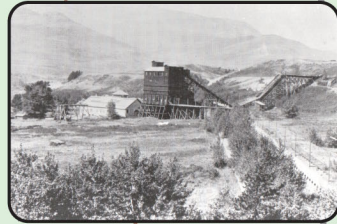


# Crownsnest Pass REGIONAL HERITAGE SITES



Leitch Collieries, circa 1912

## Municipality of Crownsnest Pass

ALBERTA  
B.C.

- Municipality of Crownsnest Pass
- Heritage Driving Route
- Gravel Road
- Hiking Trail
- ① Heritage Sites off Route
- ② Former Location
- ③ Former Coal Mine Site

### REGIONAL HERITAGE SITES

- 1. Old Burntis townsite** (Highway 3) The community of Burntis was named for two local ranchers, Robert H. Burns and Jack Kemmis (Bur + mis). The Davenport Coal Mine operated from 1910-1914, and in later years the Burntis Lumber Company was the community's main industry.
- 2. Burntis Tree** (Highway 3) The "Burntis Tree" is a limber pine that was approximately 700 years old when it died in 1978-79. The tree fell to the ground in 1998, but it was put back up by a combination of public and private contributors who wanted to keep this significant landmark.
- 3. Police Flats** (Leitch Collieries Provincial Historic Site) This basin was used by rustlers into the early 1880s to hold cattle before driving them to Montana. In 1882, the North-West Mounted Police established what was then their most westerly outpost at this site to put an end to the cattle rustling. The area became known locally as "Police Flats."
- 4. Leitch Collieries Provincial Historic Site** (Highway 3) Leitch Collieries was one of the largest and most ambitious mines in the early history of the Crownsnest Pass. Established in 1907, it was the only completely Canadian-owned coal and coke company in the Pass. A series of financial setbacks caused the company to cease operations in 1915. Today, many of the buildings of the surface operations are part of the Provincial Historic Site, where visitors can walk on self-guided pathways. Interpretive staff are on site during the summer months.
- 5. Passburg townsite** (North of Highway 3) The town of Passburg was the home to many of the miners who worked at Leitch Collieries. The town faded away following the closure of Leitch Collieries in 1915.
- 6. Turtle Mountain** (Trailhead in Blairmore) On April 29, 1903, the face of Turtle Mountain came crashing down on the valley below, burying part of the town of Frank. A hiking trail leads from Blairmore to the North Peak of Turtle Mountain, where the massive devastation caused by the Frank Slide can be fully appreciated.
- 7. Livingstone Range chert quarries** Chert, a flint-like material, is found in some of the mountains of the Crownsnest Pass and was sought by First Nation people who made stone tools from it. For several thousand years chert was collected from this site high in the Livingstone Range above the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre.
- 8. Frank & Grassy Mountain Railway** The small coal mining town of Lille was connected to civilization by the Frank and Grassy Mountain Railway. A portion of the railway was destroyed by the Frank Slide, but was quickly rebuilt. Although the rails were taken out after the closure of Lille, the railway bed can still be found snaking its way up Gold Creek valley.
- 9. Lille Provincial Historic Site** In 1901, Jules J. Fleuton and Charles Remoy of British Columbia Gold Fields Ltd. (later to become West Canadian Collieries) established a small coal mining town known as "French Camp" on Gold Creek near Grassy Mountain. In 1903, the town was renamed Lille in honour of the city in France where company headquarters were located. The mines at Lille were closed in 1913 and the town disappeared soon thereafter. Today, a few basement depressions and the remains of coke ovens can be seen at this Provincial Historic Site.
- 10. North York Creek plane crash site** On January 9, 1946, a Royal Canadian Air Force DC-3 (Dakota) aircraft crashed into upper North York Creek valley. None of the seven crewmen survived. The remains of the aircraft are still scattered around the area.
