PART III.—CLIMATE AND TIME ZONES

Section 1.—Climate*

Just as there are great differences in the weather throughout Canada at any given instant, there are also many climates. These climates are not unique but are similar to those in Europe and Asia extending from the Arctic down to the mid-northern hemispheric latitudes. Because Canada is situated in the northern half of the hemisphere, most of the country loses more heat annually than it receives from the sun. The general atmospheric circulation compensates for this and at the same time produces a general movement of air from west to east. Migrant low pressure areas move across the country in this "westerly zone", producing storms and bad weather. In intervals between storms there prevails the fair weather associated with high pressure areas.

Although the movement of migrant high and low pressure systems within the zone of the westerlies is the most significant climatic control over Canada, the physical geography of North America contributes greatly to the climate. On the West Coast, the western Cordillera limits mild air from the Pacific to a narrow band along the coast, while the prairies to the east of the mountains are dry and have extreme temperatures because they are shielded from the Pacific Ocean and are in the interior of a large land mass. In addition, the prairies are part of a wide north-south corridor open to rapid air flow from either north or south which often brings sudden and drastic weather changes to this interior area. On the other hand, the large water surfaces of Eastern Canada produce a considerable modification to the climate. In southwestern Ontario winters are milder with more snow, and in summer the cooling effect of the lakes is well illustrated by the number of resorts along their shores. On the East Coast, the Atlantic Ocean has considerable effect on the immediate coastal area where temperatures are modified and conditions made more humid when the winds blow inland from the ocean.

The following table gives temperature and precipitation data for typical stations in the various regions of Canada. Temperatures in this table refer to observations taken in a thermometer shelter which has been placed in a representative location with the thermometer bulbs four feet above the surface of the ground. Mean January and July temperature data are based on records over the 30-year period from 1921 to 1950 except for far northern stations where the available period of record is shorter. After an average temperature is obtained for each day in January over a 30-year period, the mean January temperature may be arrived at by striking a mean of these 930 daily values. The mean July temperatures may be obtained in a similar manner. The highest and lowest temperatures on record refer to the absolute extremes for the entire period of record at each station. Average dates are shown for the last occurrence in spring of a temperature of 32°F. or lower and for the first occurrence in autumn of freezing temperatures at the four-foot level in the thermometer shelter.

The official Canadian rain gauge is a small cylinder in which the rain is caught and then measured to one hundredth of an inch with a simple measuring device. Freshly fallen snow is measured as it lies on the ground and recorded to the tenth of an inch. Total precipitation values as shown in the table are the sum of the total rainfall and one tenth of the total snowfall. For the purposes of this table, a day with precipitation is one on which at least one hundredth of an inch of rain or one tenth of an inch of snow has fallen.