

Ground Blessing Held for Montana Heritage Center

BY NOLAN LISTER

HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

The site of the new Montana Heritage Center underwent a “ground blessing” ceremony on Wednesday morning, September 2.

Steve Lozar, a member of the Montana Historical Society’s Board of Trustees and a tribal councilman with the Confederated Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d’Oreille tribes, performed the traditional blessing, known as a smudging, in front of a limited crowd that included Governor Steve Bullock, Lieutenant Governor Mike Cooney, and several state legislators.

In addition to the smudging and prayer, Lozar symbolically ingested a pinch of earth from the site, acknowledging its historical significance as a trail to traditional buffalo hunting grounds.

“We take it in as a sign of unity, that everyone who walks into this place walks in with equality, walks in with a pure heart, and finds what this ground really is,” Lozar said. “It’s a place of discovery where we discover who we are, how we connect. We can see how we’ve connected in the past. We can take joy and pride in the things we’ve collectively done well, and we can learn from our mistakes.”

Construction of the approximately \$50 million museum expansion will be completed in three phases, the first of which is parking. Phases two and three entail new



(Above) The Montana Heritage Center ground blessing included support from (from left) Representative Julie Dooling, Senators Terry Gauthier and Jill Cohenour, Governor Steve Bullock and MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg. **(Right)** Lieutenant Governor Mike Cooney, MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg and Governor Steve Bullock celebrate at the ceremonial ground blessing on September 2.

construction and a renovation of the existing space, respectively.

The project is expected to be entirely completed by early 2024.

“The Historical Society is such a special place for both Montanans and visitors,” Cooney said. “Its collections and research are priceless. It’s time we have a building that will do justice to the extensive



Ground Blessing (cont. on p. 3)

With Appreciation

It is with a great deal of emotion that I submit my 36th and final Director's Corner. By the time you read this, I will have slipped off into retirement after more than nine years as your director. In this column, you've read about the comings and goings of the Montana Historical Society, the joys and frustrations, the successes and successful failures. I would like to conclude with appreciation.

I depart with an immense appreciation for this institution, the Montana Historical Society.

- Created in 1865 by the first territorial legislature in Bannack during the wild and woolly gold rush, when Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States.
- Collections so rich and staff so skilled that visitors travel from all over the world to enjoy Montana's Museum or study in our amazing Research Center.
- Educational outreach that impacts all fifty-six counties in Montana.
- One of the great journals of western history, *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.
- A State Historic Preservation Office that is second to none in skill and professionalism.

No wonder the Montana Historical Society has been referred to as the "Smithsonian of the West."

But it's my colleagues that truly make the Montana Historical Society so special. I so appreciate our leadership team—Kirby Lambert, Jennifer Bottomly-O'looney, Diana Di Stefano, Pete Brown, Denise King, Eve Byron,



and my wonderful assistant, Jodel Fohn. And of course, Research Center manager and your new director, Molly Kruckenberg. They have taught me so much and together have encouraged each other, supported each other, laughed and cried together. *They* are the real leaders of the Montana Historical Society. They made my job so enjoyable and interesting.

Our Board of Trustees has supported our work in every way. I served six presidents of the board, each of whom was just a phone call away to lend support or assist with difficult decisions.

And finally, I appreciate all of you, our members, donors, readers, visitors, and friends. Your participation in our work, your kind words, your contributions, and your friendship make our jobs fun and rewarding. The Montana Historical Society exists to conserve and preserve, but mostly to serve. The Historical Society belongs to all Montanans. From Charles M. Russell's masterpiece, *When the Land Belonged to God* to Montana's first newspaper, the *Montana Post*, to the iconic white bison, "Big Medicine," to the thousands of artifacts that tell the story of our First Peoples. The collections belong to all of you.

And now we embark on a journey to create a new Montana Heritage



Center, a long-awaited and much-needed expansion and renovation, scheduled for completion in 2024.



