

Paxson Diaries an Artist's History of Early Montana

Edgar Paxson came to Montana in 1877 and worked for a stagecoach line, was a backcountry guide, became an itinerant sign painter, researched the Battle of the Little Big Horn, was a 1st Lt. in the 1st Montana Infantry in the Spanish American War, and became a famous Montana artist.

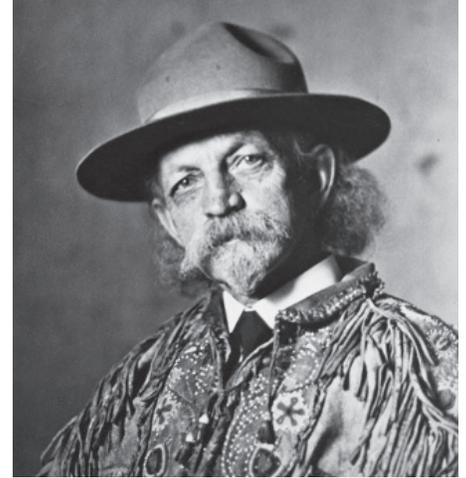


Marion Preston (left) and Bill Paxson with their great grandfather's diaries on the table.

He lived the early Montana story. Now you can relive his daily experiences from 1898 to 1919 through the 22 detailed and well written daily diaries that have been donated to the Montana Historical Society.

"This is an excellent look into the life of a famous Montana and western artist who was building his reputation and mastering his craft as Montana emerged in the 20th century," MHS Senior Archivist Rich Aarstad said.

The diaries were donated by the great grandchildren of Paxson who are William E. Paxson, Marion Preston and Laura Ericsson.



Edgar Paxson's diaries of frontier Montana now part of MHS collection.

Paxson Diaries (cont. on p. 4)

Greater Montana Foundation Supports New MHS Film Archives

The Greater Montana Foundation granted another \$20,000 to the Montana Historical Society Film and Media Archives project, raising the total it has provided for the new project, which will provide a home for important visual Montana history, to \$87,000.



MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg (left) and Sid Armstrong (center) and Bill Whitsitt of the Greater Montana Foundation looking at a canister of film in the MHS archives.

The GMF funding will provide for equipment and physical environmentally controlled space for the film archives. Most importantly it will provide initial funding for a film archivist to inventory, protect and preserve film and video that is important to Montana history, MHS Research Center Manager Molly Kruckenberg said.

"Film is a fragile medium that is vulnerable to many types of decay and is easily damaged," she said. "Films and video provide a unique look into our past by capturing aspects of our history that are not otherwise preserved in photographs or on paper. Without

the help of the Greater Montana Foundation, we could not be moving forward with this project."

The latest GMF grant was a challenge grant that required MHS to raise \$10,000 to match it, which MHS raised from private sources.

Bill Whitsitt, chairman of the GMF Executive Board and a veteran broadcast journalist, said over the last several decades television and other video services have played an increasing role in gathering daily news.

"To not preserve as much of the electronic information as we can means we are ignoring a large and important part of our history," Whitsitt said.

New Archives (cont. on p. 4)

Let Your Voice Be Heard: Build the Montana Heritage Center

It's 1864, Bannack, Montana Territory. The gold rush was on in the new territory. President Abraham Lincoln created the Montana Territory with the stroke of a pen on May 26 of that year. On December 12, the first Territorial Legislature of Montana convenes. Just nine days later, the act creating the Historical Society of Montana is passed. Territorial Governor Sidney Edgerton signs the act incorporating the Historical Society on February 2, 1865, over 24 years before Montana became a state. The vision of the pioneers, ranchers and prospectors who settled here to create a historical society was impressive.

In 1923, the Eighteenth Legislative Assembly established the Montana Pioneer Historical Fund for the purpose of constructing a building to hold the treasures of the Treasure State. It was 1949 when Governor John Bonner, with support from the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers and the state's veterans organizations, persuaded the legislature to put the final funding in place for the Veteran's and Pioneer's Memorial Building, the first and current home of the Montana Historical Society. Construction started in 1950.

