



# Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

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### Co-Editors

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### A Crowsnest Heritage Initiative Project

If interested in submitting an article, news piece, or update, please send it to: <cnhnewsletter@shaw.ca>

## Issue #42

March 2016

This issue will feature the legacy of skiing in the Crowsnest Pass with an in depth history of the development and the acclaim that skiing in Blairmore won in the 1940s and 50s. Author and local historian Fred Bradley relates the development of the Pass Powderkeg as the first major skiing venue in Southern Alberta.

## What's ON this Spring?

### Crowsnest Museum

**Hours** - 9:00-5:00; Tuesday to Saturday until May 14, then Monday to Sunday.

**February 23 - May 23 - Feature Exhibit** - An Immigrant Story: The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello.

**March 16 - 2:00 - 4:00 - Connecting Communities** - join the Museum as they review local photos spanning decades.

**March 19 - 1:00 - 4:00 - Seed Swap** - bring seeds, swap seeds, and meet other gardeners.

**March 20 - 2:00 - Crowsnest Historical Society AGM** - Coleman Seniors Drop In Centre.

**March 26 - 10:00 - 2:00 - Kids Kraft Day** - Spend some time decorating Easter Eggs.

**April 2 & 16 - 11:00 - 3:00 - Kids Kraft Day** - Colour flags of the world and design your own.

**April 6 - 1:00 - 3:00 - Connecting Communities** - join the Museum as they review local photos spanning decades.

### Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery -

Mon - Thur - 10:00-3:00; Fridays- 10:00-1:00 & 2:00-4:00;  
Weekends and Holidays - 1:00-4:00

- **Feb 29-Mar 27 - “No Particular Topic”** - 25 local and area artists - 47 pieces of art
- **Apr 2-May 1 - “Emergence”** - Livingstone and Crowsnest Consolidated High Schools  
Opening Reception - April 2 - 1:00-3:00
- **May 7 - June 6 - “A Journey Through My Mind”** - Allegorical paintings by Rick Gillis  
Opening Reception - May 7 - 1:00-3:00

## Feature Article

### Early History of the Blairmore Ski Hill 1938 – 1952

**Fred Bradley**

In the early days of Alberta skiing, Blairmore had the only ski hill south of Banff in the Canadian Rockies. The Blairmore Ski Hill, now known as Pass Powderkeg, began its existence in the late 1930s when a group of local ski enthusiasts started cutting trails on the hill south of Blairmore. The hill, in the former Town of Blairmore in the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass, is ideally located on a north facing slope within a short walking distance of the local business district and community residences.



**Blairmore Ski Hill c. late 1950s Note the large hump mid hill which acted as a natural ski jump.**

At first, there was a little controversy, as the land was owned by the local coal company, West Canadian Collieries, and the trail cutting had not received their approval<sup>1</sup>. But soon the coal company was on board and the trails continued to be developed.

The Crowsnest Pass Ski Club was formed at a meeting at the Greenhill Hotel in October of 1938 with the aim of “providing safe ski trails and the securing of an instructor so that members generally, juniors especially, can be trained for skiing.”<sup>2</sup> The first executive was: J.A. Brusset (General Manager and Vice-President of West Canadian Collieries), Hon. President; T. J. Costigan (a local lawyer), President; Miss D. Evans, Vice-President; P. Owen, Secretary – Treasurer; Mrs. Claxton, Messrs. L.P. Robert (General Superintendent of West Canadian Collieries Greenhill Mine), and W. Innes, Executive. It was reported that a trail twelve feet wide and three miles long had been cut during the summer months by individual skiers.<sup>3</sup>

The trail cutting was spearheaded by Fred Gavelin, a Swedish immigrant who settled in Blairmore in 1910 and worked for West Canadian Collieries.

