

SB3 Report 2024

State Agency Biennial Report on State Owned Heritage Properties

Montana Heritage Commission



Montana's Oldest Standing Territorial Capital Building, Stonewall Hall , Montana State Legislature
Circa 1860's



Governor Gianforte at beginning of preservation
ribbon cutting ceremony April-2023



Stonewall Hall, preservation in process 1-2024

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Prepared For: State Preservation Review Board and Montana State Historic Preservation Office



Cover Images

Stonewall Restoration Project

The past two years have been full of surprising developments. In 2022, the Montana Heritage Commission accepted donated of the Stonewall Hall property in Virginia City. With fundraising support from the Foundation for Montana History stabilization and restoration of this historic landmark has begun.

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Attachment A: FY2024 MHC Biennial Report and Financial Summary

Executive Summary

This report was prepared in response to SB3 State Agency Biennial Report requirements and previous feedback received from the state review board. Specific topics discussed in the report include:

- a. A list of the heritage properties managed by the agency.
- b. The status and condition of each heritage property.
- c. The stewardship efforts in which the agency has engaged to maintain each heritage property and the cost of those activities.
- d. A prioritized list of the maintenance and preservation needs for the properties.
- e. A record of the agencies' compliance with subsection MCA 22-3-424 (1) and (2)

Background:

In 1997, the 55th Montana Legislature approved the purchase of a large portion of Virginia City, all of nearby Nevada City and thousands of artifacts from the Bovey family. These historic town sites comprise 248 buildings and over 100 acres of land. The Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission (MHC, or more simply, the Commission) was created to manage these resources and promote the story of "the Nation's best-preserved example of Gold Rush-era architecture and history" and to reflect the changes and continuum of Montana's heritage.

Since 1997, the Montana Board of Land Commissioners has approved the acquisition of only two additional historic properties - Reeder's Alley and the Pioneer Cabin in Helena. Both properties were received through private donations in 2001 and 2006, respectively. **This report describes an exciting third acquisition. In 2022, the State Land Board accepted donation of the Stonewall Hall/Dudley Garage properties in Virginia City.**

The Montana legislature authorized the Commission to care for these heritage resources "in a manner that protects the properties and encourages economic independence" (MCA 22-3-1001). The Commission's statutory purpose remains acquiring and managing, on behalf of the state, properties that possess outstanding historical value, display exceptional qualities worth preserving, and are genuinely representative of the State's culture and history.

Over the past 26 years, the Commission has worked diligently to expand access and enjoyment of these historic resources, while minimizing the economic burden of their care and maintenance to the State of Montana. In this management role, the Commission can point to numerous "brick and mortar" projects as tangible accomplishments. These projects range from building maintenance and improvements, structural stabilization, site maintenance, artifact conservation, and the overall protection of this diverse and fragile collection. The Commission also serves as a resource for the public and

professionals interested in learning more about Montana history, building preservation, archaeology, conservation of artifacts, education, living history, and historic site management.

Historical Significance:

Virginia City was Montana’s Territorial Capital from 1865-1875. The size, scope, and quality of the site earned Virginia City designation as one of the first National Historic Landmarks in Montana (1961). The state-owned properties in Virginia City constitute some of the most historically significant properties within the community. Nevada City is an assemblage of historic buildings, some original to the site, others relocated from across Montana and Yellowstone National Park. Both communities operate as “open-air” museums that host dozens of seasonal businesses and educational events - providing a unique, immersive experience for visitors of all ages. Reeder’s Alley and Pioneer Cabin are the oldest remaining miner’s settlements in Helena. These historic sites are significant to Montana and national history as places of western settlement and the formation of Montana society.

Tourism and Business Development:

According to the Office of Tourism, Virginia and Nevada City are ranked as Montana’s number one state-owned tourism attractions. The average tourist count is over 1 million tourists from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year. Recognized as the 2nd largest Americana artifact site (next to the Smithsonian), both communities have been featured in the New York Times and numerous other national publications. Each year, the Commission sponsors over 100 dedicated volunteers to help research and interpret Montana’s early frontier years, and especially, the activities of the infamous Montana Vigilantes.

In support of this popular tourism experience, the Commission provides leases to over 42 different concessionaires, as well as running several of its own business operations. In 2017, an economic impact report compiled by the Northern Rocky Mountain Economic Development District indicated Virginia and Nevada City contribute \$74.4 million in economic impact to the state and directly, and indirectly, support the employment of over 1226 people. In-house data indicates this impact continues to grow – despite the lingering impact of Covid. The 2022-23 tourism seasons produced some of the highest attendance and revenue numbers since the creation of the Commission.

Over the Commission’s 26-year existence our management philosophy has evolved as a greater understanding of the resources under our care has emerged, and economic realities confronted. The scale and diversity of this collection creates many management opportunities and challenges. Accordingly, the Commission strives to achieve the delicate balance of respectful resource stewardship with public access and enjoyment, and economic self-sufficiency.

