new highway was merely a second class road, and would avoid travelling along it at other times of the year.[70] And in the following spring the McBride Chamber of Commerce—which was the old Board of Trade renamed—indignantly protested the fact that the new highway had been marked as "closed to public" on the provincial government's 1969 maps of BC's highway network, which were freely handed out at tourist information centres, heritage sites, and parks.[71]

After the fall of 1969 only bridgework remained to be done on the Prince George-McBride section of Highway 16. Between the latter point and the junction with Highway 5, various small realignment projects were underway to widen and straighten the existing gravel road and bring it up to limited access standards, and paving was being done as the successive completion of each of these circulation-enhancing infrastructural adjustments allowed. With the length of Highway 16 through east-central BC gradually shaping up as a first class line of automotive circulation, McBride's merchants and boosters shifted their attention away from representations and conditions of the highway itself towards the interface between their town, highway traffic, and automobile travellers. Signs and markers were an important part of their effort to make certain impressions on motorists passing through. In December of 1969 the *Robson Valley Courier* ran a quarter-page photograph of the new reflective "Yellowhead/Hwy 16" signs, which were being placed along the verges of the Yellowhead highway between Manitoba and Prince Rupert.[72] With their emblematic, defeatured image of the legendary fur trader Tête Jaune and their

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[69] *McBride Courier* 13 June 1968, 4.

[70] *McBride Courier* 19 September 1968, 2.

[71] *Robson Valley Courier* 22 April 1969, 3.

[72] *Robson Valley Courier* 9 December 1969, 3.

ubiquity and standardized form, these signs served to demonstrate that McBride in and east-central BC were now part of an extensive network of interprovincial circulation, and also of a system—albeit a diffuse one—that possessed its own banal iconography. One month later, McBride's village council moved to take action against two eyesores that had recently appeared in town: the proliferation of litter around the commercial centre, and frequent instances of long-haul truckers illegally parking their vehicles in a municipal park. They voted to "place more garbage cans at various points around town and to either put up 'no parking' signs or fence off the playground area to prevent large trucks from using this as a parking lot as they are now."[73] Later that summer, the same village council voted to purchase directional signs and put them up on the municipal streets around the town centre in order to help motorists navigate between the highway and whichever local goods or services they might be looking for.[74]

The village council and the local merchants of McBride had no jurisdiction to erect signs inside the Highway 16 right-of-way, the verges of which were controlled and aesthetically regulated by the BC Highways Department under the rubric of its limited access policies. However, special applications to put up signs within the right-of-way could be made, and applications which were received from the municipalities that the highway traversed were usually accepted, provided that the form or location of the proposed sign would not interfere with traffic flows or intrude too heavily in motorists' lines of sight. Thus by the summer of 1971 both McBride and Valemount had their own large, custom-made signs located beside the highway. Valemount had one sign—which said "Welcome to Valemount"—located at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Highway 5. McBride's two carved spruce signs—which said "Welcome to McBride"—were located on the highway verges a few hundred feet to either side of its intersection with Main Street.[75] However, not every concern about roadside signage involved putting up new ones. For example, in the spring of 1971 the Valemount Chamber of Commerce

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[73] *Robson Valley Courier* 22 January 1970, 1. A quarter-page photograph of the completed sign, simply captioned "McBride sports a new sign," appeared in the *Courier* a few months later, after it had been erected in anticipation of the summer tourism season. 26 May 1971, 5.

[74] *Robson Valley Courier* 30 July 1971, 2.

[75] *Robson Valley Courier* 5 May 1971, 11; 16 June 1971, 5; 11 August 1971, 1.

lodged a complaint with the Highways Department that related to signs, travellers' views, the verges of Highway 5, and an emerging competition between Valemount and McBride for motorists' attention and business. "We request," their motion read in part,

> more [highway mileage] signs along Highway 5 advertising Valemount. At present Valemount is on one sign between Kamloops and Tete Jaune while McBride is mentioned on seven, and McBride is not even located on Highway 5 at all. We do not object to the signs for McBride on Highway 16—it is the proper place for them. [But] we should have at least as much mention made of Valemount as McBride.[76]

Under a dromoscopic mode (or regime) of perception, even mundane roadside mileage markers were seen to communicate—or at least connote—significant information about the relative importance of places located alongside the highway.

Perhaps the most interesting illustration of how automobile travellers' views of McBride came to dominate the thinking of the town's merchants, restaurateurs, moteliers, and other boosters were their vaguely insidious efforts to turn their employees and neighbours into walking, talking signs of McBride being a place that was friendly towards and cheerfully willing to do business with the motorists who drove along Highway 16. In an April 1971 edition of the *Robson Valley Courier*, the following editorial appeared:

> As the Tourist season approaches the enthusiasm of making a dollar becomes more prevalent. Many businesses have felt the pressures of the long unprofitable winter. Naturally, they are most anxious to increase their financial earning. In return for the Tourist's Dollar the businesses are expected to provide fast, efficient service. They will give merchandise of equal value, or service, where possible, depending on the desires of the Tourist. It is hoped that they will go one step further, and also give a few kind words and a warm smile, for these cannot be purchased with the Tourist Dollar. It would be shameful if visitors travelling thru the Robson Valley left with the impression that all we cared about was their Tourist Dollar.[77]

A small advertisement on page following this editorial seemed to indicate that at least some community-minded residents were already working in this direction. The McBride Chamber of Commerce was requesting bids for the operation of a highway-side tourist

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[76] *Robson Valley Courier* 21 April 1971, 7.

[77] *Robson Valley Courier* 21 April 1971, 2.

information centre during the coming summer, a project that was to be jointly funded by the chamber and the village council.

At this point, the implication was that it was only the owners and operators of McBride's restaurants, gas stations, and motels who needed to make an effort to 'go the extra mile' (and prod their employees to do so as well) by presenting a friendly, folksy, cheerful façade to the fickle, observant, and passively judgmental travellers who patronized their businesses. But in the same way that the CNR's rigidly structured tracks and trains had been supplanted as the prevalent mechanism through which travellers' views of places like McBride were mediated, the local railway depot was no longer the bustling location where most of the community's comings and goings occurred and where residents and travellers came into contact with each other. Automobilists set their own timetables, and were free to drive or stroll around the town at their leisure. As a result, there was an enormous increase in the amount of face-to-face interaction between the 650 people who lived in McBride and the thousands of people who drove through it during the average week. As is shown by the following editorial (which was published at the height of the 1971 tourist (dollar) season), the editor of the *Courier* had come to the conclusion that *all* residents of McBride had to cultivate a feeling of always being watched, and learn to be aware of how their words and actions would make their community look in the eyes of highway travellers and auto-tourists.

> Everyone has probably noticed the great amounts of strange people around lately, and it's no doubt quite a shock to most of us who have lived here several years to see sleepy old McBride become a bustle of activity all of a sudden, with traffic, people, noise and rush all over the place. Remember when it used to be only a formality to stop at a 'Stop' sign and you could park a car on Main Street any old time of the day without squeezing into a spot? Those days are probably gone forever, except for in mid winter, perhaps. *Since we all have to get used to the change sooner or later, it would be beneficial to the local economy if we developed an image; something that the travellers could identify with.* If the local people and businesses went out of their way to be courteous and friendly towards the tourists, McBride would be remembered as a nice place to shop and visit rather than as a backwards hick town. A plan of operations, possibly developed through the Chamber of Commerce, could offer a guideline for correct conduct concerning relations with others. Unfortunately, some people can be terrible boors, but businesses in particular cannot afford to be impolite with them. A guide of some sort would help to deal with problem people nicely. [...] Don't say: "We don't want yer kind around here." (Even if we really don't want them). Just a polite fib will suffice. In dealing with nice people, which most people are, no

> guidelines would be necessary as truth and bonhomie would be uncontrived. [emphasis added][78]

This editorial directly implies that during the summer of 1971 the behaviour of some local residents *had* given visitors the distinct impression that McBride was in fact a backwards hick town; a place where the universally accepted rules of the road were flouted and "strange people" and "others" from out of town were insulted by hostile, parochial small-towners. It also suggests that at least some of the travellers who exited the highway and came into town behaved like "terrible boors," perhaps by making rude statements about the limited array of goods and services that were available in "sleepy old McBride," or otherwise looking down their noses at the place and the people who lived in it.

The *Courier*'s repeated appeals for residents of McBride to be community-minded and image-aware when dealing with the auto-mobile public that patronized a particular group of local businesses can also be read as evidence of subdued yet widespread feelings of resentment towards the speeding, scanning motorists who passed through (or past) the town at high speeds while on their to and from distant points. Telling off the anonymous, fleetingly-present travellers and tourists who typically wanted nothing more from McBride than to 'gas and go' was a way to disrupt or interrupt the structured, stereotypical narratives of space and place that they experienced, narratives in which the communities and people of east-central BC became the static, unimportant, and seemingly unreal scenery of a dromoscopically-generated landscape. There is a parallel here with the younger residents of Red Pass Junction who in the 1940s and 1950s repeatedly engaged in the seemingly meaningless, harmless, and insignificant prank of painting out the 'P's on all of the CNR signboards that identified the existence of Red Pass for sightseeing train passengers. These instances of behaving badly towards or within sight of travellers not only suggest discomfort or bitterness over being under passive, anonymous, around-the-clock observation, but also resentment over the very fact of being set in a 'rank' by the networks, systems, and modes of circulation that facilitated the movement of travellers and commodities through the spaces that intervened between important sites of production and consumption.

