

Society STAR

A PUBLICATION OF THE
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2012

Montana History Made as 'Pretty as a Postcard'

Before there were cell phones, people who wanted to share special places and their stories with others used postcards. From Montana with love.

Tom Mulvaney of East Helena has spent thirty years amassing nearly 32,000 postcards dating from 1898 into the 1970s that reflect a wide variety of Montana history topics including mining, agriculture, commerce, western life, and Native Americans. Many of the postcards are extremely rare.

The Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees, recognizing the importance of the collection, has launched a fund drive to acquire his collection.



Society Research Center Director Molly Kruckenberg recommended the acquisition and said many of the views are "one of a kind."

"The collection would be very difficult if not impossible to reproduce," Kruckenberg said. "The contents of the collection, from both a topical and a format point of view, are very significant to the study and documentation of Montana history."




The bulk of the collection is from the pre-1930 time period and documents the historical landscapes of many towns, rural and urban, including some that are no longer part of the Montana landscape.

There also are images of railroads, Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, main streets, promotional advertising, and artwork by Montana artists including Charlie Russell, Edgar Paxson, J. K. Ralston, and Charles Morris. Nearly one third of the postcards are "real photographs" with a postcard back.

The various views illustrate the development of communities, his-



toric events such as strikes and disasters, and local appearances of notable personalities.

Kruckenberg said that anyone interested in contributing to the acquisition of the collection can contact her at 406-444-4787, or mkruckenberg@mt.gov for more information. See page 7. 

Leap Year Custom Changes for the Best

When we were digging around for a story about Leap Year to include on our "On This Day in Montana History" blog, we came up with an interesting custom fraught with tensions.

Although mostly forgotten now, in days of old, Leap Year custom held that every four years women could ask men to marry them. Newspapers into at least the early 1900s carried stories, cartoons, and other features on the custom.

In 1871, the *Helena Daily Herald* dealt with the subject under a headline: "Leap Year and Its Privileges—The Eligible Old Bachelors of Helena."

Leap Year (cont. on p. 5)

DIRECTOR'S CORNER:
MHS DIRECTOR BRUCE WHITTENBERG

“Wow! I had no idea!”



How often have I heard that exclamation over the past several months? Visitors to the Montana Historical Society often walk through our doors with a purpose—to explore the treasures of Montana’s Museum, to dig through the Research Center to study the legacy of a family member, to subscribe to *Montana The Magazine of Western History* or purchase a book in The Museum Store, to attend a presentation on a unique event in Montana’s history, to learn with colleagues at an Indian Education for All workshop, to inquire about National Registry for their historic home. As your Director for just seven months, I continue—every day—to be amazed at the scope of the work of the people at MHS and the service they provide to our customers and visitors every day. So when you consider the Montana Historical Society, I hope you feel a close relationship to Montana’s history through your unique experience with our team of historians, preservationists, archivists, scholars, and teachers. I also hope you recognize all of the programs provided by MHS in serving Montana’s citizens, visitors, teachers, and friends.

Amidst all of this activity, we are preparing plans for a wonderful new addition to the state’s Capitol Campus, the Montana Heritage Center.

The Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building adjacent to the State Capitol in Helena is the hub of MHS functions. A four-story, 66,995-square-foot facility, it was dedicated in 1952. The Society has several times outgrown this home and has undergone three major additions to the original building, the most recent completed in 1986. The facility hosts thousands

of visitors annually and houses sixty-five staff members and the collections that now overflow into off-site storage.

The Montana Historical Society has a critical need for additional space that will make more collections and holdings accessible to the public, better protect our treasures, and better support MHS services. It will add a wonderful new building to the Capitol Campus just across the street from our current building.

To make this vision a reality, we need the Montana legisla-

About Us

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

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ture to provide funding, in addition to the private contributions from hundreds of members and benefactors.

This project will be a real point of pride for our citizens and visitors who celebrate and honor Montana’s rich history. We appreciate your support for this exciting project. Thank you! ☀

SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD:
TREASURES FROM THE SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

You’ve Come a Long Way Girls

In a Highway Commission memo dated March 1, 1971, and newly discovered by Society government records archivist Ellie Letterman was a directive that read “Attention: Girls.”

