

## MTHS Loans Russell Paintings to CMR Museum

The Montana Historical Society is collaborating with the C.M. Russell Museum on an exhibit by loaning it 20 Charles M. Russell paintings.

The loan of the paintings from MTHS to the non-profit Russell museum in Great Falls is part of an ongoing collaboration between the two entities, and comes as MTHS is packing its collections in anticipation of extensive renovations at its current facility in Helena.

“It just makes sense to loan these paintings to the C.M. Russell Museum so they can be enjoyed by the public while we’re undergoing upgrades to our current facility,” said MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg. “We’re also constructing a 66,000-square-foot addition, which will allow us to almost triple the size of our current Charlie Russell gallery in the existing building when we reopen in 2025.”

The loan from the state agency includes some of Russell’s most iconic paintings, such as “Laugh Kills Lonesome,” a 1925 oil on canvas; “York,”



*“Laugh Kills Lonesome” is one of about 20 Charles M. Russell paintings recently loaned to the C.M. Russell Gallery in Great Falls.*

a 1908 watercolor; and “Caught in the Act,” an 1888 oil on canvas.

They will join some of the 1,000 Russell creations owned by the C.M. Russell Museum, which holds one of the world’s largest Russell collections.

“Charlie would have deeply appreciated this collaboration between

friends, the C.M. Russell Museum and the Montana Historical Society,” said C.M. Russell Museum Executive Director Tom Figarelle. “This art, exhibited with those already in our loaned and permanent collection, will constitute the largest single venue

“Russell” (cont. on p. 3)

## Two Inducted into Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

Ivan Doig and Dolly Smith Cusker Akers were inducted on March 1 into the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans.

Montana Historical Society Director Molly Kruckenberg and Lt. Gov. Kristen Juras, as well as

Montana’s congressional delegation, recognized the achievements of these two exceptional Montanans during a ceremony in the capitol rotunda in Helena. The gallery itself is in the west wing of the capitol.

“Montana is full of men and

women who deserve the designation of ‘outstanding,’” Kruckenberg said. “This year’s inductees are enormously qualified to be honored in this manner.”

Doig, a Montana author and

“Outstanding” (cont. on p. 3)

## The People and the Lands of Montana



*An artist's rendition of The People and Lands of Montana mobile in the new Montana Heritage Center.*

In Montana, the land that surrounds us influences us every day. Sometimes it is as simple as sipping our morning coffee while noticing the beauty of the sun rising above the Plains. Other times it is dramatic, like watching a forest fire growing closer to your home as flames leap from tree to tree.

Montana's landscape shows the impact of ancient volcanoes and glaciers, dinosaurs and megafauna, telling the stories of millions of years of geologic history. The many geologic forces have left the land with iconic features throughout the region, like the Yellowstone caldera in neighboring Wyoming. They have given us the rugged mountains of western Montana, the high plains of the central portions of the Treasure State, and the rolling prairies of eastern Montana.

The first people in what is now Montana lived directly from the land. Native Americans developed sophisticated ways to live on and prosper from its resources. As European and American explorers came, they used the land in different ways — they were bison hunters, fur trappers, prospec-

tors, and cattle ranchers at first. Later they were homesteaders, railroaders, dam builders, hunting guides, and truckers.

The land that is Montana provides food for our tables, water to soothe our thirst, and energy to power our homes. Yet the land also has created conflicts — of ownership, water rights, and use. We've changed that landscape with highways, mines, and deforestation. And we've preserved that landscape by replanting forests, reclaiming industrial zones, and creating wilderness areas. We also enjoy that land in so many ways — biking, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, canoeing, horseback riding, and other outdoor activities.

The Montana Heritage Center evokes our vast and varied landscapes. The design of the addition echoes the cliffs of our mountain ranges. The landscaping conjures the prairies. River patterns in the floor underscore the importance of our waterways. Throughout the galleries the stories of how Montanans have interacted with the landscape are told in many ways.

