



Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

IN THIS ISSUE

- Heritage Partner News
- The List
- Feature Article – *Remembering Black Wednesday* by Gary Lockhart
- Harvey Murphy* by Ian McKenzie
- Book Review – *The Noble Cause* by Bruce Ramsey
- Q&A on Archaeology Process
- News, Tim Buck Boulevard
- Sign of the Times
- Local Heritage Attractions
- Newsletter Archives

Issue #56, September 2019

2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, and the creation of the One Big Union. What will you ponder on Labour Day this year?

The labour unrest of the 1920s and 1930s was a major event – perhaps *the* major event – in Crowsnest Pass history. Our colourful, tumultuous and sometimes violent labour history is hinted at but largely absent from our heritage facilities and displays. This complex topic resists neat packaging, and is perhaps best suited to books and academic papers. But it also suffers from reluctance to take sides in a struggle between capitalist and socialist ideals, and partially because of its associations with Communism. Uncomfortable or not, it is an era of our history that deserves more attention.

- Ian McKenzie

Labour march through the Frank Slide.

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives (2007.004.0086)



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. 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 and reinsert them into our newsletter format.

Heritage Partner News

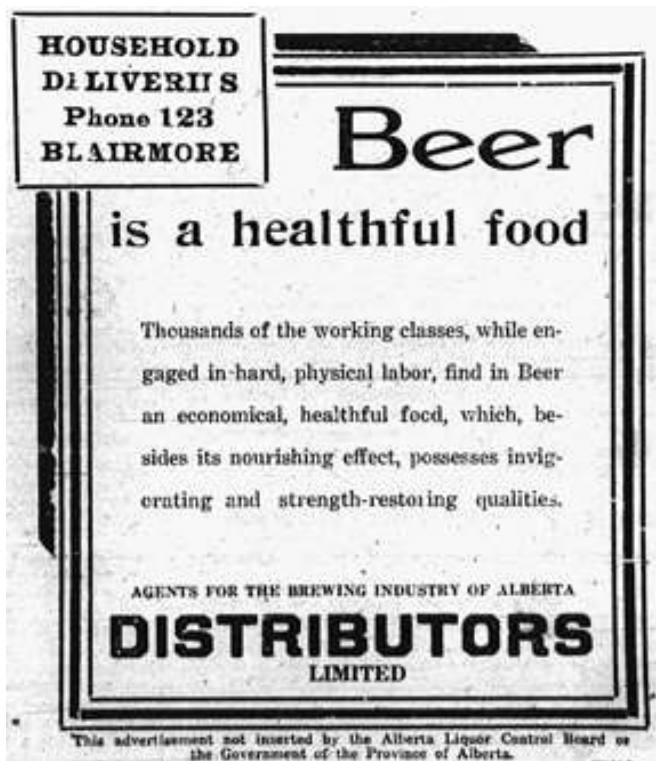
Despite good weather, the **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative's** annual Doors Open and Heritage Festival attendance seemed lower, although a few events had equal or higher participation than previous years. The absence of the vintage car Show And Shine may have been a factor.

Frank Slide Interpretive Centre has completed the rejuvenation of its Frank Slide trail, despite rain and high winds which hampered the delivery of gravel, benches and other materials by helicopter. Their new entry sign on the highway was installed in August.

Crowsnest Museum has had a challenging summer, as street reconstruction has limited access to the building. The front entry ramp still awaits replacement, and part of the museum yard has also been dug up for replacement of the Nez Perce Creek tunnel that underlies it. Executive Director Chris Matthews is back at work from his paternity leave, and his temporary replacement Shannon Ingram has wrapped up her Oral History project and has bid us farewell. Don't forget the annual Harvest Of Memories fundraiser, at the MDM on September 28.

The **Municipality of Crowsnest Pass** continues to work on new water/sewer lines, curbs, sidewalks, paving and landscaping in downtown Coleman National Historic Site. It will look great when finished, and should help energize the area. We hope for completion in October.

CNP Memorial Society has completed an inventory of at-risk heritage headstones located throughout our dozen historic cemeteries. This report has been submitted to the Municipality as background information on the nature and extent of broken and toppled stones, as well as those at risk of damage from toppling or failed adhesion. Issues of ownership and authority to act have yet to be resolved.



