



Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

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Co-Editors

Barb Koch, Isabel Russell and Ken
Allred

A Crowsnest Heritage Initiative Project

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

What's ON this Winter?

This issue will feature an interesting article by local historian Monica Field. This story addresses her mother's crowning as a local 'carnival queen' who went on to represent the Crowsnest Pass at the Banff Winter Carnival. Monica's reference to the Maycroft Ski Club is followed up with a short history of that neighbouring ski club by Charlie Price, who also grew up in the Maycroft area. I recall as a young skier from Waterton competing at a ski tournament in Maycroft where I was billeted at the 'Price Hotel'.

Ken Allred

Crowsnest Museum

Hours - 9:00-5:00, Monday to Saturday

- **Jan 14 - Winter Paper Crafts** - 10 - 3 PM
- **Jan 18 - Connecting Communities** - 1:30 PM
- **Jan 28 - Chinese New Year** - 10 - 3 PM

Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery

Hours - Monday - Thursday 10:00-3:00 - Friday - 10:00-1:00 and
2:00-4:00; Weekends and Holidays - 1:00-4:00.

Gallery closed from Dec. 12 - Jan 28.

- **Jan 28 - Feb 26 - 'No Particular Topic'** by local and area artists
- **Feb 25 - 11AM - Annual Chili Bowl Festival**

- **Feb 25 - March 15** - **'Winter in Alberta'** Photo Exhibit
- **March 4 - April 2** - **'The Heart of the Hunter'** - solo show from Tynan Groves

Stone's Throw Cafe

- **Dec 12 - Feb. 6** - Annual Yule Season exhibiting local artists
- **Feb 6 - April 10** - paintings by Donna Bilyk

MDM Centre - Bellevue

- **Jan 21** - **Australia Day** Dinner, Dance and Silent Auction



'Tom and Tillie'

**"Mr. Wild Turkey has the funniest face,
 Don't ever try to run him in a race,
 He'll run like the wind and gobble as he goes,
 GOBBLE GOBBLE GOBBLE - this he really knows!"**

Photo and poem courtesy of Yvonne Martinez

Feature Article

She's Got Betty Davis Eyes

Monica Field



Bette Davis (1908-1989)

A beauty queen and acclaimed Hollywood icon, in addition to having captivating eyes, threw a few memorable quotes into the wind. Here are three that chronicle her walk through life:

- 1) *I'd luv to kiss ya, but I just washed my hair*
- 2) *The best time I had with Joan Crawford was when I pushed her down the stairs.*
- 3) *Old age is no place for sissies.*

*Her hair is Harlowe gold
Her lips sweet surprise
Her hands are never cold
She's got Bette Davis eyes*

(from Bette Davis Eyes; Kim Carnes, 1981)

Backstory

Everyone says my mother (Marina Lynch-Staunton) has Bette Davis eyes. Perhaps she used them, back in 1955, to catch the judges' eyes. That's when Marina was crowned Queen at the Crow's Nest Pass Winter Carnival.

The tale of Marina's crowning achievement has an unlikely beginning.

Picture this: a grassy hillside overlooking the Oldman River. There, a hop, skip and jump east of The Gap - the water gap through which the Oldman River cuts through the Livingstone Range - a farm tractor was used to power a rope tow that pulled skiing enthusiasts from the surrounding ranching community to the top of "Mount Pleasant," a modest climb from the Oldman's storied shores.

It was here that the Maycroft Ski Club was born.

On the road to Queen of the Crow's Nest Pass

Back in the '50s, ski clubs and other community organizations nominated candidates to compete regionally for the "royal" title of Queen at the Crow's Nest Pass Winter Carnival Contest. The winner, then up against other regional winners from western Canada, competed for the ultimate achievement: Queen of the Banff Winter Carnival.

These winter carnivals were a big deal. There were ski races, dinners, dances and other festivities. It was no small honour to become queen at any level.

A 1955 newspaper clipping describes Marina: "Five foot, four inches tall, with platinum blonde hair, brown eyes and a trim figure, her sponsors state that no better choice could be made. Marina excels in all sports, riding, dancing, trap shooting, target shooting, swimming, tennis and skating."

