



Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

Issue #46

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A Crowsnest Heritage Initiative Project

If interested in submitting an article, news piece, or update, please send it to cnhnewsletter.ca

This issue features another of the pioneers of the Crowsnest Pass; **Joe Little**, together with a rather humorous news clipping about his dog. In lieu of a book review we feature a review of the opera *Filumena* which recently aired at the Jubilee Auditorium in Calgary.

What's On This Spring?

Crowsnest Pass Museum - Hours 9-5, closed Sundays

- **March 18 - Seed Swap 1-4pm.** New and Experienced gardeners welcome to attend. Buy seeds, swap seeds, and meet other local gardeners.
- **March 25: Music of the Pass. Drop in 10am-3pm.** Learn about the history of music in the Crowsnest Pass! We will be making our own instruments while discovering some of the antique instruments in the museum's collection.
- **March 29: Connecting Communities, 2pm @ York Creek Lodge.** Using archive photos from the collection, guests help identify people, places, and events while also sharing stories from their lives in Crowsnest Pass.
- **April 1, 8, & 15: History Detectives: Easter Edition. Drop in 11am-3pm.** Follow the clues through the exhibits and solve the Easter mystery!
- **Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery** - Mon- Thur: 10:00-3:00, Friday: 10:00-1:00 and 2:00 - 4:00; Weekends and Holidays 1:00-4:00
- **March 4 - April 2 - "The Art of the Hunter"** - Tynan Groves
- **April 8 - May 7 - "EMERGENCE"** - high school student show from CCHS & Livingstone High

- **May 13 - June 11**— **“Bridges”** - group show courtesy of Alberta Society of Artists
- **June 17 July 16**— **“Painted Thoughts”** - July Trafford
- **Crowsnest Pass Public Art Gallery exhibit at Stone’s Throw Cafe**
- **Feb 6 - April 10** - paintings by Donna Bilyk
- **April 10 - May 8** - **“Emergence”** from the local High Schools
- **May 8 - July 3** - paintings by Curtis Stevens

Filumena the Opera: A Layman’s Review

When music, culture and history collide all at once the result is always spectacular. Such was the case recently in Calgary when Calgary Opera presented *Filumena* on February 4, 8 and 10, 2017. The three performances were a true celebration of both Canada’s 150th birthday and the original work of John Estacio and John Murrell. The opera, which was written for the Calgary Opera, and which premiered in 2003, is a rare find. Opera is often associated with dramatic 19th century European stories fraught with melodrama and unrealistic story lines. *Filumena*, by contrast, is a factual story of an important time in Canadian history, and is a modern opera written in the twentieth century.

We attended the performance on February 10, the final night. As we entered the Jubilee Auditorium’s lobby we encountered a throng of people clustered round a portable exhibit set up and manned by Fred Bradley, the Crowsnest Historical Society’s greatest front man. While Fred regaled the infamous story of Emilio Picariello and Florence Lasandro; opera goers, some native Crowsnest Pass residents, and others curious historians, pressed closer to hear the real story of Pic and *Filumena*.

The opera itself was a wonderful production. Although I am not an opera expert, “ I know what I like” and I enjoyed the entire evening. The cast seemed perfectly chosen with many of Calgary Opera’s regular members cast as Pic, Maria Picariello, and Papa Costanzo. Members of the Emerging Artist Development program performed in the roles of *Filumena* and Charlie Lassandro and they were all exceptional. If this is an indication of what this program is developing, it is a tremendous asset to opera. Calgary composer John Estacio, and Librettist John Murrell delivered the tragic story of Emperor Pic and *Filumena* and were able to portray it in a score which traverses from a light hearted immigrant wedding to the gallows of Alberta’s Fort Saskatchewan prison. Opera audiences often rely on the subtitles to understand the lyrics of the story. In *Filumena* however, much of the dialogue, and many of the songs, are presented in English and are very accessible to listeners. Not having to constantly “read along” was a great benefit and contributed to the flow of the story. This also added to the story in the sense that you felt the urgent pressure on immigrants to assimilate and speak English, although they were much more comfortable in their own language. The underlying theme of the difficulty of immigrants new to Canada and the prejudice they encountered was subtly presented through the narrative and reinforced as a contributor to the fate of Emilio Picariello and Florence.

