



Fernie Railway Trilogy

Morrissey, Fernie and Michel Railway Canadian Pacific Railway Great Northern Railway – Crowsnest Southern Branch



The first train to arrive was this CPR work train early in 1890. Regular service did not commence until July of that year.

Fernie was initially conceived because of coal, but business was allowed to flourish because of the railways. The Canadian Pacific Railway reached Fernie from Lethbridge, in 1898, where stockpiles of coal were already awaiting its arrival. Many passengers on the train were business people looking for the opportunities that this emerging community offered. A spur of the CPR line was extended to the coke ovens (present Aquatic Centre site), and then continued to the Coal Creek mine site.



In 1901, James Jerome Hill announced that a line from Bonners Ferry to Fernie would be built, and the Great Northern Railway arrived in 1903. Crowsnest Southern Railway (CNS)



Morrissey, Fernie and Michel Railway

The CPR Train Station (now The Arts Station) was a hub of activity, receiving supplies, and newcomers alike. In 1904 a twenty-year lease of the Coal Creek Branch to the Morrissey, Fernie and Michel Railway (MFM&M) from CPR was executed, where an additional mile of track was added to connect both the CPR and GNR, converging at this present day location.

In 1907, the year that the Crowsnest Pass Coal Company increased its capital stock to four million dollars and bought the CPR's rail spur to Coal Creek, some 3,600 tonnes per day,

initiated scheduled service into Fernie on December 15th, 1904, the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company had incorporated the Morrissey, Fernie and Michel Railway Company (MFM&M), and J.J. Hill and his Great Northern were well on their way to gaining control of Crow's Nest Pass Coal.

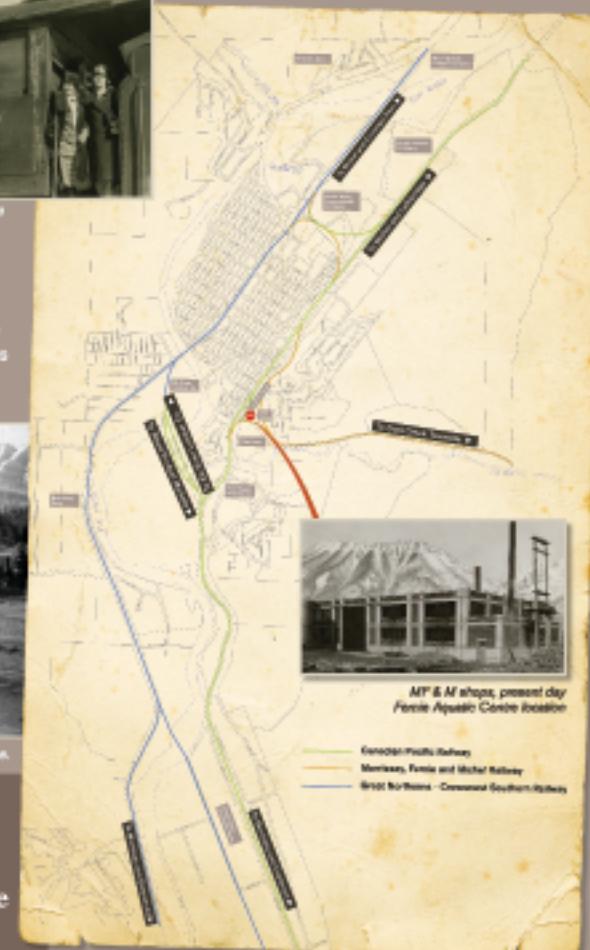
The GNR followed the present alignment of Crowsnest Highway #3, from Elkto to where the present Best Western Hotel is located, where a spur looped back through what is now the Fernie Golf and Country Club, to the coke oven site.

most of the company's production, was either loaded raw into CNS gondolas at the tipple at Coal Creek, Michel and Carbonado, or into CNP Coal's 1116 ovens at Fernie, Morrissey Mines and Michel for reduction into coke.

Proposals were developed in the 1960s to build a new railway over sections of the abandoned Great Northern between the GN main line in Montana and the Crowsnest Pass when new mining developments were being considered in the area. However, the idea was not politically acceptable in British Columbia and the coal was routed over the Canadian Pacific instead. The proposed railway was chartered as the Kootenay and Elk Railway in 1968.



MFM&M Railway Engine #502



While you look around Fernie try to imagine the industrial buzz of activity at the turn of the 20th Century, where railways were the linkage to the outside world and Coal was King.

Fernie History

With all of its heritage buildings, Fernie is steeped in its past. Many a miner's shack still lines its streets. Today's City Hall once housed the offices of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company and the Livery building on Victoria Avenue tended to horses. Although no mining happened in Fernie, it would not exist without coal. With the development of

railroads, Fernie became the hub, fed by the coal produced from the slopes of its surrounding towns.

The mines at Coal Creek were the first developed in the area, making it a major economic driver in the building of Fernie and important part of its past. Six short years after mining was established at Coal Creek in 1890, Fernie's population grew to nearly 4,000, and another 1,000 lived in the town of Coal Creek.

While both Fernie and Coal Creek Townsite were both intimately tied to the boom and bust of coal markets, Coal Creek Townsite suffered a different fate. Mining operators at Coal Creek ceased in 1958, and mining families were forced to move on.

As you take in the Coal Creek Heritage Trail, ponder what once was. Hear the shrieks of children rushing off to school. Feel the sweat of miners digging deep into mountain slopes.

The Trail: The Coal Creek Heritage Trail can be walked or biked and can be accessed from several points. The trail is recreational and accessible to the whole family.

More History: From mining to skiing, more of the area's history can be found at the Fernie Heritage Museum on 2nd Avenue. Or take in the Miner's Walk located in front of City Hall on 3rd Avenue.

Fernie Trails Alliance: The Coal Creek Heritage Trail Interpretive Panel project was conceived of and delivered by the Fernie Trails Alliance. FTAs mission is to maintain responsible, non-motorized trail access on Fernie area Crown lands and private lands. Work with other outdoor recreation groups, government, private landowners and tourist businesses to enhance and maintain the Fernie area non-motorized recreational trail system. Visit fernietrailsalliance.com for more information.