

Ralston Mural Finds New Home at MHS

Like the subject of his large mural, noted Montana artist J. K. Ralston's *Return of the Raiders* has found its

home at the Montana Historical Society after a long and winding journey.



From Livingston to Pennsylvania to the Montana Historical Society "Warriors" find new 'camp' to share with all Montanans.

Bitterroot Valley Backdrop for 2016 MHS History Conference

History will be all around you when you attend MHS's 43rd annual Montana History Conference in Hamilton and Stevensville, Sept. 22 through the 24th.

"Taking the conference on the road enables us to focus more closely on the history of a specific part of the state—in this case the beautiful Bitterroot Valley," MHS Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager Kirby Lambert said.

This year's conference will include events at local sites like the Daly Mansion for a barbecue on Thursday night, field trips to Traveler's Rest—a famous Lewis and Clark site—and St. Mary's Mission, which will be celebrating its 175th anniversary of being part of Montana's heritage.

"Among the many excellent speakers we will have on board, *History Conference* (cont. on p. 4)

The 15-foot-long mural was unloaded recently after being restored by John Hartmann Preservation in Carlisle, Penn., and was immediately installed in Montana's Museum in the Montana Homeland Exhibit.

The mural was commissioned in 1953 by Joe Swindlehurst for his Empire Savings and Loan Bank in Livingston. His son, also Joe, and daughters Beverly and Jean donated it to the Montana Historical Society in memory of their parents Joe and Pearl.

"This is a beautiful mural by J. K. Ralston that has deep ties to Montana history. We thank the Swindlehurst family of Livingston for making this a gift to the people of Montana for all to enjoy," MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg said.

The story of the mural is a great example of the teamwork that goes into adding a historic treasure to Montana's Museum for the enjoyment and enlightenment of the people the Montana Historical Society proudly serves.

The Swindlehurst family recognized the importance of the mural and decided to donate it to the people of Montana. The museum staff worked with others to transform the mural that was in rough shape back to its original grandeur, and finally, the teamwork that it took to get the mural into the gallery and on display.

Joe said his father, who knew Ralston, proudly displayed the mural at the entrance to the bank

Ralston Mural (cont. on p. 4)

MHS . . . Bridging Cultures in Northeastern Montana

In 1998, upon the completion of a new, low profile highway bridge over the Missouri River near Wolf Point, Montana, the Montana Department of Transportation began plans to demolish the previously existing span across the river, the Lewis and Clark Bridge. This 1,074 foot, massive Pennsylvania through truss structure was unique. Constructed in 1930, it was the longest bridge of its design in Montana and was the first bridge to connect the two sides of the Missouri River between Fort Benton and Williston, ND, over 300 miles downstream. At its dedication in



Wolf Point bridge spans eastern Montana history.

1930, the bridge was called “a memorial to those whose lives have been lost in the Missouri and a monument to those whose cooperation made possible its erection.” It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. The bridge had great meaning to the members of the Wolf Point community and the Fort Peck Tribe, on whose land the north access to the

bridge rested. The bridge literally connected cultures. The community was preparing for quite a sad situation as their 37 year old lifeline was about to be destroyed.

Enter the Montana Historical Society. The debate over the future of the bridge had become quite contentious. Lacking a clear new “owner,” MHS’ State Historic Preservation Office stepped forward. On April 25, 1998, the MHS Board of the Trustees voted to accept ownership of the bridge, to be preserved as an important symbol of the transportation history of northeastern Montana.

I recently made a trip to Wolf Point to visit community leaders to understand its importance to the region. The structure is really quite remarkable as you top the hill heading south on Hwy. 13. Its potential as a component of Riverside Park and trail system, a venue for community and tribal celebration, and its beauty as a historic landmark is undeniable. Demonstrating the seriousness of this vision, representatives of FWP, the Bureau of Land Management, the Wolf Point Historical Society, the Wolf Point Area Museum, the Fort Peck Tribe, the Roosevelt County Sheriff’s Office, local businesses and the Montana Legislature all participated in these discussions.

