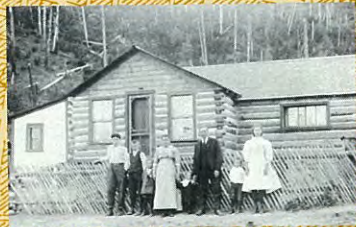


Crowsnest Pass  
Historical  
Driving Tour:

# Bellevue and Hillcrest



  
CROWSNEST PASS  
ECOMUSEUM TRUST

  
THE COAL  
ASSOCIATION  
OF CANADA

**Alberta**  
CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM

WEST CANADIAN COLLEGE



## Crowsnest Pass Historical Driving Tour:

# Bellevue and Hillcrest



West Canadian Collieries boarding houses,  
Bellevue, 1904. (GAI)

**T**he Crowsnest Pass, an area in southwestern Alberta that is extraordinarily rich in historical resources, became the first Ecomuseum and Historic District in Alberta in 1988. The purpose of the Ecomuseum is to preserve, restore, interpret, enhance and maintain features and objects of historic, natural, human and industrial interest in the Crowsnest Pass. This new initiative supports heritage preservation activities as a tool to overall community development and enhancement, and will lead the way for other Alberta communities to explore cultural economic development.

A large number of buildings remain as testimony to the importance of the coal mining industry that shaped the development of the Pass and its towns. The towns of the Pass are

### Front Cover Photo Captions:

#### Top

Miners with dinky engine and coal cars, Hillcrest, 1910-11.  
(GAI)

#### Bottom

Bellevue before fire of 1917. (GAI)

#### Background

Map of the Bellevue Mine

also participating in the Alberta Main Street Programme, which is designed to assist the maintenance and restoration of the historical commercial facade along the main streets.

This driving tour of Bellevue and Hillcrest is one in a series of three booklets, which also includes Blairmore and Coleman. The buildings can be located most easily by following the order in which they are arranged in the brochure. However, as they are numbered along with the streets and avenues on the map in the centre, they can be found in whatever order is most convenient by vehicle or on foot. Note that historic names are used for as many of the buildings as possible, and these do not often correspond with the present name or that of its occupant. Many of the buildings and resources in this tour are privately owned and **should only be viewed from the road.**

These booklets were researched and written by the Historic Sites Service of Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and were published by the Crowsnest Pass Ecomuseum in conjunction with the Coal Association of Canada. The Coal Association of Canada provides both a forum for Canada's coal producers and coal utilities to discuss matters of common interest, and a voice with which to enhance the viability of the industry by promoting the clean use of coal through technology development and communication with governments, employees and the public.

These tours, together with a visit to the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, the Leitch Collieries, and the Bellevue Mine, give an overview of the fascinating history of mining, settlement and commercial development in the Pass.

## Towns of the Crowsnest Pass



Hillcrest and Bellevue. (CM)

In the fall of 1898 the Canadian Pacific Railway completed its new southern main line through the "Crow's Nest Pass," linking Lethbridge with Kootenay Landing in British Columbia. Canadian and foreign investors immediately took advantage of this development. Between 1897 and 1911 no less than twelve companies began mining the rich coal seams that run north to south across the Pass. These companies laid out townsites for their workers and soon a variety of businesses sprang up to serve the rapidly swelling communities. Immigrants flocked to the Crowsnest Pass, which was soon populated by a wide ethnic mix that included Ukrainians, Poles, Italians, Czechs, English as well as some Scots and Irish.

The towns of the Pass, of which Bellevue, Hillcrest, Frank, Blairmore and Coleman still remain, shared many common characteristics





Bellevue streets, ca. 1915. (PAA)

and experiences. They were above all vulnerable to the cyclical swings in the fortunes of the coal industry. The initial boom was short-lived. In 1911 the defeat of the federal Liberal government under Laurier saw a significant reduction in investment, resulting in mine closures or reduced hours of operation in the Pass. Unemployment and falling land prices worsened with the loss of overseas markets during the Great War. Although the situation improved from 1916 to 1918, high unemployment followed in the post-war recession. Union organisation became a feature of life in the Pass. Strikes and demonstrations against reductions in wages and hours of work were common through the 1920s. The situation deteriorated in the deepening depression of the 1930s. The strike of 1932 was followed by the election of a workers' slate to the Blairmore Town Council in February 1933. The Second World War stimulated the demand for coal, but the reprieve was only temporary. At the end of the war declining markets, under-employment and over-production resulted in closures. By 1967 only four mines remained in operation in the Pass.

Life was uncertain in the Crowsnest Pass, and people frequently moved from one place to another in search of work. Mining was a hazardous occupation and accidents were common. Several large scale tragedies struck, most

notably in Hillcrest where 189 miners were killed in an underground explosion in June 1914. Benevolent societies, often within ethnic groups, were the only insurance available in case of injury or death of the family breadwinner. Churches and community halls, again built by various ethnic groups, provided continuity in the face of uncertainty. Social pastimes such as picnics, dances and musical entertainments brought the communities together.

