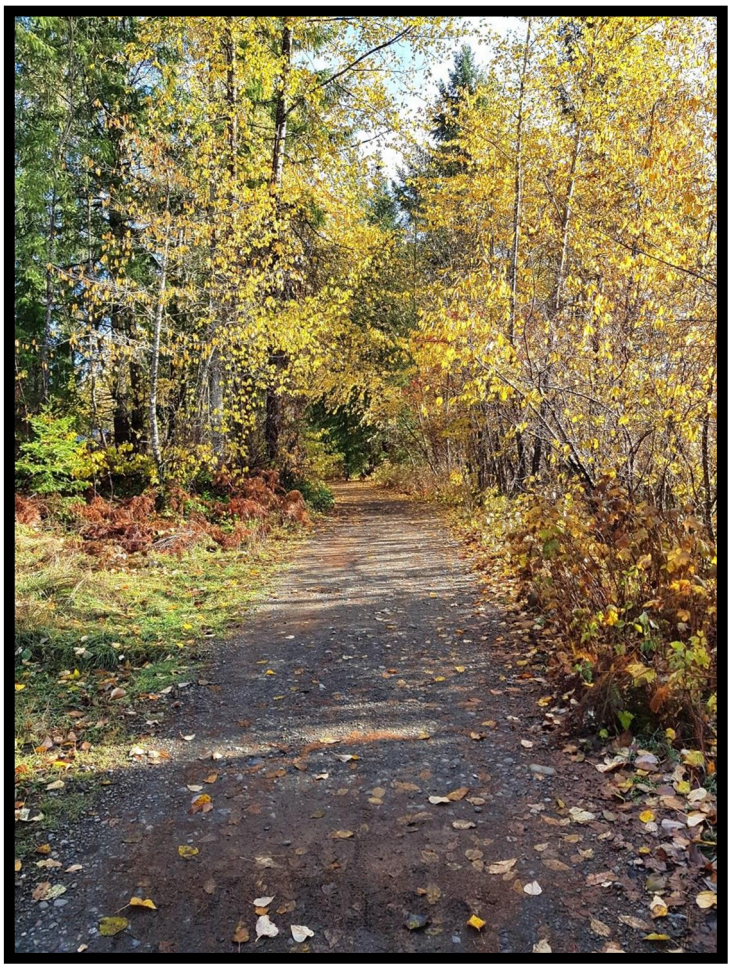
Village of Cumberland

Statement of Significance

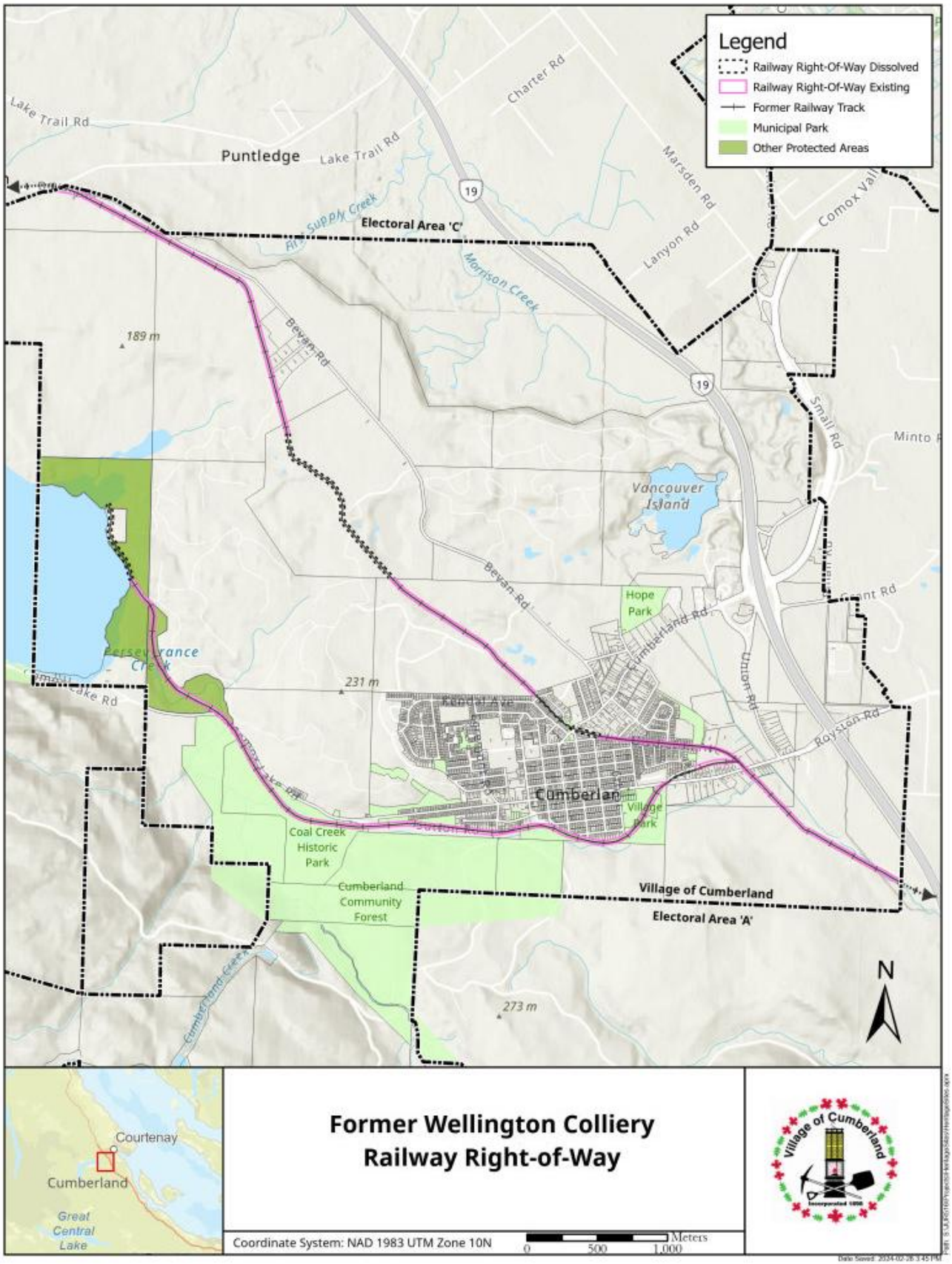
Wellington Colliery Railway, Cumberland, BC :: 1889-1912



Prepared by Elana Zysblat, CAHP :: Ance Building Services :: March 2024
Research & Analysis by Jurian ter Horst, MA :: ter Horst Research

HeritageBC

HERITAGE Legacy Fund OF BRITISH COLUMBIA


Legend
Railway Right-Of-Way Dissolved
Railway Right-Of-Way Existing
Former Railway Track
Municipal Park
Other Protected Areas
Puntledge
Lake Trail Rd
Charter Rd
Marsden Rd
Lanyon Rd
Comox Valley
Supply Creek
Morrison Creek
Electoral Area 'C'
19
189 m
Bevan Rd
Small Rd
Minto
Vancouver Island
Hope Park
Cumberland Rd
Grant Rd
Union Rd
Royston Rd
231 m
Perseverance Creek
Cumberland
Village Park
Coal Creek Historic Park
Cumberland Community Forest
Village of Cumberland
Electoral Area 'A'
273 m
Cumberland Creek
N
Courtenay
Cumberland
Great Central Lake
Former Wellington Colliery
Railway Right-of-Way
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N
0
500
1,000
Meters
Village of Cumberland

Description of Historic Place

The Wellington Colliery Railway is a former triangular-shaped railway line that connected Union Bay, Royston, Cumberland and Bevan, transferring both passengers between these places as well as coal from Mines 1 through 8 to Union Bay for trans-shipment. Surviving evidence of the line exists in unbuilt, open areas on all four sides of the Village of Cumberland, as well as in areas outside of Cumberland's boundaries.