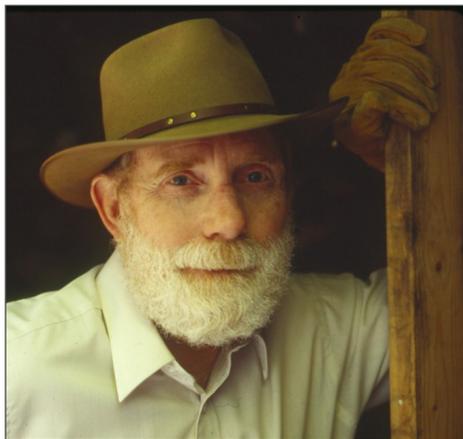
One special way we will feature the people and lands of Montana is through an art installation in the central commons. Hanging from the

ceiling in a swirl pattern, the mobile features images of Montana people, known and unknown, and Montana landscapes, iconic and unfamiliar. The photographs are both historical and contemporary, mingling the past with the present. The People and Lands of Montana art installation integrates our people with place and history.

The mobile also is a limited-opportunity fundraiser for the Montana Heritage Center, helping raise \$1 million in support of the project. Individuals or groups can sponsor one of 200 panels for \$5,000, which can be paid across three years. Sponsors will be recognized by name in the central commons of the Montana Heritage Center. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us at [mthsdevelopment@mt.gov](mailto:mthsdevelopment@mt.gov).

Recently, the Yellowstone History Museum in West Yellowstone let us know of its intent to jointly sponsor a panel in the mobile. We are so grateful for their support! The Montana Heritage Center is a project that will benefit all Montanans and all Montana communities by preserving and sharing the stories of our beautiful state. We hope that you will join us in completing that dream. ▼▲▼▲

“Outstanding” (cont. from p. 1)



historian, devoted his career to telling the stories of ordinary people and examining the ways western lands shaped their lives. His diverse works, which include 13 novels and three non-fiction books, challenged the mythologized West and framed it in the larger context of what it means to be an American.

In 2007, Doig was recognized with the Wallace Stegner Award for making a sustained contribution to the cultural identity of the American West. Doig died April 9, 2015, at age 76.

Historian Marcella Walter and her late husband, Dave, were close friends of Ivan Doig and his wife, Carol. Walter spoke on behalf of Carol, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

“Ivan gave us an honest, clear-eyed view of this place and those who inhabit it,” Walter said.

Akers, an Assiniboine woman, was Montana’s first Native legislator



and championed Indian self-determination during the 20th century. Following her legislative tenure, she was Montana’s first coordinator of Indian welfare. In addition to her political service in Helena, she was a fixture in Washington, D.C., for more than 60 years, fighting for passage of key federal legislation including the Indian Citizenship Act and the Indian Civil Rights Act.

She died June 5, 1986, having dedicated her life to securing opportunity for American Indians, especially members of the Fort Peck tribes.

Eddy Crowley, a great-nephew of Akers, recalled “Auntie Doll” as a woman of integrity who was not



MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg and Eddy Crowley, a great nephew of Dolly Smith Cusker Akers, stand near her plaque in the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans.

afraid to take on big issues.

“She was passionate about equality for everyone,” Crowley said. “She would have been honored, yet humbled, to accept this award.”

The gallery was established by the Montana State Legislature in 1979 to pay homage to Treasure State citizens who “made contributions of state or national significance to their selected fields while epitomizing the unique spirit and character that defines Montana.” The program is operated by the Montana Historical Society.

Ten inductees were chosen in 2016 for the gallery, but only two are initiated every biennium. Inductees are rotated into the gallery every two years when the legislature is in session; each is honored for an eight-year period.

“Russell” (cont. from p. 1)

of Russell Masterworks anywhere. We are proud of this, but we are particularly thrilled to advance our relationship with MTHS during their transformative project.”