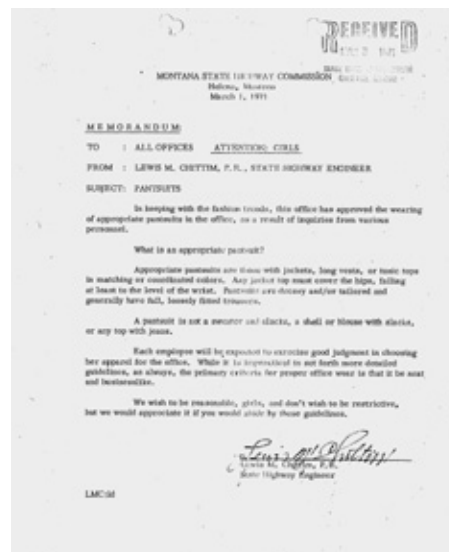
The memo proudly announced: “this office has approved the wearing of appropriate pantsuits in the office.” The jackets had to “cover the hips, falling at least to the level

of the wrist.” The pants should “generally have full, loosely fitted trousers.”

State highway engineer Lewis Chitim noted in his memo that “it is impractical to set forth more detailed guidelines.” In his closing line he noted: “We wish to be reasonable, girls, and don’t wish to be restrictive, but we would appreciate it if you would abide by these guidelines.”

Letterman, 32, said she had to look at the date of the memo twice when she came across it. “I was surprised it was from the 1970s and not from the 1940s or something,” she said. “I talked to my mom about it, and she said ‘that’s pretty much how we were spoken to then.’”

The Society staff got a good laugh out of the memo, but Letterman said she couldn’t “fathom” what she would do if someone addressed her like that today. “I would definitely have a word with them,” she said. ☀



Central Montana Museum in Lewistown

At the end of Main Street in Lewistown is a great little museum where you can see one of World War II's top secrets and learn how it ties into Montana history.

The Central Montana Museum has on display a Norden Bombsite that was actually used to train the hundreds of B-17 pilots and crews that came to Montana to train for the missions that would take them into the heart of Nazi Germany. (See the story on page 4.)

"It is a story that many people don't know about," Shirley Barrick, spokesperson for the museum, said. "I was a war baby born in 1941, but I have always been aware of the role it played in our history because one of my cousins married one of the men who trained here."

The B-17 crews trained in Lewistown, Glasgow, and Cut Bank,

and bombsite storage bunkers, hangars, and other buildings in all three towns are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Last year the museum put up its newest exhibit, the skeleton of a Torosaurus dinosaur found near the community—the fourth-largest ever discovered. The museum also features exhibits on other local history including Métis, outlaws, and the Croatian stonemasons who settled in the area because of the stone quarry nearby.

The museum is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., but Carrick says people who want to see the bombsite or other exhibits can call her at 406-535-9289 to arrange special off-season tours. ☼



The Central Montana Museum in Lewistown has on display an original Norden Bombsite.

SOCIETY STAR PROFILE

Vic Reiman Keeps Us Shining

It takes nerves of steel to care for the precious artifacts and artworks in Montana's Museum, the Capitol, and the Original Governor's Mansion.

"Sometimes I can't believe what I am doing. Like when I was helping the conservator clean the Charlie Russell mural of Lewis and Clark in the House Chamber," Montana Historical Society Museum Technician Vic Reiman said. "You just have to control your nerves, or you won't be able to do the work that has to be done."

Reiman, who received his bachelor's in anthropology from the University of Montana in 1979, has worked at the Society for ten years and is responsible for caring



Vic Reiman armed and not so dangerous!

for and cleaning the objects and exhibits that the rest of us are forbidden to touch.

Like everyone else at the Society, Reiman also has "other duties as assigned."

When the museum team learned that he has a life-long interest in

historic firearms, Reiman took on the job of curating a Winchester lever-action rifle exhibit that will open in late May. "That's what's fun about the Society," he said. "The people here are very passionate about Montana history, and they are willing and ready to do whatever comes along."

Reiman also is chairman of the Society's Safety Committee and coaches the staff to maintain its low rate of work-related injuries despite all the heavy lifting and dangerous places in which they sometimes have to work.

The staff and all Montanans can sleep well knowing that Reiman is taking care of Montana history. ☼

Archivists Strike It Rich Underground

Being an archivist is not for the faint hearted.

Deep underground in the Power Block building in Helena, you can still see the shovel marks of the workers who began the project in 1889. There, Montana Historical Society and State Archivist Jodie Foley and her team worked over a period of two months to retrieve and organize letters, records, and other materials that are literally a gold mine of information on the development of Montana.

In addition to being kind of scary, the area where the records had languished for years was dirty and dusty and required the archivists to wear breathing masks to protect themselves.

