

## Building Excitement for New Heritage Center



In this issue we proudly present plans for the Montana Heritage Center, the new home for your Montana Historical Society. Society Director Richard Sims and the statewide Society Board of Trustees required the new facility to embrace a vision worthy of Montana and its people. After years of painstaking planning and design, we believe this architectural model reflects that goal. Just east of the Capitol, it will be the friendly and open door of Montana. All building images courtesy of CTA Architects Engineers, SRG Partnership, and Main Street Design.

### Society Needs Your Support to Create New Home for History

Once in a great while Montana architecture can capture the grandeur and excitement of Montana itself.

In this issue we present to you, our special friends, architectural plans for the new Montana Heritage Center that will create a “Society to match the scenery,” to borrow Wallace Stegner’s phrase.

We began with a vision of greater service to all components of Montana history and heritage so that Montanans can forever share their story with each other and with the world in functional and attractive facilities.

After years of hard work and careful design, we have arrived at

plans that unite six Montana Historical Society programs together in two buildings with one vision to provide greater service to Montana history, to Montanans, and to our visitors.

“This is the most exciting moment in the last quarter century of this institution,” Society Director Richard Sims said. “As you examine these wonderful architectural illustrations, you will share our vision of what this means for us and all future generations of Montanans.”

Consensus has been reached with the Society’s Board of Trustees, government officials at all  
*New Home (cont. on p. 4)*

### Research Center Sleuth Closes Cold Murder Case

Today’s television “cold case” fiction dramas can’t hold a “reality” candle to Montana Historical Society sleuth Molly Kruckenberg when it comes to unraveling a murder case that happened nearly 60 years ago.

In true film noir style: It was a day like any other day when Clem Pellett asked the Society Research Center to help him learn more about his grandfather’s 1951 murder.

Kruckenberg, the head of the research center, took on the investigation personally. Pellet said he didn’t know much about what had happened and hoped that perhaps he could find the gravestone of the  
*Sleuth (cont. on p. 6)*

## MONTANA HERITAGE CENTER

# The Work Ahead

DIRECTOR RICHARD SIMS

Let's get right down to the dollars and sense. Architectural plans for the Montana Heritage Center approved by the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees represent a construction budget of \$37.5 million. This amount was identified as a reasonable figure for building a project of this scope, and won necessary approval by the Montana Legislature in 2005. Of that amount, \$7.5 million in bonding authority was approved by the 2005 legislature. Over the past three years, even though the debate continued over a location for the facility, an additional \$2 million was raised—\$600,000 from the Greater Montana Foundation, and \$1.4 million in appraised value of 300 acres of donated real estate. That now makes our goal \$30 million (including an endowment goal) to raise over the next few years, through appeals to the public sector and to the private sector. Many donors would like to see state government allocate significant funds for the new center, and many in state government would like to see further success in the private sector. The work, accordingly, will focus on two fronts simultaneously. Also, it is a rule of Montana state government that 100% of funds for construction of state buildings must be on hand—"cash on the barrelhead"—before any bid process for construction begins. We must meet our total

### About Us

The *Society Star* is published quarterly by the Montana Historical Society and is a benefit of membership.

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[www.montanahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org)

fundraising goal for the Montana Heritage Center project before we realize our dream of a new home for Montana history.

The Society is working towards making the dream a reality. Internal preparations for this major campaign have been underway for quite a while, although it has been only three months since the four-year debate over facility location was finally resolved in mutual agreement over the importance of building the new center. We are now creating a presence on the Society website, we are developing fundraising protocols, we are preparing a budget for campaign needs, we are designing campaign literature, we are producing a commemorative naming program, we are working with both sides of the legislative aisle, we are re-tasking certain staff internally and recruiting a professional fundraiser, and most importantly, we are recruiting leadership statewide whose participation will validate this momentous effort and help ensure success. You will hear much more about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a heritage campus at the Capitol worthy of Montana's breadth and depth of history.

