



# Heritage News

## Discover Crowsnest Heritage

ISSUE #26

June/July 2012

### WELCOME

[Click blue underline to go to page](#)

- Welcome
- What's On
- [Feature Article](#)

#### Coleman's Little Yellow Engine

By

Kyle Franz

- [Mark Your Calendars](#)
- [Heritage Update](#)
- [100 Years Ago](#)
- [Subscribe/Unsubscribe](#)

#### "BARBWIRE JOHNNY DAYS"

Reading about the plans for Rum Runner Days (July 19-22) in Blairmore, I was surprised to learn the weekend festival used to be called "Barbwire Johnny Days."

According to Norm Hanson and Allan Wakaluk, in *Crowsnest and its People, Millenium Edition*, the "Barbwire Johnnies" club was formed in the winter of 1966 to coordinate a beard-growing contest for the celebration of Canada's centennial in 1967.<sup>1</sup> No doubt this was inspired by memories of the highly successful beard-growing competition held during Blairmore's 50th anniversary celebration (the "Bearded Ones" actually abducted Blairmore's beardless Mayor Jallop and held him in stocks at the town park<sup>2</sup>).

The 1966 "Barbwire Johnnies" also decided to build a train using a truck chassis, once again possibly emulating the Blairmore 50th anniversary, for which a train, the Cannonball, had been built. The volunteers worked evenings and weekends to complete it on time. It was a highlight at the Canadian centennial parades in all the Crowsnest towns.<sup>3</sup> It was used for several years and the name "Barbwire Johnny" passed to the train exhibit itself and the summer festival. Today, the train sits in the grounds of the Crowsnest Museum desperately needing volunteers to repair it and get it running again.

That brings up our Feature Article by Kyle Franz, who makes a plea for volunteer help and community support to move and protect Coleman's Little Yellow Railway Engine, an important Crowsnest Pass historic artifact. If you are able to help please contact Chris Matthews at the Crowsnest Museum (403-563-5434).

So who was the real "Barbwire Johnny" and what is his association with beards? He was William John Spears, an outdoorsman who lived in a cabin in the Gap. He was a farmer, hunter, and trapper and would come to Blairmore monthly to buy supplies and visit with "the boys."<sup>4</sup> No doubt, his heavy white beard made the townsfolk beards look like peach fuzz.

<sup>1,3,4</sup> Crowsnest and its People, Millenium Edition. <sup>2</sup> Blairmore 1911-1961.

### WHAT'S ON

#### RUM RUNNER DAYS

Thursday, July 19th - Sunday, July 22nd.

While there will be lots to do in Blairmore, don't forget the Crowsnest Museum, the Bellevue Under-ground Mine and the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre will be open.



#### Highlights include:

THURSDAY - 8th Annual Green & Gold Bill Fukami Memorial Golf tournament and the Crowsnest Wine and Food Festival.

FRIDAY - RBC Sole Survivor Foot Race, Blairmore Legion Supper and 50/50 Draw, and the Rising Star Road Show and Paxton Bachman Band at the Blairmore Main Stage.

SATURDAY - Lions Club Pancake Breakfast, Rum Runners Parade, Show 'n' Shine, Boys and Girls Club Duck Race, Pure Power Wrestling and lunch at the Blairmore Legion, Co-ed Slo-pitch Tournament, family events at several venues in town, and the Teen Variety Show, local musicians and TR3 at the Blairmore Main Stage.

SUNDAY - the Midway will run from Thursday until Sunday.

DETAILS: Go to <http://rumrunnerdays.com/events.php>

## CROWSNEST PASS DOORS OPEN AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Thursday, August 2nd - Monday, August 6th. Pick up a brochure in town or go to <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/DOHF-2012-low.pdf>

### Thursday, August 2

- 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm **Bellevue Summer Sun Street Festival** - Mainstreet Bellevue  
8:00 pm **Maria Dunn in concert** - Bellevue Legion - Mainstreet Bellevue  
8:00 pm **Sarah McDougall** - Blackbird Coffee House - 7914-20 Ave., Coleman