Advertisement, *Blairmore Enterprise*, September 15 1932

"We thank Harvey Murphy for forgetting us in his condemnation of good things in general here on demonstration day."
Blairmore Enterprise, May 5 1932

The List

Six Communist Party of Canada (CPC) members who spoke at Pass labour rallies in the 1930s:

- Tim Buck, CPC national general secretary
- Harvey Murphy, CPC executive
- Pat Lenihan, CPC Alberta executive
- Malcolm Bruce, CPC founding member, editor of *The Worker*
- Rev Alfred E. Smith, activist (dedicated Tim Buck boulevard)
- John Stokaluk, national secretary of the Mine Workers Union of Canada

Remembering Black Wednesday

Gary Lockhart

April 17, 1935 has been memorialized as Black Wednesday by local miners as a day of infamy when a contingent of British Columbia Provincial Police, at the behest of an American company – Corbin Collieries Ltd. of Spokane – committed an act of sheer brutality on a miners' picket line, in an attempt to break a 3-month-long strike. What follows is a brief recounting of the incident as told by the miners' wives who shielded their men from the full onslaught of the police's brutality, and by the author's grandfather who witnessed it all. Their words have been lifted from testimonies given at the Provincial Police Court held in Corbin on May 9, 1935 in the case of *Rex vs David Lockhart*. Importantly, the women's evidence challenges the official police narrative.

Scarcely an hour had passed following sunrise on April 17, when a bugle sounded across the mining hamlet of Corbin, high up on the British Columbia side of the Crowsnest Pass. Light snow had fallen through the night creating an otherwise postcard-perfect scene. In a house perched on a slope about 150 yards above a smart row of garages that lined the only road through the town, Vera Joyce strained her eyes in search of her husband amongst the parade of miners and the large contingent of their wives who had joined them. They assembled at Lee Fook's café on Mrs. Joyce's side of the road. It was approaching 8:00 a.m. Earlier the parade had formed and marched down the main road in front of the café to several hundred yards south where the road met the Eastern B.C. railway tracks. At this point the road forked eastward towards #3 Mine – "The Big Showing". The parade turned around and marched back to the café. This would be where they would make their stand. The bugle signalled the approach of Garrison's tractor.

The tractor was anticipated. Manned by Calgary contractor W. Garrison and his crew, the tractor was heading up to the Big Showing to clear snow off the road so that strip mining operations could resume. A deal brokered two days prior by local M.L.A. Tom Uphill, which would have allowed for the snow clearing in exchange for committing to negotiations, was flatly rejected by head office in Spokane. The company was adamant that there would be no further negotiations and the mine would reopen without union miners.

The miners' wives assembled in 4 rows spanning the width of the road in front of their men who were all in a mass formation. By their very presence the women believed they could force a negotiation.

“. . . we were there as an influence; we were there that if the tractor came along it wouldn't surely go over us women, thereby there would be some negotiations started between the company and our men. That is why we were there.” -- Sara Dornan

Commanded by Inspector John Macdonald, fifty Provincial police constables arrived. One squad of constables assembled in a line on the slope above the crowd and another squad formed on the opposite edge of the road just a few feet in front of the picketers. Nine days earlier, Inspector Macdonald accompanied by a number of "special" officers arrived in town in anticipation of the mine resuming operations with strikebreakers.

Everyone watched as the 5-ton Holt-30 Caterpillar laboriously crawled its way up the road. It had trouble getting over one particularly bad patch of frozen road. At a top speed of only 4.5 mph (a brisk walking pace) it took some time for the tractor to reach the crowd.



Police photo of picket line, prior to the arrival of Garrison's tractor. Note police line on the slope just above the picketers. Photo: Royal BC Museum and Archives, GR0419, Box 439, File 117/1935

As the approaching tractor passed miner McGruther's house, about 250 feet away, the Inspector instructed the crowd, "You people now get off the road, you're blocking traffic." And the crowd argued back, "We're here peaceably, and we are not doing any harm." "You have five minutes to disperse as the tractor is coming through. You will not keep these men from going to work," warned the Inspector. "No!" the crowd shouted back.

Dave Lockhart was standing alongside the front row of women and the line of constables on the creek side of the road. He witnessed the approach of the tractor:

"I was standing about four feet from constable Hatherill. The tractor came up, and it stopped, and I leaned past constable Hatherill to see what they were doing, and they were lowering the blade. The tractor came on until it was about ten feet or fifteen feet from the crowd, and I saw three constables getting up. I saw Inspector Macdonald too; he was standing on the same line as the constables on the creek side. As the tractor came on after lowering the blade, he crossed over to the café side of the road, when he took his cane and he waved the constables to come down a bit closer. The tractor came up to the point where the policemen got on, and it came forward, but it didn't seem to be going fast enough for the Inspector, so he waved it up. I was standing right there with the front row of women. I hollered out: 'for Heaven's sake, stop.'" -- Dave Lockhart

In an instant, the tractor plowed directly into the rows of women. Women on the margins easily stepped aside to avoid the blade, but the women in the centre had nowhere to retreat.