More than 65 years later, the need to care for and provide access to the collections of the Montana

Historical Society is pressing. The current facility is outdated and in constant need of repair. The ability to provide appropriate environmental conditions for important artifacts, fine art and archival material gets more difficult with each passing year. Exhibition and research space is restrictive. The need is real and it is critical. Yet Montanans and others with a connection to western history still place their trust in this institution as the collections grow literally every day and visitation has been increasing. We owe this great state better.

So, some 68 years later, this long overdue Montana Heritage Center project is before the 65th Legislature as part of the many infrastructure proposals to be considered. As this time, Gov. Steve Bullock continues to push for the new building. The issue will probably come down to the closing days of the session. We hope you are following the legislation. There is still time for you to contact your legislators and urge them to support the Montana Heritage Center.

A recent study by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana estimated, based on the experience of our neighboring states, an additional 78,000 visitors each year, increased spending of \$7.5 million per year and total economic output of \$21.5 million. Not only is this investment in the MHS necessary and important, it is an investment with a real economic return.

We know the time has come for the Montana Heritage Center to become reality. Let your voice and your pride in Montana history be heard. 🌟

SOMETHING NEW,
SOMETHING OLD

Old Beer Made New Again

Using original Montana Kessler Brewery recipes from the late 1800s in the MHS archives, Lewis and Clark Brewing Company of Helena helped celebrate MHS' 150th birthday last year in style.

Max Pigman, owner of the microbrewery, recently presented a \$1,050 check to MHS from proceeds of the sale of the beer he called "Celebrate Montana" in his tap room.

"People really loved the beer and the story behind it, and the fact that we looked back at the old documents at MHS to make it," Pigman said. He is considering doing a similar project in the future.

The Celebrate Montana beer was sold on tap only, and Pigman said it was so successful that he is "toying with the idea" of doing it again and bottling it so that it can be sold at other outlets. "We'd love to do it again - perhaps to support the new (Montana Heritage Center) project." he said. 🌟



MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg accepting check from Max Pigman.

About Us

The *Society Star* is published quarterly by the Montana Historical Society as a benefit of membership.

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Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

Author, poet and teacher James Welch and Great Falls Librarian and first black State Librarian Alma Jacobs were inducted into the Gallery of Outstanding Montanans in March. The gallery is just off the Rotunda in the State Capitol, and is worth a visit on your next trip to the Montana Historical Society.

Welch (1940-2003) was born to a Blackfeet father and a Gros Ventre mother in Browning and went on to become an internationally recognized author and poet. He won international acclaim for the award winning book "Fools Crow."

He once said Native American writers "are story tellers from a long way back."

Jacobs, (1916-1997) was born in Lewistown and grew up in Great Falls where she went on to become the first black woman to head the Great Falls Public Library and later the first black State Librarian. She also worked on many civic and civil rights organizations. With all her success she said, "I would rather concentrate on being a good librarian."

You can learn more about these and other great Montanans from



James Welch



Alma Jacobs

the past in the Capitol.

You can also log on to www.montanahistoricalsociety.org where these and other past honorees are listed. 🌐

Natasha Hollenbach: EXTRA! EXTRA! Read About Her

Natasha Hollenbach delivers Montana newspapers to you.

It's not like she throws them on your porch or in the bushes, though. It's way more complicated than that.

As Montana Historical Society Digital Services Technician, Hollenbach organizes, reviews and puts online historic newspapers that can be viewed, downloaded or printed by you at home. She also makes them easier for you to search for the things that interest you.

"The most important thing in planning a project is figuring out why you are doing it," she said. MHS has about 98 percent of all the newspapers ever published in Montana, and less than 5 percent of them are now digitized.

As technologies change and more and more information exists only electronically, Hollenbach said it is also important to anticipate ways to preserve information so that it remains retrievable for future generations.

