



TRAVEL THE

# BLACK DIAMOND TRAIL

OF SHERIDAN COUNTY



**Stretching north of Sheridan and south of Ranchester for about 15 miles, the Black Diamond Trail highlights Sheridan County coal mining districts that were integral to the settlement and development of the city and county of Sheridan.**

# COAL MINES FUEL SHERIDAN

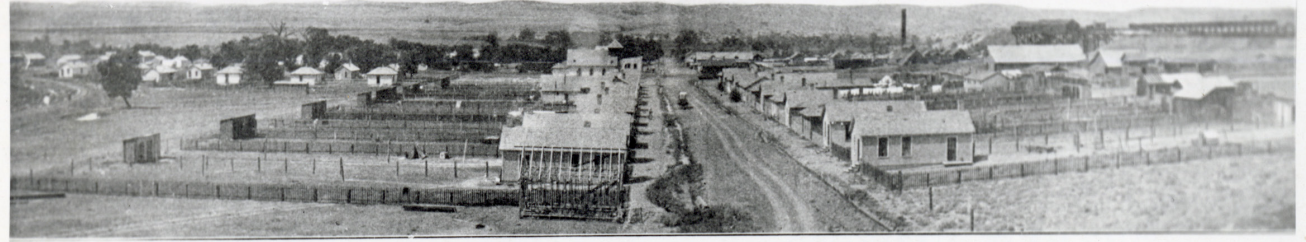
Founded in 1882, Sheridan remained small in population until the coal mines north of town began developing. In 1892, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy (CB&Q) Railroad reached Sheridan and by 1903 the CB&Q was the largest buyer of area coal. The CB&Q also transported area coal to larger markets across the northwest region. Sheridan provided the miners and their families with services not found in the mining camps, such as a high school. From 1911 – 1926, the heyday of the Sheridan miners, a trolley ran hourly between the mines and Sheridan. As the mines closed, many residents of the mining communities moved to Sheridan. Buildings, traditions, and descendants of these miners remain visible and active in the Sheridan Community today.

With an estimated 10,000 people by 1908, the coal communities experienced greater population growth than Sheridan itself. Although the peak of activity was the 1910s and early 1920s, commercial mining took place here from the 1890s through the 2000s, and is again making a resurgence with active exploration and planning activities in the area.



*Sheridan Wooden Train Station. Image Courtesy of Sheridan Community Land Trust.*

PLEASE RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY AND STAY ON ALL DESIGNATED ROADWAYS.



*View of the Town of Dietz, Wyo., Showing Loaded Dump-Cars and Tipple of Mine No. 1.*

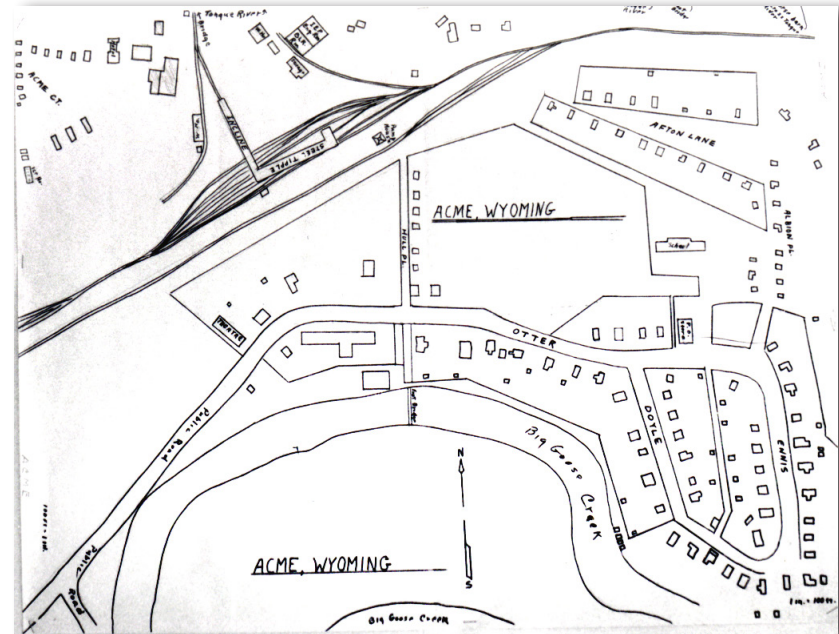
*View of the Town of Dietz. Image Courtesy of The Kuzara Collection, Wyoming Room, Sheridan County Fulmer Library.*

## COAL BOOM BEGINS AT DIETZ

The Sheridan Fuel Company operated the Higby Dietz (pronounced "Deetz") Mine No. 1 for the first time in March 1893. When Gould Dietz of Omaha began working closely with the mine company in 1897, the mine and its "model camp" took the name of Dietz. Seven other Dietz mines operated in the same area until 1923. Before the Dietz mines closed, as many as 100 men worked in them and 3,000 people lived in the two company towns nearby. Residents abandoned the townsite by 1937.