So I want to express my deep gratitude to all of you. You made me smile and be thankful every day that I was led to complete my career at the Montana Historical Society. I trust that we will remain friends and I will see you at the annual history conference, in Montana's Museum, or at one of our many programs. And I have one request. Invite me to the ribbon-cutting when the Montana Heritage Center opens. That will start an exciting new chapter for the Montana Historical Society, and I wouldn't miss it for the world. But I will miss all of you.

See you around, Friends. 🌟

About Us

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Ground Blessing (cont. on p. 1)

collections that tell Montana's many stories."

MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg profusely thanked the politicians and board members for keeping the dream alive. Funding for the project passed in the final days of the last legislative session after years of unsuccessful attempts to secure funding.

"To get here today took leader-

ship and courage," Whittenberg said, specifically acknowledging Senators Terry Gauthier and Jill Cohenour and Representative Julie Dooling. "Kicking that can is over."

The project's first phase is now under way, and the plan is to overhaul the museum's parking options prior to the start of the next legislative session, adding much-needed parking in the capitol complex.

To allow the Historical Society to

remain open, the current phasing concept will involve construction of the new addition from May 2021 to December 2022 and then upgrade the current Historical Society building through all of 2023, with a grand reopening event tentatively planned for early 2024.

Bullock promised the museum will be a "world-class facility."

"This is really a day of celebration," he said. 🌟

New MHS Portrait Exhibit Shows Eclectic Slice of Collections



The Fiddle Maker by Loren Entz. Oil on canvas, 2006. Gift of Dr. John E. Garrett and S. Fleming Beasley, Rendezvous Legacy Collection, Capitol Loan Collection, 2006.56.02



Self-portrait by Robert DeNiro, Sr. Oil on masonite, no date. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Poindexter, X1960.05.01



Phylis Rides at the Door and Son Rabbit by Elizabeth Lochrie. Oil on masonite, 1962. Gift of the artist, 1979.12.28

The Montana Historical Society's newest exhibit, *Who Speaks to You? Portraits from the Permanent Collection*, includes an eclectic mix of paintings, juxtaposed to encourage visitors to look at portraits in a new way.

Portraits can reveal a lot about people and their times if you know how to look for clues, notes Amanda Streeter Trum, curator of collections at MHS. Examining objects in the artwork, considering the backdrop,

and observing the artist's color palette reveal important information about the subject of the art.

"Experiencing art is a really personal thing; we all bring our unique experiences and opinions that color the way we may or may not appreciate the piece in front of us," Trum said. "We hope the exhibit will provide visitors an opportunity to see portraits in a different way or discover a new artistic style they enjoy."

The exhibit opened September 10; no opening reception was held due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

It includes forty to fifty portraits of interesting people and pets whose presence has enriched the lives they touched and, in some cases, the larger state of Montana. The artwork is both traditional as well as abstract, Trum said.

"So many traditional portraits represent only a certain segment of society, often wealthy white men," she added. "This is a playful exhibit, and we want to show an eclectic mix of people and art." 🌟

History Conference Goes Virtual

Because the COVID-19 pandemic precluded travel and large-scale gatherings, the Montana Historical Society's 47th state history conference is being held online, with seven virtual conference sessions that ran in September, plus three still slated for October 1, 20 and 27.

Much of the program will be posted online for later viewing and Zoom links to all sessions have been posted on our website. Visit <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/ConferencesWorkshops> for links and additional information.

The lineup originally planned for the 2020 conference has been rescheduled for September 23–25, 2021, at the Copper King Conference Center in Butte.

"Butte is just too unique of a place to capture virtually," MHS director Bruce Whittenberg noted. "So we will wait until we can gather in person to present the lineup we had originally planned for the

Mining City this fall. Hopefully, all our speakers will still be able to join us, and we will attract more attendees than ever next year."

