

## History Wins!

With the passage of the Montana Museums Act of 2020 (SB 338) on the last day of the state's sixty-sixth legislative session, museums and historic preservation in the Treasure State scored a major victory. In addition to providing funding for a state-of-the-art facility for the Montana Heritage Center (see "Director's Corner," p. 2), Senate Bill 338 will also greatly benefit other museums and historic sites across the state. Drafted by Sen. Jill Cohenour (D-East Helena), introduced in the Senate by Sen. Terry Gauthier (R-Helena), and carried in the House by Rep. Julie Dooling (R-Helena), the bill gained bipartisan support to pass by a final vote margin of 58–40. The bill was signed by Gov. Steve Bullock on May 10. As noted by MHS director Bruce Whittenberg, April 25 "was a huge day for Montana and our museums and heritage sites. An ongoing investment was made in our work, our passion, and our history. Montana deserves no less!"

The Montana Museums Act of 2020, which goes into effect on

January 1, raises the state's "bed tax" by 1 percent, which will create an estimated \$8–10 million per year that will be dedicated to preserving Montana's past, promoting heritage tourism, and improving our state's infrastructure. Initially, the majority of funds will be used to construct MHS's long-anticipated Montana Heritage Center and refurbish our existing building to provide a physical home befitting Montana's colorful past. In addition, during the first five years that the law is in effect, 20 percent of the revenue will be directed to a historic preservation grant program to support museums and historic sites across the state in their preservation efforts, including \$400,000 each for the Moss Mansion in Billings and the Daly Mansion in Hamilton. After the initial five-year period and the new Heritage Center's construction, the grant program will continue to support museums and historic preservation, and funds will also provide for tourism, infrastructure, and tribal economic development, and for the operation of the Montana



MHS central services administrator Denise King (left), Montana governor Steve Bullock (center), and MHS director Bruce Whittenberg (right) pose with the final vote count for the Montana Museums Act of 2020.

Heritage Center complex.

"This is phenomenal news for Montana's museums and historic sites," says Deb Mitchell, executive director of the Museums Association of Montana. "The SB 338 preservation grants will have an enormously positive impact on visitor experiences at Montana's rich collection of historical institutions." ★

## Don't Be Left Behind!



Join us in Helena September 26–28 for the 46th annual Montana History Conference where we will be *Keeping Up with the Past*. This year's gathering of history enthusiasts will offer an exciting array of workshops, session topics, and historic tours.

For a detailed program, visit <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/ConferencesWorkshops>. ★

## The Montana Museums Act of 2020: Here's What It Means for Montana!

As our *Society Star* front page says, in Montana, "History Wins!" I'd like to use this column to tell you more about the Montana Museums Act of 2020. This bill was the product of great collaboration and impressive leadership from certain legislators who understood the importance of the Montana Historical Society to our state and the value that our museums and historic sites have to communities all across the state. Here are the highlights of the Montana Museums Act of 2020.

Sponsored by Senator Terry Gauthier (R-Helena) and Representative Julie Dooling (R-Helena), Senate Bill 338, the Montana Museums Act of 2020:

- Provides a new revenue source for important infrastructure projects throughout Montana. It requires no general fund or reallocation of existing revenues.
- Increases the statewide accommodations tax from 3 percent to 4 percent (\$1 per \$100 of spending). This tax

is paid by Montana's visitors and in-state travelers and will generate \$8–10 million per year in new revenue on the 1 percent increase. According to data from the Institute for Travel and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, approximately 75 percent of accommodations spending is by nonresident visitors.

- Utilizes existing bonding authority (approximately \$6.7 million).
- Requires \$10 million in private contributions to complete funding for the project.

In the first five years (January 1, 2020–December 31, 2024), 80 percent of the revenue (approximately \$38 million) will fund the construction of the Montana Heritage Center. Twenty percent of the revenue (approximately \$13 million), will fund a "historic preservation grant program" that provides for infrastructure projects for museums, local historical societies, and historic sites statewide. The first year only, the grant also allocates

\$400,000 for the Moss Mansion in Billings and \$400,000 for the Daly Mansion in Hamilton, both of which are state-owned properties.

