



# HERITAGE VIEWS

history and heritage  
in Crowsnest Pass, AB

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## Issue #61, December 2020

In any other town, an industrial site like the Frank zinc smelter or the Sentinel power plant would be the main focus of heritage interpretation. Here, they have been pushed aside by our many big disasters and exciting events. We just have so much to remember.

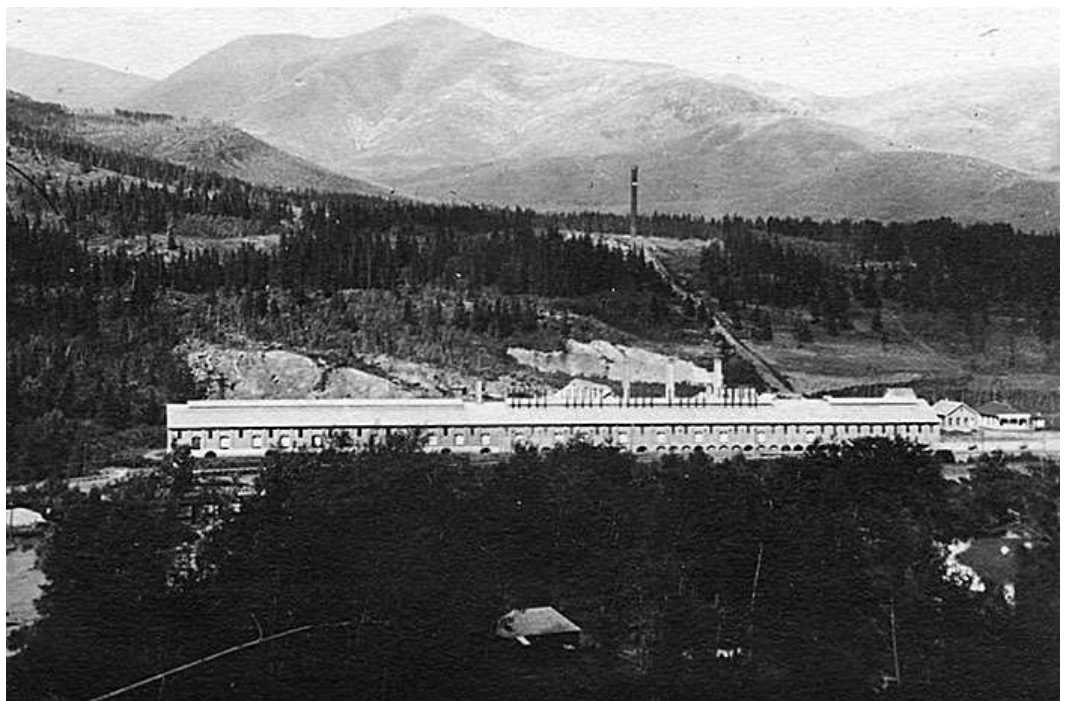
This issue includes greatly-shortened versions of original papers on these two unique, historic industrial plants. Email us if you'd like to read the full versions.

Researching the zinc smelter led me to an AncestryUK webpage on the Fernau family. One of the page's creators told me the story of Cecie Fernau, and of Wallace Chambers' diary which is this issue's Book Review. Historical research can lead you to some unexpected places.

- Ian McKenzie

Frank zinc smelter, about 1906. Note the tunnel leading to the smokestack on the hill. The dark-roofed building on the extreme right is the present-day office and residence for Goat Mountain Get-A-Way.

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives (0000 Joe Pozzi collection)



*Heritage Views* 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 and Ken Allred. Inquiries, comments or submissions can be sent to [heritageviews@shaw.ca](mailto:heritageviews@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 embed photos into your document; we will just have to strip them out and reinsert them into our newsletter format.

## Local Heritage News

Despite the economic impact of COVID-19, both the **Frank Slide Interpretive Centre** and the **Bellevue Underground Mine** report robust summers, as western Canadians replaced foreign travelers. The **Crowsnest Museum** reports average or better attendance, and its annual **Harvest of Memories** fundraiser, despite some technical glitches, was very successful and exceeded its \$30,000 goal. The **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative** notes that consumption of its seven walking tour brochures exceeds that of previous years.

Responding to a presentation by the **Municipal Historic Resources Board**, Council has supported the much-needed and long-overdue cosmetic restoration of **Old Maude**, the vintage steam engine across from Blairmore's post office.

The revamped **Crowsnest CanDo Society** is purchasing the **Roxy Theatre** in Coleman, the first step in its restoration into a 300-seat performing arts venue. Information on plans for this important heritage and social point within **Coleman National Historic Site** is described at <http://www.crowsnestcando.ca/the-roxy-project.html>. The **Orpheum Theatre** in Blairmore



remains closed due to serious structural roof problems. (If you think the outside of the 1948 theatre is nice, you should see the interior. We hope that someday our citizens and visitors will be very familiar with it.)

This year's local **Remembrance Day** observance was a smaller, shortened, invitation-only event streamed over Zoom, followed by a scaled-back wreath-laying at

our local cenotaphs. Viewers could "attend" at home or at a screening at the **Coleman Legion**.

A quiet little project by a couple of individuals has placed supports beneath the **Dunlop Guns** cannon in Frank, taking some of the 1225kg weight off its 104-year-old wood-spoked wheels. It is thought to be one of only three German 10.5cm Krupp 98/09 field howitzers displayed in Canada, distributed as war trophies by the Allied forces after World War One.

The **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative** is completing what is probably, hopefully, the final phase of its [heritage signs program](#) with the installation of a handful of posts and panels, including some replacements for existing panels which were damaged or out of date.

The **CNP Memorial Society** has partnered with **Fantin's Funeral Chapel** and the **Municipality of Crowsnest Pass** to straighten and repair historic headstones in our many cemeteries. Work has started and will likely extend beyond 2021. Information on the Society and its projects can be found at <https://cnpmemorial.weebly.com/>.

The diverse elements of heritage, industry, sport, and nature came together in October when large artifacts from the **Crowsnest Museum** yard in Coleman were moved to sites within the **United Riders Of Crowsnest (UROC)** kids' mountain bike park in Blairmore, located at the base



of the ski hill road. Funding for the massive move was provided by **Teck Resources Ltd**, and interpretive signs were designed and fabricated through the **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative** and will be installed in the spring.