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[78] *Robson Valley Courier* 18 August 1971, 2.

It is impossible to determine how many (if any) of the people who lived in McBride actively made an effort to project a courteous and friendly image in order that travellers would associate the town with these qualities, and how many (if any) actively tried to resist or subvert this image. Nor can the extent to which this kind of thinking and behaviour became internalized as integral aspects of place-based identities be determined. However, the deeper significance of the *Robson Valley Courier*'s editorials of April and August 1971 becomes clearer when considered in conjunction with other actions taken by some McBride residents. The materially-tangible design, construction, and placement of various signs and markers; the complaints about representations (and non-representations) in signs, roadmaps, and guidebooks; and the discourses that urged residents of McBride to be aware of how their behaviour made their communities look in the eyes of visitors (and to show 'common sense' when interacting with these people, regardless of one's true feelings about their fleeting presence and powerful visual practices) are all evidence of how the views that were held by the motorists who traversed Highway 16 became important, normative aspects of both everyday life and the meaning of place for the people who resided in east-central BC.

Several other statements, structures, and spaces could be cited here to provide further evidence of how the motoring public's views from provincial highways quickly became an important, powerful part of living in McBride, as well as in other places in east-central BC, like Valemount. However, there is one source that neatly allows the shifting connections between visuality, circulation, and concepts (and images) of place in McBride to be traced over a period spanning three decades. Optimistically but significantly titled "McBride: Wild and Wonderful. Once Seen, Never Forgotten," the promotional pamphlet that was put together by McBride's Chamber of Commerce in the early 1970s was the third such publication to have been published and distributed since the early 1950s.[79] But whereas the McBride Board of Trade's first brochure, titled "Facts About McBride," had narrowly focussed on disseminating information about local agriculture, and the pamphlet jointly published by the Board of Trade and the new Log-Tel Motel in the early 1960s had meekly introduced the "modern village" of McBride with the statement that it was situated "113 miles west of Jasper," the pamphlet from the

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[79] McBride Chamber of Commerce, "McBride: Wild and Wonderful. Once Seen, Never Forgotten" [1973]

1970s was devoid of information about agriculture, railways, or sewer lines, and instead loaded with references to the scenic attractions that were visible or accessible from Highway 16. These included the Mount Teare fire lookout—accessible by a rough switchback road—which provided a stunning view of McBride and its situation in confines of the Rocky Mountain Trench; the riverside municipal picnic site located next to the highway was a great spot to look at the surrounding mountains and to contemplate the meandering flow of the "historic" Fraser River, and its associations with gold rushes of long ago (and far away); the drive-in movie theater provided an evening's worth of stationary visual-vehicular entertainment in McBride; and the wildlife museum a few miles to the west of town was as educational as it was entertaining. It also noted that McBride was a great place to stay for those tourists who wanted to spend a few days exploring the backcountry of Jasper and Mount Robson parks (even though the latter park's western portal was more than fifty miles away!).

Comparing these three promotional pamphlets about McBride, it is possible to trace a changing conception of place held by at least one especially boosterish group of its residents—or at least a changing idea of what kind of information about and/or image of McBride ought to be communicated to non-residents. The significant information about McBride went from being facts about conditions on the ground—quite literally—in the 1950s to a list of the features that made it a "modern village" in the early 1960s—new sewers, more electricity, paved roads in the town centre (coming next year!), and a future highway outlet to the west (coming sometime soon!).[80] By the early 1970s, the important information about McBride was related to scenic attractions that might be of interest to sightseeing auto-tourists and travellers with time to spare—thus the hopeful "once seen, never forgotten" component of the last pamphlet's title. The place-image of McBride had become separated from the agricultural district that surrounded it by the early 1960s, but after Highway 16's through-connection to the west was completed even the infrastructure and networks of circulation that had once identified the town as truly 'modern' became

[80] In light of McBride's marginal connection to or separation from automotive, telephone, electrical, and television networks of circulation in the early 1960s, these points—as well as the counterintuitive description of McBride as a "modern village"—can be read as indicating a certain defensiveness and insecurity about being seen as 'behind the times' or 'not up to speed.'

immaterial, and dromoscopic speed, lines-of-sight, viewpoints, appearances, and differentiated scenery came to be of paramount importance.

The government-published magazine *Beautiful British Columbia* confirmed that the McBride area's scenic attractions were its features most deserving of attention when it did an extensive story about the Highway 16's completed line across British Columbia in the spring of 1971.[81] Ten of the article's twenty-two pages were dedicated to the space between Jasper, Alberta and Prince George. Seven of these focussed exclusively on the scenery visible in Mount Robson Provincial Park, including three large photographs of Mount Robson (two of which were shot from the verge of the highway), one photograph of the large carved mountain goat sign at the Park's eastern portal, and one of a man fishing in Yellowhead Lake at the new roadside picnic site that had once been the location of the Crate family's lodge and guest cabins. Only two pages described the spaces and places traversed between Mount Robson and Prince George. While there was no description of McBride in the text, there was a wide angle photograph of the town that had been shot from the Mount Teare viewpoint, and its caption noted that McBride was located in the Rocky Mountain Trench near the Fraser River, which was visible in the foreground. Three other photographs of the McBride area were included. One reprised the theme of the magazine's 1962 article, and showed a pastoral scene of sheep in a field against a mountain backdrop. The other two showed the interior and exterior of Oscar Lamming's hunting trophy-stuffed 'wildlife museum.' A small map and key on the magazine's inside back cover indicated to readers exactly where each of the photographs included in the issue had been taken relative to the provincial highway network.

Like the inclusion of these attractive photographs of the McBride area, the 'common sense' representational logic of the larger map that accompanied the article about Highway 16 also emphasized that that town was the most important place (after Mount Robson) in east-central BC: as much was made clear by its name appearing in large, capitalized letters on the map in the same way that Jasper and Prince George's did. The map also showed Dunster and Penny, and inaccurately showed the highway passing

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[81] "Jasper... to the Sea," *Beautiful British Columbia* (Spring 1971), 2-24. The *Robson Valley Courier* enthusiastically its readers of the "48-page full colour" magazine's "photographic exploration" of Highway's 16 route through east-central BC, and pointed out the article's prominent position as the first feature in the spring issue. 10 February 1971, 2.

through them both—probably in order to make the long line of Highway 16's route through east-central BC not appear *too* lonely. It did not mention either of these places in the text, but did point out that:

> (t)he population between McBride and Prince George, a distance of some 140 miles, is sparse. While there are more than a dozen hamlets dotted along the Fraser River and the railway, the highway, after crossing the river at McBride, continues on an independent course with side-roads to some of these communities leading off here and there. [...] Now, for mile after mile, there is a feeling of great distance and endless forests, and a wilderness that many people feel exemplifies British Columbia.

But, the glossy magazine stressed, motorists had to follow special procedures if they wanted to get a true feel for this endless wilderness that exemplified beautiful (or super natural, or perhaps spectacular) BC. These involved directly confronting the tension between the nostalgic 'freedom' facilitated by the flexible relationship between automobile and highway and the insulated, irrational, spectacular, dromoscopic drive for high speeds, kin-aesthetic experiences of landscape, and 'making miles':

> Any tendency to push on quickly should be dispelled—perhaps by pulling off the road and taking a few minutes to look around. Forget for now about the distant horizon and sweeping panoramas; walk ten or 20 paces off the highway and look at the world at your feet or perhaps an arm's length away. Perhaps you will discover an unfamiliar perfection.

3.4 "It was an Island Existence"

Despite its inaccuracy, the representation of Penny on the map that *Beautiful British Columbia* used to illustrate Highway 16's sweeping course through central BC was one of the very rare instances that the existence of that place was mentioned in the array of guidebooks, pamphlets, and other promotional materials that were produced to inform and entertain the motorists who traversed that route. In a few publications it was lumped together with the other undifferentiated, anonymous "hamlets" that "dotted" the Canadian National Railways corridor (Frank Coutant's "small towns that have little prospects of becoming more than rural villages"). In most, however, Penny and these other disconnected, invisible, and therefore seemingly unimportant places were not referred to at all.[82]

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[82] For example, Ken and Kathy Bernsohn did not mention Penny (or Hutton and Longworth) in their book *Prince George Backroads* (Sidney, BC: Saltaire, 1976) because they could not drive east beyond the end of

Yet people still lived in Penny after the closure of its last sawmill and the completion of Highway 16. In addition to about twenty established residents—including several retirees—who had decided to stay put, there was also a small influx of young "Back to the Landers" during the late 1960s and early 1970s.[83] For work there was tree planting, forest fire fighting, and railway maintenance. However, as at Sinclair Mills, Dome Creek, Crescent Spur, and several other places located between McBride and Prince George, Penny's only store had closed at the same time as the last sawmill, so that in order to get groceries, car parts, medical help, or any other goods and services the people who lived in Penny had to go to Prince George or McBride—almost everyone chose the former because of its retailers' wider selection and better prices. To do this they either had to travel by way of the inconvenient and increasingly expensive CNR (which was in the process of further reducing and even eliminating the unprofitable, traffic-complicating passenger services that it provided to small places like Penny) or else cross the Fraser River to the landing where they parked their cars and trucks, and then drive along the narrow, winding dirt and gravel road that led up to Highway 16.