## THE LAST TO GIVE INTO THE BUST

In 1907, A.K. "Archie" Craig and Ora Darnell created the Acme Coal Company. By 1911, the company had opened Acme 1 and Acme 2 and completed most of the town's development. Acme not only provided residents with the necessary amenities, such as a store and schools, but entertainment as well. The town had its own theater, a six-man football team, and a baseball team complete with its own field and grandstand. Coal mining lasted in Acme until 1940, but residents remained in the town until 1977, when Peter Kiewit Sons' Mining Company bought the town and surrounding coal-rich acreage for open-pit coal extraction.



*Town of Acme Layout. Image Courtesy of The Kuzara Collection Wyoming Room, Sheridan County Fulmer Library.*

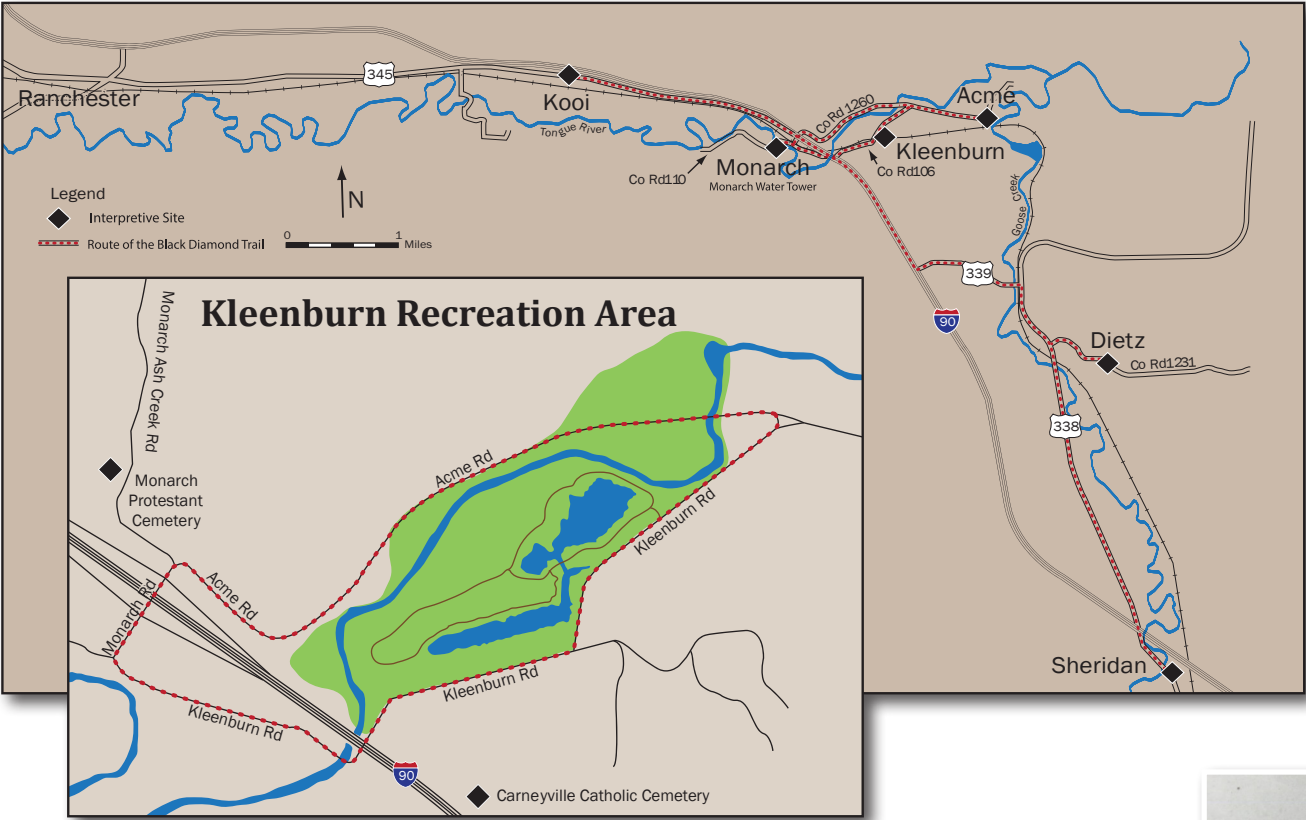


# TRAVEL THE BLACK DIAMOND TRAIL

PLEASE RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY AND STAY ON ALL DESIGNATED ROADWAYS.

Tour can begin either at Sheridan or Ranchester  
Sheridan: begin at the Museum at the Bighorns 850 Sibley Circle  
Ranchester: begin at the Southwest corner of US Hwy 14 and Coffeen Street

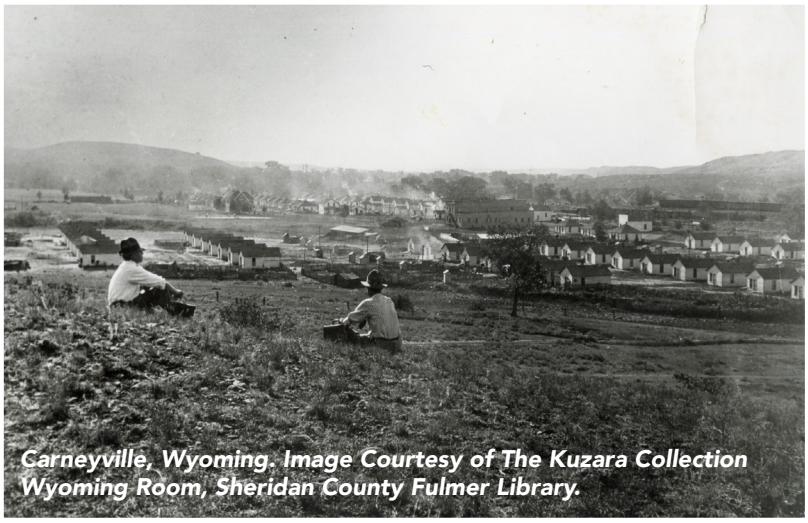
