

## “Quelle belle vue”

The community of Bellevue was founded in 1903 on land owned by West Canadian Collieries Limited, a French-based company with substantial holdings throughout the Crownsnest Pass. Rich coal seams were situated near the railway line in the valley, and the level land above the mine was thought to be an ideal location for a townsite. The town received its name when Elise Fleutot, daughter of mine manager Jules J. Fleutot, upon her arrival at the townsite, expressed delight with the wonderful view. The little village took Elise's perceptive utterance of “Quelle belle vue” to heart and became known as *Bellevue*.

The town and mine grew hand-in-hand in their first years of existence. By 1910, Bellevue was a thriving community with hotels, cafes and a variety of other businesses. On August 28, 1917, a devastating fire swept through the business section of Bellevue, destroying all but three buildings. 16, 20, 27 Main Street and Front Street (today's 213th Street - Bellevue's main thoroughfare) were hit hard by the disaster, but businesses quickly rebuilt. In January 1921 and July 1922, subsequent fires again burned many of the new buildings along Front Street. As a consequence of the fires, most buildings along 213th Street today date from the 1920s.

## Bellevue Mine

West Canadian Collieries' Bellevue Mine was opened in 1903, with production beginning in 1904. At its peak of production, from 1925 through 1929, the Bellevue Mine employed over 500 men and produced over 200,000 tons of coal per year. Over its existence, from 1904 through its closure in 1957, over 13 million tons of coal were extracted from the rich seams. The Bellevue Mine, like most of the mines in the Crownsnest Pass, had a large surface plant. This included the tippie, power house, hoist, lamp house, repair shops and a wash house.

A major tragedy occurred in the Bellevue Mine on December 9, 1910 when the afternoon shift of 42 men went down into the mine. Around 8 o'clock in the evening a rock fall from the roof ignited the ever-present methane gas and explosive coal dust, causing a tremendous blast inside the mine. Oxygen was burned out of the air, leaving the deadly afterdamp - a poisonous mixture of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide - in the tunnels. Despite the heroic efforts of rescue teams, thirty miners and one rescuer lost their lives.

Today, the Bellevue Mine is home to a *one-of-a-kind* experience. Visitors put on miner's helmets and lamps and take a safe, underground tour of the Mine. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable guides describe a miner's life and the intricacies of the room-and-pillar method of coal mining. The Bellevue Underground Mine Tour is open daily from mid-May through the first weekend in September, with off-season tours available by appointment (403-564-4700).



