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**Montana**  
**Historical Society**

**MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES'**  
**HERITAGE KEEPER & HERITAGE GUARDIAN AWARD**

**NOMINATION FORM**

**ABOUT THE NOMINEE**

Name of Nominee Nick Shrauger  
Address 7825 Gooch Hill Road, Bozeman, MT 59718  
Phone Numbers 406-539-3360  
E-mail mtnick54@gmail.com

**ABOUT YOU**

In case we need more information about your nominee.

Nomination Submitted by Paul F. Christenot  
Address 2400 Durston Rd, Bozeman, MT 59718  
Phone Number 406-556-1133, cell 451-4686  
E-mail pfcltc@aol.com  
Date Nomination Submitted Mar 18, 2019

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**Return** completed form, narrative & support documents **by March 16, 2019**  
to: **Heritage Keeper Awards Chair**  
**Montana Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 201201, 225 North Roberts**  
**Helena, MT 59620-1201**

Or e-mail to: Joy Lewis, [jlewis@mt.gov](mailto:jlewis@mt.gov) , or FAX to: 406-444-2696.  
For information call: 406-444-1799

Paul F. Christenot  
2400 Durston Rd #68  
Bozeman , MT 59718

March 14, 2019

Heritage Keeper Awards Chair  
Montana Historical Society  
P.B. 201201, 225 North Roberts  
Helena, MT 59620-1201

I would like to introduce Nick Schrauger for consideration the Heritage Keeper & Heritage Guardian Award. I did not know Nick until 25 years ago when he stumbled upon the mill site and did the research to put together the Christenot family tree with nine children.

Nick is a retired Electrical Engineer professor at Montana State University and research and attention to detail is his quality. From the nine children, he put together a family tree with 320 mailing address's and established The Christenot Chronicle Newsletter published twice each year. He coordinates with BLM and organizes work crews each year for maintenance and cleaning up the of the mill site. He established family reunions every three years with Virginia City on the calendar every sixth year. Most importantly Nick was instrumental in getting the mill on the National Register of Historic Places. Nick is well deserving of Heritage Keeper & Heritage Guardian Award.

Respectfully Your,



Paul F. Christenot

Attachments:

- 1 Contributions
- 2 Strengths & Impacts
- 3 Biographical Sketch
- 4 News Paper Article (mailed)

## Contributions to Montana History

This nomination centers on the contributions of the Christenot Family to stabilize and maintain remains of a unique and historic 1866 gold crushing mill located at Union City in Alder Gulch. The Christenot Family has partnered with the BLM for more than 25 years to insure this significant artifact is preserved for future generations. This achievement is largely due to Nick Shrauger's research and leadership.