Marina, chosen as Carnival Queen of the Maycroft Ski Club, went on to compete in the greater Crow's Nest Pass Carnival competition. There, she faced three other candidates: Miss Beatrice Gejdos of Coleman, sponsored by the Coleman Elks Club; Miss Beverly Kemp of Blairmore, sponsored by the First

Maycroft Ski Club
Proudly Nominate Marina Lynch-Staunton As
1956 Crows' Nest Pass Winter Carnival Queen



MARINA LYNCH-STAUNTON

A vote for Marina means a bigger and better Ski Run on Mount Pleasant.

Marina is a prominent member of the Maycroft Ski Club and an out door enthusiast, excelling in riding, shooting, skating, swimming and tennis.

Get on the band wagon and support Marina for 1956 Banff Carnival Queen.

The 1955 Crows' Nest Pass Winter Carnival will be held February 4, 5, and 6.

CROWS' NEST PUBLISHERS

That Marina! She's got Bette Davis eyes.

Blairmore Lions Scout Troop; and Marie Lagrandeur of Pincher Creek, sponsored by the Pincher Creek Community Band.

You know who won.

Marina was crowned at a big Sunday night banquet held at the Greenhill Grill in Blairmore, and she was the guest of honour at her coronation ceremony. There, Marina received a lovely bouquet of flowers from the Maycroft Ski Club, and she got to make the draw allowing the lucky winner to receive a \$50 Canada Savings Bond.

The Road to Banff

Marina's big win gave her a coveted ticket to the 1955 Banff Winter Carnival. There, she competed against nine regional winners representing Calgary, Edmonton and elsewhere in western Canada. The prize: the privilege of being queen at the following year's (1956) carnival.



Ten regional Queens pose to be the 1956 Queen of the Banff Winter Carnival.

As 1955 came to a close, Marina married Leroy Field (my father). They celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary a year ago in December.

“But,” you ask, “Who was crowned Queen back at the '55 Banff Winter Carnival?”

The answer: Miss Yukon, a vibrant brunette in a luxurious fur coat, won the big prize.

Oh well, Marina had a great ride, an exciting, “big-city” experience for a rural ranching girl. And she enjoyed a week in Banff, where she was treated as a celebrity.

Maycroft Ski Club

Charlie Price

Skiing was introduced to the residents of Maycroft in the Spring of 1948. Bruno Engler from the Crowsnest Ski Club came out to Maycroft to demonstrate skiing.

In the winter of 1948/49 some of the local families decided to start the Maycroft Ski Club. A lot of the youth living in the area received skis and other equipment for Christmas. The first ski hill was developed on land owned by Joe Heaton, south of the Maycroft Community Hall. The trees were cleared, a tow rope was purchased, and a farm tractor was set up to provide power. Bruno came out to provide lessons for the skiers.

A number of the skiers made a trip to Blairmore in the spring of 1949 to compete in the races at the Crow's Nest Pass Winter Carnival. I still remember that trip, a convoy of 4 wheel drive vehicles, a Dodge Power Wagon, Willies jeeps, and half ton trucks set out to make the trip to Blairmore. The roads were blocked with snow, so we had to drive through farmer's fields and along the ridge east of the present Highway 22. This was the start of many trips to Blairmore for skiing and racing.

Over the years, 3 additional ski hills were developed by the Maycroft Ski Club. Two more runs were developed near the Joe Heaton residence. The rope tows on these runs were powered by farm tractors. In 1950 the club decided to develop a longer, steeper run near the Gap. Trees were removed, a log ski lodge was built and a new run was developed on Mount Pleasant. The rope tow on this hill was powered by a 3 ton Rio truck.

Ski races were held at the new Maycroft ski hill. Skiers were in attendance from Crow's Nest Pass, Waterton Lakes, Fernie and other surrounding areas. There were no accommodations available in Maycroft so skiers were invited to stay with families living in the area. When we went to Blairmore and Waterton Lakes for ski races we stayed with people living in those areas.

Maycroft Ski Club had the honour of having two members crowned as Queen at the Crow's Nest Pass Carnival. Roberta Jones was Queen in 1952 and Marina Lynch-Staunton in 1955. Both ladies went on to compete at the Banff Winter Carnival.

Poetry Corner

Thick Ice in mid-Winter

Michael J Leeb

glaciation
and crystalline forms
the thick frost
of condensation
and opaque ice
obscuring windows
and mountain views

a wind chill
from the frozen prairies
towards the east
rushes through the valley
across an ice field
in the early mid-winter morning
until the warmth
of a mid-day sun
melts away
these glaciated panels
of frosted glass
and thick Holocene ice

a *diorama* of change

Both of the poems on this page are from local author Michael Leeb's book *Spirit of Place Earth, Wind, Sky & Water* published by Eschia/SkyDancer Books.

