

Society Building on Its Reputation for the Future

There's an old saying that "it ain't bragging if you can prove it."

After an intensive two-year review including on-site visits, the American Association of Museums has once again certified that the Montana Historical Society is one of the great historical institutions in the nation.

"You are a leader in the field in providing the best possible museum services and experiences, reminding both your peers and the public exactly how much museums really matter," AAM President Ford Bell said.

There are an estimated 17,500 museums in the nation and only 777 are currently accredited by AAM. That puts the Society in the top 5 percent nationwide.

"This is a tribute to the outstanding staff of the Montana Historical Society and a validation of the commitment it has to serving all the needs of Montana history and heritage," Society Interim Director Mike Cooney said. "All Montanans can be proud of what this accomplishment says about our love of the past and our hopes for the future."

The Society received high marks in all areas considered, and in the summary remarks in the report, the accreditation team said they saw a "strong sense of pulling together for a successful future," during their visit to Helena.

Cooney said the accreditation not only shows the high level of *Building* (cont. on p. 4)



Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger accepted the certification award for the Society during a press conference in his office with American Association of Museums President Ford Bell joining in by speaker phone.

Society Magazine Still Going Like 60

Montana The Magazine of Western History is celebrating its 60th year of taking the Montana story to people across the state, the nation and even around the world.

Since its first issue came out in 1951, the magazine has continued to draw national awards for its well researched and insightful articles on Montana and the West. It now circulates to nearly 10,000 people in all 50 states and 14 other countries.

It was conceived in 1950 by the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees, and given the motto "to preserve, to publish, and to promote interest in the history of Montana." It has more than lived up to that standard. For example,

there are now 11 subscribers to the magazine in Malaysia!

It has grown up over the years, though, and a free searchable index for researchers is now offered on the Society's web site, www.montanahistoricalociety.org. The staff is still going like 60 to find new and better ways to serve you and Montana history. 🇺🇸



Montana Historical Society Interim Director Mike Cooney

Long before I took this job as interim director of the Society, I was a big fan of all the staff does.

My own family has deep roots in Montana including my grandfather Frank Cooney, who became governor of the state in 1933. As president of the Montana Senate, I was impressed with the great job the Society did in telling the Montana story during the Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial. Among other things, the Society developed and carried out the project for the great bas relief of the expedition that adorns the wall behind the President's rostrum. As secretary of state I constantly drew on the history and collections of the Society, and I used its museum to show off our state to visitors.

Now that I am a part of this great place, what amazes and overwhelms me each day is how much gets done here with so little staff. When something comes up,

from an event to a special project, the staff is always there to pitch in to get the job done. I invite you to read the profile on Martha Kohl in this issue to see how we are able to have such a wide variety of expertise with a small staff. I thought I understood what multi-tasking meant, but I didn't until I came here. It is beyond teamwork. There is a special energy here that comes from a shared passion for Montana, its history and its heritage. It is an honor for me to serve here.

I was a supporter of plans for a new Montana Historical Society Heritage Center, to be built in the parking lot across the street north of the existing Society building and connected together by a grand underground concourse, before I came here. Now that I see all that the Society has to offer, I am further convinced of the world-class museum and history center that it will become. We continue to work on those plans and will be able to

tell you more after the current legislative session is complete. Thank you for the strong support you continue to give to this worthy project. Share your feelings with others.

We are here to serve you. I encourage you to contact me with any ideas you have for the future of Montana history and heritage. When I was growing up in Montana I learned that we are called the Treasure State. Now I have become part of one of the greatest treasures we have, the Montana Historical Society. ★

About Us

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

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SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD: TREASURES FROM THE SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

How the Society Got Russell's Masterpiece

Sometimes history just walks in the door.

John Cronholm came to a recent program by Society Education and Outreach Program Director Kirby Lambert on Charlie Russell's masterpiece "When the Land Belonged to God" that was originally a fixture in the historic Montana Club in downtown Helena and is now part of the Society collection.

