

Exciting Changes to Your Membership: New Levels & Names Unveiled!



In anticipation of our move into the Montana Heritage Center this fall, the Montana Historical Society is making some exciting changes to the membership program. Input from a recent patron survey helped MTHS staff update the membership program to meet the wants and needs of our closest supporters – you!

We’ve dug deep (pun intended) to rename member levels – Copper, Garnet, Sapphire, Silver, and Gold – after those precious minerals found naturally in Montana.

The names may have changed, but your basic member benefits haven’t. Members will continue to receive four issues of *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, 15 percent off eligible items at the Museum Store, an MTHS calendar as our gift, personalized membership cards, the SocietyStar quarterly newsletter, discounts at affiliated Time Travelers museums, and priority registration on ticketed events.

In addition, upper level members will receive brand-new benefits in the form of gallery and exhibit pre-opening events, special “member only” events, free curated tours

of the new Montana Homeland Gallery, the Charles M. Russell Gallery, the Changing Gallery, or the Original Governor’s Mansion, member names listed in *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, one MTHS press book annually, curated “behind the scenes tours” of collections, and discounts on room and space rentals.

Over the next several months, we will be implementing the new membership levels with updated renewal forms, membership cards, and swag for our members. Be on the lookout for upcoming communication from MTHS as we prepare for our grand opening this autumn. We’re so excited and hope you’ll come along on the adventure! Learn more at mths.mt.gov/Membership. ▼▼▼

Crow Indian Traditionalist/Healer and Irrigation Specialist Inducted into Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

Pretty Shield, an Apsáalooke (Crow) medicine woman, and I. D. O’Donnell, an agricultural leader and irrigation advocate, were inducted into the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans in the State Capitol on Thursday, Mar. 6.

Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras, Montana Historical Society director Molly Kruckenberg, and friends and family spoke at the

ceremonies that took place in the Capitol Rotunda.

The State Legislature created the gallery in 1979 “to pay homage to citizens of the Treasure State who have made contributions of state or national significance to their selected fields while epitomizing the unique spirit and character that defines Montana.”

Ignatius Daniell O’Donnell

(1860-1948) dedicated much of his life to helping farmers modernize and improve their operations. He popularized such crops as alfalfa and sugar beets and helped established efficient methods of irrigation and dryland reclamation on a national scale.

Pretty Shield (1856-1944) worked

“Montanans” (cont. on p. 5)

A Milestone



In early February, MTHS reached a milestone in the Montana Heritage Center project.

Over the past several months, we have been receiving tantalizing images of parts of the Montana Homeland exhibit under construction: a view of a case being built one week, an interactive media piece the next. But now the exhibit is being installed in the gallery!

It's exciting to see the concepts we began discussing nearly five years ago becoming a reality. If you walked into the gallery today, you would see a 1920s tractor and a 1950s car along with a mine headframe and the timbers for a powwow arbor. These are the backbone of an exhibit that will incorporate our history into the landscape and invite visitors to explore our past.

Creating an exhibit is an involved process. Content outlines, artifact selection, and case design are just a few of the hundreds of decisions that are made as an exhibit is taken from concept to installation. MTHS's staff, led by our curators but also including librarians, archivists, and educators, have put in tens of thousands of hours to create stunning exhibits in the Montana Heritage Center.

And their time is well spent. When we open late this fall, visitors will be immersed in Charlie Russell's paintings. They will experience work in an underground mine and explore a winter count. They will step into a homestead claim shack

and hear first person voices speaking about their experiences. And they will, of course, explore Montana's history through the artifacts that tell these many stories.

We are excited to share with you here some images of the exhibit installation. Enjoy! And plan to join us this fall to explore our exhibits in person. 



Employees from Cinnabar, the exhibit fabrication company contracted for the Montana Heritage Center, move a 1950s-replica car into place in the Montana Modernizes zone of the Montana Homeland Gallery.



Construction of the Montana Homeland Gallery is in full swing. Here you can see the framing around the steel outline of a headframe that will soon feature an immersive underground mining experience.