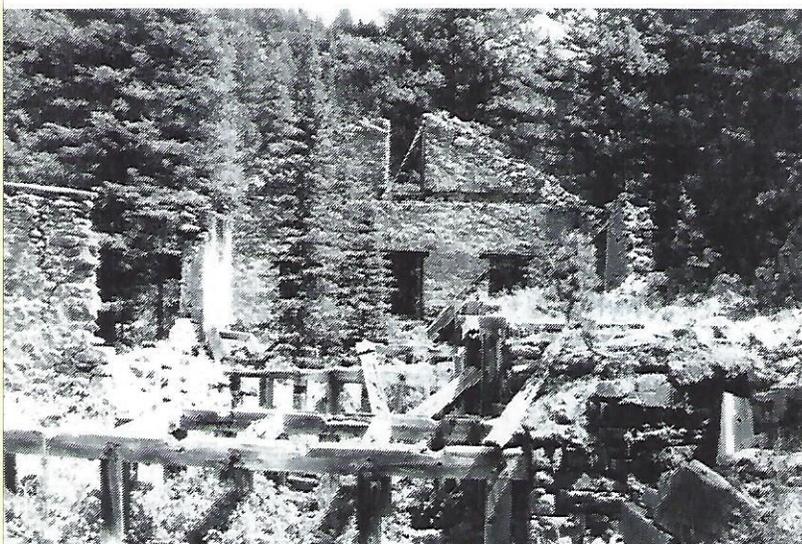
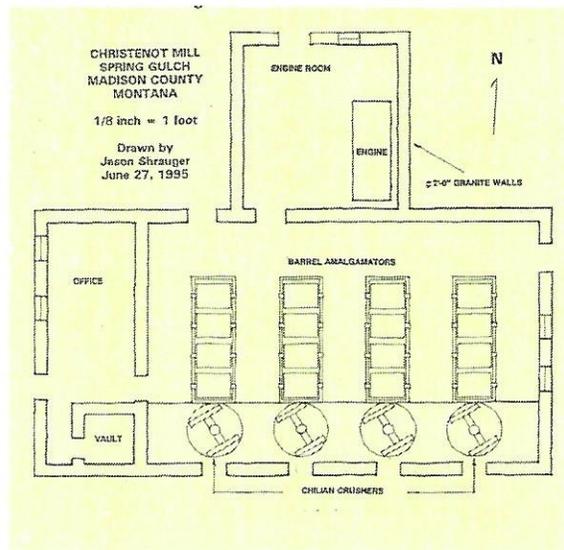
Benjamin F. Christenot arrived in Alder Gulch in 1863 and began acquiring mining properties, including claims on the Oro Cache lode above Union City. (He was associated there with Nelson Story). In the winter of 1865 he operated a primitive arastra at the Oro Cache. He realized crushing machinery was needed. Through his vision and efforts he acquired 87 mining properties. These were sold to Pennsylvania investors who provided \$250,000 to build a mill. The Christenot Mill was established in the October of 1866 after 81 tons of mining machinery reached Union City by ox train.

Nick's research shows the path of the machinery from Pittsburgh to the mill site, first traveling by river boat and then transported overland by wagon. Fifty-two wagons left Nebraska City, NE bound for Alder Gulch, forty-two carried machinery, 5 wagons were devoted to provisions and 5 for founder Benjamin F. Christenot. Benjamin did not travel with the train, but other family members did including his brother <sup>Charles</sup> and sister-in-law Martha, Nick's GG Grandparents.

A substantial stone building was constructed for the machinery. It is constructed of undressed, random laid stone from 21 to 24 inches thick. Roughly-dressed quoins laid in a header and stretcher pattern reinforce the building's exterior corners. Segmental arches over the openings carry the superimposed weight of the stone walls. The arched window frames are constructed of rough planks fastened with cut nails. The stone edges of each window opening are slightly tapered to give a more finished look. Many such details attest to the quality of craftsmanship used in construction and the need for preservation.

Significant existing mill features include timber structures that held Chilian Roller machinery. This is the only example of those machines used in that era. The Montana Post (7-20-1867) stated: "The mill is known as the "Chilian", and if one can picture four great iron saucers, with two ponderous iron wheels, like immense (circular) cheese-boxes, weighing nearly two tons each, traveling around within the saucer in an endless effort to overtake each other, they have a fair conception of the Chilian Crushers." While these were likely considered state of the art, they were tall, heavy, and wide requiring specially built wagons for transport.

There was hardly anything pertaining to the Christenot Mill that came easy. The story of the Mill and the family who started it provides a rich testament of early Montana settlers. It also chronicles the importance of gold in Montana and those who invested in mining.



Plan view based upon existing structures

Pre-stabilization photo (ca 1992). Note trees "inside" mill building  
Barrel Amalgamator support structures are in foreground.

## Preservation and Education

Nominee Nick Shrauger's work has accomplished significant historical preservation and educational achievements in historic gold mining activities in Alder Gulch.

