

Early Donors to the Montana Heritage Center Make Fundraising Success Possible

Through the gifts of many individuals, the Montana Historical Society achieved incredible success in raising \$57.5 million for the Montana Heritage Center to date. But without the early support of many donors, that accomplishment would not have been possible.

Four years ago, Dr. Larry Len and LeAnne Peterson made the largest donation in support of the project at that time. Their early \$1 million gift jump-started the capital fundraising campaign, allowing the MTHS to reach even higher levels of giving.

Peterson is an award-winning scientist, physician, and cultural historian. He is an expert in Western art history and is an accomplished author, having published more books on Western artists than any other living author. His most recent publication is “Edward S. Curtis: Printing the Legends,” which is available for purchase in the MTHS Museum Store. In addition, during his 30-year career in dermatology, he was a National

Institute of Health research fellow and published dozens of articles in prestigious medical and scientific periodicals.

Peterson has won many awards, including the 2019 Montana Heritage Guardian Award from the MTHS Board of Trustees, the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Center, the C. M. Russell Heritage Award, the High Plains Book Award, the Will Rogers Gold Medallion Award, and the University of Nebraska Great Plains Book of the Month Selection.

Having grown up in Plentywood, Montana, preserving and sharing Montana’s history is incredibly important to Peterson.

“The Montana Heritage Center represents the mission of the Montana Historical Society in solid form. It celebrates who we are, tells the stories of who we were, and reminds us of who we should be as Montanans,” Peterson said.



(Left to right): Dr. Larry Len Peterson, LeAnne Peterson, daughter Dr. Haley Hostetler, son-in-law James Hostetler III

Paying tribute to his passion for research and writing, the MTHS Library and Archives will be named in honor of the Petersons.

The couple live in Sisters, Oregon, on the Spirit of Winter Ranch, in the shadow of the Three Sisters Mountains.

Behind the Scenes with the MTHS Museum Program

While the exterior of the Montana Heritage Center is visible to the public, what many can’t see is the work happening inside the walls by the Museum Program team to create a world-class

museum for the people of Montana and beyond.

Museum Program manager Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney said the past three years have involved a team effort second to none, with

other Montana Historical Society employees pitching in when needed.

“It is a long, arduous project to dismantle, inventory, and pack our art and artifacts, but we’re excited

to be close to the unpacking and creation of exhibits,” Bottomly-O’looney said. “We only have nine people in the program, but each has contributed significantly to “Scenes” *(cont. on p. 3)*

Heritage Keepers



Each year, the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees honors Montanans and Montana organizations that have significantly contributed to the field of Montana history. The Montana Heritage Keepers Award recognizes the accomplishments of our neighbors and colleagues who are dedicated to preserving and sharing our past.

To receive a Heritage Keeper Award, an individual or organization must contribute substantially to the interpretation, promotion, or preservation of Montana's history or Indigenous Nations' history. They must have completed a significant history project, which could include historic building and landscape preservation, historical and cultural research and publications, fine art history and preservation, historical reenactments, and other related projects.

This year the MTHS Board of Trustees selected Ellen Crain of Butte

and Ralph Saunders of Billings to honor as Montana Heritage Keepers, designating Crain as a Heritage Guardian. Crain and Saunders demonstrated their commitment to preserving and sharing our past in many ways.

Crain's work during the past several decades has ensured the preservation of Butte's history in many ways. She was part of a team that expanded the Butte National Historic Landmark District, has co-written three historical books, and served on the State Historical Records Committee Advisory Board; she currently sits on the board of Humanities Montana. Crain also led the \$7.5 million capital project to renovate and expand the Butte-Silver Bow Archives building.

Saunders was honored for his efforts to determine the Corp of Discovery's likely camping sites on the Yellowstone River and helping create a free app for visitors to locate the various sites. He also worked to identify the precise Bozeman Trail location throughout Montana, and developed a program for seventh and eighth graders to better understand the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Their contributions make them true Heritage Keepers and well-deserving of recognition.

While we honor Saunders and Crain, it is important to remember that we are all heritage keepers. In many ways each of us captures the stories of Montana, preserves them, and shares them with our communities. In my family (and many others), food traditions help preserve our history. Homemade caramel rolls and elk sausage embody our family stories. Other Montanans' food heritage might include pasties and povitica, camas and



Ellen Crain



Ralph Saunders

huckleberries, or beef and lamb.