Front Street Bellevue Prior to Fires

## Maple Leaf

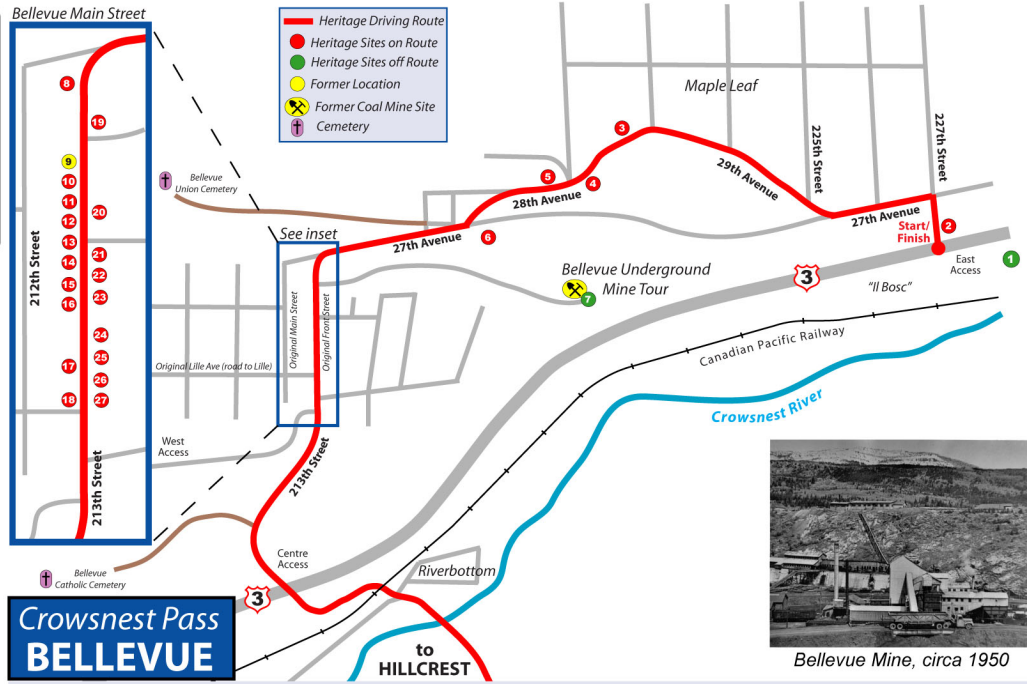
The eastern end of today's community of Bellevue was originally known as Maple Leaf. Maple Leaf is located on the original site of the Chester “Chet” Wentworth homestead of 1906. In 1907, the Maple Leaf Coal Co. opened a mine on the property immediately to the east of the Wentworth homestead. The tiny settlement of Maple Leaf sprang up around the new mine. The three-story Maple Leaf Hotel was a centerpiece of the town, which included several stores, a plus butcher, shoemaker and blacksmith shops. Maple Leaf remained a community separate from Bellevue until 1957, when Bellevue was incorporated as a village and Maple Leaf was included within its boundaries. For the first fifty years of its existence Bellevue ended at the Maple Leaf School, at which point the community of Maple Leaf began.

## Shoot Out at the Bellevue Cafe

On August 2, 1920, the Canadian Pacific Railway's passenger train was held up at gunpoint by three masked bandits at Sentinel, west of Coleman. Russian emigrants George Arkoff, Tom Bassoff and Alex Auloff made off with a slim haul of \$300 in cash and some jewellery. Following the hold up, Auloff split with his cohorts and made his way to the United States. Five days after the train robbery, Arkoff and Bassoff showed up in Bellevue and brazenly entered the Bellevue Cafe in search of a meal. Police were alerted to the presence in the cafe of “two desperate looking characters answering the description of the bandits.”

Three police officers, Constables Frewin and Bailey of the Alberta Provincial Police (A.P.P.) and Corporal Usher of the Mounted Police, made their way to the cafe to arrest the suspects. Inside the cafe, the robbers made a play for their guns when confronted by the police. In the ensuing gunfire the policemen were forced out of the front door of the cafe, with Usher falling wounded to the ground and a back-tracking Bailey stumbling over Usher. Bassoff made his way out the front door and finished off the two officers at point-blank range. Arkoff and Bassoff attempted to cross the street, with Arkoff succumbing to his wounds and falling dead in the street. Bassoff, wounded in the leg, escaped into the rocks of the Frank Slide.

A massive manhunt ensued, but failed to capture Bassoff. The next day, during the manhunt, Special Constable Nick Kysliuk was accidentally shot and killed by an A.P.P. officer. Bassoff was captured four days later near Pincher Creek. He was tried and found guilty of murder and was hanged on December 22, 1922. Auloff was later captured in the United States and returned to Canada for trial on train robbery charges. He was found guilty and sentenced to seven years in prison, where he died in 1926.



