

THE EFFECTS ON THE KETTLE VALLEY RAILWAY LABOUR POOL

Presented to Douglas College Research Days

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INTRODUCTION

The Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) is a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) subsidiary line that was located in British Columbia, Canada and was built during the World War One time period

Majority of construction occurring from 1910 to 1916

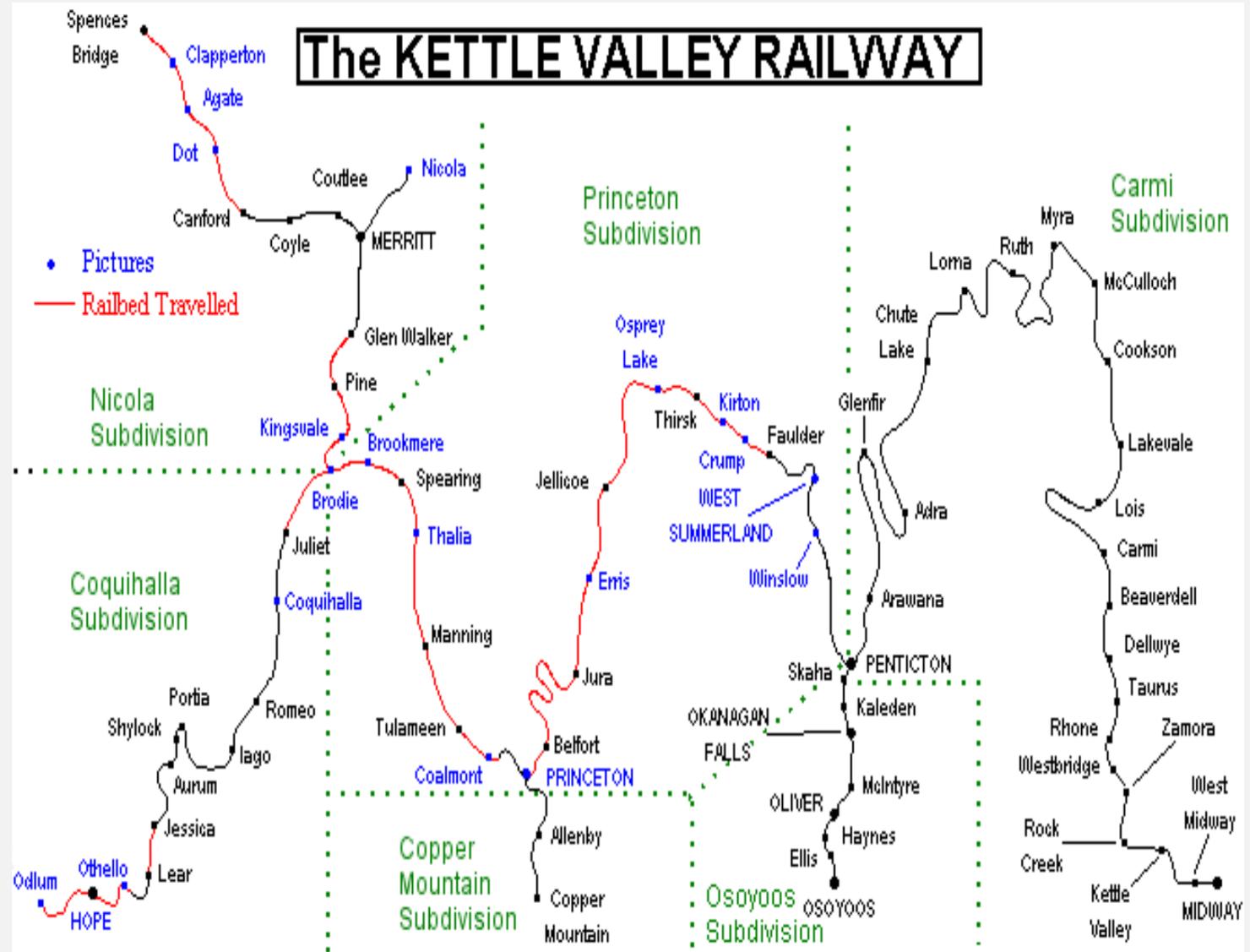
When fully constructed it ran from Midway, B.C. to Hope, B.C.

Key figures included:

Chief Engineer Andrew McCulloch

President of the CPR Sir Thomas George Shaughnessy

My main argument is: Labor shortages along the line were profound due to World War 1



LABOR ALONG THE LINE

10,000 workers from start to finish¹

Subdivision/spur lines built throughout the war years

- Princeton to Copper Mountain to assist with coal transportation in hopes of helping with the war effort²
- Coquihalla
- Osoyoos

Labour took many shapes and forms including

- Engineers
- Camp men like cooks
- Navigators (the builders)

Labourers were paid roughly \$2.75-\$3 per day³

- pay variance on location
- portion of the line
- majority of the money was not claimed as labourers would have to pay back owed dues at the end of each week

HISTORIOGRAPHY

“Myra’s Men: Building the Kettle Valley Railway, Myra Canyon to Penticton” by Maurice Williams, 2008.

