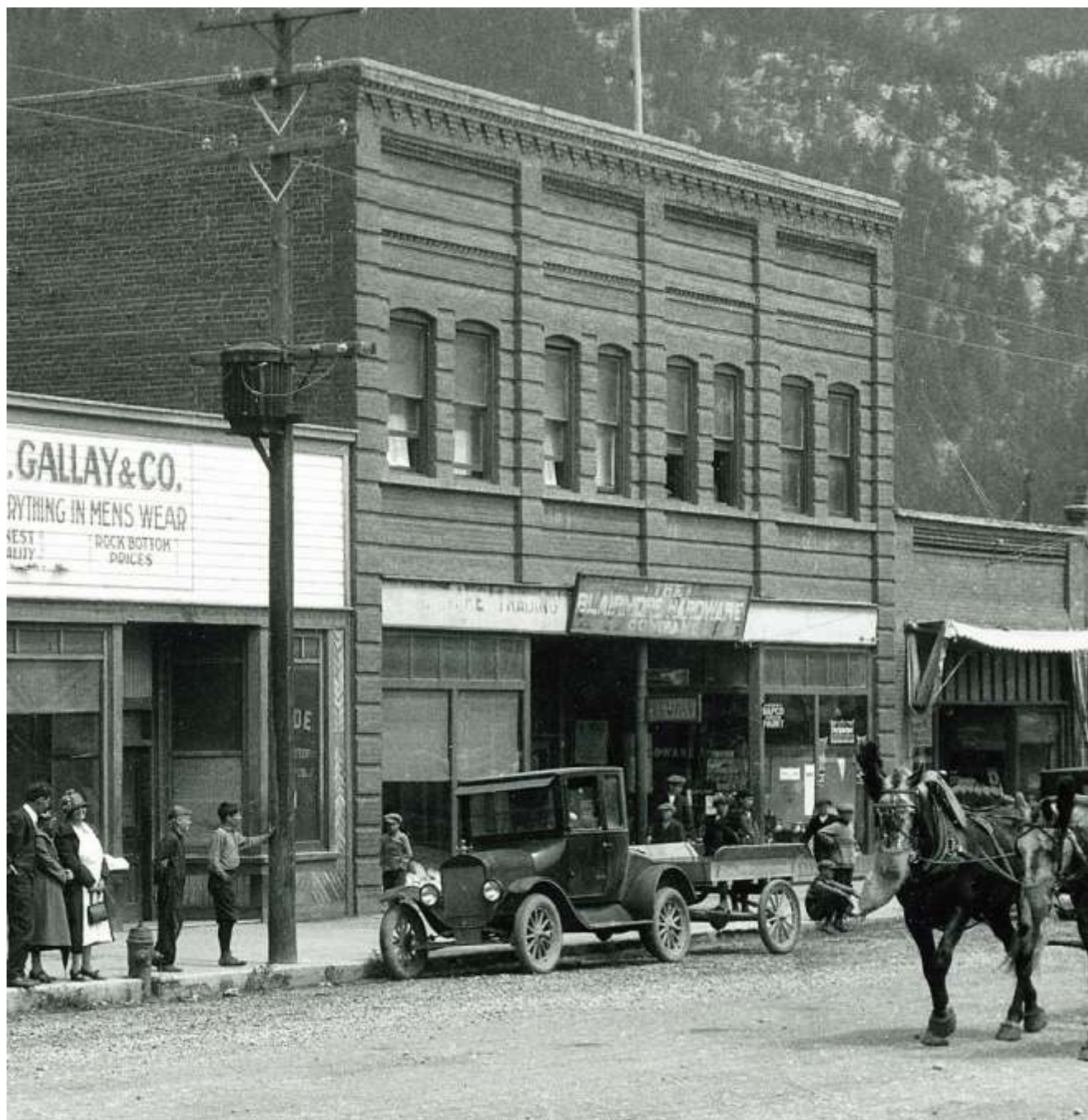


# HERITAGE VIEWS

History and Heritage in Crowsnest Pass, Alberta



Issue 73

December 2023



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Local photographer Vic Bergman ([www.vicbergman.com](http://www.vicbergman.com)) provided this insight into the house-moving photograph on the cover of our previous edition (issue #72):