A drive of the trail will take you through the physical remnants of the once vibrant mining communities of Dietz, Acme, Carneyville (later called Kleenburn), Monarch and Kooi. Look closely at the landscape to see remnants of the mine camps such as cemeteries, water towers, a power plant, a mule barn, a stone church, countless foundations, and other evidence of the past coal mining booms of Sheridan County.



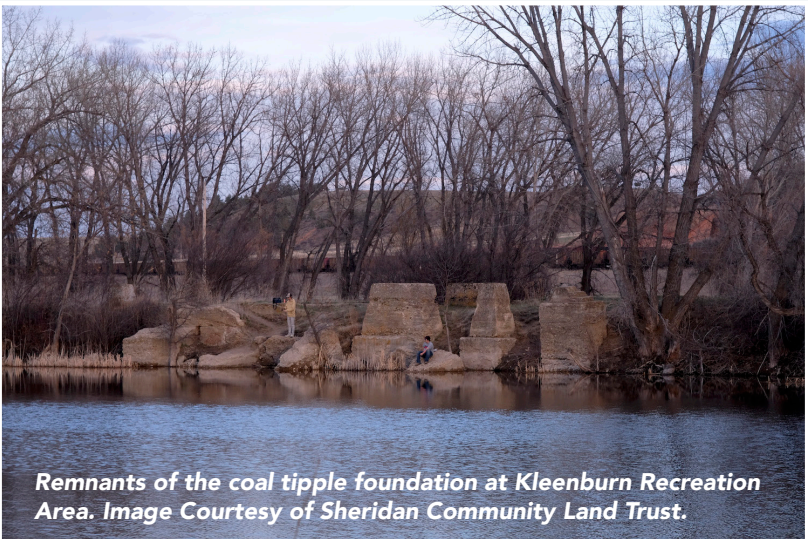
## KLEENBURN RECREATION AREA RISES OUT OF THE CARNEYVILLE MINE BUST

The Carney Coal Company opened the Carney Mine in 1904 and established the company town of Carneyville. Carneyville reached its peak population of 1,400 in 1907. This coal town had a number of improvements including a water supply, fire protection, schools, general store, meat market, ice house, and public baths for the miners. The town, described as “neat and in excellent repair,” boasted that it was never the point of origin of a single case of typhoid fever. In 1920 the Sheridan Wyo Coal Company consolidated several of the active mines in the area, including the Carneyville mine, renaming it Kleenburn. The mine closed in 1923, and the town was abandoned in 1933.