The Crowsnest towns shared a common architecture, the development and features of which are presented in an historical context in this driving tour. The commercial architecture of the Pass evolved over time, and examples from different periods are evident in the streetscapes.

The towns' business centres were laid out along their main streets. Optimism and unbridled confidence in the prosperity of the future characterized the early commercial architecture. Most of the first commercial buildings were wood frame boomtown front designs. Often with only one storey, they were typically built on a rectangular plan, with a gable roof and a rectilinear false facade attached to the front. The boomtown front differentiated commercial from residential structures by making them appear larger, more formal and imposing from the street. Many were plain in appearance, and differed from each other only in small details such as the shape of the parapet or the arrangement of the windows. Recessed doorways allowed a maximum area of visible window display. The wooden siding on some of these buildings was later covered by stucco. Commercial buildings continued to be built on this design into the 1920s.

Some commercial structures were designed in a more elaborate style, and built in brick,

wood with a brick facade, or wood with the hollow brick tiles that were produced in Blairmore. They were most often two storey buildings; the store front had large windows and often had an entablature above. The second floor was usually unadorned although sometimes decorative pilaster strips were added. The roofline was typically marked by a large cornice projecting from the facade. Awnings were a common feature affording shelter from the elements.

Residential buildings varied considerably from large houses built by the mining companies and the towns' businessmen of means, to modest miners' "cottages". Some of the latter were built by mining companies for their workers, others were built for individual miners by local contractors and some were ready made, prefabricated by companies such as the British Columbia Mills, Timber and Trading Company. They were typically one storey wood frame buildings on a square or rectangular plan with a hipped or gable roof and shiplap or clapboard siding.

In each of the towns one or two main contractors and builders were responsible for a good deal of the early construction, and their mark is left on the buildings that remain.

## Bellevue



Bellevue, ca. 1910. (GAI)

West Canadian Collieries Limited began active development of both the mine and the townsite of Bellevue in 1903. The French-based company had begun prospecting in the Pass in 1898, and subsequently bought 20,000 acres of land that encompassed the future townsite of Lille to the north, Blairmore to the west and Byron Creek to the south. Rich coal seams were located immediately beside the railway line in the valley at Bellevue, and the level land above the mine was an ideal place for a townsite. Bellevue received its name when Elise, daughter of the first manager, Frenchman Jules J. Fleutot, expressed her delight with the view on her arrival at the townsite.

By August 1905 there were 150 men on the West Canadian Collieries' Bellevue payroll. An order went out for 40 houses to be constructed that fall. Two major streets running parallel to each other developed in Bellevue: Front Street (the present main street or 213 Street) and Main Street (212 Street) one block north. The commodious Southern Hotel had been built on Front Street by 1906, and in 1909 the imposing Tom McCutcheon Block on Main Street housed a drug store, a refreshment





The main street of Bellevue after the fire in 1921.  
(PAA)

parlour and the hall of the Independent Order of Oddfellows in the west section, and a cafe in the east section. Next door a poolroom and cigar store was set up; the livery stable was just along the street. Bellevue had become a thriving little town, and its population grew further in 1912 when the mine closed down at Lille.

Disaster struck on the morning of August 28, 1917. Fire wiped out most of the business section of Bellevue, destroying over twenty buildings and causing damage to the extent of about \$150,000. Within a week, however, plans were being made for the rebuilding of the Front Street businesses. Main Street was developed as a residential street. Four years later, in July 1921, a second fire destroyed a number of buildings on Front Street, including the Oddfellows Hall that was under construction. The buildings along 213 Street, with a few exceptions, consequently date from the 1920s.

Fred Wolstenholme was the contractor for many of the buildings constructed after the 1921 fire. Wolstenholme had come to Canada with his family from England in 1885, settling first in Lethbridge and soon afterwards in the Pass. By 1909 he had a successful flour and feed store, a lumber yard and a contracting business in Frank. In 1912 Wolstenholme moved his business to Bellevue where he also acquired a dairy.

*Enter Bellevue off Highway 3 by the east access, and turn right at the first fork. This route leads through Maple Leaf, once a separate community, but now part of Bellevue. The community of Maple Leaf sprang up around the small Maple Leaf Mine that opened in 1907. Businesses soon included a butcher, a shoemaker and a blacksmith shop.*

2700 Block - 223 Street

## 1. Grocery Store



Grocery Store, 1990. (HSS)

This building was an Italian grocery store during the 1920s. The proprietor, Mr. Pagialli, sold Italian specialities such as olive oil and tuna fish as well as other groceries. Olives were sold loose, scooped from a barrel. The building was later used to house an overflow of students from the school, and then once again as a grocery store. The store is a fine example of commercial architecture. It is a small but imposing single storey red brick structure on a fieldstone foundation with a boomtown facade. Note the course of fancy brickwork under the parapet.



2165 - 223 Street

## 2. Maple Leaf School



Maple Leaf School 1925. (CM)

An increase in school enrolments in the Bellevue area prompted the erection of a new four room school in 1924. The Bellevue school built before 1912 had proved inadequate, and even though an extra four rooms were added to the school in 1919, the extra space was still not enough. The new four roomed school in Maple Leaf solved the problem. It is a large single storey wood frame building on a raised basement with a hip roof. The original stucco remains along with the central recessed entrance. The school was used until the 1960s when the M.D. McEachern School opened. It has subsequently served as a community hall.