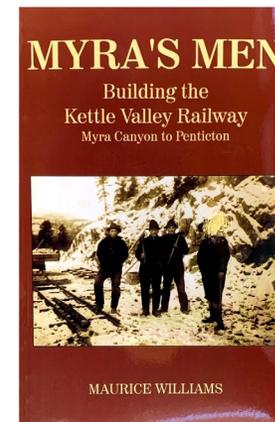
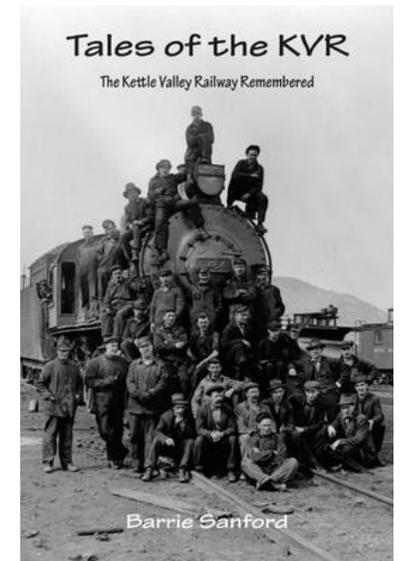
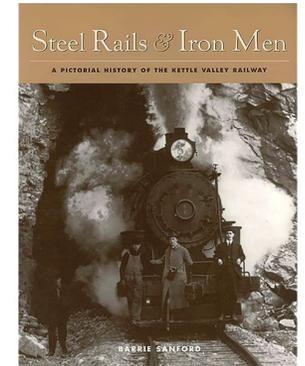
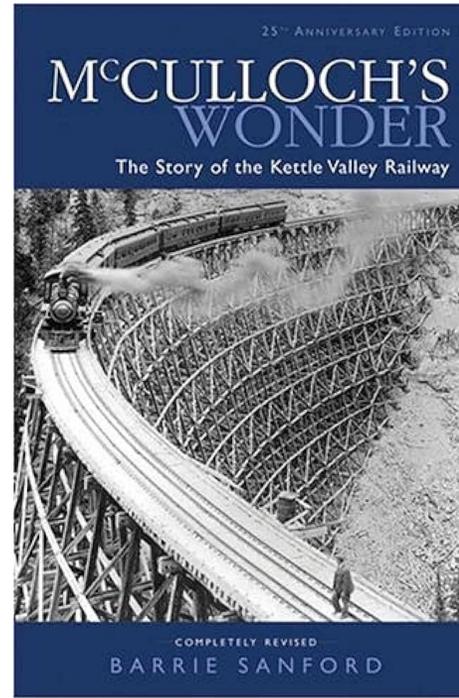
- Describes what labour along the Okanagan portion of the KVR line was like
 - Ethnic background dividing
 - Treatment based on country origins
 - Education and overall strength

“McCulloch’s Wonder” by Barrie Sanford, 1981.

- Describes the Kettle Valley Railways construction from the late 1880’s until the 1930’s when the subsidy line and its branch lines fully opened

“Tales of the KVR The Kettle Valley Railway Remembered” by Barrie Sanford, 2021.

”Steel Rails & Iron Men: A Pictorial History of the Kettle Valley Railway” by Barrie Sanford, 1990.



HOW I CONDUCTED MY RESEARCH

Contacted and met with Barrie Sanford for a 2-hour discussion

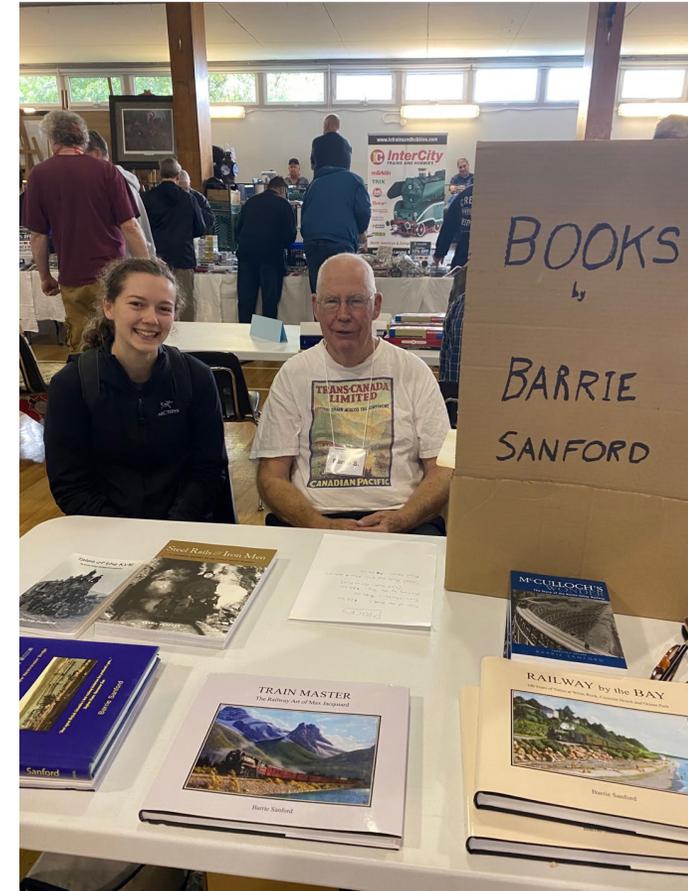
Emailed Professor Maurice Williams and asked him my questions about the KVR

