

## Newspaper Project Rips History Right from Yesterday's Headlines

You can hear the explosion, feel the heat, smell the smoke, and see the reporters pounding away on their typewriters.

It is history ripped right from the headlines of the *Anaconda Standard* on January 15, 1895, which was put to bed just two hours after a massive dynamite explosion destroyed Butte's warehouse district, killing fifty-seven people—including nearly every member of the fire department. The article is only one of hundreds of Montana stories now available online thanks to the work of Christine Kirkham, coordinator of the Montana Historical Society's Montana Digital Newspaper Project (MDNP).

For the past two years, Kirkham and the MDNP team have scanned, page by page, complete issues of the *Standard* and 33 other Montana newspapers as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Library of Congress National Digital Newspaper Program. The Montana issues appear on *Chronicling America* at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>, which now has 4.8 million pages from 737 newspapers of twenty-eight states.

The Montana Historical Society received a grant in 2009 to participate in the project and appointed an Advisory Board composed of people with special knowledge of Montana history, including academics and journalists. The panel selected newspapers and time

periods based on their importance to Montana history.

The Society's Research Center has about 95 percent of all the newspapers ever published in Montana and, so far, has evaluated seventy-three thousand pages of newspapers.

Digitizing newspapers allows multiple researchers around the world to access the material simultaneously via the Internet and reduces wear and tear on fragile print copies. "But the real advantage of digital newspapers is that the complete text of every page is searchable. End users can type

a term, such as *Assiniboine*, and retrieve a list of every page on which it appears," Kirkham said.

Montana newspapers to be digitized by the end of 2013 are selected runs (1864–1922) of the *Anaconda Standard*, *Benton Record*, *Billings Gazette*, *Butte Daily Bulletin*, *Butte Inter Mountain*, *Butte New Age*, *Colored Citizen*, *Culbertson Searchlight*, *Daily Missoulian*, *Daily Yellowstone Journal*, *Fergus County Argus*, *Great Falls Tribune*, *Harlowton News*, *Helena Independent*, *Libby Herald*, *Malta Enterprise*, *Mineral Argus*, *Montana Newspapers* (cont. on p. 5)

## New Exhibit: Newman Myrah's Vision of Art and Montana

Newman Myrah's life took him from Canada to Montana to Oregon, to service in both theaters of World War II, and finally back to Montana, which always provided him with inspiration as he found his pathway to becoming a nationally known artist.

Myrah achieved a reputation as a great painter, drawing on his love of the outdoors and his ability to capture the spirit and image of horses on canvas. "My interest in the horse and what the animal meant to the West determines the subject matter of many of my paintings," he said.

The Montana Historical Society is honoring its longtime friend with a new exhibit, the Newman



*Dusty Day Herd* reflects Newman Myrah's ability to capture the magnificence of the horse. The oil on canvas painting won the 2004 Rendezvous Legacy Award and became part of the collection of the Montana Historical Society Museum.

Myrah Retrospective (1921–2010), and a session celebrating his life and work at this year's Western Rendezvous of Art August 16–19.

*Myrah* (cont. on p. 5)

# MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg

## Come Share the Wonder

It's great to see the smiles and hear the laughter. In the springtime, the Montana Historical Society and Montana's Capitol Building are the center of activity for busloads of students and teachers from all across the Big Sky State. They pile off of the buses or Tour Train and onto *Herd Bull*, the landmark sculpture in front of the building.



Kids at play—but learning about history—on the ponies of the Please Touch exhibit.

Our wonderful Friends of the Society guide them through the exhibits, sharing stories of Montana's history and the characters who lived it. They touch and feel in the Please Touch Gallery, ride the ponies, and drape themselves in a buffalo hide. They are building life-long memories that will be shared with their families, children, and grandchildren.

As much as the MHS is about preserving Montana's history, we truly are about preparing our future generations for what's to come. The importance of this institution to our state begins with these children and their smiles, laughter, and wonder. Their love for Montana begins right here.

This is their Montana Historical Society.

## The New Montana Historical Society . . . for all of Montana

Once in a great while, an opportunity presents itself to capture the

grandeur of Montana, the excitement of Montana's history, and to provide a wonderful new public facility for our citizens, families, and guests. The Montana Heritage Center—construction of a new history center and renovation of the existing Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building—is that opportunity.