*Continue along 28 Avenue to join 27 Avenue, entering Bellevue along 213 Street. Once known as Front Street, this is now the town's main street.*

2502 - 213 Street

## 3. Oddfellows Hall



Oddfellows Hall, 1990. (HSS)

This hall was erected in 1922 by Fred Wolstenholme for the Independent Order of Oddfellows. This was the third Oddfellows Hall in Bellevue, two earlier ones having been destroyed in the fires of 1917 and 1921. The new hall served the Oddfellows until it was sold in 1967. It is a one storey building of wood frame and hollow brick tile construction. Note the wooden brackets under the front gable eaves and the small shed roof and brackets over the entrance.

The arch attached to the hall on the east side has an interesting history. It was built to stabilise the hall and the building that stood next to it, which was the United Church. The Bellevue water works ran water south down 25th Avenue in wooden stave pipes, which, when they reached 212th Street split east and west. Leaking water continued down in the direction of the coulee below the town. Its natural route took it between the Oddfellows' Hall and the United Church. The foundations of these buildings became undermined and the arch was put up to strengthen the two corners. It was later blocked off to prevent people taking a short cut between the two buildings from 212th Street to 213th Street. The arch is



now once again open, and the short cut was re-established when the United Church was demolished.

*Continue west along 213<sup>rd</sup> Street.*

2438-213 Street

## 4. Bellevue Cafe



Bellevue Cafe, 1933. (GAI)

The Bellevue Cafe, built in 1917 by Joe Mah, became famous as the scene of a shoot-out between police and train robbers in August of 1920. Mah had emigrated from Canton in China in about 1908. He first lived on Vancouver Island, but the following year moved to Bellevue, where he opened a restaurant. This was a small shed-roofed wood frame structure with clapboard siding. The cafe was burnt down in the fire of 1917 and Mah was one of many businessmen forced to rebuild their premises. The Bellevue Cafe remained in the hands of the Mah family until 1975. It is a long rectangular two storey wood frame structure

with a boomtown facade.

As the Canadian Pacific Railway No. 63 wound its way through the Crowsnest Pass on August 2, 1920, it was held up by three men who believed that Emilio Picariello, the well-known bootlegger of the Pass, was on Board with a large sum of cash. The three thieves, George Arkoff, Tom Bassoff, and Alex Auloff, were mistaken and only collected about \$300 before making their escape. Two of them were apprehended in Bellevue five days later.

As the *Calgary Herald* later reported, “two unkempt, unshaven men hurried with furtive glances,” past the bank and went on to a small Chinese cafe “where odours of fried potatoes onion and cabbage struggled for supremacy on the summer air.” When they entered they sat down in one of the booths and called for immediate service. In the meantime the police had been alerted that “two desperate looking characters answering the description of the bandits were in the cafe.”

When the police officers Frewin, Usher, and Bailey arrived to arrest them, pandemonium broke loose as shots were fired. Usher died just inside the door of the cafe and Bailey was killed as he came from the back of the building on hearing gunfire. One of the bandits, Arkoff, died as he staggered out of the Bellevue cafe. Bassoff escaped but was finally captured after an extensive manhunt and was subsequently hanged. Auloff managed to elude justice for several years but was finally captured in Butte, Montana and sentenced to life in prison. Bullet holes partly filled with putty were still visible during the 1920s in one of the booths.

In December 1989, this building was designated a Registered Historic Resource. The original clapboard siding and window details of the Bellevue Cafe’s front elevation were reconstructed in 1990 by the Alberta Main Street Programme.



2425-213 Street

## 5. Brazzoni Building



Brazzoni Building, 1990. (HSS)

This building is an interesting example of later boomtown front commercial architecture. It is of wood frame and hollow brick tile construction with a stucco facade. Both the front and east facades have a stepped parapet. The decorative embellishments on the walls are a recent addition. Local contractor and businessman Arthur Brazzoni erected the building in 1927. In its early years it housed the office of notary public Fred Turner and was later a hardware store.

2413-213 Street

## 6. E.C. McDonald Drug Store



E.C. McDonald Drug Store, 1990. (HSS)



Detail, 1990. (HSS)

The E.C. McDonald drug store building was constructed prior to 1920, when the business was bought by Alf Barbour, better known as Doc Barbour, who lived in the leanto at the back of the building. He sold the store in 1934. Joe Brazzoni later also ran it as a drug store. It now serves as a drop-in centre for senior citizens, who make use of the old display shelves along the walls.

The building is a wood frame one storey boomtown front structure. It is unusual in that it has a returned cornice, or one that continues around the sides of the building. Above this is a shaped parapet ornamented with enamel tiles at each end. Note the fancy brickwork beneath the cornice and also the polychrome tiles on the pilasters flanking the display windows. The original recessed doorway and windows have been modified.

