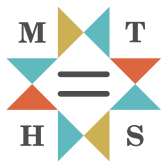




Montana Historical Society

Impact Report July '24 - June '25



The Montana Historical Society preserves
Montana's past, shares our stories, and
inspires exploration, to provide meaning
for today and vision for tomorrow.

PRESERVE • EDUCATE • CONNECT

Table of Contents

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Letter from the Director | 10 Library and Archives |
| 2 Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees | 11 Historic Buildings Get New Life Through SHPO Awards and Grants |
| 3 About the Montana Historical Society | 12 Master Craftsman Restores Rare Friendship Doll |
| 4 Retrospective: Looking Back While Looking Forward | 14 Releases from the Montana Historical Society Press |
| 4 Montana Heritage Center Opening Events | 15 Education Statistics and 250 Commission |
| 5 How Montana's Landscapes Shaped a Place for History | 16-17 Engaging Montanans |
| 6 The Gift Shop at the Montana Heritage Center | 18 Volunteer Spotlight |
| 7 Food as Experience | 19 What Being A Member Means To Me |
| 8 Event Spaces Created For You | 20 Why I Support the Montana Historical Society |
| 9 Honoring Sovereign Nations at the Heritage Center | 21 Membership |
| | 22 Thank You for Your Support |
| | 22-25 Donor Recognition |

"Bicyclists' group on Minerva Terrace, YNP." Lt. James A. Moss's company of 25th Infantry, U.S. Army Bicycle Corps, from Fort Missoula, Montana. August 1896 per Moss's diary. F. Jay Haynes, photographer, 1896. H-03614, MTHS Photo Archives



Letter from the Director

This year the Montana Historical Society marked 160 years of preserving Montana's history. From the time of our founding through today, we have grown and evolved, changing with the needs of our audience and adapting to new ways to share our stories. Our evolution has never been more obvious than it is right now, with the opening of the Montana Heritage Center in December.

Generations of Montanans have worked hard to preserve our past and share our stories. With the construction of the Montana Heritage Center, we've added hundreds, maybe even thousands, to those ranks. Our efforts to plan, design, and build the Heritage Center have taken a skilled army to complete, from curators to stone cutters and educators to electricians. Each one has helped us to achieve our vision of a community-centered space where visitors will explore and be immersed in our past.

Our partnerships for the Heritage Center are many. The State's Architecture & Engineering Division, led by Russ Katherman, has expertly managed the many moving pieces of the first major construction project on the Capitol Campus in decades. Cushing Terrell Architect and Principal Martin Byrnes directed numerous architects and engineers in every design aspect of the project, from the shape of the building to the mechanical systems. Our general contractor, Sletten Construction, Inc., has been a partner in every sense of the word, showing flexibility and creativeness in their approach and attitude.

With the bones of the project handled by this superstar team, an abundance of museum exhibit designers specializing in content, layout, graphics, and fabrication worked for many years, led by the MTHS curatorial team, to create the experiences within the building. Our own historians, librarians, archivists, educators, curators, designers, and fabricators joined forces with the talented teams at Cinnabar and Richard Lewis Media Group, among others, to make our vision for innovative, dynamic, and experiential exhibits come to life.

So, you can see, it's truly taken a force of talented, creative, and hard-working people to erect the steel, pour the concrete, build the exhibits, and create the media that have made the Montana Heritage Center an exciting and immersive building. We are immeasurably grateful to every single person that has helped

us achieve this milestone and truly appreciate the work they have all contributed.

We look forward to exploring Montana's past with you so that, together, we can create a vision for our future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Kruckenberg". The script is fluid and cursive.

Molly Kruckenberg, Director

Leadership Team

Director

Molly Kruckenberg

Administration

Emily McKeever, CPA

Development, Membership, Public Relations

Ginny Sullivan

Library & Archives

Roberta Gebhardt

Museum

Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney

Outreach & Education

Martha Kohl

Publications

Jeff Bartos

State Historic Preservation Office

Peter Brown

For a complete staff listing, please scan the QR code or visit mths.mt.gov/staff





Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees

As president of the Board of Trustees of the Montana Historical Society, it is my great honor to welcome you to the new Montana Heritage Center. We look forward to opening our doors on **December 2, 2025**, and to celebrating with the broader community during our grand opening festivities from **June 25–28, 2026**. This long-anticipated milestone marks a new era for Montana's past, present, and future.

Since its founding in 1865, the Montana Historical Society has played a vital role in preserving the stories and artifacts that shape our state.

Over the decades, we've moved from Virginia City to Helena in 1874, found temporary quarters in the Capitol basement in 1902, and settled into the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building in 1953. Each step reflected the Society's growth, but none compares to the significance of this new, purpose-built facility. The Heritage Center is more than a building; it is a promise to future generations that Montana's history will be preserved, interpreted, and shared with care and integrity.

This project became reality because Montanans, along with supporters from across the nation, understood the urgency of investing in our cultural legacy. If you contributed to the Montana Heritage Center campaign, thank you. Your generosity has helped create something truly extraordinary.

I also want to recognize the many individuals who shaped this endeavor in other ways. From the Building Committee that envisioned this facility, to the Tribal Stakeholders Group whose thoughtful input helped guide its design and exhibits, your contributions were essential. Above all, I commend the outstanding staff of the Montana Historical Society. Under the leadership of Director Molly Kruckenberg, their commitment and professionalism have brought this vision to life.

As we prepare for opening day, I encourage you to become a member of the Montana Historical Society. Membership is the best way to stay informed, get involved, and support our mission to preserve Montana's past and share our stories with the world.

We've come a long way. Now, we invite you to be part of what's next.

Tim Fox, President of the Board of Trustees
Former Attorney General, State of Montana



**Become a
member today!**
[mths.mt.gov/
JoinGive/
Membership](https://mths.mt.gov/JoinGive/Membership)

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About the Montana Historical Society

The Montana Historical Society, founded in 1865 by the Montana Territorial Legislature, pursues our mission to *preserve Montana's past, share our stories, and inspire exploration, to provide meaning for today and vision for tomorrow*. We accomplish this by collecting, preserving, and providing access to art, artifacts, photographs, and documents. We strive to educate Montanans and visitors through exhibitions, publications, public programs, research collections, and online resources.