After the presentation, Cronholm asked some great questions. It turns out he was president of the Montana Club when the decision was made to sell the painting to the Society.

Interim Society Director Mike Cooney later asked Cronholm to



John Cronholm and a picture of history he knows well

write his memories of the sale. The results are now part of the Society archives. Those who know Cronholm know he has a way of getting things done. After some

stiff debate among club members, Cronholm sensed when he finally had the votes to pass the sales agreement. "I then made short work of additional comments. ★

Capital City Has It All

We are going to do a little something different this time on the road to Montana's great museums and galleries and show you what your capitol city of Helena offers for a great getaway.

Of course you can visit the **Montana Historical Society** and its museum as well as take a tour of the beautiful capitol building next door. But Helena offers other great galleries, museums and events.

The **Original Governor's Mansion** museum near downtown lets you take tours to see how governors and famous people lived their daily lives in luxury in the late 1800s.

The **Holter Museum of Art** features the best in contemporary regional fine arts and crafts and hosts nationally known and local artists in guest exhibitions that change throughout the year.

The **Archie Bray Foundation** is known internationally as one of the best ceramic art studios in the world and attracts top potters and other artists whose work is featured on the grounds of the beautiful complex.

Reeder's Alley dates back to the gold rush of 1864, and the quaint alley features the Pioneer Cabin which is the oldest documented dwelling in the city.

The magnificent **Cathedral of St. Helena**, patterned after one in Vienna, offers historic tours under the 230-foot spire that dominates the Helena skyline.

The **Montana Military Museum** located on Fort Harrison just west of Helena offers great artifacts, displays and memorabilia ranging from Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery through the military conflicts of today.

Exploration Works is a hands-on museum of science and culture for children of all ages, and is a great family experience.

In the summer the open-air **Last Chance Tour Train** takes you on a scenic guided tour of Helena. ☼

Society Star Profile

MARTHA KOHL: GETTING JOB DONE FOR MONTANA HISTORY

Martha Kohl epitomizes the can-do, multi-talented people who make the Montana Historical Society even greater than the sum of its parts.

Her current title is historical specialist, but in the 15 years she has been at the Society Kohl has been editor for the Society Press, project manager of the award-winning history book *Montana: Stories of the Land*, creator of a list that unites and informs history teachers and others in related fields across the state, researcher and writer of historic signs that adorn Montana buildings and properties statewide, and author of a forthcoming book on the history of weddings in Montana.

"One of the biggest things I have learned is that Montana is a big, big state, and it is important that the Montana Historical Society serves the entire state," Kohl said.

She got her masters in history from Washington University in St. Louis and one of her first jobs was working for a magazine at the

Missouri Historical Society that was modeled on the Montana Historical Society's award-winning *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.

She met her husband, Geoff Wyatt, in St. Louis, after he had been in Montana as graphic designer for the Society's Montana Homeland Exhibit. "Geoff was desperate to come back to Montana, and when I learned about the editor's job at the Montana Historical Society, it was the perfect job for me," she said.

Dave Walter, a legend at the Society, had developed the idea for the new Montana history book that became *Stories of the Land*. When he died, Martha stepped in to complete the project and the book was published in 2008 to great reviews and numerous national awards.

"I learned many things in working on the project. One of the biggest was the history of the Indians in Montana," she said. "We worked hard to integrate Indian and non-



Martha Kohl strives to tell the story of all Montana's people.

Indian perspective throughout the book."

Using mainly private funding, the Society has put more than 10,000 copies of *Stories of the Land* in schools across the state. "It has been very satisfying to see so many schools and students using the book to learn about Montana," she said.

Working on historic signs led her to a broader understanding of Montana and how it came to be. "History is big things and little things. For instance, the reason that older homes often have detached garages was that in the early years of automobile ownership people were afraid their car

Kohl (cont. on p. 4)



Historic signs like this one at the Krug House in Glendive serve history and also heritage tourism.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Past and Present

Historical highlights, architectural trends, and colorful anecdotes make Montana history come alive across the state in an important Society Outreach and Interpretation program.