A Cinnabar crew member levels the poles that form an arbor in the Sovereign Nations zone of the Montana Homeland Gallery.

Free Tours of the Capitol Offered During Legislative Session

Building on the success of summer tours at the “People’s House,” the Montana Historical Society has been offering free Capitol tours during the 69th Legislative Session in Helena.

The free, one-hour tours meet on the first floor of the Montana Capitol at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday and will continue through the end of session.

“Seeing our citizen legislature in action is a very special opportunity,” said MTHS Museum education officer Darby Bramble.

While everyone is welcome to explore the Capitol and observe the legislature on their own, Bramble explained that MTHS tour guides enhance the experience by providing insight on the history, art, and architecture of the building, while offering an introduction to the political process.

“Our tour participants have a front row seat to history being made,” she said.

Since January 2025, MTHS guides have provided tours for hundreds of people and school groups from across the state. They move their groups expertly through the bustle of the Capitol, which can be intimidating on your own. The guides work with Capitol staff and navigate tour participants through the highpoints of the building and the 90-day legislative session.

“If you’ve never been to the Capitol during the legislative session, our Capitol tours are the perfect introduction,” Bramble explained.

Tours are open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and do not require a reservation, but they are limited to 20 people and will be scheduled around staff availability. Participants must call or email at least one week ahead of time to arrange the tour.

For people looking for tours or school field trips outside of the daily hours, the Montana Historical Society (MTHS) has staff available to offer tours on request.

For more details about MTHS Capitol tours, visit mths.mt.gov/education/Tours. 🟡🟢🔴



Visitors learn about the Montana State Capitol during a tour led by MTHS guide Brian Baldwin.



8th-grade students from Sacajawea Middle School in Bozeman visit the “People’s House” during a February field trip

National History Day in Montana Sees a Bump in Student Participation

“I am happy my teacher challenged me in doing something different and building up my research and writing skills.”—Takoa Old Person, 12th Grade

National History Day in Montana provides students grades 6-12 the opportunity to conduct historical research projects and to share their work in regional, state, and national competitions. The Montana Historical Society (MTHS) and Montana State University (MSU) collaborate to make each year’s event special and educational.

This spring, 162 students competed in regional competitions in Helena, Kalispell, and Miles City. Students and their teachers traveled from Bigfork, Frazer, Wolf Point, Harlowton, Lolo, Potomac, Stevensville, Superior, and Victor. Participation increased 82 percent over last year, which was the first time in several years that Montana students could participate in this nationwide program. That was because, prior to 2024, there lacked a permanent organization to spearhead the project. Now that MSU and MTHS are collaborating, participation has flourished.

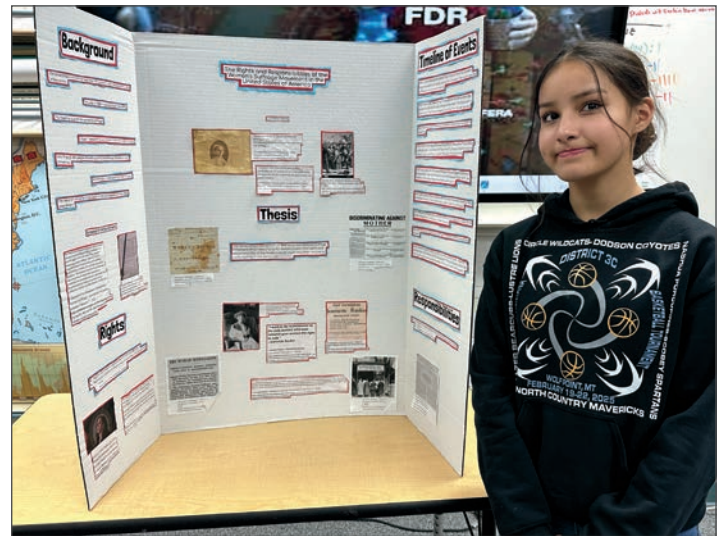
National History Day requires students to conduct primary and secondary source research, analyze and interpret their sources, and draw conclusions about their topics’

significance in history. They then present their work as a paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, or website.