Administration

The Administration program provides leadership, oversight, and coordination across the agency. Responsibilities include fundraising, membership services, public relations, payroll and personnel, financial reporting, business operations, security and guest services, facility management, information technology, and retail operations.

Library & Archives

The Library & Archives program develops, preserves, and provides access to the Montana Historical Society's collection of research materials, including books, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, films, maps, and more. Staff support public use of the collections through reference services, reproductions, cataloging, and online databases and repositories. As the official State Archives, the program also offers training and support for similar institutions across Montana.

Museum

The Museum program preserves and manages the Society's extensive collection of art and artifacts, including historical, ethnographic, and archaeological items. Staff catalog objects, implement preventive preservation practices, and coordinate conservation efforts. The program develops exhibitions, manages a statewide loan program for other museums, and provides training for peer institutions. It also oversees the care of artworks in the Capitol and Capitol Complex, administers the Original Governor's Mansion, and offers research support related to the collections.

Publications

The Publications program produces, prints, and distributes an award-winning quarterly journal and books focused on Montana and Western history. *Montana The Magazine of Western History* highlights the people, places, and events that have shaped the state and region, offering in-depth, engaging scholarship for a wide audience.

Outreach & Education

The Outreach & Education program delivers engaging learning experiences for Montanans and visitors of all ages. Offerings include conferences, workshops, guided tours, hands-on activities, web-based learning, and educational trunks. The program also develops curriculum materials and instructional literature, and provides professional development workshops for K-12 educators. In addition, staff manage the National Register Sign Program, the Centennial Farm and Ranch Program, and the Volunteer Program.

State Historic Preservation Office

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) administers the Montana Antiquities Act and oversees Montana's participation in the National Historic Preservation Act. The program maintains an inventory of documented historic and archaeological sites and reviews preservation projects for eligibility under the federal Tax Reform Act. SHPO also manages the National Register of Historic Places nominations through the Preservation Review Board and coordinates the federal Certified Local Government Program.



Retrospective:

Looking Back While Looking Forward

More than twenty years ago staff at the Montana Historical Society recognized the need for more and improved spaces. Collections were improperly stored, exhibits were small and outdated, and public spaces lacked modern amenities. With these arguments in hand, MTHS leadership first took the idea of a renovated building to the legislature in 2005. With this first ask, the State allocated \$7.5 million toward the project. Those funds allowed MTHS, working through the State's Architecture & Engineering Division, to complete the master planning process for a new facility. That planning demonstrated that additional funding would be needed to complete the Montana Heritage Center. In subsequent legislative sessions, MTHS directors tried several different options to secure funding for construction, including the promise of raising private funds.

After many close but unsuccessful requests, the Montana Museums Act passed in 2019. A unique approach to funding, the MMA increased the State's lodging sales tax by 1% and allocated a portion of those funds to construction of the Montana Heritage Center and to historic preservation grants. Ultimately, the funds from this tax provided \$41 million for the project. These funds were paired,

initially, with a commitment from MTHS to raise \$10 million in private funds.

With legislative funds in hand, construction of the Heritage Center began in September 2020 with a ground blessing ceremony. What followed has been a journey. It began with "value engineering," due to pandemic-induced cost increases in both materials and labor. Thanks to a wildly successful capital campaign that ultimately raised \$60 million in support of the project, we could then increase our scope and provide many enhancements to the visitor experience in the Heritage Center. Thousands of hours of staff time and an army of contractors have worked tirelessly since then to create a world-class facility with immersive, exploration-driven exhibits, operational improvements, and community-driven spaces.

As we celebrate the completion of decades of planning and five years of construction, we are beyond excited to introduce you to the Montana Heritage Center. From its architectural design to the experiences inside, the Heritage Center captures and shares Montana's many landscapes and the many stories that have shaped our history.

Montana Heritage Center Opening Events

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Tuesday, December 2
3:00 p.m.
Open to the public.

mths.mt.gov/education/Community-Events

Winter & Spring 2026: Opening Community Events

Join us for lectures,
workshops, and
community events.

Montana History Celebration & Grand Opening Celebration

June 24–28, 2026
Four days of MTHS-hosted
activities, receptions,
luncheons, and additional
Helena-based events.

FREE ADMISSION

Every day,
for everyone.

How Montana's Landscapes Shaped a Place for History

By David Koel, Director of Design, Cushing Terrell

When work began on the Montana Heritage Center, the design team faced a challenge: how to create a building that not only functioned well but also embodied the spirit of Montana. The original 2010 concept envisioned a separate structure across East 6th Avenue. Yet questions of safety, accessibility, and cohesion soon made it clear that a new vision was needed—one that could unify old and new, function and meaning, people and place.

Rather than anchor the design in a particular era or style, we asked: What connects all Montanans? The answer was clear: the land itself. From the wide-open prairies to the Rocky Mountain Front, from Yellowstone's geothermal wonders to Glacier's alpine peaks, the Montana landscape offers a shared identity as vast as the state itself.

The Heritage Center draws directly from this geology and geography, translating the drama of the land into built form. Like Chief Mountain, the 24-foot north-facing cantilever represents older rock thrusting over younger layers. Expansive glass in the Central Commons recalls glacial movement, while details like a fractured stone tile band echo Glacier's rock layers. Materials were chosen intentionally: sleek tile ties the building to its surroundings, while stone from a Harlowton quarry grounds it locally.

The visitor experience also mirrors the land. Approaching the outward-leaning north wall creates

a slight sense of unease, like hiking an exposed trail. An interpretive trail showcases Montana's eastern prairies, rolling foothills, and western forests. The trail connects to a symbolic river as a concrete channel at the west entrance then transforms into a terracotta flow through the Commons.



Equally important was a unified entry. A glass connector and courtyard now join the historic building with the addition. This transparency honors the past while looking to the future, linking history, people, and place in a seamless whole. Respect for the historic structure, and reverence for Montana's land and people underpin the design. The result is a building that is a sculptural metaphor for Montana itself—a place where the stories of the state's landscapes and communities are held under one roof.



A New Name, A New Home

The Gift Shop at the Montana Heritage Center Welcomes You!

We are delighted to announce that the beloved Museum Store has grown into **The Gift Shop**—offering a fresh, inviting shopping experience both in person and online. The Gift Shop is located in the Central Commons of the Heritage Center.

