

The Life Story of Elmer Crickinbak (How Echo Lake came to be)

Twass the summer of '85 (or was it '86--Elmer never was very good with dates, as his guests could later tell you) when old Elmer Crickinbak was hiking through his beloved Monashee Mountains.

The pain in his lumbar region got to be something fierce, and so he decided to rest for awhile on a small rise overlooking a quaint mountain lake--at just about the spot where a babbling brook flowed in.

Suddenly as he sat there he realized that this was the place he had been searching for lo these many years.

"This is it!" he shouted, and "this is it," the mountains echoed to him, confirming his revelation, and fixing his resolve to build the lakeside hotel of his dreams.

And so the Crickinbak Inn came to be, on a small rise overlooking Echo Lake, with a small power house set off aways so the noise of machinery would not disturb his slumbering guests. (There never has been much to do beside Echo Lake except sleep.)

Weren't many years later when the rails of the Monashee Pacific began their push through the hills between Castlegar and Vernon. And when they arrived at the shore of Echo Lake, there was the Crickinbak Inn, thriving in isolated glory.

Well sir, Elmer was none too happy about the railway's disturbing his tranquil retreat, and he refused them a right-of-way across his property.

So the M.P.R. did what all railways do, they started to go around him. Only this time, squeezed in by the mountains, and determining that Elmer owned the land but not the water, the M.P.R. began their approach from the north by building an embankment and trestlework, intending to swing out around the Inn across the edge of the lake.

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Naturally, when he realized that the railway would completely destroy the Inn's view, old Elmer gave in, begrudgingly granting the railway a line on hotel land, but only on condition that they build a spur to serve his power plant.
(Even in defeat he triumphed.)

Obviously in some retaliation for the troubles they'd been through the railway located their Echo Lake station in the worst possible spot from the Inn's point of view--too far to walk from, not far enough to need a station jitney.

Never one to be wasteful, Elmer took over the old rail way embankment in trade for the right of way, and used the leveled and roughly ballasted spot for a couple of short spurs for private railway cars. And the railway in a counter move, extended the power house siding to serve the town now rapidly growing up around the station, and quickly spreading up the side of the hill above the lake.

The entire incident affected Elmer so greatly that he spent less and less time at the Inn itself, so as not be reminded of the arduous negotiations with the M.P.R. and he spent much more time wandering through the hills. It was on one of these walks, up above the babbling brook and lake that he made the find that would turn his entire relationship with the railway topsy turvy. Crickinbak discovered the mineral mother-lode that lead to his founding the Echordge Mining & Refining Agency (E.M.R.A.).

The M.P.R. was contracted to build a switchback spur up the side of the mountain to serve Elmer's mine, and in the process the Monashee Pacific gained a second industrial spur in the Upper Town to compliment their first siding serving the power house and the Lower Town.

Elmer was feeling so magnanimous that he even allowed the M.P.R. to double track their line through his property (at about the same time incidentally that he convinced them to build an additional runaround siding to serve Crickinbak's latest corporate venture, Crickinbak's Mill.)

Since then, Elmer and the railway have lived in a comfortable state of cooperation on the shore of Echo Lake.

At least that's how the story goes.