

HERITAGE VIEWS

History and Heritage in Crowsnest Pass, Alberta



Issue 74

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We are very fortunate to have received an article from Scott Rowed which includes a small selection of his famous father's photographs. Amongst many other topics, Harry Rowed photographed people and scenes from coal-mining districts around Alberta and into BC. The photos selected for this presentation are known to have been, or are thought to have been, taken on the Alberta or BC side of the Crowsnest Pass, about eighty years ago. The Rowed negatives are not labeled, so if keen-eyed readers have observations on the location of any of these photographs, or the people in them, we'd sure like to hear from you.

- Ian McKenzie

On the cover: A portrait of a miner picking up a "check" - a numbered brass disc issued to each miner to keep track of which men were underground. This system was used throughout the mines of the Crowsnest Pass in both Alberta and BC. The photograph was taken by Harry Rowed in the 1940s, and has been cropped from the original to fit this edition's cover.

Photo: Harry Rowed, from the Scott Rowed collection; www.harryrowed.ca

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 Ken Allred. Inquiries, comments, or submissions can be sent to 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.

For a free subscription to *Heritage Views*, send a request to heritageviews.cnp@gmail.com. Back issues of this free newsletter are available at www.crowsnestheritage.ca by clicking on the "newsletter" link on the home page.

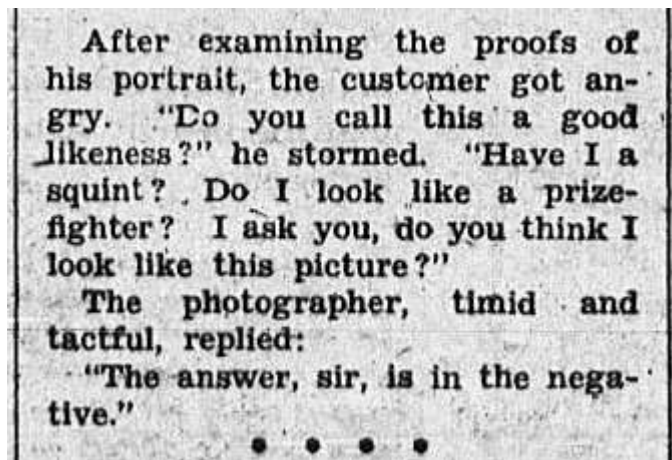
Local Heritage News

The digital, searchable, vintage Alberta newspapers in the **Peel's Prairie Provinces** collection have migrated to a new website: https://archive.org/details/peel_newspaper_s. More Crowsnest Pass newspapers have been added, but some lists don't sort well and the site is more difficult to use.

The **Frank Slide Interpretive Centre** has recently undergone a major staff rotation, with the retirements of Joey Ambrosi and Cathy Pisony in 2023.

The 1909 **Eagles Hall** in Coleman's old downtown is currently for sale. Frank Aboussafy purchased the building in 1936; he was Coleman's mayor from 1943 to 1962.

Planning is underway for the 2024 **Doors Open and Heritage Festival** to be held on August 1st – 5th. The theme is *Prohibition: End of an Era* which acknowledges the close of that turbulent time a hundred years ago. Events and schedules will be posted on www.cnpheritagefest.ca when things firm up.



Blairmore Enterprise, January 4, 1946

The Pass heritage community was saddened by the sudden passing of **Isabel Russell** last December, whose numerous community contributions included serving on the Crowsnest Historical Society board which, amongst other things, operates the Crowsnest Museum. Isabel was also one of this publication's skilled and thorough proofreaders.

French historian Emmanuel Tilloy is working on a paper on the 1901-1918 **Frank Mine** development, from the unique perspective of French investors and shareholders.

Did You Know...

... that well-known author, journalist, and civil servant Wilfrid Eggleston, OBE, who has his own Wikipedia page, was a teacher and vice-principal at the Bellevue school from 1922 to 1924?

... that he first met his future wife Magdelana Raskeviciute when she was a student at that school?

... that both have entries in *Crowsnest And Its People*, with Magdelana included with her parents Joseph and Ann Raskevich?