Pictured at left is the placing of the 25-ton Joy Loader onto its new site, one of four large artifacts moved. The photo is by local mining historian John Kinnear, whose interesting article on the move was printed in *Looking Back* in the October 7th edition of the *Pass Herald*, available from their office or online [here](#).

On November 3 there was a small fire in the historic **Coleman Journal** building (across the street from the Crowsnest Museum), presently used as a residence. Fortunately damage was minor.

If you are curious about the **history of post offices** in Crowsnest Pass (and who isn't?), have a look at the *Journal of Alberta Postal History* by clicking [here](#), and then click on "Issue No. 6".

## Did you know...

... the Frank zinc smelter was intended to be the largest in North America?

... bricks from the Frank zinc smelter may have been re-used in the Polish Hall in Coleman's Bushtown?

... there were once brickyards in both Frank and Blairmore?

... the Frank smelter, the Sentinel powerhouse, and the Devon gas/sulphur plant had smokestacks which were 35m, 65m and 100m tall?

... zinc was a strategic material during World War One, as a component of brass used in shell casings?



This advertisement ran in *The Frank Paper* between 1906 and 1909

## Smelter Skelter – the Zinc Smelter in Frank

by Ian McKenzie

(abbreviated from the author's 2011 paper)

The British Columbia mining boom of the 1890s focused on high-grade ores of gold, silver, copper, and lead. The presence of zinc in these ores was a problem, and actually lowered their value as it reduced the efficiency of smelting and coated equipment with a thick scab. Ore could be smelted for zinc itself, but the process was difficult and not particularly profitable due to the limited demand in the manufacturing centres of eastern North America and Europe. Most Canadian mines hand-sorted the zinc out of their ore and discarded it.

Those piles of waste zinc attracted the eye of entrepreneurs, including John James Constant Fernau. He was a mining engineer who had worked in Spain and England before coming to Canada in 1903 or 1904. Part of his solution to the “zinc problem” was an elegantly simple way to reduce costs. It took three tons of coal to process one ton of zinc ore, so rail shipping costs could be reduced by building a smelter where the coal was, rather than where the ore was. The other part of Fernau's plan was to seek government protection for a Canadian smelter. CPR freight rates made anything produced in western Canada more expensive than imports from the United States, so investors would need a subsidy on their own zinc or a hefty tariff on American zinc, or both. It was a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation though; you can't ask your government to protect an industry that doesn't yet exist, but there was significant risk in developing an industry without first having government protections in place. Fernau felt that the best way to demonstrate the practicality of a Canadian zinc smelter was to build one, without waiting for the results of government studies. Being the first player in this market opportunity would also be a significant competitive advantage.

Fernau's concept was taken up by the Canadian Metal Company, organized in Paris with zinc smelting as its principal objective. President and managing director Count Edouard Riondel topped the list of French investors, with Fernau as general manager and company spokesman based in Nelson, BC.

In early 1905 Constant Fernau selected Frank as the ideal site. There was sufficient flat land for a zinc smelter right next to the railway tracks, and the local coal company's “north tunnel” next to that could be leased for the smelter's exclusive use. Next door was Reuben Steeves' brick plant, started in 1902 with a theoretical maximum daily capacity of 40,000 bricks. Next to the brickyard was Frank, at the time the largest community in the Crowsnest Pass with a growing stock of housing, services and labour.

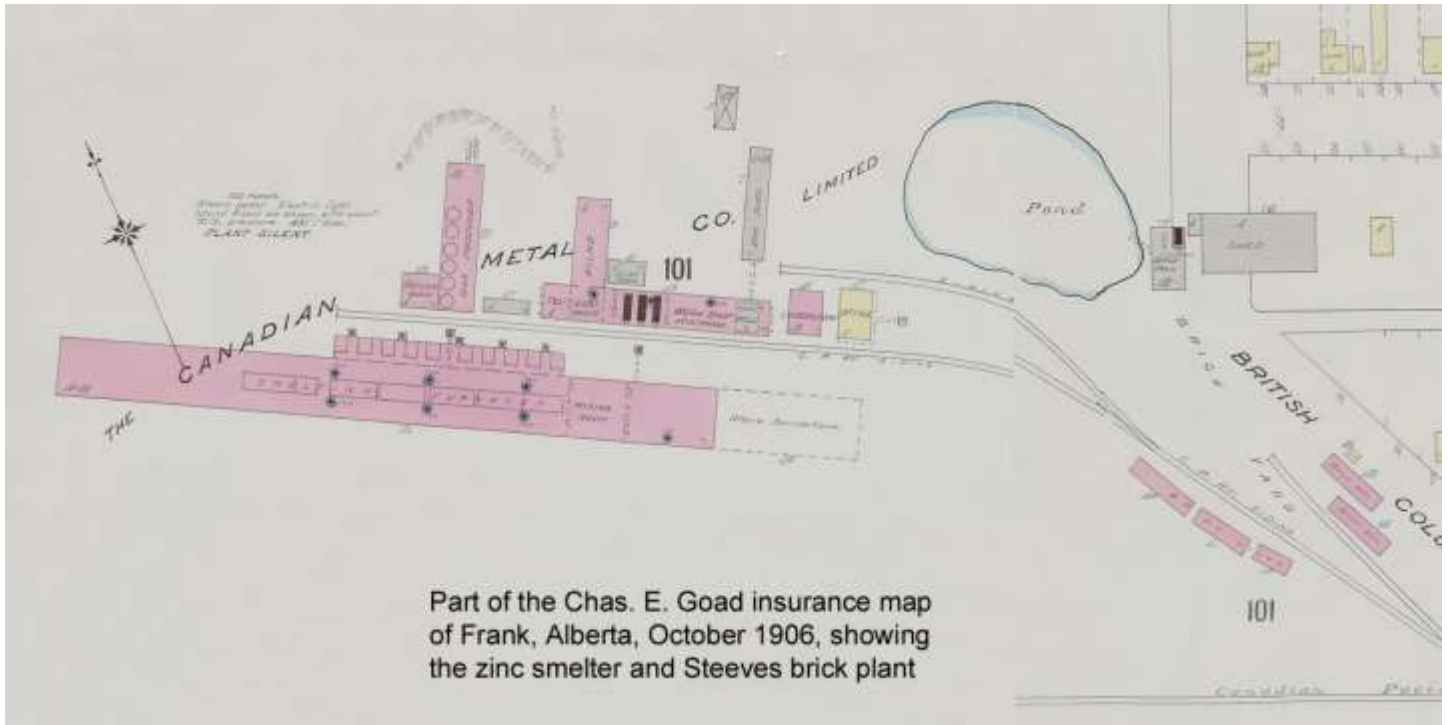
The Canadian Metal Company assured its zinc ore supply through the acquisition of mining claims in British Columbia, principally the Bluebell Mine on Kootenay Lake. An existing concentrator plant was purchased and rebuilt at Pilot Bay where ores were to be sorted into lead, silver, iron, and zinc for separate smelting. All of the zinc concentrate was destined for the Frank smelter, which could reasonably expect the same from other BC mine owners.