Russell, who died in 1926, masterfully captured the heart and soul

of the American West through his work that includes oil paintings, watercolors, sculptures, and writing. Known internationally as the “original cowboy artist,” his work celebrates Indigenous culture, grand landscapes, and majestic wildlife.

Although renowned throughout the world, he spent his entire adult-

hood in Montana, with a home in Great Falls. His love of Montana and the life he observed shaped his art and personal philosophy for decades, as both an artist and a storyteller.

The new exhibit at the C.M. Russell Museum opened March 17.

# Former Trustee Chuck Johnson Dies

Charles S. “Chuck” Johnson, who reported on Montana politics for almost 50 years and was a Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees member from 2015 to 2021, passed away in early March at his home in Helena.

A memorial service was held at St. Peter’s Episcopal Cathedral for Johnson, 74, before burial in the Memorial Garden in Helena.

MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg said Johnson was a “thoughtful and committed member.”

“His incredible insights into Montana history were invaluable to the work of the Society,” she said. “Chuck will be missed as a trustee, as an historian, and as a friend.”

Johnson was born in Great Falls but raised from a young age in Helena. He

earned a degree in journalism from the University of Montana and quickly jumped into coverage of the 1972 constitutional convention. He was known as “a walking history book of Montana politics,” as well as a generous mentor to other reporters.

In 2022, Johnson received an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Montana State University. By that time, he had covered 22 Montana legislative sessions, seven governors, nine U.S. senators and 10 U.S. representatives, in addition to countless state legislators, elections, conventions and policies. He was believed to be the longest-serving statehouse reporter in Montana, according to the Helena Independent Record. 



## MTHS Board Members Appointed

Three Montanans were appointed to the MTHS Board of Trustees terms from Dec. 1, 2022, to July 1, 2027.

### Mary Helland

of Glasgow graduated from the University of Montana with degrees in journalism and creative writing. She has served on the Valley County Historical Society Board and administers the Valley County Museum. She also is an author and operates Mary’s Mercantile, which pays homage to the history of the people who lived in the region.



### Steve Lozar

of Polson is a member of the Salish, Kootenai and Assiniboine tribes, and has served on the board since



2005. He has a master’s degree from San Diego State University and taught anthropology at Salish Kootenai College in Pablo for 25 years.

### Bill Whitsitt

is the creator of the Montana Television Network news organization and holds a philosophy degree in public administration from George Washington University, where he also taught courses in public policy and federal institutions. He is the past chair of the Greater Montana Foundation.



### Candace Zion

of Winifred was appointed to the MTHS board in July 2022, and holds a master’s degree from



Arizona State University in public history and historic preservation. With years of experience serving on boards and dealing with local, state, and tribal governments, Zion is committed to documenting, preserving, and recording Montana history. Her term will run through July 1, 2024. 