Beginning January 1, 2025, the revenue will be reallocated to:

- The historic preservation grant program.
- Infrastructure projects as outlined by HB 553.
- Operations and maintenance for the Montana Heritage Center complex.
- Distribution to:
  - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
  - Montana Department of Commerce
  - Regional convention and visitors' bureaus
  - State/tribal economic development commission.

After more than decade of work, the vision of the MHS staff and Board of Trustees will be realized in the Montana Heritage Center. We thank you—our MHS members—for your support and patience as we pursue this dream. 🌟

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## Northwest Archivists Gather in Bozeman

BY KELLYN YOUNGGREN, SENIOR PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVIST

The annual meeting of Northwest Archivists, Inc. took place at the Hilton Garden Inn in Bozeman in May. For those unfamiliar with Northwest Archivists (NWA), it is a regional association of professional archivists, users of archives, and others interested in the preservation and use of archival materials in the Pacific Northwest, including Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. All the archivists at MHS are members, with many being active in leadership roles over the years. I am currently the

Montana state representative to NWA as well as the chair of the Program Committee for the 2019 annual meeting. One of many regional professional organizations for archivists that are scattered across the country, NWA retains a small, close-knit membership with excellent opportunities for MHS archivists to make important professional connections, and gives us access to many professional development opportunities.

Montana had not hosted an NWA meeting since 2011, and we were

very excited by the opportunity. We had a fantastic turnout with over 100 participants from around the region. Session topics ranged from emergency planning to cultural competency in the archives, with presenters from all types of institutions (private, academic, state, and federal). Montana-based archivists and associated professionals also took the opportunity to attend the first meeting of the Montana Archivists Roundtable. The goal of the meeting was to start a continuing dialogue

*Northwest Archivists (cont. on p. 3)*

# ExploreBig Gets Bigger

In 2017, MHS launched ExploreBig.org—a website and mobile app—to share the history and architectural significance of selected Montana buildings, neighborhoods, and cultural sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Initially, ExploreBig included approximately 250 individual sketches and several themed tours. When Christine Brown was hired as a historian for the National Register Sites and Signs program in January, she began efforts to expand the website's offerings and showcase an even greater treasure trove of interpretive material. Brown was aided in this time-consuming process by MHS volunteer turned part-time contractor Michael Connolly, who assisted in uploading narrative text and creating links to digitized bibliographic sources.

Today, visitors to ExploreBig can find nearly 1,800 brief stories on a dizzying array of historic sites ranging from grand business blocks, churches, and schoolhouses to railroad depots, brothels, mansions, humble homes, cabins, and industrial buildings. The project is far from complete, however.



Michael Connolly makes ExploreBig better every day with his work to add more than 1,000 historical sketches, links to more information, and photographs.

With the narrative text now live, Connolly continues to expand the site's visual resources, adding contemporary photos generously donated by MontanaPictures.net and historic images from the MHS Photo Archives and State Historic Preservation Office collections, while MHS volunteer Joe Furshong is scanning photographs from National Register of Historic Places records. Additionally, MHS welcomes the gift of contemporary photos, especially homes contributing to historic districts.

Once completed, ExploreBig will combine years of distinctive historical sketches written by

MHS historians, links to secondary research through digitized resources, and access to thousands of digital images gathered from various sources. The site makes it easy to learn about Montana history by town, time period, architectural style, architect, or even building type. Getting there, however, continues to be “an enormous project and a little daunting,” says Brown. “It's well worth the time to make this information so readily available to the public. ExploreBig is an invaluable tool for students and teachers, researchers, and curious travelers delving into place-based Montana history.” ★

## Northwest Archivists (cont. from p. 2)

among all archivists in the state about our work and goals. I would like to personally thank Jodie Foley, MHS state archivist, for organizing this roundtable, and hopefully we can maintain momentum with this Treasure State group. Next year, NWA will join the Society of California Archivists (SCA), the Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists (CIMA), and the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA) for a joint meeting in San Francisco. ★