Construction was contracted to Smith Brothers, which had also constructed important buildings in Coleman; Alex Smith moved his family to Frank. Brickwork was subcontracted to Enrico Pozzi who had emigrated to Frank in 1905. His bricklaying experience got him out of the coal mine and launched his long career in construction.

The office building was constructed first, in April 1905, and likely served as a temporary construction office for the rest. The smelter, pottery/workshop, gas producer (where gas was extracted from coal for the final smelting process) and laboratory buildings were built of brick with galvanized metal roofing, while the office, 3000-ton ore shed, clay shed, and powerhouse buildings were of wood. The small power plant, located behind the pottery, would also be

used to light the towns of Frank and Blairmore. A 250m long brick-lined tunnel ran from the back of the smelter to the crest of the hill to the northeast, atop of which was a 110-foot red-painted steel stack. The local newspaper gleefully noted that Frank would thus be free of noxious fumes which would instead be dumped on Bellevue.

In October of 1905, as construction was nearing completion, orders were given to double the dimensions of the main plant to 54 x 700 feet, making it the largest zinc smelter in North America with the capacity to process 150 tons of concentrated ore per day. The entire complex was completed in less than a year, at a cost of about a half-million dollars. An estimated 2.5 million bricks and over 450,000 board feet of lumber had been used.



Part of the Chas. E. Goad insurance map of Frank, Alberta, October 1906, showing the zinc smelter and Steeves brick plant

During construction, Frank was visited by mining experts and government officials to gauge the smelter's progress and viability before making recommendations on government support. Influential visitors included senator William Templeman who visited in August 1905, noted mineralogist Professor Walter Ingalls and his assistant, Philip Argall, who visited in November 1905, and later that same month G. O. Buchanan, the lead commissioner for the Kootenays.

There was considerable skepticism from some Kootenay mines regarding the Frank smelter, whose construction hadn't awaited government investigations into the "zinc problem". The mine owners may have feared American retaliation in the form of higher tariffs for Canadian ores being shipped southward, or perhaps they doubted that the technical difficulties in zinc smelting had been overcome. It is probable that eastern Canadian manufacturers were cool to the idea of Canadian-produced, tariff-protected zinc, which would be more expensive than their existing American imports.

Although it was a new plant, the Frank smelter did not incorporate any new technologies. Instead, it relied on the traditional "Belgian" or "American Belgian" method that was only effective with a relatively high grade of ore, although Fernau made some questionable design modifications. A single pig of zinc was turned out in October 1905 for demonstration and publicity purposes, but this was in the laboratory building rather than the main plant, whose test was yet to come.

The Canadian Metal Company's other smelter – the aging but upgraded lead plant at Pilot Bay, co-located with the concentrator – tested successfully in January 1906, but failed completely after startup in May. The Canadian Metal Company removed J. J. C. Fernau as general manager for this failure, and closed the Pilot Bay lead smelter just as the Frank smelter was being fired up for its first real test. The Frank plant was operated by skilled smelters recruited from works manager Thomas Jones' home state of Kansas. Of the 750 tons of ore

that had been shipped to Frank, about 150 tons were processed into 48 tons of zinc. Of this, two tons were distributed as samples and the balance was shipped to Montreal. The Canadian Metal Company publicly declared a complete success, but privately could not have been pleased with the smelter's performance. The two carloads of refined zinc probably cost between 10 and 20 cents per pound to produce, significantly exceeding the market price of about 6 cents per pound.

A subsequent study by the federal government showed that the Frank smelter had multiple problems. The report sums up the problems: high labour charges and too large a staff, poor quality coal, low grade ore, and faulty design of furnace blocks and the Merton roaster (presumably due to Fernau's modifications). These suggest a lack of research and planning, possibly because of the haste to be the first Canadian zinc smelter, as well as a lack of technical competence. It is revealing that the concentrator, co-located with the Pilot Bay smelter, tested well but also failed upon startup.

The general managership of the Canadian Metal Company was assumed temporarily by Riondel himself, before the appointment of Samuel Stewart Fowler in July 1906 who had the unenviable task of putting all of the company's facilities back on their feet. Despite the seriousness of the Frank smelter's now-apparent shortcomings, the Canadian Metal Company had too much of an investment in it to just close its doors. In November 1906 works manager Thomas Jones traveled to Nelson to confer with Samuel Fowler on options, including replacing the faulty Merton roasters with Jacklin or Brown straight-line roasters and reducing capacity to 30 or 40 tons of ore per day. A proposal to pour even more money into the brand-new plant was a difficult pill for shareholders to swallow, particularly as the same was required for the Pilot Bay facilities. Federal government support was very much on their minds.

In February 1907 the United States re-interpreted their zinc import rules and exempted Canadian concentrated ore from the prohibitive 20% tariff. This was good news for the mines, but not for the Canadian Metal Company which would now have to compete with the Americans for their ore supply. Although the Canadian Metal Company continued to advertise for ores, the problems were now insurmountable and it was better to leave the plant idle rather than to reinvest or run it at a loss.

The Canadian Metal Company's basic approach to the "zinc problem" was to operate an American-style smelter and be competitive with government help. But the Americans only smelted high-grade ore while the Canadian opportunity lay in processing low-grade ore. The Canadian Metal Company ought to have known that the technology wasn't up to the task. And the Canadian government did not protect Canadian zinc until World War One.