... that Magdelana Eggleston's book *Mountain Shadows* was reviewed in our issue #54?

Harry Rowed Photographs

by Scott Rowed

In the early 1930s in Saskatchewan, money was tight. With his gift for storytelling, an outgoing personality, and an insatiable curiosity, Harry Rowed applied for a job as cub reporter for a small newspaper. The editor hired him on the condition that he learn to use a camera, so that he could do both the writing and photography. Within a few years Harry became a well-recognized photojournalist and was selected to cover the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, capturing haunting images of the rise of the Nazis.

Following the Olympics he vagabonded and photographed through Germany, Austria, France, and England before returning to Canada to become the Director of Photo Services for the National Film Board. In this position he travelled extensively throughout Canada, documenting the people, industry, and landscapes of the country.

His projects covered many diverse subjects, such as the Quebec Conference in 1944 (with Churchill, Roosevelt and Mackenzie King), the formation of the UN, logging in British Columbia, fishing in the north, coal mining in the Crowsnest Pass, and wild rice harvesting in Manitoba. During the war his assignments took him to the Rockies, both summer and winter, covering Lovat Scout and Canadian mountain troop training. Shortly after the war he moved to Jasper with his wife, Geneviève, and daughter, Daphne.

From the 1940s through the 1970s, his commercial and editorial work documented the early days of the oil industry in Alberta and the NWT, as well as the airline industry, including Trans Canada Airlines (later to become Air Canada) and Canadian Pacific Airlines. Much of his time for CPA was documenting Mexico in the 1950s, especially Puerto Vallarta, then a quiet fishing village.

His work, whether commercial or editorial, showed his roots in photojournalism, focusing on the people, their stories, and the land where they worked and lived.

When he retired in the 1970s, my father's tens of thousands of negatives, transparencies and clippings, were stored in boxes, ignored for decades. In the past few years I finally opened the boxes and learned more about my father's extraordinary career. Using social media, I have been able to connect with descendants of the people Harry photographed, and sometimes the people themselves.

Prints are available for purchase. Most of the negatives are 120 or larger format, allowing for beautiful prints at large sizes. What follows are a few from the Pass.

Website: <https://harryrowed.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/harryrowedphoto/>

Email: scott.rowed@gmail.com



Miners on lunch break. Different styles of helmet are worn; the lights are powered by rechargeable lead-acid batteries carried on hip belts.

