



Jasper-Yellowhead  
Museum & Archives

JASPER-YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM & ARCHIVES PRESENTS

# OUR JASPER STORIES



JYMA PA 38-42

## DONALD CURLY PHILLIPS

Jasper National Park is famous for its pristine natural beauty, and bountiful opportunities for tourists to entertain themselves year-round. Enterprising individuals such as Donald Curly Phillips were instrumental in setting the infrastructure for the tourist trade to expand and thrive in the Park. An ambitious man, even compared to others of his ilk, Phillips was among the most influential men in shaping Jasper National Park to what it is today.

of a lack of any mountaineering experience- to join him up the mountain. (Wilkins) Though they spent part of that summer making numerous failed attempts, on August 13th they had supposedly reached the peak of Mt Robson. Though the achievement was controversially unverifiable, it was nonetheless hotly celebrated, (Alpine Club of Canada) and had established Phillips's reputation as a desirable tourist guide. (Gainer, 108)

Phillips operated in the area for years, eventually settling there permanently in 1912. Building his home, shop, and corrals in the fledgling town of Fitzhugh, Phillips ran his outfitting business successfully through to the late twenties, when the popularization of automotive travel led to a decline in business. In light of this, Phillips diversified his interests. In 1928 he had begun offering boat cruises and fishing tours on a number of local Lakes including Maligne Lake. (Gainer, 110) The Maligne Lake Boat House, which he had constructed for these purposes, is still in use today.



In the 1930s skiing had grown popular among younger tourists, and Phillips begun investing in the trendy new business by manually clearing ski paths. Often he would take one of his children to tend his camps while he was out clearing paths or building cabins. (Phillips) Many of his skiing paths, hiking trails, and walkways remain cleared and in use today. The cabins he had built, including Shangrila, are believed to have been so numerous and remote that evidence of otherwise lost sites reappear frequently. (Fitzhugh) Unfortunately, Phillips met an early end in 1938, when he was killed in an avalanche in the vicinity of Elysium Mountain.

As a man with a foundational connection to much of Jasper's heritage, Donald Curly Phillips is widely and regularly regarded by Jasperites as a local legend. (Fitzhugh) A vanguard for offering many of the now seemingly quintessential pastimes of the area, his contributions achievements were recognized and celebrated in life and death. He is mentioned in multiple exhibits of the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives, crediting him with several vanguard expeditions in the surrounding areas. Mount Phillips was named in his honour in 1923 by Norman Collie.

*Submitted by Dolph Shaw*



JYMA PA 38-20



Donald Nelson "Curly" Phillips was born in 1884 in the town of Dorset, Ontario. His father, Daniel Alven Phillips was a competent outdoorsman (Archives Society of Alberta), and from his teachings, Phillips had become proficient in hunting and trapping in the woodlands surrounding his hometown. As an adult Phillips saw potential fortunes to be made in the Rockies, where the planned construction of two new transcontinental railways and the foundation of an adjacent national park hinted at the promise of a lucrative tourist trade, and fortunes to be made by those who acted quick enough to establish themselves. (Gainer, 106) In 1909, twenty-five year old Phillips made the trek into the mountains, likely taking the train to Strathcona, Alberta, and purchasing horses there or in Edmonton.

Intending to familiarize himself with the land and make his living leading tourists on hunting expeditions, it was by chance that Phillips was introduced to mountaineering as a career. According to the recollections of Phillips' brother-in-law, Bert Wilkins, Phillips had travelled as far as Jasper Lake when he crossed paths with Reverend George B. Kinney. A founding member of the Alpine Club of Canada, Kinney had set out in a rush to beat other climbing party to the peak of Mount Robson. Kinney had persuaded Phillips in spite

**Learn more about Jasper's history at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum & Archives.** Open Thursday thru Sunday, 10am - 5pm. 400 Bonhomme St. (Across from the Activity Centre). Current and upcoming temporary exhibitions include "Once... We Were Allies", a wildlife exhibit by Colleen Campbell a Biologist and Artist, April 4th - June 29th, 2019; "Jasper's Past Through the Eyes of Jasper's Future", an exhibition by AnnaMarie MacDonald's 2/3 class of the Jasper Elementary School, April 4th - May 12th; Treat Your Mother to our Mother's Day Strawberry Tea, Sunday, May 12th, 2-4 pm, \$10 per person; "A History of Camping in Jasper", by Parks Canada, Mid-May - October, 2019; the "CNR, 100th Anniversary in Jasper", July 1st - November 15th, 2019. [www.jaspermuseum.org](http://www.jaspermuseum.org)