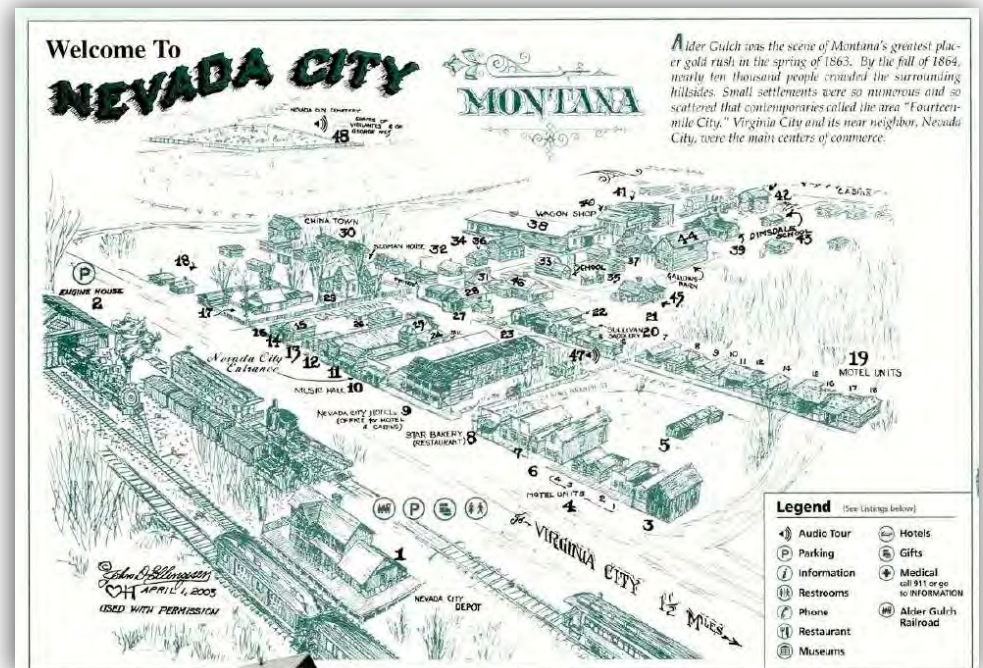
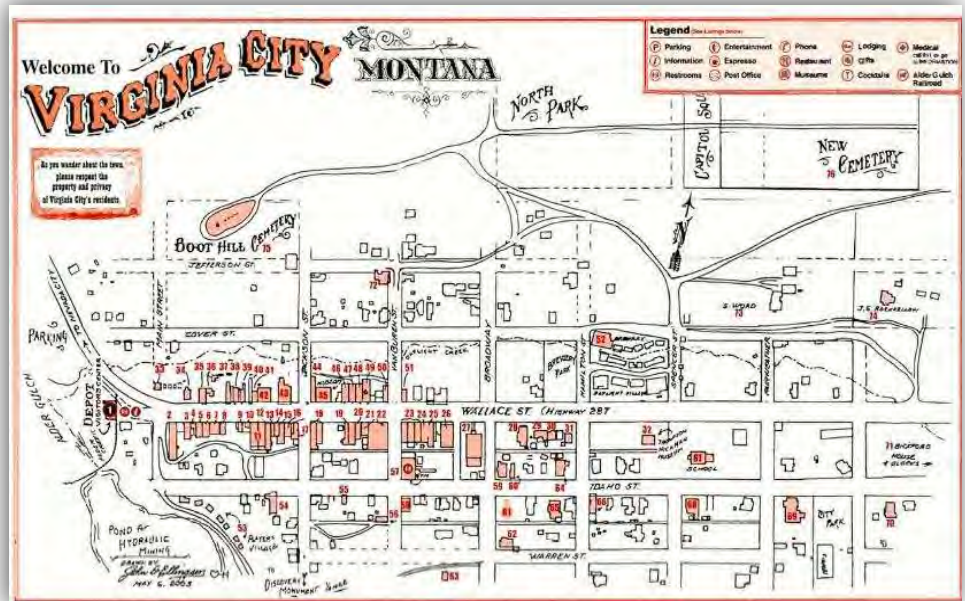
We respectfully submit this report of our stewardship practices for the past two years as evidence of that commitment.

Section 1 - Understanding the Resource

The Commission is responsible for a large and complex collection of historic resources comprised of buildings, structures and artifacts at three primary sites - Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley. Many of these 250+ buildings and structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing resources within the Virginia City National Historic Landmark District, or as individually listed or eligible resources in Nevada City and Reeder's Alley.

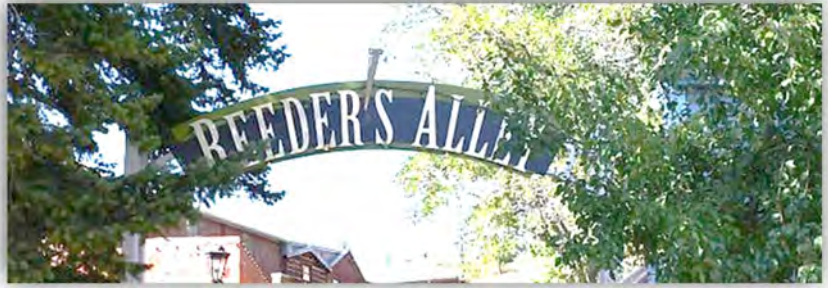
Refer to the following Summary of Heritage Properties for specific information regarding the Commission's heritage properties, including their condition, use, threat level, and National Register status.

For the sake of this report, the Commission wishes to clarify the difference between "heritage properties" (herein defined as cultural resources listed



Visitor Guides to the Cities

or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as individual or contributing historic resources) and the numerous properties owned and managed by the Commission that are not National Register listed or eligible, denoted within as “non-heritage properties”. In some cases, previous MHC SB3 reports inadvertently



combined the two resource types and reported all state-owned properties within Virginia City under the general heading of *heritage properties* - resulting in an inflated resource count.

