

CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS

Visitor's Metal Vehicle Badge



CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS VISITORS' METAL VEHICLE BADGE

Periodically, one may encounter a small, stamped metal plaque of a buffalo with the words **CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS** or **CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS** along the bottom edge, with or without a year date on it. Park and regional office staff have frequently been asked what these items signify. Were these simply souvenirs of a trip to a national park or did they serve an official function? Was the buffalo the only design used by the national parks? How many different issues were there? What were the years of production?

This then is the story of the metal vehicle badges issued to motorists visiting the National Parks.

Officially, these badges were issued by the national park as a "receipt" for the purchase of a seasonal admission pass to a national park. Prior to the metal badge, descriptive stickers served the purpose. Some have speculated that the reason for the introduction of the metal receipt is that it was more durable than the stickers and being attached to the radiator or grill, the gate attendant could readily spot the badge. Aside from any official reasons for the change, many of the Park's visitors thought the metal badge an appropriate souvenir of a visit to one of the national parks.

In addition to the buffalo design, there was one other design used by the national parks. This was a circular badge with a beaver depicted within, surrounded by the words, **NATIONAL PARKS CANADA**. Other comparable designs, such as that of a beaver on a log or of a moose, exist. These may also have served as receipts for a vehicle pass. However, with the exception of the buffalo badge and the beaver within the circular design, these were not used or issued by the National Parks.

Many stories about the park badges have been put forward, with some of these stories being in error. From the documentary and material culture evidence available and from recently surfaced archival data, the story of the national park vehicle badges can now be documented with a reasonable amount of accuracy.

Due to increased interest resulting from the 1985 National Park's Centennial, a research project was initiated in 1984, to learn about these objects. Almost immediately an obstacle presented itself. The majority of the files in the National Archives which would have helped clarify the situation had already been destroyed. One piece of information that did emanate from this project was a one-sentence reference in an undated photocopy of Banff's local paper, the Crag & Canyon, to a new badge being introduced in June, 1925. This was the first and, as it turned out, a significant key to solving the puzzle.

The original article was eventually located in the 5 June, 1925 issue of the **Crag & Canyon**, a copy of which is illustrated below.

**Aluminum Buffalo Badge
For Tourists Entering
The National Park**

To replace the old descriptive stickers on automobile windshields the Rocky Mountains Park department has issued a beautifully designed aluminum badge which can be wired to the radiator of cars in a couple of minutes.

The badge will be presented to all tourists entering the park by auto, and who pay the usual \$1.00 license fee, is very neat and attractive, and depicts a buffalo reproduced from an actual photograph. Beneath the buffalo the words, "Canadian National Park" are neatly moulded. Two small holes are drilled at the base of the badge to permit the attaching of a small plate bearing the dates of future years.

The size of the badge is three inches high and four inches wide, and is a considerable improvement over the old windshield sticker. It is also guaranteed absolutely rust proof.

J. M. Wardle, chief engineer of the Parks Department, who brought one of the badges to the Crag & Canyon for inspection a few days ago, claims that they will be attached to over 20,000 automobiles from all parts of the world this season.

June 5, 1925

Another piece of the puzzle was located when, through a series of fortunate circumstances, a photograph of the original pattern piece and the blueprints issued to the proposed contractors surfaced amongst the personal donations from a former staff member. These two pieces of documentation helped put us on the right track in resolving the story behind the badges' interesting but still sketchy history.

BACKGROUND TO THE TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

As these badges were associated with permits/licences for vehicles visiting the national parks, it was felt that some answers would likely be found in the appropriate regulations and associated documentation. The information about the traffic regulations, as well as the background on the history of the parks was obtained from W.F. Lothian's works on the history of the national parks, the four volume set entitled **A HISTORY OF CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS** and the later issued single volume entitled **A BRIEF HISTORY OF CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS.**

After the discovery of the Cave & Basin at the base of Terrace Mountain in November 1883, pressure to develop the area continued to increase. In order to prevent the private development of this area, the Privy Council approved Order in Council No. 2197 on November 25, 1885, setting aside a little more than 26 square kilometers on the northern slopes of this mountain, later known as Sulphur Mountain, for future park use.

On April 22, 1887 the Minister of the Interior set into motion the legislative steps necessary to establish Canada's first national park, introducing a bill in the House of Commons. This bill was read for the third time on May 6, and the Act, since known as the Rocky Mountains Park Act, received Royal assent on June 23, 1887. The future concept of the Park, its scope and purposes were set out in the dedication clause of the new Act which reads as follows:

2. The said tract of land is hereby reserved and set apart as a public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the people of Canada, subject to the provisions of this Act and of the regulations hereinafter mentioned, and shall be known as the Rocky Mountains Park of Canada.

