



# Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

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## Issue #54, March 2019

Our earliest European immigrants brought culture in many forms, particularly music. Our present-day orchestra finds its roots in Hillcrest from the 1920s, and is now the oldest amateur symphony in Alberta. Similarly, our annual Musical Festival dates from 1925 (see issue #50) and runs from March 11 through the 15<sup>th</sup> in 2019 ([www.crowsnestpassmusicfestival.com](http://www.crowsnestpassmusicfestival.com)). The theme of our 2019 Doors Open and Heritage Festival is Coal Town Culture; in addition to music we will celebrate painting, photography, dance, architecture and other aspects of our rich artistic heritage, across the August long weekend. Even the museum's 2019 calendar has a musical theme. And so this newsletter is, in part, dedicated to the music of the Pass.

- Ian McKenzie

1927 photo of Ukrainian brass band by local photographer Thomas Gushul

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives (6386 Gushul glass negative)



*Heritage News* is a publication of the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative. We are a cooperative committee of local heritage organizations and interested individuals who seek to promote the understanding and appreciation of heritage within the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass, Alberta. For more information on who we are and what we do, click here: <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/crowsnest-heritage-initiative/>

This issue was edited and produced by Ian McKenzie and proofread by Isabel Russell. Inquiries, comments or submissions can be sent to [cnhnewsletter@shaw.ca](mailto:cnhnewsletter@shaw.ca). Future contributors should send in their articles in MS Word or something similar, with any photos sent as separate jpeg files. Do not insert photos into your document; we will just have to strip them out again and reinsert them into our newsletter format.

## Heritage Partner News

Chris Matthews is partway through his parental leave from the **Crowsnest Museum**. This temporary void will be filled by Shannon Ingram who will be staying on through the summer. Shannon has been working on the next phase of the Oral History project, recording interviews of our senior citizens on life here in the 1950s and 1960s. And watch for the April launch of the new book *Guide to the Historic Cemeteries of Crowsnest Pass*, published by the Crowsnest Historical Society and available in the museum gift shop.

The **Bellevue Underground Mine** has been busy through their quiet winter season. Refreshed exhibits and the opening of a new section of mine tunnel should be ready for this May. Ideas for the future include developing a campground up top on the old wash-house site, and utilizing the mine outfall for hydro power.

The **Frank Slide Interpretive Centre** now has blu-ray versions of *On the Edge of Destruction—The Frank Slide Story* and *In the Mountain's Shadow* with English or French subtitles. This allows better communication to people who might have difficulty understanding the content of these two award-winning, high-definition theatre presentations.

Planning is almost complete for the **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative's** fourteenth annual Doors Open and Heritage Festival, which runs for five days across the August long weekend. Check their website [www.cnpheritagefest.ca](http://www.cnpheritagefest.ca) for the schedule of events.

The **Municipality of Crowsnest Pass** plans to commence street infrastructure upgrades in downtown Coleman National Historic Site this spring.



1919 advertisement, *Blairmore Enterprise*

### Help Wanted

Historian completing a study of the Sentinel Train Robbery and Bellevue Cafe Shootout of August 1920 would like to hear from Crowsnest Pass locals, or other individuals, who may have family photos, letters, other writings, stories or lore about the events and are willing to share them. Anyone having such information may contact Keith Regular at [kreg2035@telus.net](mailto:kreg2035@telus.net) or call 250-417-5025.