Two of the people are Lena and a young Evan Gushul. Lena is standing on the river bank beside another man, to the left of the house being moved. Lena’s arm is raised to her forehead, probably shielding her eyes from the sun. Evan is to the right of Lena. Evan is wearing a hat that he was photographed with in several other photos . . . Evan may even be wearing the same clothes in these photos. My guess is the photo was taken in the early to mid-'20s. Evan looks like he might be about 8 or 9 years of age. Just a guess, though.

Thanks Vic! We appreciate your keen eye, and your great knowledge of the Gushul family!

- Ian McKenzie

On the cover: The Peuchen Block, downtown Blairmore, 1926. The faded sign on the left side of the building is for the old Blairmore Trading Company, founded by Alex Kalil but soon owned by Frank Kafoury. That sign has been superseded by one for the Blairmore Hardware Company, owned by Louis Dutil (see our Issue #21), who committed suicide with a pistol in his store some months before this photo was taken. There is also a smaller sign for Dr. Lillie, dentist, who operated upstairs.

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives, CM-BL-20-21

*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.cnp@gmail.com](mailto:heritageviews.cnp@gmail.com). 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.

Back issues of this free newsletter are available at [www.crowsnestheritage.ca](http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca) by clicking on the “newsletter” link on the home page.

## Local Heritage News

The **Roxy Theatre** restoration project has entered the construction phase. For details on construction, fundraising, and other actions: <https://www.crowsnestcando.ca/>. There are some interesting fundraisers in the works for this winter.

The proposed twinning of Highway 3 will seriously impact the **Frank Slide**, a Provincial Historic Site. We've heard some interesting ideas - to designate Crowsnest Pass as a scenic/heritage corridor, with a more compact four-lane (not twinned) highway. Does what will be left of Frank really need its own overpass? And perhaps the Old Frank Slide Road could be paved as an alternative to building a new service road between Frank and Bellevue/Hillcrest.

A **Crowsnest East reunion** is proposed for September 7 and 8, 2024; for details, see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/135092966341283/>. A similar reunion for Crowsnest West is apparently still being planned, as far as we know.

Last October, Stephanie Hamilton presented three talks on aspects of **Alberta's liquor history** - at the Provincial Archives, Arcadia Brewing in Edmonton, and on Zoom.



*Blairmore Enterprise*, January 12, 1917

The September 2023 **Harvest of Memories** museum fundraiser was held in the **Crowsnest Museum**, rather than at MDM as in the past, and slightly exceeded its fundraising goal of \$30k. Food and drink were stationed in all gallery spaces. Though some might miss the old days of the formal dinner and dance, the new 'cocktail' format may be the way forward.

A new fifty-minute video on the **1903 Frank Slide** covers the event fully and accurately: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsRhLn h3CVQ>.

### Did You Know...

... that an SoS, or Statement of Significance, is a document which outlines the architectural, historic, and social importance of a heritage building, identifies the features which define its value and ought to be preserved, and is used to support an application for official designation?

... that there are three levels of heritage designation – municipal, provincial, and national?

... that each level of designation confers both advantages and obligations onto the owner?

... that the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass has a free pamphlet on municipal heritage designation?

## The Peuchen Block

Excerpts from the 2013 *Statement of Significance, Peuchen Block, Blairmore*

Located in the centre of Blairmore's 13000 block on 20th Avenue, the Peuchen Block's heritage significance lies in its age, its distinctive architecture, its landmark importance to the community, and its associations with persons of historical significance.

The Peuchen Block is easily the most prominent commercial building of pre-1920 Blairmore, existing or otherwise, and is clearly representative of the optimism of the day. It was in the vanguard of the transition from wooden buildings with boom-town false fronts to more substantial brick buildings with parapeted façades better reflecting the true shape and scale of the building. Its fireproof brick construction exudes a sense of permanence with a restrained architectural flair typical of industrial towns that falls short of the gaudy exuberance seen in some silver and gold mining towns. The overall effect is an attractive appearance to an otherwise simple and symmetrical design that does not rely on embellishments requiring especially-talented tradesmen or artisans with their attendant cost. It follows the Edwardian Commercial style.