The free conference is supported by funding from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

Conference sessions include:

- "Good Beer Here: An Interactive Exhibit Tour" followed by "Montana History Pub Trivia Contest."
- "Making Your Mark: 145 Years of Recording Montana Brands" followed by "Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement."
- "A Wild Land Ethic: The History of Wilderness in Montana"
- "Shakespeare in Montana"
- "The Great Smallpox Pandemic of 1779–1784"

- "Appropriate, Curious, and Rare: Treasures from the Collection"
- "A New Home for Montana's History"

The last two sessions at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, October 20 and 27 are "Collections Care: When Disaster Strikes, Plan to Strike Back."

This year's educators' workshops in August included two programs:

- "Native Knowledge 360 Degrees and Montana Essential Understandings: More Complete Narratives About Native Americans" with Colleen Call Smith of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian
- "Historical Thinking and Civic Education" with Sam Wineburg of Stanford University 🌟

MHS Offers Digitized KRTV, L.H. Jorud Film Clips

Comedian Red Skelton on stars' political activism, psychologist Joyce Brothers on being called a "women's libber," and TV announcer Ed McMahon on preparing for performing are just a couple of the tidbits included in the Montana Historical Society's newest offerings on its YouTube station.

The film clips are part of two collections the Montana Historical Society recently had digitized, using a grant from the Greater Montana Foundation. They include numerous KRTV interviews from Montana TV Hall of Fame journalist Norma Ashby and silent films from the L.H. Jorud Collection. The clips are being added to the Montana Historical Society's Moving Image Archive, and are

available on the MHS YouTube station at <https://bit.ly/2PxApi3>

"These segments are reflective of the time they were filmed," said Heather Hultman, an MHS photo archivist. "My favorite ones are with Vincent Price; he was so humorous. I didn't expect that wit."

Along with the interviews of celebrities—including Clint Eastwood and Charley Pride—is KRTV footage from the 1974 auction of the historic Broadwater Hotel west of Helena. The clips show the once-stately structure stripped of its fixtures, with Mandeville Auction taking bids for bathroom sinks, stained-glass windows, and even light fixtures.

The Jorud reels include shots of Helena's Vigilante Day parades in

the 1930s, the Mount Helena Ski Club, and Camp Fire Girls heading out on a trip in 1937.

"While most of the Jorud segments focus on Helena area activities, other clips in our Moving Image Archives are from across Montana, including Daly family home movies in the Bitterroot, Charlie Russell demonstrating sign language, and a tour of Columbia Gardens in Butte before it burned," said Montana Historical Society director Bruce Whittenberg. "It's easy to get lost for hours in these images of another era."

Currently, the MHS Moving Image Archive has about 140 segments. Hultman said they've recently added 40 of the KRTV films and 10 Jorud films, with a few more to come. 🌟

MHS Unveils Historic Letters as Part of 19th Amendment 100th Anniversary

The letters of three Montana women politicians offer historical insight as the nation celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment in August, which gave women the right to vote.

Women's earliest known role in Montana politics began in 1882 when Helen Piotopowaka Clarke was the first woman and first Native American elected as county superintendent of schools in Helena. In 1916, Jeannette Rankin was elected as U.S. representative for Montana, four years before women could vote; she voted against entering both World Wars.

Rankin's legacy extends beyond her peace activism. She inspired other women, including politicians Dorothy Eck, Louise Cross, and Arlyne Reichert, who served as delegates to Montana's 1972 Constitutional Convention. Of the one hundred delegates elected, only nineteen were women.

Yet women around Montana celebrated this unprecedented female representation. Marie MacDonald from Glendive wrote to Eck, saying, "As a Montana woman, I take pride in your election to the

Constitutional Convention. We are about 50% of the human race; government affects each of us every bit as much as it does our men."

Eck, from Gallatin County, served on the Bill of Rights Committee and lobbied for the inclusion of Indian Education for All. In 1980, she was elected to the state senate and served until 2000. Eck was a lobbyist for the League of Women Voters until her death in 2017.

Hailing from Dawson County, Cross's focus was on the environmental impact of strip mining. She chaired the Natural Resources and Agricultural Committee, the only woman to chair an Article Committee. Until her death in 2014, Cross fiercely defended Montana lands, including advocating for the protection of Makoshika State Park from oil development in 1997.