To guide this analysis, the Commission relied on the 1976 National Register nomination for the Virginia City National Historic Landmark District, the subsequent 1990 Architectural, Historical, and Archaeological Inventory of the Virginia City, Montana (Dames & Moore Report), and individual nominations records for information. Upon closer scrutiny, it appears that of the 125+ heritage properties previously reported by the Commission for the three sites only 96 properties, ranging from outhouses to an Opera House, have been listed or determined eligible for the National Register. The remaining 30+ properties fall into the general category of ineligibility due lack of historical association with the site, for example the McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City Railroad Depot, and the Daylight Village and VC Players cabins. ***For clarification purposes, the summary table shows the 96 Heritage Properties (including the recent Stonewall Hall and Dudley Garage acquisition) with the HP prefix while other properties are identified as NHP, or Non-Heritage Properties. The Commission requests that the list of heritage properties under their administration be updated accordingly.***

Due to the need for further research, this list does not include the 116 non-heritage properties located in Nevada City. These properties have been determined by the Montana SHPO as ineligible for the National Register due to their age, relocated nature, and/or the general lack of historic integrity of the site. We anticipate many of these resources will become heritage properties as further time passes and they all reach the important 50-year age threshold generally required for National Register eligibility. Another important steppingstone to National Register



Nevada City streetscape



Nevada City living history volunteers

consideration is the creation of historic context statements allowing the significance of these Bovey-era resources to be better understood and appreciated. We support the compilation of this research, and are confident that as professional scholarship emerges, the significance of the Bovey family's preservation efforts in Virginia and Nevada City will be recognized within the larger national context of the early-20th century heritage tourism/town museum movement. In the meantime, we have our hands full caring for the 96 heritage properties already listed on the National Register.

Summary of Heritage Properties (2024 SB3 Report)

(HP = Heritage Property (National Register-listed) NHP = Non Heritage Property

RECON = Bovey Reconstruction MOVED = Bovey Relocated NEW = Not Original ALTERED = Heavily Modified NS = Not Surveyed, likely moved

Preservation and Maintenance Priorities = Heritage Properties in Threatened or Endangered Status

MHC Building #	Building Date	State-owned Heritage Property	Use	Status	Condition	Priority Preservation needs
HP001 –RECON	1864	Ford Bovey House	MHC rental	Watch	Fair	Drainage issues, exterior wood treatment, concrete re-pointing
NHP002-MOVED	1952	Ford Bovey Cabin	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Foundation assessment, oil exterior, French drain, maintain daubing
NHP003-NS	1952	Tack Shed	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	New roof, vegetation control
HP004	1900	Bosworth Barn	MHC storage	Watch	Good	Vegetation control
NHP005	1955	Stone Cellar Ruins (Bovey)	MHC Display	N/A	N/A	Bovey constructed this “ruin” structure to hide gas tanks
HP006	1863	Brewery Dugout Cabin	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	NPS shoring in place, condition monitored, awaiting funding for further stabilization.
HP007	1867	Ford’s Old House	MHC rental	Watch	Fair	Maintain daubing, roof, window & door systems
HP008-RECON	1950	Sim Ferguson Cabin (Bovey)	MHC display	Satisfactory	Good	Full restoration in 2005. Vegetation control needed
HP009	1882	Kissling Cabin	MHC rental	Satisfactory	Good	Full restoration in 2005. Roof replaced in 2022.
HP010	1875	Thexton/Kitson House	MHC rental	Satisfactory	Good	Modified in 1990s, Roof replaced 2023.
HP011	1864	Old House	MHC rental	Watch	Fair	Roof replaced 2023.
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HP014	1875	Aunt Julia's House	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Exterior siding replaced; structure repaired; boardwalk repaired 2015
HP015	1875	Aunt Julia's Outhouse	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Vegetation control
HP016 -RECON	1950	Dance & Stuart Store (Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Exterior wood treatment 2018, vegetation removal
NHP017-ALTERED	1939	Pitman Gas Station & Shed (Bovey)	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Vegetation, drainage, repair and treat wood siding, pending
HP018	1869	Cabbage Patch Barn	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	None immediate, vegetation control
HP019	1869	Cabbage Patch Shed	MHC Display	Watch	Poor	Foundation piers, repair exterior timbers, re-grade & drainage,
HP020	1869	Shed east of barn- Cabbage Patch	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Condition monitored, roof repaired 2020.

HP021	1869	Shed with display- Cabbage Patch	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Dug for drainage in 2009, needs foundation and drainage, vegetation
HP022	1869	Outhouse- Cabbage Patch	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Vegetation, eventually: new roof and door preservation, wood treatments
HP023	1863	Kramer Dress Shop Building	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Signature VC building, front porch roof replaced 2022.
HP024	1874	McGovern Barn	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Walls deflecting, condition monitored, bracing installed 2018
HP025	1869	Tin Clad Shed- Cabbage Patch	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Vegetation, eventually drainage
HP026	1863	Weston Hotel	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Extensive restoration in 2009
HP027	1863	McGovern Store	MHC Display	Watch	Good	UV window protection for display. Building stabilized in 2008
HP028	1863	McGovern Outhouse	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	None immediate, will need a foundation, vegetation control
HP029	1863	Tobacco Shop	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Drainage issues corrected in 2008
HP030	1863	Jewelry Store	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Drainage issues corrected in 2008, foundation
HP031	1863	Outhouse behind the Jewelry	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Stabilization completed 2018
HP032	1864	Toy Store	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Exterior wood treatment
HP033	1864	Toy Store Ground Floor Outhouse	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Proper foundation, roof replaced
HP034	1864	Toy Store 2 Story Outhouse	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Permanent stabilization, proper foundation, vegetation
HP035-RECON	1948	City Bakery (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Rear of building stabilized in 2015, interior renovated.
HP036 037	1863	Kiskadden Barn left blank	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Roof repairs, vegetation
HP038-ALTERED	1863	Fairweather Inn	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Plumbing repaired and roof patched 2015; Exterior re-painted 2023
HP039-ALTERED	1948	Fairweather Inn Annex (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Plumbing repaired and roof patched; Exterior repainted and balcony repaired and expanded 2023.
HP040-RECON 041	1864/1946	Montana Post (Bovey) & Stone Print Shop left blank	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Stabilization of northern wall of Print Shop completed 2015
HP042	1863-80s	Gilbert Brewery	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Received preservation treatments 2011; Structure repaired 2015
HP043	1864	Pottery Shop & Bottling Building	MHC Display	Threatened	Fair	Foundation and walls failing due to creek encroachment. 2024 Update: Funding being sought. Proposed for repair 2024-25 period.
HP044	1864	Gilbert House	MHC Display	Threatened	Poor	2024 Update: Funding being sought. Condition assessment completed. Proposed for restoration/rehab 2026-27 period.