A Thick Ice Melt

Michael J Leeb

In a *Greenland* of blue ice
and grey sky
with snow fog and haze
lies an ancient ice field
of molten ice flows
and glacial melt water
a coastal ice shelf
of undulating melt flows
from upwellings
with snowy white ice ridges
that collapse and implode
then sink below
into the melt water
of ice flows beneath
rapid fluvial development
along a *moulin*
the making of a new sea
a chasm rift with icebergs
afloat upon an ice current

the warming of thick ice

BOOK REVIEW

Crowsnest An Illustrated History and Guide to the Crowsnest Pass By J. Brian Dawson

How long has the Crowsnest Pass area been inhabited? How did these cultures live? What did they eat? How did they hunt?

Who was the first white man to enter the Pass? What did he discover? What is the origin of the name 'Crowsnest Pass'?

How much did the railway navvies earn per day? Why did Blairmore's growth come to a grinding halt in 1902? How did Sam Steele's recommendations benefit the Pass?

If you aren't curious enough to pick up this book to discover these answers, perhaps you would rather read about floods, fires and mining disasters -- or chuckle over true incidents that involved dynamite (but no one gets hurt).

Throw in chapters about the everyday life of a miner and their unions, and don't forget the rumrunners, train robbers and the Lost Lemon Mine. There's more in these pages, but I don't want to give it all away.

What a wealth of fascinating information. I expected a touristy travel guide with snippets of well-known facts tossed in to justify the 'history' in the title. What I found between the covers was much more history than travel guide. The 'guide' part is only six pages long.

Is this overview of the history of the Pass too comprehensive? Not to me.

Thanks to the author's flowing style and his liberal use of anecdotes, I found that it was an entertaining read. It's chock full of photographs, not the coffee-table-book, look-at-and forget type, but of people and places, well chosen to strengthen and enhance the accounts on these pages. Don't let the title fool you.

Crowsnest – An Illustrated History and Guide to the Crowsnest Pass is available to borrow through the Crowsnest Pass Municipal Library or for purchase from Crockets Trading Company.

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 Lettbridge 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.

Skiers at the 1938 Powderkeg Ski Hill. Photo: Crowsnest Museum Archives

1938 Skiing at the Powderkeg

Ski club members circa 1940

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 while you are there, stop for lunch or a coffee.

100 YEARS AGO 1916

February 4, 1916 - Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon is given authorization to organize and command a battalion of infantry "192nd 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 (Crowsnest Pass, Alberta: History) *Crowsnest and its People*

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. Open Monday to Saturday, 9 am - 5 pm. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24.

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.

Open year round 10:00 am to 5:00 pm (9 am to 6 pm July 1-Labour Day) Adults \$13, Seniors (65+) \$11, Youth (7-17) \$9, 6 and under free, Families \$35.



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

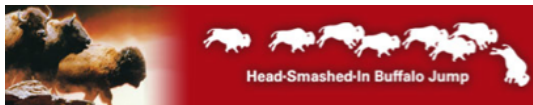
• Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village is an outdoor heritage facility. Visitors are able to walk directly into any of the historic buildings and view the artifacts, which are displayed openly. The open concept and self-guided museum means you are also free to wander through six acres of beautiful gardens, 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. Open: daily from 10 am to 6 pm until Labour Day, then 10 am to 4:30, Monday to Friday. Adults/Seniors \$10, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free.

• **HEAD-SMASHED-IN BUFFALO JUMP (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 9 am to 5 pm until Labour Day, then 10 am to 5 pm. Contact: info@head-smashed-in.com. Admission: Adults \$15, Seniors (65+) \$13, Youth (7-17) \$10, 6 and under free, Families \$40.



•**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; Adults \$6, Seniors (60+) \$5, Youth (7-17) \$3, children free, families \$15.



•**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 year round 9:00 am to 4:00 pm (9 am to 5 pm July 1- August 31). Adults \$13, Seniors (65+) \$11, Youth (7-17) \$9, 6 and under free, Families \$35.



•**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.

ARCHIVES

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<http://www.crownsnestheritage.ca/>

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