In the early days of the park's history, Calgary was not a major population centre. Most visitors to the park came from across Canada and the United States, arriving and departing by train, by horse or by horse-drawn carriages or wagons.

By the turn of the century a new mode of transportation appeared on the scene. During the first twenty years of the park's existence, automobiles were few in number and the government didn't see the need to regulate admission. However, by 1905, the government responded to the new pressures by simply issuing a short, but very effective, regulation.

That the use of automobiles of every kind be prohibited on any road or elsewhere within the limits of the Park.

Despite the barring of automobiles in the park, extensive roadways were slowly being developed both within and outside the park boundary.

By the turn of the century, the Crag & Canyon issued the following advertisement:

The Canadian National Park. A natural watering place and pleasure resort. Seventy-five miles of good roads and bridle paths. For information, write the Superintendent, National Park, Banff, North West Territories.

As the automobile gained popularity, pressure from motorists had finally, in September of 1910, induced the Minister of the Interior to ease the regulations allowing automobiles travel on roads designated by him.

By April of 1911, the first national park Motor Vehicle Regulations were enacted. One of the provisions of this regulation was the registration by the Park Superintendent or the Royal North West Mounted Police, at a cost of 25 cents, of all motor vehicles brought into Rocky Mountain National Park. This park is better known as Banff National Park, having been renamed in 1930 with the passage of the National Parks Act.

These regulations seem to be the first attempt to officially control automobiles entering the park by the use of entrance fees.

By 1912, highway construction west of the townsite was under way. The automobile, now a common feature, and the train were fast becoming the standard modes of transportation. That year the motor vehicle regulations were amended by requiring every motor vehicle driven into the park to be licensed by the superintendent. **The fee for a season was \$5 and for a single trip \$1.** Travel was now expanded from simply following the previously designated routes to the Banff Springs Hotel to include access to private homes and the golf links.

In June, 1915, the motor vehicle regulations were revised and expanded and on September 16, 1915 were made applicable to other national parks.

New Motor Vehicle Regulations adopted by Order in Council, Privy Council No. 1249 of 18 June 1919, authorized the Minister of the Interior to fix the fees for transient motor licenses which in no case were to exceed \$1 for a single trip into the park for a period not exceeding a week, and \$1 for each additional week or portion thereof. Later, apparently by departmental ruling, a maximum fee of \$4 for a seasonal license was adopted.

On March 20, 1928, on recommendations of the park superintendents, the Minister changed the regulations, establishing a seasonal park motor licence of \$2.00 for Banff, Kootenay and Yoho Parks. The licence was reciprocal in all three parks, and also entitled the holder to free camping privileges for a period of one month. In March, 1933, Jasper Park was included within the group in which the \$2 park motor licence was charged. The reciprocal licence for Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho Park was also made available at Waterton lakes Park. This enabled visitors to Waterton, which was not yet subject to automobile licensing, to take advantage of the free camping privileges acquired with the licence.

Effective January 31, 1938, the free camping privileges associated with the purchase of a park motor permit were withdrawn. Licensing of motor vehicles entering Waterton Lakes, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain and Point Pelee parks was authorized. Fees of 25 cents for a single trip and \$1 for the season were payable. The fee structure for the four-park unit of Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho Parks remained as before.

Licensing was extended to Elk Island National Park in 1939, the fees being identical with those prevailing at Waterton Lakes, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain and Point Pelee National Parks.

This two tier fee structure necessitated a means of differentiating the motor vehicle permits. The use of the buffalo badge was originally intended to be used in the western, or mountain parks. With the expansion of the national parks there was a need for another readily identifiable entry permit. The circular beaver badge was the result. This is supported by the following excerpt, found in the 1940 issue of the MANUAL FOR THE GUIDANCE OF FIELD OFFICERS NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA:

Motor Licence Fees

Banff, Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay and
Waterton Lakes National Parks

Seasonal Licence –

Private automobile\$2.00
Private automobile (with trailer)\$3.00

**A buffalo plate is issued with this licence which
is reciprocal in all western Parks.**

Waterton Lakes, Prince Albert, Elk Island,
Riding Mountain and Point Pelee National Parks