A formal campaign for the new Montana Heritage Center will be launched soon, and we will be asking for your support and contributions. We consider you our partners in history. Please begin

thinking about how you can contribute to this worthy effort in the future. We would love to hear from you. ✪

## Something New, Something Old

TREASURES FROM THE  
SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

The "something new" this issue is the seventh Wrangler Award for Western Heritage from the prestigious National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma awarded to the Society's *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.

The award was for author John Monnett's article, "My Heart Now Has Become Changed to Softer Feelings,' A Northern Cheyenne Woman and Her Family Remember the Long Journey Home." It was voted the Outstanding Magazine Article for 2009.

The Metropolitan State College of Denver professor tells the tragic story of Iron Teeth's trek from Indian Territory to the Northern Cheyenne's homelands on the northern plains in 1877. She vowed to reclaim a way of life or die trying.

Society Press Magazine Business Manager Tammy Ryan said proudly: "Now we have a Wrangler in our collection for every day of the week." ✪



Director Richard Sims (left) and John Monnett with the Wrangler Awards presented to Monnett and the Society Press.

## Great Museums and Galleries

### RANGE RIDER MUSEUM, MILES CITY

There is no better place to go to understand southeastern Montana than the Range Riders Museum in Miles City.

It does what it says it does: "Captures the essence of area ranches, railroads, Indian villages, Fort Keogh and all the things that make southeastern Montana special and historical."

For 25 years Bob Barthelness and his wife Betty Ann have carried on the mission and improved the museum that was established in 1939.

Bob's sense of humor is as great as his knowledge of the history of the area. One day he is working

with artifacts like Charlie Russell artwork, he says, "and the next I'm cleaning the toilet."

The museum includes 13 buildings on 13 acres of land and has more than 38,000 square feet of exhibit space. It is a rich collection of artifacts and historic buildings that is well worth a trip to see.

Although there is not much of it left, the museum is near the site of the famous Fort Keogh that led to the establishment of the community. Bob is a third generation Miles Citian, and his grandfather, Christian Barthelness was stationed at the fort serving as a musician, photographer and



The Range Rider Museum has lots to offer.

trooper. Bob is one of the foremost experts on the history of the fort, a model of which is on exhibit.

But his favorite room is Memorial Hall that has 875 plaques with the names and the histories of the families that settled the area. "It preserves the memory of the lives that were lived out here. There is no greater thing than that," he said. Go see all the "riders" of the past. ★

## Society Star Profile

### DEB MITCHELL: GUIDING LIGHT FOR MONTANA HISTORY

For thousands of students and adults Deb Mitchell has been the face and voice of the Montana Historical Society.

Her official Montana Historical Society title is Program Specialist for Outreach and Interpretation. What she does is oversee tour guides for Montana's Museum, the State Capitol and the Original Governors' Mansion, work with bus tours, sends Society history footlockers to schools across the state, and coordinates a wide variety of special educational programs for children and adults.

"I started out at the Society 10 years ago as a tour guide," she said. "I really enjoyed working and visiting with people from across the state, and really the world. I like to challenge myself, so I applied for my current job, and here I am."

She is a graduate in civil engineering from Yakima Valley Community College in Washington,

and puts that knowledge to work in the tedious detail and scheduling that she faces every day.

"We have some of the most amazing tour guides. They are our front-line people with the public. They are here because they are passionate about what they do," she said.

International visitors sometimes ask Mitchell where the cowboys and Indians are, and she always strives to present the real story of Montana. "When they complete a tour, the most common thing you hear is that we have the most beautiful museum and capitol they have seen. Especially from those who came thinking that we were still the wild, wild West," she said.

