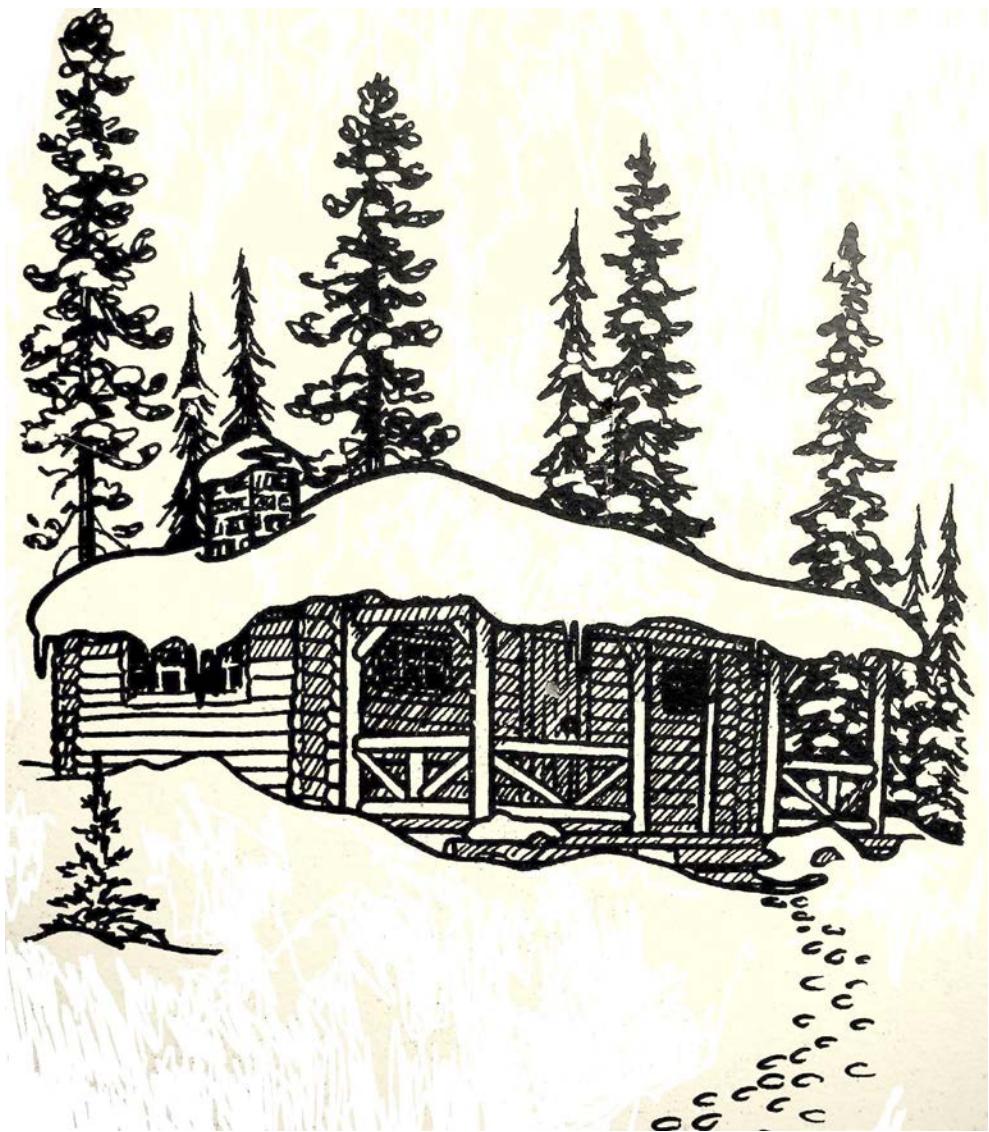


Kananaskis Forest Experimental Station (KFES)
&
P.O.W. Camp 130
History Trail



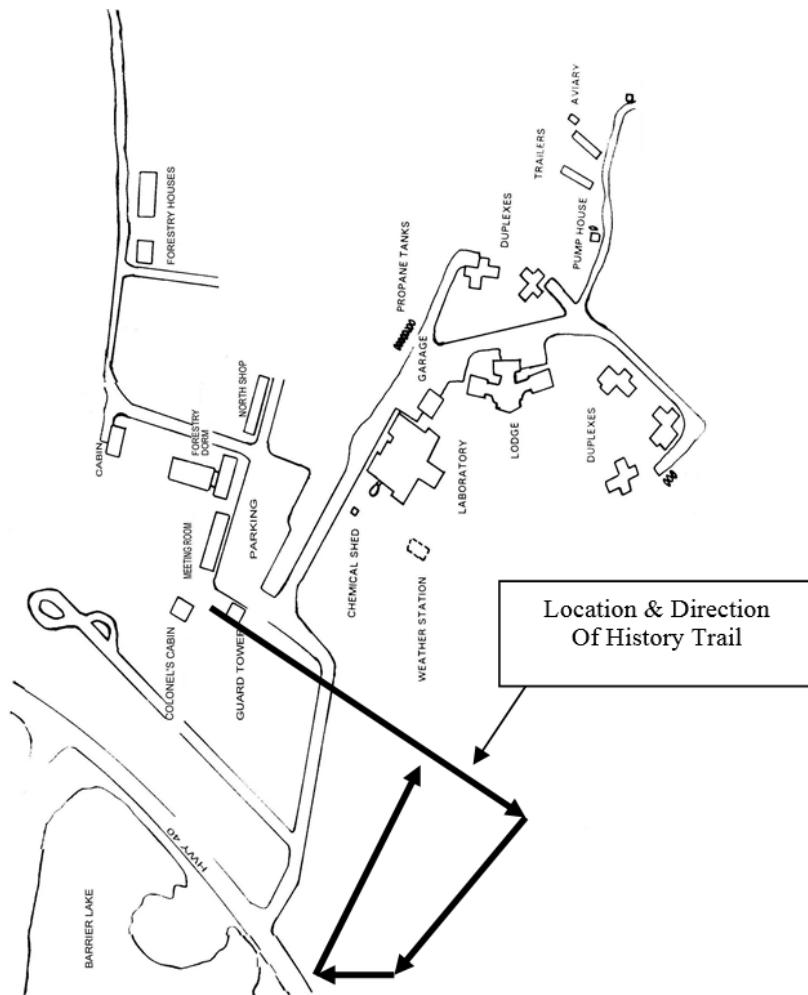
2016 Update

Trail Signs

1. Kananaskis Forest Experimental Station
2. Second World War
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4. Camp Remnants
5. Behind Barbed Wire
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Introduction:

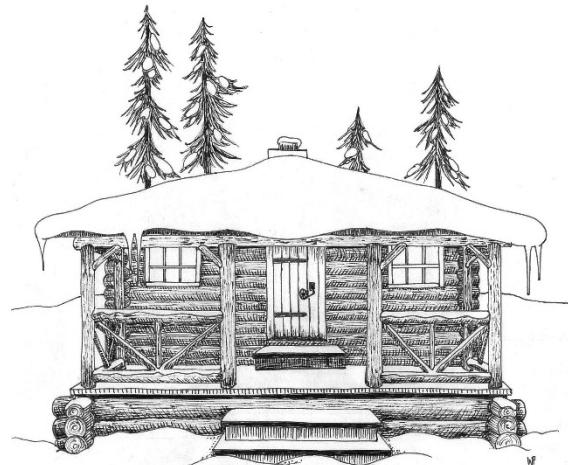
This trail guide is for the *History Trail*, a 1 km interpretive trail located on the south side of the Guard Tower and James Cragg Road. The trail takes approximately 30 minutes to walk. Each stop is labeled with a number corresponding to each number in this guide.



1

Kananaskis Forest Experimental Station (KFES)

In 1934, a forest experimental station was established here to provide an outdoor laboratory for research on tree growth, soils, forest pests, and disease, hydrology, and forest fires. Shortly after its opening, the station became the site of an unemployment relief camp where unemployed single men from the prairies provided physical labour. The log cabin was one of the first buildings constructed on the site and served as the Camp Commandant's quarters. The cabin is constructed of local lodgepole pines joined by double cut round saddle notching. The interior of the cabin contains an impressive Rundle Rock fireplace and an open-beam log ceiling.