For nearly two decades, the Society's National Register sign program, featuring those shiny interpretive plaques seen across the state, has delighted property owners and visitors and contributed to tourism and the money that brings to Montana.

The handsome silver plaques provide a great opportunity to share little-known stories of people, places, and events. Hundreds of signs on National Register-listed properties enrich the state. You will find them along major thoroughfares and out-of-the-way places in virtually every corner of the state from Troy to Dillon and Wolf Point to Baker.

Montana's National Register sign program began with legislative approval in 1989 as an extension of the state's National Register of Historic Places program.

Department of the Interior and the National Park Service administer the National Register of His-

toric Places program. The Society's State Historic Preservation Office oversees Montana's National Register program. Its goal is to recognize special heritage places.

Almost all of Montana's counties have Register-listed properties, but there are still hundreds worthy of nomination. Sometimes owners are reluctant to nominate their historic places because they believe restrictions might apply. National Register listing does not place restrictions of any kind on property owners. Nor does it require opening the property to the public. The notion that listed properties cannot be insured is equally false. National Register listing simply recognizes and honors those places that are special to our history. Montana's National Register sign program is one of the best benefits of owning a listed property. In fact, some realtors maintain that a National Register sign on a home or business increases its market value.

The heart of any community lies in its own unique history, and searching out these windows to the past rarely fails to yield new discoveries. Sign program staff carefully verifies facts and delves into the many primary resources available at the MHS Research Center. The goal is to craft a sign text that is interesting and distinctive. It is the owner's obligation to install the sign, care for it, and leave it with the property if ownership changes.

For the last twenty years, visitors and residents alike have been able to learn more about communities by reading these plaques as they walk the streets of historic districts. Thanks to the recent ongoing work of sign program volunteer JoAnne Miller, hundreds of our sign texts are now also available online. Visit <http://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/signs.asp> and click on "Interpretive Signs." ✪

Building (cont. from p. 1)

professionalism the Society has in caring for and protecting Montana's past, it also is important to fund-raising efforts. "It certifies to both the public and the private sector that the Montana Historical Society uses its resources wisely and effectively," Cooney said. "That is critical as we continue to work toward a new Montana Heritage Center worthy of the history of the people of Montana."

Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger, who received the news from Bell by speaker phone in his office, said it proves what Montanans have known for years. "We have the best historical society in the nation. This is great news and will help us as we move forward," Bohlinger said.

The Society was among the first institutions in the nation to be accredited in 1973 by AAM. Reaccreditation now takes place every 15 years and can take up to three years to complete. "Our activities reach not only a select few, but citizens all across Montana, the USA and the world through the great array of resources we provide," Society Curator of Collections Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney said. "We are Montana's memory." ✪

Kohl (cont. from p. 3)

would blow up and destroy their house," she said.

In addition to her list, Kohl also has been active in building the Society's website, putting lesson plans and other educational material online, as well as getting the Society to use such social networking sites as Facebook. "We have to use the internet to extend our outreach and service," she said.

The Society Press will publish her new book, *I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings*, soon.

One of her favorite things is taking her dogs and kids on long walks—part of the landscape she has brought to life in her work. ✪

County Histories Now In Computer Age

In a state as large as Montana counties have always played an important role in how people prospered and failed in their daily lives.

The Montana Historical Society Research Center with the help of a Humanities Montana grant and assistance from the counties has taken a large step toward bringing the importance of county history into the electronic age.

“We have digitized 23 county history books and made them available online in the Montana Memory Project,” Research Center Program Manager Molly Kruckenberg said. “We hope to add more as time and money allow.”

The Society holds the most complete collection of Montana county histories including books on 54 of the 56 counties.

“During the decades celebrating the Montana territorial centennial, the national bicentennial and the statehood centennial, many local historical organizations in Montana published histories of their town and counties,” she said. “These histories provide a look at Montana’s history at the most local level.”

