

Norm Asbjornson Gifts \$10.4M to Heritage Center

Montana native Norm Asbjornson has donated \$10.4 million for the construction of the new Montana Heritage Center in Helena.

The generous donation completes the MTHS's goal of raising \$18.8 million for enhancements to the museum's galleries. The MTHS continues its fundraising efforts to improve the building further and strengthen visitor experiences.

"I look for projects that will be game changers for the state of Montana," Asbjornson said. "This is an investment in the history of Montana and a gift to our current and future generations."

A graduate of Montana State University, Asbjornson is the founder, a member of the board of directors, and the recently retired executive chairman of AAON, a NASDAQ-traded heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning manufacturer.

"With this donation, Norm leaves a tremendous legacy that will allow

Montanans and visitors to our state to experience Montana history like never before," Gov. Greg Gianforte said. "When completed, the Montana Heritage Center will provide a world-class and unparalleled experience for visitors. We thank all Montanans for their contributions and interest in the project."

MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg noted that Asbjornson is excited to support the Montana Heritage Center and its educational opportunities.

"Norm is particularly interested in how we support Montana schools with history curricula and our goal of bringing every student in Montana through our doors to help them learn from our history," Kruckenberg said. "We truly appreciate Norm's support and that of others who've generously contributed to this effort."

The newly renovated Montana Heritage Center, which includes the 66,000-square-foot addition and renovation of the Montana Historical



Norm Asbjornson

Society's historic 70-year-old building, is expected to open in summer 2025. Overall, the MTHS has raised

"Gifts" (cont. on p. 3)

Helena-Area Teens are Making (and Preserving) History

BY MELISSA MUNSON, PROGRAM OFFICER, HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

A new collaboration between the Montana Historical Society, Montana Discovery Foundation, Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, and Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) is providing a career

pathway for the next generation of archaeologists, while laying the groundwork to meet a critical need in cultural resource management in Montana.

The Youth Archaeological Survey Program provides

high school students with hands-on training and experience in cultural resource management. The program launched this year as an addition to the foundation and the forest's Youth Forest

Monitoring Program, which provides high school students an opportunity to learn about forest ecology, monitor forest health, and engage with natural resource professionals.

"Teens" (cont. on p. 3)



Transforming



Lately we've been doing a lot of work at the MTHS that is transformational. As we work toward the opening of the Montana Heritage Center in the summer of 2025, we must consider the future of the Montana Historical Society. That future is one that is momentous, even given our lengthy and substantial history.

Planning and building the Heritage Center has involved a reimagining of how the MTHS will function in 2025 and into the future. We considered every aspect of our work: collections storage and heating and cooling systems, staff workspaces and public circulation, event spaces and security, and so many other items. We didn't simply plan how to fit our existing functions into a new space; we con-

sidered how we want to work together and serve the public tomorrow, then we planned accordingly.

Thinking about transformation spilled into our exhibits. Actually, it didn't just spill – it cascaded over in a tidal wave. Visitors to the Heritage Center will experience Montana's history through artifacts, images, hands-on interactives, built environments, and immersive experiences. Audio and visual media will interact with authentic stories to fully engage visitors in exploring our past. Each of these exhibit techniques will actively engage visitors in exploring the stories in the galleries, no matter what style of learning appeals to them.

The MTHS recently completed its campaign to raise \$18 million so that we can incorporate enhanced exhibits throughout the galleries and public spaces in the Heritage Center. This campaign was part of our larger capital campaign. Thanks to our more than 1,000 generous donors, we've raised a total \$57.2 million, which gets us within arms' reach of our ultimate goal of \$60 million. The final \$2.8 million will allow us to augment the visitor experience throughout the Heritage Center. Adding the enhancements to our project increased our budget; the cost is at \$104 million. But the effect for our visitors and their improved understanding of Montana history is well worth the price tag.

We're also envisioning the impact

the experience our new building and exhibits will have on Montana's students. Most Montana students study our state's history during their educational years, and many use the MTHS textbooks ("Montana: A History of our Home" and "Montana: Stories of the Land") to guide their learning.

Yet field trips can transform students' learning experience by engaging them in new ways. To truly spark future engagement with Montana's history and the Heritage Center, the MTHS has launched a campaign to raise \$10 million to bring every child in Montana to the State Capitol and the Heritage Center during their educational career. Through the Connecting Students to History & Civics campaign, we will offer grants for field trip expenses so that students can engage with Montana history. We invite you to join us in this campaign by scanning the QR code [below].