Of course, she gets to read and see things in newspapers that most of us will never come across. One of the things that caught her eye as she



Natasha Hollenbach reading the news from decades ago in the MHS Library.

scanned the 1911 Roundup Record was a cartoon with a household fly in front of the bench of "Judge Science" holding a long list of "crimes."

"I wondered why are they condemning the little fly to death," she said. That became the topic of one of her favorite "Montana History Revealed" blogs that you can read by clicking on the blog icon on the MHS home page.

Hollenbach coordinates the popular blog site, and she said it gives the staff a chance to share some of the interesting and unique things that they come across in their daily jobs. "Writing the blog gives

you a reason to spend a couple of hours on something that interests you, so that you can share it with the entire MHS audience," she said.

Hollenbach has an interesting history of her own. She grew up in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where her father was a scientist in the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. "One of his projects was to make the computer codes to make sure the things they worked on don't go boom," she said with a laugh.

Her mom was an avid historian, and combined with her dad's job she said, "I grew up with computers and asking questions."

She graduated with a double major in psychology and history from St. Mary's College of Maryland, and got her masters in information sciences for the University of Tennessee. She used her keen reasoning skills to land her first full-time job in 2014 at MHS by making a list of the states that didn't have a college with a library master's degree.

We are lucky to have her on staff putting her skills to work for Montana. 🌐

Paxson Diaries (cont. from p. 1)

One of William Paxson's favorite stories is of his great grandfather's friend and fellow artist Charlie Russell arriving late one night at Paxson's home and rolling up in his bedroll so he wouldn't awaken his friend. "When he got up and went out on his front porch the next morning there was Charlie Russell asleep," William said.

Paxson chronicled the frontier life and Native American people in his artwork that remains popular today.

"Even if Paxson hadn't become a renowned artist this would still be an impressive collection of diaries," Aarstad said. "That his family chose to entrust their care to the Montana Historical Society for research and enjoyment of all Montanans is a tremendous gift."

Paxson was a strong patriot. "He started his diaries right after the sinking of the battleship Maine in Cuba and the declaration of war against Spain," Aarstad said.

Paxson and his son, Harry, both joined the 1st Montana Infantry, which was sent to the Philippines to fight against an insurrection that broke out in the former Spanish colony.

At the conclusion of that war, Paxson created an arch in Butte that was lit by electricity for the Montanan veterans to march through.

When Montanans wanted to commission paintings for the new Montana Capitol wings, they turned to Paxson. His large murals in the entry way to the House Chambers brilliantly portray the history of Montana.

Art historians say that having the diaries of such a well-known western artist provide a unique look at the thinking and research that went into depicting the early history of the West. 🌟

MHS Loses Two Great Friends

Montana history lost two of its greatest friends in January with the deaths of Ward Shanahan (1931-2017) and George Dennison (1935-2017).

Both served as important voices on the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees and served Montana history and heritage in many ways during their lives.

Shanahan, who headed his law firm in Helena, was a long time member and past president of the MHS Trustees. He played a major role in saving the historic buildings and resources of Virginia City and Nevada City.

The historic buildings and treasures in both cities were first saved by Charles and Sue Bovey who operated them as a public attraction. In 1996, their heir and son Ford Bovey was in the process of selling the property and artifacts.

As head of the then Montana Historical Society Foundation, Shanahan worked tirelessly with this writer to take the cause of saving the best preserved gold rush town in the West nationally. He appeared in major newspaper and television news stories in major papers across the nation and on all major TV networks. The efforts raised more than \$400,000 as good faith payment to Ford Bovey to give

the Legislature time to act.