- 11. Crownsnest Volcanics** (North and south of Highway 3 west of Coleman) The Crownsnest Volcanics is a unique geological formation that extends north and south of Highway 3 just west of Coleman. This is one of the very few examples of igneous rock in the Rocky Mountains of southwest Alberta.
- 12. Crownsnest Mountain** (North of Highway 3) Crownsnest Mountain, at 2785 metres, is the highest point in the Crownsnest Pass. Geologically, it is referred to as a "klippe," or isolate, and is separated from its sister mountains of the High Rock Range to the west by the Allison Creek valley.
- 13. Old Sentinel townsite** (East end of Crownsnest Lake) Railway construction brought development to the east end of Crownsnest Lake, originally known as Sentry Hill. The name was changed to Sentinel and the town boasted the Lake View Hotel, boarding house, general store and Fat Alice's restaurant, which was remembered for guilty pleasures sometimes sold along the food.
- 14. NWMP Crownsnest Lake Post** (East end of Crownsnest Lake) From 1897-1900, during the construction of the railway, a North-West Mounted Police post was located at the east end of Crownsnest Lake.
- 15. Crownsnest Lake Dance Hall** (East end of Crownsnest Lake) In 1930, a dance pavilion was built at the east end of the lake where nearby cabins catered to tourists. At the pavilion throughout the 1930s and 40s, big bands entertained the crowds that would come out from the Pass communities.
- 16. East Kootenay Power Plant** (East end of Crownsnest Lake) The coal-fired electrical generation plant was opened in 1927 and provided power for much of the Crownsnest Pass until it closed in 1969.
- 17. Phillippis Pass** (North of Highway 3) In 1873, Michael Phillippis was the first white man to record a crossing of the Rocky Mountains in the immediate vicinity of Crownsnest Pass, and did so over the pass that bears his name today. The pass is to the north of Crownsnest Lake and Crownsnest Ridge.
- 18. Crownsnest Pass National Historic Site monument** (West end of Crownsnest Lake) The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque at the west end of Crownsnest Pass recognizes the importance of the Crownsnest Pass in western Canadian history.
- 19. Old Hazell townsite** (West end of Crownsnest Lake) The town was named for Mr. E.G. Hazell who established Summit Lime Works in 1903. Residents of Hazell worked in the nearby limestone quarries. Graymont Western Canada Ltd. still mines the site today.
- 20. Hazell lime kilns** (Graymont Western Canada) Two beehive or pot kilns, the remains of which are located just east of the present Graymont plant, were used to produce quicklime from limestone.
- 21. Old Crownsnest townsite** (West of Highway 3 at Alberta-B.C. border) In 1896, the town of Crownsnest was established on the B.C.-Alberta border as a railway camp. With the completion of the railway, the workers moved on and Crownsnest faded from existence.
- 22. Summit Hotel** (Inn on the Border) The first Summit Hotel at Crownsnest burned down in 1921, but another was built in its place and still stands today as the Inn on the Border. Any Good? the original proprietor of the Summit Hotel, boasted that rain falling on one side of the hotel roof ran into the Atlantic Ocean, while rainfall on the other side ended up in the Pacific Ocean.
- 23. Crownsnest Pass** (Highway 3 at Alberta-B.C. border) The Crownsnest Pass, with its relatively gentle grades was selected as the route for the Canadian Pacific Railway's southern line in 1897. Today, the railway line as well as the Crownsnest Highway (Highway 3) cross the Continental Divide at this pass, 1358 metres above sea level.