## Volunteers Count!

Each May, MHS hosts an appreciation luncheon to recognize the countless contributions of our incredible crew of volunteers, the Friends of the Montana Historical Society. Masterminded by volunteer coordinator Katie White, this year's theme, Volunteers Count!, reflected the critical role that the Friends played in conducting the Society's Visitors Count! survey last year. Other notable contributions for 2018 ranged from 650 hours serving as floor hosts, docents, and special event assistants at the Original Governor's Mansion to 300 hours spent edit-

ing the closed captions from our public programs posted on our YouTube channel. During the ceremony, White recognized Lucille Gordon, Vicki Smith, and Miki Wilde for twenty years of service each; Anthony Schrillo received the award for donating the most hours at 750; and Vic Reiman accepted the Friends' Choice Award for “Whoa, Blue, Whoa!,” the best article in *Montana The Magazine of Western History* (Summer 2018). Altogether during 2018, volunteers contributed 6,500 hours of labor, a value of \$150,000. And, as noted by White during her welcome

remarks, current MHS volunteers have been working at MHS for a combined total of 672 years! ★



Director Bruce Whittenberg presents the Friends' Choice Award to retired MHS museum technician Vic Reiman for his article, “Whoa, Blue, Whoa!” as part of MHS's annual volunteer appreciation luncheon.

## Fields Joins Publications Staff



Micah Fields is the MHS publication program's new associate editor. A native of Texas, Fields received a BA in English from the University of Montana and an MFA in nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa. His previous experience includes service in the U.S. Marine Corps, teaching at the Missoula Writing Collaborative and the University of Iowa, and work with *CutBank Magazine* and the *Iowa Review*. Most recently, Fields completed an editorial fellowship at the *Oxford American* in Little Rock, Arkansas. In his "free time," he is currently at work on a book about

the history of Houston, Texas, and the impacts of Hurricane Harvey on that city. He also publishes writing and photography as a freelance journalist. As associate editor, Fields will work with authors to shape article manuscripts and book projects about Montana and the West for publication. Passionate about Montana, Fields says he is "thrilled to be back in Montana, proud to be affiliated with *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, and thankful to be working in a place where I can learn so much more about Montana's past." 🌟

## Summer Interns Aid the Research Center

A PhD student in history at Montana State University in Bozeman, Jacey Anderson joins the Montana Historical Society this summer as the Digital Projects Assistant in the Photo Archives. Her primary task will be digitizing approximately 1,000 photographs from the Bud Lake and Randy Brewer Crow Indian photograph collection and uploading them to the Montana Memory Project. The majority of the images with which Anderson will be working were taken by four photographers—Orlando S. Goff, Fred Miller, Richard Throssel, and Frank Rinehart—and include some of the earliest photographs ever taken of the Crow people. Together, these images document a pivotal moment of change from traditional to reservation life for the Crow Indians.

MHS's archives welcomes summer intern Megan Bruggeman. Bruggeman is a Montana State University alumna who is currently working toward her master's degree in Library and Information Sciences from Rutgers University through an online program. At MHS, Bruggeman will be processing League of Women Voters records. The League was formed nationally in 1920 by Carrie Chapman Catt just prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment; the Montana chapter was formed in Great Falls that same year. Bruggeman will be working on records from the 1970s to early 2000s, which include extensive documentation on the 1972 State Constitutional Convention, a milestone in Montana history in which the League played a pivotal role.

Each summer MHS oversees a Student Archivist internship that is administered through the Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board and funded by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. This program connects an archival student with a heritage organization for an intensive ten-week internship. Hannah Ermi is this summer's Student Archivist. A native of Washington State, she is an online student at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies in New York. Her project is two-fold: working with Flathead County clerk and recorder Debbie Pierson on the archival management of digital records, and with the Central School Museum on cataloging archival collections. Both institutions are located in Kalispell. 🌟



Jacey Anderson



Megan Bruggeman



Hannah Ermi

# Blackfeet Youth Heritage Project



Blackfeet elder Smokey Rides At The Door (standing) helps students with their research in the MHS library.

