

Lt. Governor McLean Biennial Preservation Awards
Myrna Loy, Helena, MT
Friday, January 23, 2015

Thank you so very much for the opportunity to be with you this afternoon. Thank you to Mr. Whittenberg for the wonderful introduction. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to recognize those who preserve our history, a history that tells the story of our great state of Montana. Let's give up a big round of applause to all of you for your wonderful work!!

This important history is found in historic courthouses, hotels, banks, homes, ranger stations and roads. By identifying and recognizing these properties, we are making an effort to ensure these extraordinary places never pass into obscurity.

The history and architecture found in our towns and countryside represents the story of Montana and all of its inhabitants. It is so very important that we recognize that these locations are open to the public and each provides a unique window to a slice of Montana that in some cases is never known.

Some properties require little effort to understand why they are significant and listed in the National Register. Properties such as the Babcock Theatre Building in Billings, the Montana State University Historic District in Bozeman, and the Glacier County Courthouse in Cutbank, require little imagination as to their National Register-worthiness.

Other properties such as Old U.S. Highway 91 between Helena and Great Falls, or the Haight-Bridgwater House (pronounced "HATE-BRIDGEWATER") in Helena may not present their significance to Montana history, instead, their importance lies buried beneath years of history. It is only when one peels back the layers that their story is told and their importance to Montana history understood.

Of course, the passage of time often diminishes and in some cases, completely erases past traces of history from the landscape. Often times, we can only understand their importance to Montana through archaeology, or in one case this afternoon, paleontology. Whether architecture or paleontology, these resources provide a mirror to our past and the reasons for their significance often vary from person to person, but all should agree as to their value.

Little doubt exists about what compels many of those we recognize today. A review of our list of award recipients and their accomplishments, reminds us of what preservation means. It is not easy and sometimes it entails a lifetime of work. Not all battles are won. Many times, effective preservation relies on ingenuity, persistence and fiscal assets.

Today we honor your commitment to preserve our history and tell the story of our collective past. Thank you for the important work you do each and every day to preserve the great state that we all call home.