Dennison was the longest serving president of the University of Montana where he had earned



(left to right) Former MHS Director Brian Cockhill, Ward Shanahan, attorney Bill VanCanagan, then MHS lobbyist Mona Jamison, and Ford Bovey sign documents outside a bank in Ennis in 1997 that led to saving the historic resources of Virginia and Nevada Cities.

his master's degree in history in 1963, and also wrote many articles and books on Montana history. On campus he was known as a great builder. He used that experience, and was a strong voice for the planned Montana Heritage Center. "George and Ward epitomized a dedication to Montana and its history that stand as an example to all of us," MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg said. "They will be missed, but the things they have done for Montana heritage will live on." 🌟

New Archives (cont. from p. 1)

For instance, much of the recorded history of the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention was television video. "It adds to the ability of future generations to better research and understand those proceedings because they will be able to hear and see the discussions the delegates were having," he said.

Kruckenbergsaid the Media Archives will provide TV outlets and other sources a place to share and preserve their history. 🌟



Edgar Paxson did sketches like this of a battle site in the Philippines to highlight his diaries.

MHS Project Offers Insight to African American History in Montana

The Montana Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office continues to explore and document African-American history in Montana and make it available to you on line.

More than 50 properties across the state associated with the African American experience have been documented and researched over the past year across Montana, and the Preservation Office has just unveiled an updated website rich with new information on black history.

The project, funded by the National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grants Program and the Montana History Foundation, now offers everything from historic photographs to interactive maps, to family histories to buildings and sites important to black history in Montana.

The "Identifying African American Heritage Places" project was built from a previous endeavor that identified resources at the Montana Historical Society connected to black heritage. Using census information, city directories, and historic maps, historians researched many properties where African American residents lived and worked in Montana during the late nineteenth and early twentieth



Walter Dorsey, who is pictured with his daughters in about 1905, had several grocery stores in Helena including this one that is still standing today as a reminder of Black history in Montana.

centuries.

The project team focused on Helena, where they documented 26 residences, businesses, and social centers. Two of the Helena properties, the Crump-Howard House and the Dorsey Grocery and Residence, have been nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional properties were recognized statewide, from Miles City to Missoula, and from Anaconda to Havre.

"Researchers have barely scratched the surface in identifying places that convey the rich heritage of the black community," says project director Kate Hampton. "We are thrilled and so grateful to the National Park Service and the Montana History Foundation for their support, whereby scholars, families, and the public will gain a tangible link to this important aspect of our history."

Although blacks made up a small part of Montana's early population, "it's so important to recognize that multitudes of people of varied ethnicities and backgrounds came to Montana and each, in their own way, contributed to our collective culture and history," said Hampton. "Their stories are interwoven with our own."

SHPO staff worked with various professionals in completing the project. Dr. Delia Lee Hagen of Missoula led the Helena survey and wrote the National Register documents, including a comprehensive history of the black experience in Montana, particularly Helena.

Alan Thompson of Helena, himself a member of a multi-generational black Montana family, conducted five oral history interviews for the project.

Carrol College graduate and historian Anthony Wood



The African American Brass Band took a train excursion from Helena to Coeur d'Alene in 1891.

documented properties across the state, penned essays, developed interactive maps, and organized census and city directory information. And University of Montana student Diana Nettleton assisted in various aspects as the 2016 MHS Sobotka Trust intern.

The Montana Historical Society invites you to explore this exciting resource, found here: <http://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/AfricanAmericans>.



Correction for Your MHS Calendar

The caption for the February historic photograph in the 2017 MHS calendar devoted to cowboys and cowgirls is incorrect.

The rider on the bucking bronco is Marge Greenough Henson. The caption has the name of Alice Greenough, who is Marge's sister. The sisters were both expert horsewomen, and were inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

Margie, as she was also known, began her award-winning rodeo career as a Red Lodge teenager, and rode bareback, saddle broncs, and bulls until she retired in 1954. MHS thanks Marge's son and daughter in law Chuck and Nancy Henson for providing the correct identification and apologizes for the error. 

MHS Wins Grant to Chronicle Craft Brewing in Montana

Beer has flowed throughout the ages, and the Montana Historical Society is tapping into the recent history of craft brewing in the Treasure State.