We also preserve our heritage through our homes, our stories, our photographs, and our documents. Montana's Centennial Farms and Ranches (mths.mt.gov/education/MTCentFarmRanchProg) keep our state's agriculture heritage and traditions strong. The letters your grandparents wrote to one another or the diary they may have kept record their daily experiences. The photograph of your parents who served in World War II provides a visual story of their lives.

Each of these, along with other ways that we save our individual stories, helps preserve the story of all of us. The history of our state is the compilation of each of our stories and the stories of those who came before us and lived in what is now Montana. It is the experiences of each of those people embedded in the landscapes that surround us that create a full picture of our past. Only by preserving and sharing all these stories do we create a full understanding of our past.

The MTHS strives to capture and tell the history of all Montanans. We hope that, as heritage keepers, each of you does the same with your history. Only by gathering all those stories and sharing them can we truly comprehend the complexity and depth of our past. ▼▲▼▲

“Scenes” (cont. from p. 1)

shape the Montana Heritage Center’s future.”

Bottomly-O’looney enables the museum’s artisans and specialists to focus on their work, while she navigates the budget and administrative requirements. She also is “curating,” or selecting, organizing, and interpreting, the new Charles M. Russell gallery and Poindexter Collection exhibits with Roberta Jones-Wallace, an MTHS exhibits specialist.

Aaron Genton and Amanda Trum, curators of exhibits and collections, respectively, have spent hundreds of hours meeting with architects, contractors, stakeholders, and consultants. Trum and Genton monitor timelines and deadlines, as well as support and advocate for their team members, using problem-solving skills, diplomacy, and collaboration to ensure the vision for the Montana Heritage Center is realized.

Jacob Franklin, the exhibits preparator, is planning and building displays, mounts, cases, and other furnishings for the MHC. These items will hold, enhance, and assist in interpreting the art and artifacts on display. Franklin also is designing the new shop studio within the MHC lower level, which will serve the Historical Society for years to come.

Along with aiding Bottomly-O’looney, Jones-Wallace brings her



Kendra Newhall moves pallets in the temporary storage area.

expertise and keen eye for color, balance, and aesthetics to Franklin to help create the graphics and design of the exhibits, cases, and mounts for the galleries. Jones-Wallace also has a deep knowledge of MTHS history, which helps her tell the stories behind the objects and art.

Heather Doyle, a conservation specialist, is responsible for the physical care and maintenance of the artifacts within the museum collection, which includes examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care. Doyle consults with staff in preparing objects for display in the new Heritage Center by approving materials used by the exhibit team and ensuring a safe environment for the delicate objects on display now and into the future.

Kendra Newhall, the senior registrar, and Rowena Harrington, registrar, pro-



Heather Doyle cleans a sewing machine cabinet.

vide the foundation and security for the MTHS’s 60,000-plus art and artifact collection. They started working toward the Montana Heritage Center’s opening day in January 2021, when they began inventorying and packing the collections, which took two years to complete. The collection is stored on 380 pallets, 37 garment racks, 15 saddle carts, and 20 rolling wardrobes. Everything is labeled to track items during the construction and renovation project. In addition,

several oversized objects that don’t fit into boxes or on pallets also are being tracked. The registrars work closely with the curation and exhibit teams to find, assess, and stage all objects that will be on display.

Mary Ann George, the administrative assistant, is the glue keeping the program together. She helps team members with clerical support and purchasing, and performs a wide range of critical tasks to enable the smooth running of the office. ▼▲▼

Lewistown's Crowley Block Approved for Historic Preservation Tax Credits

BY LINDSAY TRAN, MTHS HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE SPECIALIST

In a milestone win for historic preservation, affordable healthcare, and affordable housing in Montana, the National Park Service recently certified the rehabilitation of the historic Crowley Block at 311 West Main Street in Lewistown for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program.

Technical assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), a program of the Montana Historical Society, ensured that the project met the criteria for certification.