"The river ruled us," remembered Charley Ray, a self-described draft-dodger from Los Angeles whose family lived in Penny throughout the 1970s. Living in Penny "was an island existence" even though it was located in the middle of east-central BC, right beside a railroad and barely two miles as-the-crow-flies from the recently completed route of Highway 16. Members of the Ray family also recalled

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the upper Fraser road at Sinclair Mills. The British Columbia Yellowhead 16 Travel Association elided Penny and every other invisible community in the space between McBride and the Purden Lake resort from its folding brochure "Jasper to the Sea" (Prince George [1978]). Penny and every other place between McBride and Prince George were similarly left out of Harold Fryer's guidebook *Magnificent Yellowhead Highway: Volume Three: Tete Jaune Cache to Prince Rupert* (Surrey: Heritage House, 1980). Regarding that stretch of highway, Fryer tersely wrote: "we crossed small rivers and streams and stopped to enjoy the view at several lookout points. Absent, however, were towns and gas stations" (10). Penny only appeared in Richard and Rochelle Wright's compendious *Yellowhead Mileposts from the Mountains to the Sea: Volume 2: Tete Jaune Cache to Prince Rupert* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1977). The Wrights extolled the nostalgic values of exploring side roads, and their guidebook described almost every one in east-central BC with the exception of the Longworth landing road and the maze of forestry roads in the Willow and Bowron watersheds. However, their thoroughness pressed them to be terse with their descriptions. Thus the Penny landing road was described as follows: "At mile 3.8 along this road Penny can be seen across the Fraser River, accessible only by boat. The only other access is by rail." (46)

[83] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 3-4, 185-186.

> (t)he fights we had about whether to try to get across the thin ice in the fall, thin ice in the spring, fight our way through floes during freeze-up, or whether the [ice] bridge was ready to support the pickup yet. Charley would drive across with the door open sometimes, with [his wife] Alice hoofing along after. Alice has cried real tears tip-toeing across planks laid on very thin ice… *all to go shopping!* [emphasis in original][84]

Gert Croy, a neighbour of the Ray family, recalled "just shutting my eyes and holding on" when she was driven across the winter ice bridge at Penny for the first time. Looking back on her years spent in Penny, she recalled many friendships and a close-knit community, but tersely concluded: "I'm happy not to have to cross that river any more!"[85]

In spite their physical proximity to two modern corridors of high-speed, long-distance commodity circulation, the people who lived in Penny found themselves having to deal with the same fluid, unpredictable fluctuations of nature that had plagued Benjamin Baltzly and the Geological Survey of Canada party's expedition to the Yellowhead Pass and North Thompson River valley in 1871, on the same meandering, dangerous river that GTP publicist Frederick Talbot had imagined the inevitable experiential 'annihilation' of in 1912. Situated next to an inflexible and increasingly inaccessible railway, and separated by the threatening upper Fraser River from the 'democratized' and 'free' (in both senses of the word) public highway that supposedly belonged to and served the interests of the people of British Columbia, the residents of Penny were, in effect, transported backwards in time—or, more accurately, downwards in a socio-cultural hierarchy of place in which importance and power revolved around centrality and marginality, distance and proximity, and connection and separation.

There was a visual component to the broad structural realignments and operational shifts that had resulted in Penny being an even more marginal, isolated place after the late 1960s than it had been prior to the elimination of the 'missing link.' The CNR's railway station was replaced as the "focal point of the community" by the landing where motorboats, ice bridge ramps, and pickup trucks intermingled on the south bank of

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[84] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 156.

[85] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 100-101.

the Fraser—the new 'right' side of the river, the highway side.[86] As well as being the transitional space between residents' homes and automobiles, it was from this point that any non-resident automobile traveller whose curiosity was piqued enough to divert away from the flow of Highway 16 and descend the four-mile-long Penny landing access road would be able to look at the remnants of Penny that were visible across the river. This riverside forest clearing became the structured, stereotypical platform from which the travellers and tourists who traversed the people's highway through east-central BC observed, judged, and perhaps photographed Penny, with the Fraser in the foreground, a rusting, disused 'beehive' sawmill burner in the middle ground, and Red Mountain looming in the background. It seems that the people who lived in Penny gradually internalized this dominant, distant, mass (re)produced, and marginalizing view of their community as 'normal,' or at least normative: the photographic frontispiece that was included inside a local history of Penny that was put together in the mid-1990s was a snapshot taken from the landing, and captioned "The familiar view of Penny, BC in more recent years." [Images 21, 22, and 23]

Except for Hutton and perhaps Longworth and Goat River, after 1968 no place where more than one or two people were living in east-central BC was as disconnected from modern networks of circulation as Penny was. Along the arc of the upper Fraser River, all of the East Line communities between Prince George and Sinclair Mills were connected by the old, gravel-surfaced, winding upper Fraser road. To the east of Penny, Dome Creek and Crescent Spur were located on the 'right' side of the river and could be reached from Highway 16 by way of very steep, narrow, gravel roads several miles long. Signs erected by the BC Highways Department at these roads' intersection with the highway warned curious (or fuel-low) motorists away by indicating that "No Services" were to be found along or at the end of them. [Image 24] To the east of McBride, where Highway 16 ran on the opposite side of the Fraser from the CNR's right-of-way, the farmers who lived in the established agricultural district that encompassed Eddy, Raush Valley, Dunster, and Croydon were able to access the new highway via its intersection with the old Tête Jaune-McBride road, which was located above and across the river from Dunster. In the Yellowhead Pass and upper North Thompson River valley areas,

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[86] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 37.

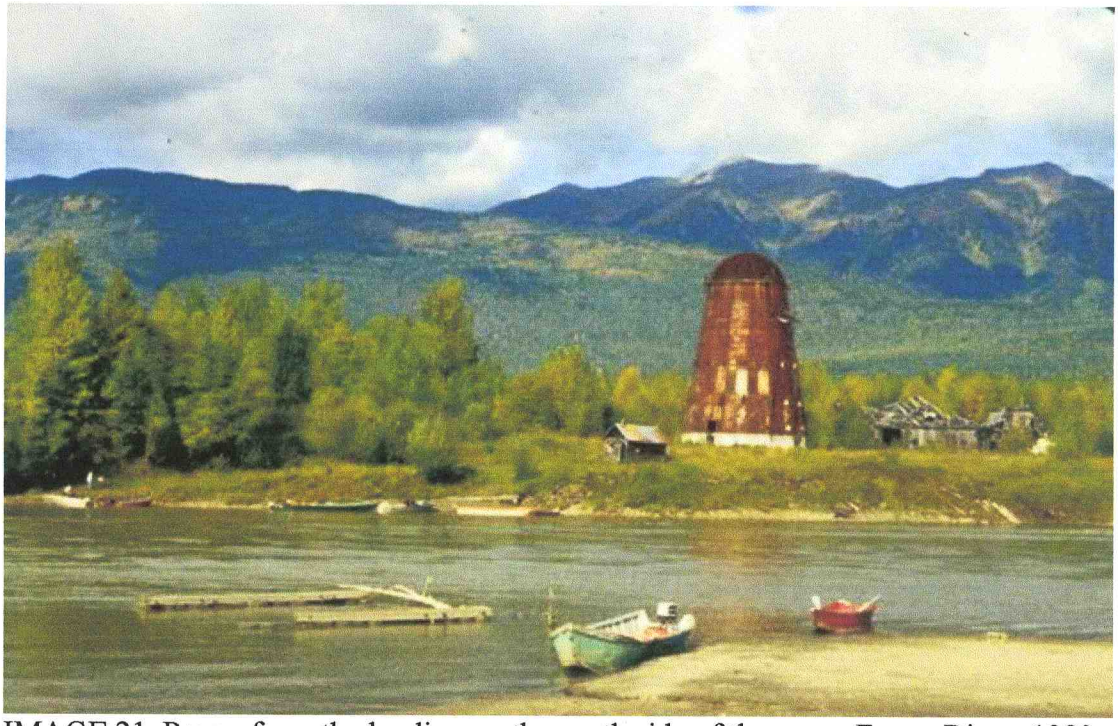


IMAGE 21 Penny from the landing on the south side of the upper Fraser River, 1980. Photograph by Kent Sedgwick. Courtesy of Kent Sedgwick and UNBC's Upper Fraser Mill Town Historical Geography Project.

