



Heritage News

Discover Crowsnest Heritage

ISSUE #7

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Now that the weather's cold but there isn't enough snow to ski or sled, why not consider volunteering time to an historical organization. According to David Ayers M.A., a registered Psychologist, volunteerism research, "...is showing that when you do this regularly, your life will be longer, healthier, happier, and more meaningful." (2007)

Volunteering appears to improve well-being primarily by enhancing social support networks, which in turn leads to lower premature death rates, less heart disease and fewer health risk factors. In order to gain these health benefits you need to volunteer at least 40 hours a year to a single cause.

You can join the 83% of all Canadians who do volunteer work, including health charities, sport clubs and non-profit societies. Offer your services to the Crowsnest Museum, the Crowsnest Heritage Initiative, the Crowsnest Heritage Signage Program, the Hillcrest Mines Memorial Cemetery Committee, the Crowsnest Pass Doors Open and Heritage Festival Committee, and a number of other other non-profit societies with an interest in Crowsnest Heritage. Check out the "Volunteers Needed" section of this newsletter for specific volunteer opportunities.

Also, if you like to write, this newsletter is always interested in receiving articles, information on events, or other information relevant to the history of the Crowsnest Pass.



Editor: Claire Allum
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 A Crowsnest Heritage Initiative Project.

If interested in submitting an article, news piece, or update, please send it to cnheritage@shaw.ca.

WHAT'S ON

CROWSNEST MUSEUM

7701-18th Ave. Coleman 403-563-5434



Booze & Bars at the Grand Union Hotel: Friday, December 3rd, 7:30 pm. The second of the very popular Booze & Bars events will feature an entertaining talk by Stephanie Laine-Hamilton on "A Grand History: The Grand Union Hotel," live music, interesting people and good fun. **\$10 Cover charge. Admission and donations go to support the Educational Programs at the Crowsnest Museum.**

Gift Shop Christmas Sale: December 1st to 24th. Unique holiday gift ideas at the Crowsnest Museum Gift Shop.

- 2011 Crowsnest Historic Calendars. Only \$10! 100% of proceeds support the operation of the Crowsnest Museum and Archives.
- *Crowsnest and its People: Vol. 3.* Locally produced historical volume chalk-full of history. 20% off the cover price for the 2010 holiday season.
- Reduced prices on souvenirs and coinsets
- Locally produced handicrafts
- Coal Candy--perfect as a stocking stuffer!

Open Monday - Friday 8:00 am - Noon 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm.

Don't forget the Museum is open year round. Along with its displays, it hosts a Gift Shop and runs tours and educational programs. **Contact: cnmuseum@shaw.ca. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24.**

FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

Hwy 3 Crowsnest Pass 403-562-7388



Open year round 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Day and Easter Sunday.

The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre is open year round. Along with its new 2009 displays, it hosts a daily audio-visual presentation of "In the Mountain's Shadow," and shows the docudrama "On the Edge of Destruction--The Frank Slide Story." It has a Gift Shop with great Christmas gift ideas and hosts tour groups and runs educational programs. **Contact: info@frankslide.com. Adults \$9, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.**

HEAD-SMASHED-IN BUFFALO JUMP (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Hwy 785 403-553-2731

Heritage Through My Hands: Saturday, November 27th.

First Nations people demonstrate and display their artistic skills and products during this pre-Christmas festival. Listen to First Nations entertainers and watch spectacular dance demonstrations. The day also features a children's crafting workshop, a silent auction and door prizes. **Admission Free.**

Open year round 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Day and Easter Sunday.

Along with its displays it has audio-visual presentations, a cafeteria featuring bison burgers, a gift shop filled with First Nations handicrafts, and hosts tour groups and runs educational programs. **Contact: info@head-smashed-in.com. Adults \$9, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.**



KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE

1037 Bev McLachlin Dr., Pincher Creek. 403-627-3684

Metis Week: November 14th - 20th.

There will be a flag-raising celebration on Monday, November 15 at 10 am. The Metis flag is 150 years older than the Canada flag. The Metis trace their heritage to a mixture of European and native ancestors. They were a vital asset to the early fur trade, and to a large degree created by it. Scottish, French, and English fur traders married First Nations and Inuit women, and their children were exposed to multiple cultures. There are more than 300,000 people who identify themselves as Metis in Canada now. In addition, approximately 50 per cent of the western Canadian population has some native ancestry. A Red River cart will be on display as well during the week, along with a video presentation. The Red River cart is a Metis designed vehicle that also doubles as a boat when the wheels are removed. There is no metal whatsoever used in its construction.

LEITCH COLLIERIES

Hwy 3, East end of Crwsnest Pass

Open year round. Self-guided tour.