## The List

Eight early music venues in the Pass:

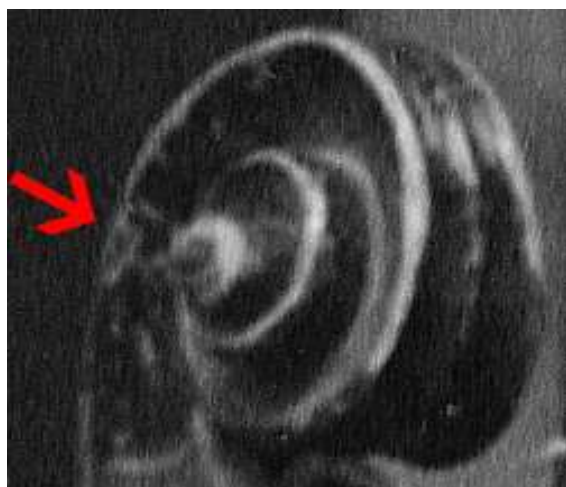
- first Blairmore Opera House, 1907-1911.
- Coleman Miners' Union Hall and Opera House, 1908-1948.
- second Blairmore Opera House, 1911-1928 (called Columbus Hall 1928-1952 and Elks Hall 1952-1980).
- Hillcrest Opera House, 1912-1922 (later Cole's Theatre).
- Lyric Theatre, Bellevue, 1913-1917.
- Frank dancehall, 1917-1921 (current art gallery).
- Crowsnest Lake Dancehall, 1931-1960s.
- Turtle Mountain Playgrounds, 1941-1970.

## A Bass Fiddle and Other Things Beebe

by Ian McKenzie

While working on this year's musically-themed Historical Society calendar, committee members noticed the consistent appearance of a bass fiddle player with a distinctive shock of hair. A photo caption identified him as Frank Beebe, son of famous Blairmore pioneer William Amasa Beebe. The bass fiddle in the photos was eventually donated to the Crowsnest Symphony Orchestra (which, by the way, is the oldest amateur symphony in Alberta), and I wondered if this same bass was still in use today.

The symphony's present bass-player Ron Schultz keeps the bass at home. It has no maker's mark or any indication that it is a particularly valuable instrument – rather generic in appearance, although it has some nice wood tuning pegs backed by brass head plates. It does look old and has been rather well-used. I photographed the instrument from all angles, then compared it to historic photos of the bass held by Frank Beebe. The body of the instrument has been extensively patched and recolored, so no distinguishing marks remain that might identify it. The head, however, is a different matter. Close examination revealed distinctive scratches within the deep scroll work that match the old Beebe photographs, indicating that this is indeed the same instrument.



One of several identifying scratches, shaped like a "5"

Left – detail from Crowsnest Museum and Archives photo 07052-GUSH-NEG

Right – Ian McKenzie photo, 2018



### Frank Beebe

Outside of the symphony photographs, Francis Arthur Beebe is not a well-documented figure in Crowsnest Pass. He was born in 1876 in Bay City, Michigan of parents William Amasa Beebe and Mollie (Holmes) Beebe, the second-oldest child with siblings Emma (1873), Elizabeth (1878) Jordan (1880), and an unnamed infant who died along with mother Millie within a few days of birth (1882). As was common enough those days, the widowed father eventually left Frank and the other children in the care of others – probably Mollie's Michigan relatives – when he left Michigan to earn his livelihood elsewhere. Frank grew up and married Hanna Anderson, and in 1905 they came to Canada via Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan and homesteaded between 1905 and 1908 in the Ogema - Yellow Grass area. They moved to Regina around 1911 and possibly to Moose Jaw around 1922. Frank played with local orchestras and allegedly also in New York, Toronto and Chicago, perhaps as a guest performer or member of a visiting orchestra. As an adult, Frank was in touch with his father William who often visited at Christmas, and Frank and Hanna sometimes visited him in Crowsnest Pass. Frank and Hannah moved to Blairmore around 1933, probably to help his aging father. Frank soon began to play with the symphony orchestra, and also with smaller ensembles including local luminaries Moffat, Gushul, Stobbs and Upton, and competed in the Crow's Nest Musical Festival and other events, likely up to his death.