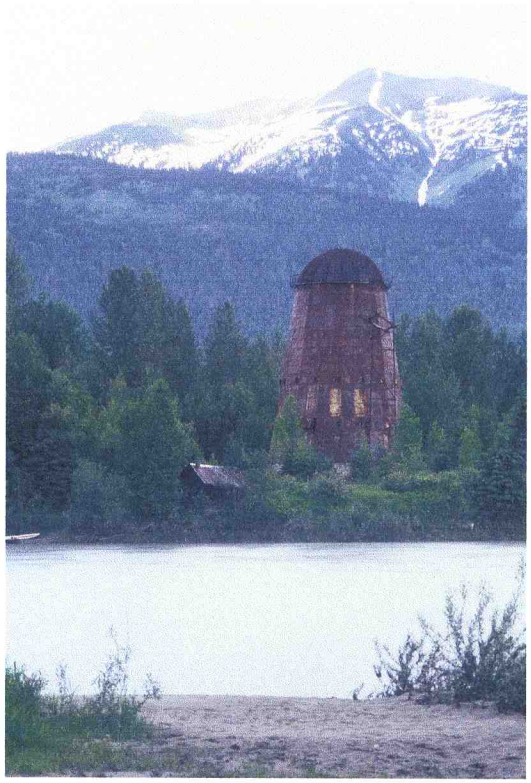
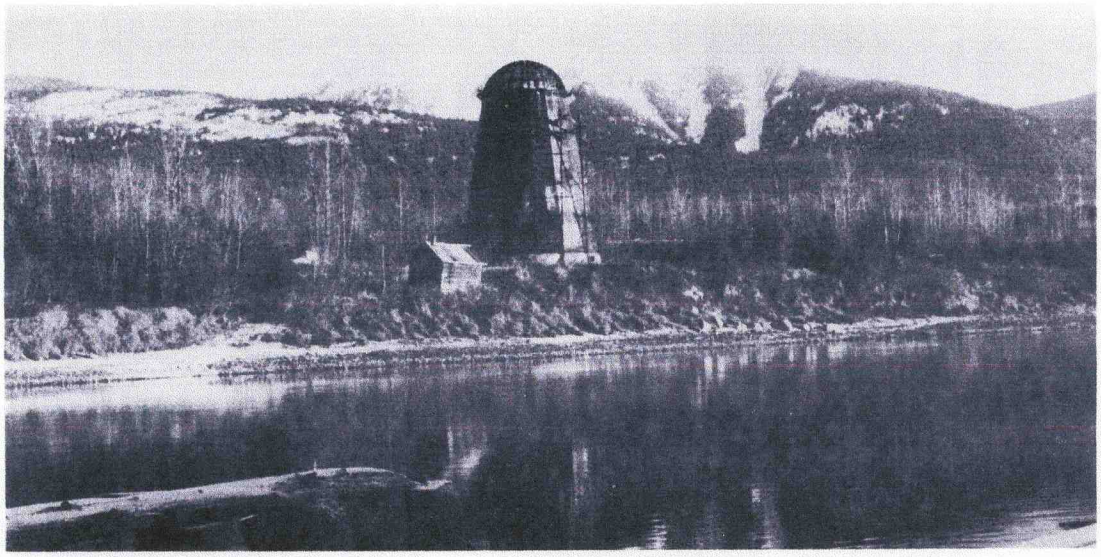


IMAGE 22 Penny from the landing on the south side of the upper Fraser River, 1999. Photograph by the author. This photo was taken prior to the author's having become interested in the history of east-central BC.



The familiar view of Penny, B.C. in more recent years.

IMAGE 23 Penny from the landing on the south side of the upper Fraser River, unknown date. As originally published in the local history *A Penny for Your Thoughts: A History of Penny, British Columbia* (1995).

IMAGE 24 "Dome Creek: No Services." BC Highways Department sign at the top of the Dome Creek access road, close to its intersection with Highway 16, June 1999. Photograph by the author.

poorly-marked gravel side roads connected Tête Jaune Cache, Red Pass Junction, Mount Robson, and Albreda to Highways 16 or 5—the latter highway only passed close to and within sight of Valemount.

In the last section of the chapter on 'Gaps' it was explained how difficult it is to study the history of many of the smaller communities in east-central BC, places like Sinclair Mills, Hutton, Dome Creek, and Crescent Spur. These places were never large enough to publish newspapers, and received barely any attention from the Prince George dailies and McBride weekly. It would not even be possible to trace—however tenuously—the relations between circulation, visuality, and hierarchy of place in Penny after 1968 if a local history about that community had not been compiled and published by a committee made up largely of its *former* residents.

The difficulty of studying these places historically is directly tied to their relative disconnection from and marginal visual-vehicular relations to the first class, high-speed, long-distance, limited access lines of automotive circulation that were constructed in east-central British Columbia during the late 1960s. When the sawmills in Giscome, Newlands, Aleza Lake, Dewey, Hansard, Sinclair Mills, Hutton, Penny, Dome Creek, and Crescent Spur went either out of business or else were bought up and shut down by one of the large forestry corporations based in Prince George, these communities lost their largest—and in some places only—steady employer. Loggers, mill workers, and their families left in droves. Many local farmers lost the only accessible market for their produce, as well as a seasonal source of waged employment. When stores and schools shut down many of those farmers were pressed even harder to move on to greener pastures or to regional centres that had stores, schools, hospitals, and so forth, like Prince George, McBride, and Valemount.

The construction of the highway that so many of the people living in the small places in the upper Fraser corridor had been calling for and looking forward to for so long did not directly cause the sawmills located in them to go out of business or get shut down. Indeed, the consolidation and centralization—or more accurately, the near elimination—of milling in east-central BC was part of a larger, province-wide trend that was driven by the Social Credit government's efforts to modernize (i.e.: industrialize, systematize, and corporatize) the forestry sector. That said, it seems quite clear that the route for Highway

16 between Prince George and McBride that the provincial government eventually decided on was laid out with the intention of publicly subsidizing the large forestry corporations' pulp mills in Prince George. By building the highway in a due easterly direction from Prince George on plateaus and ridges high above the upper Fraser River valley floor, the BC government provided the large forestry corporations with a free, flexible, and publicly maintained automotive corridor through enormous stands of previously unexploited timber. The small, often family owned sawmills located next to the river and railroad had been too undercapitalized to get at this timber, even though some of it was covered under their cutting licenses. In anticipation of the highway being completed (or at least its right-of-way being passable to logging trucks), large companies like Northwood Mills bought up the sawmills in places like Penny and Dome Creek as a preemptive elimination of local competition, and in order to acquire their cutting rights at a low price.

The provincial government's subsidization of the expensive fixed infrastructure of commodity circulation that was so key to the long-term viability of the Prince George pulp mills was simultaneously justified and disguised by the 'common sense' of building highways that were fast, safe, direct, and cost-efficient, and by the limited access principle of highway engineering. Conversely, the lengthy, shoddy, poorly maintained, second class side roads that provided a modicum of connection to the highway for several of the communities down near the valley floor and the government's strict control over development and signage along the highway corridor effectively prevented the people who lived in Crescent Spur and Dome Creek (and Dunster, and Red Pass Junction, and…) from participating in the visual, whimsical, consumption- and choice-driven, yet nevertheless structured roadside economy of automobile travel and tourism.

The new and improved automotive corridor of circulation that allowed logging trucks to rapidly and cheaply haul large volumes of timber out of east-central BC also 'annihilated' the time and space of most of the previously existing places in that area. Except for McBride and Valemount, none of those places could be seen from the highway; they were situated out of sight and out of mind from the stereotypical dromoscopic narratives that had supplanted the rigidly-structured, sideways-looking panoramas associated with railway travel as the dominant visual-vehicular mode of

landscape experience. This marginalizing invisibility effectively 'annihilated' both the spatial *and* temporal aspects of these places; that is to say, the streets, homes, sawmill buildings, railway depots, and other intentionally-constructed structures that marked the historical existence of those places, even if abandoned or in ruins.

Traces of these places were not intentionally erased or actively purged from the landscape by government agencies in the way that the 'menacing,' 'eyesore' structures at Lucerne had been (after many years of planning to, and ironically by the need to quickly establish an internment and road building camp). But nor did those agencies make any effort to arrest the gradual, supposedly 'natural' processes of abandonment, decomposition, and bewilderment that were occurring in them; not even establishing a heritage site/sight here or there, or erecting a 'stop of interest' sign at some roadside pull off beside Highway 16 in order to explain their history and testify to their existence. Not only might doing so have prompted some automobile travellers to think about why exactly the highway that they were driving on was located where it was, rather than running through the area's pre-existing communities; it would have also unnecessarily complicated and cluttered up the traffic flows and lines of sight that were so central to the newly established dromoscopic narrative of east-central BC's landscape.[87] Only so many 'stories' could be communicated to the tens of thousands of automobile travellers who drove through east-central BC every month, for whom the dominant dromoscopic experience of such traversals was of 'wilderness' landscapes almost entirely uninterrupted by signs of human activity or history, like homes, fields, gas stations, railroad tracks, billboards, utility poles, and intersecting roads. Even the growing number of clearcuts visible from the road was obviously quite recent. Both the fast, smooth new first-class, limited access highway and the ancient, abundant, seemingly endless forest and mountain scenery that were visible from it seemed to be timeless, ahistorical. The visual-vehicular kin-aesthetics of speed, the principles of a limited access highway, and the 'common sense' of place-based hierarchies dictated that there was no room in this

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[87] Given this 'common sense' elision of east-central BC's modern history from the verges of the highway that passed through it—the new and improved, publicly funded, 'free' line of circulation that had played such a key role in the 'annihilation' of the places near the valley floor—it is worth pausing to consider Guy Debord's observation that "(s)pectacular domination's first priority [is] to eradicate historical knowledge in general, beginning with virtually all information and rational commentary on the most recent past." *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* Malcolm Imrie, trans. (London: Verso, 1990), 13.

spectacularly attractive landscape that so epitomized beautiful British Columbia for visible signs of places that, like a BC Lands Inspector had observed of Lucerne in the mid-1920s, "no longer had an excuse to exist" because of their marginal relations to the dominant mode of circulation and their having been stripped of a role in both commodity production (sawmills) and consumption (stores). Even for the few motorists who did deign to drive down the Penny landing access road, the small, inaccessible, but still people place across the river was hidden behind dense brush, so that the dominant image of Penny was reduced to a simplistic, rustic, mechanically reproduced scene that was neatly trifurcated into foreground, middle ground, and background: a rusting, long-disused sawmill burner flanked by forests and hemmed in between a rushing river and steep, snow-covered mountains.