Seasonal Licence –

Private automobile\$1.00
Private automobile (with trailer)\$2.00

**A beaver plate is issued with this licence
Which is reciprocal in the parks above mentioned.**

This extract clearly shows that a buffalo badge and a beaver badge was used simultaneously, but each was only to be used in the specific park authorized by the fee structure for that park. The above extract does seem to create some confusion with the fact that Waterton Lakes National Park is mentioned in both sections. This is believed to be an oversight while preparing the handbook for printing. Prior to the fee structure change in 1938, Waterton Lakes was, for the purposes of camping, included with the other mountain parks and allowed to sell the buffalo badge. The changes to the motor vehicle regulations in January, 1938 now grouped Waterton Lakes with Prince Albert, Riding Mountain, Point Pelee and as of 1939, Elk Island National Parks' fee structure. After this fee structure change had occurred, it would seem unlikely that the buffalo badge was issued by the park. It is of interest that for the years 1938 – 1940 inclusive, the only examples of vehicle badges recovered from Waterton Lakes National Park are the beaver badges.

THE BUFFALO BADGES

UNDATED SPECIMENS

Of the badges examined, there are three undated varieties. Besides the aluminum one, specimens of the brass and copper also exist, each being stamped from sheet metal. As the 1925 **Crag & Canyon** article indicates, the badges were intended to be attached to the radiator. To accommodate this each was issued with two mounting wires. In the case of badges still having the original mounting wire, the wire is of the same composition as the badge.

This article also refers to a "date plate" being attached through the two bottom holes in the undated aluminum specimen for use in future years. Though the use of a changeable date plate was originally considered, this seems not to have been done. To date no examples of an undated buffalo badge with an attached date plate have been found. No archival evidence has yet surfaced which would shed light on the use or non-usage of the date plate. It appears that instead of using a date plate a decision was made to alter the material of the badge. This approach meant that the entire badge had to be replaced. It is thought that this practice was chosen simply to make it easier for the park gate attendant. A different coloured badge on the vehicle's radiator would be easy to note and one would readily know whether or not the entry fee for that year had been paid. It is interesting to note that though not used, these two "date" holes continued to be included in the design until the 1930 issue.

DATED SPECIMENS

The earliest dated specimen is for 1928. Dated specimens have been identified for each succeeding year up to 1940 inclusive. Combining the dated specimens with the three undated varieties, it seems appropriate to conclude that there was an official issue for each year from 1925 to 1940 inclusive. No specimens have yet been found 1941 or beyond. This gives support to the belief that because of the need for metal for the war effort, the practice of issuing the metal vehicle badges was discontinued with the 1940 issue.

The dated specimens follow an alternating sequence of copper, aluminum and brass. The repetitive sequence of copper, aluminum and brass of the dated badges has led many collectors to use the initials C A B (the initials of the three metals used) to determine the composition of those specimens missing from their collection. Though this practice holds true for the dated specimens, this sequence cannot be extrapolated back in time in an effort to "date" the undated copper, aluminum and brass badges, noting the 1925 **Crag & Canyon** article.

Officially, there was only one material used per year and dated examples of each badge are known. As with any rule, one finds anomalies which don't fit the accepted norm, in this case the C A B material sequence. The proper badge for 1933 is made of brass. However, examples of aluminum 1933 dated badge also exist. Closer examination of the date area shows that these were counterstamped 1932's. These could possibly be

explained by the fact that in March of 1933 Jasper National Park was included in the reciprocal motor vehicle fee schedule of Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks. Also in that year, the sale of the buffalo badge was extended to Waterton Lakes to permit free camping privileges acquired with the purchase of seasonal permit. Was this counter stamping a response to the need for additional badges?

For 1936, the badge is brass. Recently, a 1936 aluminum badge has been brought to my attention. This particular example is actually a 1935 badge with the number "5" having been over struck by a "6". Supposedly, this example is not unique.

How many badges of any particular year were counterstamped, and why, is not known. Further research is required before these anomalies are resolved.

The 1933 aluminum badge is generally accepted as being a legitimate variety, while the 1936 aluminum badge and its story has to be further looked into. However, there is at least one definite case of forgery. In the early 1980's an individual made dies for a buffalo badge. These were dated 1939 and a number of specimens were struck from both copper and brass sheeting. They are said to be of poor quality and could be readily differentiated from the original.