The Canadian Metal Company removed some machinery from the Frank smelter to its facilities on Kootenay Lake in mid-1907. The company limited itself to its conventional operations (principally the Bluebell Mine) under Samuel Fowler's management until 1921, when it disposed of its assets and ceased to exist. The Frank smelter property was sold in 1912 to a proposed cement plant for storage, but was never used for that. During the Great War the main building became an indoor skating arena, inaugurated in December 1914 when 200 people skated to live music. It also hosted hockey games on natural ice that was sheltered from wind, sun, and snow, until the spring of 1919. In 1923 the main structures were purchased by the same Enrico Pozzi who had helped build it and who promptly demolished the principal structures and employed manual labor to clean and recycle the bricks, steel, and other materials. Only the smelter foundation, the flue tunnel, and the smelter office building remained, and can still be seen today on the Goat Mountain Get-A-Way property in Frank.

*(The article's title refers to the term "helter skelter" which means "in undue haste, confusion, or disorder")*

# A History of the Sentinel Power Plant

by M. Keith Macken

(selected extracts from a 1963 history of the East Kootenay Power Company)

... Although improvements [to hydro-electric plants near Elko, BC] were a decided step in providing for continuity of service, the continued expansion of the system had pointed up with increasing sharpness, the necessity of a source of auxiliary power other than hydro.

First steps in this direction were taken in June 1924 at which time Mr. Sanborn placed before his directors figures of planned load increases by C.M.&S [COMINCO], and the Coal Industry. He also mentioned that while all customers had shared with the company the hardships of the 1923-24 winter season due to water shortage in the one operating plant, he did not feel that they could be expected to take too kindly to a repetition of such conditions. There was also every possibility that negotiations with the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co. for a power contract would soon be finalized. Water shortages could be expected anytime after November 1<sup>st</sup>. While [water] storage possibilities could be studied, it would take months of investigation before any construction of such facilities could commence. Diesel equipment, although desirable, was not readily available whereas steam equipment was, (it would appear), a matter of a few months delivery.

No decision was made, other than to plan a storage survey at Grave Lake on the Upper Elk River. Subsequently other sites on the Fording River and the Upper Bull River were surveyed but none offered the volume of storage necessary to firm up winter power requirements.

In January 1925, Mr. Sanborn reviewed the entire situation and again emphasized the necessity of additional generating capacity. This followed load restrictions imposed in early January by water shortage in both the Elk and Bull Rivers.

While preliminary investigation work was done on a possible site in the Phillips Canyon in early 1925, it would appear that the unfavorable storage prospect shown by the survey, decided the Directors to make a study of steam stand-by equipment. This was indicated in a letter from Mr. A. J. Nesbitt to Mr. Sanborn in February 1925. The situation from Management's point of view was a decidedly difficult one of trying to maintain customer good-will in the face of growing load and no assurance of adequate capacity to handle it. However, it must be pointed out, in all fairness, that the principals in Montreal had invested a very substantial sum of money in a young Company with no great return up to that time.

In spite of this aspect, definite planning for the addition of steam generating equipment was under way in February 1926 and by September excavation work at the site of the Sentinel Steam Station was commenced. Several factors entered into the choice of a location on Crow's Nest Lake. It was thought advantageous to have an auxiliary power source near the center of the system in the vicinity of Elko and in proximity to the C.M.&S. operations at Kimberley, they being the largest customer at that time. The presence of coal mines with a relatively short rail haul from mine-mouth to plant and the abundance of cooling water, ultimately decided the present location.

Construction proceeded throughout the winter of 1926-27 on the plant building and living quarters for the operating crew. In August 1927 the plant made its first run. Two Boilers, fired by powdered coal, the first installation of its kind in Western Canada, furnished steam to one 5000 K.W. Parsons turbo-alternator at 240 lbs. pressure. Riely Pulverizers were used to reduce the quarter-inch slack coal purchased to 200 mesh coal for firing. The stack of reinforced concrete was built to a height of 210 feet and became something of a landmark in an otherwise uninhabited area.

Mr. J. T. (Jack) Watson was appointed as Plant Inspector and then as Chief Engineer. Greatly respected and liked by all, he remained as Chief until his resignation in September 1928 at which time he assumed the post as City Manager of Lethbridge. The original staff of shift engineers who signed the first log sheet of July 19, 1927, was H. T. (Nick) Driver, Hugh C. Craig and Ab. May. Wm.(Bill) Archer, now senior shift engineer, started as fireman January 1, 1928.

The Plant's function as an auxiliary source of power is evident from the records which show an output of 114,000 K.W.H. on December 27, 1927 with a maximum peak kilowatt output on the one unit of 5600.

By early 1928 the system load was averaging over 5 million kilo-watt-hours per month, with peaks of 11,000 to 13,000 K. W. While no large single load increase was in sight, discussions with the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co. relative to a power contract were again current. The Kimberley operations were constantly being enlarged. By now the point of no return had been passed. As a consequence, it was inevitable that additional steam generating capacity be available and approval for a duplicate turbo-generator and a third boiler was given in April 1928. It was well into the late fall before much was accomplished toward this addition but work proceeded throughout the winter on all phases of the project. The turbo installation was completed in December of that year and the electrical work started immediately.



Sentinel power plant, about 1950. Crowsnest Museum and Archives 10154 Gush Neg

Up to this time the Sentinel Plant, unlike its hydro partners, seems to have been

fairly free from major troubles. On the occasion of the trial run of the new unit, luck ran out and at the time of synchronism with the system, several coils were damaged. No definite conclusion was ever reached as to the exact cause of the burn-out but it was not until October 9, 1929 that no. 2 unit was successfully operated, generating 1000 K.W.H. on its initial run. Its first major output was 79,000 K.W.H. on November 12<sup>th</sup>.

Following Mr. Watson's resignation, Arthur Reid took over as Chief until June 1929 to be succeeded by H. C. (Hughie) Craig. A. R. (Art) Wyman who joined the company on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1928, was assigned to the Sentinel Staff as Plant Superintendent in August 1929.