The MTHS is transforming. We are excited about the many new opportunities that come with new exhibits, new event spaces, and new offices spaces. We are just as excited about what we can do in all those spaces to make Montana's history exciting and appealing to Montanans and visitors alike. I hope you are just as excited about what we are becoming!



Two New Books from the Montana Historical Society Press

The Montana Historical Society Press, an arm of the MTHS Publications Program, is excited to announce two new books coming out in time for the holidays.

"The Quest: A Montanan's Photographic Journey" (\$29.95) features the photographs of Dr. Richard S. Buswell. Born in Helena in 1945, Buswell graduated from Oregon

Health Sciences University in 1970 and worked as an allergist-immunologist in Montana until his retirement in 2013.

In 1971, he began exploring

"New Books" (cont. on p. 4)

“Gifts” (cont. from p. 1)

\$57 million of its \$60 million goal. The rest of the anticipated \$104 million project is funded by \$40 million in accommodations tax and \$5.5 million in bonds.

Asbjornson has made previous generous gifts, including \$50 million to Montana State University (MSU) for its College of Engineering expansion and \$40 million to renovate the Winifred school in his hometown.

Among other donations, he endowed a \$1 million scholarship fund for graduates from Montana high schools with 100 or fewer students, and a scholarship for Winifred High School graduates who attend MSU. ▼▼▼

“Teens” (cont. from p. 1)



DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie shows students with the Youth Archaeological Survey Program how to record tipi rings.



Students with the Youth Archaeological Survey Program take measurements to record tipi ring locations.

Professional archaeologists from DNRC and the MTHS State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) trained and supervised students to record evidence of past human activity, including indications of structures used in the past by Native Americans and historic buildings built during Montana’s pioneer era. Students also learned about the relevance of cultural



(From left) Robert Lesofski, Copen Earley, Gianna Gotowsky, and Gavin Payne take tipi ring measurements as DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie observes in the background.

resource surveys and management within the context of federal and state preservation regulations.

The archaeology team included four student interns and was led by a field instructor, Libby Zorn. She is an anthropology student

at Montana State University, who learned alongside students how to identify and record sites, and how findings are incorporated into statewide GIS and cultural records databases.

“The opportunity to learn field methods isn’t something I would get through my coursework at MSU. Participating in this program has given me the chance to experience what field archaeology work might be like,” Zorn said.

After six weeks of testing their grit in the field, interns shared their findings with professionals in a final presentation. DNRC archaeologist Patrick Rennie, who provided survey sites and guidance for the students in the field, was in the audience.

“I was happy to see how enthusiastic these young people were about what they were learning,” Rennie said. “These kids are intelligent, curious, and hard workers. Their final presentation really reflected just how much they got out of this experience. Plus, DNRC got some real survey work done.”

Laura Marsh was a student intern in the Youth Forest Monitoring Program in 2010 and a field instruc-

tor in 2021. Partly due to that experience, she pursued a master’s degree in archaeology and now works for the Montana Historical Society. Marsh recently transferred from the MTHS’s Preservation Office to Outreach and Interpretation, where she is charged with coordinating the new partnership among the agencies.

“The forest monitoring program is a unique opportunity that lets young people experience what a career in the natural sciences would be like and really explore their interests,” Marsh said. “We hope that through the new archaeology team, we can more directly reach students who might be interested in the cultural resources field, which combines aspects of the natural sciences and social sciences.”

The Montana Historical Society and its partners plan to continue support for the archaeological component of the program in 2024. In February and March 2024, the foundation will start recruiting field instructors and interns entering grades 10 to 12. Contact Laura Marsh at (406) 444-4789 or Laura.Marsh@mt.gov for more information. ▼▼▼

“New Books” (cont. from p. 2)

Montana’s ghost towns and abandoned homesteads, with his camera in tow. To date, Buswell’s work has hung in exhibits worldwide, is held in more than 200 museum collections nationally and internationally, and has been the focus of six books.

In “The Quest” – his seventh book – Buswell has created images of some of Montana’s most haunting relics of the settler period. Ghost towns can have an eerie allure or architectural charm, but Buswell’s technique captures more than decrepit buildings and historical trash.