MHS received a \$4,500 grant from Humanities Montana to conduct a series of oral history interviews that will record the voices of those who have been involved in the evolution of what is called craft brewing in Montana from the 1980s into the 2000s.

Anneliese Warhank, certified archivist and oral historian at MHS, will conduct and oversee the interviews that will be done over the next two years.

“Despite the fact that the actions and development of modern day breweries and the industry are often documented in news articles published by regional media outlets, these articles usually focus on a singular event, providing scant background and no follow-up to document the event’s effects,” she said.

Information on the industry generally is focuses on a single aspect from the political, economic

or social perspective, Warhank said. “This project will combine all three of these themes to provide perspective on how each theme has impacted the other two,” she said.



Anneliese Warhank with some containers of Montana microbrews.

A five-member advisory board will select the initial interviewees based on individuals who have played significant roles in the development of the craft brewing industry. MHS will host MP3 recordings of the oral histories on its digital collections website currently under development. A second phase of the project focusing on the industry from 2008 to the present will follow after completion of the first phase.

Microbreweries began to reemerge in Montana in the 1980s, and began to boom with the Legislature passing an act in 1999 that allowed for breweries to operate taprooms.

“In addition to the impact they have had on local economies from brewing to using Montana grown ingredients, the microbreweries have also drawn on history to recreate some of the beers that were popular in Montana’s past. They have become a part of community social history,” Warhank said. ⚙️

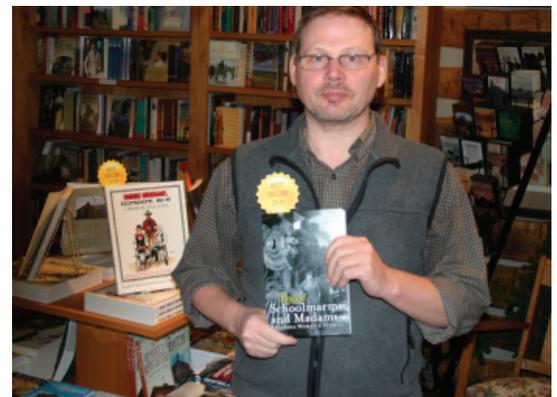
Museum Store’s 2016 Bestsellers

We know our members are the best-read readers of Montana history and heritage books.

MHS Museum Store Manager Rod Coslet’s 2016 best selling books list reflects what the people who care most about Montana history are reading. If you have any questions about the books on the list or want to order some of them, call him toll free at 1-800-243-9900 or www.mhs.mt.gov/state and use your 15% member’s discount.

Here’s the list of the MHS Museum Store’s Top 10 Best-Sellers of 2016!

1. *Beyond Schoolmarms & Madams*
2. *Immortal Irishman*
3. *Ghosts of the Last Best Place*
4. *Montana’s Charlie Russell*
5. *Haunted Helena*
6. *Rick O’Shay, Hipshot & Me*
7. *Fifty-Six Counties*
8. *People Before the Park*
9. *Blood on the Marias*
10. *The Beartooth Highway* ⚙️



MHS Museum Store Manager Rod Coslet with one of his top ten best sellers.

First Door on the Left

BY REBECCA BAUMANN, MHS MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

As we contemplate what 2017 will bring to each of us and our state and country, I hope your plans for the year include a visit to the Montana Historical Society. Your Montana Historical Society friends are here waiting to greet you and show you amazing things like the new fishing exhibit – “Hooked: Fishing in Montana.” It is a great exhibit complete with a stream to cast your line in!

The Research Center staff is always eager to help you discover

Montana’s history as well as your own. I am always amazed at what else I discover while looking for particular facts and photos! Spring will be here before you know it, and hopefully, you can stop by for a long visit and make some friends and get ideas for summer trips to historic sites and other wonders.

Your commitment to history, your interest in Montana, and your passion for knowledge are the things that inspire and enhance everything we do. Thank you for

all that you do for MHS. Montana history is fun, remarkable, entertaining, and educational - and it’s all here for you to explore!