The Crowsnest Ski Club made Fred Gavelin an Honourary Vice-President<sup>4</sup> in recognition of his efforts and he was a Life Member of the club. He headed up the Trail Development Committee and other members included: E. Silverhorn, T.J. Costigan, W. Innes, and L.P. Robert.<sup>5</sup>



Group of skiers in front of ski hut, c1939. L to R Joyce Brown, nee Millett, W. Innes, Tom Costigan, Fred Gavelin, unknown, Mrs. Odette Brusset, unknown

Trail development continued and *The Lethbridge Herald* reported:

During the summer of 1939 the trail was cut out of the brush on the mountain side but the next winter very little skiing was done due to the lack of sufficient snow to cover large rocks, stumps and other objects.  
(February 26, 1941, p. 10)

*The Blairmore Enterprise* editor, W.J. Bartlett, expressed some skepticism over the development of a local ski hill and Fred Gavelin was the recipient of many critical tongue in cheek comments in the newspaper.<sup>6</sup>

However, in early January of 1941 *The Lethbridge Herald* headline read:

**BLAIRMORE SKI TRAIL IS UNIQUE Pass Skiers Enjoy Sport for Past Month With Minimum of Snow...**

Unlike any other ski clubs in western Canada, members of the Crow's Nest Pass organization have been enjoying this exhilarating sport since the first snow storm in November. The wisdom of the club in having the trail bulldozed and levelled off is now quite apparent. Although only a few inches of snow has fallen since the winter season started, the skiers have enjoyed over a month's skiing without interruption.  
(January 9, 1941, p. 14)

Further improvements had been made to the hill the previous year.

During the summer and fall of 1940 the ski club obtained a caterpillar tractor and bulldozed the lower half of the trail clearing it of all rocks, stumps, logs, and underbrush and levelled it, with the result that it is now perfectly safe and has the additional advantage of enabling skiers to use it with as little as four inches of snow covering its surface...The trail is slightly over a mile in length and in this distance has a drop of one thousand feet. The West Canadian Collieries of Blairmore donated a cabin where skiers can have their refreshments or rest after climbing and racing down the hill.  
(*The Lethbridge Herald*, February 26, 1941, p. 10)

There was great enthusiasm to promote the new hill and Blairmore as "the ski centre of Southern Alberta"<sup>7</sup> and *The Lethbridge Herald* ran the following headline in 1939:

**Blairmore Ski Run Now Ranks With The Best in Western Canada**

... will attract hundreds of skiing enthusiasts from prairie points and eastern B.C.  
(November 11, 1939 p. 16)

In an article in 1941 the hill was reported to:

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... present the same surface as on the ski run on Mount Norquay at Banff, and Sun Valley Ski run in Idaho." (The Lethbridge Herald November 1, 1940 p. 14)

THE LETHBRIDGE HERALD FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1940

# BLAIRMORE SKI CLUB ANTICIPATES BANNER SEASON

### EXPECT GREATLY IMPROVED RUN TO PROVE MAJOR ATTRACTION TO SOUTHERN ALBERTA ENTHUSIASTS

Will Not Have to Wait for Heavy Snowfall to Use Lower Part of Trail—All Obstructions Removed—Trail for Novice and Experienced Skiers.

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Nov. 1.—Enthusiasts of that exhilarating sport of sliding are expected to flock to Blairmore this winter to the number as it will be one of the most sporting activities in this mining town during the winter months.

Although the sport proved to be quite popular in Blairmore last winter, with many skiers coming from outside the town to get the benefit of snow runs the newly made ski run of the Crow's Nest Pass Ski Club which started a membership of just over 100 members, the season was not so successful as the club desired.

Lack of a sufficient run of snow was the main reason for the disappointing results of the winter season. The club is now planning to have the ski run made in the lower part of the trail, which will be a great improvement for the winter season.

The club has had a very successful season in the past, and it is expected that the new run will be a great success.

### Improved Blairmore Ski Run Now Ranks With Best in Western Canada

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Nov. 8.—Further improvements have been made on Blairmore's ski run just south of the town which it is expected, will attract hundreds of skiers continuously from nearby points and from eastern B.C. in this center of sporting activity this winter.

The tremendous popularity that has been shown in skiing the world

wide as possible. When completed it will be one of the finest and best ski runs in Western Canada.