With the support of private investors, Missoula-based nonprofit Homeword collaborated on the development with One Health. Homeword adapted the second and third floors of the 1913 building to create Crowley Flats. The two floors include 16 homes, ranging in size from studios to two-bedroom apartments. One Health, a federally qualified health center with clinics throughout central Montana and northern Wyoming, turned the ground floor, mezzanine, and basement into a full-service medical and dental clinic.

"We knew from our previous historic preservation and adaptive reuse work in the state that communities like Lewistown need rental homes for people of all incomes," said Homeword Project development director Heather McMilin. "We were so excited when the folks from One Health called us and asked us if we would be interested

in turning the upper two floors at the Crowley Block into homes that people earning lower incomes could afford to rent."

Homeword and One Health maintained and restored the critical components that make the building unique, such as the original facades, interior woodwork, wood floors, and high ceilings.

Administered by the National Park Service, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program provides property owners with a dollar-for-dollar income tax credit for 20 percent of their total rehabilitation costs. Eligible properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, be used for an income-producing purpose, and remain depreciable for five years after certification.

"The federal tax credit helps to level the playing field and incentivizes redevelopment of historic properties when the cost to do so exceeds that of new construction," noted Lindsey Tran, a historic architecture specialist with SHPO.


Since 1990, investors have put nearly \$94 million toward the rehabilitation of historic income-producing properties across the state. In return, they have received nearly \$19 million back in federal tax credits.

Montana offers a state income tax credit for an additional 5 percent of

the project's total rehabilitation costs. Projects certified for the federal tax credit are automatically eligible for the state tax credit, with no additional application process. The state tax credit went into effect in 1997, and since then investors across 67 certified projects have been eligible for \$6.4 million in state tax credits.

Homeword used equity syndicated by Redstone Equity Partners from the sale of federal tax credits as well as federal low-income housing tax credits allocated by Montana Housing. The organization also used federal grants, a HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program grant awarded by Montana Housing and the Department of Commerce, an Affordable Housing Program (AHP) grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) from the City of Lewistown, and a private foundation grant from the Steele-Reese Foundation.

While Homeword's tax credit partnership was unable to use the state tax credit to generate equity, One Health was able to use equity from state tax credits to support the construction of the clinic and the restoration of the exterior of the building.

"State credit is a critical piece of the puzzle in doing these historic adaptive reuse projects and preserving our heritage," McMilin said. 

Three Families Attain Centennial Farm and Ranch Status

The Montana Historical Society (MTHS) welcomes Birkeland Farms and the Woodmansey Ranch in Chouteau County, and Inbody Farms in Teton

County, to the Centennial Farm and Ranch register.

These long-lived farm and ranch families received a certificate from Gov. Greg Gianforte and a roadside

sign to honor their remarkable achievement.

"By honoring families who have owned their land for 100 years or more, we help preserve Montana's

strong agricultural roots and the stories and traditions that define our rural communities," said Christine Brown, MTHS Outreach and

"Ranch" (cont. on p. 5)



Volunteers Honored During Luncheon

On May 22, the Montana Historical Society celebrated its volunteers with years of service pins, recognition of hours of service, and a luncheon.

Friends of the MTHS president Judy Dorsch presented a symbolic check to Molly Kruckenberg, MTHS director, recognizing 3,575 hours donated to the Society by its volunteers in 2023, which is the equivalent of \$100,100.

Lucille Gordon, Vicki Smith, and Miki Wilde celebrated 25 years of service. Kirby Lambert was recognized

for donating 450 volunteer hours to the Society.

Volunteers work with every program at the MTHS, cataloging artifacts, stuffing envelopes, assisting on tours and with public programs, maintaining files, and much more. These donated hours help the Historical Society accomplish projects that would not otherwise be possible. Volunteers' time, skills, and commitment to the mission of the Montana Historical Society is vital to preserving our rich history. ▼▲▼▲



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“Ranch” (cont. from p. 4)

Interpretation historian.

Denis W. and Mary Flagler filed on a 313-acre homestead on Nine Mile Bench north of Highwood in Chouteau County around 1909. When Denis and Mary retired in 1934, daughter Elizabeth and husband Ingolf Birkeland continued the family operation, steadily adding new acreage. The farm passed to their son Tom and his wife Beverly in the 1950s and then to their grandsons Steven and Michael Birkeland and great-great grandson Weston Birkeland, who operates the farm today.