". . . it [the tractor] came quite fast towards us, and the next thing I knew it was right on top of us. I never dreamed it would go through us, and when I found it was that close, there wasn't time to get out of the road and the people were in the centre and as they started to move backwards the people closed in, at least they were there, and there wasn't any room for me and the people and the cat. The police were hitting the people with their wooden clubs as they came. I saw people scatter on each side of me, and I had no room to move, and my only resource was to hang on to the blade in front, and I hung on with all my might. I would have been O.K. and would have never been hurt except for the police. They plastered me across the back and shoulders, and I had a hit over the head, and it knocked me out and I fell under the tractor. My foot got under the blade, and I was dragged quite a little way." -- Kay Williams

Annie Lemeshuk was next to Mrs. Williams, and she too grabbed hold of the blade and was clubbed until she dropped down in front of the blade.

“The tractor started going full speed and the policemen start using their clubs. I didn’t have time to escape the club. I was hit between the shoulder blade when I fell. I have got my foot injured. Broken toes.” – Annie Lemeshuk

Katharine Ranostaj was in the centre of the third row of women. First one foot then the other became entangled with the blade and she fell. She held onto the blade’s edge as it pushed her forward. It was some 300 feet down the road that she was finally pulled free.

“When it (the tractor) got up to me the blade caught my foot underneath, and I was trying to pull my foot underneath the blade, and I tried to get that one out and the other one would get tangled underneath it, and I was struggling to get away.” – Katharine Ranostaj

Annie Adamovich fell and sustained a foot injury.

“I was standing when the tractor was coming towards the people; I was standing still and after the tractor came I fell backwards. Whether it was the people moving backwards or myself going backwards I don’t remember . . . I fell, and I felt my foot hurting.” – Annie Adamovich

Pat Collins was standing on the edge of the crowd off to the side when the tractor went into the women.

“. . . when the tractor ran into the women, I was pushed ahead. As I went by the tractor, a missile hit me on the left side behind the ear. I kept on going. I was so disgusted with everything, and I knew that was no place for me. When I got to the top side where the roads cross, Inspector Macdonald was coming towards me. When he got near me, I thought he was passing. I happened to turn slightly and he let me have it across the ear (with his cane).” - Pat Collins

Dazed, Mrs. Collins laid on the ground until she was carried away. Other women who were struck on the head by police batons were Liz Adamovich, Marie Haigh and Livia Strussi.

Although the blade was lowered, apparently there was just enough of a gap for toes and occasionally feet to slip underneath the blade on the pothole-ridden and bumpy frozen road. Lacerated shins, broken toes and bruises were injuries inflicted by the blade. Bruises and contusions to upper parts and heads were inflicted by police batons.

Almost as soon as the tractor went into the crowd, a few miners took to throwing rocks while others tried to pull the constables and Garrison’s men from the tractor in an attempt to stop its advance. A brief melée ensued with miners fighting with police constables.

The tractor finally came to a stop after it crossed the tracks, about 300 yards down the road from where it entered the crowd, a distance that would have taken a little more than two minutes to cover at top speed. The entire incident was over within minutes. Initially, seventeen miners were arrested on charges ranging from vagrancy to obstructing and assaulting peace officers.

The papers on the coast picked up the official Provincial police radio dispatches and reprinted wild reports of a rampaging mob of 250 men and women attacking police and colliery workers, injuring many grievously. Indeed, most seriously injured was Constable T. Aikman from Vancouver when a sledge hammer was thrown from the tractor, striking him on the head. The reports go on to say that being greatly outnumbered by 5 to 1, the police, showing

considerable coolness, resorted to batons to repel the charging armed attackers all the while keeping their pistols holstered. The dispatches covered up any hint of police brutality or misconduct. It would be a week later before a more balanced view of events appeared in the newspapers. Dr. Robert Elliott, the town's physician and, incidentally, the secretary-treasurer of the Liberal riding association of Fernie, was incensed by the extent of police brutality and openly critical of the provincial government's inaction to arbitrate a settlement. His letter to Ian Mackenzie, MP Vancouver Centre, was reprinted in the newspapers. In part he says,

"I have written three letters to Attorney-General Sloan to try to settle the strike by arbitration, but he apparently believes in beating women and men up instead of using common sense." - Dr. Robert E. Elliott, physician



Gushul postcard showing Corbin miners' injured wives, and the 5-ton Holt-30 Caterpillar. Back row (L-R): Livia Strussi, Pat Collins, Liz Adamovich, Marie Haige; front row (L-R): Annie Adamovich, Katharine Ranostaj, Annie Lemeshuk, Kay Williams. Courtesy of the late Bill Eckersley, Fernie.

