

Columbia and Western Railway Bed



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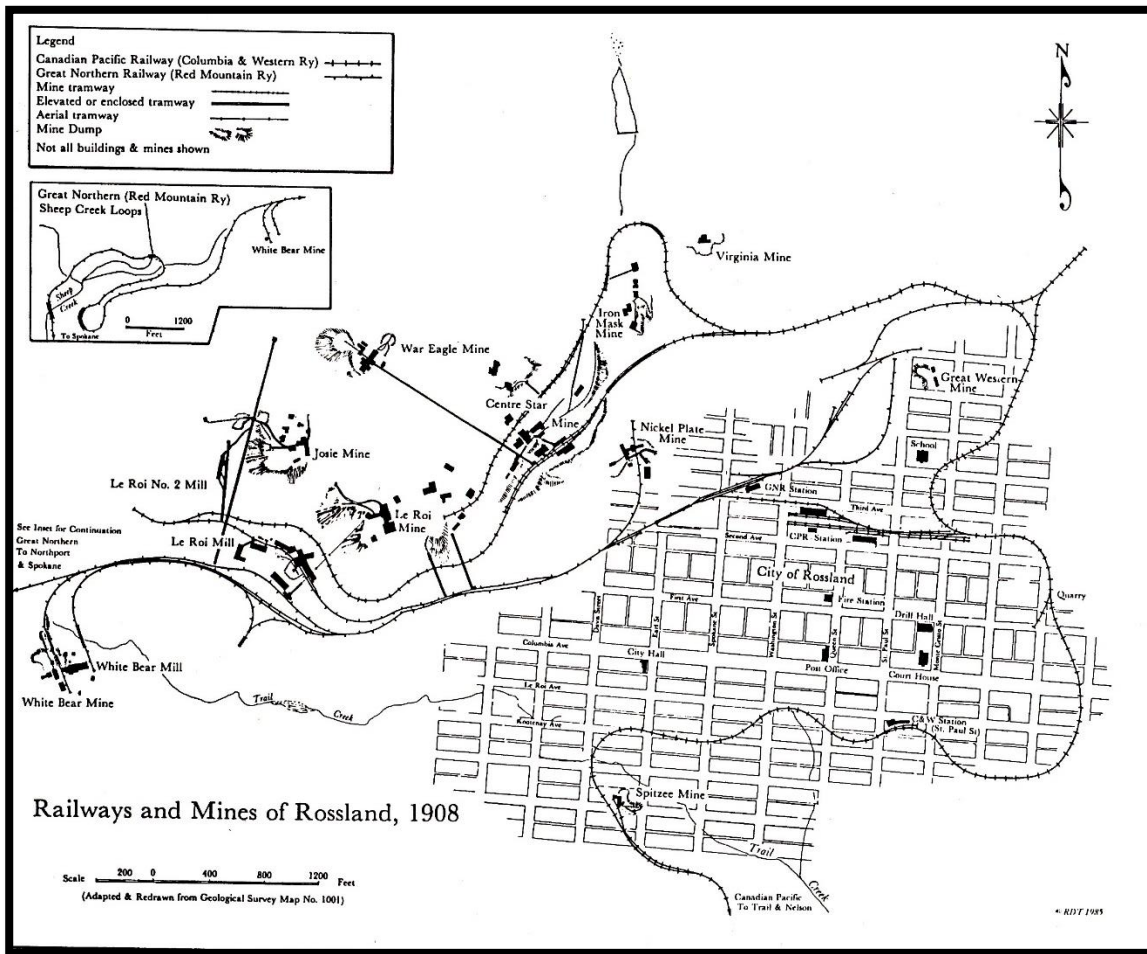
Heritage Register - Site

- 1) **Historical Name:** Columbia & Western Railway Bed
- 2) **Common Name:** Rail Grade
- 3) **Location:**
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1895/96

SIGNIFICANCE

The Columbia and Western Railway has historical significance for the City of Rossland and the development of its mines because it was the major transportation link between the rich ore deposits on Red Mountain and the smelter in Trail. Upon completion of the line in 1896, the trains were also the major carriers of freight and passengers up to Rossland from the connection at Trail Creek Landing with the steamers on the Columbia River from Revelstoke and

Northport. For early Rosslanders, the railway also provided the opportunity for excursions to other communities like Nelson in the surrounding area.



Source: Railways of Rosland by Jack McDonald, pg 11

HISTORY

The railway route took some careful engineering because of the steep grade and even after the narrow gauge rail was replaced with standard gauge in 1899, the trains still used 4 switchbacks to climb up the Trail Creek Valley.

The Columbia and Western Railway and the smelter were sold to Canadian Pacific Railway Co. in 1898 by the owner developer and entrepreneur, Fritz Augustus Heinze as part of the package to get Heinze's charter for a western rail route to the Okanagan. By 1911 when the LeRoi mine was the final addition to the combined rail and smelter operations, Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company - C.M.&S was created. - an arm of Canadian Pacific Railway which later became Cominco and most recently Teck - one of the world's largest mining and smelting companies today.

CPR abandoned its Rossland railway line in 1966 but today, the railway bed is still continuous from Rossland to Warfield and there is still evidence of the area used for 2 of the switchbacks. The railway bed is used extensively by hikers, bikers and cross-country skiers.

Read, "Railways of Rossland" by Jack McDonald (1991) for the indepth and fascinating railway history of Rossland. Available at the Rossland Museum.