Working with classroom teachers and students is one of the most rewarding parts of her job, she said. "Seeing what we do here at the Society incorporated into



Deb Mitchell and a tour group in the Montana Homeland Gallery

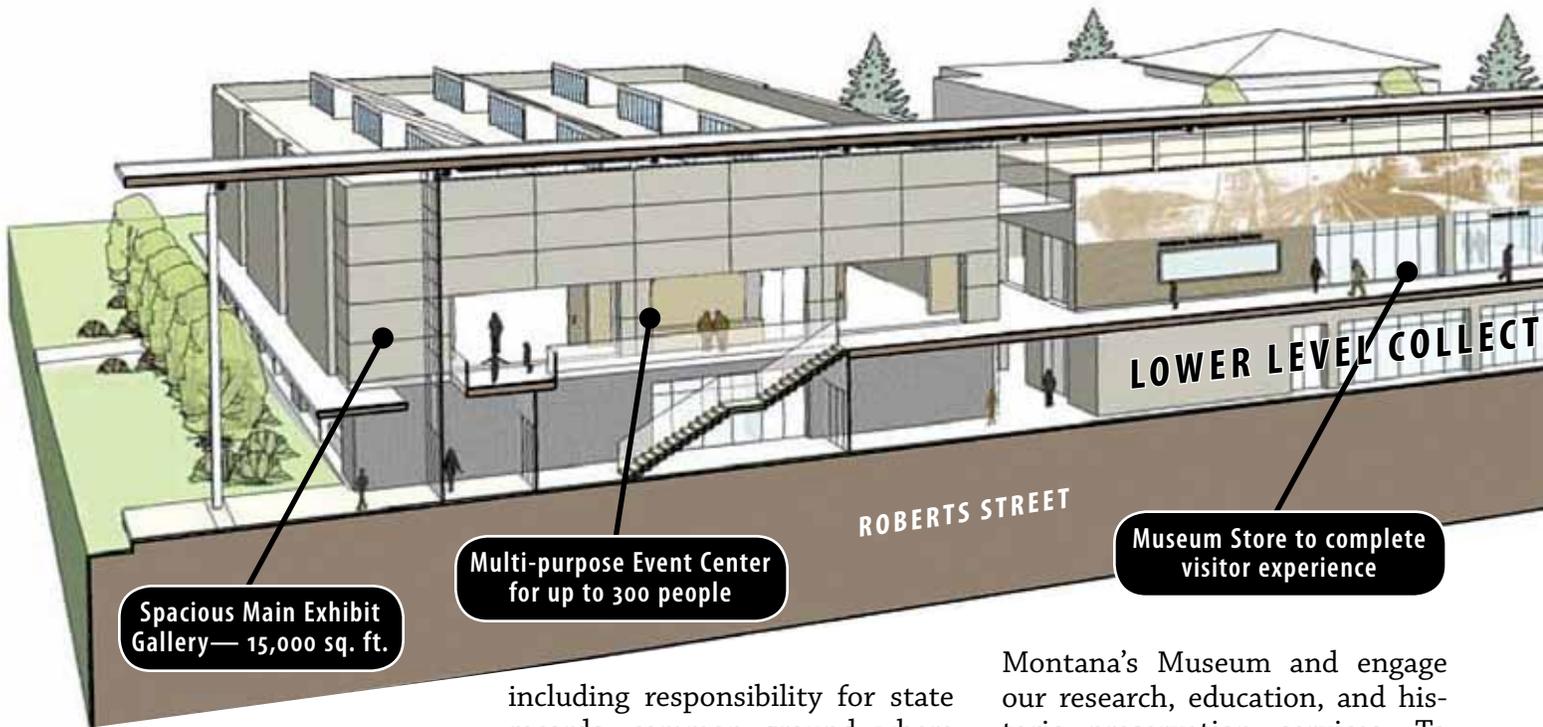
the classroom is always special. It is fulfilling to work with all of the kids across the state," she said.

Mitchell grew up showing horses, so she has a "good understanding" of early transportation in the state. Her sons Tanner and Skyler both participated in high school rodeo, and Tanner also competes at the college level.