Although students can choose to research any topic they like, nearly one-third of this year’s projects focus on Montana or Indigenous history, including homesteading, boarding schools, the 1897 Butte Chinese boycott, Elouise Cobell, the Bonus Army, the founding of Rocky Boy’s Reservation, Jeannette Rankin, the Marias (Bear Creek) Massacre, the 1904 Fort Shaw women’s basketball team, the Battle of the Little Big Horn/Greasy Grass, the 1917 Butte miners’ strike, and Montana’s World War II conscientious objector camps.

During the month of March, students are revising their projects based on their judges’ feedback to compete at the state competition at Montana State University in Bozeman on April 12. The top two finalists in each category will earn a spot at the national competition in College Park, Maryland in mid-June. This year, the state competition welcomes a special guest, National

“National History Day”
(cont. on p. 5)



Mariah Beston, 9th-grader at Frazer Public School, with her first-place Senior Individual Exhibit Board highlighting the women’s suffrage movement in the United States. According to Mariah, “National History rocks!”

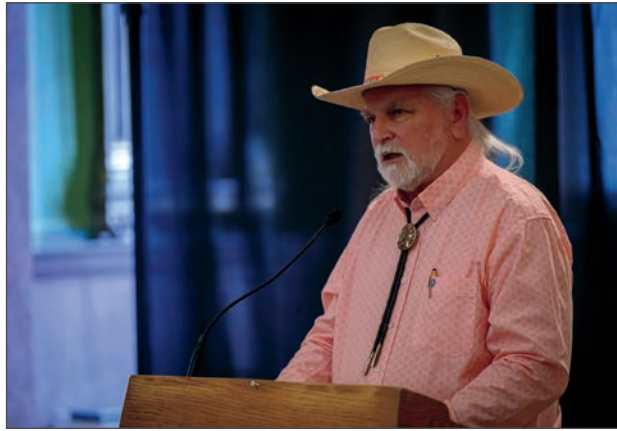


Judge at the Northern Regional in Kalispell reviewing a board from Bigfork High School

“Montanans” (cont. from p. 1)



Pretty Shield. PHOTO BY NORMA LINDERMAN WALLER, COURTESY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



William Snell Jr. speaks in honor of his great-grandmother, Pretty Shield. PHOTO BY RENNAN RIEKE, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

tirelessly to promote her people’s culture and keep it alive in succeeding generations. Raised traditionally, she taught Apsáalooke culture, knowledge, skills, and values to her children, grandchildren, and other members of the Crow Nation.

Panels with photographs and biographical information about O’Donnell and Pretty Shield were added to those currently on display in the gallery, which lines the hall that connects the Secretary of State’s office to the rotunda. ▼▼▼



I. D. O’Donnell, COURTESY BILLINGS GAZETTE.



Descendants of I. D. O’Donnell pose with the panel honoring their ancestor. PHOTO BY RENNAN RIEKE, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABOUT US

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

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“National History Day” (cont. from p. 4)

History Day’s executive director, Dr. Cathy Gorn.

“I am thrilled that History Day in Montana is back on the National History Day map!” said Gorn. “We are so grateful to the Montana Historical Society and Montana State University

for sponsoring the program and bringing excellence to history education for students and teachers in Montana. Of course, I must congratulate Melissa Hibbard and Hailey Hancock for their dedicated leadership in bringing this event back to life. I can’t wait to join everyone at the state contest in

April and congratulate all!” National History Day relies on teams of volunteer judges to provide student feedback and select winning projects. This year’s regional judge pool included MTHS staff, members, and volunteers, college professors, current and retired teachers, graduate students, pre-service teachers from

Carroll College, and other community members and history enthusiasts.

If you are interested in judging at the state competition in Bozeman, please sign up at www.nationalhistorydaymt.org. For all other questions related to History Day, email nationalhistorydaymt@gmail.com. ▼▼▼

Postcard Digitization Underway



A postcard showing downtown Billings, circa 1912-1917 (PC 001 BILL-st.48a)

The MTHS Photograph Archives cares for a vast collection of historical postcards – an essential tool for researching 20th-century Montana culture and life.