After 18 years of being gated and generally inaccessible, we look forward to working with Wolf Point community leaders, Fort Peck tribal members and others to make the bridge a point of pride in the region. An engineering marvel, an important transportation corridor and a connector of cultures, this historic bridge is to be celebrated and enjoyed, not abandoned and destroyed. 🇺🇸

SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD

Remembering a ‘Boy of Summer’

Kirby Hoon came to Montana in 1900 to play baseball in Butte.

A large and amazing scrapbook donated recently to MHS by one of his descendants Kirby Langdon Hoon, tells a story that took “Lightfoot Hoon” to a professional baseball career in New York, back to Helena to get married in 1911, to a successful business career, to becoming postmaster of Helena, to being named to the State Athletic Commission, to becoming a nationally ranked handball competitor.

The newspaper clippings and other memorabilia trace his life up to his death in 1981. Perhaps the most unexpected tidbit is that his son, also Kirby, under the stage name Kirby Grant, became the star of the popular Sky King television series.

Names and details of athletics, business, community and other Montana history jump off the pages. There is a photo of Hoon with his state champion doubles partner, Helena District Court Judge Les Loble, who is best remembered for his national reputation for his work with youthful offenders.

You can look through the scrapbook by stopping in at the MHS Research Center. 🇺🇸



Kirby “Lightfoot” Hoon in Butte.

About Us

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

- ✔ MHS Director: Bruce Whittenberg
 - ✔ Membership Coordinator: Rebecca Baumann (406) 444-2918
 - ✔ Editor: Tom Cook (406) 444-1645
- www.montanahistoricalsociety.org

Big Horn County Historical Museum Rich in History

The Big Horn County Historical Museum grounds have literally been growing since 1978 into an historic town rich with the history of the area.

Those who travel the interstate past Hardin have seen the museum grow from a 22-acre vegetable garden with the original farmhouse

and barn into a complex that now includes 24 authentic historic structures from throughout the county that have been saved and moved to the site.

Each building exhibits items representative of the era of the building. Artifacts like horse drawn equipment, restored tractors and

automobiles as well as smaller artifacts. In 2012 the museum grounds expanded to 35 acres and a new museum building was constructed that features a gallery, gift shop, research library, archives, visitor center and offices.

Exhibits include Fort Custer on the Big Horn, Plains Indian, Will James, Missionaries on the (nearby Crow) Reservation, and a millinery shop. If you love Montana history, be prepared to spend some time when you visit this museum complex. 📍



Fort Custer is one of the many exhibits that tell the story of Big Horn County and Crow Country.

John Boughton Searches High and Low for History

John Boughton has spent his career wandering the West from its mountains to its communities working to save history and its historic places and buildings for you.

As the Montana Historical Society National Register Coordinator, Boughton works with property owners across Montana to qualify historic buildings and sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

Born in Canada, his parents moved to Oregon when he was young. He earned his undergraduate degree in anthropology from Oregon State University and his masters in 1989 at the University of Oregon. "I'm some kind of a (combination of a) duck and a beaver," he said with his infectious smile.

After graduation, he worked on cultural resource projects throughout the West as well as in Hawaii. "I always enjoyed projects, especially in the mountains," he said. "When you are in a place like that you feel history. You definitely have a feeling of those who went before you,

and that you are not the first one there."

Boughton worked for several years for Ethno-Science out of Billings before joining MHS in 2008. He and his wife Lynn, who is an archaeologist, moved to Helena where she works for Tetra Tech.

The birth of their daughter, Anna, made it easier for Boughton to change his focus to historic preservation projects in Montana. "When you have a child, it's nice not to be gone all the time," he said.

Much of his work now focuses on historic preservation of properties from the frontier period of Montana into the first half of the last century. He said from 12 to 15 Montana properties are listed in the National Register from across the state each year.

Boughton said he enjoys working on historic buildings and community districts because of the pride people have in their local history. When asked what was his favorite thing to work on, he had a surprising answer.