Reichert of Cascade County was a skilled debater, and fellow delegate Lucile Speer noted that "she [Reichert] was a person who went around getting signatures, support." Reichert's focus was creating a unicameral legislature, although Montanans voted against it when the constitution was rati-

fied. Reichert served one term as a Montana state legislator in 1979 and remains active in local politics and historic preservation efforts, including preservation of the Great Falls 10th Street Bridge.

MHS intern Hannah Soukup of Missoula recently processed the correspondence collections of Cross, Eck, and Reichert. "These collections are a treasure trove of information, and I think the most interesting thing about them is the correspondence," Soukup said. "These letters give us a glimpse into the inner workings of Montana politics, especially from a woman's point of view."

In addition, the Montana Historical Society Archives holds a robust collection of Rankin's materials, including a newly processed addition of mostly incoming correspondence to Rankin, which sheds additional light on her peace activism and her second-term activities. Full descriptions of the newly accessible records are available in the MHS catalog (<https://mhs.mt.gov/research>). To explore these records in person, contact the Research Center at MHSlibrary@mt.gov to set up an appointment. 🌟

First Digital MHS Magazine Now Online



The Montana Historical Society's publications program has exciting news to share.

First, we hope you will explore *Montana The Magazine of Western*

History's first digital issue, highlighting African Americans in Montana and the West. This free online magazine is available at <https://mhs.mt.gov/pubs/MMWHDigitalIssueSum2020>.

This special digital issue of *Montana The Magazine of Western History* focuses on African American history in Montana and the diversity of Black experiences in the West. Well-known African Americans like York, William Clark's slave, or

country music star Charley Pride spent time in Montana, but it is less famous African Americans who significantly shaped Montana's history from territorial days into the twenty-first century.

We draw attention to this history with a selection of articles from the past twenty-five years of *Montana The Magazine of Western History*; excerpts from

Digital Magazine (cont. on p. 6)

two MHS Press books; an update on the State Historic Preservation Office's African American Heritage Resources Project; and a new essay from Herbert Ruffin II on the state of the field. We hope you will take some time to explore the articles that make up *Montana's* first online publication, and that you will help spread the word about this free resource.

Next, we are pleased to announce the second Emerging Scholar Article Contest for the best article on the history of the American West by an emerging scholar. We welcome sub-

missions from graduate students, early career faculty, and independent scholars. The deadline for submissions is January 4, 2021.

The winning manuscript, chosen by members of *Montana The Magazine of Western History's* board of editors, will be published in an issue of the magazine. The author also will receive \$300 and free registration, travel, and accommodations to the 2021 Montana History Conference in Butte, Montana, where the winner will give a talk about the article. For more information about the contest and submission guidelines,



The Ozark Club in Great Falls. Leo LaMar is pictured surveying his domain while bartender Bruce Brown stands on the left and an unidentified customer is seated on the right. (Courtesy LaMar Family)

visit <https://mhspublications.submittable.com/submit>. 

SHPO Staff Shores Up School

Although school's out forever at the Placer School near Winston, that doesn't mean the historic school will fade away.

In late July, four staffers from the State Historic Preservation Office used their talents and time to help Mary Webb of the Montana Preservation Alliance stabilize the structure. They removed ceiling lath and rotted flooring, which was deemed too damaged to reuse, from the school as part of an ongoing preservation project.

The staffers included Jessica Bush, Melissa Munson, Eric Newcombe, and Vickie Sheppard.

"I learned how to run a circular power saw, which was pretty exciting for me," Sheppard said. "The day

before, Mary Webb had to shovel a huge pile of pigeon droppings, and we found more than one deceased pigeon and some eggs, along with a lot of bones, under the flooring."

Apparently, the sections of the roof that were still in place also were a favorite perch for pigeons that weren't found under the floorboards.

"Melissa was pulling down the roof slats, and it was a particularly awful job at the end," Sheppard added.

The Placer School was built around 1910 by ranchers to serve



area children through the early 1900s. Students traveled by horse and on foot to attend summer school, as snowpack precluded access to the school outside the spring to fall months. The school closed in the 1940s. 