In the early 1970s the four upper storey bays were flattened by filling the in-set brick courses with wood and knocking off the lowest brick dentil course, allowing the addition of wood fascia panels. The ground

floor exposure was completely replaced with modern storefront windows, doors, and panels with stone details.

Since its completion, the physically-imposing and prominently-located Peuchen Block has been a Blairmore landmark that has housed some of the more important businesses in town. Its large front windows were often used to display sports trophies, cultural event advertising, hunting and fishing trophies, and other items of interest to the community.

Constructed principally from Blairmore-manufactured red brick, the physical mass of the two-storey Peuchen Block has been credited with limiting the extent of the 1912 fire which destroyed the Cosmopolitan Hotel and three other buildings.

### **History**

This building was constructed in 1911 with interior finishes completed in 1912, for Calgary businessman W. J. Budd. All spaces were intended for rental or lease, rather than for use by the owner. Budd had already built two other commercial buildings in Blairmore, including one on Lots 7 and 8 in Block 6 (sometimes called the Budd hall) in which the discussions and vote for Blairmore's town incorporation were held. This new structure was sometimes called the Budd Block, but also the "big Budd



block,” “brick Budd block,” or other variants to distinguish it from Budd’s other buildings. The title Peuchen Block was used after A. G. Peuchen purchased the building in 1915. It was occasionally called the McLaren Block (Peuchen owned the McLaren Lumber Company), and later the Dutil Block and Kubik Block which reflected the principal occupant, although no building name ever appeared on the exterior. The 1931 and 1951 insurance maps of Blairmore each include the notation “Peuchen Blk” even though Peuchen hadn’t owned the building since 1920.

One of its first tenants was the Blairmore Trading Company (Kalil’s dry goods) whose former premises had been destroyed in the 1912 fire. A very significant tenant was the Blairmore Hardware Store which occupied half of the ground floor between 1919 and 1932. In 1938 the building was purchased by John Kubik who remodelled part of the ground floor in 1939 for his general store, Kubik’s Dry Goods. Joseph and Veronica Kubik continued operations which developed into a department store under the Robinson’s franchise in the 1950s, and in 1972 under Stedman’s into the 1980s. Other tenants over the years included a poolroom, restaurant, furniture store, and Safeway grocery on the main floor, and a law office, insurance office, dentist office, music studio, customs office, credit union, and RCMP office upstairs. There is a single storey addition on the rear of the building which likely dates from the 1940s.

During rebranding as Stedmans in 1972, the front façade was painted white and was in



Peuchen Block, ca 1950 (above) and 1984 (below)  
Photos: Crowsnest Museum and Archives

part covered by wood panels. The panel installation required the flattening of each of the four bays by knocking off the lowest brick dentil course and infilling the recessed brick courses with wood, presumably to provide a nailing surface. It is believed that the modern storefronts were installed and the interior floors raised to match the modern exterior sidewalk level at the same time. The 1972 exterior wood panels have since been removed and the exterior white paint has been covered with red paint.



## Arthur G. Peuchen

Excerpts from the 2013 *Statement of Significance, Peuchen Block, Blairmore*

Arthur Godfrey Peuchen purchased the building from W. J. Budd and Company Limited in early 1915, after which it has been referred to as the Peuchen Block.

Peuchen was born in 1859 in Montreal, the son of a railroad contractor, and whose maternal grandfather managed the London Brighton and South Coast Railway. After a private school education he joined the Canadian military in 1888 and became a lieutenant in the Queen's Own Rifles. Peuchen received promotions to the rank of Major, and in 1911 was a marshalling officer at King George V's coronation.