As photographer Matt Hamon explains in the foreword: “Buswell’s photography captures everyday objects in such extreme ways that they take on new and mysterious characteristics. Buswell demonstrates that a photographer of great vision and virtuosity can transform the simplest objects into evocative works of art through composition, grain, tone, and light.”

Recently the Montana Historical Society acquired Buswell’s complete oeuvre as part of its permanent collections. In celebration of his work,

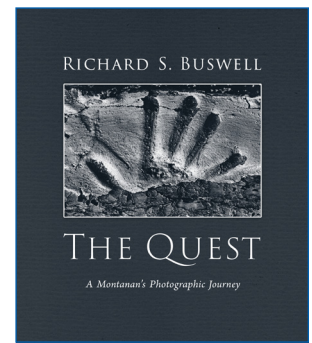
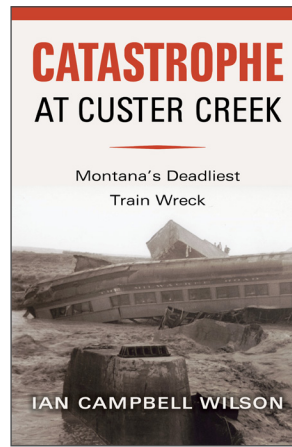
the Montana Historical Society Press and the University of Montana Press partnered to publish this stunning book.

Also coming this fall is “Catastrophe at Custer Creek: Montana’s Deadliest Train Wreck” (\$26.95) by Ian Campbell Wilson.

Just after midnight on June 19, 1938, the Olympian No. 15, an elite passenger train operated by the famed Milwaukee Road, crashed into Custer Creek, which flows into the Yellowstone River southwest of Terry, Montana. In the moments before the train reached the small bridge spanning the typically dry creek, the waters had swelled dramatically, the result of a violent storm system that moved across Montana that day.

The wreck killed 49 passengers and crew members and injured another 75, making it the most devastating train accident in Montana history.

“Catastrophe at Custer Creek” documents the final ride of the Olympian, whose sudden and violent wreck gar-



nered national attention. It forever altered the lives of survivors and victims’ families and dealt a significant blow to the Milwaukee Road’s fortunes.

In this vivid narrative history, Wilson reconstructs the lives of several passengers and crew members, probes what caused this unprecedented disaster, and surveys the intertwined histories of the Milwaukee Road and the eastern Montana communities that the Olympian passed through on its usual route from Chicago to Tacoma and back again.

Both books will be available through the MTHS Museum Store: online at <https://mhs.mt.gov/store> or by calling (406) 444-2890. ▼▲▼

Interns Aid Library and Archives Program

BY LINDSEY MICK, MTHS ARCHIVIST



Lindsay Mick helps Jonathan Jessop while the University of Montana – Western student works on the W. P. Roscoe Company records.

Two interns dove into history this summer, working behind the scenes at the Montana Historical Society’s Library and Archives Program.

Joe Lanning, who initially interned in April, obtained funding through the Internet Archive’s Community Webs program for a recent rapid-fire internship to learn more about archival theory and practice.

Lanning is a librarian at the Billings Public Library and also was put in charge of organizing, arranging, and processing its growing archival collections.

His internship entailed what could only be called “Archives Bootcamp,” with 40 hours of intense, nose-to-the-ground training in archival theory and practice. The internship covered many elements of an

archivist’s primary duties, including conducting an inventory and preliminary appraisal of unprocessed collections, entering collection information into our digital database, modifying online finding aids using specialized software, and much more. Also squeezed into this hectic schedule were in-depth discussions on archival policies, ethics,

“Interns” (cont. on p. 5)

Celebrating Volunteers

On July 24, we celebrated our Montana Historical Society volunteers with years-of-service pins, a luncheon, and an honor song performed by the Last Chance Community Pow Wow.

Friends of the Montana Historical Society president Judy Dorsch presented Director Molly Kruckenberg with a symbolic check recognizing 4,500 hours donated to the Society by our volunteers in 2022, which is the equivalent of \$125,000.

Governed by a volunteer board, the Friends of the Montana Historical Society has three separate branches: the Docents, who provide tours; the Muses, who prepare and host receptions; and the Departmental Assistant Volunteers (DAVs). Volunteers contribute in a variety of ways: clerking in the museum store, giving tours to school groups, hosting receptions, researching historic buildings, working in the state archives, transcribing oral histories, helping with exhibits,



and providing administrative office assistance for many programs.