Feel free to call, email, write, or stop and sign up your favorite person with a gift membership. Call me even if you just want to chat about Montana history. My number is (406) 444-2918 or you can email rbaumann@mt.gov. I always enjoy talking with our members! ☆

Memorial Contributions to the Montana Historical Society

Thank you to those who made remembrance gifts in support of the Montana Historical Society. Donations were received in the name of:

Lucille Balfour (1922-2016)

An Anaconda native, Lucille was a nurse in various Montana communities before becoming the Executive Director of the Montana Nurses Association and later a college nursing instructor. An avid genealogist she volunteered at MHS for many years.

Dorothy Carpenter (1928-2016)

A Texas native, Dorothy moved to Choteau in 1958 as a Shell Oil Company employee. She moved to Helena in 1962 and raised two children. She then worked at the Veterans Administration at Fort Harrison. Dorothy was a tireless volunteer at MHS.

Lester Cloninger (1931-2015)

Born in Bozeman, Lee attended MSU graduating with an Electrical Engineering degree. He served in the US Navy during the Korean War, and came home to become traffic engineer for the Montana Department of Transportation. Lee was active in the Helena American Legion Baseball program.

Edward Harold Davison (1938-2016)

Ed’s early years were spent in his hometown of Livingston. But during his life he called places like Washington, Colorado, Oregon, Ohio, Sydney and Buenos Aires home. Ed frequently returned to Montana to fish and visit Lewis and Clark historic sites—a subject on which he was an astute student.

George Dennison (1935-2017) See page 4

Robert James (Robin) Dyer, Jr. (1922-2016)

Robin was born in Gilman and grew up in Augusta. After high school Robin trained at the Curtiss-Wright Institute in LA, and worked for Douglas Aircraft. After serving in the military, he received a degree in Civil Engineering at MSU.

Patricia Hoksbergen (1944-2015)

After living many years in Washington state, Patti made her home in East Helena for over 15 years. She served as a volunteer with the Friends of the Montana Historical Society.

Gregory Lloyd Ingraham (1958-2015)

Growing up in Ronan, Greg learned to love the outdoors and Mission Mountains. He attended the University of Montana and Amherst College, and received a law degree from Gonzaga University. He was a partner

in a Ronan law firm with his father.

George Mueller (1921-2016)

A Lewistown native George was a well-known local historian, philanthropist and “curmudgeon.” After high school he attended MSU then joined the US Army during WWII. George was meteorologist with the US Weather Service in Oregon and Great Falls. He retired to Lewistown where he worked tirelessly on preserving its history.

James Nickel (1937-2015)

Dr. Jim Nickel practiced medicine in Helena for over 41 years. His interest in Montana history led him to become a volunteer with the Friends of the Montana Historical Society in his retirement.

Wenonah Poindexter (1907-1997)

Wenonah came to Montana as a teacher in Roy 1948. She taught English and drama in Roy, then in Inverness and Malta. In the early 1950s Wenonah was an actress and renowned costumer with the Virginia City Players.

Ward Shanahan (1931-2017) See page 4

Elizabeth Ann Walsh (1934-2016)

Raised in Helena, Elizabeth earned a degree in Art from Holy Names College Spokane in 1954. She was a long time MHS tour guide and volunteer. ☆

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.

Montana Historical Society

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Weaving a Story from the Past

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*We are
thankful for
our members!*



For many years a hand-made loom used on the Kraftenberg's homestead near Little Belt Creek was an interesting part of the Montana "Montana Homeland Exhibit." Museum goers would often look at the large loom and wonder how it worked. Thanks to the Helena Weavers and Spinners Guild, the loom has been "dressed" and made fully operational. Annette Cade (left) and Joanne Hall are shown at work on the loom. They used a pattern and thread just like a blanket that was made on the loom that is in the MHS collection. Stop in and see how things were made in the early days of Montana. It's reassuring to know that some people are keeping old crafts alive!