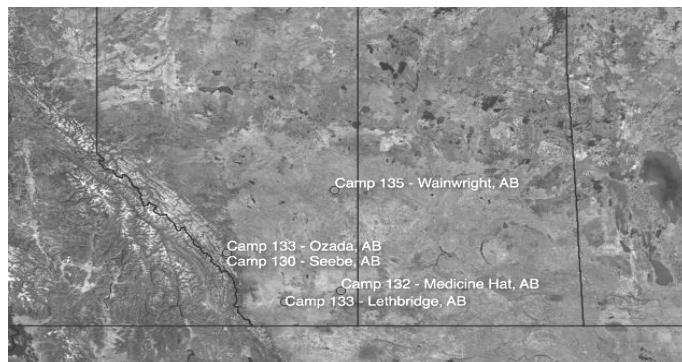


2

Second World War

When war broke out in 1939, the headquarters of Kananaskis Forest Experimental Station were converted into an internment camp for German nationals and merchant marine seamen. The camp was known as Camp 130. Later in the war, the camp's internees were moved out to work on farms, and the German prisoners-of-war were held here. The camp accommodated from 600 to 700 prisoners.

In 1941, the majority of these detainees were sent to facilities in eastern Canada and the site was enlarged and fortified for use as a prisoners of war camp. The camp detained combat officer personnel from late 1942 until 1946, when the camp closed. There were 26,000 prisoners of war interned in Alberta during the Second World War - more than were interned in any other province. The Colonel's Cabin is one of the few structural reminders of this chapter in provincial history.



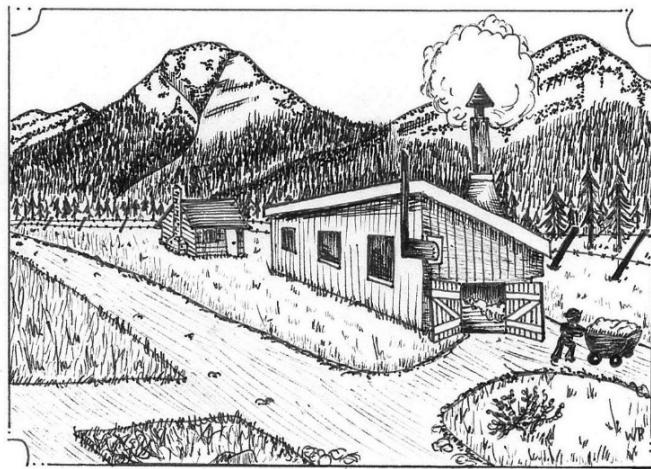
3 Larch Stand

This stand of Siberian larch trees was planted after the war to see how well the species would grow in the Kananaskis Valley. Other exotic tree species planted in the area included Norway spruce, Colorado spruce and Scots' pine.



4 Camp Remnants

Prisoners in Camp 130 showered and did their laundry in a building that once stood here. Twice a day roll call echoed across the level field beyond which was the camp's outdoor assembly area. The area was even used as a soccer field by German merchant marine seamen who were interned here during the early part of the war.

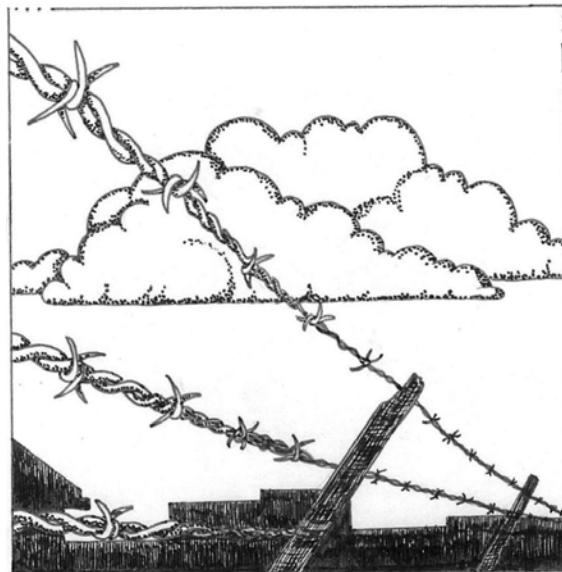


Including the prisoners' huts, mess hall, hospital, canteen, recreation hall, administration offices, guards' and officers' quarters, medical offices, warehouse and garage, there were about one hundred and forty buildings on this site during the war.