NHP045-NEW	Bovey (1948-60)	Daylight Village Cabins 1&2		N/A	N/A	Structural risk from Daylight Creek, unusable, demolished 2020, site reclaimed as creek side park.
NHP046-NEW	Bovey	Daylight Village Cabins 3&4		N/A	N/A	""
NHP047-NEW	Bovey	Daylight Village Cabins 5&6		N/A	N/A	""
NHP048-NEW	Bovey	Daylight Village Cabins 7&8		N/A	N/A	""
NHP049-NEW	Bovey	Daylight Village Cabins 9&10		N/A	N/A	""
NHP050-NEW	Bovey	Building by Pottery Shop		N/A	N/A	N/A
NHP051-NEW	Bovey	Boiler & Restrooms		N/A	N/A	Electrical plumbing restored
NHP052-NEW	Bovey	Daylight Village Office		N/A	N/A	N/A
NHP053-NEW	Bovey	Building on East End		N/A	N/A	Structural risk from Daylight Creek, unusable
NHP054-NEW	Bovey	West Building No.		N/A	N/A	Electrical plumbing restored
NHP055-NEW	Bovey	Cabins 11-32		N/A	N/A	Electrical plumbing restored
NHP056-NEW	Bovey	East Building No. 33-38		N/A	N/A	Electrical plumbing restored, shower house reconstructed 2020
NHP057-NEW	Bovey	Village Pump	MHC Display	N/A	N/A	Reconstructed by MHC 2019
HP058	1864	Bickford House	MHC-rental	Satisfactory	Fair	Foundation settling and cracking present
HP059-NS	1964-1900	Bickford (small shed, near house)	MHC Display	Endangered	Poor	Ruin, needs stabilization and interpretation. 2024 Update: In need of stabilization and interpretation.
HP060-NS	"	Bickford (log barn, ruin)	MHC Display	Endangered	Poor	""
HP061-NS	"	Bickford (chicken house, ruin)	MHC Display	Endangered	Poor	""
HP062-NS	"	Bickford (sheds, ruin)	MHC Display	Endangered	Poor	""
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HP065	1864	Content Corner	MHC Commercial	Watch	Good	Received preservation treatments, flooring repaired 2021.
HP066	1864	Content Corner Root Cellar	MHC Commercial	Watch	Good	Needs roof repaired; interior floor done
HP067-RECON	1948	Ruby Chang's (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Basic preservation treatment needed
HP068-RECON	1946	Gypsy Arcade / Variety Store (Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Basic preservation treatment needed
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HP070	1863-4	E.L. Smith Store	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Basic preservation treatment needed

HP071	1865	E.L. Smith Icehouse	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Internal stonework cracked, flooring joists repair
HP072	1863	Wells Fargo Display	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Basic preservation treatment needed
HP073-RECON	1948	Assay Office (Bovey)	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Sagging floor, stonework
HP074	1875	Buford Store (East)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Repaired flooring/fixd roof/repared electrical/plumbing 2015-2016, brick repointing needed
HP075	1899	Buford Block (Center)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Repaired flooring/fixd roof/repared electrical/plumbing 2015-2016, brick repointing needed
HP076	1886	Buford Block (West)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Repaired flooring/fixd roof/repared electrical/plumbing 2015-2016, brick repointing needed, 2023 interior renovated.
HP077-RECON	1948	Elling Store (Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	None needed for now
HP078-RECON	1948	Boots & Shoes (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	None needed for now
HP079	1865	Photo Shop	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	None needed for now
HP080	1883	Shingle Shed	MHC Display	Threatened	Poor	2024 Update: Stabilized 2022.
HP081	1863	Barber Shop	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Front porch stabilization, repair siding, wood treatment, foundation & drainage issues
HP082-RECON	1950	Virginia City Trading Company (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Good	Gutters, exterior wood treatment
HP083	1865	Prasch Blacksmith Shop	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Needs permanent stabilization, currently has temporary bracing
HP084	1869	Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Structure reframed in early 2000s, needs interior chimney stabilization, drainage
HP085-RECON	1863/1983	Bale of Hay Saloon (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Flooring replaced; Electrical upgraded; interior restored 2018-19, 2022 adjacent pavilion constructed.
HP086-REPRO	1949	Bale of Hay Connection (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Drainage, Decks replaced 2019
HP087	1900	Opera House	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Masonry redone; Electrical/Heating fixed/ Flooring replaced 2015
NHP088	1949	Opera House Shop (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Plywood siding in poor condition, foundation cracks
NHP089	1950	Scenery Shed (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Vegetation control
HP090	1875	Mutt Dixon House	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Vegetation control, foundation, drainage
HP091	1875	Mutt Dixon Shed	MHC Commercial	Threatened	Fair	Reset on piers, vegetation cutback, repair exterior wood, repair roof shingles, 2024 Update: Low priority.
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NHP093-MOVED	1964	Virginia City RR Depot (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Fixed bathrooms; put in interior roof; painted and replaced flooring 2014-2015
HP094	1869	Green Front "Hotel"	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Foundation repairs, drainage, exterior wood treatments. 2024 Update: Preservation is ongoing.