2414-2420-213 Street

## 7. Bellevue Inn

This building was constructed in 1921 by the West Canadian Collieries Company to replace the first Bellevue Hotel which had burned to the ground in the 1917 fire. The general contractor was Fred Wolstenholme. The Inn is a two storey structure built on a U-shaped plan, the design of which shows the





Bellevue Inn (PAA A11,643)

influence of European alpine chalets. It is made of hollow brick tile on a wooden frame. The main facade has two offset hipped gables flanking a recessed central entrance. Each of the gable ends has a one storey open porch with a hipped roof supported by large brackets and square wooden pillars. The Inn provided accommodation for the Company's business clients and allowed West Canadian Collieries to tap the lucrative bar trade. The Company sold the Bellevue Inn to a private owner for \$38,500 in 1945.

*Turn right onto 24 Avenue, north to 210 Street, turn right and go east.*

2418-210 Street

## 8. Guisseppi (Joseph) Nastasi Residence



The Nastasi Residence, 1990. (HSS)

This is a fine example of a type of miner's cottage that was common throughout the Pass. It is a wood frame structure built on a square plan and has a hipped roof with a central brick chimney. The front porch is integral to the roofline, forming an extended eave. Note the lathe-turned posts and fancy stick work. This cottage was not built on its present site but was moved here; the transportation of buildings from place to place in the Pass was not an uncommon practice.

Guisseppi Nastasi immigrated to Canada with his brother in 1901. He came to Coleman with a C.P.R. gang in 1902, and then went to work in the mine in Lille the following year. The brothers later moved to Passburg in 1910, where they built and operated a bakery until 1920. Joseph married Eleanore DeLieu who had come from Lille in France to Lille in Canada in 1904; she was a mid-wife in both Lille and Passburg. Joseph later ran a confectionary and worked as a miner until his retirement in 1939. In 1956 Joseph Nastasi moved his house from Passburg to Bellevue.

*Turn right onto 25 Avenue south to 211 Street. Turn right, and then left on 24 Avenue. At 213 Street, jog to the right onto 23 Avenue.*

2318-214 Street

## 9. Miner's Residence

This building is an interesting example of how people added to their existing house as circumstances demanded. The earliest part is the small front rectangular gable-roofed section with an open gable-roofed porch. The leanto on the west end and the northern section that forms a T shape were probably added later. Some modifications have been made to the original section, most notably the windows have been replaced.





Miner's Residence, 1990. (HSS)

*Turn left on 214 Street to 25 Avenue and turn left.*

21350-25 Avenue

## 10. Fred Wolstenholme Residence

Fred Wolstenholme, Bellevue's most prominent builder during the 1920s, had long promised to build a dream home for his wife Jeannie. He finally realised his dream in 1931, but only lived to enjoy it for seven years before his death in October 1938. Situated on a corner lot and set into the hill, this house is a beautifully proportioned piece of architecture.

It is a one and one-half storey wood frame structure on a partially raised cement base-ment. The original stucco covering with decorative quoins has been covered by siding. The entrance has a portico set on two columns along classical lines. Two bay windows with hipped roofs on the south side, along with a corbelled brick chimney, add distinction to the house.

*Go north along 25 Avenue. Turn right on 213 Street and then right on the Bellevue Mine access road.*



The Wolstenholme Residence, 1990. (HSS)

## 11. Bellevue Mine



The tipple at the Bellevue Mine. (CM)

The Bellevue Mine of West Canadian Collieries went into production in 1904. The main access was through a horizontal tunnel, completed in 1905, which was driven from the surface to intersect with the four main coal seams. By 1907 the colliery was producing about 1200 tons of coal a day when it was working, and in 1910 a new tipple was built. During the peak years of production, 1925-1929, the Bellevue mine employed 500 men and produced over 200,000 tons of coal a year. It finally closed in 1961.





The Bellevue Mine. Note washhouse on the hill and the flight of steps leading down to the mine. (GAI)



The locker room in the Bellevue Mine washhouse, 1920s. (PAA)

All of the coal was mined by variations of the “room and pillar” mining method in which the area to be extracted was developed by roadways driven approximately at right angles, forming pillars 10 to 20 metres square to support the roof. As the mine progressed, these pillars would be removed to the extent that roof conditions allowed. A variety of methods was used for extracting, loading, and transporting the coal from the mine to the surface. Coal was discharged from the main tunnel into the tippel. There it was crushed, cleaned and graded to satisfy the requirements of various markets.

The Bellevue Mine, like most of the mines in the Pass, had a large surface plant. This

included the tippel, power house, hoist house, lamp house, repair shops and a washhouse. Of the buildings visible in historic photographs, only the washhouse built in 1910 on top of the cliff remains. A walkway of over ten flights of steps can be seen in the photograph extending from the washhouse down to the entrance to the mine. Today the portal of the tunnel, foundations and debris from the surface plant can still be seen.

The washhouse was a large one storey structure with a low-pitched gable roof and stucco covering, constructed with the fire resistant hollow brick tile favoured by West Canadian Collieries. The washhouse contained lockers and showers, and it was here that the miners changed from their street clothes to their work clothes before descending into the mine. After their shift they cleaned up before going home. Their mining gear, often damp or wet from long hours underground, was hung in metal mesh lockers to be dried by steam heat.