### Friday, August 3

- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm **Historic Blairmore Courthouse Guided Tours** - NIT Campus - 13437-20th Ave., Blairmore  
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm **Union Bank Tours** - Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce - 12707-20th Ave., Blairmore  
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm **Lethbridge Brewing and Malting Company** - Royal LePage Office - 13055-20 Ave., Blairmore  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm **Launch Event** - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre - 1.5 km off Hwy #3 in Frank

### Saturday, August 4

- 9:00 am - 3:00 pm **Crowsnest Pass Pottery Club Sale and History** - Coleman Sportsplex - 8702-22 Ave., Coleman  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm **Crowsnest Country Market** - Flummerfelt Park, Coleman  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm **Teddy Bears' Picnic** - Crowsnest Museum - 7701-18 Ave., Coleman  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm **Royal Canadian Legion tour** - 7831-17 Ave., Coleman  
10:00 am - 3:00 pm **Guided Flower Walks** - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre - 1.5 km off Hwy #3, Frank  
Noon - 2:00 pm **Open House & Guided Tours of the Rocky Summit Masonic Lodge** - 14806-21 Ave., Frank  
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm **Historic Crowsnest Pass Bus Tour** - Leitch Collieries Provincial Historic Site - 6km east of the Crowsnest Pass on Hwy #3  
5:30 pm - 8:00 pm **Birding Walk** - Crowsnest Conservation Society Office - 12707-20th Ave, Blairmore  
6:00 pm - Midnight **Music for the Mine** - MD McEachern Community Complex - 2802-222 St., Bellevue

### Sunday, August 5

- 9:00 am - 4:00 **Walk to Lille** - Photo excursion - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre - 1.5 km off Hwy #3, Frank  
9:00 am - 6:00 pm **Summer Sizzlers** - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre  
10:00 am **Guided Walking Tours of Historic Coleman** - Crowsnest Museum - 7701-18 Ave., Coleman  
11:00 am & 2:00 pm **Mad Science Fun Workshops** - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre  
1:00 pm & 4:00 pm **Booze and Bars Tours** - Bus leaves from the Rum Runner Parking Lot, 7902-20 Ave., Coleman  
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm **Garden Tours throughout the Crowsnest Pass**  
8:00 pm **Movie by Starlight** - Bellevue Memorial Park - located behind Wildrose Confectionary, 21313-25 Ave., Bellevue

### Monday, August 6

- 9:00 am - 4:00 pm **Hike to the Chert Quarries** - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre - 1.5 km off Hwy #3, Frank  
10:00 am - noon **Tour the Gushul Studio and Cottage** - 13301-19th Ave., Blairmore  
10:00 am **Guided Walking Tours of Historic Coleman** - Crowsnest Museum - 7701-18 Ave., Coleman

### ONGOING EVENTS: Thursday - Monday, August 2 - 6, 2012

- Self-Guided Tours:** Brochures can be picked up at the Bellevue Mine, Leitch Collieries Historic Site, Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery and the Crowsnest Museum during their regular hours of operation.
- Historic Tours:** Blairmore Walking Tours, Frank Walking Tours, Cemetery Tours and the Crowsnest Heritage Driving Tour.
- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm **Crowsnest and Its Quilts** - Crowsnest Museum - 7701 - 18 Ave., Coleman  
11:00 am - 10:00 pm **Historic Bellevue Walking Tour and Photo Exhibit** - Old Dairy Ice Cream Shoppe - Main Street  
*Tuesday - Saturday* **Crowsnest Pass Photo Exhibit** - Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery - 14733-Hwy #3, Frank  
*Sunday & Monday* **Crowsnest Pass Photo Exhibit** - Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery - 14733-Hwy #3, Frank