The MHS Board of Trustees began with a vision of greater service to Montana's citizens, ongoing care for Montana's treasures and heritage, and a place that can serve as a fitting home for the study and celebration of our Great State.

It has been over sixty years since the people of Montana came together to build the current home of the Montana Historical Society near the Capitol. Now is the time for our generation to step forward to create the new Montana Historical Society to preserve and protect our rapidly expanding

## About Us

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

✔ MHS Director: Bruce Whittenberg

✔ Membership Coordinator: Rebecca Baumann (406) 444-2918

✔ Editor: Tom Cook (406) 444-1645

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

collections and provide a modern venue for those collections to be exhibited and used.

The Montana Heritage Center will be funded through the support of the Montana Legislature and the generosity of Montanans through private contributions. Please join this endeavor! Visit with your legislators and encourage their support in the 2013 session. Contact me personally if you would like to play a role in making this grand vision a reality. My email is [bwhittenberg@mt.gov](mailto:bwhittenberg@mt.gov), and my direct phone is (406) 444-5485. ✪

## SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD: TREASURES FROM THE SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

### Dreaded Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever through the Microscope

Only one thing stood a fighting chance in the early days of Montana against the dreaded killer Rocky Mountain spotted fever—science.

That's why the donation to MHS of a brass microscope, probably from the nineteenth century, that was believed to have been used by Montana's first state entomologist is so exciting. Dr. James Pepper, former head of the Montana State University Department of Zoology and Entomology, told Jerry Bowden, when he gave it to him in 1975, that it was likely used in early research to investigate the causes and potential cures for the disease borne by ticks.

It had stood on Bowden's mantel in Santa Cruz, California, for thirty-seven years. In his letter to the Society, he said, "Time to send it home." The people of Montana appreciate that. ✪



## The Big Horn County Historical Museum

From the history of the Great Crow Nation to the Battle of the Little Big Horn to the settlers who followed them down to today, Big Horn County has a big story to tell. That's why you should stop by and see the new 13,690-square-foot building at the Big Horn County Historical Museum in Hardin—even if you have been there before.

The 35-acre museum complex is located just off Interstate 90 via Hardin's east exit. The new building features an exhibit of the work of renowned Montana photographer Kenneth Roahen that includes photographs of members of the Crow Tribe and images of the Little Bighorn Battlefield.

Montana Historical Society Director Bruce Whittenberg was at the dedication of the center,

and says it is a great addition to Montana history and heritage as well as tourism and is well worth a stop. "It was inspiring to see what the passion and energy of the extended community of Big Horn County has created with the Big Horn County Historical Museum. It's a wonderful experience, created largely by local contributions and volunteer help. It's what celebrating Montana's heritage is all about," Whittenberg said.

Fort Custer, a military post built on the bluffs above Hardin in 1877, is featured in the exhibits as is the original Fort Custer stage coach that ran between the fort and Rock Spring, Wyoming. Other exhibits feature such items as a 1910 Brunswick backbar once used in the Big Horn Saloon in Hardin,



Interior view of the spacious new museum facility at Hardin.

James Woodcock photo, courtesy Billings Gazette

cell doors from the first city jail, a 1,600-pound safe, and hundreds of other artifacts showing the rich history of the area.

The new facility will also include a new library to collect and provide even more research materials for interpreting the past of the Hardin area that has played a large role in the history of Montana and the West. ★

### SOCIETY STAR PROFILE

## Damon Murdo Protecting Ancient Treasures

Since he was a kid growing up in Helena, Damon Murdo has had a keen interest in science and a love of "digging in the dirt."

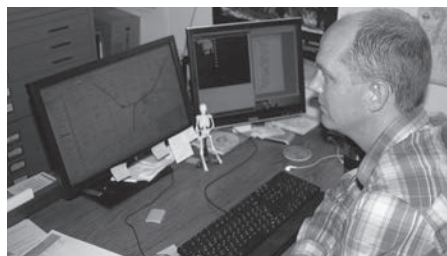
As the Montana Historical Society's Cultural Records Manager in the State Historic Preservation Office since 2001, Murdo has used those attributes to help protect the hundreds of historic archaeological and paleontological sites across the state.