### ABOUT US

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

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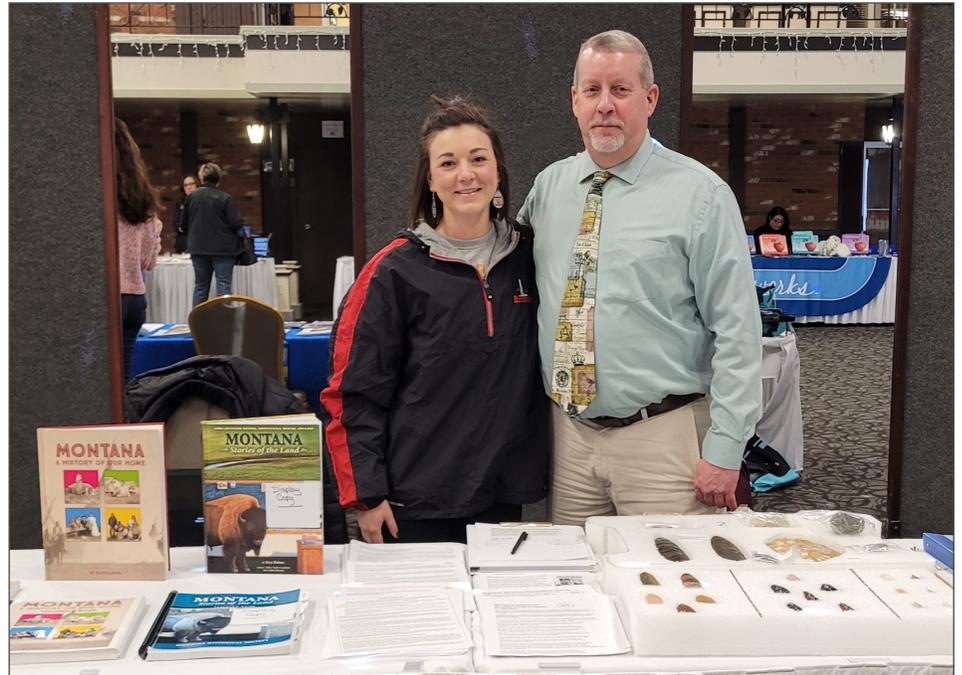
# MTHS Teacher Leader Shares History at Curriculum Fair

Teacher Leader in Montana History Ron Buck of Shelby took a day away from his fifth-grade students to represent the Montana Historical Society at the Golden Triangle Curriculum Consortium Vendor Fair.

The fair provides an opportunity for teachers and administrators in north-central Montana to learn about textbooks and other teaching tools that may benefit their students.

The Montana Historical Society established the Teacher Leader in Montana History program six years ago to enlist experienced, enthusiastic classroom teachers to help promote the teaching of Montana history, the MTHS curricular resources, and best practices in social studies education.

Currently, 15 dedicated Teacher Leaders are acting as MTHS ambassadors, providing professional development for their fellow teachers, and advocating with



*Teacher Leader in Montana History Ron Buck of Shelby and fellow Teacher Leader Hali Richmond of Sunburst at Buck's booth*

administrators to increase emphasis on social studies and Montana history.

Learn more at <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/ConferencesWorkshops/Teacher-Leaders>. ▼▼▼

## Public Programs Continue at Library

The Montana Historical Society's Outreach and Interpretation office has not allowed construction to interfere with its public programs despite the closure of the auditorium.

Instead, staff teamed up with the Lewis and Clark Public Library to offer programs twice a month on Thursday evenings. These programs are videotaped and made available on the MTHS YouTube channel.

The MTHS also plans to host a Black History Trolley Tour in Helena for Juneteenth National Freedom Day on June 17 and a garden party at the Original Governor's Mansion later in the summer. ▼▼▼

## Two Properties Moving Forward for National Register Listings

The Starr Block in Anaconda is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, while the Hillcrest Cemetery in Deer Lodge has been nominated for inclusion.

Hidden behind narrow wood boards and altered doors and windows of The Starr Block in Anaconda is the story of the most visible and substantial Black-owned business in town in the early 1900s.

Lee Pleasant Driver was a graduate of Fisk University — historically one of the top Black universities — and a 25th Infantry veteran who was discharged as a corporal at Fort Missoula in 1891. He operated a saloon in Missoula for a year before settling

in Anaconda as a well-educated and worldly 30-year-old man.

His bar and café changed locations a few times, but it was the most visible and well-known Black-owned business in Anaconda, serving a wide range of customers for 20 years. The final move in 1909 brought him to The Starr Block, which was individually [listed on Feb. 7 in the National Register of Historic Places](#) for being a cornerstone of the area's Black community.

“It served African American and other customers and functioned as a focal point, and physical and institutional core, of the local Black community, an exemplar of Black

“Properties” (cont. on p. 6)

## “Properties” (cont. from p. 5)

achievement, and an autonomous space managed by, and supportive of, African American residents,” states the Historic Register’s nominating documents. “Driver’s Saloon and Café is significantly associated with the Montana African American community during the community’s peak years in the early 20th century, and it closed during Black Montana’s post-1910 contraction.”