(continued on Page 6)

Feature Article

Who Was Joe Little?

Ian McKenzie

Last summer I had the pleasure of meeting two sisters who were researching their great-great-uncle Joe Little, which revived my interest in this prominent yet enigmatic local figure. Their mother, now 94 years old, still remembers visiting her great-Uncle Joe in 1933.

Joseph Little was born on April 25 1852 (or 1853), the son of Benjamin and Jane Little of Grimsby Ontario. Joe was one of 5 brothers: Samuel (Nov. 29 1849 - Apr. 27, 1929), William (1851 - 1939), Joseph (April 25, 1853 - March 26, 1942), Benjamin (1855 - 1939), and George (1857 - 1915); all got into railroading except Benjamin, a farmer and the only one to have children. Joe started with the railway in the 1870s in Manitoba, then worked in Washington State and Montana before coming to Alberta to work on the construction of a narrow-gauge railway (later owned by the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company) between Great Falls, MT and Lethbridge, AB. His first wife Mary Durkin died in 1894 and he remained a widower for much of his life.



Joe and Guests at brother Samuel's Grave (1933)

He made his way to the Crowsnest Pass some time before the arrival of the railway in 1898, and was thus one of the first settlers in the area. Joe Little was a prospector like so many other early Pass residents, and is said to have made a fortune acquiring coal rights in the early years and then selling them to mine developers (one later example is his purchase of the coal rights within the closed Mohawk Mine, later earning royalties when its coal was accessed underground through the adjacent Bellevue Mine). Joe Little was also a realtor, and had fingers in many pies. He developed a small subdivision east of Blairmore (later the site of The Brick House brothel), and was agent for the 1909 purchase of a portion of the

Frank Slide as a ready-made quarry for producing lime, and may have helped develop the Lime City townsite. On the 1901 census his occupation is listed as 'miner' but in 1911 it is 'rancher' indicating his retirement on his acreage north of Blairmore; later it is simply 'income'. He was nominated for the Blairmore council in 1909, but could not run as he did not live within the village limits. He ran again in 1911 after incorporation.

Despite allegedly being one of the richest men in the Pass, Joe Little lived very simply and seldom traveled. He claimed to have had a drink of whiskey every day, and chewed tobacco, but did not smoke. We don't have details of his first residence here, but in 1904 he had a modest four-room house built on his homestead north of Blairmore.



Joe Little (left) with visitors Cecil and Elizabeth Lonsbury (1933)

In 1908 Joe Little applied to the Dominion government for homestead rights to the land where he probably had lived for the past decade. His land application happened to include the site of Blairmore's cemeteries, which had been on untitled Dominion land since 1902. This caused a stir amongst Blairmore's citizens, and after much haggling Mr. Little agreed to relinquish the cemetery's four acres to the village of Blairmore. However, the village overseer Capt. W. A. Beebe neglected to send in a survey and \$10 fee to the government, so they issued title for the whole quarter-section to Little. Things came to a head when the burial of Reuben Steeves necessitated the removal of a

small portion of Little's fence, and he threatened to sue the town for damages. This situation was already distressful to the people of Blairmore, but the local newspapers elevated it to the level of political scandal when the Coleman Miner claimed it was an example of the corrupt Liberal government in Ottawa rewarding Liberal-supporter Joe Little, and the Frank Paper defended the Liberal government saying Beebe and Little were mostly to blame. In the end Little relented and the four acres (one source says 54 acres) were transferred to Blairmore. Interestingly, Little and Beebe were apparently good friends.