Whenever a construction or other project is planned by state and federal agencies such as a highway project or a planned county development, Murdo is responsible for determining if the projects would disturb any historic sites, including known burials, archaeological sites, and fossil-rich areas.

"I like dealing with all the interesting people like consulting archeologists and state and federal archaeologist all across the state,"

he said. "If you don't want to be a 'shovel bum' all the time, you get a job at the State Historic Preservation Office," he joked.

Murdo is also responsible for helping provide information to the State Burial Board whenever human skeletal remains are found and believed to be Native American. "We help the burial board in repatriating the skeletal remains to the proper tribe," Murdo said. "I actually thought about becoming a crime scene investigator for a while so I find it interesting."



Damon Murdo "mapping out" the ancient history of Montana

A large part of Murdo's job is developing a detailed record of all the archaeological and historic sites in Montana. Although he never had extensive training in computers, Murdo has become skilled in database management and Geographic Information Systems. "I don't really like the computer, but it is something that isn't hard for me to figure out," he said. "We had to start using GIS because all the other agencies were."

For several years, Murdo was the Society's de facto "computer guy," and he is always ready to help out with other Society efforts, including being on the Public Programs Committee.

He and his wife, Angela, have two children, Alexa, four, and Cameron, nineteen months. "I like to hang out with my family and like to hike and fish. I'm a true Montana boy." ★



# Uncovering the Soul of Historical Research

Photos of celebrity and political visitors to Montana, including President George H. W. Bush and Arnold Schwarzenegger, as well as efforts to preserve the state's environment, are just part of a major project to process records from state government departments to make them accessible for historical research.

Under a grant from the National Historical Preservation and Records Committee, MHS archivists Rachel Lilley and Ellie Letterman are on target to finish processing 1,500 linear feet of records and other materials by the summer of 2013.

They have completed work on roughly 330 linear feet from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and the records are now accessible to researchers. Part of the collection includes

nearly 30 linear feet of photographic materials. From the late 1950s to the 1990s, MDT had its own photo unit. Photographers working for the unit documented construction and maintenance projects, road damage from floods, and even accident sites. The photographers also documented significant statewide events. Some of the more interesting images include such celebrity and political visitors as Schwarzenegger and President Bush.

Lilley and Letterman have moved on to the records of the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Natural Resources. They are finding that these state documents can reveal a wealth of cultural information very specific to Montana.

"They also reveal the effects of larger social movements on Mon-

tana, such as the Environmental Movement of the late 1970s and 1980s," Letterman said. Many of the records are administrative and bureaucratic paperwork, forms, and memorandum. "Once we weed down to the good stuff, we find information which reveals the cultural, social, and environmental development of Montana history," she said.

"It's amazing the growth in awareness of environmental hazards left by mining and some agricultural practices, the concerns among Montana citizens about health and the environment, and the efforts put forth to maintain Montana's gorgeous landscape," she said.

History gets written thanks to the hard work of people like Letterman and Lilley that make the record available. ★

## Hand Raised a Finalist for Awards

After reviewing a record number of nominated books, the High Plains Book Award committee has chosen the MHS Press book *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana* as a finalist in two categories: Art and Photography and Nonfiction.

Written by Chere Jiusto and Christine W. Brown and with photographs taken by Tom Ferris, the book was one of nineteen finalists picked in seven categories in the 2012 competition.

The High Plains Book Awards were established by Parmly Bill-

ings Library in Billings to recognize regional authors and/or literary works that examine and reflect life on the High Plains, including the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Jiusto and Brown, both former MHS employees in the State Historic Preservation Office and now with the Montana Preservation Alliance, researched and wrote about the barns in *Hand Raised* over several years. Helena photographer Ferris traveled thousands of miles across Montana to photograph the barns. He is also the MHS Research Center photographer.

The High Plains Book Awards will be presented at the BookFest in Billings October 18-20, 2012. ★

## Sign Up for 2012 History Conference

Now is the time to plan to join your other friends of the Montana Historical Society for the 39th Annual Montana History Conference in Helena this year from September 20 to 22.

The theme of the conference is "'Opportunity for All?' Homesteading Next Year Country." This year is the 150th anniversary of the first Homesteading Act, and many of the talks and events will focus on the hardships and successes people faced as they were drawn to a new land by a government anxious to have it settled.

