

The Big Move is Moving Right Along at the Montana Heritage Center

Art and artifacts are gracing the shelves of the new Montana Heritage Center addition as the \$105 million construction and remodeling project moves toward its final phases.

With more than 65,000 irreplaceable items, the move is a combination of coordination, collaboration, and organization among the Montana Historical Society staff and volunteers. At the center of the effort is Kendra Newhall, a senior registrar at the MTHS.

Newhall spent more than five years planning, directing, and managing what's now known as The Big Move at the MTHS.

"Kendra did an incredible job in keeping this organized," MTHS Director Molly Kruckenberg said. "Except for the art storage, (due to a mix up with a subcontractor) we will exceed our move-in date by far."

Initially, Newhall and other MTHS staff inventoried, then packed everything from guns to saddles to dresses to – yes, even a kitchen sink and a steamboat steering wheel – in anticipation of the items being stored while the 66,000-square-foot addition was constructed. The

addition's compact storage space was meticulously researched and created to house both the uniform and unusual artifacts.

"We needed drawers to lay maps and delicate items like beaded children's moccasins. We needed areas to hang dresses. We needed saddle mounts and shelves large enough for chairs and a printing press," Newhall said. "We also continue to collect items from our rich history, so we had to consider what our future needs might be."

Beginning in January 2021, staff and volunteers packed and moved the boxed items into what used to be the main floor galleries in the historic Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building (VPMB) for safekeeping during the construction process. Museum and Library & Archives staff also used those galleries as office spaces, along with the vacated director's office area. The rest of the staff moved offsite to a temporary location on Helena Avenue.

With the bulk of the construction completed in the addition, it was time this fall to move the art and artifacts into the new storage areas so the



Kendra Newhall, a senior registrar at the MTHS, moves a historic kitchen sink out of a storage area in the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building into the Montana Heritage Center's addition recently.

72-year-old VPMB can be updated and upgraded. Construction crews already have replaced the single-pane windows in the building, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

"Move" (cont. on p. 7)

SHPO Offers Building Preservation Grants

HELENA – The Montana Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recently announced a new round

of building preservation grants, which will provide between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per award to support preservation

projects across Montana.

Funding for this "brick-and-mortar" grant comes from the state accommodations tax. The

program will award funds for physical repairs and improvements to properties listed in or eligible for listing

"Grants" (cont. on p. 3)



Making an Impact



If you received and read the MTHS's Impact Report, you know that the Society has been busy these past two years. The stories shared in the report showcase many of the activities that are ongoing while our new home is under construction. As we look forward to opening the Montana Heritage Center later this year – and that is exciting to say! – we are growing our programs and creating new and stimulating ways to interact with our members and visitors.

While our building is closed to the public, our Library & Archives staff are working diligently to improve access to our research collections. These efforts resulted in nearly 4,000 additional historic photographs available on the Montana History Portal, along with 1.2 million pages of historic newspapers freely available through our website. One of the highlights of our digitization efforts is the


F. Jay Haynes glass plate negatives, which focus on the Northern Pacific Railroad construction in the 1870s and 1880s.

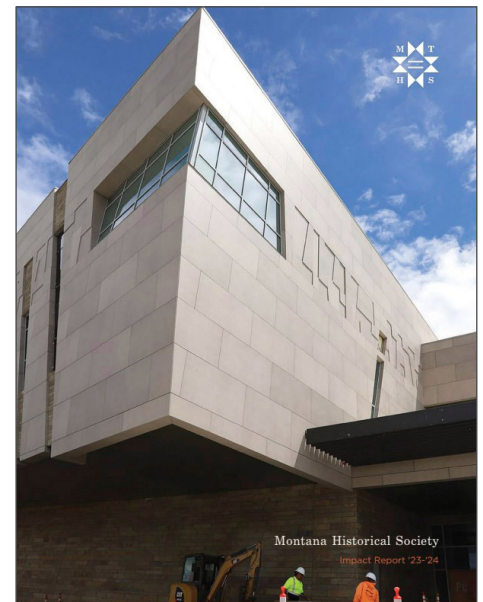
The State Historic Preservation Office impacts historic buildings and sites statewide. The preservation of the Union Bethel AME Church in Great Falls demonstrates a significant impact of our historic preservation team. Reviewing historic preservation tax credit projects, which can result in the reuse of historic buildings, has kept us busy as well. We continue to recognize the importance of Montana's historic sites with National Register nominations and signs, and acknowledgement of Centennial Farms and Ranches.

With the addition of several new tour guides, we reinstated guided tours of the Capitol building after a hiatus of nearly seven years. Through these tours, thousands of students and visitors can explore this iconic building and learn about Montana's history through the beautiful works of art there. The tours also promote an understanding of civics for students, exposing them to the operations of our state government. We are excited about sharing the beauty and history of the Capitol building with the many students who will travel to Helena during the upcoming Legislative session.