A major tragedy occurred in the Bellevue mine on December 9, 1910. The afternoon shift of 42 men went down into the mine. At about 8:00 p.m. a tremendous explosion swept through the mine, and forced the air out of the tunnels. Rock falls from the roof had ignited fine coal dust and the ever-present methane gas. Despite the heroic efforts of rescue teams, a total of 30 men lost their lives.

*A tour of the main tunnel under the auspices of the Crownsnest Pass Ecomuseum Trust gives a glimpse of the underground life of the miner. Return to 213 Street and turn left. Go west to Highway 3. Continue across the highway and follow 9 Avenue over the railway tracks to Hillcrest.*



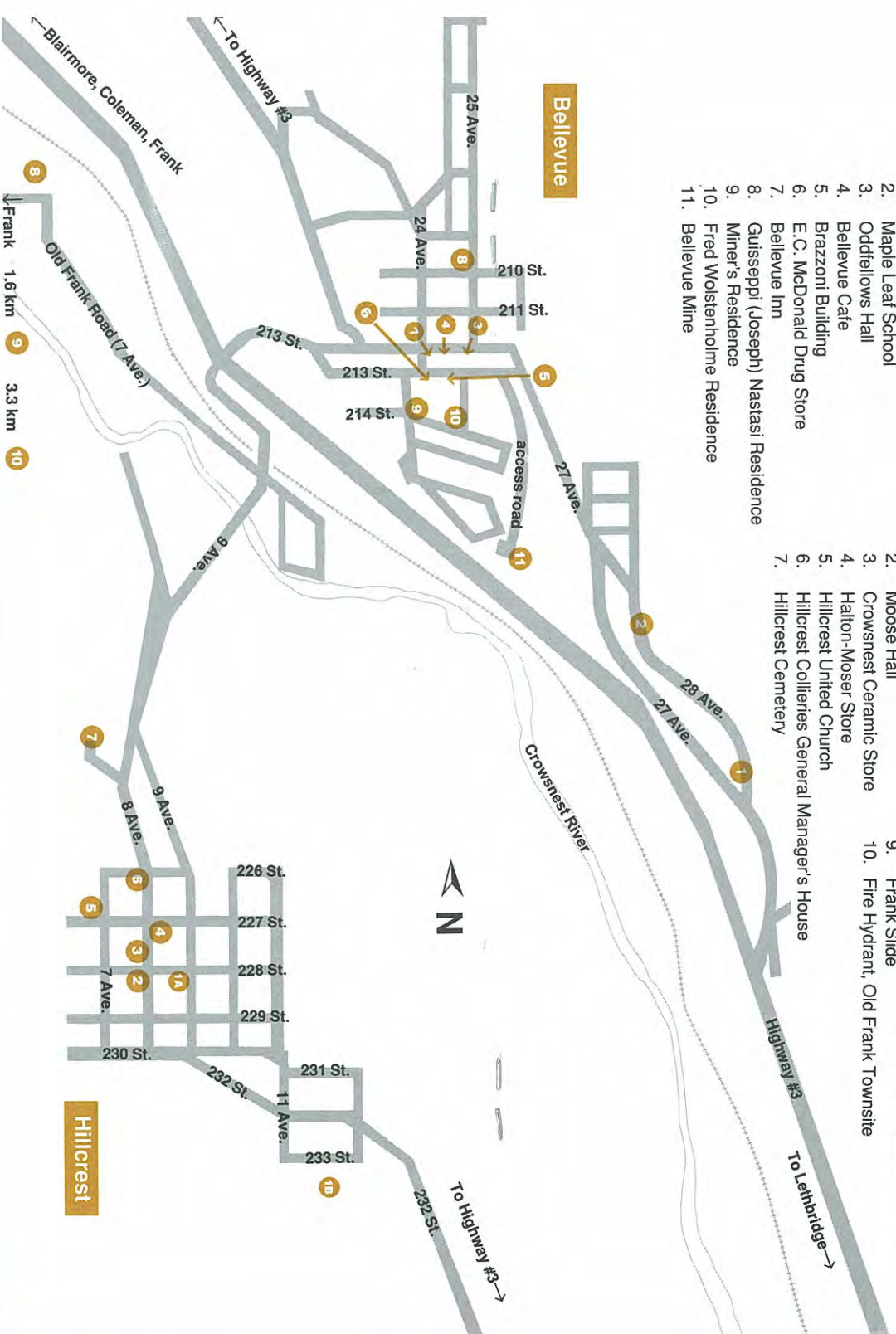
## LEGEND

### Bellevue

1. Grocery Store
2. Maple Leaf School
3. Oddfellows Hall
4. Bellevue Cafe
5. Brazzoni Building
6. E.C. McDonald Drug Store
7. Bellevue Inn
8. Guisseppi (Joseph) Nastasi Residence
9. Miner's Residence
10. Fred Wolstenholme Residence
11. Bellevue Mine

### Hillcrest

1. Miners' Residences
2. Moose Hall
3. Crowsnest Ceramic Store
4. Halton-Moser Store
5. Hillcrest United Church
6. Hillcrest Collieries General Manager's House
7. Hillcrest Cemetery
8. Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company Lime Kilns
9. Frank Slide
10. Fire Hydrant, Old Frank Townsite





## Hillcrest



View of Hillcrest, n.d. Note the Halton-Moser Store in the foreground. (CM)

Hillcrest was named after Charles Plummer Hill. Hill was one of the first individuals to prospect seriously for coal in the Crowsnest Pass before the turn of the century. He obtained mineral rights to the land on which the Hillcrest Mine and townsite would develop. It took Hill three years, however, to acquire sufficient capital to begin operations. The Hillcrest Coal and Coke Company was incorporated on January 31, 1905.

