

Atlatl Brings Hands-On Learning to Carroll College

CONDENSED FROM AN ARTICLE BY MEGAN MICHELOTTI, HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

On Sept. 8, Laura Marsh, Jessica Bush, and Laura Evilsizer, all with the State Historic Preservation Office, used atlatl throwing skills to teach Carroll College’s “Introduction to Native American Studies” class.

“We have all the stuff at the Historical Society ...” Marsh, a SHPO compliance officer, told Helena Independent Record Reporter Megan Michelotti. “(We) use it with kids usually for Archaeology Days that the Historical Society hosts every year.”

SHPO Archaeologist Jessica Bush gave a guest lecture, which touched on tribal sovereignty, colonialism, exploitation, and public and private resources, before the atlatl throwing. She noted the atlatl is a worldwide historic hunting weapon that pre-dates the bow and arrow by thousands of years. The earliest known atlatl was found in France and thought to be 17,000 years old. The earliest known North American one dates to 10,000 years ago.

The motion of throwing an atlatl is like throwing a tennis ball launcher for your dog. Each Carroll student took at least two throws with the atlatls; only



Megan Michelotti

Jessica Bush shows a Carroll College student the proper technique for throwing an atlatl.

one hit the target, so it’s not easy to be accurate!

Bush said hunting with atlatls during archery season in Montana (September and October) is legal but might not work as well as a bow and arrow because with atlatls, hunters have to stand up to get a good throw, which alerts their prey.

Also in her lecture, Bush noted her responsibilities as a state archaeologist involves national historic preservation to ensure federal agencies



Megan Michelotti

consider the impact of their actions on historic properties and provide an opportunity to comment on projects before implementation. She also

“Atlatl” (cont. on p. 3)

Stories and Symbols



Earlier this year, we took a hard look at the symbols used to represent the Montana Historical Society. Our “Big Sky, Big Land, Big History” logo served us well for more than a decade. But as we contemplated the future of the Society, with the Montana Heritage Center leading our vision, the need for a new symbol became clear.

Working with the Boise-based creative firm SOVRN – which has an office in Helena – we began developing a new brand that reflects the breadth of our work to preserve, interpret, document, and share the history of Montana and its people. Our new logo needed to be inclusive and to respect the past while embracing the future.

With SOVRN, we gathered input

from Society staff, our Trustees, and many of our partners to develop a new symbol for the Montana Historical Society, which is debuting in this edition of the Society Star.

Our new logo blends two symbols of Montana’s heritage: the quilt and the Native American Morning Star. Native Americans link the symbol of this star to guidance from their elders, past spirits, and ancestors, which is shared when telling their stories. Similarly, understanding our history and the people here before us guide MTHS today in telling the stories of this place we call Montana.


Quilts are a piece of living history, documents in fabric that chronicle the lives of those who made and use them. They serve as a testament to families’ stories. They connect the present to the past, as a bond to community and family identity. Quilts represent resilience, heritage, and a sense of our

shared past.

Combining the Morning Star and the quilt emphasizes the Society’s mission of collecting and telling the stories of all Montanans, to provide meaning for today and vision for tomorrow. The two lines in the middle of the logo further emphasize that vision, representing equality when stitching together all our stories.

Even the colors of the new logo – sage, sky, fire, and flint – have meaning. They were taken from the Charlie Russell painting “When the Land Belonged to God” and embody the landscape of our state. That landscape has played a critical role in shaping the past and the future of Montana.

Finally, with an eye to increased visitation from national and international tourists as we open the doors of the Montana Heritage Center, we adopted MTHS as our new abbreviation. The small difference of adding a T differentiates the Montana Historical Society from the many other states that start with the letter M.

As we at MTHS look forward to becoming a community hub that engages more people than ever in exploring our histories through opportunities that are inclusive, welcoming, and stimulating, this new symbol will help guide us toward achieving our vision. 

“All the Sign Text that Isn’t Fit to Print”

CONDENSED FROM A STORY BY MEGAN MICHELOTTI, HELENA INDEPENDENT RECORD

In many Montana cities, the silver signs that mark properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are full of historical information, but some details – like robberies, suicides, runaway horses, abusive husbands,

and powerful widows – often don’t make the cut.