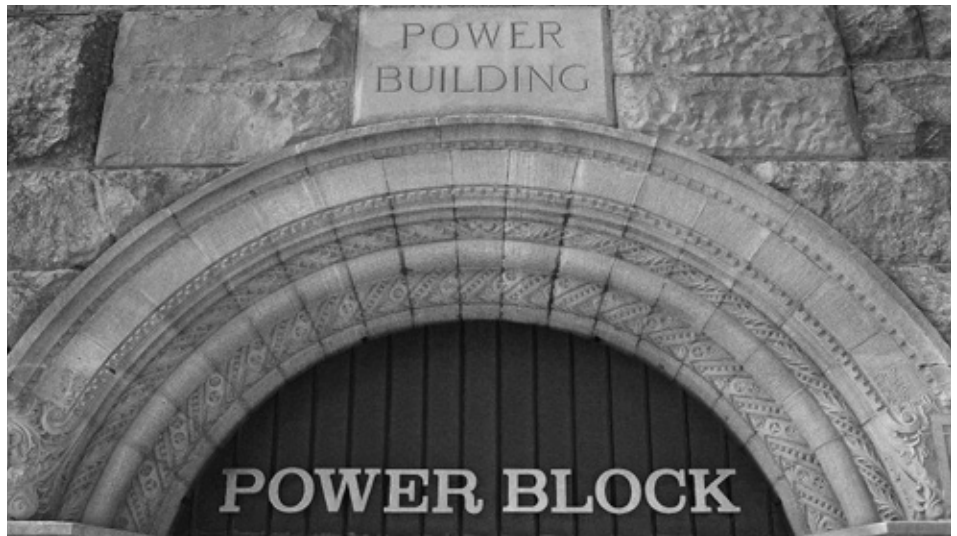
Kathy Brown, commercial property manager for the building, said that when she became aware of the collection a couple of years ago, she told descendants of the Power family about it. After taking some personal items from the collection, the family donated the rest to the Historical Society.

"I wasn't surprised that we would find something, there are antiques still down here. It's a classic basement. The building was built in 1889. I think there are still some things down here that are probably from the beginning," Brown said.

The documents and other materials, which belonged primarily to T. C. Power and his son C. B., deal



Archivist Ellie Arguimbau "checks" out Power's finances.



State Archivist Jodie Foley and her team sort Power Block materials.

with everything from early transportation to the oil and lumber industries, from banking to mercantile and many other aspects of Montana history.

"T. C. Power was sort of the Donald Trump of Montana. I mean, he was into everything," Society senior archivist Ellie Arguimbau said.

The Society already had an extensive collection of Power material, and the additional thirty linear feet of documents will greatly increase its research potential.

"Each of the different things he was involved in, we have subgroups for. We have about a hundred subgroups already in the Power collection and some of the new material is going to fit nicely into those subgroups. Others will create new subgroups, or possibly their own collections," Arguimbau said.

Working to expand Montana's memory can be a dirty job, but Foley and her gang live for the chance to do it. "When you come into a place like this, it's really like Christmas for us," she said. ✪

Community Preservation Saves WWII History

While coming in for a landing at the Lewistown airport several years ago, Leroy Musik noticed a bulldozer heading for a seemingly innocuous structure off the runway.

Some joke that he jumped off the plane before it touched down, but that isn't quite true. But he did know that an important part of Montana history was about to be destroyed forever. When he got off the plane, he ran for the bulldozer and stopped the driver from demolishing it.



This bunker once held one of the greatest U.S. secrets of WWII.

The structure was an eight-foot-thick bunker that had been used to keep one of the most closely guarded secrets of World War II under lock and key and constant watch during a hectic time long forgotten by many people in the community.

Musik set in motion a series of events that will commemorate the important role that Montana played in training B-17 crews on tactics and the use of one of the most closely guarded secrets of that war—the legendary Norden bombsite.

Even before the United States entered the war, military planners identified Montana as the best place to train bomber crews on tactics and use of the new bombsite, identified land parcels, and began

planning the construction of large bases in Lewistown, Cut Bank, and Glasgow. Hundreds of airmen spent several months training here before they shipped off to fly missions into Nazi Germany and other theatres of the war.

The influx of all the flyers and support personnel and the day-and-night roar of the giant bombers over Montana also had a major impact on the civilians who welcomed them and were suddenly exposed to new people from all over the country and the social change it brought.

Montana Historical Society community preservation coordinator Kate Hampton got involved with local historians and officials in Lewistown and the other two communities and worked with them to develop the story of those times and to save the historic sites that remained from those bases.