This move has given us the opportunity to expand our offerings, making room for more Montana-made treasures than ever before. We also take great pride in working with local Indigenous artists to respectfully present authentic, handcrafted pieces. Every Native-made item in our shop carries a story—a reflection of the skill, heritage, and creativity of its maker. Our curated selection spans the state, from Eureka to Ismay, featuring artisans whose work captures the heart and soul of Montana.

THE GIFT SHOP



Whether you're looking for clothing, jewelry, artwork, snacks, books, or fun finds for the kids, The Gift Shop offers something for every visitor. Our classic and ever-growing book collection remains a cornerstone, celebrating Montana's history and culture in print.

Your purchase is more than a simple transaction—it directly supports local artisans, makers, and small entrepreneurs, helping sustain our vibrant state economy. Even more, your support helps preserve and share the stories that make Montana unique, ensuring they live on for generations to come.

We're excited to welcome you into our new space and share this wonderful new chapter of the Montana Historical Society. Stop by, explore, and take home a piece of Montana's story.



Artist rendering of
The Gift Shop space



Artist rendering of
Norm's Café space

Food as Experience

The Montana Heritage Center provides many opportunities for new and improved services for our visitors. Students will enjoy classroom space, lifelong learners will enjoy more comfortable event spaces, and researchers will be comfortable in an expanded and up-to-date reference room.

One of the new spaces that we're excited to offer to our visitors is **Norm's Café**. Located directly inside the grand entrance to the building, adjacent to many of our visitor services, the café provides a welcoming space for guests to take a break and refresh during their visit to the Montana Heritage Center. With outdoor as well as indoor seating and beautiful views of the Capitol, the space allows

NORM'S CAFE

visitors to refuel before or after they explore our exhibits, take a walk on our interpretive trail, or enjoy a tour of the Heritage Center galleries, Original Governor's Mansion, or Capitol.

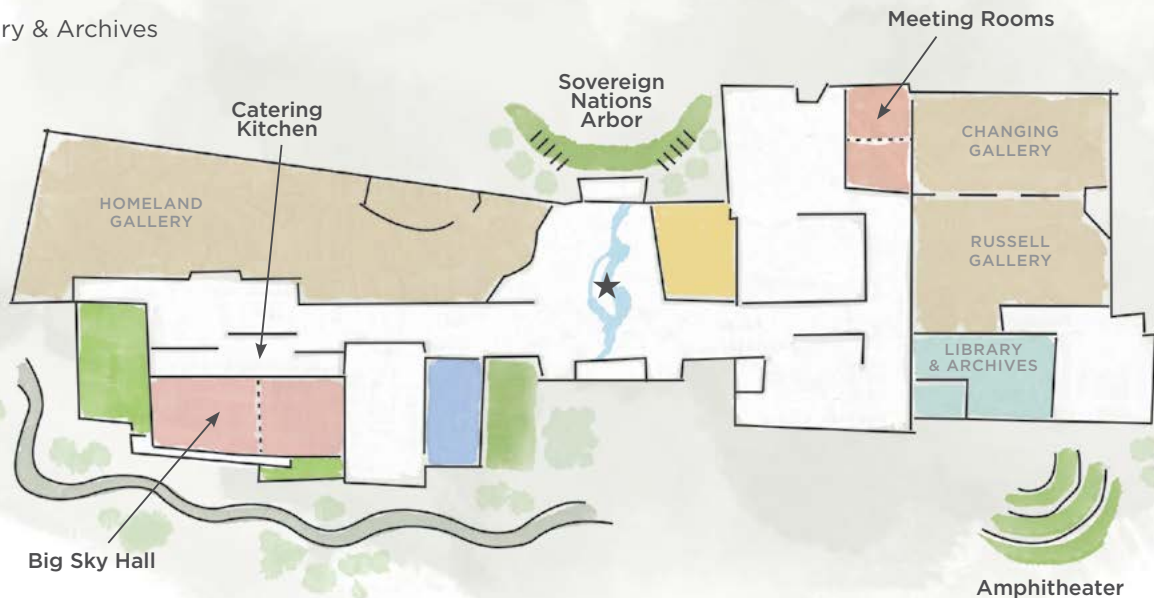
Highlighting locally sourced and Montana-inspired foods, the café will be operated in partnership with a local vendor. Selection of the vendor is underway, and we will have someone on board and ready to open by the time the Heritage Center opens in December. We anticipate a menu featuring various coffee beverages, sandwiches, and other café-style foods.

When you visit the Montana Heritage Center, we hope that you will join us in Norm's Café, named after our generous donor Norm Asbjornson, to enjoy a cup of coffee, lunch, or a snack.



Main Floor

- = Primary Event Spaces
- = Outdoor Spaces
- = Galleries
- = Library & Archives
- = The Gift Shop
- = Norm's Cafe
- ★ = Central Commons



Event Spaces Created For You

Celebrate, Connect, and Learn at the Montana Heritage Center

The Montana Heritage Center is a cultural hub where history, learning, and community come together. Soon you might join us for a lecture, beading workshop, book club discussion, pop-up exhibit, or even a winter ball.

Our versatile spaces, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, are designed for our MTHS-sponsored community events and public programs, but also can be rented privately. Whether for a seminar, reception, or conference, every event here connects guests with Montana's rich history while supporting the mission of the Montana Historical Society.

Versatile Event Spaces

- ▶ **Big Sky Hall** – seats up to 250, dividable for breakout sessions, and includes access to Sleeping Giant Terrace and Capitol View Balcony
- ▶ **Central Commons** – accommodates 300, ideal for galas and receptions.
- ▶ **Meeting Rooms** – space for up to 90, with flexible layouts.
- ▶ **Outdoor Spaces** – the Sovereign Nations Arbor outside the east entrance and a west-side amphitheater add unique open-air options.
- ▶ **Catering Kitchen** – A full-service catering kitchen supports seamless food service for any occasion.

Events of All Kinds

From conferences and trainings to creative workshops and elegant galas, the Heritage Center offers modern AV, designer furnishings, and flexible layouts for professional, polished experiences.

What Sets Us Apart

Events are surrounded by history—exhibits and galleries are just steps away, offering built-in opportunities for learning and exploration. Guests can enjoy light meals at the on-site café, while two AV control rooms, including the E.B. Craney Studios, ensure flawless presentations.

Support and Service

Our team assists with planning, vendor recommendations, AV support, and setup, making every event smooth and memorable. By hosting here, you also help bring Montana's history to life for future generations.