The BC provincial government's immediate response was to rush in police reinforcements. R.C.M.P. from Lethbridge sealed off the only road to Corbin as 500 miners from neighbouring Blairmore marched towards town. The police siege of Corbin began.

Despite a last-ditch effort by Duff Pattullo's provincial government to reach a conciliation, on May 7, 1935, Corbin Collieries announced the mine's permanent closure. Eventually fourteen miners were convicted – seven received minor fines, and the others on more serious charges received jail terms of 3 to 6 months of hard labour in the provincial jail in Nelson. Within two years the townsite of Corbin would be virtually deserted.

In hindsight, none of the women would ever have contemplated standing in the path of the moving tractor. They stood their ground because they were confident the tractor would not go through. And they paid severely for their miscalculation. Sadly, as protester Myrtle Fiddler reflected about that day, "...people that want to go in a place like that, will force their way in, won't they?"

Epilogue

On Feb 20, 1936 one prisoner, Dave Lockhart (the author's grandfather), fell ill in the Nelson jail. He suffered terribly, banging his head against a wall of his cell. He was taken to hospital a few days later and died on March 6. He was 31 years old. A coroner's inquest was hurriedly assembled in order to quell any notion of mistreatment. By a twist of fate, the jail's warden was none other than Inspector John Macdonald in charge of the provincial police in Corbin. After a thorough investigation the jury returned a verdict of death by natural causes.

Harvey Murphy, In His Own Words

compiled by Ian McKenzie

The Harvey Murphy best known to Pass history should not be confused with the shopkeeper of the same name who moved away from here around 1913. Rather, we refer to the Torontonion born as Peter Chernikovsky (1906-1977) who changed his name to something more labour-friendly and rose from local agitator to labour organizer and negotiator, union leader, and Communist Party of Canada executive (he even visited Russia in 1931). He is an unsung hero of the Canadian labour movement.

Murphy spent his life agitating, organizing, and bargaining on behalf of workers, primarily in British Columbia and Ontario, and concentrating on mining and mill industries. He was only active in the Pass during the tumultuous period between 1932 and 1935, and was directly involved in a long, bitter strike, the election of a pro-labour "Red" town council in Blairmore, and the infamous confrontation at Corbin where a bulldozer allegedly injured several women. But Murphy also met his future wife in the Pass, and in fact he is buried in Blairmore's Old Union Cemetery with her parents.

Despite his hard work, Murphy was unpopular with other labour leaders because of personal rivalries, conflicting policies, and his overt Communist connections. This and the scant documentation of his life and activities explain his relative absence from Canada's labour history. Author Rolf Knight hoped to correct this, and recorded interviews with Murphy in 1976-1977, a year before his death. Unfortunately Knight found the material inadequate for a biography, but in 2014 published parts of the interview online. The following are a few excerpts which pertain to Crowsnest Pass, in Harvey Murphy's own words.

"I came over to Blairmore from Coleman. There was a meeting of the miners' local in Blairmore but I couldn't get past the doorman. You see, the mine workers would have passwords to get into a union meeting. Every month or so we would have another password, like "back on shift" or something. They would use that to identify themselves. They didn't know who I was. The union meeting hall in Blairmore was the back of a pool hall where Bill Knight was the manager. That was in the centre of town. The guys would play cards there and all that. So, I scouted around and found a window and jumped through it and landed right in front of the meeting in progress. I can't do those things now but then I could. I started to speak as soon as I hit the floor. They were sort of surprised but sympathetic. The main thing was that I could point out what had happened at Drumheller in the fight for organization. Well, that's how I first landed in Blairmore."

"A big part of my activities during the strike was to go around getting food and relief for the miners on strike at Blairmore. To round up support. Strikers got only the most basic necessities of life. We distributed the food we had collected and had gotten from the farmers and other sources. We never gave cash relief. Mostly food. The amount would be determined by the needs of the family, the size, how many adults, children, and so on."

"In going into a place I never thought of organizing just the workers there. I always tried to organize the whole community behind the strike. Because a strike had to be considered in its effects on the whole community. That was especially important in communities like Blairmore, in mining camps and towns. But I did that wherever it had some possibility of working. Well, we did have meetings almost every day, open air rallies and what have you. Dances and benefits, too."

“Oh Christ, when you're in a little town - we knew our anti-union people. We wouldn't allow them in the meeting and we wouldn't associate with them. Only the anti-union birds went to the Legion to drink beer while we would be at the Cos, the Cosmopolitan beer parlour. We knew a guy wasn't with us when he went into the Legion to drink and associate with the birds that hung around there. There were just a handful of them anyway.”