Skiers will be able to learn the art of sliding on the lower, wide gentle sloping part of the trail a few hours of the afternoon while a sharp tricky turn near the summit of the mountain which drops over an outcropping of rock will test on only the skill but the nerve of the

### Blairmore Ski Trail Excellent

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Dec. 20.—Out-of-town skiers who are anxious to learn condition of the Blairmore ski trail, can rest assured that the trail will be in fine condition New Year's, providing a thaw does not set in within the next 24 hours. Monday the trail was in excellent shape, with a packed covering of

### SKI CONTESTANTS AT BLAIRMORE ON SUNDAY WILL TRAVEL ON ONE OF FINEST RUNS IN THE WEST

Trail is Cut Out of Brush On the Slopes of Mountain

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Feb. 28.—Skiing enthusiasts who will visit Blairmore Sunday to take part in the first annual skiing tournament of the Crow's Nest Pass Ski Club will compete on one of the finest runs and trails in western Canada, and the visitors are expected to come from nearly British Columbia and Alberta provinces.

The ski club was organized in the fall of 1939.

### PLAN SKI MEET FOR BLAIRMORE

Will Be Held March 2—Plans in Charge of Local Club

Announcement was made today by officials of the Lethbridge Ski Club of plans for a ski tournament embracing Southern Alberta and the East Kootenay district. Events for the day, which will include senior and junior competitions, are being handled by members of the Lethbridge Ski Club, who are working in co-operation with the Crow's Nest

### T. J. Costigan Head Newly Formed Ski Club At Blairmore

Activities Under New Name

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Feb. 1.—A large number of skiers are expected to visit Blairmore this winter to take part in the first annual skiing tournament of the Crow's Nest Pass Ski Club.

The club has had a very successful season in the past, and it is expected that the new run will be a great success.

### Pass Club To Have Pro Ski Instructor

Name Not Yet Announced—E. J. Gagnier Is Candidate

(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Feb. 1.—The Pass Ski Club is expected to have a professional ski instructor for the winter season.

The club has had a very successful season in the past, and it is expected that the new run will be a great success.

### CREAM OF WESTERN SKIERS ENTER PASS TOURNAMENT

1ST EAST KOOTENAY-SOUTH ALBERTA MEET SUNDAY, BLAIRMORE

Expect Throngs of Non-Participants to Watch Ski Action At Day Sunday—Urged to Bring Cameras—One of Finest Ski Runs in West

CREAM of south Alberta and British Columbia skiers is expected to pour into the Crow's Nest Pass this weekend for the first East Kootenay-South Alberta ski meet to be staged at Blairmore all day Sunday. Numerous entries, many of them from high ranking skiers, have been received by the committee in charge and plans for the event are being completed.

Sports enthusiasts and businessmen of the Pass are co-operating to ensure a successful tournament and entertain the visitors. Participants are urged to bring cameras and to watch the action.

The event will be a great success.

### YOU ARE INVITED TO THE

First Annual East Kootenay and Southern Alberta

## SKI TOURNEY

BLAIRMORE, ALBERTA  
SUNDAY, MARCH 2

EVENTS INCLUDE

SENIOR MEN AND LADIES	Downhill Event
Slalom Event	Downhill Event
JUNIOR MEN AND LADIES	Downhill Event
Slalom Event	Downhill Event

Fee per Event: Senior 25c, Junior 15c, Novice 10c

### A DANCE

WILL BE HELD ON THE EVE BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT  
AT THE GREENHILL HOTEL  
ADDED ATTRACTION: NIGHT FLARE SKIING

... NEWS-PAPER ARCHIVE

### New Tow Installed By Crow's Nest Pass Ski Organization



(From Our Own Correspondent)

BLAIRMORE, Feb. 1.—The Crow's Nest Pass Ski Club has installed a new tow for the winter season.

The club has had a very successful season in the past, and it is expected that the new run will be a great success.

All clippings above from various editions of the Lethbridge Herald referenced in the article

Skiing became a major winter sport in the Pass with the first annual ski tournament organized by the club in 1941 “embracing Southern Alberta and the East Kootenay district”.<sup>8</sup> *The Lethbridge Herald* reported:

**SKI CONTESTANTS AT BLAIRMORE ...WILL TRAVEL ON ONE OF FINEST RUNS IN THE WEST**

. . . a ski trail and run second to none in western Canada  
(February 26, 1941, p. 10)

. . . one of the finest and trickiest trails in Western Canada  
(November 11, 1939 p. 16)

. . . one of the best ski runs in Western Canada, if not Canada.  
(November 21, 1946 p. 13)

. . . one of the finest in the Dominion. Several members of the Royal Canadian Air Force training in Southern Alberta claim that it surpasses many of the famous runs in the Laurentians.  
(November 21, 1946 p. 13)

As part of the ski tournament activities

. . . a special feature will be ‘flare skiing’ from the top of the Blairmore run. A group of skiers will glide down in formation carrying flares, a stunt which has been tried in the east with spectacular results.  
(February 26, 1941, p. 10)

This may have been one of the earliest “torch light” downhill skiing events in Western Canada and certainly the first witnessed in Southern Alberta.