04894 GUSH-NEG  
Crownsnest Museum and Archives



07052-GUSH-NEG



CM-GUSH-CP-19-21

Persistent newspaper references suggest that the Beebes were popular in town, and well-known for their garden. Frank was a member of the Elks Lodge and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and was a pall-bearer at Joe Little's funeral (see issue #46). Hanna died in 1950 and Frank in 1958; both are buried in Pincher Creek, possibly indicating a post-retirement move there.

### William Amasa Beebe

In contrast to Frank, a great deal has been recorded about his father, 'Captain' W. A. Beebe, one of the best-known and most influential residents of early Blairmore. He figures prominently in written histories such as *Oakland Township: Two Hundred Years* and the 1912 edition of *History of the Province of Alberta*, and is present on the internet on sites such as *Stalking Dead People*, *Wikitree*, and in various genealogy threads. There is even a suggestion that he was mentioned in one of Pierre Berton's Klondike books, though I have never been able to find that.

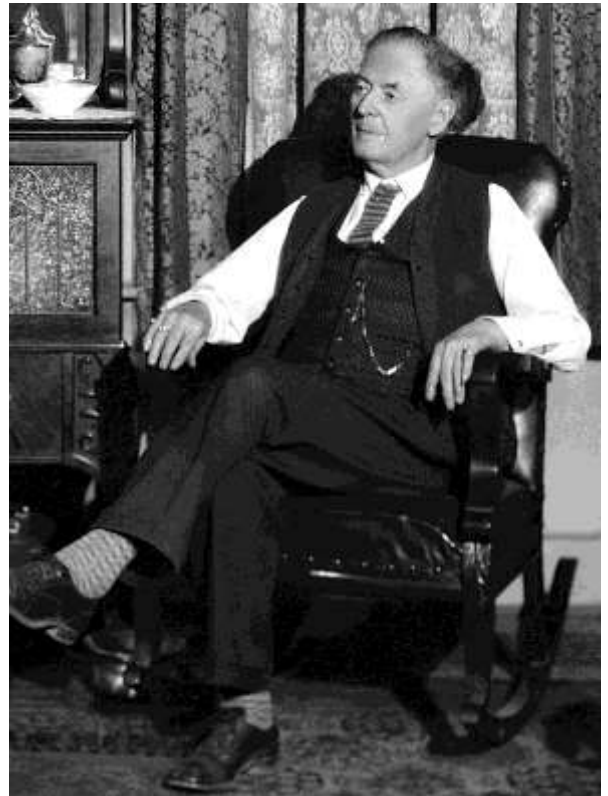
William Amasa Beebe was born in 1847, the eldest son of Jordan and Elizabeth Beebe of Oakland Township, Ontario. His ancestors fought in the American Revolution and came to Canada as United Empire Loyalists, and subsequently fought in the War of 1812.

W. A. Beebe moved to Bay City, Michigan in 1864 where he later operated a dredging and fishing business, and managed the Valetta Lumber Company between 1870 and 1873. He married Mollie Holmes there in 1871. Mollie died after birthing their fifth child, in 1882. William moved to Alaska in 1888-1889 where he engaged in fishing and sealing, before moving to Georgia to manage the Dunnan Hotchkiss Lumber Company. In 1890 he moved to Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay), Ontario working in the fishing industry, becoming captain of a fishing tug by 1895. His eldest daughter married there in 1897. He traveled up north as part of the Klondike gold rush in 1898 and was in charge of the N.A.T.&T. Company sawmill. He then traveled through San Francisco, Nevada, Utah, Montana, Washington, and Nelson, BC before moving to Blairmore in 1901 where he lived the rest of his life.

W. A. Beebe is considered Blairmore's first businessman, and in fact surveyed the original townsite. He managed the Proctor, Fishman & Baker mine until they sold out, then engaged in real estate and insurance in which capacity he was responsible for much of the sale and development of early Blairmore. He was Blairmore's Village Overseer, and in 1907 its Secretary-Treasurer and later councillor and served one term as Mayor. He was chair of the local School Board (and also the school janitor) and served on the Board of Trade. In addition to all of that, he was a founding member of the Blairmore Booster Club which conceived and built the Blairmore Opera House, and manager of the Pass Turf Association which brought horse racing into Blairmore. At the time of his death in 1939 at age 92, he had been a Mason for almost 69 years and an IOOF member for 71 years, and belonged to other fraternities. William A. Beebe was buried in Blairmore Union Cemetery with full Masonic rites.