5

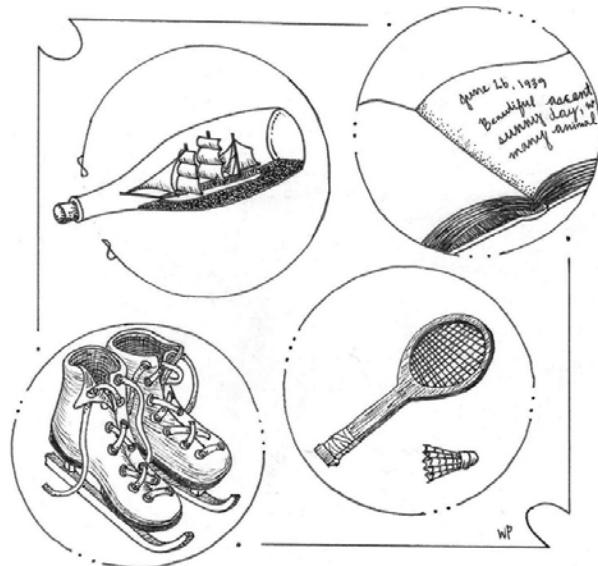
Behind Barbed Wire

Two 3.5-metre high fences made from high-strength barbed wire enclosed Camp 130. In spite of this fence and a 24-hour guard, there were escapes from the camp. One prisoner hid in a laundry bin and was discovered in a Calgary laundry. Two others apparently tunneled under the fence. When they were found by a Forest Ranger near Sibbald Flat, the prisoners were cold, hungry, and glad to return to the safety of the camp. Even though trees and shrubs have grown up since the fence was taken down at the end of the war, the old fence line can still be seen.



