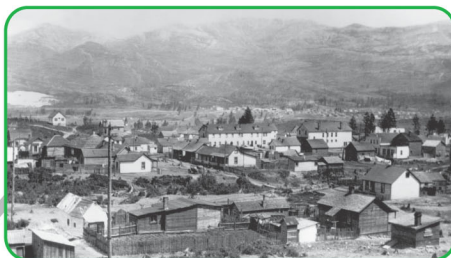
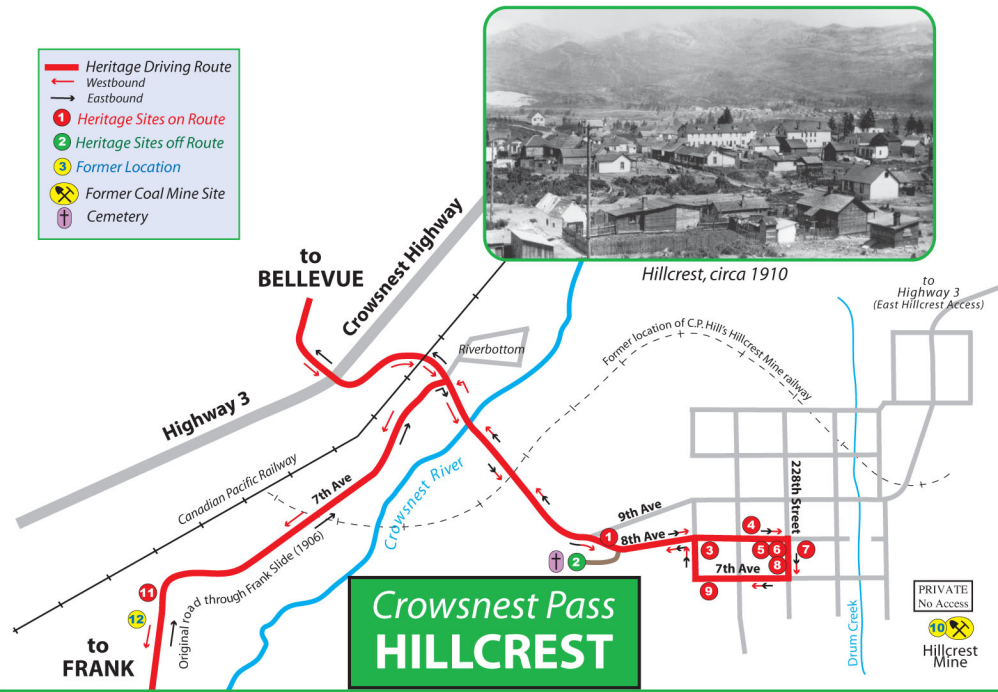


- Heritage Driving Route
- Westbound
- Eastbound
- Heritage Sites on Route
- Heritage Sites off Route
- Former Location
- Former Coal Mine Site
- Cemetery