It is not recorded that Capt Beebe played any musical instrument, though he was for awhile agent for Heintzman and Bell pianos and organs.

As an interesting footnote, Capt. W. A. Beebe is in an unmarked grave. Its location was only rediscovered in 2018 through scrutiny of photographs of his funeral and burial, from the Crowsnest Museum Archives. It seems odd that such a well-respected man with a son living in the same town would have no headstone, but the mystery goes beyond that, because neither does his wife Mollie, nor their daughter Elizabeth. His son Frank Beebe shares a plot with his wife Hanna in Pincher Creek, but only her name appears on the stone. I have been unable to track down the burial of Emma (Mrs. Howard R. Burr), leaving only Jordan – who has a stone atop his grave in Evergreen Cemetery in Southgate, Kentucky.



Captain Beebe at home. Crowsnest Museum and Archives, 09935 GUSH NEG

If you wonder how to pronounce "Beebe", the following tongue-twisting poem in the June 8, 1945 *Blairmore Enterprise* provides an answer:

A certain young fellow named Beebe  
Wished to marry a lady named Phoebe,  
"But" he said "I must see  
What the clerical fee  
Be before Phoebe be Phoebe Beebe."

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## References

*Crowsnest And its People Millennium Edition* page 501

*Oakland Township: Two Hundred Years - Volume 5 Part II* Burford and Townsend Gore, 1997. Brant County (Ontario) Library. Page 1563-1564

*History of the Province of Alberta* MacRae, Archibald Oswald, Western Canada History Co., 1912. Page 956

Obituary *Blairmore Enterprise* August 25, 1939

Stalking Dead People [www.stalkingdeadpeople.blogspot.com](http://www.stalkingdeadpeople.blogspot.com) March 1, 2015

Wikitree [www.wikitree.com/wiki/Beebe-1573](http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Beebe-1573)

Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, homestead files on Frank Arthur Beebe