While not truly a forgery, within the Canadian Parks Service collection is a badge which leads one to believe that fraud was intended. It is an original 1928 copper issue that was painted over with a silver or aluminum coloured paint. From a distance one would think that this badge was a 1929 issue, which was aluminum. The assumption is that this badge was camouflaged in an attempt to obtain admission to the park while not having paid the seasonal fee of \$2.00

MANUFACTURERS

The manufacturer of some issues put their name on the badge. These companies include **Dingwall** and **Winnipeg Brass Ltd.**, both of Winnipeg, **Pritchard Andrews** of Ottawa and **Hewitt** of Vancouver. The first issue on which is found a manufacturer's name is the 1932 aluminum issue, made by **Dingwall** of Winnipeg. This name is found on both the front and the backside of the badge. **DINGWALL/WINNIPEG**, in two lines, is located on the front side, on the ground in front of the buffalo. On the reverse side the information is in three lines, **DINGWALL/MADE IN/WINNIPEG**. As the over stamped 1933 specimens were altered 1932 issues, the information is the same. It is not known if **Dingwall** was responsible for the actual over stamping. The next regular issue with a manufacturer's name is dated 1934, having on the reverse side **PRITCHARD/ANDREWS/OTTAWA**. The 1935 aluminum badge has a two line inscription on the reverse side. It consists of **MADE BY/WINNIPEG BRASS LTD.** The 1937 copper and the 1938 aluminum issues have a single line inscription on the reverse side, **MADE BY WINNIPEG BRASS**. The original 1939 brass issue has **HEWITT/VANCOUVER** on the reverse side. The 1940 issue has the two line inscription **WINNIPEG BRASS/WINNIPEG**. Whether these companies manufactured the unnamed badges is unknown.

DESIGN CHANGES

Though fairly similar throughout the years, some design changes did occur. The most obvious design change occurred in 1932 when the buffalo was changed from a walking to a standing position. The new buffalo design was also fuller and had greater detail. An earlier change was the wording at the bottom of the badge. The undated specimens use the wording CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS and have a total of six holes in the badge. The dated versions use the phrase CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS, followed by single digit, a double digit or a full four digit year identifier. With the exception of the 1928, 1929, 1939 and 1940 issues, they are all approximately three inches high and four inches wide and have four holes. The 1928 and 1929 issues still have the "date plate" holes for a total of six. The 1939 and 1940 issues had their base dimensions heightened and a single slot was incorporated through which the badge could be screwed or bolted to the vehicle. As a result, they are lacking the paired holes in the body of the buffalo or the base. Again, exceptions to the rule surface. There are examples of both the 1939 and 1940 badges without the extended base and with the four holes for wiring them onto the automobile.

All have the text impressed into the field with four exceptions. On the 1933, 1934, 1936 and the 1939 issues the lettering is raised from the field.

The undated aluminum badge (issue for 1925) had the entire surface painted black, as evidenced by the number of similarly finished badges obtained from unrelated sources. Other badges have only their backgrounds painted black, highlighting the details of the buffalo, the letters of impressed words or the field of those with raised lettering. On many the remaining paint appears to be original. However, there are specimens that have been cleaned and touched up after their "recovery".

The 1934 issue has to be singled out as it is the only one which is tinned on the reverse side. Again, exceptions to the rule occur with some uncleaned specimens without the back tinning surfacing.

The symbolic connection of this device to the national parks is still quite strong. For the 1985 Parks Canada Centennial, commemorative plaques of similar design, but with a new text and an 1885-1985 date were made for the Banff Kiwanis Club and sold in many shops within and outside the park boundaries. These reproductions were made in three different metals, similar to the original issues.

In 1990, the Friends of Elk Island created a souvenir buffalo badge in an attempt to raise funds for their activities at the park. This modern piece is readily identifiable, having been made of pewter and with the name of the park at the base and the date 1906, which commemorates the establishment of the area which later became Elk Island National Park.

THE BEAVER BADGES

With the change in the fee structure and the vehicle regulations in 1938 a new vehicle badge with a beaver design came into being.

The beaver badge is of a circular design with the words NATIONAL PARKS reading clockwise at the top and CANADA going counter-clockwise at the bottom. In the centre is a beaver on top of its lodge. The full year date is located below the beaver in a "cartouche".

Due to the unavailability of a 1938 issue which could be personally examined, information about this badge was obtained by examining the 1939 badge, which was a counterstamped 1938 and from conversations with other collectors.

The 1938 beaver badge was attached to a vehicle by means of a narrow tab at the bottom of the body of the badge. This tab had a single slot through which the fastening bolt was passed. This issue, made of relatively soft aluminum metal, must have had complaints in regards to the attachment tab. With the 1939 badges one finds that the attachment tabs were now reinforced on the backside with an iron bar being held in place by means of an aluminum rivet.