Furthermore, the completed routes and form of Highways 5 and 16 also contributed to the temporal 'annihilation' of places like Penny by their indirect yet vitally important role in the economic shifts that prompted the dispersal of the people who lived there and, by extension, of the historical knowledge that they possessed. Most of the people who lived in communities that had be turned into mill-less, store-less, school-less, traffic-less, and poorly connected places that were invisible to highway travellers eventually moved to larger centres like McBride and Valemount, Prince George and Kamloops, Vancouver and Edmonton, and even further afield. As a result, the living historical 'memory' and 'voice' of many of east-central BC's communities was scattered. Places like Sinclair Mills, Hutton, and Dome Creek were left un-historied, while others like Red Pass Junction and Shere became miscellaneous, subservient components that were tacked into books about larger areas of east-central BC, which inevitably found their teleological centres of gravity in 'important,' populated, connected, visible sites/sights like Valemount, McBride, and, to a lesser extent, the vicinity around Mount Robson.[88]

The same routes, forms, and structures of Highways 5 and 16 that pushed many places in east-central BC even further to the fringes of the province's society, economy, and landscape than they had been prior to the late 1960s also served to entrench McBride

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[88] It is also noteworthy that in the two more comprehensive local/regional histories that have been written about parts of east-central BC—*The Robson Valley Story* (1979) and *Yellowhead Pass and its People* (1984)—the completion of Highways 5 and 16 are employed to mark a kind of 'end of history,' as though all the changes that had occurred after the late 1960s were not yet of historical significance.

and Valemount's positions as the largest, most important communities in east-central BC—as well as Mount Robson's as the entire area's dominating scenic attraction. For the large majority of automobile travellers, McBride and Valemount were seen to be and experienced as the *only* community in the upper Fraser and upper North Thompson corridors, respectively. Because they were clearly visible and quickly accessible from Highway 16 they either became (as was the case with Valemount) or were reinforced (as with McBride) as the dominant hubs—or perhaps more accurately, the dominant nodes—of commerce and service in east-central BC.

Yet hierarchies of place are above all relational, and McBride and Valemount were simultaneously situated as points that motorists could choose to either pass through or pass by (bypass) while making their way between larger, distant centres, regardless of whether they were travelling for business or for pleasure. *Beautiful British Columbia*'s 1971 article made this abundantly clear by its matter-of-fact statement, immediately after having enjoined motorists to "discover an unfamiliar perfection" by pulling to the side of the highway and walking ten paces beyond its verge in the "sparsely populated" space between McBride and Prince George, that that latter point, with its population of 30,000, "is the largest British Columbia city on Highway 16. [...] Its great period of growth has been in recent years. Look at your map: Prince George is a hub from out of which the spokes of highways and railways fan out to the north, south, east and west."[89]

Although highways quickly came to be of great importance for everyday life and social and economic activities in McBride, in Valemount, and in the shadow of Mount Robson (as had been the case with the railways), and although those lines of automotive circulation were predicated first and foremost on facilitating the high speed, long distance movement of traffic *through* east-central BC (as had also been the case with railways), these places were not necessary, integral components of a system of circulation in the same way they had been for the Grand Trunk, Canadian Northern, and Canadian National railways. Whereas all passenger and freight trains had stopped (and continued to stop) in McBride for twenty to thirty minutes, even if in the middle of the night, there was no such structural, systematic, or operational requirement for automobile travellers to do the

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[89] "Jasper... to the Sea," 15.

same. True, there was an imperative that pressed motorists to pause in McBride—the most blatantly obvious marker of this was the roadside sign on the outskirts of town that informed westbound drivers of the ninety miles 'gap' before the next service station. But a large enough gas tank that had been topped up in Jasper or Mount Robson, or Prince George or Purden was all that was needed to bypass McBride and the stereotypical 'gas and go' ritual. Similarly, two or three hours' worth of driving was all that was needed to reach a large automotive oasis like Prince George, with its wide selection of franchise motels, drive-in restaurants, and multi-pump gas bars.[90]

Their new dependence of businesses in places like McBride and Valemount on the whims, desires, and habits of passing drivers made it increasingly important for them to construct visible and accessible attractions and project a simple, standardized, and predictable yet differentiated and interesting, motorist-friendly image. Yet at the same time, the power over access roads, roadside verges, and the spaces beside the highway right-of-way was exercised by government agencies headquartered in Victoria and Prince George. The Highways Department strictly regulated the erection of signs and structures within the highway right-of-way. The McBride Board of Trade had not needed permission to set up illuminated Christmas trees across the street from the CNR's station during the 1950s, but in the late 1960s the town's municipal council needed to apply for and get approval from the Highways Department before they could put up 'Welcome to McBride' signs beside the highway near its intersection with Main Street.[91] And whereas the Highways Department, Forest Service, and forestry corporations collaborated to find suitable points for loaded westbound and empty eastbound logging trucks to enter and

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[90] McBride was not only thrown into competition with Prince George for motorists' attention and 'Tourist Dollars.' As local historian Marilyn Wheeler points out, the highway allowed McBride residents to shop in Prince George more often and also justified the removal of administrative and government services from McBride and their consolidation in BC's 'Northern Capital.' In the early 1970s McBride gradually became "merely one of a number of small communities served by the city." *Robson Valley Story*, 357.

[91] Sometimes the BC Highways Department also took a harsh approach with pre-existing structures located in or beside Highway 16's right-of-way. For example, in 1974 the provincial government and the owners of a family-operated gas station that had originally been built beside a rough, gravel stretch of the road between McBride and Tête Jaune Cache were unable to settle on an appropriate amount of compensation for the expropriation of the business and the land it was located on, which were needed to improve the alignment of the highway. The station owners refused to vacate the gas station office despite impatient Highways Department staff's efforts to have all of the gasoline siphoned out of their storage tanks and threats to knock the building down with them inside. "Highways Crews Still Held Off in Battle Over Gas Station," *Vancouver Sun* 15 June 1974, 12.

exit the flow of traffic, the recently created Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) hwas not nearly as accommodating towards the highway-dependent residents, communities, and small businesses of east-central BC.

The RDFFG was a creation of the Social Credit government. Headquartered in Prince George, it was responsible for planning, zoning, and shaping patterns of development throughout a huge swath of central British Columbia. Facilitating the fast and efficient movement of automobile traffic along the region's highways and arterial roads was one of the foundations of the RDFFG's policies, as is illustrated by the following excerpt on transportation from one of its zoning bylaws from the mid-1970s:

> Objectives:
> 1. To have a safe and efficient transportation network fully integrated with the overall pattern of land use.
> 2. To maintain the smooth flow of traffic through the Plan area on Highways 5 and 16.
>
> Policies:
> 1. The Regional District will not support development proposals which add to a pattern of strip development along Highways 5 and 16.
> 2. The Regional District will prefer development proposals which do not require new access to Highways 5 or 16. [....]
> 7. The Regional District supports road development in depth rather than frontage roads [except along existing frontage roads at Tête Jaune Cache and Valemount].[92]

In late 1968, at the first Regional Planning Board meeting held in McBride, members of the Board—all of whom were from Victoria and Prince George—explained (rather than consulted about) how new zoning bylaws and regulations were going to be established for the area between Prince George and the BC-Alberta boundary. For example, the location of tourist attractions and accommodations was to be strictly limited to the vicinity of the junction of Highways 5 and 16, and to the municipalities of McBride and Valemount. The location of other roadside developments were to be similarly restricted. The intention, according to the director of regional planning, "was to improve

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[92] Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, "Valemount Area and Tete Jaune Settlement Plan, 1980" (Prince George, 1980), 56. The quotation above is from a RDFFG publication from the 1980s, but comparison with other such publications shows it to have been 'on the books' for several years. Other important policy points reinforced in this 1980 survey included the prevention of "new accesses onto highways as much as possible," the allowance of no roadside commercial developments between Tête Jaune Cache and McBride, and the development of villages "mainly on one side of the highway." (28)

facilities such as lighting, sewage disposal, water, etc. and to prevent slums and large overpopulated areas from springing up outside the municipalities."[93] No vision-cluttering, wilderness scenery-interrupting, undercapitalized 'eyesores' or circulation-clogging local traffic would be allowed to develop around the new highways.

In the following years, strenuous complaints, extensive debates, and sometimes venomous insults would be exchanged back and forth between the Regional District (and those whose interests its policies favoured) and the residents of places situated in what come to be officially designated as "unorganized territory."[94] In letters to the editor, the Regional District's planners and local advisory board were called "appointed Mandarins," a "clique of 'directors,'" and "an extra force of overseers, or police," and their policies and decisions were derided as blatant "favouritism" and "dictatorship."[95] "Why is it that people who have waited years for Highway 16 to be completed through the area so that they could [...] develop a tourist potential when the opportunity came are now being denied that opportunity by a few who were on the inside track politically?," demanded a letter-writing resident of the farming district east of McBride.

> (W)hy has this regional planning and zoning by-law been carried this far without all land owners concerned being notified? Is it because the powers that be were too afraid of protest from many such as myself whose farms have been crossed by the highway, so by cutting down on the agricultural value for which they are zoned yet denying us the opportunity to cash in on any tourist potential there might be?[96]

Without the correct zoning designation from the Regional District, owners of land that was situated right beside the highway right-of-way and within plain view of passing motorists could not get the necessary permission from the Highways Department to

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[93] *Robson Valley Courier* 11 November 1968, 1.