HP095	1874	Green Front "Café/Restaurant"	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Received preservation treatment in 2010-18 period
NHP096-MOVED	1964	RR Motor Car Shed	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Foundation, drainage
HP097	1885	Little Joe's Cabin	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Foundation, repair damaged sill logs, drainage
HP098	1885	Little Joe's Outhouse	MHC Display	Watch	Poor	Foundation, drainage, wood treatment, vegetation
HP099-NS	1863	Dry Bean Shed (Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Poor	Relocated shell of building, appropriate treatment strategy uncertain
HP100-MOVED	1981	Fayette Harrington House (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Exterior wood treatments, eventual re-grading
NP101-MOVED	1948	VC Player's Bath House (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Existing structure demolished and being reconstructed 2019-20.
NHP102-MOVED	1977	Ruby Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Fair	Exterior preservation treatments completed 2022 including new roof and restored windows and doors.
NHP03-MOVED	""	School House Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	"
NHP104-MOVED	""	Iron Rod Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Poor	"
NHP105-MOVED	""	Duck Pond Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	"
NHP106-MOVED	""	Axolotl Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	"
NHP107-MOVED	1948	Rehearsal Hall (Bovey)	MHC Admin.	Satisfactory	Fair	"
NHP108-MOVED	1946	White Building (Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Foundation, re-grading
HP109	1946	White Building Outhouse	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Vegetation, eventual foundation
HP110	1866	Bonanza Inn Coal Shed	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Exterior paint for aesthetics, eventual sill & foundation
HP111	1866	Bonanza Inn	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Foundation and drainage work needed eventually, exterior repaired 2022
HP112	1875	Nunnery (Bonanza House)	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Exterior repainted 2022.
HP113	1875	Minerva Cogswell Cabin (House)	MHC Display	Threatened	Poor	2024 Update: Funding identified. Condition assessment completed. Proposed for restoration/interp. 2024-25 period.
HP114	1875	Jack Taylor Cabin (Jackson Street Store)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	Full preservation in Summer 2009
HP115	1864	Susan Marr House	MHC Display	Endangered	Poor	Conditioned monitored, requires stabilization, under evaluation for FY 2024-25 period as interpretative ruin.
HP116	1864	Smitty's Garage	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Vegetation, drainage, wood treatments
HP117	1864	Smitty's Coal Shed	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Foundation, wood treatments, drainage
HP118-RECON	1864/1945	Governor Meagher Cabin (Bovey)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	New foundation/Roof/In process of new flooring and plumbing 2015-2016
HP119	1876	"Lightening Splitter"/Harding House	MHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Exterior and interior fully restored 2017.
HP120	1884	Ron Abbie Cabin	NHC Commercial	Watch	Fair	Foundation, vegetation, exterior wood treatments
HP121	1875	Methodist Church	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	2024 Update: Funding identified, Interior and exterior restoration proceeding slowly thru 2024-25 period.

HP122	1864	Daems Cottages	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Full preservation in 2005-06
HP123	1864	Corbett House	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Good	Full preservation in 2005-06
HP124	1869	Hickman House	MHC Display	Watch	Poor	2024 Update: Funding identified. Condition assessment completed. restoration/rehab in-progress.
HP125	1869	Hickman Shed	MHC Display	Watch	Poor	""
NHP126	1964	Red RR Building (west - Bovey)	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Foundation repairs
NHP127	1999	McFarland Curatorial Center	MHC Admin	Satisfactory	Good	2023 interior flooding event due to pipe freeze.
HP128	1863	Dr. Byam House –Nevada City	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Fair	Needs interior framing; paint and electrical upgrades
HP129	1864	Finney House – Nevada City	MHC Display	Watch	Fair	Need to finish flooring; roof; front right side of foundation
HP130	1874	Reeder’s Alley (16 units)	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Fair	Cosmetic repairs were completed in 2015; repair of roofs, rain gutters and brick masonry on-going throughout the Alley.
HP131	1880	Stone House Building	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Fair	2014-2015 Remodeled the inside with new flooring; electrical; masonry work. Repairs to new roof; masonry work and drainage system on-going.
HP132	1864	Caretakers Cabin	MHC Commercial	Satisfactory	Fair	Needs new plumbing/roof and masonry work on left side.
HP133	1864	Pioneer Cabin	MHC Display	Satisfactory	Good	2015 stabilized as a static exhibit where people can go inside and look through interpretive doors and read interpretive signage.
HP134-NHP135	1864/1925	Stonewall Hall/Dudley Garage	MHC Display	Threatened	Poor	Property acquired in 2022. Partial funding secured. Stabilization and restoration in progress.

Heritage Properties (NR-listed) = 96 (90 Virginia City, 2 Nevada City, 4 Reeder’s Alley)

Non-Heritage Properties (NR ineligible) = 31 Virginia City only, not including 116 Nevada City properties not formally surveyed (research needed to clarify NR eligibility of Bovey legacy properties)

N/A = 8 resource numbers reserved (left blank)

Total number of properties evaluated for this report = 127

STATUS

Endangered: serious negative impacts to property historic integrity occurring, or have occurred, and resource condition is worsening.

Virginia City Buildings with this status: 6

Brewery Dugout Cabin (HP006), Susan Marr House (HP115) and four Bickford Ranch outbuildings (HP059-62). Note: Prior to MHC acquisition all these properties had deteriorated to the point of structural failure, presenting unique preservation challenges. The MHC is currently evaluating funding and treatment strategies for the 2024-25 period. Initial findings indicate that these properties have significant interpretive value as stabilized “ruins”.

2024 Update: A portion of the National Endowment for the Humanities “African American Heritage on Montana's Mining Frontier” grant awarded to the MHC will be used to help stabilize and interpret the Bickford outbuildings. The Marr House is being evaluated for inclusion in a new picnic area adjacent to the Town parking lot. Once stabilized as an “interpretative ruin”, the house and its surrounding grounds will serve as the focal point for the picnic area. The Brewery Dugout Cabin walls were stabilized (braced) in 2019, awaiting future preservation strategies.