The brick Starr Block was constructed in 1889. Lee, his wife Pearl, and their first son lived upstairs while they ran the business. After they closed their downtown bar and café business, the Driver family homesteaded on 275 acres near Opportunity. They raised seven children who became prominent members of Montana’s Black community, and the family continues to be an integral part of the Treasure State.

“Lee Pleasant Driver’s Saloon and Café in Anaconda stands as one of the few extant African American commer-

cial property types in Montana,” the nomination form states. “The presence of these historic buildings easily helps communicate the Driver’s Saloon & Café’s historic setting, along with feeling and association. Mr. Driver would today undoubtedly recognize the Starr Block as his former place of business indicating the sufficient retention of feeling and association. Former patrons of the business would also readily identify the building as both a place to gather and as a Black-owned business.”

The 49-acre Hillcrest Cemetery near Deer Lodge sits in the shadow of Mount Powell, with more than 4,600 graves dating from 1870 to the present. It represents the final resting place of many prominent Montana pioneers and mirrors major events that impacted the Deer Lodge community, Montana Territory, and the state.

“The cemetery is one of Montana’s oldest existing, active cemeteries, created when city planners realized

encroaching development would negatively impact and limit the city’s first urban burial grounds,” historian Ellen Baumler wrote in the National Register’s nominating paperwork. “Contributing sites within the Hillcrest Cemetery include the highly visible gravesite of copper king William A. Clark’s two children, a section devoted to the Montana State Prison, and 24 tombstones of Japanese residents, most associated with the Northern Pacific railyards in Deer Lodge.”

Baumler noted that the cemetery is significant based on religion, its social history, and as a record of exploration/settlement.

“Hillcrest Cemetery mirrors events that impacted the Deer Lodge community and Montana,” Baumler wrote. “Hillcrest represents the main burial ground for Montana’s earliest pioneers from far-flung mining camps” along with prominent pioneers who helped lay the foundation of the state of Montana. ▼▼▼

## MTHS Documents Black Lives in Montana

The historic ebb and flow of Montana’s Black population is laid out in a new [Black Montana’s Heritage Places Multiple Property Document](#).

The 258-page cover document provides an all-encompassing background on the Black experience in Montana. It allows historians nominating a property to the National Register of Historic Places to only focus on the place itself, without the need to re-present information found in the cover document.

“The cover sheet of every NR nomination has a line that asks if the nomination is associated with an MPD,” said John Boughton, who shepherds Montana’s nominations through the federal process. “If a nomination is associated with an

MPD, the name of the MPD is provided on that line, which then allows the reader of the nomination to know that additional history related to the nomination can be found in the MPD.

“In essence, it removes the need for a lot of duplicate paperwork.”

The MPD maps Black Montana from the early 19th century into the 1970s and was prepared by Delia Hagen of Missoula in conjunction with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Montana Historical Society. The National Council on Public History announced that Hagen will receive its 2023 Individual Excellence in Consulting Award for her book-length National Register documentation, *Black Montana’s Heritage Places*.

“It’s mapping of Black lives, of Black presence and places, shows that African Americans are an integral and prominent part of Montana history, and have been so across both space and time,” Hagen wrote in the report. “It reveals how, in crucial ways, Montana is a fundamentally Black place. By the same token, Montana history is a significant component of African American history.”

She notes that Montana’s Black past encompasses all of the state’s major cities and every county. Mapping Black Montana also documents the context of White supremacy and structural racism, as well as the African American community’s multitudinous struggles against them.

“Black Lives” (cont. on p. 7)



## New Employees

### Jenni Carr

Jenni Carr is the new membership coordinator. Carr hails from Becker County, Minnesota, but spent summers and vacations at her grandparents' home in Stevensville.



