

# Andrew McCulloch and the Kettle Valley Railway



Andrew McCulloch (1864-1945) is inseparable from the story of the Kettle Valley Railway. As chief engineer and superintendent, he surveyed and designed the line and oversaw operations through its first 17 years of operation. Upon his retirement in 1933, McCulloch was described by the editor of the Penticton Herald in the following terms:

*“Never to a greater degree in Penticton has the affection of fellow workers and friends been displayed towards a man than in the case of Andrew McCulloch, retired chief engineer of the K.V. Division of the CPR”.*

The KVR was a remarkable engineering feat by any standard, traversing some of the roughest terrain that ever saw a railway. The main challenges were laying track on steep, unstable slopes, bridging numerous gulches and canyons along the route and keeping the grade to a minimally acceptable 2.2%. This was exceptionally difficult, as the KVR had a maximum elevation of 4200 feet above sea

level down to 150 feet above sea level. Steep terrain caused landslides, spring washouts of the track bed and dangerous rock fall. In the winter, the Coquihalla portion of the line received up to 496 inches of snow...more than 41 feet. The KVR was originally built as a separate branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but in 1931, the CPR assumed full control. Despite the difficulties, the KVR usually made an operating profit, but the construction costs were never recovered.

## The KVR and William Shakespeare

One of the more appealing aspects of the Kettle Valley Railway is the use of Shakespearean names for stations and other facilities in the Coquihalla. McCulloch was an ardent reader of Shakespeare's plays. As a young man working near Seattle, he would often set out across the waters of Puget Sound to attend performances of Shakespeare plays in town.

In 1916, when the Coquihalla subdivision was completed, all the stations proudly bore the names of great Shakespearean characters, chosen by McCulloch himself. The only exception is Coquihalla station itself. From east to west, the names are Juliet, Romeo, Iago, Portia, Jessica, Lear and Othello. Thousands of passengers would take the opportunity to send a postcard from a “Shakespeare” station.

## Safety

The excellent safety record of the KVR owes much to McCulloch. He insisted on stringent safety standards and never relaxed his vigilance. Daily track patrols, mandatory brake testing before downhill runs and a personal inspection of bridges and trestles every year ensured that the line remained safe and in good condition. In all its years of operation, the KVR never had a single passenger fatality.

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