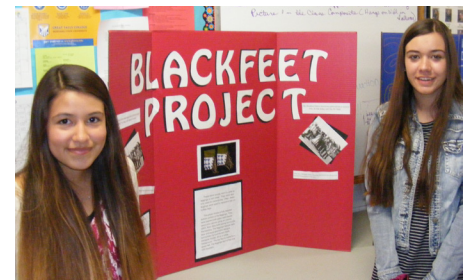
Thanks to the generosity of long-time MHS supporter Dr. Larry Len Peterson of Sisters, Oregon, and other donors, the education program recently completed a long-anticipated project designed to actively engage Native American youth with MHS's collections. Through this process, we also sought to build bridges between native and non-native youth by incorporating the goals of the Montana Office of Public Instruction's Youth Leadership Initiative, one of several programs designed to help address the "Indian achievement gap" and teach respect for Indian culture and traditions to both native and non-native students.

Led by MHS program specialist Deb Mitchell, the project began last fall when teachers Leo Bird from Browning High School and Megan Printy-Smith from Valier High School began working with their students to prepare them for a research trip to MHS. In November the students traveled to Helena, where MHS staff assisted them in the study of photographs and artifacts in our collection.

Blackfeet elders were also on hand to instruct students in traditional understanding and protocol. Valier students then traveled to Browning, where they joined with Browning students to spend the day with Dr. David Beck, professor of history at the University of Montana, learning more about how to do historical research. Throughout the remainder of the school year, these young scholars continued to work on the projects begun at MHS and, in late spring, shared the results of their efforts with community members.

The goals of this project were to teach students how to conduct authentic research and share their findings with the larger community; let Native American youth know that MHS holds material in trust for all Montanans, including them; encourage students to consider careers in museums and archives; work with students to create a bridge between communities on or bordering the Blackfeet Reservation and the Montana Historical Society; and help students gain greater appreciation for Blackfeet culture, history,

community, and landscape. MHS envisions this as a pilot project, which we hope to expand to other reservation schools and tribes in the future. ✪



Emma Valdez (left) and Keira Lackner (right) pose beside their project board while sharing the results of their research with the Valier community.

## About Us

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- ✔ MHS Director: Bruce Whittenberg
  - ✔ Membership Services:  
Jodel Fohn (406) 444-2890
  - ✔ Editor: Kirby Lambert
- [montanahistoricalsociety.org](http://montanahistoricalsociety.org)

## A Historical Interpreter Like No Other

The Montana Historical Society mourns the passing of an extraordinary historical interpreter, Bobi Harris, on May 6, 2019. Harris—who for a time also worked in the Museum Store—began giving tours at the Montana State Capitol and the Original Governor’s Mansion (OGM) in 2006. She brought equal parts passion for history, enthusiasm for giving tours, and in-depth knowledge of the two buildings’ histories to her tours. A consummate hostess, she always made visitors feel truly welcome at these

important historic sites. Her ability to connect with different types of audiences was tremendous, and she used her skills in quilting, dollmaking, and basket weaving to introduce a hands-on understanding of material culture and its significance. Harris’s dedication to her job was exemplified by the remarkable effort she put in to help reinterpret the OGM as a venue for understanding the contributions of women and children to the World War I home front. Her loss is deeply felt by her colleagues at MHS. ★



## MHS’s African American History Projects Awarded Recognition and New Grants

In May, the Vernacular Architecture Forum recognized MHS’s “Identifying and Documenting Montana’s African American Heritage Resources” project with the Buchanan Award for “excellence in field work, interpretation, and public service.” Project director Kate Hampton of the State Historic Preservation Office and project historian Delia Hagen accepted the award in Philadelphia. This honor follows previous awards for the project, including the National Council on Public History’s Excellence in Consulting Award for project historian Delia Hagen, the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Performance, and the American Association for State and Local History’s Award of Merit, the country’s “most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.”