In Christine Brown’s lecture “All the Sign Text that Isn’t Fit to Print” at the Jefferson County Museum in Clancy, Montana, she shared some stories left

off the signs. Brown is a historian at the Montana Historical Society.

“I learn something new every time I write a new sign – a new property, a new person that I’d never heard of – and I

“Fit to Print” (cont. on p. 3)

“Atlatl” (cont. from p. 1)

helps with education, research and policy review and advises Montana’s Burial Preservation Board, which protects from disturbance or destruction human skeletal remains, burial sites, and burial materials found on state and private lands in Montana, and resolves claims for repatriation of human skeletal remains and funerary objects.

Another effort to decolonize archaeology and highlight tribal sovereignty is the establishment of [Tribal Historic Preservation Officers](#), who represent the unique values and interests of their people when it comes to government affairs.

“(The goal of this class) is to gain a broader knowledge of the different Native American nations that are in the U.S. today and that also were in all of the North American region in the

past to sort of connect what it looked like in the past to what they still are in the present, because they’re very much still thriving cultures,” Marsh said. “Then gaining a broader appreciation of the different traditional knowledge and other ways of life from our own.”

You can find the entire version of this story in the *Independent Record’s* Sept. 11, 2022, edition or online at: <https://bit.ly/IRatlatl> ▼ ▼ ▼

“Fit to Print” (cont. from p. 2)

discover stories of people who have gone unnoticed for years and years,” Brown told the crowd. “The hardest thing, for me, is to leave ‘juicy’ stories on the cutting-room floor and to not be able to include them on the sign.”

The owners of historic properties work closely with Brown to decide what they want published on their signs. Brown has two lists of topics owners often choose to leave off their signs: the sad and gruesome (murder, disease, suicide, theft, adultery, car wrecks, abuse) and just plain interesting folks (women landlords, innovators, and silliness).

For example, for the sign on the Stephens Block, on the corner of Park and Montana streets in Butte, stories on the cutting-room floor include a child kidnapping, a robbery, a smallpox quarantine, a runaway horse crashing through a plate-glass window, and multiple suicide attempts.

At the Stone House in Reeder’s Alley in Helena, George and Laura Duchesney managed the property by 1920 and lived in the front unit of the Stone House. Laura bred canaries, and the couple allegedly made moonshine during Prohibition. When the alcohol was ready to sell, Laura would set the birds in cages outside their unit. If anything looked suspicious, she could



(From left) Dolly McMaster, Ellen Baumler, and Christine Brown stand with one of the distinctive National Register of Historic Places signs. Both Baumler and Brown worked on the McMaster sign.

say people were coming to her house to buy canaries. When Laura died, her husband let the birds fly free in the house when she was lying on view so the birds could say goodbye before her burial. Today, people still say they hear the “ghost birds” chirping in the building.

The Montana Historical Society has offered its National Register of Historic Places sign program since 1990, with about 1,800 historic property signs in place in the Treasure State. These signs provide “a self-guided tour,” where people can learn about history by walking around at their own pace. They also can browse all the sign text online at

[Historicmt.org](https://historicmt.org).

A residence first must be researched and listed in the National Register of Historic Places before a property sign can be put up.

“I come in after the whole certification process happens. The fastest I ever wrote a sign was about three hours because the prior research was so good. All I had to do was write it out,” said Brown. “The longest it takes could be about 40 hours if the past research is haphazard or nonexistent.”

You can find the entire story in the Sept. 2, 2022, edition of the *Independent Record*, or go online to <https://bit.ly/IRsigns> ▼ ▼ ▼

Donors Cover Costs for Buswell Photos



MTHS Director Molly Kruckenber and Photo Archives Manager Jeff Malcomson flank Dr. Richard Buswell with his photographs.

The Montana Historical Society not only reached but also exceeded its goal of raising \$60,000 to help acquire Dr. Richard S. Buswell's collection of black-and-white photos.

Thanks to generous donors –

including one from a special friend of Buswell – the grand total raised was \$60,800.


Ginny Sullivan, the Montana Historical Society's development officer, said she was honored and humbled by the outpouring of support.

"We are so grateful for the generosity of so many of you," Sullivan said. "We truly couldn't do this work without you. Every dollar raised helps us meet our mission."

Buswell created a unique assortment of artistic images, depicting ghost towns, deserted homesteads, and the back road places that time forgot. The images have been called beautifully crafted, sometimes unnerving, and always thought-provoking, showing Montana's past in a way rarely experienced by the public.

