

In the years gone by we have talked a great deal about conservation education. We have been impatient of results. We realize that the teaching of conservation is not achieved by legislation alone; that conservation is a state of mind; that it is an attitude.

- - - - -

MUSEUM REGISTERS VITALITY

By William Rowan

(Mr. Rowan is professor of zoology and head of that department at the University of Alberta).

A few days ago I stopped over in Regina and for the first time had the pleasure of visting your provincial museum.

Having spent many professional hours in some of the famous museums of this continent and Europe, may I take the liberty of complimenting you on yours. It seems to be the fate of most local museums to start life in a basement and it was no shock to find yours in one, but I marvelled at the maturity yours had reached without bursting its walls and coming up into the open. Every cubby-hole and corridor appeared to be in use for the display of something: it seemed to me that the museum had already qualified for some fresh air and promotion!

I liked your museum on several counts. A modern museum should achieve various objectives: to provide entertainment for visitors of all kinds is perhaps the first. It does this in a manner difficult to analyse but attendance is the final arbiter as to whether a museum is dead or alive. The registered attendance at yours strikes me as remarkable, especially in view of its subterranean premises, for a city the size of Regina. It has definitely demonstrated its vitality.

Another function of a museum is to fire the imagination and inspire an interest in its exhibits, an invitation to visitors to obey the ancient behest--"Go thou and do likewise." In this way museums have been constant incentives for the development of hobbies. In our present age, when it seems to be expected of our youth that it should squander its spare hours on the fictitious glories of Hollywood, or lapping up the imported gangsterism (and today, propaganda) of the funnies, or listening by the hour to the swing, jazz and crooning (also imported rubbish) which flows incessantly from our radios, or reading the lowest forms of cheap escape literature (also mostly imported), a museum seems to belong to another world, a clean world of the great open spaces which are still our heritage.

The museum invites us to spend our time in personal effort, mental and physical, to cultivate our intellects under our own steam. It is not only great naturalists who have been born of museums, but geniuses in other fields have in the museum atmosphere discovered themselves too. From the simple inspiration of plants and animals, dinosaurs or Indians or geological formations, they have finally become critical students of the world they live in, prompted in the first place by the simple revelations of an effectively organized museum.

In Canada, where we can still hunt at a nominal cost, and there is yet something left to hunt, a museum, with its graphic displays of game animals and birds, can instil the basic principles of conservation more readily and soundly than many hours of lecturing. It can convert mere hunters into true sportsmen. There is also the art of photography which for many

replaces the lure of the gun. And the jumping off point is often against the museum. In this connection, the film library now so successfully started in your institution will doubtless prove a potent stimulus for this hobby also. I saw some of these films: they were excellent.

General education, that over-worked word, is perhaps the final and greatest function of a museum. In this respect, the general plan of yours is as sound as anything I have encountered. Accurate information, interestingly conveyed, is doubtless the essence of a museum: yours has it.

A museum is only half a museum if it fails to cater also to the beautiful, the aesthetic. The paintings embellishing the walls and cases, part and parcel of modern showmanship, surpass many that I can recall in some of the world's more celebrated museums. They are an inspiration in themselves. They add that final touch that gives a museum its "soul."

A museum cannot create a good director: it is the director, and his staff, that create the museum. In Mr. Fred Bard and his associates you have the dynamo which is putting yours on the map. If I may make a suggestion--I hope it won't be considered an impertinence--it is that you give them fresh air to breathe and the space to fulfill the promise they have shown to provide Saskatchewan with a notable and invaluable provincial institution.

- - - - -

BEAVERS AT WAUCHOPE

Marion Nixon

There has been a marked increase in beaver population throughout this district during the past three years. The main lodge we know of is situated about 3 1/2 miles northeast of our house, and is well posted. It is now quite a local tourist attraction, as the lodge is so large in comparison with the ubiquitous muskrat house; and the amount of wood being cut and hauled is amazing. I have been to look at it once, in early evening, and our presence was repeatedly reported by the scout, smacking his tail on the water several times. Then he would dive, come up a few yards farther away, swim around for a few moments, smack out his beaver morse code again, and submerge.

Their site is on the north side of a long slough with fairly steep sloping banks. My husband says that all through the dry years it was a hay meadow, and was cut out year after year, right to the middle. It was then like a long "draw." But now that it has been filled with our past rainy seasons, and dammed by the beaver, horses have been seen to swim, crossing it.

The neighbor who lives nearest to it has counted 15 beaver adults and yearlings. This is the same number I was told were there last year also. Perhaps they consider this the capacity of that site, for now there are several new lodges being started within two or three miles of the big one. One of these is within 3/4 mile of our house, and they have dammed a runway between two sloughs, backing up the run-off so that water covers the road in one place where a high narrow grade separates the two sections of a deep slough. My husband noticed the beginning of a lodge east of this last fall, but no one saw any activity all winter, nor any footprints while the snow was here. There is another started on the Antler creek just south of Parkman; and my son's school pupils are enjoying watching the construction of another, now, in their pasture. The trimmings from the felled trees had been laid