John Boughton knows history inside and out.

"I like to work on dude ranches," he said. "They have interesting histories, and often have been in the same family for many years," he said. "Dude ranches are part of Montana history for sure."

It is rewarding to help people recognize and have others recognize the importance of their historic properties, he said. "Because it is their history, and once it is gone you can never get it back."

Those who make Montana history eventually fade away, but Boughton helps save the things they have left behind for all generations to remember. 📍

Ralston Mural (cont. from p. 1)
for his customers to enjoy. “As a little kid, I was in awe of it. It was large and wonderful, and depicted Indian life,” young Joe said. “I spent many hours studying that mural.”

The mural depicts a Crow war party returning from a successful raid. They stopped to put on their finest clothing before entering camp and showing off their success by displaying some trophies of their victories. The camp depiction was said to be below Livingston on the Yellowstone River sometime around 1850.

Ralston was born in 1896 in Choteau and spent his early adult years as a cowboy in eastern Montana. He was a prolific artist

and specialized in topics of the American West, especially of cowboys and Indians. After serving in World War I, Ralston took over his father’s ranch—the Roman E, near Culbertson.

He opened a studio in Billings in 1935 and died there in 1987. He was awarded the Gold Medal by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1978, and his log cabin studio and a large collection of his art work is on display at the Western Heritage Center in Billings.

The mural is not only important because of its beauty, but it also represents a wider story of Montana history from Native Americans, to early pioneer families that produced people like Ralston, to



The mural being mounted permanently in the Montana Homeland exhibit.

community development that institutions like the Livingston bank helped encourage, to preserving those stories for all future generations of Montanans.

We encourage you to take some time to look at the mural next time you visit us. 📍

History Conference (cont. from p. 1)



The MHS Montana History Conference will also celebrate the 175th anniversary of St. Mary’s Mission.

I’m especially excited by two highly esteemed Salish cultural leaders, Tony Incashola and Steve Lozar,” Lambert said. “They will be talking about the long history of the Salish people in this area and why they continue to maintain strong emotional and spiritual ties to the home of their ancestors.”

Other topics include “Logging and Lobbying in the Gilded Age,” a look at the issues of forests in the valley from 1882 to 1917; “In the Winner’s Circle: How Montana Thoroughbreds Upset the Nineteenth Century’s Racing Establishment”; and “In the Begin-



Flathead Indians gathered at Medicine Tree in 1923 during a Pow Wow at Medicine Tree Flat in their traditional homeland. Tribal history of the Flathead Valley will be part of the Montana History Conference.

ning Was the Word: A Brief History on Who Wrote Montana’s History.”

“In addition to simply being a lot of fun, the conference brings together history enthusiasts from all over the state and from other parts of the nation to learn more about

our shared past, and why that past still matters to us as Montanans today,” Lambert said.

To learn more log on to www.montanahistoricalsociety.org, or email jlewis@mt.gov. We look forward to seeing you there. 📍

MHS Photo Archivist Becca Kohl Leaves a Lasting Image of Montana

For 37 years Becca Kohl looked at the history of Montana through the lenses of thousands of photographers who captured images of the people, places, landscapes and lifeways that are our heritage.

Kohl joined the Montana Historical Society in 1979 and retired in June as Senior Photograph Archivist. Her work included acquisition, accession, preservation and cataloging photographs collections and providing public access of them.

MHS Photograph Archives Manager Lory Morrow said Kohl had “endless patience” in dealing with researchers and donors, and developed almost a cult following of people, both staff members and researchers. 🌟



“Becca’s knowledge of the photo collection and Montana history were always impressive, and she taught me plenty, but equally valuable to me was her continued enthusiasm and excitement for the photographs.”

—Tom Ferris, MHS Archival Photographer.

“Over my 34 years at MHS . . . Becca was always helpful when asked for assistance with a project or problem. I appreciate Becca most for the joy she brought to us every day, in many ways.”