In 1897 Peuchen developed a method for extracting chemicals from waste wood for use in the manufacture of products such as dyes, pesticides, and explosives. Peuchen became president of the Standard Chemical, Iron & Lumber Company of Canada Ltd which had plants in Canada, England, France, and Germany. He owned the yacht *Vreda* and was, for a time, Vice-Commodore and Rear-Commodore of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club.

The Crowsnest Pass connection began in 1911 when Peuchen bought the timber rights, cutting camps, and Blairmore sawmill from Senator Peter McLaren. (Hampered by a major forest fire in 1921 which depleted merchantable timber, the operation closed in 1932 after another forest fire and the loss

of markets during the Great Depression.) He acquired the building to be known as the Peuchen Block in 1915. A. G. Peuchen is known to have visited his business interests in the Crowsnest Pass in 1914, 1916, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1926 and 1928.



Lieutenant (later Captain, Major, and Lt. Colonel) Arthur Godfrey Peuchen, ca. 1890

Photo: Wikipedia

Peuchen often traveled to Europe on business. In April 1912, Peuchen planned his fortieth transatlantic voyage as a first-class passenger aboard the Titanic. Because he was an accomplished sailor, Peuchen was allowed off the stricken liner aboard the under-filled Lifeboat 6 which also held the "Unsinkable Molly Brown;" she and Peuchen were to become the Titanic's best-known survivors. As well as being one of the few

Canadian survivors, Peuchen was the sole Canadian to testify at the Titanic inquiry, where his criticisms of the captain and crew were not well received by the public and called into question his own conduct that night, leading to considerable loss of reputation. Peuchen's wallet was recovered from the Titanic in 1987.

Despite the scandal, A. G. Peuchen was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel of the Queen's Own Rifles in 1912. Peuchen retired from Standard Chemical at the commencement of World War One to command the Home Battalion of the Queen's Own Rifles. His reputation as the man who survived the sinking of the Titanic and avoided the Great War continued to suffer, and bad investments in the 1920s caused Peuchen to lose much of his money.

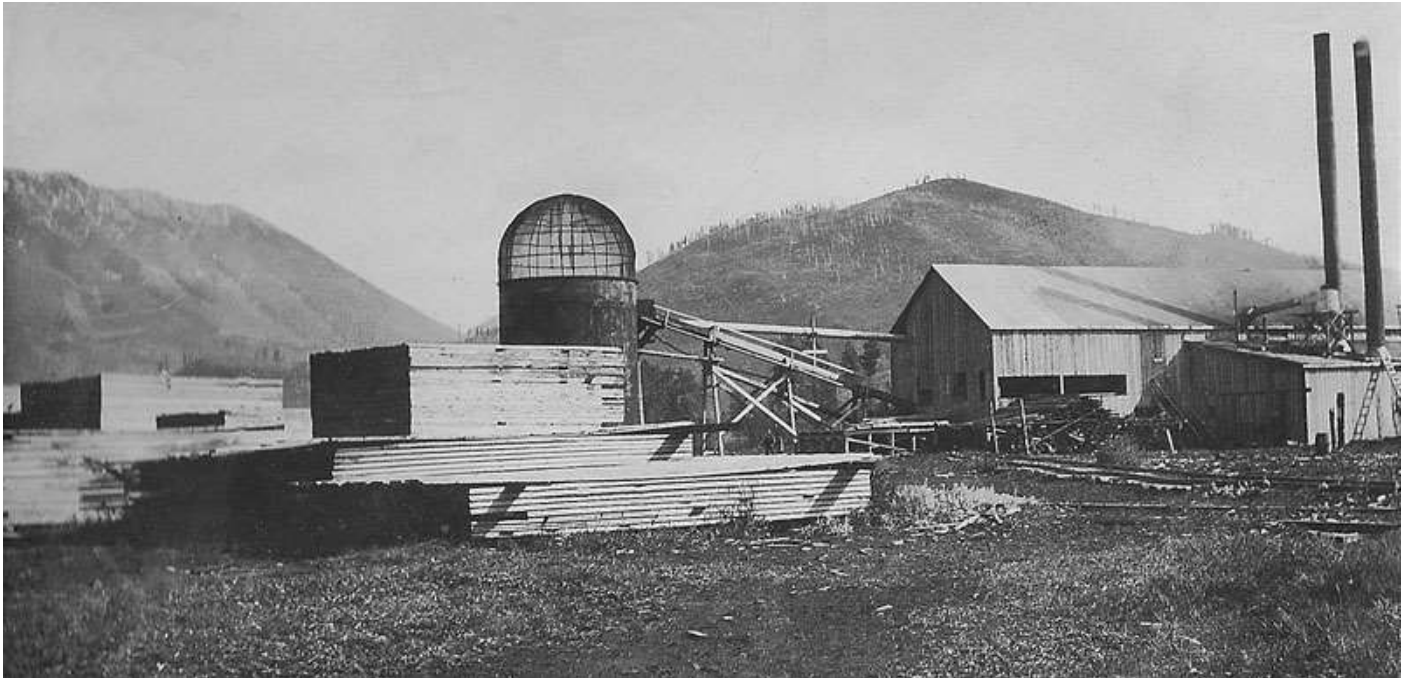
Arthur Godfrey Peuchen died in 1929 and is buried in Toronto's Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Col. Peuchen's daughter Jessie Thomson Lefroy (born 1894 or 1895) acquired the Peuchen Block in 1920 and held it until 1938. She died in 1980 in Ontario.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Editor's Note: this is yet another example of how the Crowsnest Pass was connected to significant events and people in other parts of the world.*