What began in 1994 as an effort to understand family involvement in the Christenot Mill has resulted in a 25 year adventure that provides an 1860's history of Montana hard rock mining investment, construction, and failure. This odyssey has not only united the Christenot Family with a common goal of stabilization and preservation of the Christenot Mill, but has also joined the Montana Historical Society and BLM in Historical Registration of the Mill, and the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, Montana Ghost Town Society and others in education and preservation of Alder Gulch hard rock mining history.

Mill visitors often wonder aloud about the quality of the building and ask how and why such a magnificent structure was constructed in such a remote place. (More than 2,895 visits from 263 American communities and 13 countries have been recorded.) The Historical Register sign provides some tantalizing facts, but the story is much more.

These walls represent a story of capital investment, a concept which provided private individuals an opportunity to invest money for the promise of a good return. To be sure, the Montana Gold and Silver Mining Company (MGSMC)-- incorporated in Pennsylvania--, was not the first capital adventure in Alder Gulch. It is however, the most understood based on Nick's efforts, and thus becomes a conduit to understanding early hard rock mining investment in Montana.

Nick's research has identified MGSMC investors, traced the mill machinery (the only Chillian Crushers in the Gulch at that time) from Philadelphia, to Nebraska City on the steamship Nile, across the Overland and on to the Bozeman Trail via ox wagons to Union City. Indeed, Nick traveled by covered wagon from FT. Laramie to Virginia City in 2001. He followed the 1866 diary of Thomas Creigh, the manager of the MGSMC ox train, to obtain a better understanding of the journey.

Union City, the site of the mill, is well documented by A.K. McClure in Three Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains, and pictured by A.E. Mathews in Pencil Sketches of Montana. They show Union City to be a "company town" whose sole purpose was to house mill workers. There were no stores or saloons. It consisted only of the Mill and some small cabins (housing an estimated population of 50) and a frame home for the mill manager. As such, it may be the first company town in Montana.

The Mill story is interesting and compelling. In terms of education, Nick has written articles, conducted educational tours, and given presentations for several groups including BLM, Montana Historical Society, Virginia City Preservation, Montana Ghost Town Society, 4-H, Pioneer Museum, National Stage Coach and Wagon Association, and Backroads of Montana (PBS). He also helped editor Susan Badger Doyle in interpretation of the Thomas Creigh Diary (Journeys to the Land of Gold), and Bill Neal who produced the map "Gold in Historic Alder Gulch".



Unstabilized West Wall, 1992



West wall during stabilization, 1994

**CHRISTENOT MILL STABILIZATION VIEWS**



I-r Gale and brother Ken Christenot--1996



Gale Christenot and rebuilt west window frame -1999



Christenot Mill Preservation Association family and Friends  
National Historic Register Sign Installation—1999



John Ellingson, Mill Stabilization Worker --1999  
Note newly installed door frame and sill, North Wall of Boiler room

## Biography

Nick Shrauger was born in Butte. Growing up he learned that his maternal Great Grandfather George Staudaher arrived in Bannack in 1863. This triggered his interest in Montana History. While attending high school in Deer Lodge (1953) he subscribed to a relatively new history publication: Montana, The Magazine of Western History. From this he learned of Montana's historical ambiance including Native Americans, Lewis & Clark, fur trading, gold rushes, cattle drives & cowboys, Bozeman Trail, army battles, and railroading. (It wasn't until age 62 that he learned his Christenot ancestors arrived via the Bozeman Trail.)

Montana History has become a lifelong passion for Nick. In high school he serviced passenger trains for the Milwaukee Railroad. His paper "The Railroad Boys at Deer Lodge" was published by the Milwaukee Road Historical Association (2010). In 1958-59 he lived in the Maudlow School while attending Montana State College. That year he enrolled in Dr. Merrill Burlingame's Montana History course. His first history paper "A History of the Maudlow Area" (1959) fulfilled a class requirement. (Nick later authored "The Maudlow School", published in The Pioneer Museum Quarterly, (autumn 2006). Other history papers include "The Sign of the Big Boot" about Helena's Boot Maker Nick Millen, The Rocky Mountain Gas Model Club, a story of 1939-1945 Model Airplane Clubs in Bozeman, (both 1997), and "Frank Esler, Bozeman Saddle Maker" (1999).