—Susan Near MHS Development and Marketing Officer.

“She just had a great ability to find things, and a way of thinking about photos and where you might find things that will be missed at MHS.”

—Roberta Gebhardt MHS Library Manager.

“Becca was very helpful, very knowledgeable and very enthusiastic about the photograph collection”

—Birgit Spengler Goethe University Professor from Frankfurt, Germany.

“Thank you so much for your help with the Evelyn Cameron documentary. Your interest and support were essential to the production.”

—William Marcus and “Back Roads Montana” PBS crew.

“Not only has Becca brought an expertise and passion for her work to MHS, she brought a spirit and humor that kept us smiling.”

—MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg.



(far left photo) Becca Kohl brought knowledge and hard work to MHS, as well as an even greater sense of humor and fun.

Becca Kohl (right) and Lory Morrow at work on the major F. Jay Haynes Yellowstone National Park collection in 1982.

Playing for Keeps: SHPO Has a Gift for You

This is the 50th Year Anniversary of the National Register Act, and the MHS State Historic Preservation Office is celebrating it with you.

While they last, you can order a free poster and deck of playing cards with images of historic properties in all of Montana’s 56 counties.

“We thought it would be fun—and educational—to commemorate this important event in this way,” SHPO Officer Mark Baumler said. “We tried to show the diversity of

significant historic places in Montana through the cards. They are all important places in their own way.”

Further information on each of the properties in the playing card deck can be found at www.mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/nationalReg/PlayingCards. MHS members can request a poster and/or deck of cards by calling (406) 444-7715 or online at mtshpo@mt.gov. Supplies are limited and will be given first come, first serve. 🌟



While they last, first-come-first-serve, you can order a State Historic Preservation Office deck of cards with historic properties on each card.

History of Hunting In Montana New Exhibit at MHS

The Montana Historical Society's new "Big Game, Big Stories: Montana's Hunting Heritage" exhibit uses modern interactive "touch and talk" devices to let museum goers listen to the stories of hunting in Montana through the voices it has collected in its oral history collection over the years.

People who have lived on this land for more than 11,000 years of known history have relied on hunting to sustain their lifeways physically, culturally and spiritually.

The exhibit takes museum goers on a trip from hunting large game with atlatls and spears to advances in techniques that decimated game animals like the bison, to modern conservation efforts that work to ensure a balance between hunters and the game they seek.

Nomadic hunter-gatherers hunted large Ice Age mammals with spears with large, heavy stone points from 15,000 to 8,000 years ago, and as temperatures rose they began to use atlatls with throwing darts armed with medium-sized stone points to bring down smaller game.

About 1,500 years ago, bows and arrows and buffalo jumps came into use, and in the 1700s, horses and firearms were acquired by native people, greatly changing their way of life.



Kendra Newhall, MHS registrar, and Magarete Ordon, MHS curator of history, curated the new exhibit.



Interactive devices allow you to hear the sounds the animals make as well as see their horns, tracks and other identifying characteristics.

In 1865 the Montana Territorial Legislature passed the first law protecting wildlife in Montana, but it was too late to save the buffalo herds. The exhibit brings the timeline forward into the modern conservation efforts of today.

The exhibit covers all aspects of hunting including things like an

interactive exhibit that uses horns, footprints, scat and the actual sounds of animals in the wild to show how game is identified and hunted.

There are stories that hunters and non-hunters alike will want to hear from this important part of Montana history. 📍

MHS Forgotten Chinese Exhibit Receives Prestigious National Award

Montana Historical Society's "Our Forgotten Pioneers: The Chinese in Montana" exhibit was awarded the American Association for State and Local History 2016 Award of Merit for bringing to light a little understood part of Montana history.

"We are extremely honored by this national award that shows the great work our staff does in telling and presenting the important stories of Montana history. This also shows the important partnerships we have with all of the history organizations across the state," MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg said.