Reservations are now open with events beginning January 2026. Learn more at mths.mt.gov/about/Event-Spaces-Rental or contact MTHSEventCenter@mt.gov.

Honoring Sovereign Nations at the Heritage Center

The Montana Historical Society respectfully acknowledges that the Montana Heritage Center rests upon the ancient ancestral lands of many Indigenous nations. We are committed to honoring their rich histories and to collaborating with them to understand our shared past.

MTHS collaborated closely with representatives of all sovereign nations in Montana beginning with the design process to ensure their perspectives were included in the Montana Heritage Center. Our partners provided input on the building's design and exhibit content, reviewing drawings, offering expert opinions, reviewing graphic panels, and choosing artifacts and photographs.



While the entire building and grounds incorporate Indigenous perspectives, two spaces were specifically designed with Indigenous concepts in mind. The east entrance features a powwow-style arbor with medicine wheel and nation-specific design elements, and a sculpture by Piikuni artist Jay Laber,



“Warning Road Hazards Ahead,” honors the buffalo’s importance to Indigenous nations. A smudge room provides a private space for smudging before interacting with artifacts and stories.

Tribal stakeholders reviewed all exhibit content; directed interpretation, artifact selection, and graphic content; and provided expertise on Indigenous topics. The Homeland Gallery’s Sovereign Nations area shares contemporary stories curated exclusively by our partners, and features the media piece “Sovereign Nations Today,” highlighting topics of cultural importance to each nation.

We’re grateful to the representatives of each sovereign nation and the many people they consulted for advice. A statewide network ensured Indigenous culture and history were accurately woven throughout the Heritage Center. We acknowledge the hours and expertise they contributed.

Montana’s history and culture are the history and culture of the sovereign nations located here. At the Heritage Center, these stories are enmeshed with those of emigrants and immigrants, so we share a fuller history of all who’ve called Montana home.

Uncovering Montana's Hidden Stories

New Collections Added to the Library and Archives

The Library and Archives team made several acquisitions this year, bringing to light collections that illuminate Montana's rich and complex past. Two standout additions included the Cheryl Hutchinson papers and the records discovered in a forgotten Roundup, Montana safe, both of which offer windows into stories that might otherwise have been lost forever.



A Legacy of Leadership and Advocacy

Four archivists from the Library and Archives team traveled to Hardy, Montana, to review the extensive papers of Cheryl Hutchinson, a woman whose influence shaped state government and cultural preservation from the 1960s through 2000s. While officially serving in administrative roles, including secretary to Lt. Governor Ted

Schwinden, Hutchinson wielded considerable behind-the-scenes power, managing correspondence, attending conferences, and representing leadership at official functions.

Her most enduring achievement was successfully advocating for Tower Rock's designation as a state park along the Missouri River. The collection also includes her unpublished biography of biophysicist Norman Jefferis "Jeff" Holter, representing one of her final research projects. These papers will prove invaluable for researchers studying women's roles in Montana politics, education, and leadership.

Secrets from a Forgotten Safe

Three archivists also ventured to Roundup where documents stashed in an old safe near the former county attorney's office revealed slice-of-life moments from 1930s to 1950s Montana. The collection includes complaints ranging from the mundane—highway speeding tickets—to the peculiar: citations for "operating a motor vehicle without a muffler" and "permitting goats to run at large."

One 1943 letter from Mrs. Catherine Kennedy seeking damages from Fred Bassett, whose goats had eaten all her hay, captures the agricultural challenges of rural life.

More sobering records expose historical injustices. In 1929, 47-year-old housewife and mother Gertrude Stevens was declared insane due to menopause and was later committed to Warm Springs Insane Asylum by her own husband. Her case illustrates how women's health was pathologized and used to justify institutional confinement.

These fragments, both celebrated achievements and troubling realities, form pieces of Montana's historical puzzle. By preserving such collections, the Library and Archives team ensure these voices and experiences remain accessible to future generations.

ITEMS ADDED TO COLLECTION



ITEMS DIGITIZED



LINEAR FEET OF FILM ADDED TO COLLECTION



Historic Buildings Get New Life Through SHPO Awards and Grants

Montana's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is breathing new life into the state's architectural treasures through several initiatives that celebrate champions of preservation and provide critical funding for restoration projects across Big Sky Country.

Honoring Montana's Preservation Heroes

At the biennial Montana Historic Preservation Awards ceremony, five recipients were recognized for their exceptional contributions to safeguarding the state's historic legacy. Gary Smith, retired Bureau of Land Management Deputy Preservation Officer, and historian Joan Brownell received Outstanding Service awards, while the late Kevin Kooistra, former Western Heritage Center Executive Director, earned both the Outstanding Contribution Award and the John N. DeHaas Memorial Award.



Two remarkable building rehabilitations also earned recognition: Lewistown's Crowley Block and Glendive's Dion Block, with the latter receiving the Montana Historic Preservation Governor's Award. The ceremony also celebrated 25 properties from 18 counties newly listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

"Montana's diverse history and abundant historic places fascinate not only Montanans but serve as an important tourist draw," noted Montana National Register Coordinator John Boughton. "This biennial ceremony highlights how preservation efforts strengthen both cultural identity and economic vitality in our state."

Inaugural Grants Breathe Life into Historic Buildings

The newly launched SHPO Grant program was christened with a demonstration of overwhelming community need, receiving 32 applications that totaled over \$2.2 million in requests. The State Historic Preservation Office had \$155,000 in available funding to distribute, which made the selection process highly competitive. Projects that were prioritized for funding included those that proposed reactivation of underutilized historic buildings for community and tourism purposes.

Of the 32 applicants, four diverse properties were chosen to receive inaugural funding.

- ▶ Dayton's bank building from 1913 will get essential roof and flooring repairs after flood damage.
- ▶ Terry's 1906 Prairie County Museum will undergo comprehensive foundation and structural work.
- ▶ Virginia City's 1876 schoolhouse begins its transformation into a year-round arts education center.
- ▶ Helena's Western Clay Manufacturing Tile Plant on the Archie Bray Foundation campus will become an exhibit and meeting space.

"Sometimes these buildings are architecturally stunning, sometimes they are more quotidian. But each of them is important to Montana history."