The ski tournaments in Blairmore attracted skiers from all over southern Alberta and south east B.C. For the 1941 tournament the banner headline in *The Lethbridge Herald* read:

**CREAM OF WESTERN SKIERS ENTER PASS TOURNAMENT**

(February 26, 1941, p. 11)

Throughout the 40s and early 50s the Lethbridge Ski Club organized many weekend and Sunday bus trips to the Blairmore hill.

The new ski hill became quite an attraction to many non-skiers which prompted the Club President T. J. Costigan to write a letter to the local paper expressing concern about the safety of skiers and spectators and described proper etiquette for both.

The Club is pleased that the skiing is becoming a popular sport in this district, but the Club desires that skiing be not only popular, but also safe. In order for it to be safe, there must be consideration from the skiers and from the public who are spectators. Many spectators visit the ski runs south of Blairmore each Sunday, and they are requested to observe the following:

1. Do not walk on any part of the ski runs. Your feet leave imprints on the snow which will cause even an experienced skier a dangerous, sharp fall; and in particular do not walk up the runs. Skiers sliding down, have in many cases, a hard enough time keeping on their feet without having to dodge spectators at the same time. Remember, also, that a collision might do you and the skier serious harm.
2. Do not bring your dog to the ski hill unless he is on a leash. Dogs are hard to dodge, and they have a tendency to chase skiers.

Skiers should take notice of the above rules and in addition should abide by the following:

1. When going up a ski run, go up on your skis. If you walk, you mark up the snow.
2. When going up a ski run, always go on your right hand side and keep in near the edge, so that skiers coming down will have a clear run.
3. When you fall, get up as quickly as possible and go to the nearest edge of the run and take all of your equipment with you.
4. When going down, keep away from your left hand edge as much as possible, in order to avoid hitting those coming up, and keep to your right hand edge as much as possible.

In addition to the above, the public is requested not to use sleighs or toboggans on the ski runs and **not to fire off guns** anywhere near the run.  
(*The Blairmore Enterprise* March 10, 1939, p. 4)

After a heavy snowfall the hill was packed by skiers ascending the hill with parallel sideways steps. It was quite an effort to climb the hill in this fashion in order to make a descent on a packed run.

In 1939 annual membership fees for use of the ski way were set at the following: Seniors (over 18) \$2:00 and \$1.00 for juniors. All non-members were charged 25 cents per day for use of the trail.<sup>9</sup>

The Second World War interrupted the activities of the Crowsnest Pass Ski Club and further development of the hill. But once the war was over, the club re-organized. In 1946, with Martin Aschacker (Mining Engineer at West Canadian Collieries Greenhill Mine) becoming the president of the club, major ski events were again hosted by the club at the hill and new plans to develop the hill emerged.

In 1946 the winter carnival was revived. A new log ski lodge was constructed at the bottom of the hill in 1948. *The Lethbridge Herald* reported that a new \$1200 ski tow was to be installed.



**Group of skiers in front of log ski hut built in 1948**

In 1948, Bruno Engler, a Swiss Mountain Guide, photographer and renowned ski instructor from Banff, was recruited by Mr J. Brusset, the general manger of West Canadian Collieries, to move to Blairmore and further develop skiing.<sup>10</sup>

From that year until 1951 Mr. Engler was a great asset in developing skiing at Blairmore and promoting skiing in southern Alberta. He established a ski club at Maycroft (north of Lundbreck) for ranchers and farmers in that area and promoted the Akamina Cup spring ski tournament at Cameron Lake in Waterton Lakes National Park. For a period of time he lived in the ski lodge at the base of the Blairmore hill with his wife.