### Historic Sites & Museums

- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm **Crowsnest Museum** - 7701-18 Ave., Coleman  
9:00 am - 5:00 pm **Crowsnest and its Quilts Exhibit** - Crowsnest Museum - 7701-18 Ave., Coleman  
9:00 am - 5:00 pm **Holy Ghost Church** - Blackbird Coffee House - 7914-20 Ave., Coleman  
9:00 am - 6:00 pm **Frank Slide Interpretive Centre** - 1.5 km off Hwy #3, Frank  
10:00 am - 6:00 pm, **Bellevue Underground Mine** - Mainstreet, Bellevue  
10:00 am - 5:00 pm **Leitch Collieries Historic Site** - Guided tours at 11:00 am & 2:00 pm - Hwy #3 east of Bellevue  
*Tuesday - Saturday* **Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery Exhibit and Tour** - 14733-Hwy #3, Frank  
*Sunday & Monday* **Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery Exhibit and Tour** - 14733-Hwy #3, Frank

For more information visit: [www.frankslide.com](http://www.frankslide.com) or 403-562-7388  
[www.crowsnestheritage.ca](http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca)

## Frank Slide Interpretive Centre becomes an Alberta Museums Association Recognized Museum

Join us at the Frank Slide Centre on Friday, August 3, 2012 from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm, as we celebrate the launch of the Crowsnest Pass Doors Open and Heritage Festival and our achievement in becoming a Recognized Alberta Museum.



### Dr. Reeves' talk will be on the Archaeology of the Crowsnest Pass

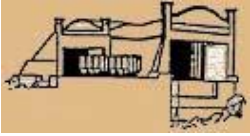
The Crowsnest Pass was one of the focal valleys for First Nation seasonal resource harvesting and occupancy in the Northern Rocky Mountains. Seasonally home to the K'tunaxa (Kutenai) Michel Prairie Band for at least the last 3000 years, a rich archaeological record remains of these people and ancestral First Nations extending back over 10,000 years. My Power Point presentation focuses on where people lived seasonally, what animals and plants they harvested, the stone tool quarries and workshops they first opened some 3000 years ago along the Livingston's. I conclude with my thoughts on sacred significance of this place from the hints we have both from K'tunaxa oral tradition and the archaeological record.

We will have dignitaries' greetings and a special presentation by Dr. Barney Reeves. This will be followed by musical entertainment and a social in the foyer of the Centre. Seating to this event is limited, so if you would like to attend please call the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre at 403-562-7388 to book a seat.



### Booze and Bars Bus Tour, Sunday, Aug. 5th.

On Sunday climb aboard the bus for either the 1 pm or 4 pm tour. It leave from the Rum Runner Parking. Visit the historic bars of the Crowsnest Pass and learn about their exciting histories and their importance to the development of our town. Venues include: Hillcrest Miner's Club, Bellevue Inn, Alberta Hotel, Cosmopolitan Hotel, Greenhill Hotel, and the Grand Union Hotel. \$5 for the bus. All proceeds go to support the Crowsnest Museum.



Don a hard-hat and light and come on a tour of the historic mine.

Admission Adults \$12, Seniors (65+) \$11, Youth (6-17) \$8, Under 6 free, Families \$35. Pre-Booked Tours (15-25 people, one person pays for the group): Adults \$10, Seniors \$8, Youth \$7. Youth Groups (School, Girl Guides, etc.) \$5 each. Adult Groups \$6 each. 1 free adult for every 8 students, remaining adults at student rate.

## The 1st Annual Bellevue Underground Mine Fundraising Gala! Music for the Mine

Come out and enjoy a fun-filled evening of dine and dance as Bellevue Underground Mine presents this exciting fundraising gala for a new interpretive centre. The evening includes a silent auction, best table in the house, and a 50/50 draw.

Entertainment by Dino Martinis  
Catering by Country Encounters Hospitality

Date: Saturday, August 4, 2012  
Time: Cocktails 6 PM / Dinner 7 PM / Dance 9 PM  
Location: MD McEchern Community Centre Gymnasium  
Tickets: \$50 each or \$350 for a table of 8

To purchase tickets please contact the Bellevue Underground Mine at : 403.564.4711 or 403.564.4700

Tickets available at the following locations:

- Bellevue Underground Mine site
- Blairmore Pharmasave & Blairmore Rexall
- Coleman Remedy RX
- Bellevue Turtle Mtn Pharmacy

### THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

7701 18th Ave. Coleman. 403-563-5434



#### Crowsnest Museum: Volunteers Needed

The Crowsnest Museum would like to put a call out for volunteers to help with this summer's special events and operations. We need volunteers to help with a BBQ, assist with parade floats, attend to our garden beds, just help to set up chairs at events. If you're interested in helping with the summer events or operations please either call or email the Museum. (403-563-5434 or [cnmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnmuseum@shaw.ca))

#### Open every day until Labour Day 3 – 9 am to 5 pm

As well as exhibits on coal mining in the Crowsnest Pass, there are galleries on Pass life in the early 1900s, natural history, the military and on Emperor Pic and rum-running, and a gift shop. The Museum is run by volunteers.