Lindsay Tran
Historic Architecture Specialist





Master Craftsman Restores Rare Friendship Doll

In June, the Society welcomed a distinguished visitor from Japan: Masaru Aoki, a master craftsman who has dedicated over four decades to preserving Japanese Friendship Dolls. Aoki traveled to Montana specifically to restore Miss Ishikawa, a remarkable 98-year-old doll that has called the state home since 1928.

Miss Ishikawa is one of just 58 Japanese Friendship Dolls created in 1927 as part of a diplomatic exchange between Japan and the United States. Today, only 46 of these cultural ambassadors are known to survive, making Montana's doll an increasingly precious artifact of international cooperation.

Aoki, who has restored dozens of Japanese Friendship Dolls throughout his career, approaches his work with deep reverence. "She's like my granddaughter," he said of Miss Ishikawa, reflecting the personal connection he feels to each doll he encounters.

The restoration expert began his career immediately after university at the Yoshitoku Doll Company, a Japanese business that dates to the 1700s and played an instrumental role in the original Friendship Doll exchange. His first involvement with the dolls came in 1983, when two dolls were sent to Japan for a special exhibition, beginning what would become his life's work.

Working with brushes given to him by his teacher and using traditional recipes passed down through generations, Aoki represents a direct lineage to

the original doll makers. His teacher's father created 12 of the original Friendship Dolls, making Aoki's restoration work a continuation of nearly century-old craftsmanship traditions.

The Need for Repair

Montana's dry climate has taken its toll on Miss Ishikawa over the decades, causing cracks to form in her delicate structure. The doll is constructed with a wooden core covered in 25 hand-applied layers of "gofun"—a traditional Japanese material made from crushed oyster shells and animal glue that creates the doll's distinctive features.

"Typically, dolls would be flown to him in Japan and would take six months or more to repair," explained Alan Pate, the foremost authority on Friendship Dolls who accompanied Aoki to Montana. Instead, Aoki was flown to the Montana Heritage Center, where he completed the restoration work in just five days using an accelerated timeline.

The restoration comes at a crucial moment. In 2027, the 100th anniversary of the Friendship Dolls' creation will be celebrated with a special exhibit planned in Norfolk, Virginia. The hope is that Miss Ishikawa will participate in this centennial celebration, making her restoration both well-timed and essential.

"The doll will need time to rest before being exhibited, so it is a timely restoration," noted Heather Doyle, conservation specialist. Doyle further noted that the museum team is considering giving Miss Ishikawa her own display case to better protect and showcase this unique piece of Montana's cultural heritage.

A Diplomatic Mission

The Friendship Doll exchange began in 1927 during a period of significant tension between the United States and Japan. Just three years after the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited Japanese immigration, Reverend Sydney Gulick conceived the idea of improving relations through cultural understanding among children.

The United States first sent over 12,000 "Blue-Eyed Dolls" to Japan in March 1927. The gesture was so well-received that Japan commissioned 58 special dolls in return, each representing a Japanese prefecture and standing exactly 33 inches tall to approximate the height of a small child.

Miss Ishikawa arrived in Montana through the work of local advocate Ruth Bowman and toured several areas in the Northwest and Montana, including stops in Havre, Helena, Great Falls, and Missoula before joining the Society's permanent collection in 1928.

What makes Miss Ishikawa particularly special is her completeness. She arrived with a 60-piece lacquer trousseau, and the Society has preserved nearly all of the pieces—one of the most complete doll sets still remaining in good condition.

"This is a testament to Montana's conservatorship," noted Pate, praising the Society's commitment to preserving this piece of international history.

The dolls were treated as dignitaries during their original journey, complete with passports and formal receptions. Baron Matsudaira, the Japanese ambassador in 1927, said of them: "These dolls are silent; they do not talk, but sometimes silence is more eloquent than speech. When one's heart is filled with emotion, one often loses speech. So these dolls silently tell you of the friendly feeling which the children of Japan have for the children of America."

While the goodwill generated by the original doll exchange proved short-lived—the children who participated in 1927 would later fight each other in World War II—the surviving dolls have taken on new significance in recent decades as symbols of the enduring possibility of international friendship and cultural understanding.

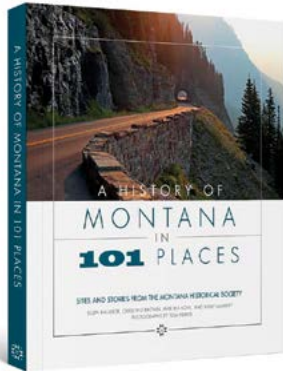
Miss Ishikawa stands as Montana's sole Friendship Doll, a unique ambassador of peace in a collection that continues to inspire visitors nearly a century after her arrival. With her restoration complete, she's ready to continue her mission of cultural diplomacy for generations to come.



Releases from the Montana Historical Society Press

The Montana Historical Society Press released three new books in the last year, thanks to the hard work of our authors and the diligence of the Publications staff.

New Titles Include:

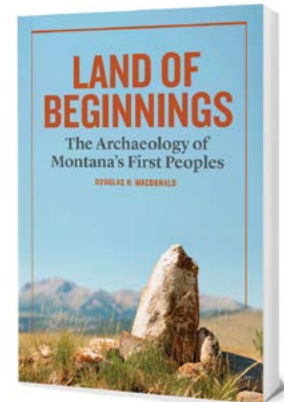
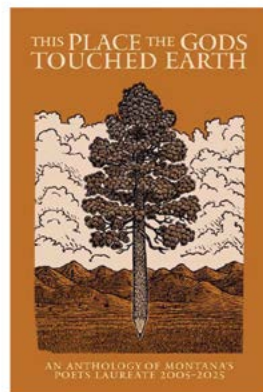


A History of Montana in 101 Places: Sites and Stories from the Montana Historical Society

This book takes readers on a wide-ranging tour of Montana, tracing its complex past along the way. Written by current and former MTHS staff members Ellen Baumler, Christine Brown, Martha Kohl, and Kirby Lambert and featuring beautiful original photography by Tom Ferris, this carefully crafted exploration of Montana's built environment and cultural sites tells the state's history through a unique lens.

This Place the Gods Touched Earth: Poetry by Montana's Poets Laureate, 2005-2025

Since 2005, eleven Montana poets have been chosen by our state to speak to us with the voice of the land, the rivers, the wind, the stars—and that quiet, persistent voice of poetry itself. Edited by Krys Holmes and Eric Heidle of the Montana Arts Council, this book presents selected poetry from some of Montana's finest voices.



