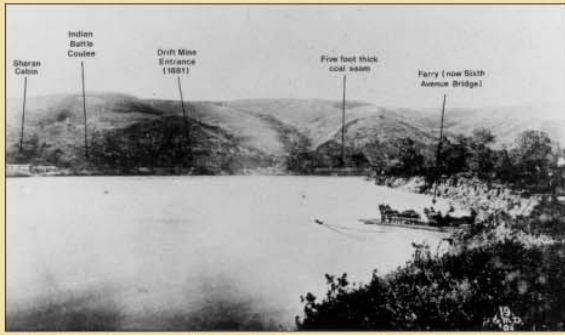


# Nicholas Sheran Mine



This 1883 photograph by Dr. G.M. Dawson of the Geological Survey shows the ferry started by Nicholas Sheran, the cabin and coal shed built by him, and the third mine entry opened by him in 1881.

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Bull teams on "The Square" in the 1880's. The tippie of #1 mine can be seen in the background. Coal was taken to Fort Benton and Fort Macleod by these teams, a paying return load after bringing supplies to the fledgling town of "Coal Banks", now called Lethbridge.

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Nicholas Sheran had fought in the American Civil War, lived with the Inuit for three years, and homesteaded in Montana. In June of 1874, when he arrived in what would become southern Alberta, he was looking for gold. What he found, was coal.

Initially mining was a sideline to a ferry he operated about 1 km north of Fort Whoop-up, three miles south of present day Lethbridge. In his spare time he grubbed for coal in a small seam nearby which he sold to the traders at Fort Whoop-up. With the arrival of the North West Mounted Police, Sheran saw the opportunity to expand his market and in October of 1874 he moved his ferry down river and opened a second mine on the Belly, (now Oldman), River. It was located on the west bank of the river across from Indian Battle Park.

Sheran sold his coal to the new North West Mounted Police post in Fort Macleod, and to merchants in Fort Benton, Montana. Sheran's mine was the first commercial coal mine in Alberta.

The mine passed through several hands after Sheran died. By 1917, it was commonly known as the Federal Mine and kept this name until it was abandoned in 1941. In the 1920's the mine tippie was located on the east side of the Oldman, with the coal coming across the river in a cage on cables called "The High Line". Pedestrians crossed on a cable foot bridge.

Production records were kept from 1902 until 1941, and show almost 482,000 tonnes of coal were taken from the mine. Nicholas Sheran would have approved.



Outcrop of main coal seam at Coal Banks, Belly River, 18 June 1881.

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A cable 'swinging' bridge allowed mine workers to cross the river near the mine, instead of making the long trip by road. A portion of the tippie can be seen in the distance.

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Entrance to Sheran mine (1881). Nicholas Sheran died by drowning in 1882 while assisting Col. James F. Macleod and a group of North-West Mounted Police to cross the flooding river at Kipp's Crossing near Monarch.

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