Hillcrest, circa 1910



Crownsnest Pass HILLCREST

HERITAGE SITES - HILLCREST

- 1. Silent Policeman** (Main Hillcrest Access: 9th Avenue, at junction with 8th Avenue) The "Silent Policeman" stood for many years as a four-way stop signal for automobile traffic in the heart of downtown Hillcrest, at the corner of what today is 8th Avenue and 228th Street.
- 2. Hillcrest Mine Disaster Memorial and Cemetery** Most of the victims of the 1914 Hillcrest Mine Disaster were buried side-by-side in two mass graves in the Hillcrest Cemetery. Individual victims of the disaster are identified in the cemetery with graveside plaques, and interpretive panels throughout the cemetery bring the story of June 19, 1914 back to life. In 2000, a monument was erected to honour the memory of not only those who died in the Hillcrest Mine Disaster, but all coal miners who lost their lives in Canadian coal mining accidents.
- 3. Mine Manager's House** (Private residence; 22627 - 8th Avenue) In 1911, a large residence for the general manager of Hillcrest Collieries was constructed. It was home to several general managers over the years, including F.J. Harquail, who was key in the merger of Hillcrest Collieries with Mohawk Mines in 1939.
- 4. MacLean Trading Company** (Turning Pointe Dance Studio; 22709 - 8th Avenue) In 1908, T.A. MacLean and wife Annie established the MacLean Trading Company. The MacLeans were father and mother-in-law of Charles Plummer Hill, founder of the Hillcrest Coal and Coke Company. The MacLean Trading Company was later bought by George Cruickshank and Thomas Burnett, who operated the general store at the time of the Hillcrest Mine Disaster. In 1948, Walter Moser and Dave Halton bought the store and opened a meat market alongside the grocery, which eventually became the Hillcrest General store, operating into the 1980s.
- 5. Hillcrest Trading Company** (Vacant building; 22718 - 8th Avenue) Founded in 1921 by Stephen and Mary Janostak as a grocery and butcher shop. It operated as Hillcrest Trading Company under various owners until 1975.
- 6. Barbour's Pharmacy / B.C. Cafe** (Post Office; 27334 - 8th Avenue) In the early 1920s Albert "Doc" Barbour operated a drug store in this building, as well as one in Bellevue. It later became a confectionary owned by Sam Shing and Chong Yue. Kong Sing and his wife purchased the property and opened the B.C. Cafe, which also functioned as a confectionary. The B.C. Cafe operated until 1967, the confectionary until 1980. The building was bought by Gordon Makin, who operated Gord's Plumbing and Heating from 1985-1999. During Makin's tenure the original building was replaced with the present structure. In recent years Mo's Corner Store and Drum Creek Mercantile have occupied the building.
- 7. New Canada Cafe** (Loyal Order of the Moose Hall (Hillcrest Fish and Game Hall; 22802 - 8th Avenue) Originally a confectionary that was later destroyed by fire. In 1921, Chim Chan, known as 'Cook'; built and operated the New Canada Cafe. From 1930-1946, the cafe was operated by Quong Jim and Wong Jong. It continued as a cafe until 1959, when the Loyal Order of the Moose Lodge moved into the premises and converted the building into a hall. The Hillcrest Fish and Game Association, which had been organized as a club in Hillcrest since 1924, assumed ownership of the hall in 1992.
- 8. Hillcrest Miners' Co-op and Hillcrest Miners' Literary and Athletic Association** (22733 - 7th Avenue) During the six-month long miners' strike of 1911, merchants who had unpaid bills withdrew credit from the miners of Hillcrest. The miners responded by organizing a co-operative society and with help from their union, built the Hillcrest United Building, which housed the Hillcrest Miners' Co-op on the floor and the Union Hall on the second. Provisions were sold at cost to miners of Hillcrest, Frank, Bellevue, Lille, Burmis and Passburg. With the decline of company-owned stores during the 1920s, the need for a co-op no longer existed and it closed. The newly organized "Hillcrest Miners' Literary and Athletic Association" took over the co-op space on the main floor. A license to sell alcohol and a rule of "No Women Allowed" made the Miners' Club a popular destination for miners after work. The building burned down in 1959, and was replaced with the current building in which women were allowed. The Miners' Club continues to be active in the community, sponsoring many local events.
- 9. Hillcrest United Church** (Private residence; 2500 block 7th Avenue) The church was constructed in 1913 by the Methodist congregation of Hillcrest and had no resident minister but was served by "circuit riders". In 1925, the Hillcrest United Church became part of the United Church of Canada. In 1998, due to a declining congregation, the Hillcrest United Church was sold.
- 10. Hillcrest Mine** (Private land; No public access) The Hillcrest Mine operated from 1905-1939 in the rich seams of Hillcrest Mountain. By 1914, the mine was producing 2,000 tons of coal per day with over 350 workers on the payroll. June 19, 1914 was a day of supreme tragedy at the mine, when 189 of the 235 men on shift were killed in a massive mine explosion. The mine recovered from the disaster to resume operations and was to remain in operation until 1939. Hillcrest Collieries, which operated the mine, shut down mining operations in Hillcrest Mountain and merged with Mohawk Bituminous Mines to form Hillcrest Mohawk Collieries.
- 11. Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company Lime Kilns** (Corner of 7th Avenue and 207th Street) This is the location of one of the few economic enterprises within the Frank Slide. The massive amount of limestone brought down from Turtle Mountain in the Frank Slide of 1903 encouraged the Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company to buy the property from Joe Little and A.A. Sparks. Two lime kilns were built on the site, where the limestone was heated to drive off the carbon dioxide, producing quicklime. A third kiln was added and production continued until 1922.
- 12. Lime City** (West of lime kilns) A small community of workers and their families grew up around the lime kilns. After the kilns ceased operations, most of the homes from Lime City were moved to Bellevue.