Heritage Values

The Wellington Colliery Railway holds historical value for its association with the coal mining industry in the Comox Valley in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Its first track from Union, the former name of Cumberland, to Union Bay was completed in 1889. The railway line is valued for its association with the mining campsite of Union, established by Robert Dunsmuir and Sons just west of the settlement that would soon after become known as Cumberland, as well as with civil engineer William George Pinder, who surveyed the rail line, and with engineer Joseph Hunter, who supervised the construction of the railway.

The Wellington Colliery Railway has historical and social value as a transportation system that supported important extraction economies in the Cumberland area. The surviving railbeds are testament to the transfer of local coal, timber and freight to the wharf at Union Bay; the movement of mining company staff, miners and their families between Bevan, Cumberland, Royston, Union Bay, and Mines 1 through 8, as well as of general passenger service between the mid-1890s and 1931. When the Comox Valley mines gradually closed in the mid-20th century, and the tracks of the Wellington Colliery Railway were lifted in stages between 1935 and 1953. Some of the remaining railbeds were adapted as logging roads, serving yet another important regional extraction economy for many decades.

The Wellington Colliery Railway has cultural value for its association with formal and informal outdoor recreation in Cumberland. Seeing the value of this former transportation network as hiking, walking and biking routes used for decades by both locals and visitors, the railway rights in Cumberland were purchased by the Village in 1976 and portions outside Cumberland were purchased by the Comox Valley Regional District in 2014. Today, sections of the railbeds of the former Wellington Colliery Railway are protected as parks and greenways, valued for offering public access to Cumberland's natural environment and to former industry, settlement and transportation sites of importance.

Character-defining Elements

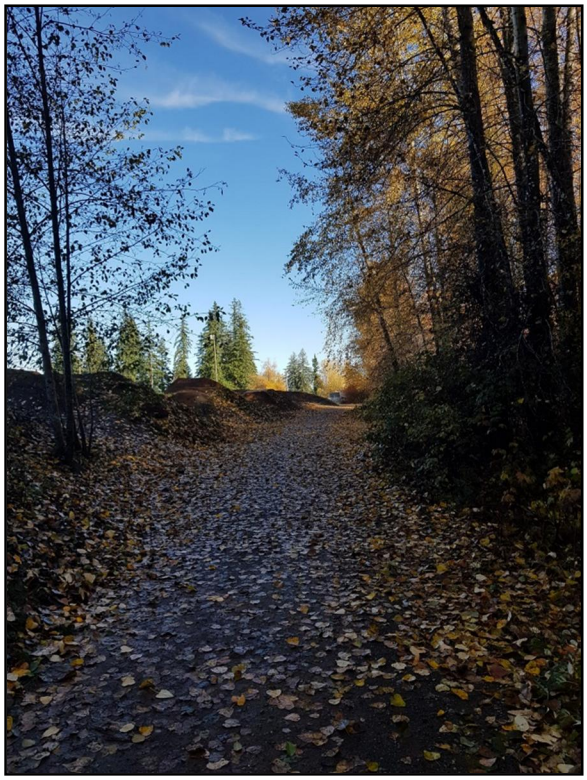
The elements that define the heritage character of the Wellington Colliery Railway are its:

- Original location of lines in the Cumberland area
- Flat rail beds that traverse the natural wetlands, forests and environments of the Cumberland area, and any evidence of their construction, including the grading and ballasting of the beds
- The geometry of the railing gridlines and curves
- Industrial transportation use from 1889 to 1953
- Passenger transportation from mid-1890s to 1931
- Recreational use - both historic and contemporary