The collection will be housed in the MTHS Library & Archives, formerly known as the Research Center. This allows his work to be available to all Montanans and anyone wishing to see the collection.



Thank you for supporting the Montana Historical Society," said MTHS Director Molly Kruckenber. "Because of you we will continue to serve historians, lifelong learners, students, teachers, and researchers. Each and every member, donor, volunteer, and visitor are valued." 

Grants Offered to Rural Schools for History Textbooks

The Steele-Reese Foundation, a charitable trust committed to supporting rural communities, donated \$20,000 to fund grants to rural schools for the purchase of classroom sets of *Montana: A History of Our Home*, the new fourth-grade student textbook published by the Montana Historical Society.

The 96-page textbook offers a quick tour through 13,000 years of Montana his-


tory. Students will learn about Montana's 12 tribal nations and seven reservations; the immigrants who moved to Montana in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and the trapping, mining, logging, farming, and ranching industries that drew them to the Treasure State. The book also introduces students to amazing Montanans, from Northern Cheyenne Chief Dull Knife to photographer Evelyn

Cameron.

MTHS received requests from 63 schools for 1,528 books total and was able to fulfill 49 of those requests. The smallest school to receive books was Yaak Elementary, which currently has only one fourth grade student. More than half of the schools that received the grants requested 12 or fewer books, and several of them featured multi-grade classrooms.

Superintendent Jeremy

Locke of Dutton was particularly excited to make the material available to teachers and students at Hutterite colony schools.

"This will be great to help our colony students build confidence in their English language ability," he said. "This will also help guide our new international colony teachers in presenting our students with the material in Montana history." 

Library & Archives Temporarily Closing, But Still Here for You

As renovation of the Veterans and Pioneers building rapidly approaches, Montana Historical Society staff is implementing plans to protect the collections in our care.

Contractors will replace walls and install new heating and cooling systems, as well as new fire suppression systems. Since this work will be happening near irreplaceable collections, they need to be packed and moved; or, if staying in place, they need to be covered so that they are not damaged by stray dust and water. Sadly, the Library & Archives must temporarily close to get this work done, and once the collections are packed or covered, we no longer can access

them. We anticipate the closure will take place on or before the first week of January 2023.

Staff will work on special projects during the temporary closure, including collections stored at an off-site facility and digital projects. This includes adding more photographs and livestock brands to the Montana Memory Project; updating our collection development and management policies; and creating best practices for all our procedures, so we can take better care of the collections in our new spaces when we reopen in early 2025.

Online collections and information can be found at <https://mhs.mt.gov/>

[Research/OnlineCollections](#).

Staff will still check email and voicemail every day and can help our customers understand the online resources and refer them to other institutions that can help while we are closed.

As a reminder, the Charlie Russell and Lobby galleries, as well as the Original Governor's Mansion, are expected to remain open during the bulk of the construction.

We appreciate your patience as we navigate through these historic times. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Library & Archives program at 406/444-2681 or mhslibrary@mt.gov. ▼▼▼

MTHS Press Announces New Book

The Montana Historical Society Press is proud to announce its newest book, *Montana's Visionary Mayor: Willard E. Fraser*, by Lou Mandler.

Fraser (1907–1972) was the four-term mayor of Billings during the turbulent Vietnam War era, but his reach and impact lay far beyond the borders of the Magic City. He brought vision and energy to the mayor's office, using it as a platform to promote Billings and Montana to the world. He tackled air and water pollution, cleaned up urban blight, and ensured that

women, youth, and minorities were not marginalized. He championed Montana's history, cultural heritage, and tourism potential.

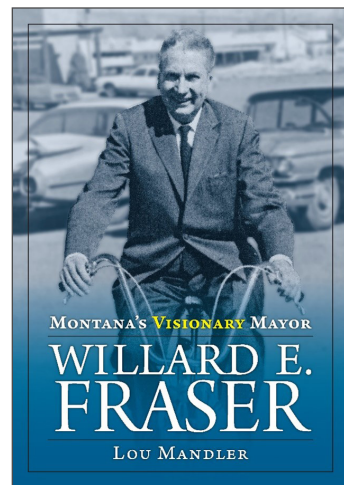
A true humanitarian, Fraser was equally comfortable rubbing elbows with high-level politicians and celebrities – like his father-in-law Robert Frost – and hobnobbing with the “bums” on Skid Row. As a politician, he followed his conscience even when it meant bucking the party line. No stranger to tragedy or defeat, Fraser served the people and the state he loved with optimism, dedi-

cation, and panache.