### Prehistory

The Crownsnest Pass region has archeological sites that confirm the presence of early people as far back as 10,000 years before present. The southeast end of Crownsnest Lake, in the general vicinity of the dance hall heritage site **15**, has been identified as a regular summer camp used at least 8,000 years ago and as late as the 1700s. Many Peoples camped there through time. In the last 3,000 years or so, the ancestral band of the K'tunaxa, who lived in the Pass, used it and other areas to fish, hunt and gather food plants. The ancient lakeside camp site, perhaps like the dance hall in a much later era, may have attracted groups who danced and sang in celebration.

About 1,000 years ago the K'tunaxa moved their winter campsites westward, close to what is now Sparwood. Elders claim the winters on the east side became too windy. They continued to use the eastern side of the Pass to hunt bison in the winter and camp and hunt bison and other game during spring and fall, travelling through Continental Divide passes such as Crownsnest **23** and Phillippis **17**. They were wiped out by a smallpox epidemic in the 1730s.

An important resource to early Peoples living in the Crownsnest Pass was material for making stone tools such as knives, scrapers, awls, spearpoints, dart-points and arrowheads. Chert, a flint-like material, was a favourite, and there is an important source of it in the Pass. The Livingstone Range chert quarries **7** are the largest prehistoric quarries found to date in the Canadian Rockies. Ancestors of the seasonally resident K'tunaxa and of the Piikani who live in the foothills to the east used them for at least 3,000 years. Ancient miners used bone and stone tools to extract nodules of chert from waist-deep pits. Around the quarry sites chert flakes and broken chips are evidence of preliminary stone tool manufacture.

### Early Explorers

In 1858, Lt. Thomas Blakiston of the Palliser Expedition was in search of a potential route for a railway through the Rockies. He was informed by his native guides that the route through Crownsnest Pass was a "bad road". Blakiston interpreted this to mean that it would be impassable for a railway, when in fact it was only a tangle of trees fallen after a forest fire, which indeed would be a "bad road" for anyone travelling by foot or horse. Blakiston noted the Crownsnest Pass in his journal and Palliser's map would be the first to identify the general vicinity of "loge des Corbeaux".

In 1873, Michael Phillippis, a Hudson Bay trader from the Tobacco Plains in the Kootenay Valley, was the first white man to record a crossing of the Continental Divide in the Crownsnest Pass area, likely following the route up and over Phillippis Pass **17**. It is interesting that Crownsnest and Phillippis Passes were explored from the west side of the mountains, while virtually all other major passes in the Rockies were first explored by white men from east to west. Phillippis was also the first white man to see the significant coal deposits in the Crownsnest area. By 1877, Phillippis had cut a horse trail from the Elk Valley up and over Phillippis Pass. In 1878, renowned geologist George Dawson made his way through the Crownsnest, reporting on the coal deposits and suggesting that Crownsnest Pass would be an ideal railway route through the mountains.

### Canadian Pacific Railway

In 1897, the Canadian Pacific Railway began construction of a railway line from Lethbridge to Kootenay Landing, British Columbia. The line was built to connect the coal deposits of the Crownsnest and Elk Valleys with the rich lead-zinc-silver mines of southeast B.C. U.S. railways were starting to extend north into B.C., and the new line was also an attempt to establish Canadian sovereignty in the region. The completion of the railway line in 1898 provided the impetus for the development of the Crownsnest coal fields, and new towns sprang up along the rail line as it advanced. **18, 24** In building the "Crow's Nest Pass Railway", the C.P.R. received substantial subsidies from the federal government. In return, the C.P.R. established the "Crow Rate" which allowed grain and other agricultural products from western Canada to be shipped east at a reduced rate, and allowed manufactured goods from eastern Canada to be shipped west at a discounted rate, in effect stifling the economic diversification of the west. The contentious Crow Rate was abolished in 1995.

### Early Industries

Ranching, in the late 1870s, was the earliest industry to establish itself in the region. In the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, individuals such as Samuel Lee and Louis O. Garnett had thriving cattle ranches. At a site later known as Police Flats, **3** cattle rustlers gathered their herds before driving them south to Montana. The North-West Mounted Police set up an outpost to put an end to the rustlers.

On Mill Creek, to the south and east of Crownsnest Pass, the region's first lumber mill was established in 1880. Senator Peter McLaren, an Ontario lumber king, purchased the mill in 1881. The construction of the railway through the Crownsnest Pass in 1897-98 brought a boom to the lumber industry. Towns sprang into existence along the railway line and McLaren developed new mills in the Crownsnest. Others followed suit in setting up mills to take advantage of the growing need for lumber.

Substantial coal deposits were reported by early visitors to the region, but it was not until the completion of the railway that entrepreneurs could develop the resource. In 1901, Henry Frank opened up the Canadian-American Coal and Coke Company mine at the town of Frank. British Columbia Gold Fields Limited, later to become West Canadian Collieries, opened mines at Lille in **1901** and in Bellevue in 1903, with later mines at Blairmore South and Greenhill. Within ten years, fourteen mines were established in the region, and coal would be irrevocably tied to the economic life of the Crownsnest Pass.