These donated hours help the Historical Society accomplish projects that would not otherwise be possible. In addition, volunteer hours are used to match grant funds. We couldn't accomplish these valuable tasks without the support and dedication from our volunteers. Their time, skills, and commitment to the mission of the Montana Historical Society are vital to preserving our rich history.



Still Fundraising

With less than two years until we open, the Montana Historical Society has raised a landmark amount: \$57.2 million.

But we aren't finished.

The cost of the Montana Heritage Center is \$104 million. The public spaces, galleries, exhibits, and overall visitor experiences will continue to be enhanced as we raise the last \$2.8 million, for a total of \$60 million.

Every dollar counts and helps us make the Montana Heritage Center a world-class destination. We can't wait to celebrate the future of the Montana Historical Society with you when we reopen.

Learn more at:

[MontanaMuseum.org](https://montanamuseum.org). Support the Montana Heritage Center campaign at <https://mhs.mt.gov/about/donate>.

“Interns” (cont. from p. 4)

and responsibilities.

“I learned from and worked with a great group of professionals while interning with the MTHS,” Lanning said. “Over the week, I gained practical skills that I was able to immediately put into practice when I returned to Billings.”

The Archives' second intern, Jonathan Jessop, started his 160-hour internship in early June and spent the summer working on the W. P. Roscoe Company records. Jessop is a senior at the University of Montana Western in Dillon and is working toward a dual

degree in history and interdisciplinary social sciences.

The W. P. Roscoe records were donated to the Historical Society in 2021 by Jim Roscoe. His grandfather, William Roscoe, founded the company in 1923, and it was one of Montana's most prolific bridge building companies. Between 1926 and 1956, the W. P. Roscoe Company built more bridges than any other business in the state, and it remained in business until the 1970s.

The collection itself contains a wealth of information, including financial records, meeting minutes, photographs, and more than

280 project files on a variety of construction projects.

Jessop worked diligently on the collection, absorbing countless aspects of archival work in just a few short weeks.

“It's been wonderful working on the Roscoe records,” Jessop said. “This internship has really given me an inside look at what an archivist's job entails by providing me with firsthand experience.”

Lindsey Mick, the archivist who oversaw both interns, noted that with the MTHS's temporary closure to the public due to the ongoing remodeling, staff

was able to focus on training the interns.

“Internships are a fantastic way of providing both new professionals and students with a quick glance at the important work undertaken at historic organizations,” Mick said. “They also highlight careers that often are forgotten – including archivist, librarian, public historian, museum registrar, conservationist, and others.”

“By offering these internships, the MTHS has opened the doors to a nearly endless sea of possibilities for history lovers.”



New Teacher Leaders Announced

Six teachers have joined the Montana Historical Society's Teacher Leader in Montana History program.

They are Charlie Brown (grades 7-12 in Fairfield), Laurie Enebo (grades 7-8 in Glasgow), Abbey Kochel (grade 7 in Billings), Michelle Moccasin (grades 7-12 in Lodge Grass), Lauren Robbins (grades 4-6 in Philipsburg), and Jessica Van Kerkhove (grades 6-8 in Power).

These new fellows join 12 returning Teacher Leaders. Their leadership assists MTHS in serving teachers in every corner of Montana.

The MTHS started the Teacher Leader program in 2017. Since then, Teacher Leader fellows have presented at regional conferences, worked with their districts to introduce Montana history units into the curriculum,

mentored new teachers, and created lesson plans.

"The MTHS is committed to serving every corner of the state – and working with Teacher Leaders who live as far east as Bainville and as far west as Eureka makes that possible," Outreach and Interpretation Program manager Martha Kohl said. ▼▲▼

New Employees

Samantha Gilk

Give a big welcome to Samantha Gilk, the new compliance officer at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Gilk reviews historic building rehabilitation tax credit projects and undertakings that are subject to state and federal preservation laws.



A native of Columbia Falls, Gilk did her undergraduate work at Montana State University in Bozeman, then earned a Master of Science in historic preservation from the University of Texas in Austin.

"Historic preservation has always been a passion of mine, and I'm really stoked to be in a position where I get to have a positive impact on the cultural resources that are significant to our stories as Montanans," Gilk said.

She and her husband are excited to be back in Montana to experience fall

and winter again, cooler weather, the mountains, a slower pace of life, being closer to family, and to finally be able to set down roots and dig into the Helena community.

