

Conservation Lab Preserves Minerva Stagecoach

The Museum Program's Conservation Lab is working on various projects for the opening of the Montana Heritage Center, including the cleaning and treatment of the "Minerva" stagecoach.

Stagecoaches like the Minerva were the primary mode of transportation within Yellowstone National Park, starting in 1886.

The Minerva will be part of the new Homeland Gallery. To prepare for its display, the museum's conservationists first assessed the stagecoach's condition, including all the metal, wood, leather, textiles, paint, and varnishes, which experience deterioration differently.

After assessing the Minerva's condition, Heather Doyle, MTHS conservation specialist, chose the best treatments. Those included using minimal intervention to stabilize its condition and prevent – or at best slow down – further damage, and be in a presentable condition for exhibit.

Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, the Museum Program manager, noted that overall the Minerva was in good condition, but some areas showed advanced UV damage, including on the wood and leather components.

"We are so appreciative of Heather's expertise that she skillfully utilizes to help ready the collections for exhibit," Bottomly-O'looney added.

In several areas, the coach's wood substrate was cracked and split, plus its seven colors of paint were faded,



The historic Minerva stagecoach before it was lovingly restored and preserved by Heather Doyle, MTHS conservation specialist.

cracking, and flaking, with ground-in dirt and grime.

The leather in the driver's box had surface dirt and staining, possibly from mold. Inside the carriage, only a single cushion remained, covered in dust and dirt. The cushion had a tear and a large rip in the back with the horsehair stuffing coming out.

Much of stagecoach's metal is in good condition, with a bit of corrosion, mud, and dirt. Conversely, areas around the axle and hubs – where oil

was added to the wheels on a regular basis – were a historical part of the Minerva that needed to be preserved.

Doyle first removed loose dirt and dust with a variety of methods, ranging from a soft brush and low-suction vacuum to cotton swabs and a natural enzyme cleaner.

She used fill to raise the level of the multiple large scrapes along the right side of the coach to match the rest of the side. Paint was then applied

"Minerva" (cont. on p. 2)

Legacy



The Montana history community lost a treasure in late 2023 with Ellen Baumlner's passing.

Ellen was a champion advocate for the preservation of Montana's historic places and built the MTHS National Register Sign program from the ground up. Each sign required detailed research into community history and the ability to tell a meaningful story in a short amount of space. Ellen's skills created a sign pro-

gram that now reaches every corner of Montana.

Many of us remember Ellen's numerous public presentations, which covered so many different aspects of Montana history. She demonstrated an exceptional capacity to connect with students and the public through her lectures, presentations, interviews, and tours. She excelled at making the past relevant, understandable, and enjoyable.

From author to researcher to storyteller, Ellen embodied what it means to be a passionate advocate for Montana history. Her work with both the Montana Historical Society and the greater Montana history community made a deep and significant impact on the Treasure State. Montanans are richer in their cultural heritage because of Ellen.



For many at the Society, the standard of excellence that Ellen set is one that we strive to attain each day. As we continue our journey toward opening the Montana Heritage Center next fall, we often consider how to make

the past relevant, understandable, and enjoyable. How do we engage all generations with Montana history? How do we ensure all Montanans see their story in our past? Are we effectively balancing authenticity and engagement?

These are tough criteria to meet. But the curators, exhibit designers, archivists, librarians, historians, and educators at MTHS are working incredibly hard to ensure we meet these challenges. Immersive exhibits that incorporate artifacts and Montana voices will help engage cross-generational, diverse audiences. They will inspire Montanans to engage with one another as they learn about Montana history. Our hope is that those conversations will provide meaning as they consider the world today, and help them create a vision for what our state and nation can be in the future.

The Montana Heritage Center will be the legacy of today's Montana Historical Society. We are working hard to ensure the experiences in that space meet the example set by Ellen in making the past relevant, understandable, and enjoyable. ▼▲▼

"Minerva" (cont. from p. 1)

in thin layers to match the colors, sub-colors, and textures of the surrounding paint.

Rips in the leather were repaired using white spunbonded, non-woven polyester fabric for backing support, followed by a combination of materials to create a flexible fill that bends with the leather. Once dried, the fill was sanded, then painted to match the existing leather.