John Reynolds settled early in the Highwood area, starting his ranch in 1888. He married Maude Abrams in 1894. They expanded the ranch, then split it among their six children when John died in 1937. Their youngest daughter Kathryn Woodmansey purchased her siblings' shares, and she and her husband Fred lived at

the ranch full-time.

Disaster struck in 1952 when Highwood Creek flooded. After the water receded, the Woodmansey's moved the house, barn, garage, and bunkhouse 300 yards south, where they still stand near Shaw Creek. Kathryn and Fred created the Woodmansey Ranch Corporation in 1961, which included their four children. Their son Bob took over the farming operation when Fred died in 1972. Today, the Woodmanseys – third- and fourth-generation descendants of John and Maude Reynolds – still manage the 1,500-acre farm and ranch.

Northeast of Choteau, in Teton County, the Inbody family just celebrated 100 years of farming the same land. Roy and Hannah Inbody began farming leased land near the current farm acreage, which he purchased in March 1924. Roy added land to his holdings and by 1934 had amassed 1,200 acres.



Roy and Hannah were killed in a car accident while on vacation in California in 1934. Their children, ages 12 to 18, were determined to stay together on the farm.

Brothers Glen and Clark Inbody farmed together after World War II and grew the farm to 2,200 acres. The brothers created Inbody Farms Inc. in 1979 after Glen's son Roy came home to join the farming operation. Roy continued growing grains and adding more land to the farm. His son Scott returned to the farm in 2006, taking over the full operation of Inbody Farms

with occasional help from Roy.

“Wise money management and controlled growth have been factors in the farm staying in the family for 100 years,” said Roy Inbody.

Since 2010, the MTHS Centennial Farm and Ranch Program has recognized our state's agricultural traditions. To download requirements and the application, or for more information, visit <https://bit.ly/mtcentennialfarms>; email christine.brown@mt.gov to request a copy by mail; or call Christine Brown at (406) 444-1687. ▼▲▼▲

Online MTHS Exhibit on the Korean War Opens

A new online-only exhibit created by the Montana Historical Society explores the experiences of area residents who participated in the Korean War.

Situated between World War II and the Vietnam War, the Korean War is often overshadowed by those conflicts despite its own far-reaching geopolitical implications, many of which remain present today.

“In comparison to World War II and the Vietnam War, the Korean War is often seen as an isolated conflict with minor repercussions. However, the war had far-reaching geopolitical implications and in part shaped the Cold War,” said Aaron Rau, a Montana Historical Society archivist who put together the project with senior registrar Kendra Newhall. “We wanted to create an exhibit that offers a glimpse into the

experiences of Montanans who served in this relatively overlooked conflict.”

“Voices of the Forgotten War” includes oral histories, transcripts, photographs, and artifacts related to Montanans who served in the war. The audio, images, and artifacts in this collection offer a unique glimpse into this relatively overlooked conflict.

“The objects related to Ethel LaRock and her lengthy military service (1952-1976) are among the most interesting items on display,” Newhall said. “Ethel had a dynamic and fascinating career that led to her traveling the world, from Southeast Asia to Europe. She was awarded a Bronze Star for her service in the Korean War and, by the time she retired, held the rank of lieutenant colonel. Later in her life, Ethel spent many years volunteering here at the Montana

Historical Society. She told the best stories and was a pure joy to be around.”

The Korean war started on June 25, 1950, when North Korea – supported by China and the Soviet Union – invaded South Korea, which was supported by the United States and the United Nations.

Following the invasion by North Korean troops, the United Nations, which was led by the United States, committed ground troops to the Korean Peninsula to prevent the collapse of South Korea. What today is known as the Korean Conflict lasted for three long years, and as no formal peace treaty was signed, the conflict remains unresolved in a “frozen” state of hostilities.

View the exhibit at [Voices of the Forgotten War \(catalogaccess.com\)](https://www.mthshistory.org/voices-of-the-forgotten-war).



New Faces

Luke Duran is the Montana Historical Society’s new graphic artist for “Montana: The Magazine of Western History” and other MTHS publications.