The village of Hillcrest was developed just north of the surface plant in 1905. Trees were cut down and shacks built for the workers. Roads were laid out with optimism for the future: the main street was to be 80 and the other streets 60 feet wide. A railway line was built to connect to the CPR line at Hillcrest junction. By 1910 Hillcrest station had been built and side tracks for Hillcrest coal cars had been put in. Hillcrest already had a school, a hotel and a store.

The mine expanded, a new power house was constructed in 1911 and the new steel tiple was completed in 1912. The goal of producing 2,000 tons of coal a day was near at hand when a major disaster occurred. In June 1914

an explosion destroyed much of the mine and took 189 lives. The tragedy rocked the small town and left many families destitute.

Life, nevertheless, went on in Hillcrest. Over 500 men were employed by Hillcrest Collieries and 250,000 tons of coal were produced annually from 1919-1921. After Hillcrest Mohawk Collieries went into liquidation in 1938, Hillcrest's population declined. Today it is a quiet residential community.



No. 1 Hoist House, Hillcrest Mine, before June 18, 1914. (PAA)



The remains of No. 1 Hoist House after the mine disaster of June, 1914. (GAI)



## 1A., 1B. Miners' Residences

Upon entering Hillcrest along 9 Avenue, the variety of miners' cottages is apparent. Many of the earliest ones have disappeared, and others have undergone extensive renovations, but enough remain to give an impression of the town's original character.

22810-9 Avenue

### A. Miner's Residence



Miner's Residence, 1990. (HSS)

This cottage is typical of those that were built on a square plan with a hipped roof. The porch is integral with the roofline which forms an extended eave. Note the lathe-turned posts and carved decorative brackets on the porch.

*Continue over the bridge to 230 Street. Turn left onto 232 Street and then right onto 11 Avenue and left onto 233 Street.*

1125-233 Street

### B. Miner's Residence

This cottage is a variation on the square plan with hipped roof, as it has a corner porch. The porch here also has lathe-turned posts and decorative brackets. The stained glass in the

transom windows above the windows in the front facade was a common feature among the small architectural details that distinguished one home from another throughout the Pass.



Miner's Residence, 1990. (HSS)

*Several other good examples of miners' cottages can be seen by continuing along 12 Avenue and back along 1231 Street and 230 Street. Turn right on 9 Avenue and then turn left on 228 Street.*

SW Corner of 8 Avenue and 228 Street

## 2. Moose Hall



Moose Hall, 1990. (HSS)

The Moose Hall is the second structure to occupy this lot. The first housed a Chinese restaurant during the 1920s. Fire destroyed the cafe in 1934, it was rebuilt in 1935, and it served as a cafe until the Loyal Order of Moose



took it over in the 1950s.

Blairmore Lodge 105 of the Loyal Order of Moose was chartered on October 17, 1926, and rapidly became one of the largest in Alberta. A prolonged coal strike in 1932, however, led to a drastic reduction in membership and the few remaining members moved the Lodge from Blairmore to Hillcrest.

The hall is a one storey wood frame structure with stucco covering and decorative quoins. The boomtown front has an unusual corner entryway.

22718-8 Avenue

### 3. Crowsnest Ceramic Store



Crowsnest Ceramic Store, 1990. (HSS)

This store dates from about 1910 and was a grocery and meat market for many years. From 1921 to 1923 Steven Janostak, a well-known Coleman retailer, occupied the store. John Lipnicka and Mike Jankulak later took it over and sold meats and groceries.

This building is a good example of wood frame commercial architecture. The stepped parapet of the false front, still clad in shiplap siding, hides a gable roof. The recessed entrance, typical of the widespread boomtown style, has survived intact, flanked by large multi-paned windows with transoms above and wooden bulkheads beneath.

22705-8 Avenue

### 4. Halton-Moser Store



Halton-Moser Store, 1990. (HSS)

One of the first commercial enterprises established in Hillcrest after operations began in the mine in 1905 was the MacLean Trading Company. It specialised in general merchandise including groceries, dry goods and hardware items. The store was sold in 1908 to Tom Burnett and George E. Cruickshank, who operated it under the name Burnett and Cruickshank. Cruickshank and his family lived in a residence next door.

The store played a significant role in the aftermath of the Hillcrest mine disaster of June 1914. Many of the bodies were prepared for burial on the second floor of the building, and the owners donated the cloth in which the bodies were wrapped.