“These remarkable and unique places offer the visitor a significant, tangible experience that ties them to our national heritage,” Hampton said. “From the magnitude of the hangars to the poignant signatures of the trainees on the walls of the buildings, these places convey our history on the international stage and on an intimate scale.”

Two statistics stand as dramatic reminders of those times: 26 airmen married local women in Cut Bank alone, and 50 percent of the



B-17 crews trained in places like this in Cut Bank before they headed off to war.

men who trained in Montana were killed in action.

Hampton has developed a program on the history of the B-17 training in Montana and its impact on communities. Groups interested in scheduling it can contact her at 406-444-7742 or email khampton@mt.gov. ★

Leap Year (cont. from p. 1)

It listed bachelors, including many of the leading citizens of the community, and after estimating their wealth and declaring them in “good state of preservation,” the editor noted they were well fixed and “quite sufficient to support a wife and willow wagon.”

Noting that “some of our bachelor friends may be disposed to flee the wrath to come,” the editor promised to run a list of “old maids and marriageable young ladies” in the next issue to ease their fears.

However, in the subsequent issue there was this letter to the editor from a twenty-five-year-old single woman. “If we have the privilege of proposing to gentlemen in Leap Year, we also have the privilege of not doing so,” she wrote.

The bachelors should not “flatter” themselves that they have merely been overlooked, she wrote. “If any of you ever had the manhood to propose, the lady probably had good and sufficient reasons for your rejection.”

It carried a threat to the editor that “(you) better tie your hair on” if you run a list of old maids because “your head will be as bare below the timber line” as it was above it.

Noting “discretion is the better part of valor,” the editor responded he had decided to “decline to publish a list of the Old Maids.” History shows that social customs change, and for good reason. ★

Historical Society Going Modern with Social Media

Just because the Montana Historical Society likes old stuff doesn't mean that it can't use new stuff to bring it to you.

Even the older staffers like this writer are learning to Facebook, blog, and even get all a-Twitter in finding new ways to keep you up to date on the latest in Montana history.

When you go online to our home page, scroll down a little and you will see the tabs to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and our blogs.

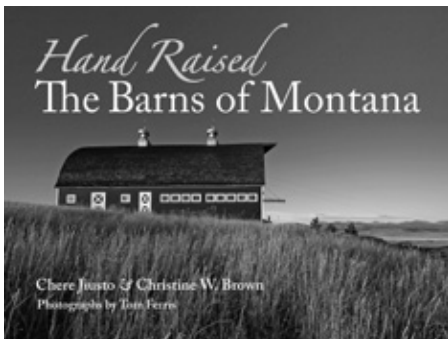
Our Facebook page features lots of information as well as photos and links to related stories hand-picked by our staff.

We just launched our Twitter feed and are looking for ways to make it interesting to you. Tweet us back to let us know the kinds of things you would like to see posted.

Hand Raised Earns Award

The Montana Book Award Committee has awarded the Montana Historical Society Press an Honor Award for its popular new *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*.

The committee praised authors Chere Jiusto and Christine Brown and photographer Tom Ferris for the story told as well as the hundreds of striking photographs. "Beyond their utilitarian functions, barns are simply beautiful," the committee said. ★



Our blogs include something for everyone:

- *Montana Moments* offers fascinating vignettes on Montana history from our interpretive historian and author Ellen Baumler.
- *This Week in Montana History* has both major events from the past as well as fun stories on the social history of Montana.

■ *Teaching Montana History* is the perfect spot to learn about place-based education and teaching Montana history and is of interest to non-teachers as well.

■ *Montana History Revealed* offers behind-the-scenes looks at interesting discoveries, written by our Research Center staff. ★



Wynonna Breen (front center) was honored recently with the Governor's Office of Community Service Award. First Lady Nancy Schweitzer (back left), Karin Olsen of Billings, and Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger join her at the event.

Deciphering Cameron Diaries

Anyone who has seen the diaries of Montana frontier photographer Evelyn Cameron knows that Wynonna Breen of Terry deserves the Governor's Office of Community Service Award she recently received for organizing a team that spent more than three years transcribing them.

Montana Historical Society and State Archivist Jodie Foley said the job was very challenging to say the least. "Not only was Ms. Cameron's handwriting difficult to decipher, but in trying to use

all available space, she often wrote between the lines in red! She also had a way of abbreviating words that could be confusing," Foley said.

The diaries, which are part of the Society collection, date from 1893 to 1928 and offer a unique woman's perspective on life on the frontier of eastern Montana where Cameron had a ranch. Breen's team created key-word searchability, and Foley said the transcripts will be online through the Montana Memory Project this fall. ★

Share the Fun, Share the History

BY REBECCA BAUMANN, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

I'm very happy to say that there is ALWAYS something interesting and fun going on at your Montana Historical Society. Here are some examples.