"Conservation is so important to the preservation of Montana's historic past," Doyle said. "We appreciate everyone's help and support as we strive to preserve these wonderful artifacts for future generations to experience.

"The Minerva was such a joy to work on. The Montana Historical Society can't wait until we open our doors, so that you can see the Minerva in person." ▼▲▼

ABOUT US

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MTHS Store Temporarily Moves to Downtown Helena

The popular Montana Historical Society store is temporarily relocating to Helena's downtown Walking Mall as part of the ongoing renovations.

The store's long-term home in the Montana Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building at 225 North Roberts – across from the Montana Capitol building – is part of the \$100 million Montana Heritage Center project. The work includes a 66,000-square-foot addition, plus significant renovations to the historic 70-year-old VPMB structure.

"The store's new location, in the Securities Building on the downtown mall, opened in early March. This way we can continue to serve our patrons until we move the store into its new, larger location in the Montana Heritage Center," noted MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg.

The cost of leasing the downtown

space is covered entirely by proceeds from the store's sales; no tax dollars are involved in the move. The store is expected to lease the downtown store space until early 2025.

The Securities Building originated as the First National Bank in downtown Helena, which was the second home of Montana Territory's first bank, chartered in 1866. The bank occupied the building from its completion in 1886 to 1931. The building stands as witness to Helena's great prosperity in the 1880s.

"We look forward to serving our loyal customers with our wide range of Made in Montana products, as well as other books, gifts, cards, and posters as we go through this transition," said Dianna Berry, the store manager.

Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 101 No. Last Chance Gulch. To shop online, go to <https://app.mt.gov/shop/mhsstore/>. ▼▲▼▲



Historic Hammersley Photos Processed and Digitized

The MTHS Photograph Archives recently processed and digitized the Harold F. Hammersley Photograph Collection (Lot 054) of his early 20th-century photographs taken throughout Montana and the western United States.

The collection includes 116 black-and-white nitrate negatives, 122 photographic prints, and a 106-page album containing 495 photographs, including both black-and-white and cyanotype prints. The collection was donated to the Montana Historical Society in 2008 by Harold's son, Frederick Hammersley, a well-known American artist, and funding for the

project was granted by the Frederick Hammersley Foundation.

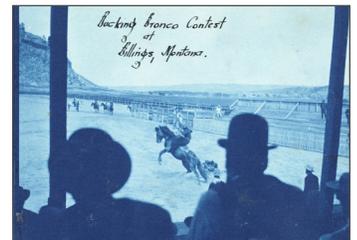
Harold Hammersley worked for the U.S. Department of the Interior for 40 years. Born in 1882, Hammersley emigrated from England to the United States in 1906 and had settled in Montana by 1907, when he began work as a clerk for the U.S. Reclamation Service.

Throughout his time in Montana, Hammersley captured scenes of his Reclamation Service coworkers and friends. Images show survey crews, wagon trains, camps, and workers constructing irrigation projects, such as the Tongue

River Irrigation Project in southeastern Montana. They also portray leisure activities of government workers, providing a view into their lives on various Indian reservations.

Other photographs show cattle roundups and rodeos, as well as portraits of cowboys, cowgirls, ranchers, farmers, and their families. The Three Circle Ranch near Birney, Montana, is the setting for many photos.

The collection also includes photographs of Reclamation Service facilities in Ballantine and Huntley, Montana, as well as the U.S. allotting agent's facilities in Browning,



Montana, and Indian allotment survey crew operations around the Blackfoot Indian Reservation. Other photos depict scenes from Oregon and Washington State.

Hammersley took many photographs of Native Americans, too, including several portraits of Northern Cheyenne and Blackfoot men, women, and children.

"Photos" (cont. on p. 4)

MTHS Complies with New NAGPRA Guidelines

When the Montana Historical Society got a phone call from a news outlet about national museums closing galleries to try to comply with new federal regulations on displaying or researching tribal cultural items under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the response was brief: We're already in compliance.

In January, the New York Times ran a news article on the American Museum of Natural History closing two major halls exhibiting Native American objects.

"Museums around the country have been covering up displays as curators scramble to determine whether they can be shown under the new regulations," the NYT noted. "The Field Museum in Chicago covered some display cases, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University said it would remove all funerary belong-

ings from exhibition and the Cleveland Museum of Art has covered up some cases. And the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York said that it had removed roughly 20 items from its musical instruments' galleries."