The books generally contain biographical sketches of residents, many historic photographs, histories of schools, churches and civic organizations and other important accounts of daily life and how it changed over the years.

“This project is about making Montana history more available to Montana’s citizens and encouraging them to learn about and understand their local history and heritage,” Kruckenberg said.

You can go on line at www.mtmemory.org and browse to the “County Histories of Montana” to see the collection. ☼



Research Center Manager Molly Kruckenberg and Digital Initiatives Specialist Christine Kirkham, who was in charge of the Montana History Project, and the county history books now online.

History is Amazing

When Christy Goll, assistant editor of *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, heard about the Society’s Montana Memory Project, she decided to look for information on her grandmother, Lois Imler Warren.

What she found was truly amazing. Her grandmother came to Montana in 1914 to join her brothers Albert and Frank on a homestead near Turner. In the Blaine County history book “Thunderstorms and Tumbleweeds” online at the site, she found out Lois’ diary was part of the history of the county. “Her life is a glimpse into the life of a woman homesteader,” Goll said.

She talks about making soap from “cracklins and lie,” and doing other chores. She writes about reading a letter from her boyfriend, Lowell, and having a good cry. Later that day while doing chores she notes that she suddenly saw Lowell coming around the corner of the barn. Two days later they took the train to Havre and got married. On their honeymoon, the couple “took in the city” and went to a lecture at the high school on “Booze and business.”

The truly amazing thing was Goll seeing a picture of her grandmother from that wedding day in 1915. Christy and Lois could literally be taken as twins.

“I couldn’t believe how similar we look,” Goll said. “I encourage everyone to research their family history—you might be surprised by what you find. The Montana Memory Project is a good place to start.”

What will you discover about your family? ☼



Christy Goll (left photo) and the photo she found in the Montana Memory Project of her grandmother and grandfather. An amazing look-alike!

Society Bringing Home the Honors

Research Historian **Ellen Baumler** received one of six Governor's Humanities Awards for 2011 for her many years of work interpreting, writing and teaching Montana's rich history. She is responsible for the content of hundreds of interpretive signs at historic sites across the state and is author of numerous books and articles on Montana history.

Society and State Archaeologist **Stan Wilmoth** received the Governor's Award for outstanding service for his 17-year career with the State Historic Preservation Office. His knowledge of Montana stretches back more than 12,000 years on the land now known as Montana. The award stated "Above all else Stan's job is to work with all Montanans, from agency directors to 3rd graders, to bring greater awareness to Montana's significant archaeological resources and their preservation."



Society and State Archaeologist Stan Wilmoth and Gov. Brian Schweitzer make bolos the attire as Wilmoth receives the Governor's Award.

Montana The Magazine of Western History won another national award with the Westerners International Coke Wood Award for Monographs and Articles for the summer 2009 story by John



The Alvin Young barn is a beautiful survivor of the early settlement of Montana.

Barn Makes News

The Society's State Historic Preservation Office drew praise from the *Heritage News* publication of the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places listing of the Alvin Young Barn and Cabin Historic District near Busby in eastern Montana.

The barn was built circa 1896 and is a classic example of using local materials in construction. "Its history recalls the thousands of homestead seekers who settled

southeastern Montana after the close of the Indian wars," the Park Service said.

The stone barn is near "Royall's Ridge," which was the site of the heaviest fighting of the Rosebud Battle during the Great Sioux War of 1876.

Society Community Preservation Officer Kate Hampton thanked the Montana Preservation Alliance for its outstanding research and documentation of the site. ⚡

Society Puts Old Face on New Electronic Book

The Montana Historical Society has a Facebook page and is always looking for new friends that want to keep up on the latest in Montana history and heritage.

Many of our members can't come in and check out the latest in Montana history, and Facebook is a great way for us to keep you informed about all the latest in what's happening at the Society.

We are up to nearly 400 friends, and we invite you to become one as well.