The Burnett and Cruickshank store was one enterprise that did not lay off staff due to the drop in business during the 1930s. In 1937 Cruickshank bought out Burnett and continued the business until 1948, when he sold it to one of his employees, Walter Moser. Moser, along with his brother-in-law David Halton, established the Halton-Moser store, and added a meat business to the enterprise which remained in operation until Moser's death in 1959.

Walter Moser had lived in Hillcrest since



1921. The youngest son of a Zurich banker, he had immigrated to Canada in 1910, soon moving to Edmonton where he earned his living as a violinist with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. When he moved to Hillcrest, Moser first lived in the boarding house that stood across the street from Cruickshank's store. He travelled throughout the Pass teaching violin and playing for silent movies and at dances. Moser made a significant musical contribution to the communities of Pass, and played a key role in the organization of the renowned annual Crowsnest Pass Music Festival. The rationing of gasoline during the war made it difficult for Moser to travel to give lessons; he took a job at Cruickshank's store in 1942 to ensure an income.

The store is a large two storey wood frame structure. It has a gradually sloping shed roof, clearly visible from the southwest corner of the building. Although the facade has been substantially altered on the ground floor, the original shiplap siding on the second floor and bracketed cornice are visible.

*Turn left on 227 Street, then turn right on 7 Avenue.*

22618-7 Avenue

## 5. Hillcrest United Church



Hillcrest United Church, 1990. (HSS)

This building was erected in 1913 by the Methodist congregation of Hillcrest. In its early years the church had no resident minister but was served by circuit riders, the first being Rev. James Lang from Passburg and the second, the Rev. W.T. Young from Blairmore. In 1925, on the union of the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, Hillcrest Methodist Church became part of the United Church of Canada.

The church is a modest wood frame gable-roofed structure clad in shiplap siding. It is typical of small churches built in the Carpenter's Gothic Style throughout Alberta. A louvred belfrey and spire grace the roofline.

*Turn right on 226 Street.*

Corner of 226 Street and 8 Avenue

## 6. Hillcrest Collieries General Manager's House



General Manager's House, 1985. (HSS)

A Montreal syndicate took control of the Hillcrest Coal and Coke Company in 1910, renaming it Hillcrest Collieries Limited. Many improvements were subsequently made to the surface plant and townsite. In the spring and summer of 1911 a general office, general



manager's house and a smaller house were built. Of these only the general manager's house remains. It is a large two storey wood frame building with a cross gable roof.

In the 1940s the house was the residence of F.J. Harquail, a Montreal businessman, and a key figure in the reorganization of the Hillcrest Collieries. When the company merged with Mohawk Bituminous Mines Limited, Harquail became one of the two treasurers of the new company. In 1951 this enterprise merged with the two Coleman mining companies, the International Coal and Coke Company and the McGillivray Creek Coal and Coke Company, forming Coleman Collieries Limited of which Harquail served as managing director and later president.

*Turn left on 8 Avenue and go west to the cemetery.*

## 7. Hillcrest Cemetery



Mass burial in two long trenches, 1914. (PAA)

On June 19, 1914 the morning shift of 237 men went into the Hillcrest mine to work; at the end of the day only 48 were still alive. They were the survivors of the most devastating underground explosion in Canadian mining history. At approximately 9:30 a.m.



Waiting to identify bodies, 1914. (PAA)

a thunderous explosion ripped through the tunnels, up the slopes and burst from the mine entries. "It was just like the crack of a cannon," one survivor reported, "and without the slightest warning."

The blast was so strong that the engine house standing a full 100 feet from the mouth of the pit was demolished. The manager immediately reversed the air flow of the ventilation fan so that fresh air was pumped into the mine, saving many men from the deadly "afterdamp" or carbon monoxide poisoning. Rescue teams rushed to the scene from all over the Pass and beyond. The rail rescue car was summoned from Fernie in British Columbia. The rescuers first on the scene used "pulmotor" equipment to revive unconscious victims.

Most of those who were brought out of the mine were, however, beyond medical help. Many of the dead could not be identified. Bodies were wrapped in white cloth in preparation for burial. Most of the victims were spaced one foot apart in mass graves, enclosed now by white picket fences. The Hillcrest Cemetery was designated a Provincial Historic Resource in February, 1985.

*Return along 9 Avenue, take the left turn immediately before the railway tracks and go north on 7 Avenue (Old Frank Road).*



## 8. Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company Lime Kilns



Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company lime kilns, ca. 1915. (PAA)

The years immediately before World War I saw a massive boom in the towns and cities of the prairies. Numerous building supply companies sprang up to meet the demand for materials. One of the largest of these was the Winnipeg Fuel and Supply Company. In 1912 the company built two lime kilns near Hillcrest, taking advantage of the proximity of the CPR main line to the thousands of tons of limestone rock that had come crashing down in the Frank Slide.