During the winter operating periods both before and after the installation of the second unit, various members of the Elko Plant Staff were transferred to Sentinel as Switchboard Operators. Such names as Bert Grady, Henry Waterhouse, Tommy Conquergood, Fred Greenwood, Albin Van-Sacker, Jeff Stokes and Lee Davis appear on the daily log sheets.

The original Plant building, well-constructed of steel frame, concrete floors and red brick siding, was divided into the turbine room and boiler room. A coal storage shed adjoined the building on the north side of the spur track for coal car delivery and unloading. Situated on the edge of Crows Nest Lake it made a striking picture especially on a calm day when the Plant and its towering stack, dwarfed by the mountain behind it, were reflected in the Lake surface. A large staff house and one dwelling were erected along with the Plant but in 1929 two more



cottages were added for married staff members. Unlike the hydro plants, all buildings were on the same ground level and readily approached from the main highway.

The story of the development of the Company's power sources would not be complete without mention of the interconnection with Calgary Power Company's system which was effected in February 1930. The theme of discussion between the two Companies was the mutual benefit to be derived from the interchange of power, the most economical use of the water power on both systems and the sale of surplus and stored power. A 66 K.V. line was built by the Company in the winter of 1928-29 eastward from Bellevue to connect with a line built westward from Fort MacLeod by Calgary Power. Despite construction problems arising from below zero [Fahrenheit] weather and the ever present wind, the first interchange is recorded as a transfer to Calgary of 21,600 K.W.H. on February 16, 1930. The interchange metering equipment was located at the Interconnecting Substation, a short span away from the Bellevue Substation.

Although some of the terms of the interchange Agreement entered into by the two companies in 1930, have been altered from time to time during the years that followed, it can be said that both parties have participated in those benefits which the inter-connection of the two systems was designed to bring about.

The slowing up of business activity which followed the disastrous stock market crash and financial crisis of 1929 was not immediately reflected in a decline of system output but by the end of 1930, the trend was evident. System net output dropped approximately nine million kilowatt hours or ten percent from 1929. The next two years showed similar declines. In 1932 and 1933 Sentinel was not called on for power and indeed the plant was closed and shuttered and manned by a skeleton crew. Consolidated Mining and Smelting Co.'s operations showed similar declines in consumption and their normally continuous operations were cut to a five day per week schedule.

In 1946, following the discovery that encaustic embrittlement was prevalent in the Sentinel boilers, the boiler room was completely dismantled in preparation for their replacement. Two boilers of 90,000 pound per hour capacity were installed by Combustion Engineering Co. At the same time an addition to provide wash-room, office space, machine shop and a laboratory was built on the east wall of the turbine room. This work was barely completed in time for the winter season. Three years later in 1949 automatic combustion control was added.

Contrary to the expectation of much of the business world, the cessation of hostilities in 1945 did not produce an overall cut-back in production. So far as the Company was concerned, output again increased in 1947 and mounted steadily until 1951 when an all time high of 170 million KWH was attained. Peak in this year was 33,900 K.W.

It is evident that this peak figure was in excess of the system generating capacity and in fact the additional peak requirements had been drawn from Calgary Power. This situation brought about a most unfortunate circumstance in the form of power rationing to the coal mines and the C. M. & S. in early December 1948 and again in February 1949.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, an explosion in No. 2 boiler furnace at Sentinel rendered it inoperative and once again all customers including the Cities were called on to cut back consumption. On February 15<sup>th</sup> repairs were completed and load restrictions again cancelled.

The repetition of rationing due to lack of generating capacity had seriously disturbed the West Canadian Collieries Limited and the Hillcrest-Mohawk Collieries and they jointly applied to the board of Public Utility Commissioners in Alberta to be served by Calgary Power. Following

lengthy hearings by the Board, a decision to grant the application of the Collieries was handed down and on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1951 they became Calgary Power customers. While the loss of these two customers was a severe set-back to the company's revenue, it did improve its ability to carry the remaining load.

The welfare of the Company as the year 1963 draws to a close, can only be described as satisfactory.

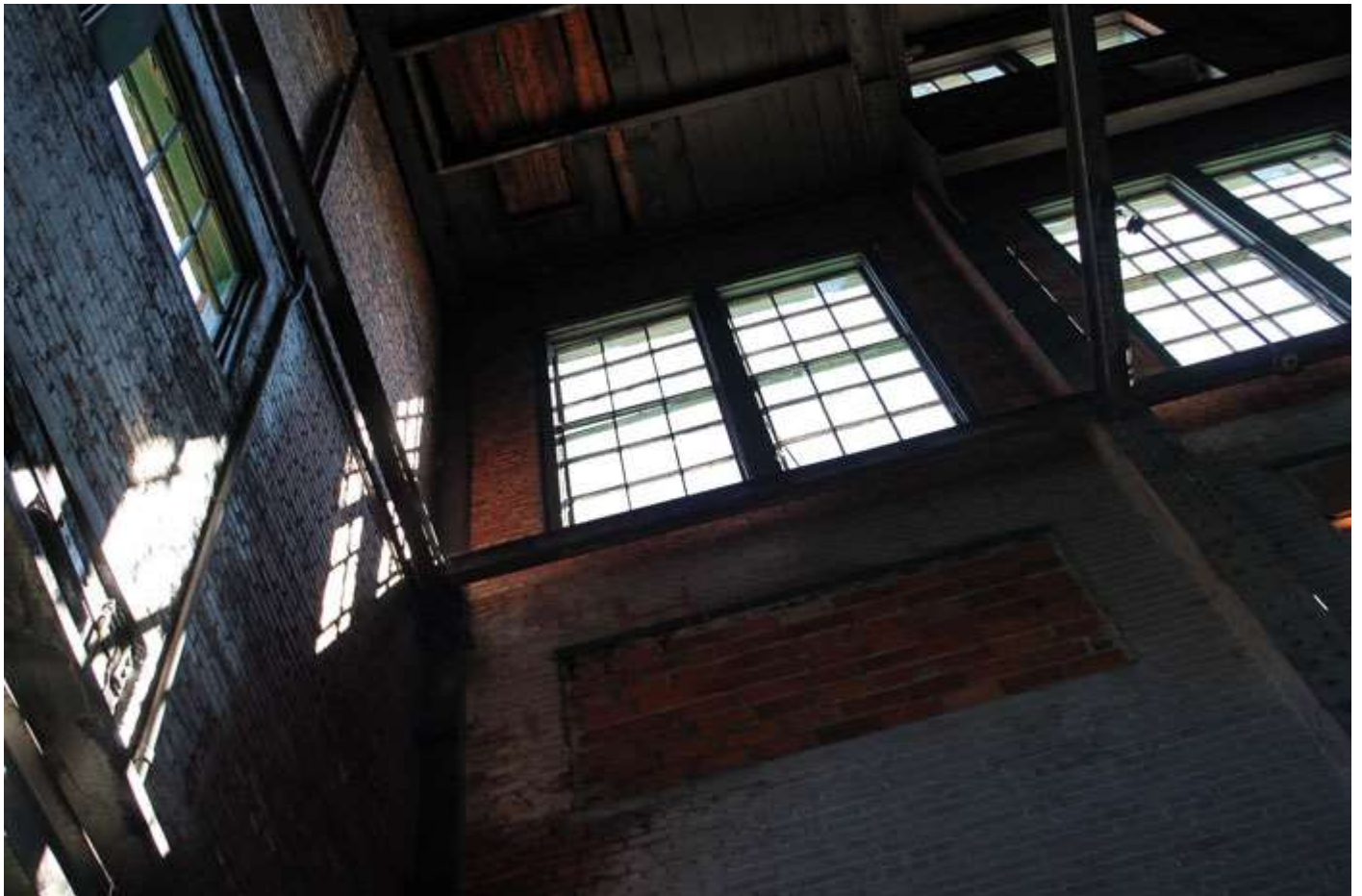
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*The East Kootenay Power and Light Company's powerhouse at Crowsnest Lake operated until 1969. Its landmark 65m tall smokestack was demolished in the 1990s and the rest of the building came down in 2019. Over the years, several Pass residents had the opportunity to view its stripped and partially-demolished interior. It was all very cool.*