In 1953 and 1954, surface coal mining left two open pits that ultimately filled with alluvial water from the adjacent Tongue River. These pits now form the lakes at the Kleenburn Recreation Area. In 2009, the Wyoming Abandoned Mind Land Program, Sheridan County, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department partnered to reclaim the hazardous conditions left by historic coal mining activity. Today’s Kleenburn Recreation Area is the product of this effort. The success of this project was nationally recognized with the 2011 Western Regional Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award by the United States Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining.



Carneyville, Wyoming. Image Courtesy of The Kuzara Collection Wyoming Room, Sheridan County Fulmer Library.



Remnants of the coal tipple foundation at Kleenburn Recreation Area. Image Courtesy of Sheridan Community Land Trust.



Monarch Mine. Image Courtesy of The Kuzara Collection Wyoming Room, Sheridan County Fulmer Library.

## MONARCH

Mr. Scotts and Mr. Edleman founded the Monarch Mines in 1903. J.B. Kendrick, a future Wyoming U.S. Senator and Governor, L.H. Brooks, and William C. Ervine later consolidated as Monarch Coal Mining Co. During the height of mining that ran through 1920, Monarch was home to over 800 residents. As mining declined in the early 1920s the small amount of coal still mined in the area was primarily for local use. Monarch was formally abandoned in 1953, and all that remains today are a few livestock structures, the town water tower, St. Thomas Catholic Church and the mine foreman’s house.

## A COMMUNITY CREATED DURING THE BOOM OUTLASTS THE BUST

Peter Kooi (pronounced “Coy”) established the Kooi Mine in 1906, making it the only area coal mine established by an individual and not a company. Soon after, he organized a modern mine camp, where he promoted community programs such as a band, a baseball team, parades and holiday celebrations. These activities contributed to the strong community ties in Kooi. At its peak, the Kooi Mine employed 263 miners producing 3,000 tons of coal daily. The mine closed in 1922 and the school in 1955-56. Similar to other communities that closed, many of the original mining houses were moved off-site and remain in use even today in Sheridan and Ranchester.



A group of miners at Kooi. Image Courtesy of The Kuzara Collection Wyoming Room, Sheridan County Fulmer Library.



# BLACK DIAMOND BYWAY DRIVING TOUR

on TravelStoriesGPS app

Tour the Black Diamond Byway and learn about Sheridan County's mining heritage. The 45 minute audio tour tells the story of those who lived and worked in the historic coal mining towns just north of Sheridan during the early 20th century. The tour features narration by Senator Dave Kinskey and guides travelers with directional cues, making it easier to locate historic sites and focus on the voices of the past while you drive along the byway.

*Directions below to download the free "TravelStoriesGPS" app on iPhone or Android to experience the rich history of this area.*

1. Go to the AppStore (iPhone) or GooglePlay (Android) and search for the "TravelStoriesGPS" or scan the QRCode to download the app.



2. Download and open the "TravelStoriesGPS" app with your phone.

## HOW TO TAKE A TOUR



1

Find a Tour

2

Download

3

Downloading

4

Begin Tour

Black Diamond Trail is part of the Wyoming Historic Mine Trail and Byway program, which was created in 2005 by the Wyoming legislature to identify and designate historic mine locations and trails within the state. The program objectives are:

1. To provide a precise history of mineral development in Wyoming.
2. To interpret the role of mining and minerals in the development of Wyoming's economy.
3. To identify and describe Wyoming's mining and mineral development heritage.

## ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.

Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources

Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources  
2301 Central Ave.  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002  
307-777-6314  
wyoparks.wyo.gov



Sheridan  
Community  
LAND TRUST

sheridanc.lt.org



Be advised that the Black Diamond Trail includes unpaved county roads. Consider carefully recent weather conditions and vehicle size when deciding whether to follow the trail to Dietz, Monarch, Kleenburn and Acme. There is no turn-around space for large recreational vehicles at Dietz and Monarch.

Cover photo courtesy of the John Buyok Collection.