Lime, which was used in the mortar of brick buildings and in cement, was produced by the following process. Narrow gauge rail cars followed tracks laid into the Frank Slide, where the limestone rocks were broken down to a manageable size. The rocks were loaded into containers, which were then pulled by horses to a steam hoist. A safety whistle was sounded as the hoist lifted the container, and a rope opened one side of the container to let the rock fall into the kiln. A fire of slab wood was banked to produce a long, slow and even baking of the rock to break it down. Once cooled, the lime was then drawn from the bottom of the kiln and

loaded into the company's barrels. These were stored in a lime shed ready for shipment in the boxcars that came down the spur line.

The manager of the operation was George Pattinson. A third kiln was later added, and a small community grew up around the plant. Known as Lime City, it included a number of bunkhouses for the hired men, a small office and a house for Pattinson and his family. The building boom collapsed in the west before the First World War, and by 1918 the resulting decrease in demand for lime forced the Company to cease operation. The three kilns, clearly visible from the road, are all that remain of the company's operations.

*Continue along this road through the Frank Slide.*

### 1.6 Kilometers West on Old Frank Road

## 9. Frank Slide



Frank Slide, ca. 1911. (PAA)



CPR main line buried by slide, 1903. (GAI)



Early in 1901 two Americans, S.E. Gebo (Gibeau) and H.L. Frank acquired the mineral rights to a large area at the base of Turtle Mountain. Within a year, they had established the Canadian-American Coal and Coke Company, laid out a townsite called Frank and were selling the first commercial coal to be mined in the Pass to the CPR. The town of Frank grew rapidly, and by 1903 had a thriving commercial district and a population of 600. Disaster, however, was about to strike.

“On April 29, 1903 between four and five o’clock in the morning, without any warning, a large portion of the northern face of Turtle Mountain slid into the valley below...,” recorded Superintendent Primrose of the NWMP. “This crossed the valley,” he continued, “scooping up river, rocks, trees, etc., and carrying them across the valley, at a distance of about a mile and a half, up the opposite side to a height of four or five hundred feet, and piling debris in places to the depth of one hundred feet in the valley and spreading out east and west, a distance of about two miles.” It has been estimated that approximately thirty million cubic metres of limestone had crashed down to the valley in only 100 seconds. Sixty-eight residents of Frank were killed, although only part of the town of Frank was in the direct path of the slide. The mine entrance was also buried, trapping the men on the night shift. Fourteen hours later they dug their way to the surface without loss of life. The mine, despite such a disaster, was once again in operation only thirty days afterwards.

## 10. Fire Hydrant, Old Frank Townsite



Frank after the slide, ca. 1911. (PAA)

This fire hydrant, on the left hand side of the road just before the tracks, constitutes the only visible remains of the old townsite of Frank. Fear of a second slide led to the relocation of the town away from the base of Turtle Mountain to north of the CPR main line in 1912. When the town had recovered from the disaster of the slide, the Canadian-American Coal and Coke Company closed its mine in Frank in 1917. Commercial development in Frank declined and the town became largely a residential community.

*Continue over the tracks to Highway 3. A right turn leads to the access road to the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre. A left turn leads west to Blairmore.*



# Glossary

## bargeboard

a wide, decoratively carved board, usually found under the eaves in gable ends

## boomtown front

a facade on a building which disguises its actual roof shape and increases the building's apparent size

## bulkheads

the low wall in a storefront which forms the base for display windows

## corbel

a projection or series of stepped projections in masonry or brick built out from a wall to support the eaves of a roof or some other feature

## cornice

any projecting decorative moulding along the top of a building, wall or arch; may be in wood, stone, plaster or pressed metal

## cross gable roof

a roof with a cross-shaped ridgeline formed of two gable roofs of equal size intersecting at right angles

## entablature

a combination of decorative elements which form a wide band at the top of a wall or above a row of columns

## facade

the exterior or front of a building

## gable roof

a roof with two slopes, a straight ridgeline and an inverted v-shaped cross-section

## hipped roof

a roof having a sloping surface instead of a vertical gable end, often resembling a pyramid in shape

## parapet

a low wall, which may be embellished or decorated, projecting along the edge of a roof

## pilaster

a pier or pillar attached to and projecting only slightly from a wall

## quoins

stones or bricks used to structurally reinforce or decoratively emphasize the outside corners of a building

## shed roof

a roof having only one slope

## transom window

a window found above a door or main window and separated from them by a horizontal piece of wood or stone known as a transom bar





# Notes





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## **Historical Tour Series**

**Historical Walking and Driving Tours are  
available for the following communities and  
areas:**

Bellevue and Hillcrest, 2nd Edition  
Blairmore, 2nd Edition  
Calgary (Inglewood and Mount Royal)  
Coleman, 2nd Edition  
East Central Alberta (Ukrainian Churches)  
Edmonton (Downtown)  
Edmonton (Strathcona)  
Fort Macleod  
Grande Prairie  
High River  
Lacombe  
Lethbridge  
Markerville  
Medicine Hat  
Red Deer, 2nd Edition  
Turner Valley



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Hillcrest, June 19, 1914 (*GAI*)

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Charles Ironmonger Residence, Hillcrest, 1914. (*GAI*)

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Bellevue shops with Finlander's dancehall in background. (*GAI*)

#### Background

Map of the Bellevue Mine.