*Information on Louis Dutil, a principal tenant in the Peuchen Block, can be found in our issue #21, available at <https://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/archives>*



A 1912 view of the McLaren mill just west of Blairmore, part of the Peuchen purchase the year previous. Some historians speculate that Peuchen's many visits to this and other Alberta investments (such as at Hinton and Mountain Mill) were a way to escape the criticism of Toronto society.

Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives, J. B. Sutherland collection

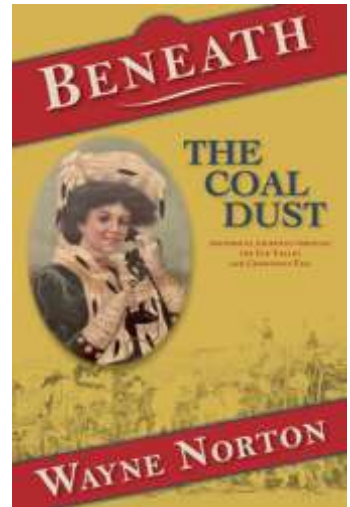


## Book Review

### *Beneath the Coal Dust* by Wayne Norton (2022)

Review by Keith Regular

With this collection of well-researched essays, focused on the first two decades of the 20th Century, Wayne Norton convincingly illustrates that the Crowsnest Pass was an economically, politically, and socially complex environment. Norton's biographical essays on Syrian businessmen and brothers Ayoub and Nassif Kfoury, brewing entrepreneur Albert Mutz from Germany, and union activist Albert "Ginger" Goodwin, England, demonstrate the economic pull of the Crowsnest during the early 1900s. All came here with the view to bettering their circumstances and, in the case of Goodwin, making better the lot of fellow workers. Goodwin's reputation was such that it earned him the enmity of the establishment and an early violent death. With his essays on Chinese immigrants in Fernie and the internment of Herman Elmer during World War I, Norton highlights local racism and ethnic prejudice.



The working class gets its due, as indeed it should in an economic environment heavy with turmoil, toil, and tragedy. Tom Uphill, BC MLA and Fernie resident, and champion for the working man, is clearly so significant that he deserves his own biographical study. Labour activist Albert 'Ginger' Goodwin has not lacked for the attentions of historians. Both are a testament to the significance of the Pass to the national labour story. The essay on the failed Miner's Union Building effort offers a glimpse at a lesser-known aspect of worker struggle. Norton's offerings on sports, specifically football in Crowsnest and hockey in Fernie, in this case dominated by women, testifies to the significance of serious sport for locals. An essay of note is Norton's study of the Home Bank collapse, a national story with local reverberations. Here, he reveals the levels of duplicity in human behaviour. In this case local depositors and investors fell victim to the lax national banking regulations. A consequence, too late for locals, was the change in federal banking regulation in 1924. Of interest but not discussed is the belief that what remained of bootleg king Emilio Picariello's fortune following his effort to stave off the hangman, was swallowed up in the collapse of the Home Bank.