“Well, I was charged with “unlawful assembly” for my part on the picket line. And I later served my time in Lethbridge jail, but that was after the strike was over. The law was so ridiculous. It said that “unlawful assembly” meant any assembly, even if it were only three people, no matter what they were doing. If it would cause a reasonable to fear for a breach of peace *that* was unlawful assembly. Well, how can you defend yourself against a law like that? The strike was over by the time we went to trial. About 85 women had been arrested during the strike, a whole bunch of them. They took us all to Fort MacLeod where our trial was held. The Attorney-General of Alberta promised to release the women without any sentences, if they pleaded guilty of unlawful assembly. So they all pleaded guilty. Yes, there were that many arrested. They were to come up for trial at the Fall Assizes. But the Attorney-General thought they could dispense with those trials and sentences if they would plead guilty. But I demanded a jury trial. What the hell was the use of my getting a suspended sentence and having that hanging over my head? So I went for a jury trial and defended myself - and that's where I learned a big lesson. I was convicted but I asked the judge to give me a stay of a couple of days to get my business wound up before he sentenced me. That same afternoon I'm having a drink in the local beer parlour with some of the boys and here, just a few tables away is the foreman of the jury. After I'd had a few beers in me I went over to him and asked “What was wrong with my defense?” Well, the foreman of the jury told me that he was from Pincher Creek, was a small rancher there. And he says, “What are you guys kicking about, to go on strike in times like these, with a job and money coming in?” And he starts to get into the troubles he's having to keep his head above water. “Well,” I says, “Do you know how much the miner gets for a ton of coal?” and it had to be a long ton. “We get 48 cents to mine a ton of coal.” But when that rancher bought the same coal he'd pay over nine bucks a ton, right in our district. So this farmer says to me, “If you'd have brought that out in the trial you sure would have got acquitted.” “Well,” I say, “I wasn't charged with the price of coal. I was charged with unlawful assembly.” Anyways, I got sentenced to three months in jail and served the whole three months. There wasn't much to it. I remember coming back to Blairmore after I got out of jail. There was a big celebration.”



Murphy in 1933.
Photo: Crowsnest
Museum Archives
CM-GUSH-BL-17-07

“I proposed short strikes, hit and run strikes. Today, with labour relations as they have developed, you sign an agreement with the company to settle disputes and grievances on the job through negotiations. But I wasn't really interested in agreements. All the time I was at Blairmore I never once went on a negotiating committee. The system we have today with grievance committees and arbitration and all that. That's all new. It was pretty primitive. Our pit committee went down to the company office and tried to settle the grievance or some dispute that arose at the time. If they didn't succeed they'd come out to the miners outside, they'd be waiting at the mine entrance, and tell them what the result had been. The methods we used were very primitive. It's a whole different ball game today. We'd make agreements with the company - but they'd break them and we'd break them. It was a hit and run affair on both sides. It was a man-to-man business. If we felt strong we'd call a strike. We had general agreements but they didn't commit either side to any hard and fast grievance procedures.

Some of those agreements used to be only two or three pages long. It recognized the wage scales. It used to be a straight argument with the threat of work stoppage standing in the doorway. You know, for a company to get the mine ready and then nobody turns out to work, that's quite a pressure on the company to settle a grievance. The mine would first be inspected for gas before any shift could go down. The miners would be waiting outside to go down in the mine cars. They'd stay out until the mine committee had settled the grievance with the company, right there and then.”

“It's hard to visualize what labour organization was based on then. The Trades and Labour Congress was mainly for skilled workers who were established in the cities. But lumber workers and many miners were more like seamen. Unions were very primitive. We had no treasuries. Trade unions weren't legal bodies anyway. Not really. It was the Labour Relations Act that gave legality to trade unions. The whole system of labour-management relations wasn't really covered under the laws. To start with, unions were secret organizations. They had no legal status. The Western Federation of Miners - hell, they had no legal status either. They'd just shut her down. That was our only weapon. It's the same rights as the management has. When he doesn't want your work or thinks you're getting too much, why, he'll shut the operations down too and try to hire other guys. A man doesn't have a right to a job. Not under our system. I tell you, I've seen whole working agreements that weren't more than two or three pages long. Just the wage scale and the hours of work. Nobody used [labour negotiating] procedures. The pit committee would go in to the management and meet in the morning and the guys would be up at the mine ready to go to work. They waited there at the mine entrance till the pit committee came out of the meeting with the company. If we couldn't come to an agreement we'd just shut her down. I never met with the management myself; that was always done by a committee of the miners themselves. I might be sitting down in the square at six o'clock in the morning. But as primitive as we were, we were still able to establish a standard for the miners. It's tough to explain the situation. But we had the instant strike. The whole thing was wild cats, all the time.”

