

To: MHS Board of Trustees
From: Bruce Whittenberg, Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Kirby Lambert
Date: 16 March 2019
Subject: Special heritage guardian award

We would like to nominate Dr. Larry Len Peterson for a Heritage Guardian Award. A long-time resident of Oregon, Peterson is a native of Plentywood who maintains strong ties to Montana. Most importantly, he is an avid booster and supporter of Montana art and the Montana Historical Society.

Dr. Peterson's has contributed greatly to the preservation and dissemination of Montana culture and history through the books he has written and published on historic Montana art. These books all represent an extensive commitment of time, expertise, and financial resources in researching, writing and publishing. Through these publications, Peterson has not only dedicated his efforts to well-known artists like Charlie Russell and L. A. Huffman, but he has also championed less-well-known, but extremely significant, Montana artists like John L. Clarke, John Fery, and a variety of artists working in Glacier National Park. All of these publications clearly align with the mission of MHS and fill a distinctive niche in our understanding of Montanans past.

- *Blackfeet John L. Cutapuis Clarke and the Silent Call of Glacier National Park: America's Wood Sculptor*, 2019
- *John Fery: Artist of Glacier National Park & The American West*, 2015
- *Charles M. Russell: Photographing the Legend* (The Charles M. Russell Center Series on Art and Photography of the American West), 2014
- *L. A. Huffman: Photographer of the American West*, 2013
- *Charles M Russell: Printed Rarities from Private Collections*, 2008
- *Philip R. Goodwin: America's Sporting and Wildlife Artist*, 2007
- *The Call of the Mountains: The Artists of Glacier National*, 2002
- *A Most Desperate Situation: Frontier Adventures of a Young Scout, 1858-64*, 2000
- *Charles M. Russell: Legacy*, 1999

In addition, Peterson has produced an opus that deals with the history of the treatment of Native Americans by non-Indians. This book, which has won numerous awards, is

titled *American Trinity: Jefferson, Custer, and the Spirit of the West*. It explores the origins, development, and consequences of hatred and racism from the time modern humans left Africa 100,000 years ago to the forced placement of Indian children on off-reservation schools far from home in the late 1800s. Along the way, dozens of notable individuals and cultures are profiled. Many historical events turned on the lives of legendary Americans like the "Father of the West" Thomas Jefferson, and the "Son of the West" George Armstrong Custer— two strange companions who shared an unshakable sense of their own skills—as their interpretation of truths motivated them in the winning of the West.

Not only has Peterson produced these books, in several instances he has donated the proceeds from these publications to different MHS causes. Most recently, he donated the royalties from *American Trinity* to MHS “to provide travel scholarships for reservation schools to bring students to Helena to visit the Society.” And, he is donating royalties from his new book on John L. Clarke to MHS “to benefit art-related exhibits.” Not only do the monies greatly aid the designated the causes, the prominent endorsement of MHS in these publications provides an invaluable “advertisement” for the worthiness of the Society and its efforts.

Peterson’s befriending of MHS is ongoing and extensive. In addition to the above-mentioned support, he has donated multiple copies of both *Photographing the Legend* and *American Trinity* to the O&I Program to distribute to classrooms and school libraries around the state. He presents public programs at MHS and other venues. And he enthusiastically boosts for MHS, our resources, and our staff at venues ranging from the C. M. Russell Museum in Great Falls to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.

The contributions that Peterson has made to MHS and Montana history, and the spirit in which he has made them, qualify him as a true Heritage Guardian. We heartily encourage the Board to endorse this nomination.

Thank you for your consideration.