The local newspaper tells us of another house built on Joe Little's acreage in 1913 by 'an Italian' who was about to be married. Joe also had a 'handsome cottage' built in April 1915, but photographic evidence suggests this may have been an addition to his existing cottage.

Census data tells us that Joe's older brother Samuel moved in with him prior to 1921, presumably until his death in 1929. Not much is known of Samuel other than he was a veteran of the Fenian Raids (an Irish-American invasion of eastern Canada in 1866-1867), had been a station master in Winnipeg, and had lived in Blairmore for some time.

Joe Little mostly kept to himself in later years, being somewhat reclusive. His lifestyle improved after his second marriage to Mrs Mariel Swann (age 34, daughter of businessman Frank Kafoury) on April 25 1933, his 81st birthday. That summer Joe's niece Elizabeth and family visited, and in September of 1941 Albert Little of Louisville KY visited, a step-brother that Joe hadn't seen for twenty years. At age 89, Joe bought a new 1941 Ford Mercury coupe.

Joseph Little died in March 1942. His funeral was in St Luke's Anglican church and he was buried in the Blairmore cemetery next to his brother Samuel. Joe's widow Mariel moved to Calgary and lived in the Winston Manor apartments which still stand at 1409 - 4th Street SW; her son Ferris Swann was a pilot with the Royal Navy's air arm during World War Two.

I am happy to have met Virginia Burns and Susan Patterson who shared information on 'Uncle Joe' and provided the photographs accompanying this article.

"Do You Know Joe Little's Dog?"

Joe Little's dog was the subject of a very important case heard in the city police court on Monday of this week. The case was brought about by the chief of police, who entered action against Joseph Little for allowing a vicious dog to run at large within the town limits.

Both sides of the case were defended by members of the legal profession, Mr. Gillis appearing for Mr. Little and Mr. Putnam for the Town. Many witnesses were called for both the prosecution and defence, and practically everyone who had had the pleasure of being acquainted with that dog were obliged to give testimony.

From the evidence for the prosecution one would judge that the morals of that canine were not beyond reproach. The animal was evidently illiterate and a maniac. Councillor Rosse stated that he knew Joe Little's dog, and did not consider him a desirable citizen. He had known the dog to be on the street at all hours of the day or night, irrespective of the curfew or any other by-law, and judging by the company that he kept the morals of that dog were not of a high standard. Mr. Rosse claimed that the dog was really vicious, for he had known him to chase bicycles and automobiles with apparent intention of doing them harm. Joe Little's dog had spoilt his dog for all time and thus he claimed that the animal must be a public nuisance. In conclusion he stated that he "did not want anything of Tom Edie's breed or a brother of Putnam's!" Cross examined by Mr. Gillis, he never knew of Joe Little's dog ever attempting to chase a railway train, a steamship or an airship. He did not know what was meant by the term "vicious," but thought that any animal that would chase a railway train without provocation must be a vicious animal.

Abraham Albert Sparks knew Joe Little's dog.

Robert George Vincent knew Joe Little's dog.

O. Lagace (ex-councillor) knew Joe Little's dog.

George Patton knew Joe Little's dog and had the pleasure of assisting to arrest him and put him in the pound. He quite agreed with Webster's interpretation of the word "vicious."

Finlay Patterson knew Joe Little's dog and helped to impound him. He did not know much about that dog's morals. He had known the dog to chase cows across the river and to viciously bite at their heels.

He, too, understood the meaning of the word "vicious."

Archie McLeod knew Joe Little's dog and did not consider him a respectable citizen.

Jack Johnson knew Joe Little's dog.

Joe Falini knows Joe Little's dog, and on Sunday night dreamt about him. In his dream he could see that dog soaring high into the heavens, its wings resembling those he used to see the angels wear, and the dog finally dropped within the town limits. He did not notice a collar on the dog's neck and came to the conclusion that the owner could not afford it.