You can log on to [www.montanahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org), click on Outreach and Interpretation, then click on conferences for more information. This event will surely be both fun and interesting. ★



Photo by Tom Ferris

St. Ignatius Barn, Lake County, built 1941

*Myrah (cont. from p. 1)*

Log on to [www.westrendart.org](http://www.westrendart.org) and plan to come to one of the best art shows and sales in the West.

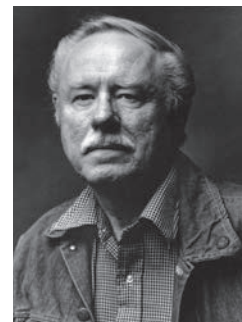
After Myrah's family moved to Deer Lodge when he was five years old, his natural artistic ability began to emerge—as did his incredible sense of humor. His illustrations for the high school newspaper were amusing as well as good examples of his awakening talent.

Myrah grew up in tough times

during the Great Depression and earned money working on a sheep ranch. When asked why he took that often-dirty job, he said simply—showing off his dry wit—“there wasn't much choice.”

After working as a commercial artist, which included a stint traveling with a circus carnival and painting its signs and wagons, Myrah became a full-time studio artist at age fifty.

Myrah was an original member of the Montana Historical Society's



Newman Myrah (1921–2010)

Western Rendezvous of Art and influenced artists and art lovers alike. He died in 2010. ★

## History Proves That No One Is Infallible

If there is one critical event that led to the creation of Montana's capital of Helena as we know it today, it was the discovery of gold in what is now Last Chance Gulch by men who were called the Four Georgians.

One would think that single event would be commemorated forever and honored at the place where history happened so that all future generations could remember it.

That is what the Montana Historical Society and the Montana Pioneers decided in 1920, when they formed a special commission of “old-timers” to meet and identify the exact location of that historic gold strike.

The group met at the Montana Club in downtown Helena and after several days of deliberation,



MHS Interpretive Historian Ellen Baumler holds a gold pan at what is now known as the site of the first gold strike in Helena.

and probably more than a few drinks, they decided to put up a plaque on the east wall of the Montana Club—where they were getting those drinks—to commemorate the strike. That sign remains today where it was placed.

The plaque does not directly say that the strike was made at that location, but it clearly implies it.

In 1990, Vivian Paladin, retired editor of the Montana Historical Society's *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, doubted the correctness of the plaque.

What she found was “compelling evidence” that the actual strike site was just north of the current Lewis and Clark Library near the Walking Mall in what is now a blacktop parking lot. “It is difficult to understand why a panel of distinguished citizens decided that it took place at the corner of Fuller and Sixth, at least a tenth of a mile to the north,” Paladin said.

The correct site is where Helena's first bank was located. In 1886 when the original bank was torn down, it was reported that the mortar made from gravel at the site was “full of gold.”

As MHS Interpretive Historian Ellen Baumler said, “sometimes history takes a little while to get right.” ★

## SHPO Wants Your Help

Every five years, the Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) updates the Montana Historic Preservation Plan (see at <http://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/surveyplanning/HistPresPlan.asp>). It guides the preservation of Montana's significant historic, archaeological, and traditional cultural places.

In preparation for the 2013–17 revision, SHPO is asking for your input on the issues, challenges, and opportunities important to those interested in preserving Montana's historical sites.

Please take five minutes to answer our anonymous online questionnaire at [www.montanahistoricalsociety.org/shpo](http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org/shpo), or call (406) 444-7715 to request a paper copy in the mail. Please help. ★

*Newspapers (cont. from p. 1)*

*News, Montana Nonpartisan, Montana Plaindealer, Montana Post, New North-West, Philipsburg Mail, Producers News, Ravalli Republican, Red Lodge Picket, River Press, Rocky Mountain Husbandman, Ronan Pioneer, Suffrage Daily News, Sun River Sun, and Yellowstone Monitor.*

You can search or browse these historic Montana newspapers at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/?state=Montana>. ★

# Winchester Repeating Rifles Exhibit Hits Bullseye at MHS

Even if you are not a gun lover, the new exhibit, *Winchester Repeating Rifles: Iconic Firearms of the American West*, targets an important tool of frontier Montana life.