Threatened: serious negative impacts to property historic integrity have not occurred, but are impending

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 6

2024 Update: Funding has been identified to restore/rehab two of these properties the Cogswell-Taylor House/Cabin (HP113-114) and the Hickman House (HP124) and shed. Work in progress. Funding is being sought to stabilize and restore the Gilbert House (HP044) and Bottling works/Pottery Shop over the 2024-25 period. Stonewall Hall/Dudley Garage (HP134) in the process of being stabilized and restored. The Dudley Garage (NHP 135) may require reconstruction due to structural instability and limited historic significance.

Watch: negative impacts to historic integrity have the potential to occur

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 44

Satisfactory: negative impacts to property historic integrity are unlikely to occur; or potential/impending loss of integrity has been addressed and mitigated in consultation with State Historic Preservation Office.

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 57

CONDITION

Excellent: Well preserved; routinely maintained and monitored. If building or structure: meets current codes and use needs, while preserving historic integrity.

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 1 (curatorial center, constructed 1999)

Good: Stable; generally maintained and/or monitored. If building or structure: minimally meets current codes and use needs, while preserving historic integrity.

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 68

Fair: Stable, but largely unmaintained; needs or will soon need preservation treatment. If building or structure: does not meet all current codes or use needs.

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 47

Poor: Unstable; unmaintained; in need of preservation treatment. If building or structure: does not meet current codes, health or safety standards or does not meet use needs.

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 15

Failed: Demolished; destroyed; resource is gone or lost its heritage values/eligibility

Virginia City NHL Buildings with this status: 2024 Update: Over the 2022-23 period no properties were demolished.

Section 2 – Cultural Resource Management Philosophy and Economic Realities



Stonewall Hall 2022 (before)



Stonewall Hall 2023-24 (current)



Stonewall Hall 2025 (proposed)

Since the 2022 SB3 report, the Commission has acquired one additional heritage property – Stonewall Hall. The property actually consists of two buildings – the 1864 historic two-story masonry building and the adjacent 1925 one-story Dudley Garage addition. After many years of careful consideration of its economic challenges and historic significance, the Commission agreed to take on this important project. As showed above, the property is currently in the midst of an extensive multi-year restoration effort. The deteriorated roof, flooring system, and façade were carefully deconstructed this past summer in preparation for reconstruction in 2024 based on the historic photo shown below. Fundraising efforts to complete the project in 2025 are ongoing.

All of our properties, previously surveyed and recorded, are routinely inspected on a regular basis by our preservation staff and monitored for changes in their condition. Minor repairs and corrective actions are implemented by the preservation staff promptly, while major changes, such as replacing a deteriorated roof, are discussed, and scheduled at regular staff meetings. Ultimately, this information is used to coordinate SHPO consultation efforts and prioritize our preservation and maintenance efforts within each budgetary cycle.



Stonewall Hall (c1885, MHS)

As documented in Attachment A: FY2024 MHC Biennial Report and Financial Summary, on an annual basis, the MHC regularly allocates a major portion (42%) of its general operation budget of \$2.2 million toward maintenance and preservation activities. Revenue sources include earned income from its operations in Virginia and Nevada City and Reeder’s Alley, bed tax allocations, and donations and contributions such as the voluntary portion of the license plate registration fee. We continue to explore creative uses and revenue-generating opportunities for our properties, including as movie sets and wedding venues.

In 2021, the Legislature increased the Bed Tax Allocation for our operation to \$1,000,000 annually. Over the past two years, these funds were used for major housing and fire suppression improvements throughout Virginia and Nevada City, and to match grants awarded to the project from the Montana Historic Preservation Grant (MHPG) Program and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). In 2023, the Legislature award MHPG funds to two projects in Virginia City - the long-awaited restorations of the Hickman House and the Jack Taylor-Cogswell Cabin. Both projects are currently in the early phases of design and construction.

Refer to the attached website, <https://www.savemontanashistory.com> and Section 4. Special Stewardship Initiatives for additional information on major restoration/rehabilitation projects scheduled for the next biennium.

Under the general heading of stewardship - our mandate is broad. The MHC is responsible not only for preserving and maintaining these properties, but also providing public educational programming, research access, and ensuring for the basic needs, comfort, and safety of our 500,000 plus annual seasonal visitors to Virginia and Nevada City, and numerous year-round visitors and tenants at our facility in Reeder’s Alley.



Visitor safety along our historic boardwalks is an on-going challenge

It's an understatement to claim that our resources are stretched thin. Since 2012, when it became apparent that staff reductions were necessary to better align with our mandate of economic self-sufficiency, we re-organized around a core of six full-time employees, including an Executive Director (ED), tourism event coordinator, two preservation and maintenance staff members, and two museum staff members. This team is augmented by numerous seasonal employees, contractors, concessionaires, and volunteers to ensure our facilities are well-maintained, professionally staffed, and welcoming.

Out of necessity, during the busy summer months we focus primarily on visitor services and minor maintenance repairs, relegating major facility projects, including preservation and maintenance to the off-season. To make best use of the short construction season we routinely schedule projects for the spring or fall to avoid impacting summertime visitation. If we can't avoid the summer season, we try to minimize the inconvenience of an active construction site by incorporating a learning element into the project. Interpretative signage is installed at the site to encourage public awareness and understanding of the project while work proceeds mostly unimpeded by curious onlookers. The on-going Stonewall Hall restoration project, a very high-profile endeavor in the midst of downtown Virginia City, is a good example of this outreach approach. The construction fencing used to secure the site serves as an excellent educational and fundraising platform.