Nick first learned of the Christenot Mill from newspaper clippings saved by his mother. This led to his considerable interest and research in the Christenot Mill. Nick's first paper on the Mill was "B.F. Christenot, Where Are You?" (1995). It reported what was then known about Nick's GG Uncle who amassed 87 Alder Gulch mining properties that were acquired by MGSME investors. This indenture was for \$1.41 million!! (Madison County Clerk and Recorder book N, pp216-425). In 1998 "The Christenot Mill" and "Union City" were published in the Montana Ghost Town Quarterly (1998).

The first organized Christenot Family tour to the Mill was led by Nick in 1995. Family members agreed to help protect and stabilize the mill building and the Christenot Mill Preservation Association was formed to work with the BLM. This resulted 8 work parties from 1997-2015.

Nick was honored to accept the 1999 Certificate of Registration of Union City on the National Register of Historic Places from Governor Judy Martz on behalf of BLM for his research and writing of the application.

In 2001 Nick followed Bozeman Trail on a wagon train from Ft. Laramie, WY to Virginia City a distance of over 600 miles. He related some experiences from his diary with comparisons to the 1866 Thomas Creigh diary in "Bozeman Trail Revisited" (Gallatin Historical Society, 2003). He helped author Phyllis Smith understand Mill history for her book "Montana's Madison County" (2006). In November 1995 Nick and other family members received an award from the Virginia City Preservation Alliance for Mill protection and stabilization.



Nick Shrauger accepting Union City Registration Certificate from Governor Judy Martz, Jan 16, 2001



# Montana Historical Society

Historic Preservation Office

1410 8th Avenue • PO Box 201202 • Helena, MT 59620-1202 • (406) 444-7715 • FAX (406) 444-6575

April 15, 1998

Mr. Nick Shrauger  
7825 Gooch Hill Road  
Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dear Nick:

The Union City/Christenot Mill National Register Nomination will be presented to the State Historic Preservation Review Board on June 8 at Chico Hot Springs. You will receive an official notice of the meeting the first of next month. In the meantime, I wanted to give you a chance to review and comment on the nomination prior to it being send out with the meeting notice. I moved some things around, deleted some items, and added others.

I am fascinated by McClure's book and keep wondering whether he is describing mining and milling in general, or specifically as it relates to the Christenot Mill and Oro Cache mine. One thing I wanted to point out is that Christenot was in Philadelphia on April 4, 1866. The indenture says "Benjamin F. Christenot *who at present is sojourning* in the City of Philadelphia ... ."

This nomination has been especially fun since we are also nominating another 1867 property at the next review board--the Union League of America Hall, formerly in Diamond City, now in White Sulphur Springs. Interestingly, A.K. McClure was a member of the Union League of Philadelphia and Wilbur Fisk Sanders was a founder of the League in Bannack in 1863. I wrote the Union League of Philadelphia with several questions, including whether they had any information on McClure and his western trip (they maintain an extensive library), but haven't heard back.

Did you try to get the articles of incorporation for the Montana Gold and Silver Mining Company from Pennsylvania? I would be interested in seeing who the stockholders and bondholders were. Did you know that the Montana Territorial Legislature incorporated a Montana Gold and Silver Mining Company in 1865? I don't know that there is any relationship between the two, but Wilbur F. Sanders was involved. It had the power to establish an office in New York City.

Anyway, your research was exhaustive! This will be one of the longest, single property nominations we've submitted.

I need to mail notices of the meeting sometime the first of May, so if I could get your comments within a week or so, I'd appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Lon Johnson, Coordinator  
National Register of Historic Places