[94] For example, Stan Carr was the father of Mount Robson Motor Village owner Tom Carr, and an outspoken critic of the Regional District's zoning decisions which threatened the viability of the business his son had established in the mid 1950s. After he registered strong objections at the first Regional Board meeting in McBride, the local newspaper printed a letter from a member of the RDFFG planning group who publicly slandered him as being culpable for a murder that had occurred at Mount Robson during the late 1940s, when Carr had been a justice of the peace at Tête Jaune Cache. *Robson Valley Courier* 11 November 1968, 3.

[95] *Robson Valley Courier* 2 December 1969, 2; 29 January 1970, 2.

[96] *Robson Valley Courier* 29 January 1970, 2.

construct access routes—which might be as simple as a driveway—that would allow automobiles to exit and enter the flow of traffic (which, as has been pointed out, was not especially heavy during the late 1960s and early 1970s).

From the Regional District's point-of-view, its regulation of local people and places' visibility and accessibility from the highway corridor was a perfectly neutral, natural, 'common sense' action that was in step with both modern planning practices and the (dromoscopic, spectacular) aesthetics of beautiful British Columbia. On the same day that Premier Bennett officially "dedicated" Highways 5 and 16 at the viewpoint and parking lot at Mount Robson meadows, the directors of the RDFFG officially adopted a comprehensive zoning plan that restricted the location—and by extension, the appearance—of developments beside those publicly funded, publicly owned, 'democratized' lines of automotive circulation. The chairman of the regional planning committee proudly informed the *Vancouver Sun* that "the most significant part of the concept was the district's determination to preserve the *natural beauty of the valley through which the highway passes*. [emphasis added]"[97] The regional planner who in 1968 had sternly warned against allowing slums to sprout up beside the new highways added that the intention behind the plan was to "cope with the demands of *travellers and local people* without sacrificing the natural character of the valley," and that without a plan of control in a few years "one could expect to *face blighted areas, new slums,*[and] *traffic congestion*. [emphases added]"

A 1973 RDFFG report concluded that roadside businesses in McBride and Valemount were still largely dependent on motorists' fleeting 'gas and go' practices, and were "not attracting potential tourist sales." Possible solutions to this problem that were suggested included prompting business owners in those towns to modernize their facilities; better promotion of those existing facilities; infrastructural upgrades to Highway 16 (which still had a few short stretches of gravel surface to the east of McBride); and requesting the provincial government to develop more roadside campsites and recreation areas.[98] Exactly how any proposal that involved speeding up the flow of

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[97] "Preservation Planned of Valley's Beauty" *Vancouver Sun* 15 August 1970, 8.

[98] Regional District of Fraser-Fort George. Regional Development Commission., "Preliminary Economic Report: McBride-Valemount" (Prince George, 1973), 4.

highway traffic, spending money on advertising and upgrading motels and restaurants, or building new government-operated campgrounds would have helped the undercapitalized automobilist-oriented businesses in McBride is not clear. The same report also noted, in a demonstration of 'closing the barn door after the horse had bolted,' that

> (r)ailroad communities—Dome Creek, Longworth, Penny, and Red Pass—are now being bypassed by the highway and are giving way to the greater emphasis on road transportation. The residents of these isolated communities are the resource of the area, and the impact of new transportation systems should be studied in light of the needs of the people who settled in this valley a generation ago. Families are in conflict over their pull to the land they have developed and their children's need for education that can only be found in concentrated centres.[99]

While this report concluded that these matters deserved further study, nowhere did it argue for a relaxation of the Regional District's strict controls over the visual and vehicular connections between those communities and the highway rights-of-way that traversed the area.

The Highways Department and the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George were not the only government agencies that were concerned with managing relations between highways, highway travellers' views and visual practices, and the people and places of east-central BC after the completion of Highway 16 between McBride and Prince George. This chapter began by describing how in 1964 the BC Parks Branch had set out to establish a series of recreational reserves that would be visible and/or accessible from the future route of Highway 16. All of the sites that they inspected and all of the sites where the placement of a reserve was approved were located on the south side of the Fraser River. All of them were also located far away from the river and valley floor, with the exception of the Goat River Mouth reserve, which had been inherited from the Forest Service. Because they were located on or part way up the Trench's forested plateaus, benches, and ridges, not one recreational reserve was closer than one mile to the communities strung in regular intervals along the Canadian National Railways' (ex-GTP) right-of-way. This system of picnic sites, scenic waterfalls, and roadside rest stations that the Parks Branch had planned in anticipation of the elimination of the 'missing link' was intended to be the automotive equivalent to (and thus in a sense the replacement for) the

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[99] Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, "Preliminary Economic Report," 8.

railway's linear system of stations, sidings, and depots that had been established to facilitate the fast and efficient circulation of commodities through east-central BC on their way to and from distant metropolitan centres.

After Highway 16 became passable between Prince George and McBride, the Parks Branch established several new reserves in order that this system would better fit with Highway 16, which had ended up being located considerably further to the south than the Parks Branch had anticipated it would in 1964. In 1969 and 1970 several new reserves were established at locations closer to the route of the completed highway. Two of these—the Bowron River Bridge picnic site and the Slim Creek rest stop—were placed where the sites of former construction camps were located right beside the highway. This conveniently allowed the province to incorporate into the roadside recreation system a pair of prominently visible sites/sights that otherwise would have been considered intrusive, disruptive 'eyesores' in need of either screening or aesthetic remediation.[100]

As was described in the last section of the chapter on the geographical and socio-cultural 'gaps' in east-central BC, the provincial Parks Branch had also been intensely active during the late 1960s in shaping and structuring—or authoring and authorizing—the landscape narratives that automobile travellers would experience as they traversed Mount Robson Provincial Park. Some of the Parks Branch's efforts during the 1970s are of particular significance to the subject of this thesis, and could be elaborated on in considerable detail. Doing so would help emphasize how motorists must have seen the upper Fraser and North Thompson river corridors as monotonous, undifferentiated, unimportant space to be traversed as quickly as possible when they were compared against Mount Robson Park (as well as Jasper National Park, to the east). However, the body of this thesis ends with the Parks Branch and Mount Robson Park in 1975 because it was in the first week of that year that the pamphlet titled "Mount Robson Provincial Park: Concept for the Scenic Highway Corridor" was distributed, after having been given

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[100] BC Lands. Box 9. File 1-4-1-122 (Slim Creek Highway 16); File 1-4-1-126 (Bowron River Highway Crossing).

ministerial approval, to "groups whose actions can have a significant effect on the corridor and subsequently the visitor's impressions of the park."[101]

The interested parties included the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, the BC Forest Service, the BC Lands Branch, the provincial government's powerful Environment and Land Use Committee, the Highways Department, and the general managers of Canadian National Railways' Mountain Division, BC Hydro, and the Trans Mountain Oil Pipeline Company. The pamphlet that they received had been produced (ironically in the form of a folding roadmap) by the Department of Recreation and Conservation's Parks Planning office in order to encapsulate its long-term, comprehensive plan for the active management of the visual-vehicular relations that existed between the travellers who drove through the park and the spaces and places that they experienced as dromoscopic landscapes. The introductory statement on the inside front page of the pamphlet explained to its readers that

> Mt. Robson is a 'jewel' within the Province. The highway corridor through Mt. Robson Park provides an introduction to the Province and the Provincial Park system. For a majority of travellers the impressions created by this corridor are the impressions of the park that are retained. *Therefore it is essential that the natural values of the corridor should be preserved or restored. Scenery, natural environment and features should dominate the visual landscape.* This does not imply that there be no further development along the corridor. Developments suitably located and screened should occur at those areas most conducive to human activity... [emphasis in original][102]

The Concept for the Scenic Highway Corridor divided Highway 16 and everything that was visible and/or accessible from it into five hierarchically ranked "zones," which were identified as possessing "varying degrees of quality if rated for their visual attractiveness." Thus the area around the Red Pass Zone was evaluated as merely

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[101] BC Parks. Reel BO-1758. "Mount Robson Provincial Park: Concept for the Scenic Highway Corridor" (1974), undated entry, see section 7, sheets 354-355; R.H. Ahrens, Director, Parks Branch to Hon. Jack Redford, Minister, Department of Recreation and Conservation. 4 October 1974.

[102] Upon submitting the pamphlet for comment, the Director of the Parks Branch explained to the Minister of Recreation and Conservation that the corridor concept "promotes the idea that travelling through a provincial park is a legitimate part of the recreational experience. Since travel corridors constitute a significant portion of the visitor's impression of a park it is our belief that they should receive the same degree of concern and attention which we normally devote to the rest of the park. The fact that such corridors are usually deleted from the park proper should not restrict the Parks Branch from attempting to arrive at the best possible compromise with the various rights-of-way holders." BC Parks. Reel B0-1758. Ahrens to Redford. 4 October 1974.

"a transient space—a means of getting from one place to another. Except for the one key feature of Overlander Falls (which cannot be viewed from the highway) it offers no inclination nor possibility for the traveller to stop." On the other end of the kin-aesthetic spectrum, the pamphlet explained that the Robson Meadows Zone "constitutes the highest quality zone of the entire corridor" because the location of the highway provided "an overview of the Fraser River with the overpowering presence of Mount Robson as a back-drop." Furthermore, the Robson Meadows Zone was important as "the only portion of the entire corridor that permits an unobstructed view of this mountain from the highway."