MHS Welcomes New Staff

Chris Johnson is Montana Historical Society's new security guard.



He was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska, and joined the U.S. Army "to see the world." Johnson spent

almost thirteen years of active duty in the military and was trained in explosives use, wildland firefighting, and extensive first aid.

He returned to Juneau and married his wife, Courtney. They have three children.

Johnson's hobbies include fishing, hiking, and hunting, although

he's learning how to fish freshwater. Johnson said he appreciates how kind people are at the Montana Historical Society.

"When I came here, I was pleasantly surprised at how they welcomed me in as one of the family so quickly," Johnson said.

New Staff (cont. on p. 7)

Jacob Franklin is the new Museum Exhibit Preparator for the Montana Historical Society.



He's a wood-working artist with a wide range of experience that includes replacing the Montana State

Capitol building's round rotunda windows after one hundred years of wear and replicating the state's oak furniture. Franklin also used his background in drafting and computer numerical control technology to help create a line of fly-fishing goods for Orvis.

"I've worked alongside some of the best artisans, contractors, and architects that Montana can offer both in residential and commercial builds," Franklin said. "I am

eager to perform, humble for the circumstances, and grateful for the opportunity. Becoming the Museum Exhibit Preparator is more than an honor. I take the job as a welcome challenge toward a new day for us and look forward to being present by any means necessary."

Franklin was born and raised in Las Vegas, but asks that people not hold it against him. He moved to Helena six years ago with the intention of "providing my kids with a better life, pursuing a gratifying role in society, and lending a civic-minded lifestyle toward progress."

Along with woodworking, Franklin enjoys creating art in a range of mediums, adding that he's "insatiable" when it comes to art, crafts, and ingenuity.

Sam Lindgren, a Helena native and senior at Carroll College is the new intern for the Archives and Museum programs.



In the Archives program, Lindgren is working on preliminary inventories for government records. He also will research and write biographical notes for several gubernatorial records, including the Bullock administration. For the Museum program, Lindgren is inventorying and packing artifacts in preparation for the upcoming move into the new Montana Heritage Center.

Lindgren has volunteered for the Montana Historical Society in the past. His internship concludes in late November. ⚙️

Roberta Jones-Wallace



Montana Historical Society exhibit designer Roberta Jones-Wallace marked a milestone by reaching thirty years of service to the State of Montana.

She started working at MHS in 1991, after a stint with Montana's Museum of the Rockies. The first exhibit Jones-Wallace designed for MHS was *Buildings in the Balance*, which featured Montana's historic structures and the importance of preserving them. Today she is working with the exhibit team on ideas for the future Montana Heritage Center.

Throughout the years, Jones-Wallace has designed countless wonderful and engaging exhibits, and many have won national awards from the American Association of State and Local History. She navigates the complex world of exhibit design, which can vary from traditional art to

those that require complicated layout and planning of gallery space. Her designs are always compelling, entertaining, and educational. She does all this while herding a cast of curators who have strong personalities and widely divergent work styles. It's not an easy process. First she translates the curator's vision into a template, which the exhibit preparator can then use to fabricate the finished, tangible exhibit. Simultaneously she works with registrars and the museum technician to orchestrate the placement of art and artifacts while bearing in mind concerns for their long-term preservation.

She brings a high level of creativity, professionalism, and enthusiasm to all that she touches. The museum's success owes everything to Jones Wallace's amazing talents. ⚙️

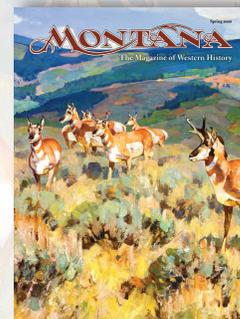
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Emerging Scholar Article Contest

ENTER YOUR MANUSCRIPT for a chance to win \$300, receive a free trip to the 2021 Montana History Conference, and have your article published in *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.



Deadline:
January 4,
2021

To learn more and submit:
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