Carroll College Professor Emeritus and leading Chinese history in Montana scholar Robert Swartout said the exhibit is the first detailed effort to tell that story in an analytical, statewide fashion.

The temporary exhibit was co-curated by MHS Museum Registrar Rowena Harrington and Interpretive Historian Ellen Baumler.

"Despite their many contributions to Montana's evolution as first a territory and then a state, the Chinese story has rarely been included in Montana's mainstream historical narrative," Swartout said.

Humanities Montana Director Ken Egan said the exhibit drew on new research as well as from MHS collections available in the Research Center.

"One can reasonably predict that 'Our Forgotten Pioneers' will spur new research, new writing and new thinking about the underappreciated role of the Chinese in Montana's cultural history," Egan said. 📍

First Door on the Left

BY REBECCA BAUMANN, MHS
MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Almost weekly, I receive wonderful comments from our members talking about how much they love *Montana The Magazine of Western History*. Did you know that MHS has been publishing this distinguished quarterly publication for more than 65 years and has accumulated approximately 21 prestigious national awards in the field of western history and literature? If you would like to read more about the awards we have won, please visit: <http://mthistoryrevealed.blogspot.com>.

Your commitment to history, your interest in Montana, and your passion for knowledge are the things that help to enhance everything we do. Thank you for all that you do for MHS. Montana history is fun, remarkable, entertaining, and educational—and it's all here for you to explore! Feel free to call, email, write and sign up your favorite person with a gift membership. As always, I can be reached at (406) 444-2918 or rbaumann@mt.gov. If you get a chance, swing by and visit. I always enjoy talking with our members! 🇺🇸



If you enjoy MHS's *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, post your photo with it on social media using hashtag #ReadMontana. You might see your "historic" face in an upcoming issue.



The Museum Store staff loves to talk books with you, especially when they involve a new exhibit, like "Big Game, Big Stories: Montana's Hunting Heritage."



The Museum Store has some great hunting-related metal signs that would look good on your wall. Stop by or phone toll-free 1-800-243-9900.

Your Special Gifts Make a Difference!

BY SUSAN NEAR, MHS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OFFICER

Sincere thanks to all who sent in special gifts in response to the letter we sent to you in June. Donations you give MHS help support many special projects. More Montana history is preserved and delivered to the public because of your gifts.

If you're like me, appeal letters from my favorite charities go into a stack on the desk—and I make a donation after the bills are paid. It would be an honor to have MHS included in your stack! We strive for excellence at MHS—in programming, service, and providing access to Montana's historic resources. Our promise to you is that we will use your gift wisely to those ends.

You can send in a donation to MHS any time. Use the donation form we sent you, or send your check with a note in the memo line indicating "Special Gift" and how you would like your donation to be used: Where Needed, Museum, Preservation, Outreach, Research Center, Publications, or the Montana Heritage Center. Contact me directly if you'd prefer to use a credit card for your donation or if you have special requests—I'm always glad to hear from you! Contact me at (406) 444-4713 or email (406) 444-4713 or email snear@mt.gov. 🇺🇸

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.

Montana Historical Society

225 N. Roberts, P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201

Inside

- ▼ New Home for Ralston Mural 1
- ▼ Don't forget History Conference 1
- ▼ Thanks to Becca Kohl 5
- ▼ SHPO Has Gift for You 5
- ▼ New Hunting Exhibit 6

*We are
thankful for
our members!*

Gardening History and Edible Landscapes



The Original Governor's Mansion Secret Garden Tour in July reminded us that gathering, which is a form of gardening, is part of our heritage and history, as is hunting—the subject of our new exhibit. Loren Gustafson, pictured above eating raspberries, and his wife Cynthia shared their garden with the public as part of the fund raiser for projects at the OGM. They describe their two-lot garden as an “edible landscape” and use organic methods to raise it. The history it represents is reflected by their home, which they remodeled to look like Loren's dad's childhood home in Sweden. Loren loves to spread his love of gardening, and you can email him at lorenjgustafson@gmail.com for tips and ideas on gardening.