No mention was made the communities at Red Pass Junction or in the Mount Robson meadows, but two of the key recommendations that were made in pamphlet appeared to apply to those places: these recommendations called for the Parks Branch to "visually screen all development from the highway," and to restrict the "location of commercial service facilities" to "centres outside of Mt. Robson Park; in Tete Jaune for western portion of the park and in Jasper for the eastern portion." Other key recommendations contained in the pamphlet called for the acquisition of a "consistent roadside signing system which unobtrusively designates locations of developments, interpretation features, etc."; and for "meeting the objective of a visually 'clean' corridor," which involved a "rehabilitation programme" that was intended to "restore certain unsightly portions of the corridor." The Parks Planning office's management plan constantly took the route and form of the highway into account, and also the visual-vehicular intricacies of dromoscopic perception, such as the blurring effects of speed and the slightly different perspectives that were held by automobile drivers and passengers.

The initial distribution of the BC Parks Branch's "Concept for a Scenic Highway Corridor" pamphlet in early 1975 serves as a terminus for this study because the incredibly detailed programme of visual-vehicular micro-management that was laid out in that slim publication—let alone what was contained in the larger body of studies and reports the conclusions of which it presented in abridged form—can be seen as marking both the total ascendancy and the utter banalization of the dromoscopic mode of

landscape experience in east-central BC.[103] Not every recommendation contained in it was implemented—for example, despite its proscription against "commercial service facilities" in the Mount Robson meadows area, the Carr family and the Mount Robson Motor Village could not be dislodged from their prominent roadside location in the "highest quality zone of the entire corridor." And the pamphlet was far from the first sign that agencies of the provincial government were aware that automobile travellers moved through and looked at spaces and places in a different way than railway travellers did—for example, the Lands Branch's initial reaction to Fred Williams' suggestion in 1934 that an automobile road would soon be built over the Yellowhead summit and past the troublesome site/sight of Lucerne is clearly indicative of as much.

However, the visual-vehicular-landscape management plan that was put forward in 1975 represented both an escalation and a formalization of this, what with its matter-of-fact acknowledgement that some "zones" were more important than others because of how and what automobile travellers could see from the highway while passing through them; its recommendation that all existing homes, businesses, and other 'un-natural' structures and spaces located inside the park be screened from motorists' views (as well as some located *outside* the park, between the Tête Jaune Cache junction and the western park portal!); its complete and calculated elision of complicating, peopled communities like Red Pass Junction and Mount Robson, which were treated as if they were trespassing amidst the "scenery" and "natural features" that were supposed to "dominate the visual landscape"; its erasure of all of the CNR's railway stations from its otherwise highly detailed maps; and its failure to give any consideration to the train passengers who also experienced the landscapes of the park while moving along another structured, mediating corridor of commodity circulation.

Furthermore, it is worth noting a significant connection or parallel between the Parks Branch's 1975 "Concept for a Scenic Highway Corridor" and the Highways Department's elimination of the 'missing link' between Prince George and McBride in the late 1960s. Obviously they both revolved around what was a single, unitary line of long-distance, high-speed circulation—the Yellowhead Northern Transprovincial

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[103] Or perhaps even its nadir, given the array of critiques and re-evaluations of automobility that began to appear in growing segments of Canadian society after the oil crises of the mid-1970s.

Highway system, or what was referred to within British Columbia as Yellowhead Highway 16. And much like the line of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway that it closely paralleled for much of its length, that highway was designed and constructed as a limited access corridor of circulation meant to facilitate the fast, efficient, and predictable movement of commodities—whether they be timber, tractor trailers, or Tourist Dollars—through the intervening, inbetween, barrier-like space that separated important centres of scenery, services, consumption, production, and population. And both the western and the eastern stretches of Highway 16 in east-central BC 'annihilated' time and space in a manner similar to the way the Grand Trunk Pacific had marginalized the dozens of people who found themselves living on the 'wrong' side of the Fraser River, or somewhere amidst the more than one hundred miles of experiential space that had been 'annihilated' by the "iron horse describing practically a bee-line" through the Rocky Mountain Trench. However, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s it was the places that had developed along that "bee-line" of modern circulation that were being 'annihilated' by their separation from or second class connection to the new dominant, flexible, publicly-funded 'people's' route and mode of circulation.

The stretch of Highway 16 that had been designed and constructed to allow logging trucks to bring a cheap, steady supply of timber to enormous pulp mills in Prince George had also served to make the small, now mill-less places down near the valley floor and the railway line invisible and unattractive (what with their gravel access roads and lack of differentiated sites/sights) to the automobile travellers who sped through the upper Fraser corridor. Automobilists who drove through this area saw an undifferentiated, 'timeless,' 'wilderness' landscape seemingly unmarked by a historical human presence. The prominent absence of buildings, fields, and highway-paralleling utility lines was a clear marker of this. At the other end of east-central BC, in the Yellowhead Pass and Mount Robson Park, a different government agency's plan to establish an intensive programme of dromoscopic landscape management along the same highway would similarly lead to an 'annihilation' of time and space. *All* developments were to be screened from motorists' view, though presumably this edict would not extend to the Parks Branch's own portal signs, interpretation centre, Tourist Information booth, public toilets, campsites, or viewpoint parking lots. All commercial facilities were to be

located *outside* the boundaries of Mount Robson Park. There were to be no historical markers at Lucerne, most of which had been covered up by the upgraded highway right-of-way anyway, the rest having been 'cleaned up' by Parks Branch staff. And inalterable opposition was to be maintained against any suggestion that view-besmirching roadside utility lines were needed to get public electricity and telephone service into places like Mount Robson and Red Pass Junction. Thus Highway 16's route through Mount Robson Park was also to traverse pristine 'wilderness,' and the spectacular, dromoscopic landscapes experienced by automobile drivers were to have 'natural' lines of sight, uncluttered by unimportant spaces and 'dead end' places, and unsullied by either intruding people or signs of recent history.

CONCLUSIONS, LOOKING BACK

Making the BC Parks Branch's 1975 introduction of the Concept for the Scenic Highway Corridor in Mount Robson Park the terminal point of this study has ultimately been somewhat arbitrary. This is because the Concept did not mark an abrupt end to the processes and phenomena that have been explored here—rather, it was significant primarily for the formalization and normalization of the connections between circulation, visuality, space, and place that its explicit acknowledgement of the importance of regulating motorists' experiences of landscape in that area represented. Numerous instances of change (and its absence) in east-central BC could be cited to show how the intersecting trajectories of circulation, visuality, landscape experience, and hierarchy of place that have been traced in this thesis have continued throughout the period after 1975. The following three examples are included in order to emphasize that this study describes a part of a continuum that leads right up into the present.

This first example is drawn from the adaptive reuse of redundant railway infrastructure to fit into a local economy that since 1970 has become increasingly dependent on services, images, and modes of visuality that are oriented towards highways, automobiles, and motor-travellers. One instance of this is the relocation of the old Grand Trunk Pacific Type E depot at Penny during the summer of 1988. Long redundant in the Canadian National Railways' system of operations and slated for demolition, the building that for twenty years had been considered Penny's "hub" or "focal point" was disassembled, loaded onto a flatbed railcar, and transported sixty-five miles west to an industrial area of Prince George. There it was reassembled by a group of heritage enthusiasts to act as the cornerstone of a new, highway-accessible railway museum.[1] [Image 25. Compare with Images 21, 22, and 23.] In this new location and its new commodified role as part of a tourist attraction, the Penny depot would subsequently be visited and seen by exponentially more people than was the isolated, island-like community from whence it had been removed. Thus in the public imagination a

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[1] Penny Reunion Committee, *A Penny for Your Thoughts*, 40-41

IMAGE 25 Penny depot at the Prince George Railway and Forestry Museum, May 2000. Originally constructed at Lindup station in 1914, this Grand Trunk Pacific railway Type E depot was moved to Penny by the Canadian National Railways in 1947. It was officially decommissioned by the CNR during the mid-1980s, and was acquired by heritage enthusiasts and moved to its present site in 1988. Photograph by the author.

displaced and decontextualized structure became the prevalent image or marker of that little-known and seemingly invisible site/sight.