With Bruno Engler's encouragement and the leadership of Martin Aschacker, president of the club and numerous volunteers including: Cyr Fabro, a machinist at West Canadian Collieries Blairmore Iron Works and Dr. R.B. Burgman, a local dentist - many improvements were made to the hill including: installing a new hand tow, implementing a ski patrol and lighting of the hill:

A new hand-tow ... has been installed with a safety cut-off gate at the top end which will instantly and automatically shut off the tow in the event someone should become entangled in the cable. The one-inch hemp rope cable is capable of hoisting 20 skiers at one time to a spot which gives the skiers an 1,800-foot downhill run. The rope cable travels at a speed of from 10 to 12 miles an hour and is driven by a gas-powered engine. The majority of the work of installing the tow was done by voluntary labor from the club's members.

The club will form a ski patrol this year to control traffic and penalize reckless skiers and be able to render efficient first aid in case of accidents.

The other outstanding feature the club has to offer this year is the lighting facilities which will enable skiers to spend many evenings at night skiing. The trail has been flood-lighted with five 750 watt flood lamps placed in positions that will best light the trail.

*(The Lethbridge Herald, November 17, 1950, p. 18)*

With the addition of illumination, Blairmore was one of the few ski hills in Canada to offer the opportunity to ski at night.

Until the mid-1950s the Blairmore Ski Hill was the centre of skiing in Southern Alberta and South Eastern British Columbia and hosted major ski tournaments annually which attracted the best skiers from the region. The development of the Fernie Ski Hill and West Castle Ski Hill both with T-Bar lifts in the late 60s replaced Blairmore, with its rope tow, as the premier ski hill in the immediate area.

*End Notes : All photos credit of Crowsnest Museum and Archives*

1 *Crowsnest and its People* Vol III p. 414

2 *The Blairmore Enterprise*, September 21, 1938

3 *The Blairmore Enterprise*, October 21, 1938, p. 1

4 *The Blairmore Enterprise*, December 5, 1941, p. 1

5 *The Blairmore Enterprise*, October 6, 1939, p. 1

6 W.J. Bartlett editor and publisher of *The Blairmore Enterprise* liked to poke fun at Fred Gavelin's efforts to develop skiing in Blairmore.

Fred Gavelin has undertaken to blaze a ski trail between West Blairmore and Reno, Nevada, over the Rocky Mountain range. He claims it may take months to complete the job, as there are many obstacles in the way including thick brush, fallen timbers, treacherous cliffs, wild animals, porcupines and skunks to be removed to safety

(September 16, 1938 p. 4)

Fred Gavelin, local skiist, climbed to the top of the ski way this forenoon – and had to climb back, for want of snow.

(March 22, 1940, p. 1)

Fred has been hunting around for a name for Blairmore's ski way. What about Blairmoreski?

(Nov 8, 1940, p. 5)

We understand that the special Alberta Commission set up to remove spots from the sun on March 29th also made arrangements for an abundant snowfall in the Blairmore district next winter. Fred Gavelin wired his thanks, and said he would complete the ski way to the top of the mountain.

, (April 26, 1940 p. 6)

*The Blairmore Enterprise*

Fred Gavelin contemplates setting up a cold storage plant in which he might preserve a little snow for use on his ski-way. (April 26, 1940 p. 6)

You should see Gavelin's Bottling Works in action. During the past week seven million tons of snow were bottled up for use next season on Blairmore's ski-way. Save your bottles, boys. (April 12, 1940, p. 4)

Fred ascended to the top of the ski-way on Saturday morning before daylight to say his prayers. Fred claims that the higher you get the easier it is for prayers from his weak voice to be heard. After relieving himself of his devotional exercises, he descended the mountain side quite gracefully on the waxed timber.

(March 15, 1940 p. 7)

7 *The Lethbridge Herald*, November 1, 1940, p. 14

8 *The Lethbridge Herald*, Feb. 13, 1941, p. 12

9 *The Blairmore Enterprise* October 6, 1939 p. 1

10 Bruno Engler: *A Mountain Life* p. 84 to 87

"During the time I was teaching and skiing and guiding at Sunshine, I came to know Mr. John Brusset and his wife Odette. They used to come to Sunshine quite often. ... He was the President of West Canadian Collieries in Blairmore, down in the Crowsnest Pass. Every time he was at Sunshine, he always asked me to come to Blairmore to look over the ski hill there and help him develop it. I kept saying, "Yes, I will – someday," but I was happy where I was and the idea never stayed in my mind for long".