To date, the project has entailed researching fifty Montana properties, preparing National Register documents related to Helena’s African American community, conducting oral histories, creating lesson plans, and further developing Montana’s African American Heritage Resources website. Grants



Undated group shot of members of the Billings chapter of the Montana Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, MHS PAC 2002.36.1

newly awarded from Humanities Montana, the Montana Cultural Trust, and the National Park Service will enable MHS to continue this important work. The “Documenting and Sharing Montana’s African American Heritage” project will develop the first statewide historical context about Montana’s African American heritage, list at least one place significant to that history in the National Register, conduct additional oral histories with members of Montana’s African American community, and

produce an eight- to ten-minute video introduction to the topic.

This work fosters the opportunity to better understand significant historical themes, including national and regional emigration patterns, the Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights eras, and to relate how those themes affected Montanans. The project will provide the mechanism by which additional Montana African American places can be recognized and their significance understood within those contexts. ★

## Mark Baumler Retires

On July 19 we will celebrate the career and retirement of one of the Montana Historical Society's longtime leaders and a statewide leader in historic preservation, Mark Baumler.

Mark has been with the Montana Historical Society for thirty-one years, serving as the state historic preservation officer since 1999. We always celebrate these milestones with mixed emotions, and this is no exception. An archaeologist by training, Mark has led the team of preservation specialists at the State Historic

Preservation Office with skill and passion.

"As they say in archaeology: it's about time. It's been a long and good ride for me at the Montana Historical Society," said Baumler. "Over the years, I've had the pleasure of being around a lot of talented and special people, and especially my colleagues at SHPO. I hope I will have as much success at not working as I have had in working with all of them."

A search for a new state historic preservation officer will begin later this year. 🌟



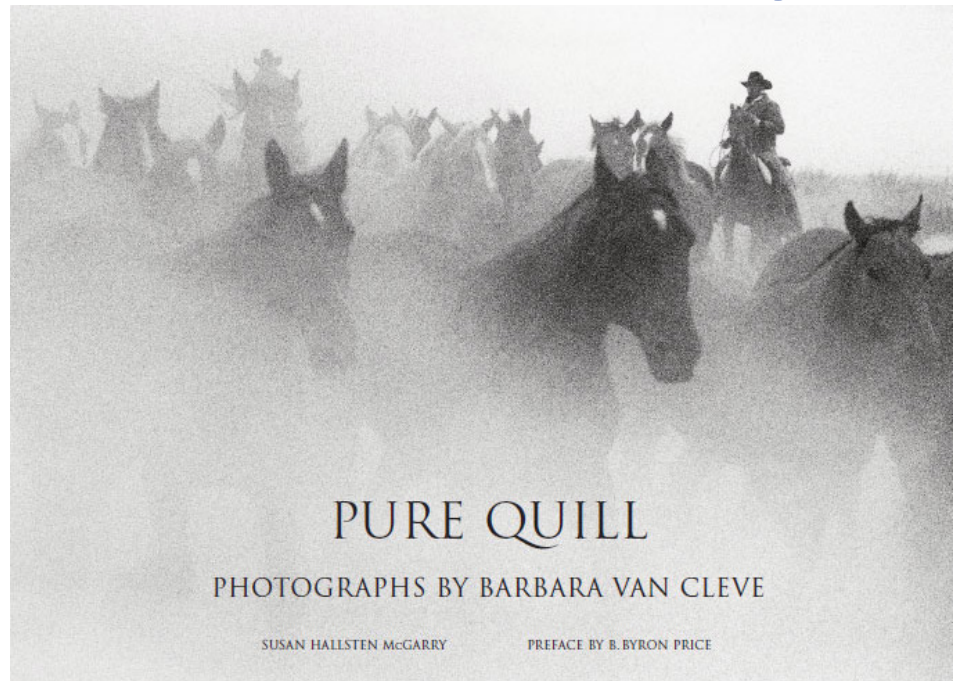
## From the Museum Store: Recommended Reading