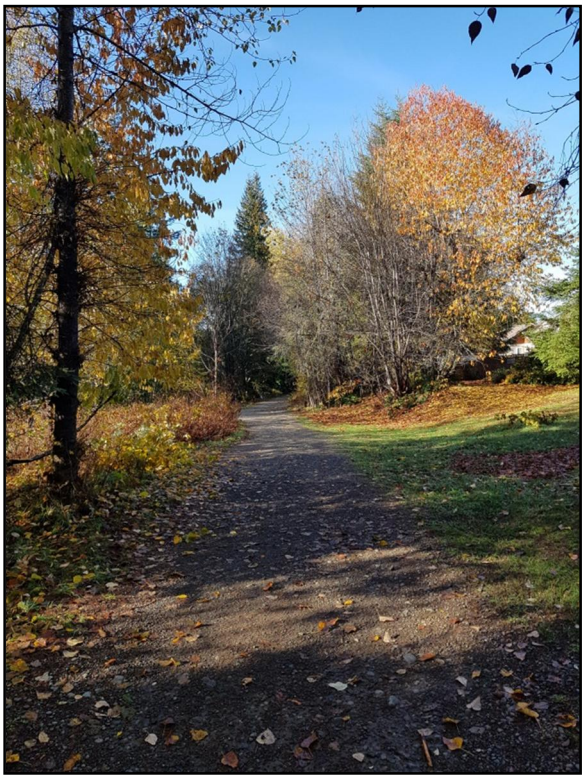
Current Photos

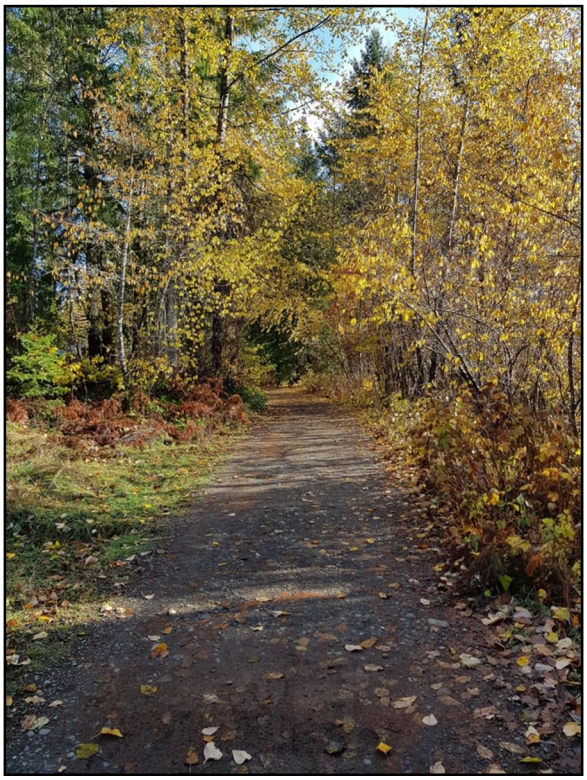
Wellington Colliery trail in Coal Creek Historic Park and site of old crossing at Perseverance Creek