Land of Beginnings: The Archaeology of Montana's First Peoples

Archaeologist Douglas H. MacDonald asked some major questions while writing this book: How long have people lived in the place we call Montana? When did they arrive? Where did they come from? Delving into the deep history of Montana, MacDonald details some of the state's most important archaeology sites and describes the methods used to determine their age and origin.

Love Montana History?

Visit our online gift shop at mths.mt.gov/store

Due to moving and the implementation of a new online store, The Gift Shop will temporarily close on October 17 and reopen in late November.

TAX CREDIT PROJECTS REVIEWED



PRESERVATION PROJECTS



NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS



NATIONAL REGISTER SIGNS



CHILDREN USING FOOTLOCKERS



HISTORY CONFERENCE ATTENDEES



TRIBAL STAKEHOLDERS



THPO ENGAGEMENT



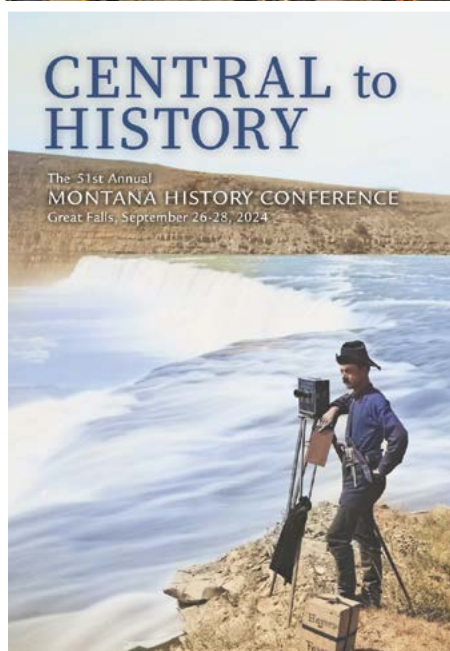
CENTENNIAL FARM & RANCH LISTINGS



The Montana 250th Commission

The Montana 250th Commission was allocated \$1,000,000 to be used to support statewide efforts to commemorate America's 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026. The commission plans to use the money in a variety of ways to support communities and organizations across Montana who are working to deepen understanding of Montana's history, culture, and heritage in connection with the nation's semiquincentennial. Grants and sponsorships provided by the 250 Commission will be open to community applicants over the coming year. For more details, visit america250mt.org.





Engaging Montanans

Explore History – Take a Tour

The Montana Historical Society offers guided tours of the Original Governor’s Mansion (OGM) and the Capitol building several times throughout the day, all year long. In 2024, more than 12,463 people toured these two venues, including 5,265 youth on 125 field trips from 40 Montana counties.

Museum Education Officer Darby Bramble is now training new tour staff in preparation for the opening of the Montana Heritage Center. Beginning in February of 2026, in addition to the Capitol and OGM, curated tours of the Montana Homeland Gallery and Charles M. Russell Gallery will be offered multiple times daily. Bramble is also preparing for increased student visits in 2026 with the launch of a field trip grant program to assist schools with travel costs, funded through the History & Civics Education Endowment and a grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana. Research shows that such field trips help students retain knowledge and connect classroom lessons to real-world experiences.

Tours are free and times vary, depending on the season. You can support school field trips by donating to the History & Civics Education Endowment at mths.mt.gov/about/donate.



Free tours!
[mths.mt.gov/
education/Tours](https://mths.mt.gov/education/Tours)

