

**To: Montana Legislative Services Division**  
**Fm: Bruce Whittenberg, Director**  
**Re: BIENNIAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE**

**August 29, 2014**

The Montana Historical Society, chartered in 1865 by the Montana Territorial Legislature, continues to pursue with passion the mission of preserving Montana's past and cultural heritage through the collection and preservation of art, artifacts and documents while educating Montanans and visitors through our programming, publications, Research Center, online resources and of course, *Montana's Museum*.

### **Key Themes**

#### **150 Years of your Montana Historical Society**

On February 2, 1865, the Historical Society of Montana was created by the Territorial Legislature and signed into existence by Territorial Governor Sidney Edgerton. The Montana Historical Society has been collecting, preserving and providing access to collection for 150 years. In recognition of this milestone, the MHS has a robust schedule of public programs, publications, exhibits and celebrations, culminating with a major event in June, 2015.

#### **To know where you are going, you have to know where you've been.**

The work of the MHS is not just about preserving history, it's about helping shape our future, encouraging civic engagement and citizenship through appreciation of our history.

#### **A Vital Educational Institution**

First and foremost, the Montana Historical Society is an educational institution. The archives, collections and publications are accessible to all for purposes of education, research, exploration, genealogy or enjoyment. Our work in classrooms and public forums throughout Montana is expansive.

#### **Increased Engagement**

A key to our success will be to continually strive to engage more and more Montanans and visitors in our work. More audiences, more access to collections, more engagement, more appreciation for our rich, fascinating history.

### **Strategic Issues 2013-2014**

#### **Outreach to All of Montana**

- The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Montana History Conference was held in Sidney, MT, September, 2013.
- Over 900 teachers are engaged through the MHS Listserv, History Footlocker program and teacher workshops and classroom assistance.

- The “Richest Hills” program, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, involved 80 teachers from Montana and across the nation in a week-long exploration of Montana’s rich mining history, including visits to Bannack, Virginia City, Butte and Helena.
- The Montana history textbook, *Montana, Stories of the Land*, has been distributed in every county in Montana, over 12, 000 copies now in classrooms.
- The MHS works closely with the Office of Public Instruction in implementing the “Indian Education for All” program.
- Dozens of free public programs are provided at the MHS and through our Outreach and Interpretation program across the state.

### **Marketing and Development**

- We have adopted an integrated approach to marketing and development. We don’t have the luxury of separating the functions with additional staff. By working hard on marketing strategies, we build the brand and the visibility for all fund-raising and audience-building endeavors. We are also very cognizant of the risk of confusing our constituents by barraging them with a variety of messages. Hence, our institutional advancement approach to marketing. A Marketing and Development Office has been established with reassignment of existing positions.
- Systems and structure have been put in place to provide fund-raising and membership development capabilities to support MHS acquisitions, growth and capital needs, without adding additional staff, and with involvement of MHS Trustees.

### **Publications and Technology, from Desktop to Digital**

- Expanding publications to eBooks, over 20 books now available electronically. E-publishing supplements our audience for publications, but does not replace print publishing.
- Montana The Magazine of Western History, published continuously since 1951, is being indexed for online access and searchability.
- *Montana’s Charlie Russell, Art in the Collection of the Montana Historical Society*, is released in November, 2014.
- We are using social media widely to expand the reach of our content. We are currently on eight social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Thanks to a private donation we have been able to build video programming capability in our Craney Studio and have over 100 videos available on YouTube through montanahistoricalsociety.org, and broadcast statewide on TVMT.

