

# By the Road. Fordism, Automobility, and Landscape Experience in the British Columbia Interior, 1920-1970



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Abstract

This dissertation examines how popular experiences of nature and history in the British Columbia Interior were structured by automobility – the system of objects, spaces, images, and practices that surrounded private automobiles and public roads. The Fordist state poured massive resources into the provincial road network during the period 1920 to 1970, and in the process created new possibilities for leisure and for profit. Motoring was a new, very modern way of experiencing BC, and also an important economic engine. Making the province's highways and the landscapes that were visible alongside them look appealing to the motoring public became a matter of concern for many different parties. Boosters, businesses, and tourism promoters who stood to benefit from increased automobile travel often cultivated roadside attractions and lobbied the state to do the same. Starting in the early 1940s, the provincial government established numerous parks along the Interior highway network: the two examined here are Manning and Hamber parks. Beginning in the late 1950s it did the same with historical sites: Barkerville, Fort Steele, and several others are examined here. These and other parks and historic sites were established, developed, and managed as roadside amenities, and were used to deliver lessons about nature and history to the motoring public 'by the road.' Drawing on a wide range of examples from across the BC Interior, including both successes and failures, this thesis examines how the motoring public's common landscape experiences were shaped by state-built infrastructure and by various groups' efforts to manage, manipulate, and modify the landscapes that were visible by the road.

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In the early days of British Columbia, a story of people with a purpose, pushing through heavy forest, climbing sheer canyon walls and finding hidden passages through seemingly impassable mountain ranges. Fighting cold, loneliness, bleak wilderness and even one another, they blazed hard won paths to reach gold fields and fertile valleys. In most of the province, the original trail builders were members of British Columbia's First Nations, whose people used these routes for millennia. For instance, the Interior First Nations peoples had to get their salt from the coast while obsidian for arrowheads and spearheads came from Mount Waddington. Successful trade meant they needed to build trails. Fordism, named after American automaker Henry Ford, is a term in economic history for the efficiencies and economic impact of mass production, following the model Henry Ford

developed in the 1910s and 1920s. Fordism is closely related to Taylorism, which is the process of reducing waste by looking for inefficient worker activity and improving workshop organization based upon scientific studies of human efficiency and incentive systems, as developed by American engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor. "Post