Tours and educational programs: Contact: [cnmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnmuseum@shaw.ca).  
Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24.

### THE FRANK SLIDE CENTRE

Hwy 3 Crowsnest Pass 403-562-7388



The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre highlights the rich heritage of the Crowsnest Pass amid the breathtaking beauty of the Canadian Rockies. The Centre is open all year and visitors will be greeted by friendly, knowledgeable staff who will share the fascinating stories of the Frank Slide through dynamic interpretive programs and presentations. State-of-the-art interactive displays and exhibits throughout the Centre focus on the infamous Frank Slide of 1903 - Canada's deadliest rockslide. The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre is open year round 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.

### KOOTENAI BROWN MUSEUM

1037 Bev McLachlin Dr., Pincher Creek. 403-627-3684



#### Pincher Creek Pioneer Farmer's Market: Fridays from June 8 - October 19th, 11am - 2pm.

A variety of vendors will be selling their wares. Everything from plants, produce, baking and handicrafts and so much more. [www.pioneermarket.org](http://www.pioneermarket.org). If you are a vendor and would like to book a table, contact Tracy at 403-627-3684 or [tglen.kbpv@gmail.com](mailto:tglen.kbpv@gmail.com).

Kootenai Brown is open to the public daily from 10 am to 8 pm through our summer season, starting May 19, unless otherwise posted. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth (7-17) \$7, Under 7 free, Families \$25

## HEAD-SMASHED-IN (UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE)

Hwy 785 403-553-2731



### Head-Smashed-In 25th Anniversary Celebration: Wednesday, July 25

In the "Moon of the Berry" we will celebrate 25 Years of Storytelling. The interpretive centre opened 25 years ago. Since then over 2.5 million people from across the globe have visited this world heritage site. Activities will include First Nations drumming and dancing, special entertainment and guests, unveiling of the UNESCO plaque, along with storytelling of the ancient buffalo hunting culture.

### Hike to the Drive Lanes: First Saturday of each month, May through October.

11 am - 3 pm. Bring a lunch. Phone to book. Blackfoot guides will lead these hikes. June 2nd, July 7th, August 4th, September 1st and October 6th.

### Drumming and Dancing on the Plaza: Every Wednesday, July 4 to August 31

Experience authentic First Nations culture every Wednesday in July and August on the plaza at Head-Smashed-In as some of Western Canada's best First Nations dancers perform to the beat of Blackfoot drumming and singing. Hear stories of how drumming and dance connect with the ancient buffalo hunting culture. Two performances daily: 11am and 1:30pm

Along with its displays, the interpretive centre has audio-visual presentations, a cafeteria featuring bison burgers, a gift shop filled with First Nations handicrafts, and hosts tour groups and runs educational programs. Open daily 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact: [info@head-smashed-in.com](mailto:info@head-smashed-in.com). Admission: Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.

## BOMBER COMMAND OF CANADA

1729 21st Ave. (Hwy 2 S) Nanton 403-646-2270



### Lancaster Merlin Engine Run-up

- Monday, August 6th, Nanton Parade Day

Please confirm engine run-ups and their times by visiting the web site before the event: <http://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca>

### Joe English Memorial Fly-In: Saturday, July 28th.

Poster at: [http://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/photos\\_temp/poster\\_2012flyin.pdf](http://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/photos_temp/poster_2012flyin.pdf)

## GALT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

502 1st St. S., Lethbridge 1-866-320-3898



### Scenic Plaza Whoop-Up Days BBQ: Tuesday, August 21st 11 am - 2 pm.

On the patio between the Galt Museum and Green Acres [or inside the Galt Museum in case of inclement weather] \$2 per person. All proceeds to go to Streets Alive.