Photo: Harry Tidge

Photo: Lynnette Jessop





Photos: Lynnette Jessop





Photos: Richard Huska





Photos: John Salus





Photos: Harry Tidge



## Book Review

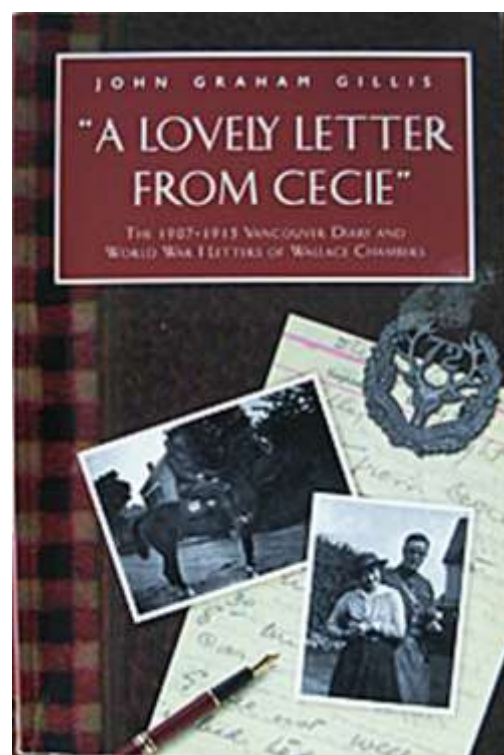
### *"A Lovely Letter from Cecie"* by John Graham Gillis (1998)

Review by Ian McKenzie

One of Crowsnest Pass' most poignant and tragic love stories is that of Wallace Chambers and Cecelia "Cecie" Fernau. Yet this story is virtually unknown here, as is this book.

Wallace Chambers lived in the Pass between 1901 and 1906, from age 15 to 20, when his father Samuel was a partner in the Chambers and Grady hardware store. In the summer of 1905 Wallace briefly met Cecie who was visiting from England, and after he moved to Vancouver they maintained a ten-year correspondence which resulted in their engagement. Unfortunately, their marriage was thwarted by Wallace being unable to afford passage to England, but the onset of World War One provided a solution. They were married during Wallace's training in England, but within a year he was killed in action.

Fortunately, the story is considerably fleshed out by the existence of Wallace's 1907 - 1913 diary and some wartime correspondence, which are the basis of Gillis' book. Each chapter presents a year of diary entries, and is organized by topic. Gillis provides useful summaries, and sometimes speculation, in advance of the actual diary excerpts. The diary is considerably edited down so that the reader sees only the most relevant entries. Overall, it presents the social and romantic development of a young man in his prime growing up in Edwardian Vancouver. Of most interest is his engagement to Cecie, a woman he hadn't seen in ten years, while surrounded by no shortage of attractive young women in Vancouver.



Regrettably, the book does not deal with aspects of Wallace and Cecie's romance beyond the diary entries. Virtually nothing is mentioned of their early days together in the Pass, which could have been pieced together from items in the gossip column of the Frank newspaper. Cecie's life after Wallace is summarized in a single sentence, even though at the time of publication there were relatives in England who would have known her. There is no mention of the social and economic class of Cecie's parents, or what her father was doing in the Pass, or speculation as to why he did not fund Wallace's trip to England. These details could have been presented in an introductory chapter, or in footnotes which would have been more relevant than some of the existing ones (e.g. Wallace's sister's husband's parent's home address). The book is also not organized chronologically, as it begins in 1915, then jumps back to 1907 and up to 1915 again.

Having said that, we ought to be grateful to Mr. Gillis for bringing this private diary into the public realm, and for sharing its charm and emotion. It is an interesting and worthwhile read. Alternatively, a summary of a somewhat fictionalized screenplay version of the story can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAnhHe9Gh1c> .

# Helping Heritage: Q&A with Fraser Shaw

Heritage Conservation Adviser with the Province of Alberta

*How would you describe your job responsibilities and activities?*

I'm one of five Heritage Conservation Advisers with our Branch; my region is southern Alberta. The job is diverse, which makes it interesting and challenging, and I'm fortunate to do something I enjoy and that in many ways is also a hobby! Much of my work is offering guidance to heritage property owners on conservation best practices and technical matters. Some conservation is intuitive but it's surprising how seemingly straightforward work like successfully repairing damaged masonry can depend on appropriate preparation and materials. Often, this is as much about performance and cost-effectiveness as historical authenticity: appropriate repair mortars, for example, simply work better.