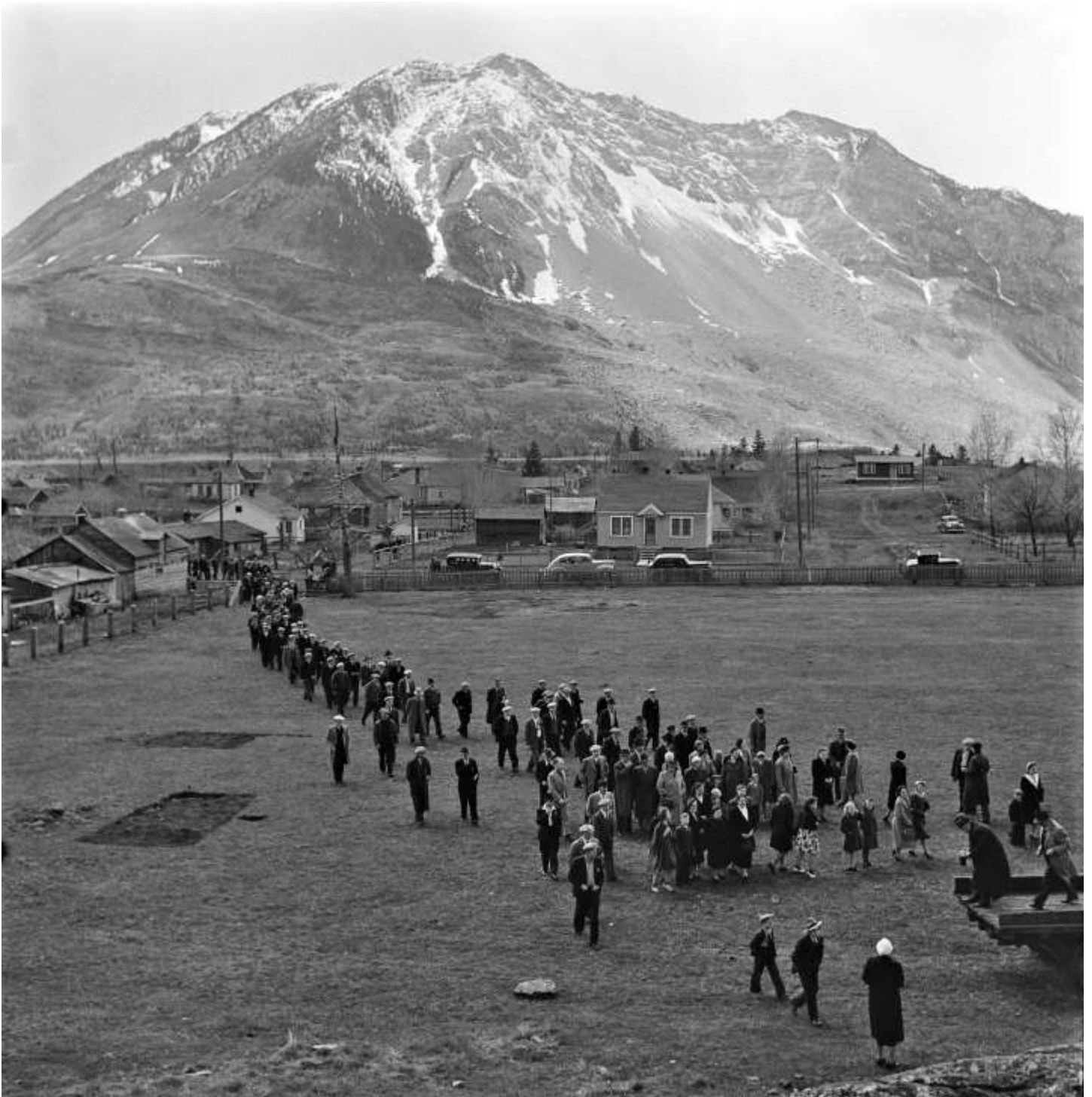


Beer delivery at the Cosmopolitan Hotel. The metal hatches in the sidewalk still exist today. The lack of a neon sign on the white-faced Java Shop next door indicates that this photograph was taken prior to 1947.

Interestingly, a near-identical photograph exists in the Gushul collection of the Crowsnest Museum Archives, which reinforces the supposition that Thomas Gushul and Harry Rowed were acquainted. Rowed may have gifted one of his negatives to Gushul.



A portrait of a coal miner, probably taken on the BC side of the Pass. This photograph suggests the pleasure of exiting the mine at shift's end, rewarded by a long-awaited cigarette. The extensive sky around the miner's head reinforces the contrast between the constrictions of the underground and the airy openness of the surface.



This photograph is of the Bellevue sports field located at the present 25 Avenue and 208 Street. It is thought to be of a funeral procession, given the location of the flatbed truck, the columnar form of the people, and the fact that Bellevue Union Cemetery is located across the ridge behind the photographer. The low building near the left of the photograph, behind the tail of the procession, is the 1897 Connelly homestead cabin which was replaced by the present-day Nastasi/Favero residence in 1956. The house at the centre of the photograph still exists, in modified form.



This posed photograph demonstrates the extraction of coke from a coking oven. Ovens of this type were found in the Pass on both sides of the border. Typically, coal was loaded in each oven from an electric tram car atop the ovens, and cooked at high temperatures in an environment deprived of oxygen by bricking up the oven entrance. After coking, the product was raked out onto the surrounding apron for cooling before it was transported by rail to smelters for steel-making and other industrial uses requiring very high temperatures.