Historian Keith Edgerton notes, “As Mandler's sprightly written, extensively researched biography reveals, Fraser was the rare politician: a hard-working, imaginative visionary with pragmatic flexibility.”

More than a biography of one of Montana's most passionate promoters, *Montana's Visionary Mayor* also is a coming-of-age story of Billings and Montana during the twentieth century.

Mandler shared excerpts from the book Oct. 6 at the Montana Historical Society. A video



of the talk can be viewed at www.youtube.com/user/MtHistoricalSociety. ▼▼▼

Call for Submissions

Montana The Magazine of Western History is pleased to announce its 2023 Emerging Scholar Article Contest for

the best paper on the history of the American West by a graduate student, early career faculty member, or

independent scholar.

The winning manuscript, chosen by members of Montana The Magazine

of Western History's board of editors, will be published in an upcoming issue of the **Submissions (cont. on p. 7)**

Active Volunteer Turns 100

Volunteers helped Charlotte Sanddal celebrate turning 100 years young on Aug. 14 with cake, ice cream, and punch on the front lawn of the Montana Historical Society.

Since 1972, volunteers have provided tours, prepared and hosted receptions, and worked behind the scenes on projects ranging from creating indexes to cataloguing quilts. Their efforts – and their hours – translate to about a \$3.5 million value.

Sanddal has been a MTHS volunteer since 1998. She has been involved in a variety of projects at the Society in the past 24 years, including serving on the Volunteer Board multiple times and assisting in the Library & Archives. Currently she

is the Muse Chair, which is the person who replenishes the reception supplies and helps prepare for receptions. In addition, Sanddal assists in the Library & Archives center collating newspapers.

“Charlotte is a pleasure to work with, is always very willing to pitch in, and has an enthusiastic personality,” said Katie White, MTHS volunteer coordinator. “It’s been a joy to work with Charlotte and call her a friend.”

Sanddal also is a master swimmer who holds world, national, and state records. She served in the Navy WAVES during World War II, and after a career in social work at the Montana Department of Public



Health and Human Services, retired almost 30 years ago, before becoming a MTHS volunteer.

Her birthday also was celebrated with a parade on Helena’s Walking Mall. ▼▲▼

Teacher Leaders in Montana History Program Grows to 15

A dedicated group of Montana educators are becoming “history missionaries” as part of the Teacher Leaders in Montana History program.

Fifteen teachers with a deep passion for Montana and its history, as well as social studies in general, are offering to share their expertise beyond their own classrooms as part of the Montana Historical Society program. The group will help write lesson plans, mentor teachers in best practices in history education, and share Montana and Indian education-related resources with fellow educators. They’ll do this in one-on-one sessions as well as in regional and statewide conference presentations.

Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager Martha Kohl said MTHS started the Teacher Leader program in 2017.

“Since then, Teacher Leader fellows have presented at regional conferences, worked with their districts to introduce Montana history units

into the curriculum, mentored new teachers, and created lesson plans,” Kohl said. “MTHS is committed to serving every corner of the state, and working with Teacher Leaders who live as far east as Bainville and as far west as Eureka makes that possible.”

Cynthia Wilondek, who teaches high school social studies in Bigfork, said being part of the Teacher Leaders in Montana history program has been a professional highlight.

“I learn from and collaborate with the best of the best Montana educators, while exploring our state’s fascinating history,” Wilondek said. “What a wonderful privilege!”

April Wills, who teaches fifth grade in Bainville, agrees.

“The opportunity to grow as an educator in the content area I am most passionate about is both rewarding and exciting,” Wills said. “Sharing resources, ideas, and lessons with educators across the state and in my own community helps not

only others grow and learn, but also allows me to expand my repertoire of tools as a teacher. The program has allowed me to develop into a leader in many facets both educationally and outside of the classroom. I will be forever grateful that this program was created, and that I am a contributing part of it.” ▼▲▼

ABOUT US

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

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mhs.mt.gov



Former Director Arnold Olsen Dies

Former Montana Historical Society Director Arnold “Arnie” Olsen, 72, of Stevensville, died from Lewy Body Dementia on Aug. 22, at West Hills Assisted Living in Hamilton.