Wellington Colliery trail at Village Park



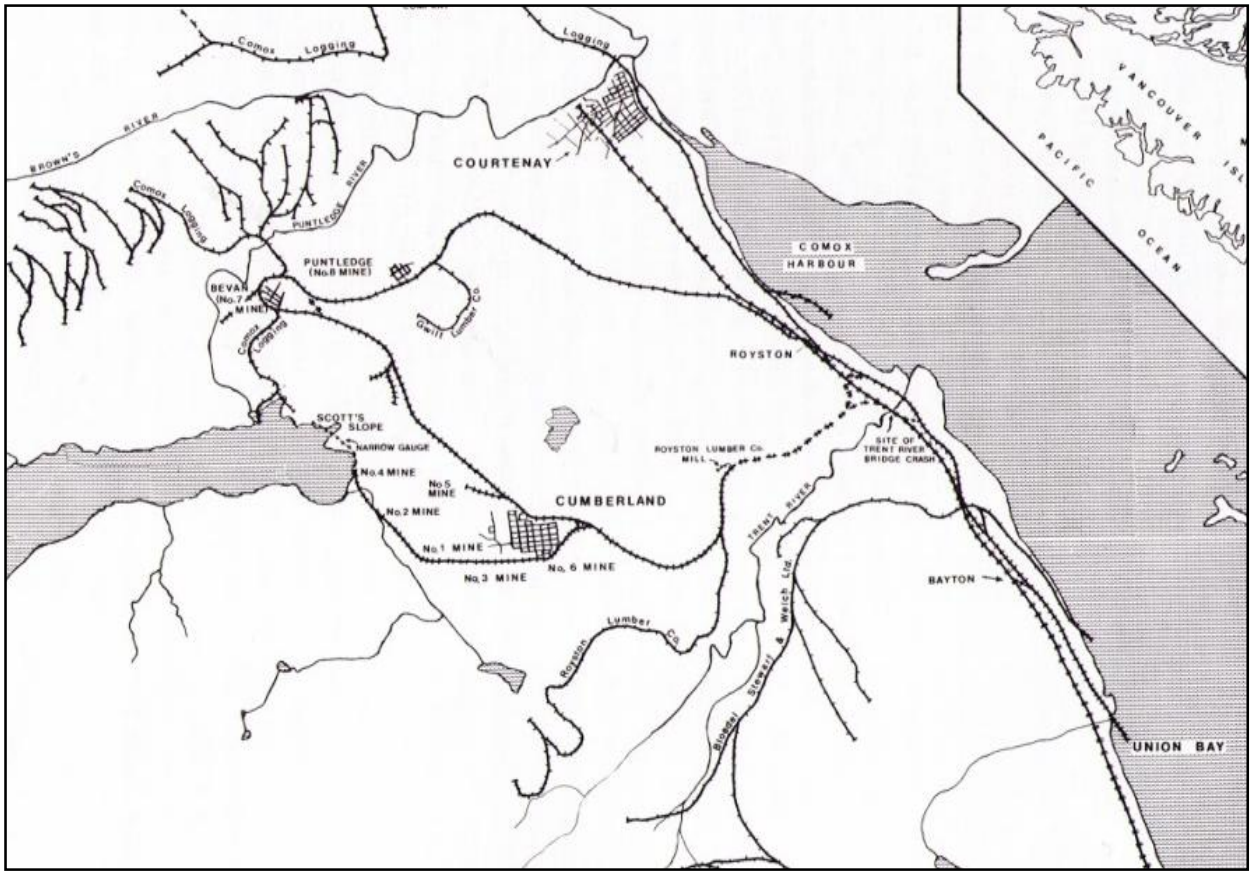
Wellington Colliery trail at Jump Park in Village Park





Wellington Colliery on south edge of the historic Village core

Archival Images & Records

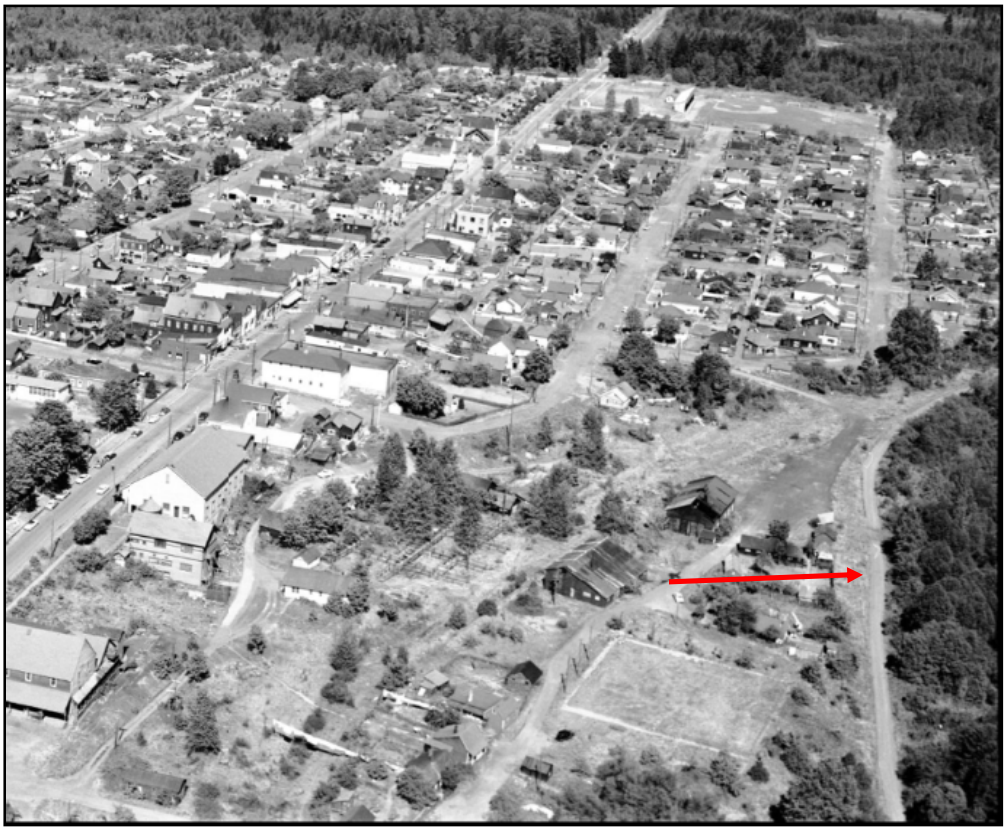


Map of the Wellington Colliery Railway in and around Cumberland. With the opening of new mines, the railway line between Union Bay, Union/Cumberland and the No. 1 to 4 Mines was later extended to the north of Cumberland to No. 5 Mine, as well as No.7 (Bevan) and No. 8 (Puntledge) Mines, creating a loop that reached Royston in 1912.

No. 4 Mine closed in 1935, and the tracks to the mine were then gradually removed. With the permanent closure of No. 5 Mine, the railway running into Cumberland was no longer needed, and in 1947, the tracks between Bevan and Cumberland were lifted. In 1953, No. 8 Mine in Puntledge was the last mine to close, and in the same year, the Collieries' railway between Comox Lake and Union Bay was dismantled.

Source: Cumberland Museum & Archives, via Village of Cumberland.

Map of the Wellington Colliery Railway Trail in Cumberland and neighbouring Royston, by Gwyn Sproule, 2000. The trail, marked with a bold red line, predominantly follows the former Wellington Colliery Railway. Source: Cumberland Museum & Archives, via Village of Cumberland.

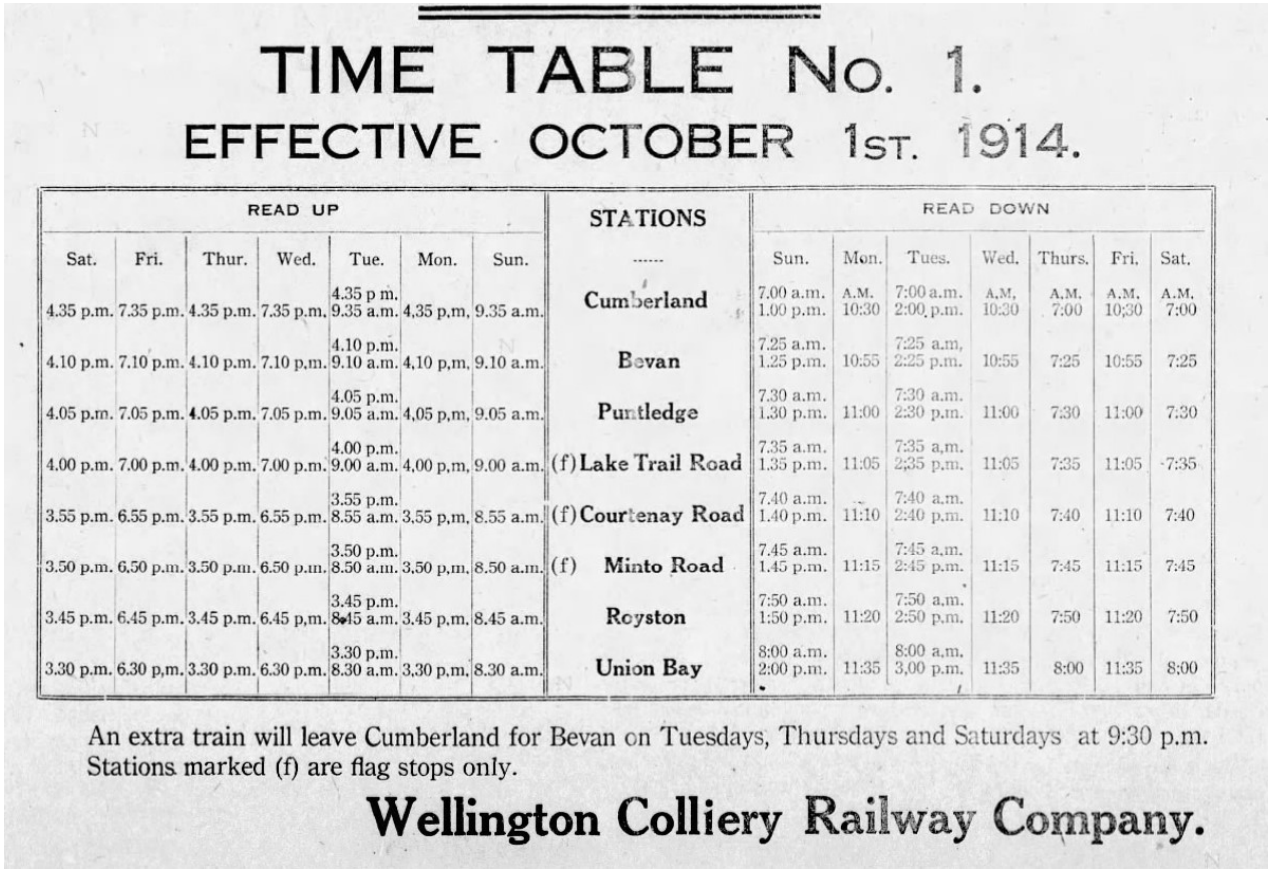


This 1958 aerial view of Cumberland shows the railbed of the former Wellington Colliery Railway to the south of the town (marked with a red arrow).

Source: University of Saskatchewan, University Archives and Special Collections.

This 1960 aerial view of Cumberland shows the railbed of the former Wellington Colliery Railway to the southwest of the town, into Coal Creek Historic Park (marked with a red arrow).

Source: University of Saskatchewan, University Archives and Special Collections.



TIME TABLE No. 1.

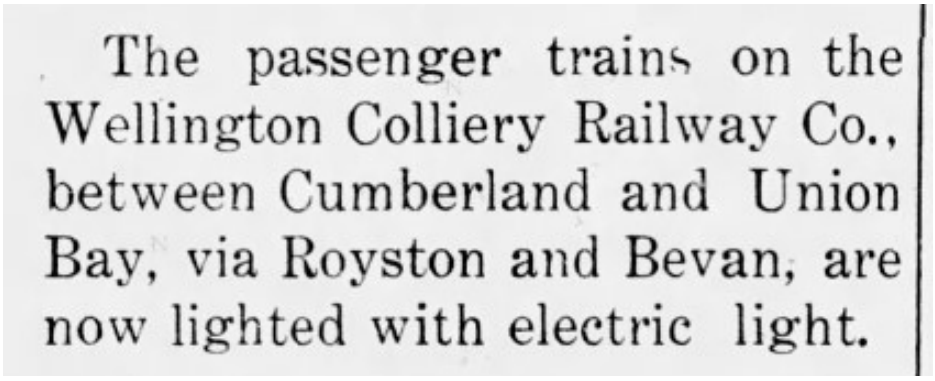
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1st. 1914.

READ UP							STATIONS	READ DOWN						
Sat.	Fri.	Thur.	Wed.	Tue.	Mon.	Sun.	-----	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
4.35 p.m.	7.35 p.m.	4.35 p.m.	7.35 p.m.	4.35 p m. 9.35 a.m.	4.35 p,m,	9.35 a.m.	Cumberland	7.00 a.m. 1.00 p.m.	A.M. 10:30	7:00 a.m. 2:00 p.m.	A.M, 10:30	A.M. 7:00	A.M. 10:30	A.M. 7:00
4.10 p.m.	7.10 p.m.	4.10 p.m.	7.10 p.m.	4.10 p.m. 9.10 a.m.	4.10 p,m,	9.10 a.m.	Bevan	7.25 a.m. 1.25 p.m.	10:55	7:25 a.m, 2:25 p.m.	10:55	7:25	10:55	7:25
4.05 p.m.	7.05 p.m.	4.05 p.m.	7.05 p.m.	4.05 p.m. 9.05 a.m.	4,05 p,m,	9.05 a.m.	Puntledge	7.30 a.m. 1.30 p.m.	11:00	7:30 a.m. 2:30 p.m.	11:00	7:30	11:00	7:30
4.00 p.m.	7.00 p.m.	4.00 p.m.	7.00 p.m.	4.00 p.m. 9.00 a.m.	4,00 p,m,	9.00 a.m.	(f) Lake Trail Road	7.35 a.m. 1.35 p.m.	11:05	7:35 a,m. 2:35 p.m.	11:05	7:35	11:05	7:35
3.55 p.m.	6.55 p.m.	3.55 p.m.	6.55 p.m.	3.55 p.m. 8.55 a.m.	3,55 p,m,	8.55 a.m.	(f) Courtenay Road	7.40 a.m. 1.40 p.m.	11:10	7:40 a,m. 2:40 p.m.	11:10	7:40	11:10	7:40
3.50 p.m.	6.50 p.m.	3.50 p.m.	6.50 p.m.	3.50 p.m. 8.50 a.m.	3,50 p,m,	8.50 a.m.	(f) Minto Road	7.45 a.m. 1.45 p.m.	11:15	7:45 a,m. 2:45 p.m.	11:15	7:45	11:15	7:45
3.45 p.m.	6.45 p.m.	3.45 p.m.	6.45 p,m.	3.45 p.m. 8.45 a.m.	3.45 p,m.	8.45 a.m.	Royston	7:50 a.m. 1:50 p.m.	11:20	7:50 a,m. 2:50 p.m.	11:20	7:50	11:20	7:50
3.30 p.m.	6.30 p,m.	3.30 p.m.	6.30 p.m.	3.30 p.m. 8.30 a.m.	3,30 p,m.	8.30 a.m.	Union Bay	8:00 a.m. 2:00 p.m.	11:35	8:00 a,m. 3,00 p.m.	11:35	8:00	11:35	8:00

An extra train will leave Cumberland for Bevan on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 9:30 p.m.
Stations marked (f) are flag stops only.

Wellington Colliery Railway Company.

Time table No. 1 of the Wellington Colliery Railway Company. Source: The Islander, November 14, 1914.



The passenger trains on the Wellington Colliery Railway Co., between Cumberland and Union Bay, via Royston and Bevan, are now lighted with electric light.

News article about the introduction of electric light in the passenger trains between Cumberland and Union Bay. Source: The Islander, September 18, 1915.

Archival photograph of the Wellington Colliery Line railbed, around the former Chinatown in Coal Creek Historic Park, 1992. Source: Cumberland Museum & Archives, HIF.015.002.

Research Resources

Barr, Jennifer. 1997. Cumberland Heritage: A selected History of People, Buildings, Institutions and Sites 1888-1950. Corporation of the Village of Cumberland.

Cumberland Museum & Archives
- Archival photographs
- Maps

Hind, Patrick O. 2013. Cumberland Collieries' Railway. Vancouver Island, B.C. 1888 to 1960. Cumberland Museum and Archives.

Isenor, Dick E.; Stephens, Edith G.; Watson, Donna E. 1988. One Hundred Spirited Years: A History of Cumberland. Ptarmigan Press.

Newspapers.com

University of Saskatchewan, University Archives & Special Collections

Site visit: November, 2023.