### ***Pure Quill: Photographs by Barbara Van Cleve***

By Susan Hallsten McGarry, with foreword by Tim Cahill, preface by B. Byron Price, and afterword by Kymberly Pinder  
Hardcover, 216 pages. \$75.00

In the vernacular of the West, the term *pure quill* means "authentic; real, through and through." Barbara Van Cleve's gripping black-and-white photographs of the West she knows and loves give vision to that term. Born and raised on a working Montana cattle and horse ranch, for seven decades she has focused her lens on the land and sky, and the men, women, and animals who animate it. In riveting compositions, subtle values, and captivating textures, her photographs dispel the myths associated with the West while conveying its true adventure and compelling drama.

In *Pure Quill*, the first book featuring the full breadth of her subject matter, readers experience her other themes—rodeo as dance, striking night scenes, the Great Montana Centennial Cattle Drive series, and documentation of the Spanish Mission Trail in Baja



California, Mexico—as well.

As noted by B. Byron Price, director of the Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West and the University of Oklahoma Press, "Over the years Van Cleve's compelling work has left a trail deep and plain over open range, departing from the main path now and again in the pursuit of majesty and romance but always returning to the elemental. Half-measures and artifice have no place

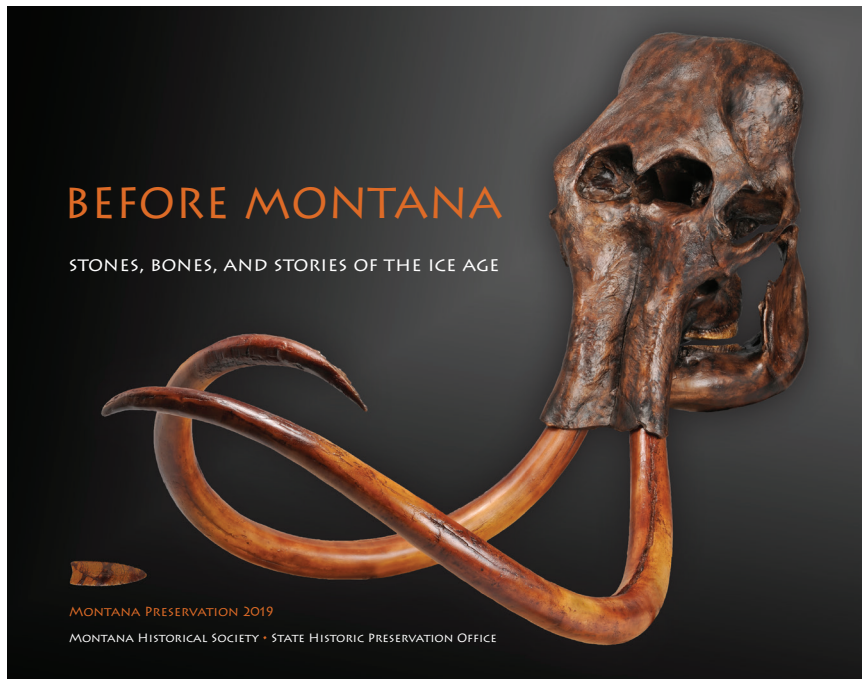
in her oeuvre. Honesty, consistency, and versatility are its hallmarks, and pride of place, her brand."

MHS is currently in the process of acquiring Van Cleve's collection of more than 10,000 negatives and prints that comprise her life's work. Copies of *Pure Quill* are available at the Museum Store in Helena. Call (800) 243-9900 to order, or order online anytime at [www.montanahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org). 🌟

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*Before Montana*, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office's 2019 poster, celebrates Montana's prehistoric past and coincides with the new *Ice Age Montana* exhibit in Montana's Museum. The 16" x 20" poster features a replica of a woolly mammoth skull with one of the Clovis-age chipped stone points found at the Anzick Paleoindian archaeological site in Park County. To receive your free copy, contact SHPO at [mtshpo@mt.gov](mailto:mtshpo@mt.gov) or call us at (406) 444-7715.