Contacted the Penticton Museum and Archives and Summerland Museum

Referred to Douglas Colleges JSTOR

Found other online Articles through news networks and B.C. Archives

Read and utilized over 8 books on the KVR



QUESTION AND THESIS

Question:

How was labor within the building of the Kettle Valley Railway affected due to the ignition of World War One (WW1)?

Thesis:

The Kettle Valley Railway provides a critical lens of workforce transformations during World War One including:

- *Immigrant workers*
- *The legislation affecting labor*
- *Women's inclusion along the railroad*



KVR LABOR AS AN IMMIGRANT

Workforce was divided into 2 groups

Whites ⁴

- Engineers, contractors, subcontractors, clerks, educated people
- Would not live in camps
- Lived a lavished lifestyle
- Has their own living quarters

Foreigners ⁵

- Navigators (Navvies), Stiffs and Camp-men
- Lived in makeshift camps
 - highly unsanitary and crowded
- Traveled as the line was being built
- Cheap labour, making profits more attainable for the company
- Less rights due to ill ability to speak English

Recruitment targeted Europeans ⁶

- Russia, Austro Hungry, other Slavic nations and Italy
- Considered “*Less desirable and obedient*”

*Many laborer's returned home to fight on their home fronts

- Greek and Balkans the first to leave in 1912
- Austro Hungarians followed
- British after



CONSTRUCTION OF THE COQUIHALLA

WW1 took a major toll on employment through the Coquihalla region⁷

- Harsh winter seasons
- Forced to shut down in December of 1915 due to snow, would not reopen for construction until the springtime of 1916
- Full operation on July 31, 1916
- Highly unsafe and ill equipped

Private Billy Dawson McCoyle recollects his experiences along the Coquihalla portion of the KVR while sitting in a water filled trench.

He states “This ain’t scary, working on building the Coquihalla, that was scary. If it wasn’t for some Chinaman blowing rocks all overhells half-acre, it was a bloody rockslide coming down on you or taking you down with it.”⁸



AFFECTING ACTS ALONG THE LINE

created challenges for contractors to get employees and maintain them

The Canadian Immigration Act of 1906

“Unintentionally” restricted the use of Asian workers¹⁰

- Epileptics
- The insane
- Individuals with impairments of sight...

No employment history of Asian workers along the KVR¹¹

The Chinese Head Tax was still weighing heavily

Consequence: construction of the KVR was slowed down especially in 1914 and 1915 in consequence

The War Measures Act of 1914

Gave Governmental power to maintain security

Restrictive choke hold as it held and took away civil liberties for immigrant - “enemy aliens”¹²

KVR employees sent to internment camps to build roads

- Vernon Internment
- Mara Lake

Created labour shortage for the KVR as people were forced to work in camps

LABOR FROM A WOMEN'S LENS

Telegraph operators (Lightning Slingers)

- Women exceeded expectations
- Handled commercial messages
- Train orders
- Ruth Elizabeth Wanless - best lightning slingers starting during the war years and continuing until 1933¹³

Factory roles for CPR

- Building munitions at many CPR munitions factories
- Car Cleaners

Community-based roles

- Community dances
- CPR garden competitions
- Laundry
- Children minding

*were not allowed to enter the role of being a train engineer/locomotive operator



HISTORICAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Vernon Internment Camp and other internment camps have a historical app

- real-life experience of how those in the camp lived, the work they did and recognizes how stripped they were of their freedoms

Reparations are still being worked out by government

Kettle Valley Railway paid tribute to WW1 by stations names

- Allenby, Copper Mountain Subdivision named after Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby, British Field Marshall in WW1
- Petain, Coquihalla subdivision named after Henri Philippe Petain, French Hero.
- Belfort, Jellicoe, Mons Junction and Jura all paying tribute to specific points within the war
- No names were given to workers only to Andrew McColloch

Data on labourers is mere none

CONCLUSION

Labor was highly impacted due to WW1

Laborer's:

- Clear camp divides
- Foreigners mainly paid the price of danger
- Portions of the line close due to low employment

Legislations:

- Had high influence
- No Asian workers
- Internment camps

Women:

- Had a breakthrough in labor
- Provided stability
- Community
- Continuous support



WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT TO ME

KVR is slowly drifting back to nature

Preserving the railway means preserving the work that people did for this railway, preserves their stories and the history

What can be done:

Greater inquiry into the people who worked the line

Plaques giving acknowledgment to the Navvies along the Myra stretch

Implementation into B.C. Curriculum



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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