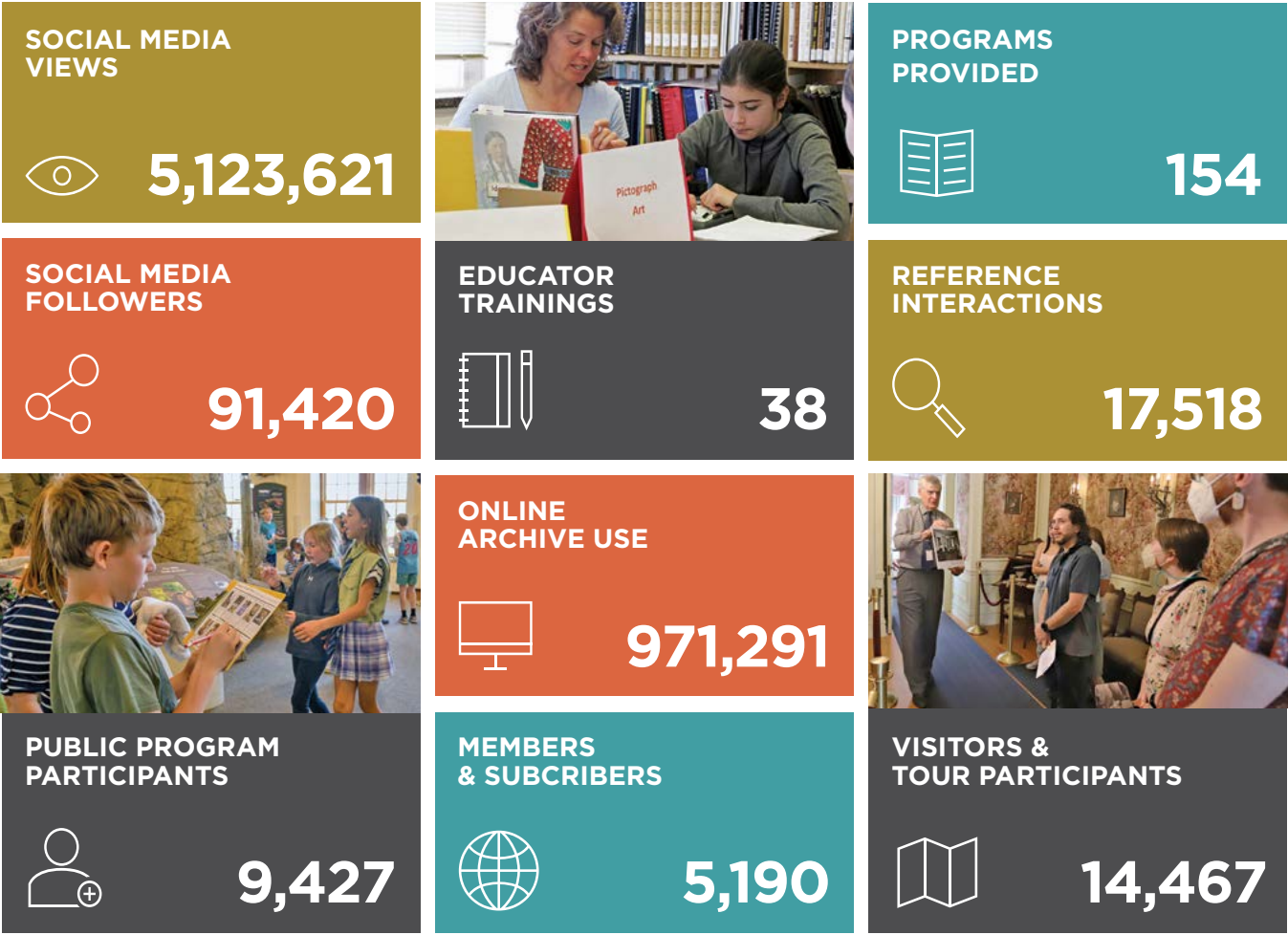
Central to History

“Central to History,” the 51st Annual Montana History Conference, took place in Great Falls September 26–28, 2024. With 450 attendees, it was the most successful conference to date. Of those, 284 joined pre-conference workshops and tours, while 147 took part in post-conference activities.

Field trips included the ever-popular Made in Montana visit to Black Eagle Dam and Grizzly Saddlery, an all-day exploration of Fort Benton—the “Birthplace of Montana”—and excursions to community landmarks such as the C.M. Russell Studio, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, and Malmstrom Air Force Base. These experiences deepened participants’ sense of place and highlighted local treasures.

Workshops served writers, educators, archivists, and genealogists, while post-conference offerings ranged from a historic district tour of nearby towns to visits at the Brother Van Museum and the Russell Honeymoon Cabin. A Thursday evening reception at the History Museum & Research Center, hosted by the Cascade County Historical Society, welcomed participants and set the stage for two days of engaging sessions.

The 52nd Montana History Conference, “A Place in Time,” was held in Helena, September 25–27, 2025.



The Heart of Our Work

Montana Historical Society Volunteers

The Montana Historical Society relies on the time, skills, and dedication of volunteers to help preserve and share the rich history of our state. From administrative support to cataloging artifacts, volunteers play a vital role in ensuring that our collections, programs, and events continue to thrive.

Volunteer Spotlight: Sue Carlson

For the past five years, Sue Carlson has been a steady and invaluable presence in the Montana Historical Society Museum Program, dedicating six hours each week to preserving and organizing Montana's history.

Sue's work began when the museum needed extra hands to prepare collections for the construction of the new Montana Heritage Center. She meticulously packed hundreds of ribbons, buttons, and pins, carefully noting their temporary locations to ensure nothing was lost during the move. She also helped pack up the museum's collection files, then unpacked and rehoused them after the transition to the new facility.

A major part of Sue's contribution has been her work in **PastPerfect**, a comprehensive software package used by museums and archives to store and organize information about artifacts, documents, photographs, and other items in their collections. In PastPerfect, Sue has:

- ▶ Updated dates and year ranges in catalog records for consistency and easier searching.
- ▶ Standardized authority fields for object materials to improve search accuracy.
- ▶ Transferred "place of origin" details from catalog card files into digital records.
- ▶ Cross-referenced old museum numbers with current object ID numbers.
- ▶ Filed hundreds of catalog document files.
- ▶ Updated thousands of home locations after the move to the Heritage Center.
- ▶ Adjusted the default viewing category—History, Art, Archaeology, Natural History, or Geology—for thousands of records to create uniformity.



While many volunteers have pitched in during the move and catalog updates, Sue's diligence, enthusiasm, and commitment have been extraordinary.

"Sue has been volunteering for me since the start of the building and renovation project! She is so dependable and conscientious—it's a pleasure to work with her," says Kendra Newhall, head of collections. "Sometimes I worry the work I give her might be too tedious, but she always assures me it's not. She enjoys what she does and is happy to do it."

Through her dedication, Sue has helped ensure that Montana's treasures are not only preserved but also easily accessible for future generations of staff, researchers, and visitors.

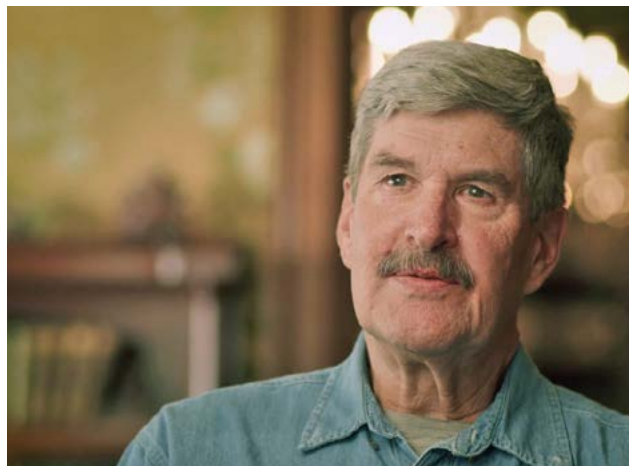
What Being a Member Means to Me

John Baucus

John describes his relationship to Montana as "probably complex," though in many ways it's beautifully simple—he's lived and ranched in the state his entire life, with roots that run generations deep. His passion for history and his decision to support the Historical Society were inspired by three influential people: his mother, his aunt, and his grandfather, Henry Sieben, who established what would become the Baucus family legacy in Montana.

For John, membership in the Historical Society represents a continuation of family tradition and values. "We support the Historical Society because of the family histories that have been given," he explained. "As a child, I remember visiting a couple of times."

That early connection sparked a lifelong commitment. "Our family wanted to support the



Society early on, and we were fortunate enough to be able to do so," John reflected.

Looking toward the future of the Historical Society, John's enthusiasm is evident. "I'm excited and intend to be at the grand opening of the new Heritage Center. It'll be fun."



Janice Hand & Rick Sanders

Janice Hand has ties to Montana that run deep. As a life member of the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers, she can trace her lineage to a blood relative who lived in Montana prior to 1868. Her husband, Rick Sanders, came to Montana from Georgia, but has developed a profound love and

appreciation for his adopted home state and its rich heritage. Their common passion for Montana and its history led them to become members of the Historical Society.