The Penny depot was not the only railway building in east-central BC that was put to new uses after the CNR divested itself of disused or antiquated infrastructure. Twelve years after its removal to Prince George in 1988, only three other railway depots that had been built by the GTP or the Canadian Northern railway remained in east-central BC. These too had been stripped of their role in facilitating the movement of trains and travellers through the system in which they had so long been integrated components, but in contrast to the Penny depot, by 2000 the old CNoR depot at Valemount, the long-disused Type E depot in the farming community of Dunster, and the large, distinctive GTP depot that had signified McBride's important 'rank' as a divisional point each remained at their original locations (or at least within sight of them) and had been converted into museums, rather than museum *pieces*.[2] With municipal funding, volunteer staffing, and the aid of promotional and directional signage located beside nearby highway exits and along local roads, these historical buildings were intended to serve as place-differentiating attractions that would draw the attention—and hopefully the "Tourist Dollars"—of passing motorists. The Penny depot, on the other hand, was totally separated from and no longer of practical or symbolic use to the few remaining residents of the road-less and unelectrified place on the 'wrong' side of the Fraser River that it had formerly been located in.[3]

The materially tangible relocation and reuse of these structures shows how automotive mode of circulation and the dromoscopic mode of landscape perception associated with it have become central to the meaning of place and to experiences of seeing and being seen in east-central BC since the completion of Highways 5 and 16. However, the same shift can also be traced through the relative *absence* of change in

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[2] On the conversion of the McBride depot to a community hall and local museum, see Marilyn Wheeler, "The McBride Railway Station" *Heritage BC Newsletter* (Fall 1995): 1, 4

[3] To the best of the author's knowledge, at the time of this writing Penny remains a kind of 'island,' and is not connected to either the road network or the electrical grid of British Columbia. Electrical power in Penny comes from local residents' propane and diesel generators. However, some relatively recent changes have reduced Penny's relative isolation. Residents used complicated and unreliable radio-telephones for their communications until early 2000, when for the first time they were connected directly by land line to the provincial telephone network. However, even after this they received only inconvenient, second-class rural 'party line' service, meaning that multiple households shared a single phone line.

large areas of east-central BC, and this leads to the second example. It is difficult to describe the extent to which the provincial Highways Department and the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George have been successful in preventing visually intrusive, aesthetically unappealing, and circulation-clogging "eyesores," "slums," "blighted areas," and other traces of settlement, industry, and history from besmirching the lonely, spectacular narrative of landscape that automobilists experience when traversing the route of Highway 16 through the east-central part of "Super Natural" BC. Probably the best way to emphasize their success in imposing their vision on the landscape is to point out that, with the important exception of many highly prominent logging clearcuts, only one small roadside development has been allowed to appear along Highway 16 between Tête Jaune Cache and the outskirts of Prince George since the mid-1970s. In the late 1980s, after four years spent applying for the necessary zoning and building permits, Dome Creek residents Karen Birch and Gary Cowell established the Dome Diner on a small lot where Highway 16 intersects with the steep gravel access road that led down to Dome Creek. Their undercapitalized, family-run business consisted of a small pressboard café with several outbuildings and a bulldozed dirt parking lot large enough to accommodate a dozen tractor-trailer trucks. Even after the construction had been completed, the Regional District refused to give Birch and Cowell the permission necessary to erect roadside signboards that would advertise their business to passing motorists until they had sufficiently addressed government agencies' concerns about how vehicles entering and exiting their property would affect the flow of highway traffic.[4]

For the third and final example, it is worth briefly touching on the events of the summer of 2003, which occurred even as this thesis was being written and serve to further illustrate how place-based identities and experiences of living in east-central British Columbia continue to be hierarchically situated through the relations between communities and the networks of circulation which pass through and pass by them. The incredibly large and intense Strawberry Mountain and McLure-Barriere forest fires that broke out north of Kamloops during that summer had the effect of cutting electrical power to every community in the North Thompson River valley, in the Yellowhead Pass,

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[4] Rosemary Neering, *Down the Road: Journeys in Small-Town British Columbia* (Victoria: Whitecap, 1991), 194-195.

and in the upper Fraser corridor as far west as Dome Creek. For more than a week everyone living between these far-flung points had no electricity and only sporadic telephone service, and for the following month had to depend on power that was produced by emergency generators that BC Hydro had brought in to what it deemed to be those regions' most important centres, which included McBride and Valemount. As unpredictable the massive conflagrations of 2003 were, the fact that east-central BC continues to form two 'dead ends' in the province's electrical grid was a key factor in local residents' temporary powerlessness and the many restrictions that were subsequently placed on their electricity usage. What made everyday life for thousands of people in dozens of communities susceptible to events that were happening dozens or hundreds of miles away that they had no control over was their tenuous, 'second class' connection—from a single direction and by a single line—to what is one of the most utilitarian and taken-for-granted of circulating if immaterial commodities in today's Canadian society.

The point of including the above examples has been to emphasize that the broader findings of this thesis must be understood as part of an ongoing process in which experiences of time, space, place, and landscape have been and continue to be broadly linked to the social, cultural, and economic imperatives and logic of capitalist modernity. This brings us to what are perhaps this study's most important findings. It has shown that the logic that materialized in Highway 16's route and form in east-central BC—and, by extension, that underlay the largely ahistorical, visually 'clean,' and seemingly 'natural' experience of traversing that space by automobile—was the time- and space-annihilating logic of commodity circulation, the metaphorical lifeblood of capitalism. It has also shown that this was fundamentally the same logic as that on which the Grand Trunk Pacific railway had been conceptualized and constructed in the first decades of the twentieth century, and that, going further back, had run through the imaginative yet eloquent and highly detailed description of future railway journeys that was made by the surveyor-photographer Benjamin Baltzly in 1872. Very broadly, this thesis has suggested that different modes, systems, networks, and technologies of circulation were elevated to preeminent—even dominant—positions in Canadian society and culture during different moments of capitalism, and that each of these shifts had a parallel in the

way that time, space, and place were looked at, thought about, and experienced. Railway companies' smoke-belching locomotives, rationally organized systems of operation, and the inflexible, panoramic mode of landscape perception associated with railway travel had seemed to embody monopolistic corporate power well into the 1930s; after the Second World War the paved, multi-lane highway, the flexible, 'democratized' automobile, and the dromoscopic mode of landscape perception came to epitomize the 'good life' that was associated with the emergence of the consumption-driven and government-managed Fordist moment of late capitalism. Despite the many differences—both superficial and structural—between these moments of capitalism and the modes of circulation and visuality that were most closely associated with them, they were still connected by several overarching principles, including the imperative for the fast and efficient movement of objects, messages, and people through the intervening, interfering space that separated centres of production and consumption from each other (which was, of course, an expression of a deeper imperative for profit and accumulation).

All of this matters to the historian interested in locale, community, and region because, whether by plane, train, or automobile (or telephone, telegraph, or electrical line), many if not most of the 'inbetween' spaces that have been traversed by lines of circulation and the places and people located within them have intrinsically been deemed unimportant; mattering primarily for how quickly, predictably, and inexpensively they could be passed through. Thus a very important factor in the meaning of a place and in its hierarchical 'rank' in a society and culture were the roles that it played within—and the degree to which it was connected to—the dominant networks and systems of circulation that had been constructed around them. This was especially obvious in the case of railways, with their structural rigidity, top-down manner of organization, inseparable mechanism of track and train, and associated panoramic mode of landscape perception. But, as this study has demonstrated, the same held true for the more flexible, diffuse, and 'consumer friendly' ensemble of highway and automobile, with its spectacle of a supposedly liberated but ultimately structured dromoscopic perception. This thesis' findings are also important because they suggest a need for social and cultural historians to engage in a more detailed and critical examination of the vital role of circulation, movement, and mobility in modern Canada. Doing so might, for example, allow for a

more nuanced understanding of the connections between the production and consumption. The sensuality of speed; the relations between transport, travel, and tourism; and the place of transportation and communication in everyday life are just a few of the many other areas of inquiry that could be opened up by taking such an approach. Also, given what this thesis has suggested about the structured nature of travellers' experiences of landscape, community, and history in one part of British Columbia during the twentieth century, a whole array of sources of evidence are potentially given new significance. What, for example, can be made of the many collections of vernacular photographs—loose snapshots, 35mm slide trays, photo albums, and postcards—that are held in various archives around the province, to say nothing of people's basements and attics? Large collections of often stereotypical images, such as the one compiled by Nina Chapman of New Westminster between the 1950s and the 1980s, become more interesting and valuable both individually and collectively when they can be considered in light of the concretely tangible history of transportation and the seemingly immaterial history of visuality in postwar BC. [Images 26 and 27. Compare with Images 4, 5, 11, 12 and 19]

Finally, it must be pointed out that the ways in which the communities and people of east-central BC have been situated in socio-cultural hierarchies of place through their shifting relations to various modes, networks, and systems of circulation, and by the ways in which they have and have not been visually perceived by the travellers who traversed those metropolitan corridors, were not entirely unique. One could describe a great many ways in which provinces, regions, towns, communities, homes, and bodies have been shot through—or avoided—by a multitude of immaterial, fleeting, and/or transient gazes, waves, currents, streams, transmissions, and flows. By employing a broad range of approaches and methodologies, it would be possible for others to critically examine the previously taken for granted relations between communities, landscape experiences, ways of seeing, and modes of circulation that have existed in other parts of Canada and British Columbia and also in different historical periods. One of the key points of this thesis has been to suggest that such studies should attempt to incorporate the two key tensions that have underlain this study's conceptualization and approach: that is, the "dialectic of roots

IMAGE 26 Nina Chapman and her husband at the east entrance to Mount Robson Provincial Park, 1973. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the New Westminster Museum and Archives, Chapman collection.

IMAGE 27 Mount Robson from the verge of Highway 16, 1973. Photograph by Nina Chapman. Courtesy of the New Westminster Museum and Archives, Chapman collection.

and routes" referred to by John Urry, which prods the historian to consider fixity and flow as inextricably interconnected rather than as neatly divisible, and the negative dialectic between change and its other, between what happened here but did not happen there. That said, this study has shown that regardless of whether the history of east-central British Columbia between 1910 and 1975 is viewed from the perspective of the residents of places like Lucerne, McBride, Dome Creek, and Penny, or from the perspective of the railway- and highway-borne travellers who passed through and passed by those communities, commodity circulation ran through it from end to end, and played a powerful role in mediating and structuring exactly how and what places, spaces, landscapes, and people were seen and otherwise experienced.

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