It gives her a good perspective on the often stressful aspects of her job. "What I do every day is a breeze compared to going to the rodeo," she said. "Watching my boys ride 2,000-pound bulls is what tough is." ★

# Grand Design and New Vision for

STRETCHING MAJESTICALLY OVER TWO BLOCKS JUST EAST OF THE STATE RESEARCHERS, ALL MONTANANS AND THEIR VISITORS



*New Home* (cont. from p. 1)  
levels, and other interests that the new facility will be in Helena—near the Capitol that is popularly known as the People’s House.

There are many logistical and technical reasons for that decision

including responsibility for state records, common ground where Montanans come together to govern themselves, and tradition.

This is where thousands of students and their teachers from every corner of the state come each year to learn about state government, take Society sponsored tours of the State Capitol, visit

Montana’s Museum and engage our research, education, and historic preservation services. To hear their excited voices, see their faces, and watch them learn from our tour guides what it means to be a Montanan reminds us of why this is chosen ground.

The plan also allows us to save money by remodeling our existing building, using state-owned property just across the street north of that building for new construction, and bringing the whole project together with a grand concourse under 6th Street between the two structures.

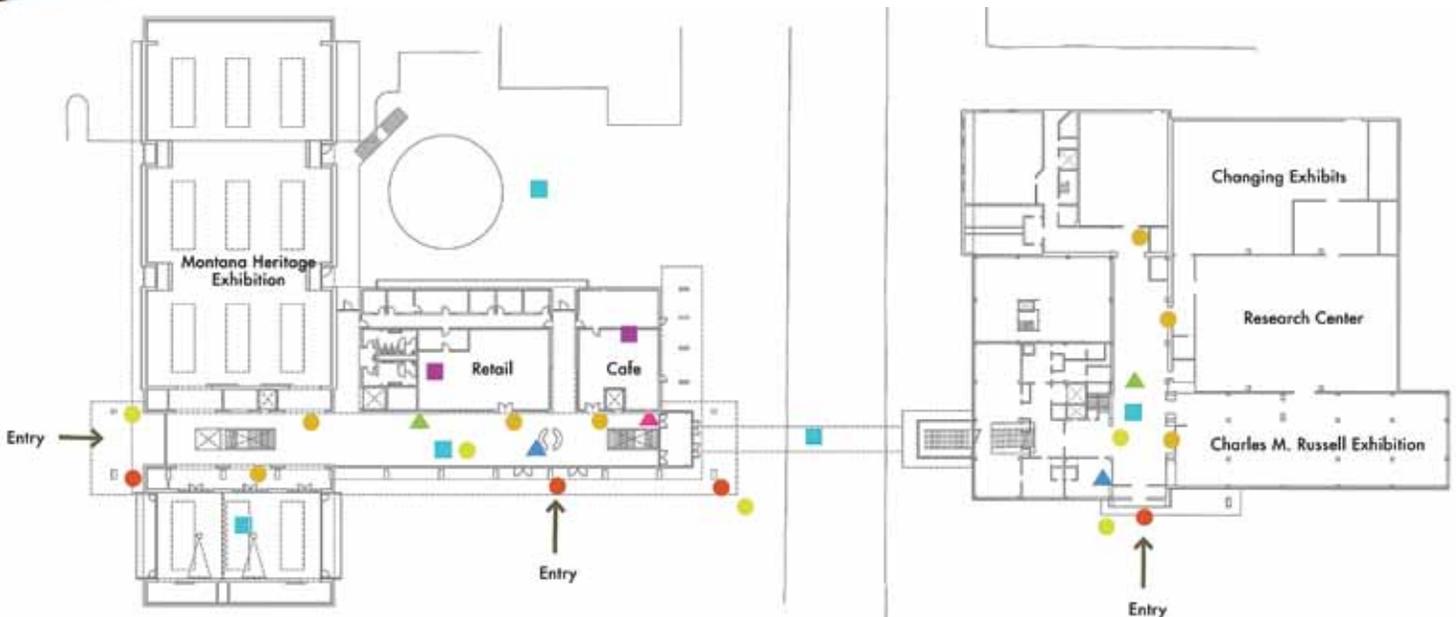
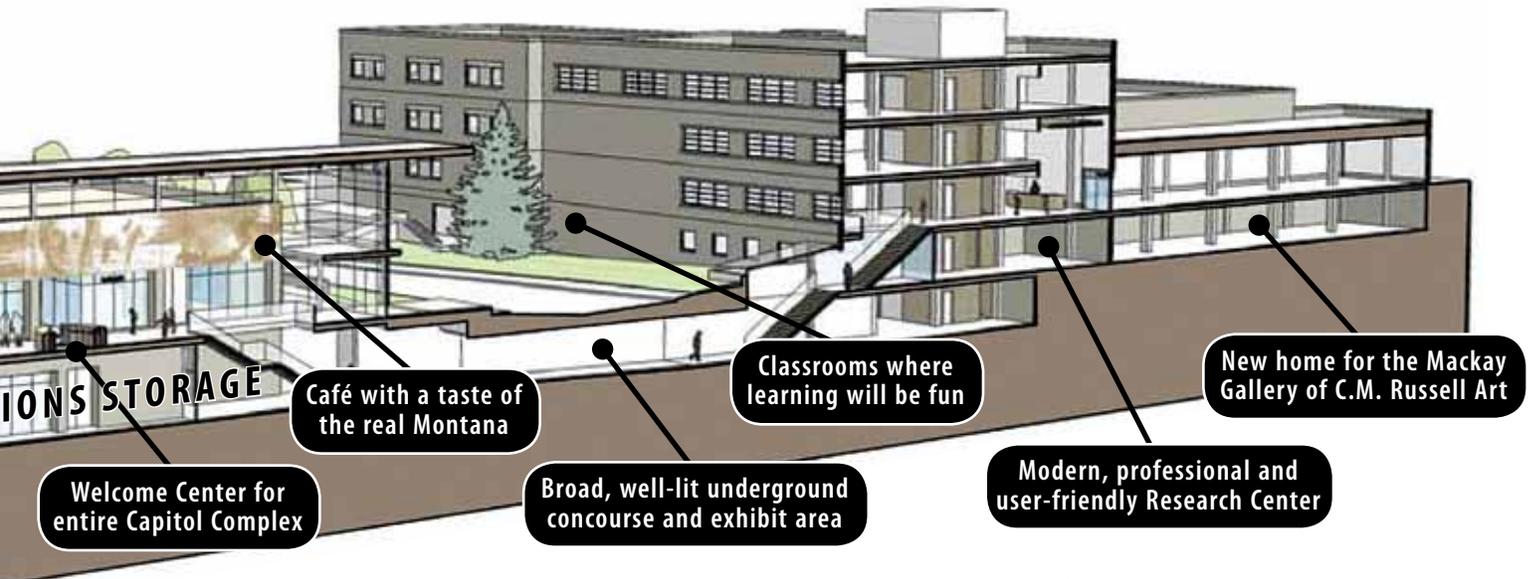
These plans were developed by some of the best Montana and national firms that specialize in facilities like ours. The partnership includes CTA Architect Engineers, SRG Partnership, Architecture Planning Interiors, and Main Street Design. The Montana Architects & Engineers Division and other state officials also assisted in planning.



Plans for the new Montana Heritage Center result in additional parking spaces in the area. The landscaped grounds have plenty of green space for outdoor events and festivals including a terraced amphitheatre adjacent to the center.

# Montana History and Heritage

CAPITOL BUILDING, A WELCOMING PLACE FOR MHS MUSEUM PATRONS,



Layout of the main floors of the new Montana Heritage Center. Underneath and above these public areas are where Montana’s memory lives. These improved spaces allow safe and modern storage for the Society’s extensive collections. Our winning formula is 6–2–1: 6 programs operating more efficiently out of 2 buildings, providing 1 new level of public service.

The new Montana Heritage Center will be a welcoming entry point and anchor for visitors as part of a Capitol Campus master plan that is also underway.