For Janice, membership represents something fundamental about the human experience. "In preserving history, there's a sense of continuity that I think is important for people to have in their lives," she explained. "To know that we're not just here to take, take, take—but that we've left something, hopefully."

Rick's perspective reflects the educational impact of what the Historical Society provides. "Having children come to museums is a good thing," he said. "The ability to learn something is terribly important and is such a great experience, especially for young people."

Together, their membership reflects both the deep roots and welcoming spirit that define Montana.

Why I Support the Montana Historical Society



Stuart and Janice Doggett are lifelong Montanans who love their home state and have spent their careers serving its people.

When the bill that appropriated funding for the Montana Heritage Center passed in 2019, the Doggetts were delighted to see Montana investing in its museums and heritage sites—a cause close to their hearts given their deep passion for preserving history and promoting culture.

Inspired by this commitment to Montana's cultural legacy, the Doggetts decided to make their own contribution to help complete the Montana Heritage Center project, ensuring that future generations would have a world-class facility to explore and understand their state's rich heritage.

"I think a sense of history helps us understand who we are and who the people around us are," explained Janice. "That sense of our own culture and our own history helps inform us."

Stuart sees the Historical Society's mission as deeply personal. "I see the Historical Society as an opportunity to tell the story of pioneers like Moses Doggett and others who came here—the struggles they had, the successes they had, and the difference they've made in Montana."

For the Doggetts, supporting the Montana Heritage Center represents more than preserving artifacts. Their support is about honoring the people and stories that built Montana while inspiring future generations to understand their connection to this remarkable place.

Membership

Free Admission & Exciting Membership Updates

When you visit the Montana Heritage Center, you'll walk through the doors free of charge. As Montana's state history museum, we believe it's our honor to serve Montanans—and all our visitors—by ensuring everyone has the opportunity to explore our state's rich history.

With this change, the Montana Historical Society has reimagined its membership program to better serve our closest supporters—you! Guided by feedback from a recent patron survey, we've made changes that both honor tradition and add fresh opportunities.

We've renamed our membership levels to reflect Montana's natural treasures: **Copper, Garnet, Sapphire, Silver, and Gold**. While the names are new, your core benefits remain the same.

We're also refreshing our look with redesigned renewal forms, updated membership cards, and some fun new swag just for members. We can't wait for you to join us on this exciting new chapter!



Become a member today!
mths.mt.gov/JoinGive/Membership

	SUBSCRIBER	COPPER	GARNET	SAPPHIRE	SILVER	GOLD
Membership Levels & Benefits						
<i>Montana The Magazine of Western History</i> subscription (Print & digital)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15% OFF eligible items at The Gift Shop		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MTHS annual calendar		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personalized membership card		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Society Bulletin</i> quarterly newsletter		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discounts at affiliated Time Travelers' Museums		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Priority registration on ticketed events		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gallery and exhibit pre-opening events			✓	✓	✓	✓
Special member-only events			✓	✓	✓	✓
2 guided tours of the Montana Homeland Gallery or Original Governor's Mansion			✓	✓		
4 guided tours of the Montana Homeland Gallery or Original Governor's Mansion					✓	✓
Name listed in <i>Montana The Magazine of Western History</i>				✓	✓	✓
20% OFF MT History Conference registration				✓	✓	✓
One FREE MTHS press book				✓	✓	✓
Curated behind-the-scenes tours of our collections (By appointment)					✓	✓
VIP early entry to exhibit openings					✓	✓
10% OFF room/space rentals (Visit website for details)					✓	
15% OFF room/space rentals (Visit website for details)						✓
Tax deduction (Memberships & donations are tax deductible)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	\$40	\$60	\$100	\$250	\$500	\$1000

Thank You for Your Support

It's a Wrap – \$60 Million Reached

From the bottom of our hearts—thank you.

Thousands of donors stepped forward, many giving \$50, \$100, or \$500, and a few making extraordinary gifts in the millions. Every contribution has been

"The history of Montana is important to me, and the Montana Historical Society is the major carrier of that historical aspect."

Norm Asbjornson

vital in bringing the Montana Heritage Center to fruition, and we are deeply grateful for your generosity.

When construction began in 2020, our private fundraising goal was \$10 million. But pandemic-related delays, shortages, and rising costs pushed that goal to \$40 million. At times, we feared our vision

for a five-star facility honoring Montana's history might have to be scaled back, though we remained determined to see it through.

And then, something extraordinary happened. A transformative \$25 million gift from the Dennis

and Phyllis Washington Foundation allowed us not only to continue, but to expand our vision. This generosity reimagined what the Montana Heritage Center could be—a truly immersive, world-class destination and community hub connecting thousands to Montana's dynamic history.

Shortly after, another remarkable friend of Montana's heritage stepped forward. When Winifred native Norm Asbjornson visited at the invitation of Governor Greg Gianforte, he was inspired to give more than \$10.4 million. As Mr. Asbjornson shared, "The history of Montana is important to me, and the Montana Historical Society is the major carrier of that historical aspect. I felt it was a very worthwhile donation."

This achievement belongs to everyone who gave—from the \$50 check with a handwritten note to the \$5,000 gift honoring generations of love for Montana. Each contribution carries a story and a piece of the heart that makes this place special. Together, thousands of donors have built not just a building, but a treasure-filled space where Montana's artifacts, stories, and spirit will inspire for generations.

Montana Heritage Center Project Total: \$105 Million

\$60 Million Private Funds

\$45 Million State Funds

Montana Heritage Center Donors

Donations funded the construction of the Montana Heritage Center.

\$25M

Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation

\$10.4M

Norm Asbjornson

\$5M

BNSF Railway



For a list of all the donors to the Montana Historical Society, please scan the QR code or visit mths.mt.gov/JoinGive/Donor-Recognition

\$1M–\$4,999,999

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\$250,000–\$499,999

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Montana History & Civics Education Endowment Donors

The endowment supports a grant program for Montana students to take funded educational field trips to the Montana Heritage Center and State Capitol. The grants cover transportation costs, meals and lodging, entrance fees to other cultural sites or museums, MTHS staff to help coordinate logistics, and guided experiences that connect to classroom activities. Donors at \$5,000 and above are eligible for the Montana Endowment Tax Credit.

Thank you to these generous donors:

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Mission & Program Support July 2024 - June 2025

Donations benefit the Montana Historical Society's programs and provide essential funding for services to the public.

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Learn more and donate at mths.mt.gov/donate



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