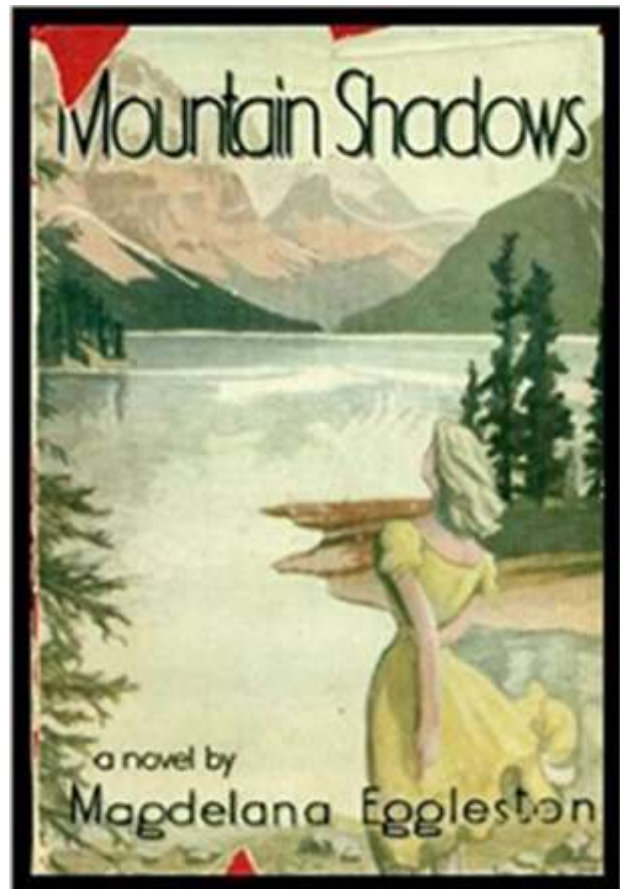
## Book Review

### *Mountain Shadows* by Magdelana Eggleston

Review by Ian McKenzie

The 1955 novel *Mountain Shadows* is author Magdelana Eggleston's best-known work. Born in 1907 in the coal-mining village of Bankhead, AB of Lithuanian parents, she spent most of her childhood in Bellevue (finishing her education and marrying in Calgary, before moving further afield) which accounts for the high sense of authenticity in this work of fiction.

The plot centres around seventeen-year-old Maggy Mileris, whose parents are also Lithuanian immigrants in Crowsnest Pass, and one wonders if the author was called Maggy in her childhood. Like Iris Noble's *Megan* (see review in issue #53), this is a coming-of-age story complicated by ethnic tensions amongst new immigrants, various infatuations with boys/men of different temperaments, and with a moral message about becoming Canadian. Although the book names actual Pass towns, it is set in the fictitious Coaltown; no year is specified or implied, but it must be pre-automobile suggesting somewhere around 1910. Like *Megan*, the plot climax involves a mine crisis, but Eggleston avoids our classic disasters and instead uses a serious 'bump' in the local mine. The characters are realistic; her lovable father strikes her mother several times during an argument, the attitudes of other characters towards marriage are repellent but representative of the times, and Maggy's friends are likeable but imperfect.



Despite its similar theme, *Mountain Shadows* is a longer and much more complex work than *Megan*. Eggleston's skilled and highly descriptive prose is that of a confident and very talented writer; I found myself re-reading certain paragraphs and marvelling at unexpected turns-of-phrase which made the book a pleasure to read.

Although a work of fiction, the authenticity of *Mountain Shadows* and its Lithuanian-Canadian author has been recognized and quoted by scholars studying the attitudes and experiences of 1900-era immigrants to Canada.

*Mountain Shadows* is long out-of-print and difficult to find. Our local library doesn't have it, and neither does the Chinook Arch system; the Calgary Public Library system has a single copy which cannot be signed out. It is a book well worth tracking down.

# Museum Acquisitions: Q&A with Michelle Cavanagh

Collections Manager, Crowsnest Museum and Archives

*Where do most of the Museum's artifacts come from? Do you solicit specific items, or is it whatever comes along?*

99% of them are donations. Mostly they just come in. Sometimes you don't know what your gaps are until something comes in. We try every once in a while to actively solicit when we are doing a themed exhibit.

*What is the process for accepting a donated artifact?*

First of all we accept them as temporary donations, until there is a meeting of the Collections Committee and we decide if we want it in the collection based on the Crowsnest Museum's mission statement. If not, the donor has the option to have it returned to them. If the committee decides on accepting it, then the donor signs a permanent donation form, called a Certificate of Gift. The next process is accessioning it into the collection. One thing to note, donors, especially from an estate, should be sure that no other family member is going to want the item, because once we put that accession number on, it becomes public trust and you cannot get it back.

*What is the accessioning process?*

We enter it into the Past Perfect dedicated museum software. It's assigned a number, a description of item is done including condition, and then photographed. Depending on the artifact, this can take anywhere from an hour to two hours. Lastly it's put in its permanent location.

*At what point do you do research on it?*

We try to get as much information on the object at the time it's being donated, from the donor. If I need to know more, then I use the internet, old Simpsons Sears and Eaton's catalogues, or old hardware catalogues for information.

*What percentage of your artifacts have been fully accessioned?*

Approximately 80% under the old paper system, but only a small percentage are in Past Perfect.

*How do transfers from another museum work?*

For artifacts that don't match a museum's scope or what they collect for, a good practice is to offer it to another museum that it pertains to, often through a dedicated museum network website. If we take something from another museum, the source museum de-accessions it from their collection. But we keep track of that history, we record their old accession number and assign our new accession number, and put it into our collection with all the pertinent information.