The Montana Historical Society exhibit features long arms of the nine different models introduced by the New Haven Arms Company and its successor, the Winchester Repeating Arm Company, from 1860 to 1895.

It also features a display of rare 1880s cartridges with more than 120 kinds of rifle, pistol, and shotgun ammunition that is often not included in exhibits of this kind.

The weapons are not only fine examples of the gun maker's art but also have a beauty that reflects their importance and value to those who used them.

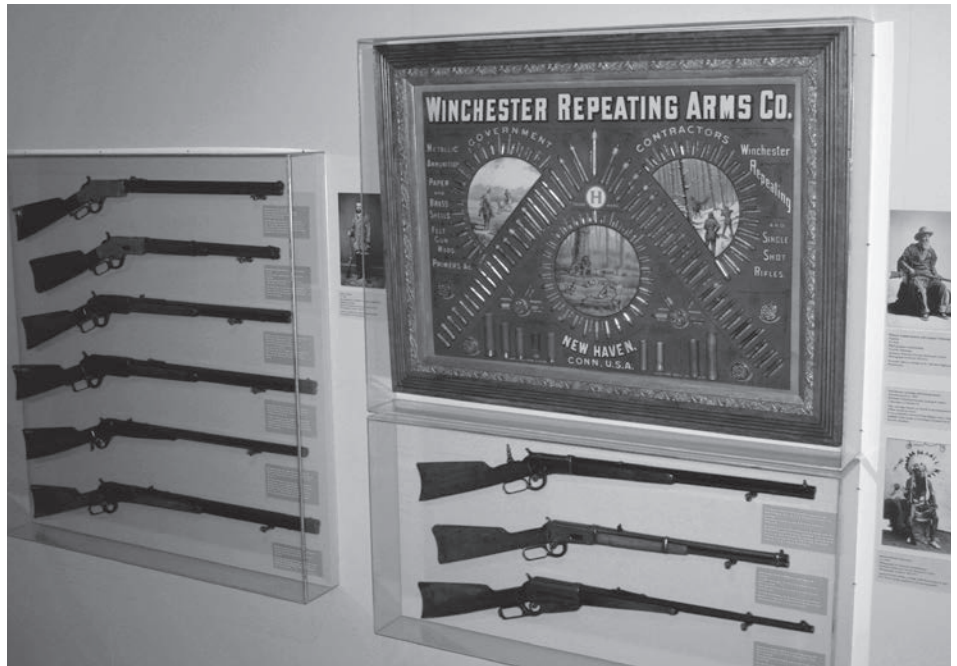
Photographs of many of the people who owned the weapons are featured in the exhibit, including Kootenai chief Aeneas, who owned a Model 1873 rifle, and William Sheard, a Livingston fur trader and merchant, who owned a Model 1886.

The exhibit will be up until February 2013. ★

## Star Pantsuit Story Continues

The story in the last *Society Star* on a pantsuit if-you-must memo ("You've Come a Long Way Girls") drew lots of interest.

Gary Burgher, an MHS member from Oregon, wrote back that his wife was denied entrance to two of Seattle's top women's shops in 1966 because she was wearing a pantsuit. It was "both an historical and nostalgic" bit of history, Burgher said. ★



In addition to the great collection of Winchesters, MHS's new exhibit also features a rare collection of ammunition from the period.

## 1940 Census Now Online with Wealth of New Information

To paraphrase a memorable line from a Steve Martin movie: *The new 1940 census is in! The new 1940 census is in!*

The MHS Research Center folks are excited for the wealth of new information the census will tell us about Montana and the people who lived here.

For those of you who don't know, for confidentiality reasons individual U.S. Census information is released seventy-two years after it is collected. The length of time is based on the life expectancy of those who provide the information.

MHS Research Center Manager Molly Kruckenberg said the 1940 census is particularly valuable because it reflects the dramatic changes that took place in the U.S. population during the Great Depression.

"It's interesting that you can see where people were living, where they moved from, if you looked at where they were living in 1935 versus 1940, for example, we could

perhaps look and see if people were moving from the rural counties in the state into the cities, which I suspect is what we would see," Kruckenberg said.

There also were more questions on the 1940 census, again reflecting the new information the government was seeking to help understand the Great Depression.