After a disastrous film project in late 1947 and upon returning to Banff discovering his instructors job at Sunshine had been given to someone else and his future looked bleak. ..." (authors summary)

"I remembered Mr. Brusset's offer to come to Blairmore." . . . I called him and he remembered me and said he had a job available. He came up to get me and gave me a room at the Greenhill Hotel in Blairmore, The arrangement was for me to develop skiing in the area, but I was also expected to work at the strip mines. And so my friend Mr. Brusset became my boss. ...After the winter was over I went back to Banff to see if Angel would agree to come back with me to Blairmore where we would get married. The ski club had offered me the use of the club's log cabin at the bottom of the ski hill rent-free....

. . . By May we were ready to leave. Mr. Brusset sent his son Henry to pick us up in Banff. This is how our life together in Blairmore began".

## Poetry Corner

### ***My Country is the Wind***

before the snow melt  
before the maples sprout their buds  
cauldrons of hot maple syrup  
ladled onto snow laden makeshift tables  
scraped off, taffy on a stick  
chased down with hot spiced wine  
plume of wood smoke billows  
foot stomping, accordion bellows  
fill cabane a sucre  
they sing, “mon pays c’est l’hiver”.

here, on the eastern slopes, my country  
is the wind  
as it devours the snow  
thrashes anything that isn’t nailed down  
giant blades of turbines cut the air  
chain of sentinels superimposed on  
craggy horizon  
hover over village of Cowley  
across from railway tracks  
old West storefronts immortalized  
on Hollywood silver screen  
sagebrush pummelled, desiccated prairie  
uprooted cowboy  
mythology

- Barbara D. Janusz (reprinted from  
Home and Away)

## 100 YEARS AGO 1916

February 4, 1916 - Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon is given authorization to organize and command a battalion of infantry “192<sup>nd</sup> Overseas Battalion, C.E.F.”, with its headquarters at Blairmore.

April 7, 1916 - The newspaper “*The Blairmore Enterprise*” advertises the upcoming live production of the war drama “The White Feather”. The venue is the Blairmore Opera House, the time, April 20, 1916, and the admission price for an adult is either 75 cents or a dollar or 25 cents for a child.

April 19, 1916 - Women are given the right to vote in the province.

July 1, 1916 - Prohibition becomes law in Alberta

Since 1901 the Mounties maintained a presence in the Crowsnest Pass but fearing trouble from “enemy alien” ethnic groups, Ottawa instructs police to set up a permanent detachment in Blairmore, with 1 inspector, 1 sergeant and 2 constables.

Archie McLeod is appointed Chief of Police and paid \$60.00 a month plus commissions.

The Town of Blairmore accepts an offer from West Canadian Collieries to supply power to the town at 12 cents per hour. A meter system is put into place after a few months because the flat rate wasn’t realistic. A Mr. Walker is paid a \$25.00 honorarium to turn the light pole switches off in the morning and on at night.

Sources:

Bellevue Times, Feb. 4/1916

*The Blairmore Enterprise*, April 7, 1916

<[www.crowsnest-highway.ca](http://www.crowsnest-highway.ca)> (Crowsnest Pass, Alberta: History) Crowsnest and its People

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The King v. Picariello and Lassandro**

By Gisele Amantea

*“A crime which wouldn't have happened if not for prohibition.”*

Gisele Amantea, daughter of an Italian father who grew up in Fernie in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has produced a memorable account of immigrant life in southwestern Alberta. Originally an art installation for the Dunlop Art Gallery in the Regina Public library, the book is a vivid retelling in pen and ink images and collages of newspaper reports, letters and recipes.

From the experience, portrayed in illustrations, of immigrants arriving and working in Canada, to the personal lives of Filomena (Florence) Lassandro and Emilio Picariello, the creator of this work makes you experience this time, not just observe and read it.