“The standard format postcard came into being in 1907, and they quickly caught on with the American public,” said Jeff Malcomson, the Photograph Archives manager. “They were the precursors to our modern-day email and text messages.”

The Montana Places Photomechanical Postcard Collection consists of postcards made with a mechanized, high-volume printing process where the image is usually based on an original photograph. The collection includes over 20,000 postcards dating mostly from 1907 to the 1960s. Organized by place, the postcards document the natural landmarks and built environments of Montana’s cities, towns, rural areas, and landscapes. Many prominent commercial and public buildings are represented, including business blocks, schools, courthouses, and churches. Mining and industrial sites, commercial and

residential street scenes, and overviews of cities and towns are also depicted. A large selection of tourist attractions are featured as well – Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, the Beartooth Highway, Gallatin Canyon, and major rivers such as the Bitterroot, Clark Fork, Flathead, Missouri, and Yellowstone.

Sometimes the message on the back is of more interest than the image on the front. An example of a memorable, and heartbreaking, postcard in the collection is one sent Oct. 29, 1959, from a mother, Esther Anderson, from Wilsall, Montana, to her son, Marvin, in college in South Dakota. She writes, “Dear Son, We’re on the way to Texas. Uncle Bill was killed in a car wreck this morning so we’re taking Grandma + Grandad down. Will write when I get a chance to write more. We’re o.k. Love, Mother.” The card, with a Billings postmark and a view of the Northern Hotel on the front, was likely sent while family members were preparing to fly out of Billings on their sorrowful journey south to Texas. Marvin would hear the

news of the tragic death of his uncle, William Vennes, via postcard.

Selective digitization of this enormous collection began in December 2024 and includes both the front and back (or verso) of the best and most representative postcards from the collection. These postcards are some of the most historically informative and visually interesting cards in the collection. However, due to the large size of the collection, we intend to accomplish digitization of only about 10 to 15 percent of the collection, or more than 2,000 postcards, by December 2025. While some of the postcards include handwritten messages that were sent through the mail, like the one from Mrs. Anderson, many remain unused for messages.

Several hundred postcards are already available on the Montana History Portal (www.mtmemory.org) under the collection title, Montana Places Photomechanical Postcard Collection, with hundreds being added each month throughout 2025. Library & Archives staff are working their way through the collection alphabetically by place name, so check back in on the digital collection as we go through Montana, from the Absaroka Range to Zurich! 🟡🟢🔴



A postcard back showing the message from “Mother” [Esther Anderson] to Marvin Anderson, Oct. 29, 1959 (PC 001 BILL-hm.76av).

Discover Montana: Locally Made Gifts & Treasures



The Montana Historical Society is proud to showcase a curated selection of Made in Montana products at our store, featuring talented local artists and skilled manufacturers who bring the spirit of the Big Sky Country to life through their craftsmanship, personal creativity, and vision.

Some of our recent offerings include handmade refillable journals from **Just My Type**. Located in Missoula, creator Donna Erickson upcycles old book covers into one-of-a-kind journals and sketchbooks. All of them are easily refilled with readily available inserts or her very own eclectic refills that offer a pop of texture and color.

We are now offering a variety of

beadwork from **Land of Beginnings** (a Little Shell company), **Ennie Reya** (Chippewa Cree), and **Standing Rattle** (Assiniboine & Sioux). Each piece showcases the artist's unique personality and background. Our beautiful selection of dreamcatchers are hand wrapped and no two are ever the same.

This is just a small sample of our Montana Made gifts. We encourage you to visit us in person at our temporary home located at 101 N. Last Chance Gulch in Downtown Helena. Items are also available online at app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/ or scan this easy QR code to take you right to the store's home page. 



New Employees

The Montana Historical Society is thrilled to welcome these new employees to our staff.