*Do you lend out things as well as take in loans?*

Not a whole lot, but we have lent out things. We have also acquired items on a loan basis for a special exhibit, for example the Alberta Provincial Police uniform in the APP barracks. With loans there is always a comprehensive contract between the two parties. This can include how the artifact is shipped, how the object is placed on display, security issues, conservation, etc. The length of time the loan is for is also agreed upon within the contract.

*What percentage of artifacts are on display vs in storage?*

A greater percentage of artifacts are on display as opposed to storage. The fact that we have themed display rooms lets us showcase a great amount of artifacts. The more sensitive artifacts spend less time being on display due to conservation concerns.

*How did you acquire the Frank Wheatley violin this winter?*

The violin was never accessioned when it was donated to the museum in Trail, BC. When they learned its story they thought it would be more appropriate for us, to help tell our story, and for that artifact to be where the provenance is. So we did some research and confirmed the appropriateness for this museum.



Waiting for accessioning: regimental fiddle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Yorkshire Imperial Yeomanry, played by Cpl. Frank Wheatly (1877-1958) during the Boer War in southern Africa. Wheatley lived in Blairmore between 1922 and 1926, and was elected president of both the Mine Workers Union of Canada and the Alberta Federation of Labour, and vice-president of the All Canadian Congress of Labour. Photo by Ian McKenzie.

*Will the violin be on display, or stored?*

There is a committee that will decide if we want to do a story around this violin and put it on display. Conservation-wise, some sensitive artifacts should never be on display for too long, and have to be rotated.

For now the violin will go into storage. When something is accessioned in Past Perfect, it has to have a location. In order for me to find anything in this museum everything has to have a location, so when I do a 'search' on violin, all of the violins recorded in the software will pop up and theoretically I will know exactly where each violin is stored.

\* \* \* \* \*



## 100 Years Ago – early 1919

The beginning of 1919 was marked by the promise of local boys returning from Europe after the cessation of The Great War, a lull (unfortunately temporary) in the Spanish Flu, and unseasonably warm weather followed by a hard cold snap. Here is some of the news from the first quarter of 1919, from issues of the *Blairmore Enterprise*:

January 23 – the Pass has experienced two weeks of nearly continuous rain.

Federal anti-loafing legislation passed in 1918 to assist in a manpower shortage due to the War, was rescinded so that it would not unfairly affect returning soldiers at the War's end.

January 30 – the opera house was set to reopen, after being closed for over two months on account of the Spanish Flu.

“The capital of Ireland should be immense, since it's Dublin every day.”

Feb 6 – the Blairmore school was being wired for electric lights, allowing evening classes.

The opera house planned to screen a film “The Surrender of the German Fleet” next week. (The surrender had taken place in November 1918, and was followed by a large-scale scuttling by German crews in June 1919).

February 13 – the town appointed L. H. Putnam as town solicitor on a retainer of \$250 per year.

March 6 – a meeting of the Crow's Nest Pass Automobile Association had to be postponed because of bad road conditions.

March 20 – “A nutmeg may be great, but sooner or later it will meet a grater.”

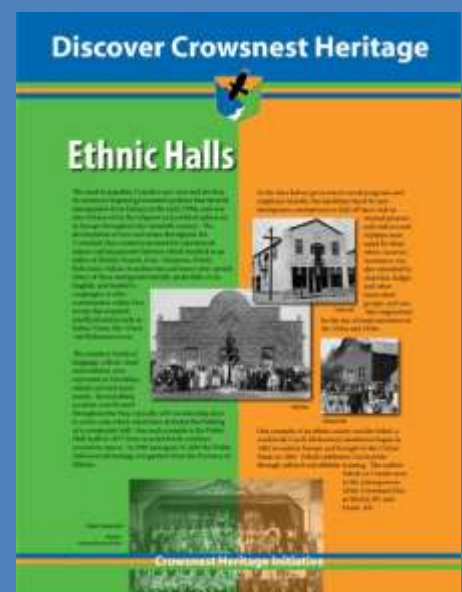
March 27 – five-amp electric meters are to be replaced by ten-amp meters as the former were being burnt out by “the use of electric irons, percolators, toasters, footwarmers etc” in Pass homes. Also, domestic water was being used by citizens to produce ice for sale “aggregating about 2600 tons”. Councillor Morency proposed a fee of 25 cents per ton which would net the town about \$650.