The two aluminum issues have the background behind the beaver punched out while the 1940 issue has an intact field behind the beaver. Another change in the 1940 copper issue was the redesign of the attachment tab, making it wider and more cone shaped and without the iron reinforcing bar.

The background of the 1938 issue was painted black and the high spots were left unpainted. The 1939 issue was also painted in a similar manner. However, there is a question as to the colours used. In discussions with a collector having an "as new" issue the paint used in the background is a dark green. The specimen within the Canadian Parks Service's collection is a recovered one. The paint remaining on it appears to be dark green on the top half and black on the bottom half. The question of this anomaly has yet to be addressed. The 1940 issue does not appear to have been painted as there is no residual paint remaining on the examples seen.

A 2-line inscription of the manufacturer, HEWITT/VANCOUVER, is found on the reverse side of the 1939 issue. As the 1939's are actually 1938's counter stamped, one can assume that HEWITT manufactured the 1938 issues. No references have been found as to who did the actual counterstamping of the earlier issue. No manufacturer's name could be located on the 1940 specimens examined.

As no specimens have yet been found with dates after 1940, their manufacture, like the buffalo badge, is thought to have been suspended due to the need for metal for the war effort.

DETAIL SUMMARY AND WHERE EACH IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN USED.

Year	Metal	Basic Description	Parks Where Used
		BUFFALO BADGES	
1906	Pewter	Standing Buffalo, with raised letters, ELK ISLAND 1906	A commemorative actually made in 1990, sold by the FRIENDS OF ELK ISLAND, a local co-operating association venture
1925	Aluminum	Undated, walking buffalo, words beneath in stamped letters CANADIAN NATIONAL PARKS	*Rocky Mountains, Yoho? Kootenay?

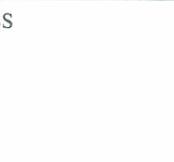
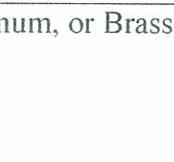
*The name was only changed to Banff National Park in 1930 with the passage of the National Parks Act.

1926	Copper? Brass?		As for 1925	As for 1925
1927	Copper? Brass?		As for 1925	As for 1925

The undated brass is the more common of the three and it is believed that it is the issue for 1927.

1928	Copper		Walking buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS-8	Rocky Mountains, Yoho, Kootenay
1929	Aluminum		Walking buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS-9	As for 1928
1930	Brass		Walking buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS-30	Banff, Yoho, Kootenay

1931	Copper		Walking buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS-31	As for 1930
1932	Aluminum		Standing buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1932	As for 1930
1933	Brass		Standing buffalo, in field in raised characters CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1933	Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper For camping purposes also allowed to be used in Waterton Lakes
1933	Aluminum		Variety, over stamped 1932 issue	?
1934	Copper		Standing buffalo, in field in raised characters, CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1934 Tinned back	Same as 1933 regular issue
1935	Aluminum		Standing buffalo, stamped in field, CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1935	Same as 1933 regular issue
1936	Brass		Standing buffalo, in field in raised characters CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1936	Same as 1933 regular issue
1936	Aluminum		Variety, over stamped 1935 issue	?
1937	Copper		Standing buffalo, in field in stamped characters CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1937	Same as 1933 regular issue

1939		Standing buffalo, in field in raised characters, CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1939	Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper
	Brass		
1939		Standing buffalo, in field in raised characters, CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1939	<u>FORGERY</u> , poorer details
	Copper or Brass		
1940		Standing buffalo, stamped in field CANADA'S NATIONAL PARKS 1940	Banff, Yoho, Kootenay, Jasper
	Copper		
1985		Standing buffalo, with inscription in raised letters, BANFF NATIONAL PARK 1885-CENTENNIAL-1985	NOT SOLD BY PARKS, MADE AND SOLD BY COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS
	Copper, Aluminum, or Brass		
		BEAVER BADGES	
1938		Circular design with words In raised lettering NATIONAL PARKS CANADA Around, beaver in centre with 1938 date beneath	Waterton lakes, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain, Point Pelee
	Aluminum		
1939		Circular design with words NATIONAL PARKS CANADA in raised letters around, beaver in centre with 1939 beneath (these were the 1938 issue with the 8 over stamped by a 9)	Waterton Lakes, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain, Point Pelee, Elk Island
	Aluminum		
1940		Circular design with words NATIONAL PARKS CANADA in raised letters around, beaver in centre with 1940 beneath	Waterton Lakes, Prince Alberta, Riding Mountain, Point Pelee, Elk Island
	Copper		