The businesses located at Scenic Plaza present their annual fundraiser for local charity! Enjoy beef-on-a-bun and entertainment following the Whoop-Up Days parade. The UFA History in Motion trailer will also be on site. This 53-foot long museum on wheels is run by the United Farmers Historical Society (UFHS) and shows the near-100 year history of the UFA in Alberta.

The Museum is open all year round. Monday to Saturday 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, Sundays and Holidays 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Adults \$5, Seniors (65+) \$4, Youth (7-17) \$3, Under 7 free, Families \$12.

## FORT WHOOP-UP NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Lethbridge, off Whoop-Up Drive. 403-329-0444



The Fort is open from 10 am-5 pm 6 days a week. (Closed Tuesdays). Admission: Adults \$7, Seniors (65+) \$6, Students \$5, Under 5 Free. The Fort has a great gift shop filled with cowboy hats, jewelry, Blackfoot crafts and books. They will ship.

## REMINGTON CARRIAGE MUSEUM

623 Main St. Cardston. 403-653-5139



The Museum has the largest collection of horse-drawn vehicles in North America with over 240 carriages, wagons and sleighs. The 63,000 square foot facility features video displays, a fire hall, a carriage factory, a restoration shop, a working stable, carriage rides, carriage rentals, a restaurant and a gift shop. There are free guided tours. Group tours and educational tours are offered. Open daily 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Contact: [info@remingtoncarriagemuseum.com](mailto:info@remingtoncarriagemuseum.com). Admission: Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.

## BAR-U RANCH

13 km south of Longview on Hwy 22. 1/2 km west on Hwy 540. 403-395-2212



Nestled between the rolling Porcupine Hills and the towering Rocky Mountains, surrounded by the prairie landscape and shaped by Chinook winds, the Bar U Ranch National Historic Site is one of the first and most enduring large corporate ranches of the West. Steeped in history, the Bar U commemorates the history and importance of the ranching industry in Canada.

Open Daily. Admission: Adults (17 and over) \$7.80; Youth (6-16) \$3.90; Seniors (65+) \$6.55; Children (under 6) Free; Family (2 parents and their children under 16) \$19.00.

## Coleman's Little Yellow Engine: Preserving Two Short Tons of Crowsnest History

By  
Kyle Franz

This month, one of the largest – and most controversial – artifacts in the Crowsnest Museum's collection is celebrating a birthday. It's an inextricable part of Coleman's industrial landscape. Many who are old enough to remember Coleman Collieries when it was operating will also remember a little yellow railway engine doing much of the brunt work around the mine property. Though small, this little engine was capable of moving a large number of coal cars at one time, loading them, and preparing them for pickup by the CPR. Recently donated to the museum, engine number 15705 is turning 70 years old this July.

Introduced in 1940, the General Electric 25 Ton Diesel Switcher was one of the first diesel-electric engines to be produced by GE, and quickly proved to be popular with mining and industrial operations across North America.<sup>1</sup> And when reading about these engines in the influential *Locomotive Cyclopedia of American Practice*, it's easy to understand why:

*For economical industrial switching, General Electric offers a standard line of locomotives for industrial use. Salient features are service-proved design and construction, low first cost, and quick delivery. Special locomotives are available to meet unusual requests... This locomotive's ability to do a real job is the result of features which are generally found only on larger units. Besides the heavy-duty traction motor, which is a feature of the G-E electric, this unit also has anti-friction journal bearings and air brakes.<sup>2</sup>*

For those unfamiliar with diesel engines, let's take a moment to discuss how number 15705 works. Known as a "B unit," this locomotive is equipped with a powerful 150hp Cummins HBI-600 diesel generator.<sup>3</sup> When the throttle is turned on and opened, electricity is sent from the generator to a GE-733 traction motor mounted under the cab of the locomotive. The traction motor powers the back axle, with the front axle chain driven from the rear. The result is that this seemingly small engine can reach a top speed of 32 km/h with a tractive effort of 15,000 pounds. In everyday terms, this engine can reach its top speed with six fully loaded coal cars. No small feat in 1942.<sup>4</sup>

For purchasers like the International Coal and Coke Company Ltd., this translated into an engine that was inexpensive to acquire, easy to maintain, and capable of handling the heavy duties required of it around the mine property.<sup>5</sup> With a 40' turning radius, it could negotiate sharp turns and tight corners that larger engines could not. And perhaps most important for cash-strapped mining companies, under law locomotives



Coleman's little yellow railway engine and Chris Matthews, Wendy Zack and the author. 2011.