Total space needs for the Montana Heritage Center were identified at 119,805 net square feet (nsf). The new building connected by a grand concourse gallery under

the street will provide 45,330 nsf. The existing Society Building has 66,995 nsf and will be renovated.

The planning process from June—December 2009 kept firmly in mind two concepts that Sims emphasized: “The steak and the sizzle.” The “steak” he describes as the meat of the project, the synergistic functionality of a renovated

building and a new building. The “sizzle” is the excitement represented by the architectural design, by new and renovated spaces, and by the increased capacity to provide education and enjoyment to all Montanans and those who visit us.

Share our excitement. Build the future with us. 🌟

*Sleuth (cont. from p. 1)*

man who had killed his grandpa, Clarence. Little did he know that his request would lead to the apprehension of Frank Drynan, who had killed Clarence, escaped justice, and was still on the loose.

"This request really hit a lot of our records," Kruckenberg said. "It covered the gamut—that's what made it a great research case."

Most people know about the Society's great museum, she said, but the archives that include more than 25,000 feet of material and records is the heart of Montana's memory.

Kruckenberg began the search with the Society's newspaper collection which has nearly all of the papers ever published in Montana beginning when it was a territory. Other records including from the state attorney general's office and the prison, which the Society archives, added to the information.

Clem and Kruckenberg continued to communicate on e-mail, and he made trips from his home in Bellevue, Wash., to meet with her and do research himself at the Society.

All of the research eventually led to Pellett hiring a private investigator, who—armed with the information—was able to track Drynan, 78, down in Arizona, where he was apprehended by authorities. ⚡



Molly Kruckenberg casts a careful eye on the Drynan files.

## Nationally renowned artist coming home for rendezvous

It is always a question whether Montana makes artists famous or whether artists make Montana famous.

Either way, it is time for art lovers to make their plans and get their reservations now for the Montana Historical Society's 32nd Western Rendezvous of Art Aug. 19-22 in Helena when Harley Brown comes home to the show and the place that made him one of the most renowned painters of the West.

"A lot of people in Montana over the years have followed my career and helped me along," Brown said. "Montana was where it all began for me. I am happy to be coming back."

Although he is a charter member of the Northwest Rendezvous Group of artists that work with the Society to put on the four-day celebration in Helena each August, it has been several years since his busy schedule has allowed him to attend the event.

Brown will present a special one-man-show on his life and work as a thank you to the patrons of Rendezvous for their support over the years and to share some of the things that he has learned from and about the people he has known along the way.

"What I am going to do is take the frames off my work and just show some of the stuff that I have done over the years and answer people's questions about it," Brown said.

University of Montana Professor Rafael Chacon is also one of the special guest speakers this year at Rendezvous. He will present "Paintings as Propaganda: Art in Glacier National Park in the Early 20th Century." "We have some very special guests that will make Ren-

dezvous even more exciting this year," said Sue Near, who is coordinating the event.

By chance, Brown came to the Montana Historical Society in 1973 and ran into then curator of art Bob Morgan, who recognized his talent. "Bless Bob's soul, he told me 'we're going to do something for you,' and he gave me a one-man show at the Society. I went from zero in my career on up to where I am fortunate to be today," Brown said.

Morgan said he knew that Brown was a great, budding artist, and his career has been "phenomenal."

"I guess we were all a little bit more exciting in our younger days," Brown said of his Rendezvous experiences. "Now an exciting day to me is going to the Safeway and looking for a cereal."

To find out more about Rendezvous, view some of the art, and register go on line to [www.westrendart.org](http://www.westrendart.org). ⚡

## Don't Miss History Conference

The history of Glacier National Park will be featured at the Montana Historical Society's 37th Annual Montana History Conference Sept. 30 though Oct. 2 in Helena.

"We are celebrating the centennial of Glacier Park as well as examining the role of tourism and outdoor recreation in the history of Montana," Society Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager Kirby Lambert said.