Five succinct paragraphs tell of Filomena's immigration to Canada, her home life and her arranged and unhappy marriage. Her husband, Carlo Sanfidele (who later anglicized his name to Charles Lassandro) was a close associate of Emilio Picariello. Emilio, a hard working entrepreneur who originally had business interests in Fernie, B.C. bought the Alberta Hotel and moved to Blairmore, Alberta, in 1918 and became involved

with bootlegging. Charles worked for Emilio and Filomena assisted with housekeeping and caring for Emilio's children and helped with transporting illegal alcohol.

The presentation of historical background about prohibition in Alberta, the forming of the Alberta Provincial Police and the recruitment of Constable Stephen O. Lawson is fresh and compelling reading. The page turning pace of the scenes, set out in a graphic novel format of the shooting of Constable Lawson, flow into the collage of newspaper and police reports of the arrest and trial of Emilio and Florence for the murder of Constable Lawson. This is said to be one of Alberta's most famous trials. These final chapters are emotionally charged with copies of Emilio's letters to his family, drawings of the accused behind bars and a copy of Filomena's final confession.

The book concludes with an article from La Tribuna Canadiana, which denounces capital punishment and questions why an Italian woman wasn't pardoned when in the previous 24 years, women were granted pardons? Was it because she was Italian and involved in bootlegging?

The King v. Picariello can be borrowed through the Lethbridge Public Library or is available for purchase at the Crowsnest Museum.

Barb Koch

## SIGNS OF THE CROWSNEST PASS

The Crowsnest Heritage Initiative has installed four information kiosks, about fifty signs and over a hundred building plaques, each revealing a small piece of our diverse history.

In this issue we recommend the Powderkeg Ski Hill sign.

**Discover Crowsnest Heritage**

### Pass Powderkeg

When the Crow's Nest Pass Ski Club formed in October 1938, individual skiers, spearheaded by Fred Cavolin, had already been clearing ski trails on local slopes for some time. The new club concentrated on improving the four metre wide run down the hill behind Blairmore, which by 1939 was already attracting skiers from Lethbridge and Cranbrook. In the spring of 1940 the first ski chalet was built at the base of the hill, and that summer a bulldozer smoothed and widened the lower run. The club had over 100 members by 1940, and in 1945 began hosting annual ski tournaments.

Famed photographer, mountaineer and skier Bruno Engler lived in Blairmore between 1948 and 1951, and helped with the promotion of the ski hill. In 1948 a new, larger chalet was built at the base of the hill and a 900m rope tow powered by a gasoline automobile engine was installed. Night skiing was made possible in 1953 with the installation of floodlights, and an old road was improved with the intention of allowing snowmobiles to carry skiers up to the top of the run. The rope tow was later lengthened to 600m, and the hemp rope was replaced with plastic rope. The rope tow was replaced with the first T-bar in 1974.

Throughout the 1950s the Blairmore ski hill was the centerpiece for the Crow's Nest Pass Winter Carnival, and hosted many regional and provincial ski competitions. In 1984 the hill, now called the Pass Powderkeg, was an important part of the Alberta Winter Games and hosted downhill races, ski jumping, luge and other competitions.

As with most early Pass projects, the ski hill depended on the willing hands of volunteers, bolstered by support and donations from the coal mining industry.

1938 ski chalet

1974 T-bar

Ski club members circa 1940

Ski chalet 1948

Photo: Crowsnest Museum Archives

Crowsnest Heritage Initiative

Teck

Have you read it yet?

Whether you ski, have skied in the past or even if you have never skied, take a trip up to Powderkeg and read the sign installed on the ski shack. And if you've got time, stop for lunch or a coffee.

## POWDERKEG TODAY

Today Powderkeg boasts a total of 13 different runs with a vertical drop of 1200 feet of family friendly as well as challenging terrain for the more advanced skier with three T-bars to take youth the top.

Designed for the progression of skiers, it even has an assortment of table tops, step up jumps and skins for the brave at heart. For a good mixture of metal to grind it also features minis, flats, kinks, wide trails and boxes for the more acrobatic skiers and snowboarders.



The cozy, modern two storey mountain style ski lodge has everything a family of skiers could ask for including rentals and a ski school.

Hosting a northern exposure overlooking the community of Blairmore as well as snow making facilities, the Pass Powderkeg maintains consistent snow conditions from late fall until early spring.