Owners of Municipal Heritage Resources need municipal approval for repairs, alterations or other interventions, and similar approval from the Province is needed for changes to Provincial Historic Resources, of which there are currently nine in the Crowsnest Pass. I have no role in municipal approvals but I'm the first point of contact when owners plan work on provincially designated sites. I'll discuss projects with owners before I prepare documentation for formal review and approval by our Assistant Deputy Minister in Edmonton. The Act legally requires approvals for municipal and provincially designated sites in order to safeguard historic resource integrity, but the process is also an important opportunity to discuss technical issues and identify work that may qualify for grant assistance.

My third role is to advise owners of designated sites on the provincial heritage conservation grant program (Heritage Preservation Partnership Program). I meet with owners to discuss grant-eligible work and help them through the grant application and claim processes. We also review grant submissions that ultimately go to the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women for funding decisions. I inspect completed work and review all invoices for grant payments, a major undertaking for large and complex projects.

I sit on the Provincial Designation Committee, a group that includes historians, archaeologists, and other HCAs. This group meets every six weeks to review candidates for Provincial Historic Resource designation. Most of these are applications submitted by property owners. My contribution is to provide regional context, and to assess historical integrity, or degree of "intactness", based on our knowledge of the site and meeting with owners and stakeholders.

Other roles include writing posts for our provincial heritage blog *RETROactive*; presentations to the public and heritage organizations; networking with partners in other provinces; and, this October, helping to organize a virtual joint conference of the National Trust for Canada and the Association for Preservation Technology International in Edmonton.

*How much is field-work and how much is office time?*

I work mostly in our downtown Calgary office, but travel an average of 17,000 kilometres annually, which sounds like a lot but typically works out to perhaps one day weekly on the road in summer and much less in winter. Road trips are often ten-plus hour loops of up to 800 kilometres to cover as many sites as possible. Travel this year is much reduced due to the pandemic and budget constraints, and I've relied on photographs and emails. I still travel when needed, however, since seeing clients and sites is essential and is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work.



*How are you involved with our local heritage and government organizations?*

I work mainly with heritage property owners, but municipal staff and board members sometimes attend site meetings to review conservation work and the provincial grant program. I play no part in municipal designations or authorizing work on Municipal Historic Resources. However, many municipalities ask me to join tours of potential Municipal Historic Resources and to review Canada's conservation framework and the provincial grant program with property owners who may be new to the process. I enjoy this and it's a great way to discover a lot of interesting and important history.

My colleagues at the Frank Slide Centre are a great source of information and I rely on them for updates on activities in the Frank Slide and Lille townsite, both Provincial Historic Resources.

Heritage conservation depends overwhelmingly on partnerships with heritage property owners, organizations, consultants, and local contractors. The vast majority of my projects are owned and/or managed by private individuals or organizations like the Bellevue Underground Mine, Coleman Seniors Association, Nippon Institute of Technology, and the Crowsnest Pass



Polish Hall Society. I cherish the client relationships that develop over years and even decades through the designation, conservation, and grant processes.

*Do you have any involvement in Coleman National Historic Site?*

Not really. Coleman National Historic Site of Canada was federally designated in 2001 by the Historic Sites and

Monuments Board of Canada without provincial involvement. Within the National Historic Site, though, are important contributing Provincial Historic Resources like the high school (Crowsnest Museum), Alberta Provincial Police Building, and the union hall/hospital which our department regulates and helps conserve. Our Branch collaborates with Parks Canada when federal funds contribute to provincially designated sites, as happened with the rehabilitation of the Alberta Provincial Police Building in 2017.

*What are the greatest challenges/frustrations with your job?*

Perhaps the greatest hurdle for me is accepting I cannot be an expert: the job and the resources I work with are so diverse. I realized this early on when dealing with railway heritage – a world unto itself – and the same is true of coal mining. This challenge is part of what makes the job so interesting! Many people in heritage work are generalists whose contribution is to know which specializations to tap and when, and how to connect people with resources, whether those be historical records or the expertise of skilled contractors.

\* \* \* \* \*

Q: How many Heritage Conservation Advisers does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: Change it? Why would you want to change it?

## Frank-Bellevue Wagon Road

Long before the construction of the segment of the Crowsnest Pass Community Trail which runs inbetween the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre parking lot and Fireman's Park in Bellevue, a number of local residents sometimes hiked or skied between Frank and Bellevue on a route somewhat north of that, following natural and pipeline clearings well beyond the edge of the Frank Slide. It's now part of UROC's *Slide Ride* mountain-bike route. I wonder how many users appreciate that this route follows the hastily-constructed wagon road which reconnected Frank and Bellevue after the cataclysmic Frank Slide of April 29, 1903. The Slide severed all connections – rail, road, and telegraph – between the western Pass and most of Canada, and vice versa. The CPR was well-equipped and highly motivated to deal with rail blockages, but the road was probably the responsibility of the territorial government (the province of Alberta had not yet been created) who also reacted quickly, all things considered.

Contractors Breakenridge and Lund (after whom Lundbreck is named) built the wagon road around the slide in 1903, connecting the north end of Spruce Avenue (present 24 Avenue) in Bellevue with the Lille wagon road which had been built in 1902. These roads were all surveyed in 1905 and appear on plan 5524-O in the Southern Alberta Land Titles Office. The Frank-Bellevue wagon road must have been too high, or too snowy, because in 1906 another road was built through the Frank Slide south of the railroad (running from Frank to the old Hillcrest train station; the present-day gravel Old Frank Slide Road follows much of this road). Presumably this new road drew traffic away from the Frank-Bellevue road which likely began to fade away. I like to think that the injured bandit Tom Bassoff used this old road on his way to Pincher Station [*after the Bellevue Café Shootout of August 7, 1920; see issue #58 – ed.*].