Mission Halls in Crowsnest Pass

by Ian McKenzie

Mission halls, sometimes called mission churches or mission chapels, were amongst the first public buildings constructed in the new Pass communities. They were almost always built by missionary priests or ministers prior to the construction of churches in town, and were used for Sunday services which otherwise would have been held in homes or shops. Protestant services were often scheduled so that ministers from other denominations could preach there as well. During the week, mission halls provided an alcohol-free social gathering place for miners, and were also used for community meetings, and events such as plays and concerts, films, quiz nights, political speeches, and even funerals.

Coleman's Anglican Mission Hall

One of the first mission halls in the Pass was the Anglican Mission in Coleman, built in the spring of 1904. This temporary structure was 24 x 14 feet in size, of single-boarded walls with tar paper on the roof, which had to be improved before its first winter. It was used by a number of protestant missionaries, and also hosted social functions, as well as school classes while the Coleman school was being constructed across the street. After St. Alban's Anglican church was built nearby in 1905, the mission hall was sold for \$75 and was torn down in 1907 to make way for the Presbyterian manse next to St. Paul's church.

Blairmore's Presbyterian Mission Hall

Blairmore's first Presbyterian services were held in 1903, in the old schoolhouse. A Presbyterian mission hall was built, possibly in 1904 but certainly prior to 1908. The 18 x 26 foot hall was across the tracks from the train station, near a mercantile store. It's not clear whether this hall was made of logs or wood-frame, so there may have been more than one version. The hall did not have electricity and was too small for some of the public events being held there, but despite discussions the Presbyterians never did build their own church, instead using the Baptist/Union church (as did Anglicans, Methodists and Congregationalists at times). The Blairmore 50th Anniversary booklet says that the old hall was moved to behind the Union church in 1921, then was moved again ten years later to become part of the Art Decoux house next door, to make way for the big 1931 church addition.



The Baptist/Union (later United) church, ca. 1925, with the old mission hall just visible behind the main church.

Blairmore's Catholic Mission Chapel

In Blairmore, the Catholics purchased an old paint shop from Mrs. McLaughlin in 1910 and used it as their 'mission chapel' prior to the construction of St. Anne's church. This mission would have originally been served by Father Lajat, who was based in Frank. St. Anne's church was constructed in 1920, in part from the lumber and fittings of the Frank Catholic church, which had blown down in a windstorm in 1917. The mission chapel was moved and attached to the rear of St. Anne's and used as a hall, until the entire structure was replaced by the present Holy Trinity church.

Hillcrest's Glynn Vivian Mission Hall

At age 19, British aristocrat Richard Glynn Vivian (1835-1910) inherited a quarter of his father's copper business, but chose to leave its operation to his older brothers while he traveled and collected art. But after becoming almost blind in 1902 he used his wealth to help the needy, including miners on which his family's wealth had been founded. He established the Glynn Vivian Miners Mission in Swansea, Wales in 1906, and then began funding missions for miners around the world. His second Mission was built in Ashio, Japan in 1908, with others in China, South Africa and northern France following. This organization still exists today as the International Miners' Mission.

A successful application for funds to establish and maintain a Glynn Vivian Miners' Mission in Hillcrest resulted in the 1910 construction of a small hall on a

hillslope overlooking the new village. This Mission met the spiritual needs of local miners through interdenominational Christian services on Sundays, but also provided newspapers, books, games and other activities. The hall was also used for community dinners, concerts, and other social events, and was considered "spacious." The Hall also housed Hillcrest's first students, prior to a school being built in 1913-1914.



A photograph from the October 8, 1910 *Lethbridge Herald* shows the Mission Hall in its original form.

The need for a mission hall in Hillcrest declined with the establishment of other religious and social buildings and halls. At some point (perhaps in the 1920s) it was converted into a residence by Bob Creighton. A front porch was added in the early 1940s. In 1945 Mrs. Karliner used the former hall as a maternity home, and did so for many years.

This is the only Pass mission hall that still exists in its original location; it's now a residence at 227 Street and 6 Avenue in Hillcrest. The old hall is hidden behind additions to the front, rear, and side, and now has a partial second floor.