Protecting the collection from an early-winter snow



Keeping the public safe and informed

Within our annual operating budget, each year we attempt to make significant investments in the preservation and maintenance of our historic properties. At a minimum we try to ensure that heritage properties converted to a commercial, income-producing use also contain a strong interpretative message, whether by signage, photos, and/or artifacts. It's been our experience that the public appreciates these historic elements within a retail or lodging setting. Refer to the attached link to our current Strategic and Business Plans for more insight into our management philosophy: [Plans and Reports - Montana Heritage Commission \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov/Plans-and-Reports)

Over the years we've found that a well-implemented maintenance program minimizes the need for extensive preservation efforts. A good example of this approach; we pay special attention to the care and maintenance of the roofs of our historic buildings. An annual springtime inspection of a roof combined with light maintenance repairs, avoids costly and invasive repairs to the interior. Maintenance efforts are generally directed on an as-needed basis as dictated by the various electrical, plumbing, and structural demands of our outdated building stock.



Historically sensitive roof repairs

For larger preservation and maintenance projects, we rely heavily on a short-list of local building contractors and regional design professionals we have vetted over the years. Through close interaction with our preservation crew, and a well-defined scope of work these construction professionals produce excellent results.

From an operational management perspective, we continue to struggle with the question; are we a museum facility or a heritage tourism attraction. For lack of a clear mandate, we try to satisfy both demands. With support from the Montana Historical Society, our work ranges from preparing high-quality, well-researched interpretative exhibits and signage to ensuring basic visitor services are met, including self-guided interpretative brochures, restrooms, and train rides. To ensure our

guests have access to quality lodging, dining, and entertainment facilities, we partner with a host of seasonal concessionaires, many of whom have been with us for 10 plus years. These private entrepreneurs magically transform our seemingly abandoned buildings into a variety of vibrant summertime businesses and attractions that help bring our story to life and diversify the local economy. An added benefit of these public-private relationships is that many of these concessionaires, with proper instruction from our preservation and collections staff, have proven willing and able to take over the basic maintenance duties of their respective business locations.

We recognize the professional needs and demands of maintaining a high-quality museum experience are considerably different than those of a roadside attraction. Accordingly, we do our best to uphold a balance between these often-competing interests and maintain professional standards and best practices for the cultural resources under our care.

To assist us in achieving our goals we routinely work with various partners including the Montana SHPO, Foundation for Montana History, Montana Preservation Alliance, National Park Service, and Town of Virginia City and numerous other private individuals, groups, and public institutions. Over the last 26 years, these partners have provided a range of supports services to us, including funding, technical advice, and hands-on labor. As part of on-going stewardship efforts, we continue to cultivate and expand these relationships.

In our ongoing effort to manage operating costs, while being responsive to previous state review board feedback encouraging the MHC to “re-establish the required qualified professionals (historic preservation specialist and staff archeologist) to manage the significant heritage properties under the care of the MHC”, we maintain close working relationships with the Town of Virginia City’s Historic Preservation Program and various private cultural resource management professionals, including regional archeological consultants and architectural firms.



Architectural Reports and Archeological Investigations used to guide the Stonewall Hall Project

With this understanding of our management philosophy and realities, we are proud to report the following preservation and maintenance accomplishments of the past two years for our 96 heritage properties.

Section 3 - On-going Preservation and Maintenance Activities (2022-2023)

For open-air museum resources like Virginia and Nevada City, preservation and maintenance (P&M) work is never ending. To retain the “arrested deterioration” appearance of our famous “living-ghost town” setting each task must be viewed through the lens of “doing the least harm”. Whether trying to address an ADA access concern on the boardwalk, or reattach a deteriorated element of a building’s cornice, each activity requires staff to creatively identify the most sensitive approach possible. Such an approach takes time and considerable experience to achieve the desired outcome of “blending the new with the old” and maintaining the historic integrity of the resource.



Repairing historic windows is a never-ending maintenance task for the preservation crew

A few examples of preservation tasks completed or advanced by the Commission over the past two years include:

A. Hickman House Restoration Project

With funding provided through the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program, the Commission has prepared a restoration plan for the Hickman House and retained design professionals and construction contractors to begin restoration of this historic residential property.



Hickman House masonry foundation and front porch stabilized – before and after (2023)

B. Fairweather Inn Balcony Project

In cooperation with the concessionaire of the Fairweather Inn, the Commission expanded the balcony of this Bovey-era reconstruction and repainted the exterior of the building.



The popular Fairweather Inn balcony was expanded to accommodate more hotel guests (2023)



Section 4 - Special Stewardship Initiatives (2022-2023)

Each biennium we identify a few special projects to pursue and hopefully complete in a timely manner. We choose initiatives that we feel will have a lasting positive impact on our program.

- A. Education: In cooperation with the Montana Preservation Alliance (MPA), the Commission was awarded a 2021 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) American Rescue Plan Humanities Organizations Grant of \$191,488. The project, “African American Heritage on Montana's Mining Frontier,” will support staff and consultant efforts to research and interpret the heritage of African American settlers in Virginia City’s gold mining past. The Coggswell-Taylor Cabin, the home of enterprising Black pioneers, sisters Minerva and Parnethia Coggswell, along with freighter Jack Taylor, is a focal point of the project. The project entails the production of signage, exhibits, and interpretative programming for the site. Over the past two years, the Commission initiated further research efforts on these topics. Completion is scheduled to coincide with restoration efforts described below.



Coggswell-Taylor Cabin, Hickman House, and Gilbert House

- B. Restoration and Rehabilitation: As previously discussed, the Commission has completed condition assessments and secured funding from the legislature to begin restoration and rehabilitation of two significant heritage properties in Virginia City. The Coggswell-Taylor Cabin and Hickman House properties have languished on the Commission’s “to-do” list for over 20 years, due to the extent of their deterioration, and the respective costs of preserving the structures. In 2023, the Commission was awarded additional funding through the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program to support these restoration efforts. In consultation with the Montana SHPO, the Commission retained design professionals and building contractors to begin stabilization and restoration of the Hickman building. Further construction activities are planned for the summer of 2024. Due to the advanced level of deterioration and modest, lightly-framed construction utilized in the Coggswell-Taylor cabin, rehabilitating the building without compromising its structural stability and historic integrity

will be difficult. Once a restoration plan is approved in 2024, stabilization efforts will begin in earnest. Upon completion, these historic properties will be added to the Commission’s inventory of vacation rentals and in the case of the Cogswell-Taylor an interpretative exhibit with VIP accommodations.