Outside of work, Gilk loves to bake, read, work on various DIY projects, and enjoy the outdoors through hiking and fly-fishing.

Melissa Hibbard

Melissa Hibbard has joined the Outreach and Interpretation team as an interpretive historian. In this position, she



is responsible for crafting interpretive text for National Register-listed buildings as part of the MTHS sign program. That program has placed more than 1,900 plaques in 52 of Montana's 56 counties. Hibbard also will conduct teacher trainings and work to create placed-based education projects and cur-

riculum resources to help improve history education across Montana.

Hibbard is well suited for this role. Raised in Whitehall and Silver Star, she attended Twin Bridges and Butte Central high schools and majored in history and psychology at Carroll College. She left the state to earn her Ph.D. in history from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

She taught middle school in New York City and the D.C. area before returning to Montana, where she taught elementary and high school in Helena, Avon, and Butte and earned her history education credentials from the University of Montana Western.

Hibbard's experience and commitment to K-12 education, coupled with her understanding and passion for historical research and writing, make her an excellent fit for the Outreach and Interpretation Program.

Jolene Keen

Jolene Keen has returned as the GIS Specialist-Cultural Records Assistant for the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), a position she held between 2019 and 2020.



Keen helps manage content and functionality of SHPO's Cultural Resource Database of more than 65,000 historic and archaeological sites.

She is a Wyoming native with a Bachelor of Science in geography and anthropology and a Master of Science in geographic and cartographic science. Keen has more than a decade of experience in geospatial technology in a variety of fields, including landscape modeling and cultural resource management across the American Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, Great Plains, and Central America.

"New" (cont. on p. 7)



Photos by Jennifer Bottomly-O'Looney.

On Aug. 5, Sletten Construction moved “Symbol of the Pros” from its temporary location on the eastside of the MTHS building to its new location in the Montana Heritage Center’s parking lot to the northwest. The move went off without a hitch! The two-ton bronze by Bob Sriver is now in a highly visible location, and will be a landmark for our visitors.

“New” (cont. from p. 6)

Her graduate education focused on applying modern geospatial techniques to analyze historical and archaeological records.

Maggie Meredith

Maggie Meredith recently joined the Library and Archives team as the technical services librarian.



She holds a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Texas at Austin and brings several years of library experience to the position.

Meredith previously worked as a library technician at the MTHS and as a librarian at public, academic, and special libraries in Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Texas. She

rejoined the MTHS because she missed working with the amazing staff, and she’s excited about accomplishing lots of special projects in the Library and Archives Program and helping prepare for reopening.

Born and raised in Montana, Maggie lived in Billings, Inverness, Fort Benton, Polson, Miles City and Anaconda before coming to Helena, where she lives with her husband, two cats, one dog, and many family members nearby.

Lindsay Tran

Meet Lindsay Tran, historic architecture specialist at the Montana Historical Society’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).



Tran manages the Historic Tax Credit

Program, conducts architectural review for projects subject to national and state preservation laws, and provides technical preservation guidance to Montanans.

Originally from Bozeman, Tran attended the University of Montana in Missoula where she majored in history. She spent three years teaching English in southwest France before returning to Montana, where she made ends meet as a copywriter, landscaper, office manager, and substitute teacher.

Graduate school began to sound unexpectedly attractive about halfway through the pandemic, and a latent interest in old buildings steered her toward the historic preservation program at the University of Oregon. She’s happy to be back home, working with supportive colleagues and

learning something new every day about our state’s cultural resources.

When not in the office, Tran can be found hiking, reading, watching campy B-horror flicks, and volunteering for Preserve Montana.

Tran holds a Master of Science in historic preservation from the University of Oregon. ▼▼▼

ABOUT US

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Big Sky~Big History

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The Museum Store is Open!

Swing by the Montana Historical Society's Museum Store for a little early holiday shopping.

New this year is "Order Without Law: The Wilbur Fisk Sanders Story." Montana's first U.S. senator has been mentioned frequently in many works on Montana history, but never has been the subject of a comprehensive individual work. "Order Without Law" is the first and complete work devoted to Fisk Sanders – written by one of his direct descendants – and introduces new, previously unknown aspects to his colorful and important history.

We also stock a wide range of gift items including Montana T-shirts, mugs, blankets and bags, canvas totes, and Charlie Russell prints.

Hours are Monday, Thursday, and Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed weekends and holidays. Shop online anytime at <https://app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/>. ▼▼▼