Book Review

King Coal: A Social History of Coal Mining in Alberta by Khalehla Litschel (2018)

Review by Keith Regular

Although a 'social history', this brief work consists of fact, fiction, and literature in the form of narrative text, fictional story, poetry, maps, photographs, and tables, in a short eighty-four pages. Appendices, bibliography, and glossary follow. Despite its brevity it attempts to be broad in scope.

Though well-intentioned, this approach to history is unsatisfying. The fiction, personal to the author, is meant to provide emotional connection to what is often dreary and tragic history. Her goal would have been better served, and her narrative enriched, by presenting original voices bequeathing their pain, poverty, recrimination, and joy to the reader.

Prosperity in the coal economy as envisioned here was "on the backs of the miners." This recognizes one reality of labour history, but fails to credit the investment of wealth necessary to pay proletarian labour, and that underpins railway technology making the coal economy possible. She talks of "close knit communities" but ignores the ethnic rifts and the reality of Anglo resentment often evident in racist expressions. One searches in vain for comment on racial tension between diverse ethnic groups in the mining towns such as led to the internment of enemy aliens during World War I. To the author's credit she provides a good sense of the hazards and working conditions found in the quest for coal.



Though a short work, the research was varied although some good sources were inexplicably overlooked. Historian Andy den Otter's master's thesis from 1967 is referenced, but his seminal "Civilizing the West: The Galts and the Development of Western Canada" (1982) is not.

The photographs are generally well chosen and appropriately identified. However, photos that illustrated the impact of mining disasters are noticeably absent. The maps are basic but useful, and the glossary much needed for those uninitiated in coal mining. Statistics add an informative layer to the narrative.

This work could have benefited from more careful editing of sentence and paragraph structure. There are unfortunate sentences such as "Alberta's history is full of coal mines". Appendix 5 states that Alberta Provincial Police Constable Stephen Lawson was shot and killed in Blairmore, not in Coleman. Much of the information in the appendix seems out of place or unnecessary.

This effort is best regarded as an inventory of coal mines and an overview of mining. The style and content of this work best suits a school library, an exemplar to introduce students to the local or provincial history of Alberta coal while demonstrating research skills and critical cross curricular integration.

Hard Times: Interview with Pauline Grigel (1920-2010)

Excerpt from Alberta Labour History Institute group interview, Coleman, 2005

I was born in Hillcrest and lived in the Pass all my life. My dad was a miner, and we kept quite a few boarders at home that were miners too. It was common. The houses were small. I remember one time we had just a fairly small bedroom, there was a double bed and three men slept together in one bed, and on a single bed two men slept. That's what helped us survive, because the mines weren't working too well.

I remember my dad at lunchtime, there was only one shift for two weeks, one day he worked. I think at the time the wages were about \$5.40. By the time the mine took their \$2 ground rent, because our house was built on mine property, \$2 ground rent. They charged the full two weeks for the washhouse even though he only showered once. Then they charged us for the lights. My dad came home with a cheque for 60 cents after all the deductions. My mom never did cash it. She never did cash it, because we survived. We were out on the edge of town. We had a cow and pigs and chickens and rabbits. Made our own butter, had all the milk we wanted, all the eggs we wanted. So that's how we survived.

It was terrible for the men. My mom told me once they were talking. She said, if a man came into town with a pretty wife, the fellow that was hiring would say, send your wife to my place tonight to ask for a job. That's how things went then. The men of course didn't have the clothes that we have nowadays.



Pauline Grigel in 2005, from ALHI interview video

I remember back in the early '30s, when a man got told to work in the mine, they put him up on the tippie, on the picking table. That's where they picked out the rocks out of the mine. I remember this one man, a Mr. Salva, he froze to death standing up at that picking table. That's what happened to him there. It was just terrible. But otherwise, like I say, another story that I heard that's really sickening to me, is when the Bellevue strike was

on, the second one I think it was, there's some men that wouldn't go on strike. So they were called scabs. But what happened to this one family, this lady had sent her children all off to school. She went out and got some wood and stoked up the stove again, and then went outside for something. Kaboom, somebody had drilled a hole in one of the pieces of firewood and put in a stick

of dynamite. It blew up the stove and everything, and the pot of porridge just stuck to the ceiling. Thankfully nobody was around at the time.