## Historical Venues in Southern Alberta



• **CROWSNEST MUSEUM** - 7701 18th Ave. Coleman. 403-563-5434

• As well as exhibits on coal mining in the Crow's Nest Pass, there are galleries on Pass life in the early 1900s, natural history, the military, and on Emperor Pic and rum-running. There is a gift shop near the entrance. For tours and

educational programs: Contact: [cnmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnmuseum@shaw.ca).

- Open : Tuesday to Saturday until May 21 - then every day until Labour Day , 9 am - 5 pm. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24.



• **BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE** - 21814 28th Avenue Bellevue, AB T0K 0C0  
(403) 564-4700

• The Bellevue Underground Mine is the only authentic historic underground coal mine tour available in western Canada. The mine is a museum based, family oriented, historic underground coal mining museum tour site that offers its visitors the opportunity to experience, first hand, what the underground miners from the first half of the 20th century would have experienced as they entered the tunnels of the Bellevue Underground Mine to go to work to each day.

- Winter Hours: October 31st to May 1st, open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Closed for all Holidays and weekends. We accept pre-booked tours (Minimum 15 people). Walk-in tours are not available.
- Spring Hours: May and June, open 9am to 5pm seven days a week. We can accommodate both pre-booked (Minimum 15 people), and walk-in tours. Open for all holidays.

**THE FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE** - North off Hwy 3 at Frank, Crow's Nest Pass 403-562-7388



The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre highlights the rich heritage of the Crow's Nest Pass amid the breathtaking beauty of the Canadian Rockies. The Centre is open all year and visitors are greeted by friendly, knowledgeable staff who 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 (9 am to 6 pm July 1-Labour Day) Closed Easter Sunday. Adults \$12, Seniors (65+) \$10, Youth (7-17)

\$6, 6 and under free, Families \$30.



• **KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE** - 1037 Bev McLachlin Dr., Pincher Creek.  
403-627-3684

• Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village is an outdoor heritage facility. Visitors are able to walk directly into any of the historic buildings and view the artifacts, which are displayed openly. The open concept and self guided museum means you are also free to wander through six acres of beautiful gardens, including a pond and waterfall (summer) and large community garden area.

- Established in 1966, the Museum consists of 19 buildings housing over 18,000 artifacts from southern Alberta. The legendary George "Kootenai" Brown lived in southern Alberta and his cabin and some of his possessions form part of the Museum's exhibits. Kootenai Brown Museum is open to the public Monday to Friday from 10 am to 4:30 pm until May 20, then 10 am to 6 pm daily until Labour Day. Adults/Seniors \$10, \$7, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free.



• **HEAD-SMASHED-IN (UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE)** - Hwy 785 403-553-2731  
Hikes to the Drive Lanes 10:30—3 pm.

• Experience authentic First Nations culture in the open air of our plaza. Our best native dancers perform to the beat of

Blackfoot drumming and singing. Hear stories of how drumming and dancing connect us with the ancient buffalo hunting culture

- 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 am to 5 pm until May 14, then 9 am to 5 pm. until Labour Day. Closed Easter Sunday. Contact: info@head-smashed-in.com. Admission: Adults \$12, Seniors (65+) \$10, Youth (7-17) \$6, 6 and under free, Families \$30. The Centre can be booked for special events.



• **GALT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES** - 502 1st St. S., Lethbridge  
1-866-320-3898

• Open 10:00 - 5:00 mon-sat; 10:00 - 9:00 thursdays; 1:00 - 5:00 sundays & holidays; closed Christmas & Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Easter Sunday



• **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 9 am - 5 pm daily, July 1 - August 31. 9 am - 4 pm

remainder of year. Contact: info@remingtoncarriagemuseum.com. Admission: Adults \$12, Seniors (65+) \$10, Youth (7-17) \$6, 6 and under free, Families \$30.



• **WRITING-ON-STONE** - Hwy 4 South from Lethbridge. Then Hwy 500 West. Then South on Range Road 130A

• Open year round for camping. No reservations are necessary if you wish to use a camp site at the park in the winter. Fees range from \$26 to \$33 a day. Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai'pi is a sacred landscape. The spectacular Milk River valley contains the largest concentration of

First Nation petroglyphs (rock carvings) and pictographs (rock paintings) on the great plains of North America.

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