Norton also introduces the seamier side of local life with an essay on Lena Bell and the 'red light' district in Fernie. It is a valued introduction to a topic that might otherwise be ignored. Similarly, an even briefer glimpse of theatre culture suggests the great enthusiasm for both cinema and live theatre arts. Crime and the business of bootlegging are missing.

Norton's approach is a model for revealing local history.



## Oral history Interview

### Miners' Pensions: Q&A with George Christie (1889-1927)

UMWA 18 Local Secretary, interviewed in Blairmore on November 18, 1919 by the Coal Mining Commission

*What is your opinion on the question of old age pensions and provision for compulsory insurance?*

GC: Well, in fetching the matter up before the Local on Sunday, I told them that I was in favour of the compulsory insurance.

*How did your Local feel on the matter?*

GC: The men that was there agreed with it. And I think today it's absolutely necessary that we have compulsory insurance, for we have cases in Bellevue where we have five men right in our own Local, that are taking \$40 a month out of Local funds; and there are so many men that never bother, and just wait until they're sick and wait and say, "Oh, if I'm sick, somebody will provide."

*You refer to both sickness and old age?*

GC: I want it, yes. As regards the old age pensions, we have an old Scotchman in Bellevue at the present time. He has worked in the mines pretty nearly 60 years – worked for this company 15 years, I think, between Lille and Bellevue. Some time ago, on the picking table, something happened to his eye. He was a pretty expert man at

picking rock. Something hit him in the eye. He went on compensation for a while, but his eye seemed to get better again. According to his report to me, the doctor came to him with a note to ask him to declare off under compensation, and he signed this note and went off the compensation. When he went back to work a while, he hadn't been very long at work

before his eye went blind altogether, and that eye going blind is gradually affecting the other eye. He doesn't want to quit work. The company have told him he can go to work any time he can make it to go down there. But now at seventy odd years anyhow, he's too

old to go down that hill to go to work.

*When did the accident happen?*

GC: Four years ago, under the old compensation law, and now he's practically up against it. There's just him and the old lady his wife, living together. He used to have a grandson, but he was killed in the war.

*Is he getting support from the Local?*

GC: No, no regular support from the local. We have taken collections for him.



*You are just pointing this out as a case which this compulsory insurance would cover if it were in existence?*

GC: Yes, this old age pension. I have written to the government asking the health board. That's the only Act whereby we could do anything for him at all, and they sent me a paper to fill in and send back to them, goes through, if he gets anything from that, the most they get from that is \$15 a month.

*Do you consider that there is anything wrong with the system whereby a man works 40 years and isn't capable of saving enough to make a provision for old age? Did you ever go into that matter?*

GC: There are cases where some men may be able to save, but don't want to; there are other cases where a man couldn't save.

. . . We had a case here in Bellevue of a man; to be quite candid with you, he scabbed during the big strike in 1911 through this district. I think he went back for a year or two after the strike was over, to work. Something happened to him, and he lost his eyesight. He had a wife and four kiddies. That man is living in Bellevue today. Now to go and ask a union miner to take a collection for a man that was directly opposed to him, couldn't hardly be thought of at the time. They wouldn't have it at all. According to some men, he reaped what he sowed. Well now, that man today is still living and his family are there – have to be fed.

. . . the doctor mentioned it to me first. He told me he had gone in there, and the pantry never looked any different at any time, and he never once seen them eat . . .

*Totally blind?*

GC: Yes. In fact, now he is. Days or weeks will finish his case. But the hardest part of it is if he is dead tomorrow she gets \$50 to \$75 a month. She will come under the Widows' Pension Act; but because he is alive that Act doesn't cover that case.