The site has interpretive panels, lights for nighttime viewing and washroom facilities. The walking tour takes you past the ruins of the old powerhouse, the mine manager's residence, the coke ovens, the washery and the tiple.

REMINGTON CARRIAGE MUSEUM

Cardston, Alberta 403-653-5139

Open year round 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Day and Easter Sunday.

It recently won "The Best Indoor Tourist Attraction in Canada" award. It has the largest collection of horse-drawn vehicles in North America with over 240 carriages, wagons and sleighs. The 63,000 square foot facility features video displays, a fire hall, a carriage factory, a restoration shop, a working stable, carriage rides, carriage rentals, a restaurant and a gift shop. There are free guided tours. Group tours and educational tours are offered. **Contact: info@remingtoncarriagemuseum.com. Adults \$9, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.**

GALT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

502 1st. S., Lethbridge 1-866-320-3898

Adopt an Artifact Online Fundraiser. Bidding closes November 30th.

Go to <http://www.galtmuseum.com/media/Adopt-an-Artifact.pdf> to find out more.

Wednesdays at the Galt, Weekly Seniors Program 2:00 - 3:00 PM (in conjunction with the exhibit "Galt Hospital 100 Years")

- November 17th Hospital Building and Exhibit
- November 14th Hospital Artifact Bingo
- December 1st Behind the Scenes in the Collections
- December 8th A Tour of the Mind through Early Lethbridge
- December 15th Women's History in the American West

GLENBOW MUSEUM

130-9th Ave. SE, Calgary. 403-268-4100

Artists and Curators in Conversation: The Films and Videos of Jamelie Hassan. Thursday, November 18th at 7:00 pm.

Jamelie Hassan is an important Canadian artist known for her politically engaged practice that, since the 1970s, has focused on issues of cultural and personal identity, exclusion, displacement, language and communication. Her work appears in various media and takes many forms. Her film works, which appear as a recurring element in her installations, represent a less known part of her practice. This evening screening event, curated by Miriam Jordan and Julian Jason Haladyn, represents the first time this group of works, consisting of nine films and videos, have been collectively screened and investigated. **Admission \$12. Call 403-268-4110 to reserve tickets.**



Jamelie Hassan

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

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PRAIRIES'N PEAKS QUILT FESTIVAL

A juried and invitational show sponsored by the Crowsnest Museum and the Kootenai Brown Museum, including a showing of historic textiles. For more information go to <http://prairiesnpeaks.blogspot.com> : **Friday, June 30th to Sunday, June 19th 2011.**

The Coleman Coke Ovens – A Legacy in Brick and Stone

by John Kinnear, Coleman, Crowsnest Pass, AB. (Images property of author)

There were only three coke oven plants built in Alberta at the turn of the century and they all were constructed in the Crowsnest Pass. Of Coleman, Lille and Passburg, the Coleman site remains the most intact and was at one time the largest coking operation in the province.

The International Coke and Coal Company mine—which started up in Coleman in 1903 with capital from Spokane, Washington—had a couple of seams on their property with excellent coking quality. Coincident with their construction of a tippie and power house, they began building batteries of “beehive ovens”—domed brick structures with a hole in the top (trunnel head) where the coal was inserted and a door-like opening in the front through which the final product (coke breeze) was extracted. They were targeting the lucrative smelting market in the East and West Kootenays.

Contractor E. Marino from Blairmore was responsible for both the brick and stone work for the Coleman ovens and by the summer of 1908 a total of 216 ovens had been built.

The design of a beehive oven battery (usually 50 ovens or more back-to-back) is such that the heat generated in the coking process is diffused and held evenly around the ovens, helping to maintain the high heat crucial to the production of good coke. The construction of these Industrial Revolution “igloos” was a fairly complex process that started with the building of eight-foot deep circular support foundations. The ring walls and the front walls of the ovens were built concurrently and the whole unit was a marvellous blending of fireclay brick and special silica bricks which could withstand extremely high temperatures. Stone walls were built around the final igloo shapes and the spaces between the walls and the oven curvature filled with clay to help hold the heat inside the ovens.



Foundation walls



Continued construction



Final construction

Stone lintels were constructed between the ovens that carried the weight of a track and loaded larry cars that travelled over the ovens.

The oven floor was tilted from back to front to help facilitate the laborious job of “pulling the coke” and the floor tiles were usually three inch thick and twelve inches square.