There were lots of others present who knew Joe Little's dog, but were not given an opportunity to say anything against his character. The dog was between one and ten months old and had evidently had a gay time. Much of his life had been wasted in silly pranks, but his face could not show anything but seriousness. This Ayrdale puppy had a reputation which any other human being would feel proud of.

Judges McGowan and Beebe presided at the bench, and were assisted by several court stenographers who were kept more than busy sifting out the important parts of the evidence. After hearing all the pros and cons of the case, Mr Gillis rose to address the court. He felt that the whole question was pivoted on the word "vicious," and that from all the evidence taken it was not proven that the animal was vicious in the legal sense of the term. He raised objection to the right of Deputy Mayor Beebe to preside on the case—in the first place because he had not previously taken the oath of office as deputy mayor, and secondly because he could scarcely be in a position to give a fair decision on account of being an interested party in the case. He would ask that Joe Little's dog be allowed to enter the court room to perhaps give expert evidence, but this request was objected to by their worship. He also objected to the By-Law No. 7 as produced, it not being the original.

The case occupied about three hours, most of which time was taken up by the solicitors in putting up their pleas. After recess of a few minutes, their worships decided to remain "Joe Little's dog" for eight days.

While the court was in progress a youth unlocked the pound and let the dog loose without permission from the pound-keeper.

Poetry Corner

Picariello's Mandolin

Picariello's mandolin waits
on the dark shelf
of the closet
a bellied instrument
bands of dark wood
cradle and send the melody

I take it down and play
rough dried by time
spaces in the glue
new strings live on an old body
holding the memory of his fingers
playing the music
of gondoliers

When with family
he removed his armour
and took pleasure in little things
he played the mandolin
innocent time
no smell of smuggling
liquor or musty cars

Hands that sealed a secret contract
opened hearts to traditional songs
my fingers slide along the neck
I pluck and strum the strings
remembering
almost forgiving him
could he be a villain?

Mary Menduk

Opera Review (continued)

Personally I was very impressed with the sets and the ability of the crew to seamlessly change the stage from the festive Fernie Park atmosphere, to a mountainous picnic area near Sparwood, and the interior of the Alberta Hotel in Blairmore. Throughout the story the silhouetted backdrop of the mountains of the Crowsnest Pass and Fernie always loomed in the background. The staging and choreography was another powerful element of the opera. At one point five distinctly different groups of characters converge from various areas of the stage and suddenly appear moving as one unified mass all while the audience is not keenly aware of their movement.

The story ended, as tragedies do, tragically, and the audience sat in silence for ten seconds until the thunderous applause began. It was almost as though they were incredulous that it had ended as it did.

As we entered the lobby once more, there stood Fred Bradley fielding questions as the throng of people wanted to know if justice had been done or was there more to learn. Fred, of course, invited them to the Crowsnest Pass to find out more and see the sight of the shooting and make their own decisions.

Lori Prentice

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 Lime City sign located on the Old Frank Road just west of the Hillcrest junction. Note the historic lime kilns in the background.

The sign mentions Joe Little.

Have you read it yet?

100 YEARS AGO 1917

First votes for women: women allowed to vote if they meet an exception for military personnel stationed abroad; Army nurses (Bluebirds) in Europe in World War I are the first women to vote legally in a Canadian federal election (women who owned property could vote before Confederation, but after 1867 they were legally barred from voting).

Income Tax is introduced as a temporary wartime measure.

April 9, 1917 - Canadians capture Vimy Ridge.

May 18, 1917 - Robert Borden announces conscription.

In Alberta, Louise McKinney becomes the first woman elected to a legislature in the British Commonwealth.

In Alberta, the Province cancels its contract with RN-WM Police and the Alberta

Provincial Police is established under Major A.E.C. McDonnell to enforce provincial law.

The Old Frank Road was built through the debris of the Frank Slide.

In Bellevue, the Coles family opened the Rex Theatre.