The quotations above were excerpted from *Harvey Murphy Reminiscences 1918-1943* by Rolf Knight, October 2014, which was compiled from interviews in 1976-1977 and with a Foreword written by Harvey's daughter Mary Murphy. Found at www.rolfknight.ca under “Manuscripts”.

Further reading:

Red Agitator: the Life of Trade Unionist Harvey Murphy by Ron Verzuh, found online at <https://bcbooklook.com/2016/09/22/19-red-agitator-the-life-of-trade-unionist-harvey-murphy/>).

Raising the Workers' Flag: the Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930 – 1936 by Stephen Lyon Endicott, University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Harvey Murphy, Canada-Born Communist Leader, Tells his Story of Workers' Aims, Ideals (interview) Lethbridge Herald, October 18 1932, page 3.

Transcript of interview with labour leader Harvey Murphy (1969) Library and Archives Canada MG31-B6, R5813-2-7-E, Vol 1, Interview With Harvey Murphy.

Book Review

The Noble Cause, by Bruce Ramsey

Review by Ian McKenzie

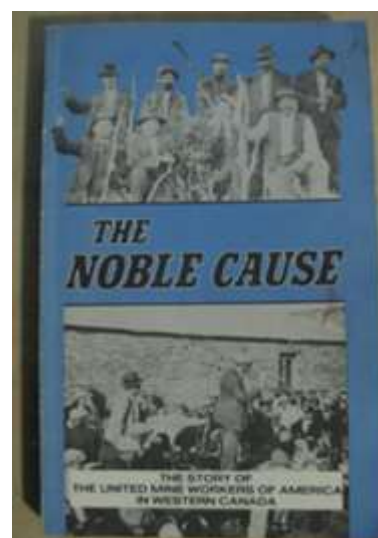
This book was commissioned by District 18 of the United Mine Workers of America as a history of that organization in western Canada. Over time the UMWA have represented coal miners ranging from a tiny minority to virtually all of them. The book covers a century of their development and successes as well as their challenges and setbacks, but also includes the rise and decline of other, competing unions and labour movements within the coal industry. The mines and miners of Crowsnest Pass were central to this story.

The history of the Canadian labour movement is an essential part of the overall history of our country, in that it reveals early-20th-century society's attitudes towards workers, industry and the sources of personal wealth, and why desperate people were driven to try and change that. The UMWA, and others, issued statements such as "the working class... have nothing in common with the employing class" and "our whole [country's] conditions and systems are wrong, and [we] are willing to reconstruct it." Poor people have long dreamed of a more equitable means of sharing wealth, and the socialist and communist political movements of the 1910s and 1920s were a result of that yearning.

Any writer will find it impossible to present a balanced narrative on the history of organized labour, as it is one of extreme polarization and incompatible ideals. Society's indifference to the huge gap between workers and owners, at least in the coal industry, meant that "the union movement...was part of a much larger movement to change the economic and political structure of society." This obvious threat to the status-quo was fully and violently resisted, but over time unions forced concessions which led to gradual government reforms and eventually a change in public opinion on an individual's right to a decent life. After reading this book, one hopes that this kinder, gentler capitalism is here to stay.

The Noble Cause is understandably biased towards labour and collectivism as opposed to mine owners and capitalism, but nevertheless presents an 'eyes-open' view of our past. Readers may be surprised at the extent to which mine owners, governments, police and much of society resisted moves towards collective bargaining, but also the fervour with which early unions sought the total reorganization of society away from the capitalism which they perceived as causing unfair and inordinate suffering amongst wage-earners.

Each of us has our own ideas and opinions on unions and collectivism, and each will read this book in a different light. There is no single version of labour history that is 'true'; rather, there are a variety of truths depending on your own values and experiences. UMWA history aside, this book will give the reader a new appreciation for the many unpleasanties that went on in our 'nice' country, and how much needed to change to get us to where we are today.



Archaeological Screenings: Q&A with Tommy Ng

Senior Project Archaeologist, Bison Historical Services Ltd

What brought you to the Crowsnest Pass this summer?

Riversdale Resources' proposed coal mine at Grassy Mountain. They are required under federal and provincial legislation to conduct archaeological impact assessments and mitigation within their development footprint. As a provincial accredited archaeologist, I was contracted by them to do the historical resource work.

What is the process and when is it triggered?

The developer is usually told to make a Historical Resources Application when they present their development plans to the municipality or county, but in Riversdale's case, a capital project that requires federal permits, they are mandated by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to adhere to Alberta's Historical Resources Act. The developer can either submit the Application itself or hire an archaeologist to do it on their behalf. The Application is submitted to the provincial government for review and they determine whether a Historical Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) is required or not. Their reviewing process includes landforms that have the potential for finding new archaeological sites and proximity to previously known sites.