## Crownsnest Pass BELLEVUE

### HERITAGE SITES - BELLEVUE

1. Maple Leaf-Mohawk Tippie (Southwest of Highway 3). Coal mining in Maple Leaf began operations in 1907, eventually becoming Mohawk Bituminous Collieries. The shanty town between the Mohawk tippie and the Bellevue tippie was known as *Il Bosc*, or “Bush Town.” It was relocated following the 1942 floods.
2. Wayside Chapel. The Chapel was built in 1960 at Passburg by members of Bellevue's Christian Reform Church, many of whom had Dutch ancestry. The chapel was moved to its present location in 1984.
3. Saudino Dairy and Livory Barn (Mocassin Flats Holiday Homes; 2706 - 29th Avenue). Originally a dairy and livery operated by Tony Saudino. Milk from this dairy was delivered by wagon throughout Bellevue, Maple Leaf, Passburg and *Il Bosc*. Later the site of Boutry General Store, Maple Leaf General Store, Joe's Maple Leaf Confectionary, and finally Mocassin Flats Gas and Confectionary.
4. Pagali Grocery Store (Private residence; 2725 - 29th Avenue). Constructed in 1915, this building was operated by the Pagali's as a small grocery that specialized in Italian foods. It served as a school building to handle the overflow of Bellevue students in the 1920s.
5. Maple Leaf School (Mapleview Community Hall; 21765 - 29th Avenue). Operated from 1924-1962 as Maple Leaf School. It later served as a community hall.
6. Chiarovano Home (Moose Mountain Grill; 21508 - 28th Avenue). Originally the home of George Chiarovano, who operated a livery barn and hauling business. Later the Avoleto family operated Jerry's Sports Shop at this location.
7. Bellevue Mine (Bellevue Underground Mine Tour). West Canadian Collieries began operations at the Bellevue Mine in 1903. At peak production in the 1920s, over 500 men were employed and over 200,000 tons of coal were shipped each year. In 1910, thirty miners and one rescuer lost their lives in an explosion in the mine. Operations at the Bellevue Mine ceased in 1957. Today, the mine is open for tours.
8. Bellevue Motors (Crownsnest Radiator & Trucking; 2754 - 213 Street). Owned by John Green as Bellevue Garage and Auto Repairs in 1919. Later operated by his sons as Bellevue Motors. Closed down in 1961.
9. Methodist United Church (Park with masonry archway). A new Methodist Church under construction in 1921 was badly damaged by fire and had to be demolished. A new church was built on the site in short order. In 1925, Methodist, Presbyterians and Congregationalists unified as United Church of Canada. The church closed in 1977 and the building was demolished in 1988. The masonry archway still remains.
10. Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Hall (Vacant building; 2502 - 213th Street). The original lodge halls were destroyed by fires in 1917 and 1921. Rebuilt in 1921, the IOOF Hall served the social needs of Bellevue for banquets, teas, socials, school concerts and graduations. From 1966 through mid-1990s it operated as a pool hall.
11. Bellevue Bakery (Bellevue Veterinary Clinic; 2468 - 213 Street). A number of families, including the Meades, Patons and Timmermans operated bakeries on this site from the 1920s through the 1970s.
12. Bellevue Theatres (Vacant building; 2462 - 213 Street). In the days of lantern shows, the Lyric Theatre operated in Bellevue. It burned down in 1917 and after being rebuilt by William Cole Sr., burned down again in 1921. Rebuilt again, it opened as the Rex Theatre, which operated until the late 1920s.
13. Burnett & Lang / Johnson and Cousens (Internationale Prayer Centre; 2456 - 213 Street). One of Bellevue's first grocery stores, owned and operated by Thomas Burnett and A.V. Lang. The building burned in the fire of 1917. The property was sold by Burnett to two of his clerks, R.T. Johnson and James Cousens who opened a grocery and dry goods store. Later it was occupied by Brazi's Sundrys and Bellevue Super Store.
14. Arturo Brazzi Building (Brazzi's Better Foods (CJS Pawn Shop; 2450 - 213 Street). Bellevue's first post office was built on this site, but was destroyed by fire in 1917. Local builder Arturo Brazzi rebuilt on the site and opened a cafe, which was reputed to be a front for a bootlegging operation during Prohibition.