### G-E Diesel-Electric Locomotives for Industrial Use

Built in Standard Sizes  
for Low Cost and Quick Delivery

For economical industrial switching, General Electric offers a line of standard locomotives for industrial use. Salient features are a service-proved design and construction, low first cost, and quick delivery. Special locomotives are available to meet unusual requirements.

#### Standard Sizes

##### 25-Ton

Smallest unit in the standard line, the 25-ton, 150-hp locomotive has a top speed of 20 mph and a maximum tractive effort of 15,000 pounds.

This locomotive's ability to do a real job is the result of features which are generally found only on larger units. Besides the heavy-duty traction motor, which is a feature of the G-E electric drive, this unit also has anti-friction journal bearings and air brakes.

##### 45-Ton

Most popular size in the standard line, the 45-ton diesel-electric has received unqualified endorsement, more than 400 having been sold since it was introduced in 1940.

Powered by two 150-hp engines, the tractive effort of 27,000 pounds may be increased to 30,000 pounds by ballasting to 50 tons. Its equalized swivel-truck construction and low weight per axle reduce track damage and minimize danger of derailment, even when the locomotive is operating on maximum-radius curves of 30 feet.

Further advantages of this profit-producing unit are two heavy-duty railway-type traction motors, side-rod construction (for starting heavy loads with minimum slippage), and excellent visibility (for fast, accurate switching).

This locomotive meets I. C. C. requirements.

##### 65-Ton

This streamlined, 65-ton, 550-hp locomotive for heavy switching service has a tractive effort of 39,000 pounds and a top speed of 30 mph.

Powered by two diesel-engine-generator sets, four heavy-duty traction motors provide an exceptional capacity for heavy industrial switching.

Meets I. C. C. requirements.



This 25-ton size can be furnished in gages from 36 inches to standard.



Steeple cab and low hoods on the 45-tonner afford excellent visibility in all directions.



The 65-ton diesel-electric has a driving motor on each axle for high hauling capacity.

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY



Photo by author.

Mine in Blairmore) helps us understand why this transition took place.<sup>6</sup> Requiring only one crew member and minimal maintenance, the diesel-electric engine was a truly all-weather locomotive that was ready at a moment's notice. Like a modern vehicle, the operator could simply turn it on and off when needed. Coal fired steam engines, by comparison, were high maintenance. Not only did they require a crew of at least two people, they also needed a lot of TLC to be their best. Before, during and after each shift they had to be cleaned and lubricated, and when the temperature dipped below freezing, careful attention paid to them to ensure the water in their boiler and pipes did not freeze and do serious damage. During the winter, it was common practice to either store steam locomotives in heated sheds when they were not in use or to employ someone to make sure there was always a small fire lit in their boilers to keep them from freezing.<sup>7</sup> And when steam engines needed repairs, their parts were not mass-produced or interchangeable, unlike diesel-electric engine components, that were. As the price of diesel engines decreased, it was only a matter of time before Canada's railways initiated the process of dieselization.

Number 15705 thus represents a turning point in local history: both a technological milestone and the beginning of the end for the coal industry. A controversial legacy to be sure, but an important one nonetheless. And as is so often the case in the Crowsnest Pass – blessed with so much heritage that its proving impossible to preserve it all – we are faced with a decision: are we going to preserve locomotive 15705, or are we going to let it rust to the point where it is no longer of historical value?