But the Montana Historical Society's galleries were already closed for expansion and renovations for the Montana Heritage Center project. As part of that work, the MTHS engaged a Tribal Stakeholders Group whose members have been providing invaluable insight and direction into what and how items will be exhibited and interpreted in the museum. A representative from each sovereign nation in Montana participates in the group.

"We strive to be inclusive, knowing that our Indigenous partners know far more about their stories and histories, and their practices play a part in how and what we include in our galleries,"

said Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, the Museum Program manager.

Director Molly Kruckenberg added that in October 2022, the MTHS returned ownership of the sacred white bison known as Big Medicine, which had been on display at the museum since 1961, to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at their request. The MTHS Board of Trustees unanimously approved this request.

"This was not a repatriation request under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act; instead, this decision came from discussions made on a government-to-government basis," Kruckenberg noted at the time. "The Montana Historical Society regularly seeks advice and collaboration with the sovereign nations of Montana, and this transfer of ownership reflects that positive relationship." 

"Photos" (cont. from p. 3)

MTHS staff selected many representative photos from the collection to be digitized. In all, 155 images from Hammersley's photos were added to the Montana History Portal. These can be viewed at www.mtmem-ory.org by searching for "Hammersley" and limiting the search to the "Image" item type.

Emma Brandt, a recent graduate of the University of Montana, worked as an intern on this project, accomplishing much of the processing and cataloging of the collection and descriptive work for digitization.



MTHS Seeks Heritage Keeper Nominations

The Montana Historical Society is seeking nominations for people and organizations whose exemplary commitment to identifying and preserving our historical and cultural heritage makes them eligible for the [Heritage Keeper Awards](#).

Up to two people or organizations will be honored by the MTHS Board of Trustees for the Heritage Keeper Awards. In addition, the Montana Heritage Guardian Award, given out only for special merit, recognizes one of the Heritage Keeper Award nominees with a record of outstanding accomplishments.

To qualify, the individual must be alive, and organizations must be currently active. The nominee must have demonstrated a commitment to a significant Montana history project or have identified and preserved objects or property of significance to Montana's history and culture. Organizations also must have a record of preserving and promoting Montana's historical and cultural heritage.

All nominees must show a commitment to Montana's historical and cultural preservation beyond the requirements of professional employment, or an

organization's specific goals and objectives. Evaluations will focus on the significance and impact of the overall work in enhancing, promoting, and stimulating public interest in a specific aspect of Montana history and culture.

Areas of interest can include historic building and landscape preservation, sustained historical and cultural research and publication, fine art history and preservation, and efforts to promote and educate future generations on the historical and cultural legacy of all Montanans.

The nomination deadline **"Heritage" (cont. on p. 5)**



MTHS Aids in Black Church Preservation

ADAPTED FROM A GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE NEWS ARTICLE BY REPORTER DAVID MURRAY

The Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church stands as an enduring monument to Black history in Montana, but deteriorating brick and mortar threatened to destabilize the church, potentially resulting in a structural failure.

“The bricking has started deteriorating, and falling bricks have become a hazard,” Pastor Betsy Williams recently told the Great Falls Tribune. “There’s deterioration along the foundation, and there’s been some sinking of the building. The mortar and the bricks are just coming apart.”

Because the cost to preserve and repair the old church was beyond the immediate financial means of the Union Bethel AME congregation, the church’s future seemed uncertain. But in January, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund’s Preserving Black Churches program announced it will grant \$200,000 to the Union Bethel AME Church to fund the needed mortar and brick repair.

“We created the Preserving Black Churches program to ensure the historic Black church’s legacy is told and secured. That these cultural assets can continue to foster community resilience and drive meaningful change in our society,” said Brent Leggs, executive director of the African American

Cultural Heritage Action Fund, which selected the Union Bethel AME Church as one of 31 Black churches across the country it will provide financial support to this year.

“The committee’s team of church leaders and community members, including Pastor Betsy Williams, Sister Kathy Reed, architect Ken Sievert, the Great Falls-Cascade County Historic Preservation Office’s Samantha Long, and the Montana Historical Society’s Kate Hampton and MTHS Trustee Ken Robison, submitted the grant application. Of 542 applicants, the Trust chose Union Bethel as one of 31 recipients.”

