telling. But I wonder if with better organization many of the distracting hops in this narrative—between the main story and the back story, across the decades of the twentieth century, and back and forth along the physical geography of the trail—might have been avoided.

It also seems to me that some of the book’s main arguments are not carried to conclusion. Or if they are, I lost the thread. Lewis is interested in testing Bodnar’s argument that public memory is a confluence of official and vernacular ideas about the past, but ultimately he finds this distinction to be of little consequence. Playing off of Nora’s concept of public memory in France, Lewis points to the complexities of constructing public memory in America’s pluralistic society, but he also suggests that “American public commemoration often transforms popular myths into national institutions” (4). Linking public memory to heritage tourism, Lewis finds that it is at base economically motivated, but he also gives the public much credit for demanding a high degree of authenticity at historic sites.

Lewis conveys an interesting story that is layered and full of paradox. Despite my frustrations with the book, it succeeded in piquing my interest in the Lewis and Clark Trail and gave me new insight into the rich scholarly discourse about public memory.

Theodore Catton

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James Bernard Harkin (1875–1955), the first commissioner of Canada’s Dominion Parks Branch in 1911, has long been uncritically canonized as the Father of Canada’s national parks and historic sites. Current national parks’ historiography is concerned with environmental or Aboriginal issues, and until now no one has really attempted anything other than a hagiography of J. B. Harkin. Unfortunately Hart has found it difficult to buck the trend. But he could have, and sometimes almost does. Ted Hart has spent his entire working life involved with Banff National Park, as archivist and then director of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, as a widely published historian of the many facets of the park and as mayor of Banff. Hart is and remains better positioned than anyone in Canada to understand J. B. Harkin and his impact. Maybe Harkin was a Saint, but persistent suspicions of political and bureaucratic realities combined with Hart’s promise to do more than raise another voice in praise leaves readers with the lingering feeling that Harkin deserves a more critical and thoughtful analysis.

What we have here is a very traditional exhaustive and exhausting 592-page-“great man” biography. The reader is not introduced to Harkin’s wife, his family situation, or the Ottawa and national intellectual context. Perhaps Harkin was that colorless bureaucrat toiling away in Ottawa, ever scheming against
his political masters to ensure the persistence of the conservationist’s dream that is today seen as the very soul of any responsible Canadian. Hart’s impeccable and exhaustive research—nearly has a memo gone unread—suggests he might have been just that. But there is no background or more complex context to this picture of the artful, sometimes stubborn and always faithful, well almost always faithful, bureaucrat.

But if Hart fails historiographically, he will be praised by the various agencies in today’s parks service, and by the Banff parks community—his primary audience. He deftly touches on all of their interests in the seventeen chronologically arranged chapters. Each focuses on a key issue that is as relevant today as it was yesterday. For example, Chapter 8, “The Business of Selling Scenery,” deals with the post-world-war era and concerns itself with the tensions amongst conservationists, Boards of Trade, and the growing tourism industry. Chapter 10 deals with the early 1920s and wildlife conservation, particularly Harkin’s less-than-noble efforts to create Buffalo National Park and the move of “surplus” tubercular buffalo to the Wood Buffalo reserve. Not a good idea even then. Chapter 12 deals with the 1920s expansion of the Parks system throughout Canada.

Hart paints Harkin as a “flawed” visionary who is responsible for one of the greatest parks system in the world. He is painted as the bulwark against mining and electric power interests. Without a doubt Harkin was influential mostly because of his longevity. But as important, he survived both Liberal and Conservative Prime Ministers because he knew how to “work” the politics of the federal system. He knew when to compromise and most important when to consolidate. Harkin was an idealist and perhaps a visionary, but his ideals of parks as places to regenerate, where the national spirit was revitalized and nurtured, was hardly novel. He was in the end a mirror of his times.

Hart does cause the reader to repeatedly reflect. Harkin’s contribution is perhaps greater than Harkin himself. Hart, or the average Canadian can possibly realize. If our identity is both reflected in and shaped by our national and historic parks system, then Harkin is someone who must be understood. To those who practice public history, there is always a degree of concern whether there is any real impact from all their work. Hart’s study shows not only that leaders in bureaucracies do and can shape futures, but also that individuals in the field can and do make an incredible difference through policies and practices.

Hart’s biography poses some tough questions. Perhaps he and readers can be challenged to provide some of the answers. While obviously Harkin’s connections with R. B. Bennett, The Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Calgary, and Charles Stewart, a key Minister of the Interior whose riding was in Alberta, were close, how much of their time did the parks portfolio really consume? Perhaps Harkin was allowed to persist because he moiled away in a dusty corner of a Ministry that was just not that relevant other than it provided “good news” and an occasional ribbon to cut. It almost seems that the parks system came about not because of a vision, which admittedly did
emerge as Hart points out over Harkin’s lifetime, but rather as Sir John See-
ley has described the creation of the British Empire it was created “in a fit of
absence of mind.” Every new acquisition had a strategic purpose at the time—
but there was no real overall design for Canada’s parks. It was a design often
remade as Harkin encountered a new challenge. And perhaps that is why the
parks system is such a wonder. But Harkin’s career also suggests that the in-
dividual excellence of those who would hold Harkin’s portfolio in the future
had a greater impact on Canada’s enviable parks system than any single bu-
reaucratic strategy or systems plan.

**Frits Pannekoek**

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*Cultural Landscape Report for the United States Armory at Harpers Ferry
and Potomac Riverfront* by Allison A. Crosbie and Andrew S. Lee.
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation and Harpers Ferry National
Historical Park, 2009. 260 pp.; spiral bound; available online at www.nps.
gov/npshistory/park_histories/index.htm

Located in West Virginia at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah
rivers, the United States Armory at Harpers Ferry and Potomac Riverfront is
operated by the National Park Service (NPS) as part of the Harpers Ferry Na-
tional Historical Park. The NPS sought preparation of a cultural landscape re-
port (CLR) in support of efforts to improve public access to the site and river-
front, and to inform day-to-day management and long-term preservation
strategies. The CLR focuses on the portion of the Armory site historically
known as the Musket Factory, located along the Potomac’s southwest bank.

Prepared by Allison A. Crosbie and Andrew S. Lee, the *Cultural Landscape
Report for the United States Armory at Harpers Ferry and Potomac River-
front* can also be used to help fulfill the agency’s regulatory responsibilities
for the protection of cultural resources under the National Historic Preser-
vation Act and National Environmental Policy Act. The intended audience for
CLRs generally consists of historians, archaeologists, architectural historians,
landscape architects, and other preservation professionals. Additionally, the
NPS publishes CLRs on its website to make them publicly accessible.

The introduction summarizes the CLR’s purpose, scope, and methodology.
For the benefit of nonspecialists, a terminology section defines technical term}s
relevant to the Armory’s historic use. Following the introduction, the CLR
includes a site history, description of existing conditions, analysis and evalu-
ation of the site’s significance, and recommendations for landscape treatments.
To trace the Armory’s development, the authors relied on government reports
filed by various civilian administrators and military leadership. Additional data
sources included newspapers, correspondence, and diaries.

The historic narrative describes the Armory’s use from the 1790s to the
1930s and places the Armory’s history within the context of larger events.