Coleman Collieries' former yard engine is an excellent candidate for preservation. When the mine finally closed in the early 1980s, the locomotive was stored inside the same shed it had occupied since the tipple was constructed some years earlier. For over twenty-five years it was protected from the elements as the tipple and other equipment left outdoors at the former Collieries site steadily deteriorated. It wasn't until asbestos was discovered in the building that housed 15705 that it was finally moved outside so the building could be demolished. It was then that the locomotive was donated to the Crowsnest Museum.



Old Maude., Blairmore Main Street. Note the peeling roof and rust. Photo by C. Allum 2012.

weighing less than 45 tons only required one person to operate them.

And that's where the legacy of Coleman Collieries' little yellow locomotive becomes locally contentious. It's undeniable that it was more powerful, agile and efficient than the locomotive it replaced. It's also undeniable that this model of railroad engine was the first mass-produced diesel locomotive that was both reliable and affordable. In that sense number 15705 heralds the beginning of the end for steam locomotion (and the mines that fueled them) in Canada.

A comparison between the Collieries' GE diesel and Old Maude (the steam locomotive performing the same tasks at the West Canadian's Greenhill

The first steps to preservation were quickly taken at the time the locomotive was donated. A section of track was laid and its ballast has since settled, yet the Museum still awaits the arrival of its train. As many of us are aware, the financial position of the Museum itself has in recent months come into question, so the engine still sits adjacent to the coke ovens in downtown Coleman, fully exposed to the elements. As a stopgap measure, 15705 was covered in a large tarp last fall, but the tarp has been no match for the notoriously strong winds that tear through the Crowsnest Valley in the winter – the locomotive spent the winter covered in ice and snow.

If we are going to save this important piece of Crowsnest history, it needs to make the relatively short journey of three blocks between where it sits now and the track that

has been laid for it at the Museum. The longer it sits exposed to the weather, the more it will deteriorate, and the more restoration it will require in the years to come. We only need to look at Old Maude, herself preserved in downtown Blairmore, to understand what spending a long period exposed to the elements will do to an engine of this kind. Have a look at the south facing side of Maude: its going to take a lot of hard work – and money – if we ever wish to fix the large rusty holes that increasingly threaten her structural integrity.

So as Coleman's little yellow engine celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, consider giving it a present. If you are a member of the business community who can help this engine make the short journey to the museum (or construct a roof over it once it arrives), now is the time to step up. Time is of the essence! And for those of you (like me) who take an active interest in the preservation of our shared history, maybe now is the time to think about how you are able to give back. For some of us, this might mean giving of our time or expertise. Others will be in a position to help out financially. But one thing is clear: our collective local heritage is under threat.

And in this context the Crowsnest Museum and engine 15705 are eerily similar. If we make them a priority now, they will continue to be there for future generations. If we turn our backs and leave them to the elements, they will quickly deteriorate. One of the biggest clichés in the field of History is “that those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.” We already know what happens when historical retention is put on the back burner. Let's make the preservation of Coleman's little yellow locomotive a priority, and in doing so reaffirm our commitment to the Crowsnest Pass Museum and the community of Crowsnest Pass.



Detail of Old Maude rust, a result of exposure to the elements. Photo C. Allum

---

## FOOTNOTES

1. Though popularly known as a GE 25 Ton Switcher, this locomotive's proper classification is a General Electric B-50/50 RY 24160A.
2. Roy V. Wright, *1947 Locomotive Cyclopaedia of American Practice* (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing, 1947), Section 16 page 1052.
3. “B unit” means that there are two powered axels under the locomotive. These axels are not articulated relative to other parts of the unit. This arrangement is used in only the smallest of locomotives, and in relation to non-steam engines is sometimes known as the “White Notation Equivalent.”
4. For those who are mechanically inclined and wish to know more about the operation/specification of this engine, an owner's manual has been reproduced online by the Phillipsburg Railroad Historians. You can find it at <http://www.prrh.org/downloads/ge-25ton.pdf>.
5. It is not known definitively if this locomotive was purchased by the International Coal and Coke Company or the McGillivray Creek Coal and Coke Company, though after talking with a few old timers it seems that steam was used at the McGillivray until it merged with the International to form Coleman Collieries. Any definitive information on who purchased this engine would be appreciated by the Museum.
6. For more on Old Maude, see *Crowsnest and its People, Millennium Edition* (Lethbridge: Robbins Southern Printing, 2000), 254-256.
7. This constant attention fostered strong bonds between man and machine, and led many railway men to see their engines as extensions of themselves.