Constructed in 1891, Great Falls’ first Union Bethel AME church stood on a donated plot of marshy ground. The original church fell into disrepair by 1915 and the congregants fundraised to replace it. Local craftsmen completed the existing church in the Ecclesiastical Gothic style in 1917.

According to the Montana Historical Society, African American individuals and families arrived in Great Falls as early as 1886. Many traveled via riverboats departing from St. Louis and Kansas; others settled in the city following military assignments and associations in



nearby Forts Shaw and Assinniboine.

“With the completion of the railroad through Great Falls, new jobs and easier transportation facilitated the growth of the city’s Black community,” a Historical Society essay states. “By the 1930s, Great Falls would boast the highest percentage of Black residents of any Montana city.”

Pete Brown, the State Historic Preservation Office program manager, said that for more than a decade, Hampton has worked with the Union Bethel congregation to document its role in Montana’s history.

“The church has been the center of that community for over 100 years, and it’s an architectural gem,” Brown said. “Like all century-old buildings, Union Bethel just needs some work to keep it functioning.”

Repairs on the church are expected to begin this summer. ▼▲▼

“Heritage”

(cont. from p. 4)

is April 1, 2024. The [nomination form](#) and additional information can be found online at mhs.mt.gov by pulling down the menu under the “About” tab, then

following the link from the “Board of Trustees” page. Nominations may be resubmitted on an annual basis if the person or organization didn’t previously receive a Heritage Keeper Award.

Nominations or questions can be emailed to Jenni Carr at jenni.carr@mt.gov, or mailed to Heritage Keeper Awards Chair, Montana Historical Society, P.O. Box 201201, Helena, MT 59620-1201. The forms also can be

dropped off at the MTHS office at 225 North Roberts in Helena.

The awards will be presented by the MTHS Board of Trustees at a time and date to be decided. ▼▲▼

New Employees

Aly Arnold,

who was born and raised in Helena as a seventh-generation Montanan, is the Museum Store's new assistant manager. She also has lived in southern Oregon and on San Juan Island in Washington, but Montana called her home.



Arnold has spent most of her career in the hospitality industry, including six years at The Hawthorn Bottle Shop and Tasting Room in downtown Helena. While there she was awarded a scholarship through the Women of the Vine and Spirits, which allowed her to further her wine education. She holds a Level 3 award from the Wine Spirit Education and Trust. Arnold also works a few nights at the historic Wassweiler Dinner

House.

She is a mom to Brayden, 16, and Ashton, 12. In her downtime, Arnold enjoys a good read, working in her garden, exploring new trails, and playing on the water with her paddleboard. She also finds herself in Missoula enjoying the music scene when the right group pops in at The Wilma.

"I am delighted to start my new journey with the Montana Historical Society," Arnold said. "I have been greeted by a family of smiling faces and passionate personalities. I am so grateful to get the opportunity to grow with you all during this exciting time of major transition."

Marco Uribe, one of the new MTHS security guards, was born in East Los Angeles and left California at age 17 to join the U.S. Army. During his 21-year military career, his duties ranged from being an infantry soldier

to a combat engineer working with explosives for a Special Troops battalion. While he deployed to Iraq a few times, what stands out for Uribe is jumping from airplanes and rappelling out of helicopters – skills he enjoys even when not working.



After leaving the military, Uribe worked as an Arizona Department of Corrections officer for 20 years. He recalled that the highest-profile inmate he transported was rapper Earl Simmons a.k.a. (DMX). He also was a SWAT team member and worked in a maximum-security prison before becoming a staff instructor and self-defense instructor, with a background in martial arts

"New Employees" (cont. on p. 7)

Historical Valentine-Making Workshops for Kids and Adults

In February, the Montana Historical Society partnered with the Holter Museum of Art to put on two historical Valentine-making workshops.

Led by staff from both organizations, these events were full of smiles, learning, creativity, history, laughs, art, and new friends.

In the adult workshop, participants learned about the history of St. Valentine's Day and the tradition of exchanging messages and cards, including examples from the Victorian era, with

some from the Montana Historical Society's collections. Next, they took on the challenge of mastering the folds of "puzzle purses," which are intricately designed folded cards that made their way to North America via the Pennsylvania Dutch. Finally, participants expressed their creativity by decorating their puzzle purses with their own watercolor designs and special messages for loved ones.