### **Security and Preservation of Art, Artifacts and Archives**

- Comprehensive Security Audit completed, plans are being implemented to address each of the critical items and assure security protocols are as sound as possible, working closely with General Services Division, Capital Security and Risk Management in the Department of Administration. The 2013 Legislature provided funding for a full-time Chief of Security.
- Even as all of our collection storage facilities, the MHS building, Scriver Center and “Highway Storage” are near capacity, we continue to work to improve conditions for the priceless collections. We have added security features at the Scriver Center, reorganized collections in all locations and continue the lengthy task of cataloging the enormous museum collection.
- Completed a project to improve and expand the storage capacity of archival collections. With funding from the 2013 Legislature, supplemented with private funds, the Archives storage facility was renovated, replacing sub-par shelving with a state-of-the-art compact storage system. The new shelving provides better storage conditions for our collections as well as increasing capacity for storage of State records and other archival materials.

### Montana Historical Society Renovation and The Montana Heritage Center

- The process of planning for expansion of the Montana Historical Society began before the 2005 session. During that session, the Legislature approved \$37.5 mil in authority and authorized \$7.5 mil in bonds for the project. The plans have been drafted and approved and we are following the Action Plan presented to the Governor and supported by the Board at our January 19, 2012 meeting.

### Significant Acquisitions

- The *Tom Mulvaney Historic Post Card Collection* acquisition was completed in 2013.
- Fund-raising is in progress for the *Bud Lake and Randy Brewer Historic Crow Photograph Collection*, acquisition expected to be completed in 2014.
- An important oil painting, ca. 1846, by Father Joset, depicting Fort Lewis during the fur trade era, near Fort Benton.
- Significant archival collections donated from the personal collection of Thomas Minckler, Billings, including records of the Northwestern Overland Mail Company (1880-1902), the John B. Herford papers (1862-1952) and the Charles F. Bates research collection on General George Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The Bates research collection is of particular note for its letters to Bates from Elizabeth Custer.
- Oil paintings by Ralph DeCamp, *Old Unionville Road to Red Mountain Above Helena*, and *Trick Falls*.
- J.K. Ralston mural, *Return of the Raiders*, 1953, donated by the Swindlehurst family, Livingston.
- A collection of sketches by Edgar S. Paxson from the Spanish American War.
- Four portraits by Joseph Scheurele of Montana Native Americans from the early 1900s. Portraits of *Horn*, *Mountain Sheep*, *White Bear*, and *Rocky Boy*.
- Original models by Charles M. Russell, *Lone Buffalo* and *King of the Glaciers*.
- Oil painting portrait of Montana broadcasting pioneer, Ed Craney, donated by Joseph Sample, Billings.
- Twenty Assiniboine and Sioux objects from the Fort Peck Reservation dating from about 1900.
- Great Northern Railway mail delivery tricycle used in Glacier National Park.
- Silver service originally belonging to Territorial Governor Preston Leslie. His granddaughter, Mary Ford, became the state's first lady in 1940 when her husband, Sam Ford was elected governor. She frequently used this service during official functions at the Original Governors' Mansion.
- Personal items originally belonging to Teddy Blue Abbott, enamel sugar bowl, shaving cup, clothes brush, comb.
- A collection of personal papers of Montana U.S. Representative Jeannette Rankin and her brother, rancher, politician and businessman Wellington Rankin.
- Personal and professional papers and photographs of Stan Lynde, Helena resident, cartoonist, and writer.
- Photographs and papers of Miles City photography R.C. Morrison, from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.
- Several publications related to Native American history, including:
  - Two books by C.C. Uhlenbeck, *An English-Blackfoot Vocabulary Based on Material from the Southern Peigans* (1930) and *A Concise Blackfoot Grammar Based on Materials from the Southern Peigans* (1938).
  - *Civilization Among the Sioux Indians* by Herbert Welsh (1893).
- Two early publications on tourism in Yellowstone National Park: *Six Weeks on Horseback through Yellowstone Park* by Louise Elliott (1913) and *6,000 Miles Through Wonderland: Being a Description of the Marvelous Region Traversed by the Northern Pacific Railroad* by Olin D. Wheeler (1893).

The Montana Historical Society is strong and growing. The opportunities that lie ahead of us are significant. On behalf of the MHS Board of Trustees and our fine staff, we thank you for your support.



Bruce Whittenberg  
Director  
Montana Historical Society