Once a bank or series of banks had been completed and the top levelled off, the track way was laid and the ovens were fired. The larry carried a six ton charge of coal that was funnelled into the top of each beehive oven via the trunnel hole. Once charged the oven front door and trunnel opening were lightly sealed with clay and the baking process begun. This usually took about 48 hours before all the impurities (methane, hydrogen, tar and ammonia) were baked out of the coking coal leaving a light grey porous material commonly referred to as “breeze”. Breeze looks a lot like lava rock and is almost pure fixed carbon with a bit of ash.

Charging and unloading the Coleman ovens would have been a huge job as there were 216 ovens operating between 1903 and 1918 before the plant was shut down due to poor market demand. Each oven produced over four and a half tons of coke that had to be manually pulled from the oven in a speedy fashion using a fifty pound special iron scraper or “coke puller”. Workers determined the oven was ready for pulling by the disappearance of smoke and the dwindling of the rolling flame within the oven, showing that most of the impurities had been burned off.



Pulling coke from the beehive ovens in Fernie, BC.



Michel: track system from tipple to beehive ovens.



Coke ovens at night. Fernie, BC

Once the coke oven door was opened the coke was quenched by playing water onto the super heated product with a large hose. This quenching only lasted 45 minutes to an hour so as not to cool the oven too much and to ensure that the next charge of coal ignited immediately upon placement. After the coke was pulled out onto the wharf area outside the oven, men with pitch-forks would sift the coke to remove ashes and then load it into boxcars. This was a laborious process requiring much stamina and only the strongest men were able to endure this tedious work.

The original 216 beehives in Coleman were arranged in three batteries with the longest holding 104 back-to-back ovens. The south and east batteries were torn down after the 1918 shutdown and the original 104 oven battery was reactivated (relit) in 1932 for about twenty years to supply coke for the Trail Smelter. Today there are only 68 ovens left of the original 104. Sixty-four sit as a group and to the west is a lonely bank of four, standing by themselves. These 68 ovens are slightly different in shape and appearance from the earlier ovens; they have larger doorways which is probably an indication they were levelled and emptied using a mechanical device.

At one time there were over 1,785 ovens baking coal, and belching smoke and gases into the mountain air from Morrissey, BC to Leith Collieries at the east end of the Alberta side of the Crowsnest Pass. The long abandoned Coleman ovens stand today, baked into a cold, massive ceramic mass that appears unaffected by the unrelenting press of wind and cold that sweeps through the valley. They are an iconic symbol of the remarkable story of our coal mining history and deserve proper interpretation and conservation.



Remaining Coleman coke ovens

John Kinnear is a local writer who lives and works in the Crowsnest Pass, Alberta.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

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GIFT SHOPS

Crowsnest Museum
Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
Kootnai-Brown Museum
Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump
Galt Museum
Glenbow Museum

GIFT IDEAS

- Adopt-an-Artifact (Galt Museum)
- "Imagining Head-Smashed-In: Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains" by Jack Brink. www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120137 Winner of several publication awards.
- Annual Membership (any Heritage institution)
- Filumena DVD (opera by Edmonton Opera Company-Crowsnest Museum)
- Books, Calendars, Coins...

100 YEARS AGO: 1910

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- Blairmore Enterprise, November 17: Passburg is going to be the Metropolis of the Foothills and land is increasing in value faster than in any other part of Sunny Alberta. Low prices and Easy terms to those requiring Building lots.
- On December 9th at 7 pm, 30 miners die in an explosion at the West Canadian Collieries Bellevue Mine.
- November 18th "Black Friday": Thousands of UK suffragettes marched to the Palace of Westminster to confront the Parliament over killing a reform bill which would have granted women the right to vote. Violence resulted in over 200 arrests and 2 deaths.
- December 11th: In Paris, French inventor Georges Claude first demonstrated the neon lamp, using an electrical current and a sealed tube of neon gas, and opening a new era in signage.
- Passburg: The first 60 of 101 Mitchell coking ovens are completed at the Leitch Collieries.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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WORK BEES FOR THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

Come on down to the Crowsnest Museum from 6 - 8 pm on Mon. Nov. 15, Tues. Nov. 16th, Tues. Nov. 23rd, and Wed. Nov. 24th to get your 'craft-on', while supporting the Museum's Gift Shop! We'll be making souvenirs. All materials are supplied, although an extra glue gun never hurts. For those who are not 'crafters,' there are also several maintenance projects on the go at the Museum that could use an extra hand. Complimentary coffee, tea, water and cookies.

SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY BY VOLUNTEERING SOME TIME AT THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM!

Some volunteer opportunities available include:

- Taking admissions and running the Gift Shop
- Acting as a guide for walking tours and educational programs
- Working with the collection
- Housekeeping and maintenance

Contact Stephanie at the Crowsnest Museum to discuss volunteering some time: 403-563-5434.

SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE

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