15. Sorrentino Gas Bar / Miners' Union Hall (Crownsnest Pass Renovations; 2444 - 213 Street). Beginning in 1921, Gino Sorrentino operated a shoe shop, confectionary and gas bar on this site. The building later became a hive of union activity through the 1940s as the Miners' Union Hall. The Hall also was the locale for Saturday evening dances.
16. Bellevue Cafe (2435 - 213th Street). The original cafe was destroyed by fire in 1917. The cafe was rebuilt and was operated by Joe Mah. In August of 1920, the Bellevue Cafe would be the site of an infamous shoot-out between train robbers and police.
17. Bellevue Inn (2414 - 213th Street). In 1921, West Canadian Collieries hired contractor Fred Wolstenholme to construct a new hotel to replace the Bellevue Hotel, which burned down in 1917. The design for the “Bellevue Inn” constructed on a new site, was a two-story, U-shaped plan with the distinctive influence of European alpine chalets.
18. Bellevue Union Bank (Vacant building; 2402 - 213 Street). The building was constructed in 1912, and was one of the fortunate few to escape damage in the major fires of 1917 and 1921. It later became the Bellevue Municipal Office.
19. Baptist Church / Pass Gospel Mission (Private residence; 2549 - 213 Street). Served as a Baptist church through the 1940s. In the early 1950s it became the Pass Gospel Mission which remained here until 1978.
20. Haddad Bros. - Emmerson Building (Old Dairy Ice Cream Shoppe; 2501 - 213 Street). Constructed around 1912 and occupied by Haddad Bros. Dry Goods, Evans Bakery and E.C. McDonald Drug Store, the “Haddad Block” was one of only three main street buildings to survive the fires of 1917 and 1921. Unfortunately the building burned in 1922. Property owner Charles Emmerson rebuilt and opened Emmerson's Hardware. In the early 1950s, Pass Dairy Ltd. relocated their operations to the building. Pass Dairy produced their nationally acclaimed “Pass Dairy Mozzarella Cheese”. Today the building is home to a popular ice cream shop.
21. Bellevue Pool Hall (Post Office; 2445 - 213 Street). It operated as pool hall for many years. During Prohibition, the pool hall was where liquor was allegedly distributed. Old timers recount that an unusual number of men learned to play pool during those years.
22. Bruno Morabito / Wingy's Shoe Repair Shop (Wild Rose Confectionary; 2449 - 213 Street). Around 1920, Bruno Morabito, a local shoemaker, constructed a shoe repair shop with a residence upstairs. In 1928, he sold to Mah Wing Quong, known to locals as “Wingy”. Wingy's Shoe Repair, along with a number of barber and beauty shops occupied the building until it was torn down in the early 1970s.
23. Bellevue Post Office (Hugos Barber Shop; 2439 - 213 Street). Bellevue's second post office (first one destroyed by fire) was built here in 1917. Hugo Chitarsee took over the building in 1965 and continues to operate it today.
24. Patek Butcher Shop - Brazzi Building (High Rock Rentals; 2419 - 213 Street). In 1919, Antonio Patek had a butcher shop built on the site. In 1927, Arturo Brazzi, a trained mason, bought the property and replaced the building. Over time it housed an insurance office, jewellery store, contracting office, hardware store, diner, bakery, confectionary and appliance store.
25. Coupland Building (Vacant building; 2425 - 213 Street). It was originally a butcher shop owned and operated by George Coupland, a coal miner turned butcher. In 1954, the building was bought by Enzo Brazzi and Super Save. Bellevue was opened, later becoming Super Save IGA.
26. Barbours Pharmacy (Bellevue's Senior Drop In Centre; 2413 - 213 Street). Albert “Doc” Barbours arrived in Bellevue in 1920 and acquired the site from the McDonalds Pharmacy. After the Haddad Building, which housed the pharmacy, burned down in 1922, “Doc” Barbours built a new pharmacy on this site, which he operated until 1934. The pharmacy was later owned and run by the Haysom brothers as Haysom's Bellevue Pharmacy.
27. Royal Canadian Legion - Branch #19 (2401 - 213 Street). The Bellevue Legion originated as the Great War Veterans Association and moved into this building in 1925, which was built by West Canadian Collieries in 1916 and was one of only three on Front (213th) Street that survived the great fire of 1917. A photographic exhibit in the legion honours all servicemen from the Crownsnest Pass who served in the two World Wars.



Bellevue Mine, circa 1950