The children's workshop

started off with fun historical facts about Valentine's Day. Then participants colored their own pre-folded puzzle purse templates. They also experimented with quilling, a historical art form using curled strips of paper glued onto backing. Many parents joined in the excitement by creating art alongside their kids.

To receive announcements about upcoming public programs and events for all ages, scan the adjacent QR code to join our email list. ▼▲◆



“New Employees” (cont. from p. 6)

and cage fighting.

He worked for a private prison transporting inmates for the U.S. Marshal Service and the Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency from 2018 to 2021, at which time Uribe and his family moved to Montana. He briefly worked with the Toole County Sheriff’s Office, then the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff’s Office.

Uribe worked with the sergeant at arms staff for the 2023 legislative session, followed by a stint at the Montana State Prison.

“During this time, I saw that my family needed me to be at home more, and when I saw that the MTHS was hiring for security, I jumped at the opportunity,” Uribe said. “I wanted to be with my family and not drive to Deer Lodge all the time, plus deep down I have always enjoyed history.

“It is an honor to work for this agency and everyone in it.”

Steffany Wood

is the new GIS specialist working for the State Historic Preservation Office. Her responsibilities include maintaining Montana’s cultural site records in physical, digital, and spatial repositories as well as working on special GIS projects for SHPO, such as designing story maps and building a predictive model for cultural resources in the state. She assigns Smithsonian numbers to newly recorded archaeological and historical sites and performs SHPO database data requests for consultants.

Wood is originally from Cleveland,



Ohio. She received Bachelor of Arts degrees in geography and history from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Studying digital humanities and historical GIS during college set her up to move to Helena in 2014 to work as SHPO’s cultural records assistant for two years. She worked again for SHPO temporarily in summer 2020 on a University of Montana GIS digitization project. She is currently working toward her Master of Science degree in historic preservation from Eastern Michigan University.

After living in Bozeman and Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a handful of years, she is happy to be back in Helena and working for the Montana Historical Society again. She lives in Helena with her husband, Anthony, toddler Elliott, and a rambunctious miniature schnauzer, Whittaker.



Five Montana Sites Recommended for National Register Inclusion

Five properties across Montana are being nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. All five nominations were recommended by the governor-appointed Montana Historic Preservation Review Board. The volunteer board is part of the State Historic Preservation Office.

Recommendations include:

The century-old Crystal Ice & Fuel Company Building in downtown Billings, which historically supplied both fire (coal) and ice to area residents and businesses. Even with

recent renovations, the building is a throwback to the days of charitable coal donations to the poor, threats of Teamster strikes, and offers of free ice to Spanish flu victims. The building also hosted several different businesses following its original use by the Crystal Ice & Fuel Company.

The Northern Montana College Girls Residence Hall on the Montana State University–Northern campus in Havre. Construction of the building showed the college’s serious intent to provide quality higher education along Montana’s northern tier.

It stands as an example of the Depression-era Public Works Administration program and was designed by prominent Havre architect Frank Bossuot.

The colorful, sometimes notorious three-story Baatz Block in Great Falls, which housed a former tavern/cabaret, a hotel, and apartments. Built in 1913 for \$40,000, the structure is one block south of the Great Falls Central Business Historic District.

A five-mile stretch of scenic highway that used to be part of the Yellowstone Trail in Silver Bow County, known as the Harding Way Historic District,

near Pipestone Pass. With its steep switchbacks and small pull-out areas, it represents the transition from wagons to automobiles in the 1920s and provided a needed link between Butte and Whitehall.

A Queen Anne–style long-term duplex rental that wasn’t included in the original Butte-Anaconda Historic District due to a documentation error. Built around 1895, the handsome Victorian building was home to a wide variety of Butte’s population, some staying for several decades. 



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More than 50 people gathered in Helena Feb. 12 for beers and a “soapbox” discussion about the Montana Heritage Center project. MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg and former Gov.

Steve Bullock charmed the audience at Brothers Tapworks – owned by Bullock and his brother Bill – as they discussed the status of the \$104 million project, as well as all the other work undertaken by the Montana Historical Society Staff. Bullock signed into law the bipartisan Montana Museum Act of 2020, which authorized the Montana Heritage Center.

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