

*2017 Montana Historic Preservation Award
for Outstanding Historic Preservation Advocacy to
Teslow Preservation Group*

**Presented by Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Officer
2017 Preservation Award Ceremony
Myrna Loy Center, Helena
January 20, 2017**

A 2017 award for Outstanding Historic Preservation Advocacy goes out to the Teslow Preservation Group of Livingston. Here accepting the award on behalf of the Group are Ron and Debbie Nemetz and Melanie Nasham.

Historic grain elevators tower over small-town skylines all across Montana. For decades these sentinels of the prairies functioned as the industrial centers of local agricultural economies. While a few still operate - storing crops for transfer to railroad cars - the vast majority stand unused and falling into disrepair. One of these landmarks, the Teslow grain elevator, stands 73 feet high in Livingston, Montana. Adjacent to the city's remarkable commercial historic district, the elevator has stood sentinel over the railroad yards since 1906.

In November 2015, a strong windstorm blew off the elevator's top tier, leaving it exposed and vulnerable. Faced with the high cost of repairs, the owner sold it to

local real estate developer Chris Salacinski, who assessed the building and concluded in January 2016 the need to dismantle it. It appeared that Livingston's iconic elevator would topple, meeting the same fate as those in Columbus, Laurel, and Wilsall. However, as work crews prepared the building for demolition, several Livingston residents began to seek out alternatives.

Understanding the elevator's historic significance, a small group of locals (Audrey Hall, Barclay Rogers, Debi Nemetz, Ron Nemetz, Melanie Nasham, and Seonaid ["SHON-A"] Campbell) organized the "Save the Teslow" campaign and took quick action. In a matter of only days, they called a well-attended public meeting, secured funding, entered into a purchase agreement with the owner, and halted demolition. Recognizing the group's determination and purpose, Salacinski was willing to transfer ownership at cost, and immediately, the hard-working crews with Dick Anderson Construction who had been hired to demolish the building began instead to stabilize it. Working through the statewide non-profit Montana Preservation Alliance, the local grassroots "Save the Teslow" campaign raised well over \$60,000.

Over the next several months, they secured more funding both from private individuals and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, establishing

themselves as the non-profit Teslow Preservation Group, LLC. Most recently they secured AE Dynamics to prepare the plans to restore the elevator and soon the “high house” and roof will be re-installed. Once fully stabilized, the work of establishing the building’s future use will begin.

Saving the Teslow was the result of a number of factors: the tireless efforts of a group of remarkable local citizens; the willingness of the owners and leaseholders to work with them towards preservation; the generosity of the community; the expertise of construction crews, lawyers, architects, and preservationists; and underlying it all the willingness to understand the importance of our historic built environment.

Laurie Bishop, who represents House District 60, which includes Livingston, recently contacted our office upon hearing the news that the Teslow Preservation Group is to receive an award for their advocacy in saving the building. Ms. Bishop wished to pass along her thoughts as follows:

"As the MT House Representative of the Teslow's home district, I regret that I can't join in the celebration today. I had a front row seat to the swift, passionate work of this dedicated group of community members and am pleased to see them getting such well-deserved recognition. You've made L-town proud!"

It is our great pleasure to bestow the Teslow Preservation Group with a 2017 Montana Historic Preservation Award for Outstanding Historic Preservation Advocacy.