For more information contact Lambert at 406-444-4741, email [klambert@mt.gov](mailto:klambert@mt.gov), or go on line to [www.montanahistoricalociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalociety.org). ⚡

# New Society Book Recalls Montana's 'Commies'



The *Producers News* once was the voice for the Communist Party in northeast Montana.

It is a story so sensitive that for decades many Montanans were ashamed to even talk about it.

A new book published by the Montana Historical Society Press at last brings to light a nearly forgotten chapter of state history when communism gained a strong foothold and even a national voice in radical politics during the 1920s and 1930s.

*The Red Corner: The Rise and Fall of Communism in Northeastern Montana* by Verlaine Stoner McDonald is a riveting book that recounts newspaper wars, farm labor activism, communist picnics and youth organizations, ugly corruption and scandal.

McDonald's journey into the dark days her family had lived through began in 1985 when a hired man came across some old newspapers on her family farm. One of the papers that had been published in nearby Plentywood in 1932 bore the headline "Vote Communist Tuesd'y, Nov. 8."

Although she had lived in Sheridan County most of her life, McDonald said she only began to discover the radical history of her community as she read through the yellowed newspapers.

"When I attended school in the 1970s and 1980s, the county's Communist movement simply was not discussed, certainly not in classrooms and never in polite conversation," she said.

For nearly two decades Charles Taylor's organization held sway in the northeast corner of Montana through his flagship newspaper, *The Producers News*, which for a time was an official organ of the Communist Party USA.

When economic times got tough in northeast Montana, Taylor found fertile ground for his communist interests among

immigrants who had experienced socialism in their native Europe.

By the late 1930s people were trying to put their past behind them.

McDonald used newspaper accounts, oral histories, FBI reports and even internal communist party files to do her research.

The 232-page book that includes many illustrations and photographs sells for \$16.95 in paperback. It can be ordered by calling the Museum Store toll-free 1-800-243-9900. Members get their discount. Ⓢ

## Memorials to Society

### GREAT WAY TO BE REMEMBERED

There is no better way to honor a person with a passion for Montana history than to donate a gift to the Montana Historical Society in their name.

You can celebrate historic occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays or say "thank you" with a tribute donation honoring a special person in your life. It's easy—just send a donation to the Montana Historical Society and let us know the name of the person you would like to pay tribute to, including their contact information and the special occasion you'd like to highlight. The Society will send the honored person a letter notifying them of the tribute gift, acknowledging your thoughtfulness (gift amount will remain confidential), and letting them know what it means for our history programs.

Memorial gifts express your sympathy or remember a loved family member, friend or colleague. At the same time these thoughtful donations contribute to the Society's effort to preserve Montana's many legacies. When making memorial donations please include a note, or a notation

on the gift check, that specifies the person to be remembered.

Families are encouraged to contact us if memorial contributions in honor of their loved one will be directed to the Montana Historical Society. We appreciate having a copy of the obituary or some biographical information on the person named in the memorial for our files. Please include contact information so that we may send acknowledgements of memorial gifts received to the family.

The Society will send all tribute and memorial donors a personal letter of thanks for their gift.

Checks can be sent to: Tributes & Memorials, Montana Historical Society, P.O. Box 201201, 225 North Roberts, Helena MT 59620-1201. Contact Susan Near, Special Projects Manager, for further information on these funds or to discuss other recognition ideas.

All donations to the Montana Historical Society are tax deductible in accordance with section 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. No goods or services can be exchanged for your gift if it is used as a tax deduction. Ⓢ

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.

# Montana Historical Society

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Celebrating the spirit of Montana’s Native American veterans, Society Director Richard Sims helps open the “Native Words, Native Warriors” exhibit at the People’s Center in Pablo on the lands of the Salish, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai tribes. The travelling Smithsonian Institution exhibit on Indian code talkers is being taken by the Society to all reservations in the state. It is much appreciated by Indians and non-Indians alike, who are finding common ground in honoring all of the state’s veterans and those who are currently serving. Watch for it coming to your area.

*We appreciate our members!*