“While the lens of history is long, I feel like the here and now is an exciting time for the Historical Society,” Duran said. “I’m eagerly

anticipating the opening of the new Montana Heritage Center and contributing my energy toward the good work and service that the Society provides.”

Duran grew up in Livingston in the 1970s, where he was steeped in the rich Montana history of railroads, cowboy culture, and Yellowstone National Park. He is passionate about the geologic history of the area; he spent a good part of his childhood hunting agates, crystals, and fossils, and pondering over rusty, mysterious farm implements and arrowheads from times past.

He served as art director for Montana Fish, Wildlife

& Parks and “Montana Outdoors” magazine from 2002 to 2024. Before that, Duran was creative director for a translation and interpreting company in Vancouver, Washington, and a graphic artist for Gibson Guitars. He also operates a freelance graphic design business, Element L Design, specializing in brand identity and visual communication for nonprofits.

Duran lives in East Helena with his wife, Marianne Baumeister, and their three dogs, a cat, and various aquarium fish. They have four children of high school and college age who come and go. He enjoys

cooking, travel, aquarium-keeping, hiking, and more! mushroom hunting. In addition, Duran is an avid music lover and bass guitar player, and likes to sing and play in rock bands.

Kenzie Baker started working part-time with the Montana Historical Society in March, as a member of the financial team.

She was previously employed at the Montana Department of Administration, in a customer service role, and also did accounting for the Montana Department of Health and Human Services.

“Although I enjoyed

“New” (cont. on p. 7)



“New” (cont. from p. 6)



customer service, I missed working in accounting and finances,” Baker said. “MTHS gave me the opportunity to take on that role again.”

Baker was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, but moved to Montana when she was three years old and has called it home since then. She attended high school in Boulder, Montana, then moved to Bozeman and Great Falls before settling down in Helena, where she also runs a new construction/remodel cleaning business.

She and her husband have four children, plus a cute griffon named Moose. They enjoy hunting, fishing, camping, riding dirt bikes, and boating.

“My favorite class in high school was Montana history; I was always fascinated about how our state was founded, and the changes in way of life as the decades pass,” Baker said. “I love what the Montana Historical Society stands for: celebrating and preserving Montana’s history.

“I am very excited to be a part of the MTHS team.”

Nalani “Nani” Hodges

is a new librarian at the Montana Historical Society.

Hodges grew up in Hawaii. She and her husband met at the local



community college, then moved to the Urbana-Champaign area where Hodges pursued a Master of Science in library and information science at the University of Illinois (2020-2022).

After earning her degree and working as a book and paper conservation graduate assistant, Hodges sought a job in Montana and worked as an e-resources librarian at Carroll College (2022-2024).

“I am overjoyed to join the MTHS community as the new librarian in the Library and Archives,” Hodges said.

Her hobbies include ceramics (wheel throwing and small figurines), book-binding and book repair, stacking/balancing rocks, calisthenics, and learning how to cook Korean, Japanese, and Southeast Asian cuisine.

Brad Russell is a new guard at the MTHS.

Russell was born in Kansas and grew up in a military family, living across the United States



and Germany. He enlisted in the US Army in 1997 as a combat medic and was stationed in Germany, deploying to Israel and Saudia Arabia.

After returning from Germany, Russell worked as a detention officer in Montana and trained in law enforcement. He returned to active duty with the Montana National Guard to complete a tour in Iraq with the infantry.

Russell has lived in Montana for 23 years with his wife and four adult children.

Curt McAlpin is a new guard at the MTHS.

He was born and raised in Montana, residing in Helena for the past 52 years.

McAlpin started working for the City of Helena after graduating from Helena High School (Go Bengals!). He spent four years with the Water Department,



then transferred to the Helena Police Department’s animal control division for 20 years. He spent the next 15 years as a patrol officer for the East Helena Police Department.

McAlpin has a small ranch east of Helena where he rides horses and enjoys trail riding and spending time camping with family and friends.

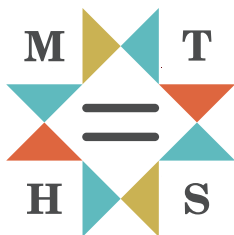
“I’m excited for this new adventure as a security officer with the Montana Historical Society,” McAlpine said. ▼▲▼

ABOUT US

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