After the review of the Application, the provincial government will issue a Historical Resources Requirements to the developer listing specific conditions and requirements that the developer is required to follow. Or, if it is deemed there is no potential for archaeology sites, a Historical Resource Clearance allows the developer to proceed with development.

What are the next steps?

The archaeologist's first step is to submit an application for a Historical Resources Impact Assessment research permit. It is illegal for anybody to alter or destroy an archaeological site in the province of Alberta, and thus a provincially-accredited archaeologist must apply for a government permit to conduct archaeology. At the permit application stage, additional "screening" is made in which the archaeologist must examine the project area, determine landforms of archaeological potential, and whether there are previously known archaeological and built heritage sites in proximity. The archaeologist is to assess or identify all archaeological sites from 50 years old to 14,000 years old, within the development boundary provided by the developer.

Once the field assessment of the project boundary is completed, the archaeologist must document all results and recommendations in a technical report that will be submitted to the Provincial Archaeologist for review. The recommendations are typically two options regarding archaeological sites identified within the development boundary: site avoidance from development, or if site avoidance is not feasible then some sort of mitigation which is typically an excavation. The excavation is considered a compensation to the province of Alberta since all archaeological sites are deemed non-renewable resources by the government.

The majority of Historical Resource Impact Mitigation (HRIM) measures involve an excavation, usually in two stages. Stage 1 excavation evaluates the archaeological site. If the site is determined to be of value, then a Stage 2 excavation will be recommended, which collects as much data (artefacts and context) about the archaeological site before its destruction. The site has to be of rare significance, such as Medicine Wheel, to warrant a Stage 3. All artefacts

Bison Historical Services team in Blairmore, with faces painted by a Blackfoot elder as part of a blessing for safety.

Photo: Bison Historical Services Ltd



will be catalogued and analyzed by Bison Historical, and eventually accessioned into the Royal Alberta Museum for storage.

What do you look for when choosing specific sites to investigate?

Areas within the client's development boundary with archaeological potential includes close proximity to previously known archaeological and heritage sites, and specific landforms such as terraces along rivers and creeks, and on side slopes, valley bottoms and floodplains, along and around lakes, ponds, and sloughs, upland features such as knolls, hills, ridges and ridgelines, around natural springs, rock shelters, and any other landforms that are attractive for occupation/camping.

The archaeologist will use various methods to do the overview study at this stage, an examination of contemporary and historical aerial/satellite photos, LiDAR maps, topographic maps, previous archaeological documentations of the surrounding area, etc.

What happens to the information? Is it public, or private?

When the HRIA or HRIM is completed, the archaeologist is required to write a technical report detailing the archaeological work and the results. After the final report is reviewed by the Provincial Archaeologist and accepted for archiving, it is available to the public. However, the public must justify access to the final reports which contain sensitive information on specific site locations, what was found, and their significance. Typically, reports are made available to other researchers and to people who are interested in the development of the project area. The client can make the final report available to subcontractors or stakeholders if they are integral to their development, but that is up to the client. The archaeologist himself/herself is not allowed to provide archaeological information to the public unless granted explicit permission to do so by the client or the province.

Who are the people involved with the work?

The Government of Alberta has a department full of archaeologists with variety of backgrounds, specializations, and experience in academia and commercial, and most have a Masters and some with Ph.Ds.

At the company level, the HRIA/HRIM process involves a team of archaeologists and all have archaeological training and experience with various specializations (built-heritage, stone tools, bones, etc.) and from numerous geographical areas, such as the Arctic, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and various regions throughout North America, and this includes the administrator and the Geographical Information Systems technicians with the final decisions made by the archaeologist who will hold the permit to conduct the HRIA/HRIM. The vast majority of archaeological permit holders in Alberta have either a Masters or a Ph.D.

News, 85 Years Ago – Tim Buck Boulevard

Rather than explore the news of 100 years ago, this time we highlight mentions of Tim Buck Boulevard in the *Blairmore Enterprise*. Blairmore's boulevard down the centre of Victoria Avenue (main street) was named after the general secretary of the Communist Party of Canada by Blairmore's "Red" council in 1934, and was illuminated with street lights, identified by two neon "Tim Buck Boulevard" signs, planted, and eventually even sprinklered. The boulevard was removed in 1937 by a subsequent town council.

Sept 27 1934: "Some of the shrubbery recently planted in the local Tim Buck boulevard proved a much desired delicacy for some of the 2000 or more sheep that were wending their way eastward through the snow on Sunday. Not satisfied with the exposed tips of the plants, they pulled out many of them roots and all."