The Research Center stands ready to help Society members and others to access the information and compare it to previous years. The Society has all of the census information taken in Montana. Call (406) 444-2681 for more information.

Society Archivist Jeff Malcomson said Montana 1940 information is available at <https://familysearch.org/1940census/1940-census-montana/>. "I looked up Samuel Ford, the soon to be in 1940 governor of Montana. Worked like a charm. I love the census!" Malcomson said.

And so do lots of other researchers. ★



## A Passion for Sharing History

*Without passion there might be no errors, but without passion there would certainly be no history.* —CICELY V. WEDGWOOD, British historian

When you hear about a new exhibit, or see that another historic property is listed on the National Register, or learn that a school group is exploring community history—do you think of passion? Montana Historical Society donors do. What drives those of us who love history is indeed a passion for sharing the past. Contributions to the Montana Historical Society from generous donors allow us to share the real stories of the West with hundreds of people every day.

Interest in Montana's history comes to each of us in a different way. Whether you are tracing your family's past, researching events held long ago, or wondering why people settled your town,

the desire to connect the past to our lives is real—and rewarding! It doesn't matter how you come to love Montana history, it is *your* passion that the MHS relies on to continue making (and collecting and preserving and presenting) history.

Our job at MHS is to expand enthusiasm for Montana's history so that we, and others, can continue to share stories that impact our lives now—and in the future. Your donations to the Montana Historical Society ensure that passion remains an integral part of telling Montana's rich history.

Thank you so much for your support—and your passion! ★

SUSAN R. NEAR

*Development & Marketing Officer*

## The Montana Historical Society Press Goes High-Tech

*Attention, techies! The Montana Historical Society Press now offers e-books. So far, the Press has digitized three titles:*

■ *Montana Moments: History on the Go* distills the most funny, bizarre, and interesting stories from Montana's history into pure entertainment. You'll meet the desperadoes, vigilantes, madams, and darned good men and women (and a few critters) who made the state's history.

■ *Girl from the Gulches: The Story of Mary Ronan* shares Mary Ronan's reminiscences of life on the frontier. The exhilaration of a forbidden sled ride, the creaking of the hangman's rope, her father giving the last of their water to his dying mule—these things Ronan remembers with vivid clarity.

■ *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* tells the story of Red Cloud's early years as he told it to a white friend in the 1890s. A

brilliant military strategist, Red Cloud honed his skills against his tribe's traditional enemies long before he fought to close the Bozeman Trail.

You can fill your reader with e-books at the special introductory price of just \$2.99 each. Find them online at most major e-book retailers, or visit the Montana Historical Society Press ([www.montanahistoricalociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalociety.org)) page at [Smashwords.com](http://Smashwords.com).

And for all those readers who prefer the heft of a book? Our museum store still sells good, old-fashioned, paper-and-ink books. These and many other great books are available at our online museum store site, or call toll-free 1-800-243-9900. ★

## MHS Fellowships Awarded

The MHS Research Center has awarded 2012 fellowships to researchers pursuing history that is important to Montana.

THE JAMES H. BRADLEY FELLOWSHIP is awarded based on the use of MHS collections, the contribution of the topic to Montana history, and potential publication in *Montana The Magazine of Western History*. This year's recipients are:

*Dr. Charlene Porsild*, who is studying the influenza epidemic of 1918 in Montana. Dr. Porsild holds a PhD in History from Carleton University. She is currently the Assistant Director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy and Associate Research Professor of American Studies at the University of New Mexico.

*Dr. Linda Sargent Wood*, who is studying the history of the Montana State Training School in Boulder, the work of Dr. Phillip Pallister, and Montana's contribution to the disability rights movement. Dr. Sargent Wood is Assistant Professor of History at Northern Arizona University.

THE DAVE WALTER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP is awarded annually to Montana residents who are working on making their local history more visible and accessible. This year's recipients are:

*Richard I. Gibson*, of Butte, who is researching Butte's Chinatown. Gibson's research will be used to create an exhibit on the Chinn Family in the Mai Wah Museum and a book on Butte's Chinatown.

*Patty Hooker*, of Roscoe, who is researching the history of Stillwater County. Hooker's research will support a book on the history of Stillwater County to be published in 2013. ★