---

*Kyle Franz is a Teaching Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate at Queen's University.*

*MARK YOUR CALENDARS*

[\*BACK TO CONTENTS\*](#)

---

### **CROWSNEST MUSEUM & ARCHIVES:**

- September 29th—Harvest of Memories Fundraising Gala w/ Alberta Culture Days

### **FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE**

- September 28th - 30th—Alberta Culture Days

On Thursday, June 28th, Fred Bradley (Crowsnest Heritage Initiative) and Mayor Bruce DeCoux unveiled a new sign added to the kiosk at 20th Avenue and 129th Street in Blairmore. It is a map of an historic walking route through Blairmore. Brochures and a copy of the map can be picked up at the kiosk.

After the unveiling, participants walked along Main Street Blairmore, reading and admiring the newly installed historical interpretive plaques that have been placed on many of Blairmore's historic downtown buildings. The Heritage Initiative hopes to have 35 buildings with plaques by the end of the summer.

The celebration ended at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, which provided refreshments to the walkers. The Cosmopolitan is one of the plaqued buildings in Blairmore and is celebrating its centennial this year.

Fred Bradley reminded participants that a revised Crowsnest Pass Driving Tour map is available at local merchants and from Community Futures.

Funding for the signage, plaque and driving tour project was provided by a grant from Canadian Heritage and the Community Initiatives Program, of Alberta Lotteries. The work of researching, creating and installing the signs and plaques was done by Crowsnest Heritage Initiative volunteers.



Cosmopolitan Hotel between 1904 and 1912. Glenbow Museum and Archives NA-5544-5. In 1912 the original wood building burned and was replaced by the 3-story red brick building you see today.

## 100 YEARS AGO

- June 30th. **The Regina Cyclone** ripped through the city killing 28. A tornado touched down south of the city about 5 pm. In 20 minutes it tore through a residential district, the downtown business area, rail yards, warehouses and a northern residential area. It remains Canada's deadliest tornado.
- July 14th. Born: **Herman Northrop Frye** was a Canadian literary critic and literary theorist, considered one of the most influential of the 20th century. He died in 1991.
- July 19th. On Monday evening a meeting of citizens was held to hear certain propositions regarding the purchase of lots in the **new townsite** [of Frank] and removal thereto. The coal company arranged to sell lots according to priority—the first to come first served. The Frank Vindicator.
- July 19. A large **meteorite** streaked over the town of Holbrook, Arizona, at 6:30 pm local time and then exploded, showering an area six miles eastward with more than 15,000 pieces. Based on the fragments recovered, the meteor was estimated to weigh more than 400 pounds.



Metropolitan Methodist Church and YMCA after the Regina Cyclone. Regina Archives. Image donated by Regina Library.



Northrup Frye 1984. Wikimedia Commons.

- July 25th. Boarding House to Let. **The Cement Lodge**, a conveniently situated boardinghouse near the ROCKY MOUNTAIN CEMENT PLANT. House has 22 rooms. Nice surroundings. Immediate possession given. References required. Apply Mrs Kidd. Stae Street, Blairmore, Alberta. Blairmore Enterprise.
- August 8. A **Drummers' Convention** [Commerical Travellers] was held at the Rocky Mountain Sanatorium. Seventy attended from out of town and over a hundred from Blairmore and Frank. A Grand Ball was held on Friday. Singing and games took place Saturday. A closing banquet was held on Sunday. Blairmore Enterprise.

## SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE

If you wish to receive copies of this monthly e-newsletter or wish to comment upon something you have read in this publication, please contact [cnheritage@shaw.ca](mailto:cnheritage@shaw.ca). If you wish to stop receiving copies of this e-newsletter, please send a message to [cnheritage@shaw.ca](mailto:cnheritage@shaw.ca) asking to unsubscribe. Copies of this newsletter and archived issues can be viewed at <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/?p=351>