6

Camp Recreation

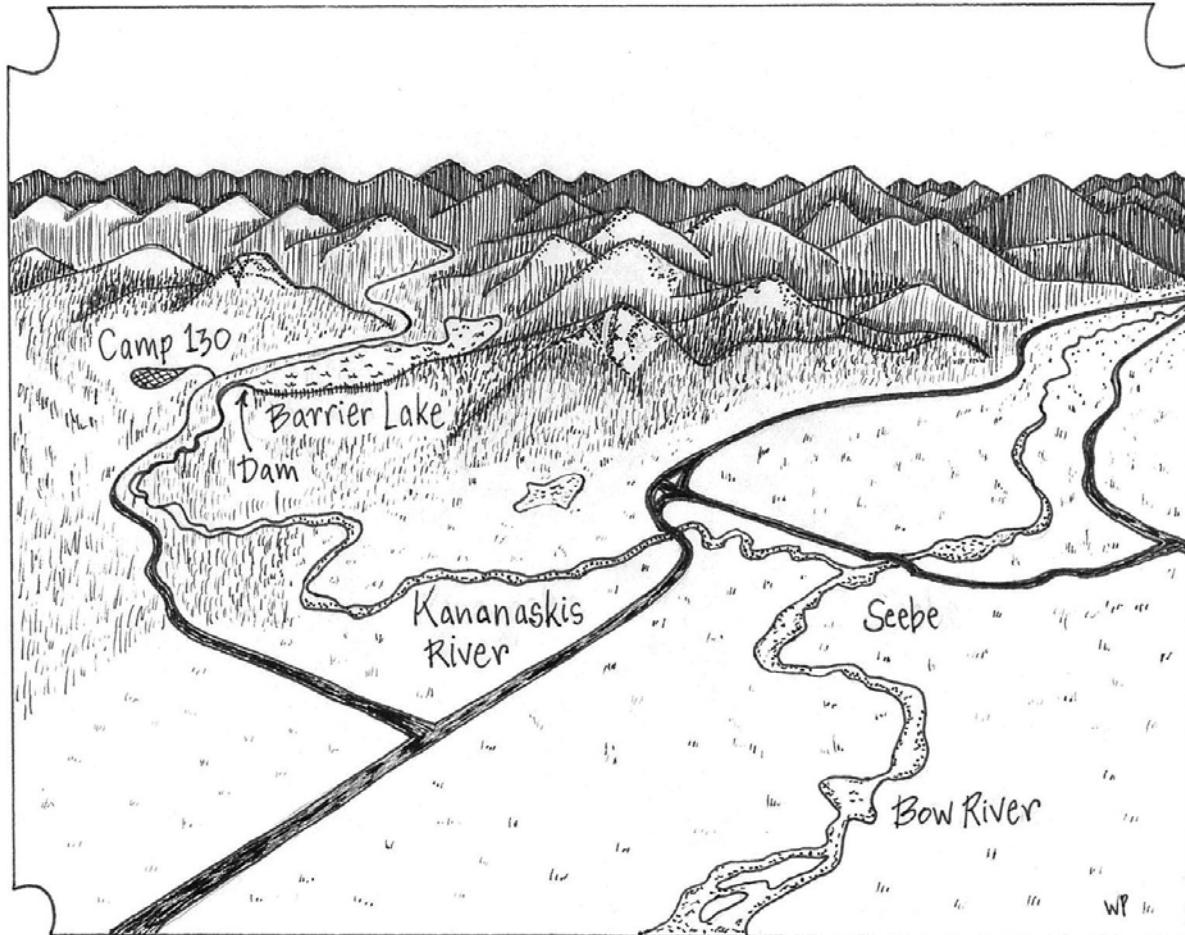


The only enemy of the prisoners in Camp 130 was boredom, so many participated in sports, arts and crafts. They built a tennis court on this level area. When winter came, the men flooded it and created a skating rink. With permission, some were even allowed to climb to the top of nearby Mt. Baldy where they signed their names into a register.

7

Pack Trails, Trunk Roads and Power Drains

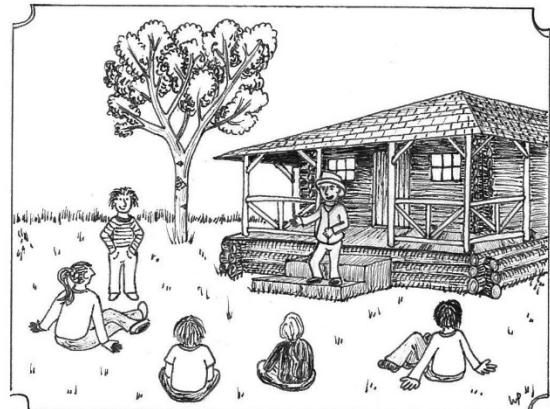
In the days before roads in this valley, Forest Rangers patrolled by here on horseback. Kananaskis Experimental Station relief camp workers constructed the first road in the early 1930s, connecting the Station to Seebe on the Bow River. A primitive trail continued up the Kananaskis valley until the late 1940s, when construction of the Forestry Trunk Road between here and Coleman began. The present highway was completed in 1977. Barrier Reservoir, which is located just across the highway from here, was constructed using labour from Camp 130. Prisoners helped clear away trees before the reservoir was filled with water.



8

As Time Passes

Over the years many people have returned to visit where they once worked or lived. Former forestry researchers return to inspect research plots and walk the forested trails. Former Veterans' Guards and German prisoners have also returned. Some recall the cold winters and heavy pall of wood smoke that hung in the air from Camp 130's heaters. Some remember the good life they had in the small compound and carry mementoes - photographs, war mail, handcrafted items. Occasionally one will find a scrap of wire as a souvenir of a time behind barbed wire far away from home. Time has changed the appearance of this place. As time passes, the colourful history of KFES will live on in records, stories, and artifacts left behind.



Acknowledgements

The Province of Alberta recognized the Colonel's Cabin within the Historical Resources Act on June 11, 1982.

We wish to thank Mike Mappin for his thoughtful insights in the making of the History Trail and the accompanying guide.