Facility Management: **Allison Leake**, Facilities & Event Coordinator

Allison develops, coordinates, and manages the Montana Heritage Center's event spaces, which will host both MTHS-organized programs as well as provide rental space for events with groups outside our organization. She has more than 15 years of experience working in events and hospitality.

Fiscal Office: **Stacey Hampson Martell**, Accountant 1

Stacey processes accounts payable and receivable documents, takes calls for payments of invoices from multiple departments, and performs various other accounting duties. She has 20 years of experience in accounting and bookkeeping, some

of which included payroll; she also has an additional 10 years of experience in human resources and benefits administration.

Human Resources: **Beth Strandberg**, HR Generalist 2

Beth is a certified classifier with the State of Montana. She holds certifications in Professional Human Resources (PHR), Certified Compensation Specialist (CCP), and Certified Grant Writer (CGW) and has her designation of SHRM-CP. Beth comes to MTHS with 29 years of state HR experience.

IT Program: **Bennet Aube**, Audio Visual Specialist and IT System Support


Bennet specializes in audio visual (AV) support and will be responsible for technology in the Montana Heritage Center's event center, classrooms, and meeting rooms, as well as support special events. He will

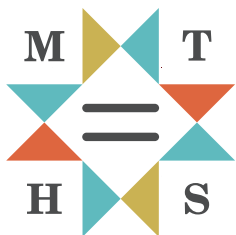
also provide video conferencing, web application, and general information technology support to MTHS staff.

Museum Store: **Jay Tussing**, Store Associate

Jay greets guests with a smiling face and helps guide them to personalized selections. Jay and his wife relocated to Helena in 2024 from Lincoln, Nebraska, where he worked for the City of Lincoln Golf Program for over 40 years, finishing his career as the golf course superintendent.

Security: **Myles Chandler**, Security Guard

Myles' duties include safeguarding the museum's artifacts, responding to emergencies, and operating security cameras along with providing visitors information regarding the Montana Historical Society. He has 27 months experience in corrections and 18-plus years of experience in fine carpentry. 



MONTANA

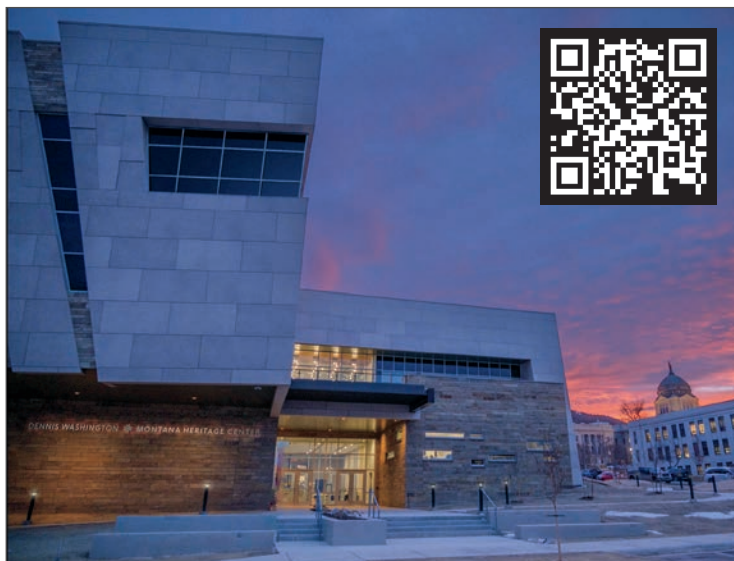
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Big Sky~Big History

INSIDE

- ▼ Exciting Changes to Membership **1**
- ▼ Gallery of Outstanding Montanans **1**
- ▼ Directors Corner: A Milestone **2**
- ▼ Free Tours of the Capitol **3**
- ▼ National History Day in Montana **4**
- ▼ Post Card Digitization Underway **6**
- ▼ Discover Montana: Locally Made Gifts & Treasures **7**
- ▼ New Employees **7**



Plans are still on track to open the Montana Heritage Center this autumn. You can support our final push to open our doors by visiting mths.mt.gov/Donate. Watch the video by scanning the QR code with your phone camera.

Thanks to our
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