Feb 28 1935: "An amendment to the town's bylaws is suggested that will make it perfectly o.k. for the union secretary and the Tim Buck boulevard hose manager to run for council."

March 28 1935 – "Coleman will improve their main street, but there will be nothing attached to it as silly as is the Blairmore boulevard."

April 25 1935: "On June 3rd, the Normandie, world's largest liner afloat, will dock for the first time in New York. The Normandie has an eighty-foot swimming pool, a completely equipped theatre, radio-telephones, cabins with private outside decks and a crew of twelve hundred. She has no boulevard."

May 9 1935: "Employees on Tim Buck's boulevard, near Victoria Street, observed the King's Jubilee as a holiday. They worked on May Day."

"The town dogs seem to be manifesting a keen interest in the Tim Buck boulevard. Almost any minute one can see a dog rendering assistance."

May 30 1935: "Tears shed by local sympathizers with the unfortunate strikers at Corbin should be applied as moisture to the new boulevard and parks."

June 6 1935: "If we ever hear a real good compliment paid to the famous main street boulevard in Blairmore, we are going to publish it."

June 13 1935: "One hundred and forty-eight thousand weeds were plucked from a boulevard in Blairmore this week. Genuine seeds are said to have been sown, but that part of nature did not wish to rise in Blairmore's rank atmosphere."

June 20 1935: "Seeds and shrubs on Blairmore's boulevard and parks are kinda worried these days. They miss the great band of horticulturalists, who are also laid off or maybe 'suspended temporarily'."

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.

The one in central Blairmore mentions the 1932 strike and the famous "Red" town council.



Have you read it?



Tim Buck Blvd, sprinklers suppressing street dust.

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives CM-GUSH-BL-30-09

July 18 1935: “Seeds and seeds and seeds, and more seeds; and plants and plants, and more of ‘em have been sacrificed on what is said to be Tim Buck’s boulevard, without success. As would be expected stink weed appears to predominate.”

July 25 1935: “Your town would be alright if you could only get rid of that d—n Red element and such nonsense as the so-called Tim Buck boulevard.”

September 12 1935: “An amendment to the criminal code of Canada lists the Blairmore boulevard as the latest concocted crime.”

January 16 1936: “The remains of Blairmore’s boulevard will be buried with proper pomp and ceremony on April 30, 1937. No flowers.”

March 6 1936: “A suggestion has been made that the so-called ‘Tim Buck Boulevard’ should be renamed ‘Aberhart Boulevard’. Its popularity may be just as long lived.”

March 20 1936: “Abolishment of Blairmore’s silly boulevard idea would be the wisest move in the history of the town.”

April 17 1936: “A carload of liquid poison is said to have arrived in Blairmore – probably to destroy grasshopper eggs along the Buck boulevard.”

May 22 1936: “No steps have been taken to improve or otherwise deal with the famous Tim Buck boulevard. No offers have yet been received for the 1936 crop of weeds, which today gives great promise of being a heavy one.”

July 24 1936: “It is said that the hay crop from the Tim Buck boulevard will go to feed the asses in Edmonton.”

September 17, 1937: “At a meeting of the town council during the week, it was decided to remove the famous Tim Buck boulevard from Victoria Street. The biggest eyesore of all, the Neon sign, still stands – but dead.”

October 1 1937: “The last plank and pole of Tim Buck’s boulevard was removed a few minutes before we went to press.”

September 27, 1940: “IN MEMORIAM – Pretty soon the town of Blairmore will be celebrating the third anniversary of the destruction of Tim Buck’s boulevard.”

Our Local Heritage Sites

- **CROWNEST MUSEUM and ARCHIVES** - 7701 18th Avenue, within Coleman National Historic Site. 403-563-5434, cnpmuseum@shaw.ca , website www.crownestmuseum.ca. Glimpse the rich social, economic and natural heritage of Crowsnest Pass from 1900 - 1950 in our 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, rum-running and the legendary shooting of Constable Lawson and subsequent execution of 'Emperor Pic' and Florence Lossandro. Open daily, 9am to 5pm. Adults \$10, Seniors \$8, Youths \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24, Crowsnest Historical Society members free. Tours and educational programs are available.
- **BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE** - access off Main Street in Bellevue. 403-564-4700, 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 to 5pm in May and June, 10am to 6pm in July and August, then 9am to 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. Friendly, knowledgeable staff 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 and now a Provincial Historic Site. Open year round, 9am to 6pm (10am to 5pm in winter). 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. 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.

(Rates and other information are subject to change)

Newsletter Archive

All of our past issues are archived on the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative website and can be accessed by clicking here: <http://www.crownestheritage.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 .