Apart from that, my husband worked at the mine. He shoveled coal at the tippie, that's when they loaded all the big boxcars by hand. They had a chute where the coal came down from the tippie. They had one man to push it down to make sure it got down the chute. On one side of the chute there was two left handed men, the other side was a right handed man. It was their job to make sure the coal was shoveled right to the back of the boxcars. They had to fill the boxcars completely as much as they could for 12 cents a ton. That was in '38, '39, when I got married. That's what my husband did for a living. He didn't go underground until he got to Coleman here. That's when Coleman took over Mohawk. The men found that the Coleman men resented the Mohawk men coming to work there. My husband was a loader man by then. They had a loader installed in Mohawk. So he was the head loader man. So naturally when he came to Coleman he was the first one. They needed him, they wanted to put on double shift. But there too, there was a bigotry there. They resented my husband from coming. This one time after they loaded the coal, it was his job to get up on top of the boxcar, release the brake, and run it down so far, to be pulled out by the trains. It was at night. They didn't tell him there was an electric wire strung right across. When he got there he hit the electric wire and was knocked right down to the ground. Thankfully he wasn't hurt too badly.

But there was a lot of bigotry. As a kid, we were called bohunks. Any nationality, unless you were English, Scotch or Irish – they were the elite. The rest of them, you're all bohunks. Until the flu came around in 1918, my mom said they were always teased. But when the flu came, they came around begging for garlic so they could make themselves a necklace of garlic to wear around their neck to not catch the flu.

(The full interview is available on the PDF file at <https://albertalabourhistory.org/interview-transcripts/crowsnest-pass-group-1/>)

The Century Home Club

Address: 12934 - 19th Avenue,
Blairmore

Year built: prior to 1906; one of the
oldest existing Blairmore houses.

Features: 1 storey house, with
flared hipped roof. Side bay
window and front open porch are
early additions.

Known occupants: David Kemp
(*Crowsnest And Its People*, p. 615).



Back yard of Kemp residence, 1940. Gushul
photo at the Glenbow Archives, NC-54-2574

News, 99 Years Ago

Here is a mixture of unpleasant and mundane news from the March 1, 1923 edition of the *Blairmore Enterprise*:

As workmen for the International Coal Co. were yesterday engaged at a point near the Crow's Nest River, just east of the ruins of the machine shop, which was destroyed by fire on November the 30th, they noticed the body of a man laying in the water. The police were immediately notified and the body was recovered and removed to Ferguson's undertaking parlors where it was soon identified as that of William Machin, whose disappearance on the morning of the machine shop fire led the authorities to believe that he met his death in the flames. It now transpires that when the pump ceased working at the time of the outbreak of the fire, Engineer Machin rushed to the intake from the river and while trying to locate the trouble there fell into the waters and was drowned.

Albert Costigano, who recently met with the loss of both eyes in an explosion in one of the workings of Greenhill mine, returned last week end from Calgary, where he has been undergoing treatment. Albert intends leaving shortly for his old home in Italy, and to this end local miners and friends have voluntarily subscribed the funds necessary to pay the cost of the trip. To make the trip, it is necessary that a guardian accompany him.

The Alberta Government Telephones for the past year shows a net surplus of but four hundred and twenty-three dollars.

Lady's Black Fur Coat for Sale. Skunk Collar. Cheap at \$35. Apply to The Enterprise.

Unrivalled Products – Shamrock Hams, whole, 35c per lb. Shamrock Bacon, whole 46c per lb. Dominion Hams, whole 33c per lb. Dominion Bacon, whole, 42c per lb. Saturday only at P. Burns & Co., Ltd.

Wanted To Rent – One or two roomed house. Apply at The Enterprise.

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.

The sign on the gravel road at the west edge of the Slide describes the little cemetery there.



Have you read it?

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, 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, 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.



- **FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE** - off Hwy 3. 403-562-7388, 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, and picnic tables. All free.



- **LEITCH COLLIERIES PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE** - Highway 3, east edge of town, 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