(The full George Christie interview is printed in the book *Alberta's Coal Industry, 1919* published by the Historical Society of Alberta (1978).

## The Century Home Club

Address: 14874 - 21 Avenue, Frank

Year built: 1905

Features: 1½ storey house, with gambrel roofs. Retains most of its original external form.

Known occupants: Built for the CMC zinc smelter manager; may have been occupied briefly by J. J. Constant Fernau (see issue #61).



Canadian Metal Company residence, about 1908.  
Photo: Crowsnest Museum and Archives

## News, 100 Years Ago

Here is a snapshot of the state of the world on December 6, 1923, according to the *Blairmore Enterprise*:

*At a special meeting of the town council held on Monday night, a surprise was sprung by the mayor in the form of a cheque from the provincial department of public works for the sum of \$1500, being amount promised by the department towards cost of erection of bridge number two over Lyon Creek.*

*At a meeting of the local barbers held last night, a scale of fees and hours was given consideration. It was decided that the closing hour for the day should be 8 p.m., except Saturdays and evenings before holidays, and that as far as possible no job be taken in hand that cannot be completed before 8 p.m.*

*You can tell whether a man is a fighter or not by feeling his head. This is especially true if you feel it with a chair.*

Strawberry, Black Currant, Raspberry and Loganberry, per 4 lb tin	\$1.00
Gooseberry Jam, per tin	85c
Peach, Apricot, Red Plum, per tin	95c
Raspberry and Apple or Strawberry Jam, tin	70c
Sheriff's Marmalade, 4 lb pail	85c
Eamon's Marmalade, 4 lb pail	85c
Neson's Marmalade, 4 lb pail	85c
Climax Sweet Pickles, gallon tins	\$1.25
Red Cross Pickles, gallon crocks	\$1.65
2 in 1 brand Evaporated Milk, tall tins, 6 for	\$1.00
Red Salmon, Clover Leaf or Sovereign, 1/2's, 5 for	\$1

**MINERS' GROCERY**  
T. PONDELICEK & SON, PROPS.

P.O. Box 188      BLAIRMORE      Phone 79

*By order of the minimum wage board, the minimum wage for women in retail, manufacturing and laundering industries in the province has been reduced from \$14 to \$12.50 a week.*

*He kissed her in the garden.  
The moon was shining bright.  
She was a marble statue  
And he was drunk that night.*

## 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.

A plaque on the Peuchen Block in downtown Blairmore tells the history of that building and its owners.



Have you read it? (Astute readers will note that there is an error on the plaque, which is at odds with the building's ownership history.)

## Our Local Heritage Sites (check websites for rates, schedules, and closures)



- **CROWSNEST MUSEUM and ARCHIVES** - 7701 18th Avenue, in Coleman National Historic Site. 403-563-5434, [cnmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnmuseum@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, plus large artifacts outdoors. Gift shop features local and regional books, and many other items.



- 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 Lassandro. 403-563-5434, [cnmuseum@shaw.ca](mailto:cnmuseum@shaw.ca), [www.appbarracks.com](http://www.appbarracks.com).



- **BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE** - off Main Street in Bellevue. The premiere authentic historic underground coal mine tour of western Canada offers a family-oriented experience of what miners from a century ago saw and heard at work each day. Pre-book tours online; [www.bellevuemine.com](http://www.bellevuemine.com).



- **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 of April 1903 through dynamic interpretive programs and presentations. State-of-the-art interactive exhibits focus on Canada's deadliest rockslide. Closed winter Mondays (but open Family Day).



- **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 adjacent **park** features interpretive signs about life in Hillcrest and the effect of the disaster, plus picnic tables and toilets. 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. Parking lot closed in winter. 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 on their way to the McGillivray Mine. All free.



- **LILLE PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - A 6km long trail leads to this remote site. Ruins in or near this former mining village include the powerhouse, hotel foundation, and coke ovens. Interpretive signs on site. Enquire at the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, 403-562-7388. Backcountry safety and etiquette apply. Free.

More information on these sites and other activities is at [www.crowsnestheritage.ca](http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca)