

Richard Phillips
Lalor

Department of the Interior,

OFFICE OF GEOGRAPHER,

Ottawa, FEB 20 1906

McBennett

DEAR SIR,

I wish to obtain information respecting the derivation of the place-names of Canada—of the names of the villages, towns, cities and of the natural features, such as rivers, lakes, capes, bays, mountains, etc.—and shall be much obliged if you will give me any information that you may possess or can procure, respecting the below-mentioned name and also respecting the names of any other features in the vicinity of your residence concerning which you have knowledge.

In many localities, the older generation is passing, or has passed away, and unless steps are taken to collect this information, it will, in many instances, be too late. In most communities there are persons who take an interest in things of this nature or who have been connected with the early settlement of the locality. If there are any such in your neighbourhood, will you kindly submit this to them.

Below I have indicated the lines along which I desire information and also the commoner derivatives of place-names in Canada :—

(1.) Whether named after a village, town or city, or natural feature in any other province or country ; if so, the name of province or country in which the original locality is situated.

(2.) Whether named after a person ; if so, the person's name, occupation, spelling of name as rendered by the person and any details of interest respecting him (or her) such as (a) Whether alive or, if dead, approximate year of death ; (b) Whether at any time a resident of the locality and, if so, whether still living there.

(3.) Whether named after a natural feature ; if so, any details respecting the origin of the name as applied to the feature and the geographical position of the latter.

(4.) Whether the town, village or city ever had any other name or names ; if so, at what dates, approximately, and the origin of these obsolete names.

Any information bearing on the above will be deemed a courtesy.

Yours truly,

JAMES WHITE,
Geographer.

Kindly write your reply on the attached sheet.

To ensure free transmission of your reply I enclose herewith an addressed envelope which will come free of postage.

" Elk Prairie "

Kootenay

B. C.

Elk Prairie March 6/06.

82 GNE

James White Esq.
Geographer.

Dear Sir.

In reply to your request I will with pleasure give whatever information I may possess in regard to the ^{origin of} names of places in this vicinity.

Elk Prairie is so called, because it is a small prairie situated in the valley of Elk River,

a stream that has taken this name, from the fact of there having been a great number of

the above named animals (that is Elk or ~~Wapiti~~ Wapiti) found along its banks, and are still to be found in fairly large numbers.

It is not a town or village, but simply a Post Office, granted to the settlers for their greater convenience.

It is tributary to the town of Michel a coal mining camp of some note.

I happen to know the particulars in regard to the naming of the town of Michel.

When the British Columbia Southern Railway was first built, the name of Sparwood was given to Michel by the railway company, but on request of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co, who operate extensively at that point, the names were exchanged, the original Sparwood being now called Michel and vice versa. (over)

(2)

The name Michel, originated in the following manner. About four miles north of the present town of Michel, there is a small prairie, where once stood a cabin erected and occupied by an old french trapper and hunter called Michel. He was well known among prospectors and hunters, who inhabited that district, before the advent of the railway, and the small prairie where his cabin stood, became known as Michel's prairie, which name it still bears. MICHEL'S PRAIRIE

The railway company during construction of the railway, used the prairie as a temporary camp, and pasture ground for horses, and in consequence the name became well known.

When the stations along the line were named

The one nearest was named Michel, and shortly afterwards was changed as shown above. The town of Fernie is called after Mr. William Fernie, the discoverer of the Crow's nest pass coal fields. If you could secure his address, and I think you can by writing to the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co., he will be able to impart much valuable information, as he travelled much with the Indians, and is well versed in their traditions.

There are various stories extant, in regard to the manner in which the Crow's nest Pass first derived its present appellation. One is that during a battle between the Crows and Blackfeet in which the Crows were worsted, the latter retired into the mountains. The Blackfeet thinking they had their enemies in a trap sat down to wait till the winter snow, and lack of food would place the Crows at their mercy, but the Crows went on through the pass of the existence of which the Blackfeet were ignorant and so escaped. The other story is that the pass is so named by reason of the peculiar cap shaped formation on the summit of Crow's nest mountain a peak that is over ten thousand feet above sea level.

This is probably the real reason for so naming this pass, as the mountain stands near the eastern entrance. I believe Mr. Purdie will give you much information as he is possessed of much valuable information pertaining to the early history of this district.

Respectfully Yours

Frank Warner.

Elk Prairie.