In Frank, an explosion levelled the surface plant of the Franco-Canadian Collieries mine.

You could buy a Ford Touring Car for \$495.00 from a dealer in Blairmore.

You could attend the Blairmore Opera House on March 29, 1917, and watch the drama, "Little Peggy O'Moore". The price of tickets was 75 cents or \$1.00 for adults and 25 cents for children.

Historical Venues in Southern Alberta

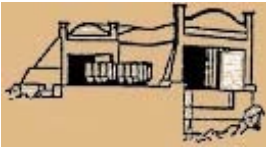


• **CROWSNEST MUSEUM** - 7701 18th Ave. Coleman. 403-563-5434

• 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 Sunday, 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 to 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.

- Open: Monday—Sunday 9:30 am—6:30 pm. Last tour 5:30 pm. Adults \$14, Seniors \$13, Youth \$10, Children 5 and under free, Families \$38. Discount pre-booked tours are available.



• **THE FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE** - off Hwy 3 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

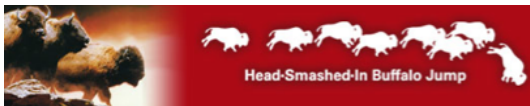
and exhibits throughout the Centre focus on the infamous Frank Slide of 1903 - Canada's deadliest rockslide. The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre is open year round 10:00 am to 5:00 pm (10 am to 6 pm in the summer) . Adults \$11, Seniors (65+) \$9, Youth (7-17) \$5, 6 and under free, Families \$28.



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

• This year we will be opening a special exhibit to commemorate the 100th anniversary of WWI and the 75th anniversary of WWII. Members of the Pincher Creek Legion, local war veterans and RCMP will participate in our plaque dedication for the exhibit and be available to give tours. There will also be a flag raising ceremony, bouncy tents, obstacle courses, face painting and balloons for kids; a concession with hotdogs, burgers, candy floss and snow cones; and historical tours.

- 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 daily from 10 am to 6 pm. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth (7-17) \$7, Under 7 free, Families \$25



• **HERITAGE SITE** - Hwy 785 403-553-2731

Hikes to the Dirve 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. Contact: info@head-smashed-in.com. Admission: Adults \$11, Seniors (65+) \$9, Youth (7-17) \$5, 6 and under free, Families \$28. The Centre can be booked for special events.



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

- The Museum is open all year round. Monday to Saturday 10 am to 5 pm, Thursday 10 am to 9 pm, Sundays and Holidays 1 pm to 5 pm. Adults \$6, Seniors (60+) \$5, Post-secondary students and Youth (7-17) \$3, Under 7 free, Families \$15.



• **FORT WHOOP-UP NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** - Lethbridge, off Whoop-Up Drive. 403-329-0444

• Fort Whoop-Up existed before there was an Alberta or Mounties; it was a notorious frontier trading post. It lies nestled in the coulees of Indian Battle Park, near the Oldman River. Today, the fort still trades with the aboriginal Blackfoot tribes of Southern Alberta, supplying many ceremonial goods, hides, sweetgrass, and other items.

- The Fort is open daily from 10 am - 5 pm; Adults \$9, Seniors (65+) \$7.50, Students \$6.50, Under 5 free, Families \$24.50.



• **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 am - 5 pm. Contact:

info@remingtoncarriagemuseum.com. Admission: Adults \$11, Seniors (65+) \$9, Youth (7-17) \$5, 6 and under free, Families \$28.



•**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 \$13 to \$19 a day. Guided rock art tours are only offered from May to October. 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.



•**HERITAGE ACRES** - Located off Hwy 3 next to the Oldman River Dam.

•Alberta's largest independent Agriculture Museum, home to an extensive collection of pioneer and farm related artifacts and heritage buildings located on 180 acre site.

•Open from May long weekend until September - 9:00am - 5:00pm. Adults \$10., Youth \$5.,

Families \$25.

ARCHIVES

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

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