## Sign of the Times

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.

Our sign in Bushtown is on ethnic halls which, amongst other things, helped bring music and culture into the lives of miners and their families.



Have you read it?

## Our Local Heritage Sites

- **CROWNEST MUSEUM and ARCHIVES** - 7701 18th Avenue, within Coleman National Historic Site. 403-563-5434, [cnpmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnpmuseum@shaw.ca) , website [www.crowsnestmuseum.ca](http://www.crowsnestmuseum.ca). Glimpse the rich social, economic and natural heritage of Crowsnest Pass from 1900 – 1950 on two floors of themed rooms. Gift shop features local and regional books and other items. Admission includes the newly-restored **ALBERTA PROVINCIAL POLICE BARRACKS** and its exhibits on prohibition, rumrunning and the legendary shooting of constable Lawson and subsequent execution of ‘Emperor Pic’ and Florence Lossandro. Open Monday thru Saturday, 9 am - 5 pm. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24, Crowsnest Historical Society members free. Tours and educational programs available.
- **BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE** - access off Main Street in Bellevue. 403-564-4700, [www.bellevuemine.com](http://www.bellevuemine.com). The only authentic historic underground coal mine tour in western Canada, this family-friendly site is your opportunity to experience what underground miners from a century ago experienced as they went to work each day. Open 9am - 5pm in May and June, 10am - 6pm in July and August, then 9am - 5pm until November. Adults \$21, seniors \$15.75, youths 12.60, children under 5 free. Family and group rates available all year round.
- **FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE** - off Highway 3. 403-562-7388, [www.frankslide.ca](http://www.frankslide.ca). 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 in the summer). Adults \$13, Seniors (65+) \$11, Youth (7-17) \$9, 6 and under free, Families \$35.
- **HILLCREST CEMETERY PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - Hillcrest. Visit the mass graves of the 189 victims of the Hillcrest Mine Disaster of 1914, and the many other picturesque graves in this historic cemetery. On-site interpretive signs explain it all. The **Millennium Memorial Monument** is Canada’s homage to miners killed across the country. The **park** features interpretive signs about life in Hillcrest and the effect of the disaster, and picnic tables. Free.
- **LEITCH COLLIERIES PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - Highway 3. [www.leitchcollieries.ca](http://www.leitchcollieries.ca). Check out the stabilized ruins of this century-old coal processing facility, explained through interpretive signs and on-site staff during summer months. Open during snow-free months, admission by donation.
- **COLEMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE and MINERS PATH** - downtown Coleman. Take a self-guided tour of this authentic coal-mining town with a free pamphlet and map, amongst buildings from 1903 - 1986 spanning the entire coal-mining period, many of which have interpretive building plaques. Glimpse the ruins of the mine buildings and coke ovens, walk or drive through the ‘miners cottage’ neighbourhood of West Coleman. Don’t forget your camera. An interpretive booklet can be purchased at the museum. Later, walk the pleasant **Miners Path**, retracing the steps of miners on their way to the McGillivray Mine. All free.

### Newsletter Archive

All of our past issues are archived on the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative website and can be accessed by clicking here: <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/newsletters> . Subscription is free; you will be notified by email when a new edition is available. To subscribe or unsubscribe, just send an email to [cnhnewsletter@shaw.ca](mailto:cnhnewsletter@shaw.ca) .