As a 2km long (one way) modern-day hike, bike or ski, the 1903 Frank-Bellevue Wagon Road is relatively flat and easy. Drive the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre road as far as the hairpin, and continue straight across the cattleguard onto the gravel road. After 250m you will pass the old Lille wagon road continuing off to your left; you are now driving on the 1903 Frank-Bellevue wagon road. About 900m past the cattleguard you'll see open ground down to your right just before a pipeline crossing; park there. Take the track up (left) through some trees; then the route is mostly untreed for the next kilometre. (You could follow the pipeline road, but the historic wagon road is the higher one, roughly parallel to and about 30m upslope of the pipeline.) The pipeline and wagon road meet up as you enter trees about halfway along the route. There are a few old roads and tracks here (and some cool old cars) and it is hard to describe which exactly is the old wagon road, but all go to Fireman's Park/Bellevue Water Tank. Most folks will exit at the Tank, but the wagon road stays up high; it is the gravel road extension of 24 Avenue and reaches Bellevue pavement at that funny triangular intersection of 208 Street and 23 Avenue.



Staging a second car at the end of the trail is handy, or you could go back the way you came. You should bring water and snacks, and should be prepared for changes in weather and encounters with wildlife. You should always pick up litter (and leave none of your own), and should always be respectful of your natural and historic surroundings.

## News from 115 Years Ago

1905 news items in the *Frank Paper* absolutely gushed with pride over the new zinc smelter. It was the peak of optimism, which within a year would give way to disappointed silence.

August 10, 1905: “Hon. Senator Templeman, of Victoria, B. C., owner of the Daily Times in that city, visited Frank last Sunday on his way home from attending to his sessional duties in Ottawa. It was the first time the Senator had ever been over the Crow line and he was hardly prepared to witness the evident signs of progress and prosperity to be noted everywhere along the line... The afternoon Mr. Templeman spent with J. C. C. Fernau, manager of the Canadian Metal Co., who escorted him on a tour of inspection of the new smelting plant.”

August 21, 1905: “Frank is entertaining two eminent gentlemen this week whose visit is of much significance as relates to the industrial life both of the community and the Kootenays. They are Messers Ed. Riondel, banker and Octave Liegeart, capitalist, both of Lille, France where they occupy prominent positions in the financial world... [they] reached Frank Sunday morning and have since been engaged in inspect the construction work of the smelter and in consultation with General Manager J.C.C. Fernau relative to the company’s plans for operation here and elsewhere... both gentleman expressed themselves yesterday, as immensely pleased with the work done, laying especial stress on their satisfaction with the rapid progress that has been made in the construction of the plant and the quality of the work.”

September 14, 1905: “General Manager Fernau of the Canadian Metal company, has just completed negotiations, the consummation of which will place that concern in a class by itself, and gives it a distinction not enjoyed by any other company in existence in this country which does a mining or smelting business or both. By reason of the deal the Canadian Metal company will operate its own colliery, smelter and mines and will be absolutely self sustaining by not being obligated to depend upon any other institution or concern for any of its requirements, that is, any of the important ones as it will mine its own fuel, and its own ore and operate its own smelter... Messers Fernau, Edward Riondel and Octave Liegart... returned Saturday in anticipation of the visit of Earl Grey and to participate in the reception tendered him.”

October 19, 1905: “The zinc smelter of the Canadian Metal company under construction here and now nearing completion... is destined to be of vastly greater importance to the community and to the mining industry than has hitherto been dreamed of, highly as that importance has been estimated... the volume of business in sight is so great that the company has decided to enlarge the capacity of the works to more than double that originally planned.”

### 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 Frank, next to the art gallery, includes mention of the Frank zinc smelter.



Have you read it?

## Our Local Heritage Sites (ask about open schedules and rates)



- **CROWNEST MUSEUM and ARCHIVES** - 7701 18th Avenue, in Coleman National Historic Site. 403-563-5434, [cnpmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnpmuseum@shaw.ca), [www.crowsnestmuseum.ca](http://www.crowsnestmuseum.ca). Glimpse the rich social, economic and natural heritage of Crowsnest Pass from 1900 - 1950 in two floors of themed rooms. Gift shop features local and regional books, and many other items. Tours and educational programs available.



- Close to the museum, the newly-restored **ALBERTA PROVINCIAL POLICE BARRACKS** includes exhibits and artifacts on prohibition, rumrunning, and the legendary shooting of Constable Lawson and the subsequent execution of "Emperor Pic" and Florence Lossandro. 403-563-5434, [cnpmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnpmuseum@shaw.ca), [www.appbarracks.com](http://www.appbarracks.com).



- **BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE** - 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 offers a family-oriented experience of what miners from a century ago saw and heard at work each day. Pre-booked tours also available.



- **FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE** - off Hwy 3. 403-562-7388, [www.frankslide.ca](http://www.frankslide.ca). Knowledgeable staff share fascinating stories of the Frank Slide through dynamic interpretive programs and presentations. State-of-the-art interactive displays and exhibits focus on the infamous Frank Slide of April 1903, Canada's deadliest rockslide.



- **HILLCREST CEMETERY PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - Hillcrest. Visit the mass graves of the 189 victims of the Hillcrest Mine Disaster of 1914, and many other historic graves. 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. All free.



- **LEITCH COLLIERIES PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - Highway 3, east edge of town, [www.leitchcollieries.ca](http://www.leitchcollieries.ca). Stabilized ruins of a century-old coal processing facility explained through interpretive signs; on-site staff during the summer. Check out the nearby **Burmis Tree**, probably Canada's most-photographed tree; free.



- **COLEMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** - downtown Coleman. Free map and pamphlet for a self-guided tour of this authentic coal-mining town amongst buildings from 1903 - 1986; most have interpretive building plaques. Glimpse the ruins of the mine plant and coke ovens, walk or drive through the "miners cottage" neighbourhood of West Coleman. An interpretive booklet can be purchased at the museum. Later, walk the pleasant **Miners Path**, retracing the steps of miners through the forest on their way to the McGillivray Mine. All free.



- **LILLE PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - A 6km long trail leads to this remote site. <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11391>. Ruins in or near this former mining village include the powerhouse, hotel foundation, coke ovens and a few old fire hydrants, and the Lille cemetery is nearby. Interpretive signs on site. Enquire at the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, 403-562-7388. Free.

For more information on these sites, plus heritage walks, drives and hikes, and much more to see and do in the Crowsnest Pass, go to [www.crowsnestheritage.ca](http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca).

### Newsletter Archive

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