The Gilbert House, another historic building in poor condition owned by the Commission, is still awaiting funding to allow stabilization and restoration.

- C. Acquisition: After many years of strategic planning, over the past two years the Commission acquired ownership of the historic Stonewall Hall property, more commonly known as, the Dudley Garage. The property is listed on the National Register for its association with the early settlement of Virginia City and the activities of the Montana territorial government. With funding support from the Foundation for Montana History, a preservation plan was developed, and contractors retained to begin stabilization efforts in 2023. The building’s poor condition necessitated the need for emergency stabilization, including bracing the side walls, repairing the rear wall, and removing the deteriorated roof, second floor and façade. The roof, floor structure and façade will be reconstructed in 2024. In 2025, pending additional funding the interior of the second floor will be restored and used to interpret the story of the territorial legislature with the ground floor rehabilitated as a public gathering space for meetings and events. Rehabilitation options for the Dudley Garage addition are being developed, including possible reconstruction of the original building at the site. Prior to the garage addition in 1925, the site was occupied for over 50 years by the Pony Saloon.



1874 meeting of the territorial legislature in Stonewall Hall.

- D. Research: Nevada City Historic Context Statement - The uncertainty surrounding the historic significance of the Bovey-era buildings and structures in Nevada City, and to a lesser extent Virginia City, creates a variety of management complications for the Commission. Lacking National Register-status these resources are often treated as lesser quality resources of lower priority in terms of preservation and maintenance funding allocations. While the Commission understands the distinction, the general public does not, creating a host of public relationship

concerns and the impression that the Nevada City properties are not as important as their counterparts in Virginia City.

In response, as the bulk of these properties inch toward the 50-year National Register eligibility mark, the Commission remains committed to supporting the research necessary to allow for their serious consideration for listing, and the protections and funding opportunities such designation provides. To this end, the Commission is in the process of dusting off copies of previous research on this subject, and with the advice of the Montana SHPO, retaining the services of cultural resource specialists to compile and submit the necessary documentation in support of eventual National Register status for these properties.

- E. Site Improvements: Wallace Street Accessibility Study – In response to accessibility concerns often expressed by visitors citing the difficulty accessing certain areas within historic Virginia City, in 2023 the Commission retained a team of design professionals to prepare a Wallace Street Accessibility Study. The Commission is currently reviewing the recommendations from the report with the goal of installing modest accessibility improvements, including ramps, stable walking surfaces, and handrails, over the next biennium as funding permits. The goal is to improve accessibility without compromising the historic integrity of the site.

Section 5 - Record of Agency Compliance with Subsections MCA 22-3-424 (1) & (2)

The Commission has developed numerous internal policies, strategies, committees, and relationships with organizations, including the Montana SHPO, Montana Historical Society, and National Park Service, to comply with the Montana State Antiquities Act, and related local, state and federal regulations involving the identification and protection of historic resources. Unlike the dual mandates of most other state agencies subject to MCA 22-3-424, the Commission is solely in the business of preserving the historic resources under its care and management. We take that responsibility seriously, and value the advice and guidance we received from the staff of the Montana SHPO.

We recognize that the complex nature of our mission to protect these valuable heritage resources while also achieving economic self-sufficiency creates challenges, and sometimes conflict for all parties involved. To that end, while our current Programmatic Agreement with the Montana SHPO has expired, we have learned that it is best to seek input from the Montana SHPO early on during the planning stage of our projects, and to keep the SHPO apprised as the project moves ahead. We respectfully admit that sometimes in the daily rush to make progress, especially on smaller scale projects, we have been remiss in seeking that counsel in advance.

Outside of the scope of the Montana State Antiquities Act, but we believe representative of our commitment to stewardship in general, we routinely seek the guidance of local community members in Virginia City regarding our projects. The Town of Virginia City is an official Certified Local Government in partnership with the Montana SHPO and National Park Service. In that capacity, the Town administers a comprehensive municipal-level design review zoning program. For over 20 years, the Town has reviewed all changes, beyond ordinary maintenance and repair, to the exterior of historic properties, including signage, throughout the community. As such, the Commission routinely submits permit applications for its various projects to the Town for review and comment by the Historic Preservation Officer and the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, and approval by the Town Council. We regularly incorporate their advice into our projects.

REFERENCES

- Architecture Trio – 2023 Wallace Street Accessibility Study
- Architecture Trio – 2023 Stonewall Hall Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Plan
- DCI Engineers – 2022 Structural Condition Assessment, Taylor-Coggswell House/Cabin, Virginia City, Montana
- DCI Engineers – 2022 Structural Condition Assessment, Hickman House, Virginia City, Montana
- DCI & BCE Engineers – 2017 Structural Condition Assessment, Stonewall Hall, Virginia City, Montana
- Elijah Allen - 2023 Executive Director Report, Montana Heritage Commission
- Friedman, A. Paul - 1990 Report of the Architectural, Historical and Archaeological Inventory of the Virginia City National Landmark Madison County, Montana. (Dames & Moore Report)
- Hope Archeology – 2023 Stonewall Hall Restoration Plan, Preliminary Subsurface Investigation
- Jim Jarvis, Historian - 2002 Historic Building Survey Assessment - Nevada City, Montana
- Jim Jarvis, Historian - 2022 Stonewall Hall Historical Report
- Montana Heritage Commission Preservation Crew - 2022-23 Weekly, Monthly and Annual Reports
- Montana Heritage Commission Collections Department - 2022-23 Stewardship Practices Report