Her grandmother introduced Carr to her love of history, starting with her first trip to the Garnet, Montana, ghost town when she was 8 years old.

Carr dreamed of writing historical fiction, but instead got into the administrative field to make a living while traveling the country (and Europe) to get her history fix.

She moved to Helena in 2010, and today shares her history adventures with her two children, ages 4 and 5.

"The past 12 years in Montana have

been an absolute whirlwind, and I am so excited to have found my dream job as a membership coordinator for the Montana Historical Society," Carr said. "I'm looking forward to all the adventures still to be had!"

### Cody Ewert

Cody Ewert is the new associate editor for the Publications program.

Ewert grew up near Power, Montana, a small community north of Great Falls. After graduating from high school, he moved to Missoula, where he received bachelor's and master's degrees in history at the University of Montana.

After earning a doctorate from New York University in 2018, he took



a job as associate editor at the South Dakota State Historical Society. There, he edited a wide range of books on the history of the northern Plains and, beginning in summer 2021, served as managing editor of the quarterly journal *South Dakota History*.

Ewert has also written articles for scholarly journals, including *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, and in April 2022 published a book based on his doctoral research with Johns Hopkins University Press.

He returned to Montana last spring after his wife, Heather Mulliner, took a position as an archivist at Montana State University. He is thrilled to be back in the state and, in addition to exploring the region's history, enjoys spending time outdoors and taking trips to visit friends and family.



## Deb Mitchell Retires

In 2000, Deb Mitchell applied for a tour guide position at the Montana Historical Society because she feared public speaking and wanted to challenge herself.

She excelled in the position, discovering she loved sharing Montana's rich history with visitors. Mitchell became the lead tour guide, then tour program coordinator and program specialist. She helped the Museum's Education department grow into the Outreach and Interpretation Program.

In addition to overseeing the tour

program, Mitchell spearheaded a number of exciting and innovative initiatives, including a Museum-School Partnership program that linked county museums with local schools to expand the reach of Indian Education for All. She also introduced innumerable teachers to Montana history resources and effective educational strategies, wrote lesson plans, planned workshops, advised on museum exhibits, recruited speakers, organized Archaeology Day and much more.

We will miss her more than we can say and wish her well on her next adventure. 



### "Black Lives" (cont. from p. 6)

The document can be found online at [https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/docs/MPDs/MT\\_Black](https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/docs/MPDs/MT_Black)

[MontanasHeritagePlacesMPD.pdf](#).

Montana has almost 50 other Multiple Property Documents, including those related to airway beacons, bridges, fire lookouts, and

post-World War II architecture. They can be found at <https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/index1>. 



# MONTANA

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### Big Sky~Big History

## INSIDE

- ▼ MTHS Loans Russell Paintings to CMR Museum **1**
- ▼ Two Inducted into Gallery of Outstanding Montanans **1**
- ▼ The People and the Lands of Montana **2**
- ▼ Former Trustee Chuck Johnson Dies **4**
- ▼ MTHS Board Members Appointed **4**
- ▼ MTHS Teacher Leader Shares History at Curriculum Fair **5**
- ▼ Two Properties Moving Forward for National Register Listings **5**
- ▼ Public Programs Continue **5**
- ▼ MTHS Documents Black Lives in Montana **6**
- ▼ New Employees **7**
- ▼ Deb Mitchell Retires **7**

## MTHS Museum Store

As “mud season” arrives in Montana, it’s a good time to wrap up in a Pendleton blanket and hunker down with new books from the Montana Historical Society Museum Store!

“Cowboy in a Corporate World” author Ray Marxer managed the 240,000-acre Matador Cattle Company ranch, owned by Koch Industries for 21 years. What happened in 2011, as he approached the finish line of a stellar career, is staggering.

Store hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursday. We’re always open for online shopping at [app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore](http://app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore), or simply scan the QR code with your Smart Phone to link directly to the store.