Olsen served as the MTHS director from 1999 to 2005. During his tenure, the MTHS acquired the Robert M. Scriver collection; helped create the Montana Main Street downtown revitalization program; established permanent Saturday hours to meet increasing demands from across the state; and advocated for a new building to store and display the MTHS collections.

He oversaw difficult times in 2003, when the legislature’s financial cuts forced elimination of some hours and tours, and the layoffs of about 10 percent of the staff. During that ses-

sion, the legislature also transferred management of Virginia and Nevada cities, along with ownership of the land and artifacts, to the Department of Commerce.

Olsen also worked with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in a variety of positions. He ended his career as director of the Montana Natural History Center.

He loved spending time outdoors, hunting and fishing, and often played softball and basketball with friends.

Olsen is survived by his wife Pamela; daughter Adria Jurhs and husband Peter of Idaho; and sons Peter (Stephanie) of Virginia, and Andrew (Karissa) of Montana.

Condolences and memories may be shared with the family at www.white-sittfuneralhome.com. ▼▼▼

Submissions (cont. from p. 5)

magazine. The author will win \$1,000 and receive free registration, travel, and accommodations to the 2023 Montana History Conference, where the winner will give a presentation on the project.

This year’s Emerging Scholar Contest is sponsored in memory of Leila Monaghan PhD (1960–2022), who shared her lifelong passion for original research and writing with countless students, colleagues, and friends.

Manuscript submissions needn’t deal with Montana history specifically but must be unpublished original works that address a topic of historical relevance to the American West. For more information about the magazine, visit mhs.mt.gov/pubs/.

To learn more and submit, go to mhspublications.submittable.com/submit. ▼▼▼

New Employees at MTHS

Lindsey Mick

Lindsey Mick is the new archivist for the Library & Archives program.

She grew up in Vermont and received her bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Vermont. After graduating, Mick volunteered in Thailand and completed outdoor projects in the rural jungles near Chiang Rai. Upon her return, she lived and worked in Colorado for a year, where she grew to love the dry, western climate and towering mountains.

Rediscovering her passion for history, Mick attended Simmons University in Boston where she received her master’s degree in library and information science with a concentration in archival management. She now is working toward her master’s degree in history.



Mick moved to Montana in June to begin her new job at the Montana Historical Society, where she is helping to preserve, arrange, and describe the historically rich materials found in the archives for present and future generations to enjoy.

“I was so excited to receive this opportunity,” she said. “Montana is a beautiful state with a fascinating history, and I want to help make that history accessible to everyone.”

Cherese Gerhardt

Helena native Cherese Gerhardt is the new Grants Contract Coordinator for the State Historic Preservation Office.

Gerhardt earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology at Montana State University after 14 years in the



accounting field. While recovering from an accident, one of her daughters was offered an internship to do illustrations based on photos in the Montana Historical Society archives for a book called “Taft, MT.” As Gerhardt aided her daughter, she developed a soft spot in her heart for MTHS.

That provided the impetus for her to recently apply for the grants position, where she now applies for, manages, and reports on grants, state contracts, and other agreements. The position also is responsible for budget and financial/project activity reports for the program manager.

“My background in psychology, along with my diverse employment history with both large and small corporations, made me a good fit for this position,” Gerhardt said. “I am thankful to work with the amazing people at SHPO; the work is always interesting.” ▼▼▼



MONTANA

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Museum Store Has Christmas Items Available



It’s never too early to order Christmas cards. The Museum Store has 10 styles of boxed Charlie Russell Christmas cards to choose from, featuring holiday-themed artwork created by Russell between 1908 and 1918. Choose from “Best Wishes for Your Christmas,” “Christmas at the Line Camp,” “Hold Up, Santa!” and more.

The original painting of “Best Wishes for Your Christmas” was a gift from Russell to the Mackay family in 1914, and currently is on display in our Mackay Gallery of Charles M. Russell Art.

Charlie Russell Christmas cards are available in our store in Helena or can be ordered online at mhs.mt.gov or by calling 406/444-2890. Be sure to check out our wide selection of Russell books, prints, and souvenirs as well.