Hillcrest Mines

Charles Plummer "Chippy" Hill, of Porthill, Idaho, was one of the first individuals to seriously prospect for coal in the Crownsnest Pass prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Finding some rich coal outcroppings, Hill in 1902 obtained mineral rights on the promising property flanking eastern Turtle Mountain. However, it would not be until three years later, in 1905, that he had amassed enough capital to begin coal mining operations as the Hillcrest Coal and Coke Company. When people first started building their small community below the mine site on the flats along Drum Creek, large trees were cut down and huge stumps dotted the landscape. "Stump Town" quickly became the name of the new hamlet. As the company grew in size, its name was changed to "Hillcrest Mines" to honour entrepreneur Hill. Whether the name "crest" was added because Hill's home was on the crest of a hill or whether it was a descriptive term for the community in general has been lost to time. The community is still officially named Hillcrest Mines, although most people today refer to it simply as Hillcrest.

By 1910, when Hill's mine was bought out by a Montreal syndicate and renamed Hillcrest Collieries, a railway line had already been built to connect the mine workings with the Canadian Pacific Railway main line, a station was built at Hillcrest and the growing community already had a school, a hotel and a store. Chippy Hill was proud of his railway and was often heard to remark, "My railway is quite as wide as the C.P.R. although not quite so long." The life of the town would always be directly tied to the fortunes of Hillcrest Collieries. Following the mine's closure in 1939, the population declined significantly, with miners moving to other towns in search of work. Today, Hillcrest is a quiet residential community.

Hillcrest Mine Disaster

Coal mining throughout the Crownsnest Pass has always been a dangerous venture. Methane gas, coal dust and seams of coal at pitched angles were the cause of numerous mining accidents. Although the Hillcrest Mine was not immune to accidents, in the early years of the twentieth century many miners regarded it as one of the safest mines in the Crownsnest Pass. All of that would change on the morning of June 19, 1914 at the Hillcrest Mine. Of the 235 men who went to work in the mine that morning, 189 would die, making it the worst mining disaster in Canadian history.

At approximately 9:15 a.m., a massive explosion occurred deep within the mine. Miners in the immediate vicinity of the blast were killed instantly. Others, who survived the explosion, fought through the smoke and dust towards one of the two mine entrances. The explosion had burned the oxygen out of the air, leaving everyone trapped in the mine gasping for air. The explosion had also collapsed Entrance No. 1, and any miners who made it as far as that entrance had to turn back and try to find their way through the underground maze of smoke-filled tunnels to Entrance No. 2, almost a kilometre away. Without precious oxygen, none of these men would make it. Several miners working near Entrance No. 2 got safely out of the mine on their own. Rescue teams were quickly assembled and saved a number of miners who had collapsed inside Entrance No. 2. Within thirty minutes, however, no more living souls would emerge from the Hillcrest Mine. David Murray Sr. was one of the miners who made it out safely at Entrance No. 2. Once outside, he quickly realized that his three sons were still inside the mine. He fought through a police line and re-entered the tunnels in search of his sons. Neither David Murray Sr. nor any of his sons would come out alive. Only 46 miners would survive the horror of that day.

Ongoing screeches from the mine's steam whistle quickly alerted the nearby community of trouble. The town's population made their way up to the mine site as the gruesome task of removing bodies was initiated. As rescue teams with oxygen masks emerged time after time with a body on a coal car, loved ones would push forward against the police line to see who it was, hoping for a survivor. The effect on the small community of one thousand people was staggering. Over 130 women were widowed that day and over 400 children were left fatherless. Everyone in town lost either a husband, father, brother, son or close friend that day.



Removing Bodies, Hillcrest Mine Disaster

Winnipeg Fuel & Supply Co. Lime Kilns

In 1909, local entrepreneur Joe Little of Blairmore bought a large area of land at the eastern edge of the Frank Slide for the purpose of producing lime from the rocks of the slide. His partner was A.A. Sparks, a local hotel owner. In 1912, prompted by the demand for building materials in western Canada, the Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Co. purchased the site from Mr. Little and constructed two lime kilns on the property. The manager of the operations was George Pattinson, and during his tenure a third kiln was added. Limestone from the slide was brought to the kilns by horse-drawn carts on a narrow gauge track. A steam hoist lifted the carts to the top of the kiln, where they were dumped. The limestone was then heated to drive off the carbon dioxide and quicklime was produced. After the fire had cooled, the quicklime was drawn out the bottom of the kiln and loaded into barrels. Filled barrels were then loaded onto railcars.

World War I lessened the market for lime because of the lack of construction projects. In 1918, the kilns ceased production, with the plant closing permanently in 1922.