You can access the page at www.facebook.com/montanahistoricalsociety, or by going on our homepage at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org and clicking on the blue Facebook link. ⚡

Monnett "My heart now has become changed to softer feelings: A Northern Cheyenne Woman and Her Family Remember the Long Journey Home."

Archivist **Rich Aarstad** was honored with the 2011 MEA-MFT Public Employee Member of the Year Award. It is only the second such award made. ⚡

Membership News

FROM REBECCA BAUMANN.....

As the new Society Membership Coordinator I quickly learned that we are all here to serve you.

It has been a longtime ambition of mine to work here, and I am excited to build on the success we have had in developing membership outreach. It is my goal to continually seek out and provide membership opportunities to all of you and the visitors who appreciate Montana's heritage and culture.

At its heart, the Montana Historical Society is fundamentally the most important component of education in this great state. We learn from history and are shaped by it. The Society through its programs and activities helps save important historic buildings and sites, publishes books and articles that expand knowledge and understanding of those who have gone before us, collects and preserves the documents and photographs and artifacts that are the essence of Montana's memory, and teaches our children what it means to be a good citizen. It teaches us all to be good stewards of this great land and to give something back. Membership is a crucial element to our ongoing mission, and you are a crucial part of getting the job done. Thank you.

Our new membership brochure will be out soon, and I would be happy to send one to your friends and family that you think might be interested in joining us as members. Please call or email me with any suggestions, comments, potential members, or things that you think we could do better. My telephone number is 406-444-2918 and email is rbaumann@mt.gov. You are part of all we do. ☘



Society Store Clerk Michelle Velez-Ferrara shows some of the beautiful Montana-made jewelry on hand. As a member you get a 15 percent discount! Call toll-free 1-800-243-9900, go online at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org, or visit our new Facebook page to check out the latest at the store.

2010 Memorial Contributions to the Montana Historical Society

Thank you to those who made remembrance gifts in support of the programs of the Montana Historical Society. Multiple donations were received in honor of the following Montanans:

Isabel Hopkins Gillie Bradshaw (1920–2010)

Born in Butte, Isabel moved to Washington State to live and raise a family. Though she lived there most of her life she never forgot her home state.

Keith B. "Mick" Hamilton (1925–2010)

A long step away from his birthplace in Musselshell, Mick was a WWII Navy veteran who saw action in three major campaigns.

Joan Treacy Holter (1921–2010)
Long-time member of the Montana Historical Society, Joan was a vibrant force in Helena. She loved Montana history and art, and avidly supported them.

Esther Tessman Petrini Norton (1913–2010)

Born to homesteaders in the Sun River Valley, Esther lived in Mon-

tana throughout her life—from Cut Bank to Great Falls to Hamilton and Helena. She enjoyed genealogy.

Mary Eva Stubblefield Rummel (1927–2010)

After growing up in Toston, Mary Eva attended the nurses' program at St. John's Hospital in Helena, and worked in nursing-related fields.

Phyllis Ford Speck (1913–2010)
During her youth, Phyllis, as the daughter of a Methodist minister, lived in many Montana locales. She went to the University of Montana, and was an English teacher. Phyllis lived in Whitehall with her husband, Carroll, who was a descendent of the town's founder.

William Douglas Wallin (1922–2010)

Born in Rosebud, Doug worked at his grandparents' ranch near Lame Deer during his formative years. After graduating from the University of Montana he worked as an accountant in Miles City, later operating an insurance agency in Billings. ☘

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.
Montana
Historical Society

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3,000 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$.70 per copy, at a total cost of \$2,154, which includes \$1,729 for printing and \$425 for distribution.

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Just when you think the old days are gone forever, somebody like Ray Brockett moseys on up to the Montana Historical Society on his horse. Instead of drawing his six-shooter, though, Ray paused to grab his cell phone. He stopped by on his way to deliver some flowers to his gal on Valentine's Day. We are always here to serve you no matter how you get here. Happy trails.

We appreciate our members!