I am a born and bred Montanan and fiercely proud of my state. When I was in school, Montana history was only minimally covered, and, let's face it, kids were more interested in the future than the past. But not anymore. *Montana: Stories of the Land*, a superb MHS Montana history textbook is geared to the eighth grade, but everyone including me can learn from it. It contains beautifully illustrated, illuminating stories, with a plethora of facts and cool trivia to keep the kids interested in where they came from and where they live.

Zoe Ann Stoltz, one of our librarians, is known as the "Diva of Divine Montana Historic Facts." When she discovers something truly new, fascinating, or quirky about our extraordinary history, she makes sure to share it with all.

A recent gallery tour of our new exhibits—*The Art of Story Telling: Plains Indian Perspectives*, and *Mapping Montana: Two Centuries of Cartography*—left me with a

feeling as though I had learned a new language.

Jim Green, one of our more than 130 volunteers, offered an in-depth glance into Charles M. Russell's life and artwork with a tour through the MacKay Gallery. Like the hundreds of students and others who take the tour, we all discovered something new and amazing in Russell's works.

I could go on and on with examples about the great folks that I am so privileged to know and work with here at MHS. We all live to talk and visit with our members via the phone or in person. We are more than happy to help with all your history needs.

Please call me at either 800-243-9900 or 406-444-2918 or email me at rbaumann@mt.gov if you have questions about your membership or just want to share an idea. I can help you with gift memberships for family, friends, clients, customers, or a special neighbor as a way of saying "thank you" or celebrating a special day. You can also make a transaction at <http://mhs.mt.gov/pub/membership/join.asp>. Remember—a membership is the gift that truly keeps on giving all year long! ★

Help Us Save Montana History

BY SUSAN NEAR, DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OFFICER

The Montana Historical Society has a unique opportunity to purchase the entire Mulvaney postcard collection, featured on page one of this issue, in order to preserve it for the future. Over 32,000 historic Montana postcards—what a resource for the investigation of our shared past!

Though this significant postcard collection has been professionally appraised at \$436,767, the purchase price for the MHS to acquire this wonderful visual history of Montana is \$300,000.

Please consider a special gift to help us acquire the Mulvaney postcard collection.

Send your donation to:

Mulvaney Postcard Collection
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201201 225 N. Roberts
Helena, MT 59620-1201

If you have any questions, contact Susan Near at 444-4713 or snear@mt.gov.

Thanks for all you do to preserve and promote Montana history! ★

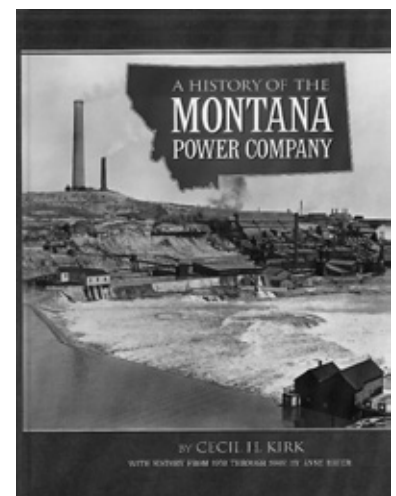
Museum Store Features Montana Power and More

The Museum Store is your place to shop for the books that make summer reading a powerful experience.

One of those books tells the story of the Montana Power Company which played a major role in the development, history, politics and economic life of the Treasure State. In 1967, Cecil Kirk was hired by the company to write a history of the business and its people that was begun in the 1880s. *A History of the Montana Power Company*

has recently been brought to light and updated through 2002, the year the company left the power business.

The Museum Store staff will be glad to help you find other books that will keep you enthralled with Montana and its story throughout the summer. Call them toll-free at 1-800-243-9900 or shop online at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org. ★



3,000 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$.63 per copy, for a total cost of \$1,890, which includes \$424.75 for distribution.

Inside

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We fondly and jokingly call them the mole people. The Montana Historical Society Archives team goes to great depths to find, preserve, and organize the diaries, letters, records, and other archival materials that are Montana’s memory. Rachel Lilley, government records project archivist (left), Caitlan Maxwell, electronic record project archivist (center), and Ellie Letterman, also government records project archivist, were on the crew that recently went to the depths of the Power Block building in Helena to retrieve a tremendous collection of materials dating back to the 1800s. Photo by Tom Ferris.

We appreciate our members!