As we move ever closer to opening the Montana Heritage Center and inviting you to explore the inclusive and interactive exhibits in our galleries, we are excited to roll out new types of programs. Workshops on historic crafts invite all ages to engage firsthand with the past. Interactive events, like Clue at the Original

Governor's Mansion, employs role playing while exploring the Mansion's history in depth. And we are engaging more deeply with our communities, inviting cultural organizations to consider ways we can collaborate.

While we work toward the opening of the Montana Heritage Center, we encourage you to interact with our collections, tours, and public events and through our engaging publications. Even as we are temporarily closed right now, we're providing multiple ways to connect with Montana history and to impact our communities. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to dig into the MTHS Impact Report and learn more! Find it online at <https://mths.mt.gov/docs/finduse/docs/reports/MTHS-Annual-Report-2024.pdf> 



Impact Report front page.

“Grants” (cont. from p. 1)

in the National Register of Historic Places. All work must meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.

“The SHPO Grant will be a tool for communities eager to capitalize on their historic architecture,” said SHPO’s Historic Architecture Specialist Lindsay Tran. “It will help reestablish underutilized

buildings to strengthen communities socially and economically. The ideal candidate property is one that would be a hub for locals and a draw for tourists.”

SHPO’s idea for the program came from seeing home-grown preservation projects succeed in communities across the state. Ekalaka established its town hall and library in an empty bank the town preserved;

one-by-one, Phillipsburg’s commercial building owners reinvigorated their community by repainting and sprucing up their Victorian-era building facades; and Deer Lodge’s Rialto Theater rose from the ashes of a devastating fire to maintain its status as the community’s gathering place on Main Street.

“We saw community buy-in with these pioneering projects,” said State Historic Preservation

Officer Pete Brown. “They were restorative architecturally and added to community spirit. We always thought it would be great if SHPO could help these projects monetarily, and we’re grateful to be in that position now.”

SHPO seeks a diverse applicant base including private, non-profit, and public owners of historic properties. Learn more about the program at <https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo>. ▼▼▼



Montana Historical Society’s Damon Murdo received the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Performance at the 33rd annual ceremony held in Helena. Murdo worked with State Information Technology Services Division to develop the State Historic Preservation Office’s (SHPO) new e-consultation platform. The fully digital submittal and review workflow eliminates print and postage costs, delivery time, data entry, and hand filing, to save consulting parties time and money. The e-consultation system is a component of SHPO’s existing GIS-linked cultural records database, which Damon designed during his 23 years at SHPO.

Montana History Network Research Fellowship Offered

Students enrolled in a Montana institution of higher education are encouraged to apply for the annual Nelson Weller fellowship to conduct research at the Montana Historical Society (MTHS), Montana State University (MSU) and/or University of Montana (UM) library and archives. For the fellowship awarded in 2025, research will need to be conducted at MSU and UM, as the MTHS is closed for renovation.

The fellow will receive a stipend of \$4,000.

Fellowship expectations and deliverables

- Be in residence and conduct research for four weeks between May 1 and Oct. 31.
- Submit a written report about the research experience by Dec. 31, which will be shared with the donor funding the fellowship, Nelson Weller.
- Submit an article to “Montana the Magazine of Western History” for consideration for publication within one year of the residency.

Award Criteria

- Applicant’s education and research abilities; the applicant must be enrolled in a master’s or doctoral program at a Montana institution of higher education.
- Suitability of the research topic to MTHS, MSU and/or UM library and archives collections.
- Potential of the project to make a significant contribution to the scholarship about Montana.
- Potential of the project to produce an article-length publication.

Application requirements

- Cover letter.
- Project proposal, not to exceed three double-spaced pages, including specific materials the applicant intends to consult at each library or archive.
- Two- to three-page curriculum vitae.
- Letter of recommendation.

Applications must be sent electronically as one PDF document to mthslibrary@mt.gov by Feb. 28, 2025. ▼▼▼

Judges Sought for National History Day Competition

Do you love history and supporting young people? Consider volunteering to judge at one of National History Day (NHD) in Montana's four competitions.

NHD is a co-curricular academic program for students grades 6-12. Each year, more than 600,000 students around the world create historical research projects related to an annual theme. This year's theme is "Rights & Responsibilities in History." Students present their findings as documentaries, exhibit boards, papers, performances, or websites. Through the process, students develop skills in communication, project management, and historical thinking.

History Day relies on volunteer judges. At NHD contests, students present their work to teams of three judges, who provide feedback and select projects to advance to the next level of competition. Training is provided the morning of the competition. No prior experience is required. Judges are needed for the following competitions:

Eastern Regionals, Miles City



Aniya Smoker (Assiniboine and Sioux) of Frontier Middle School in Wolf Point, presenting her project "Buffalo Slaughter: Build Up and Effects on Native Americas" at National History Day competition in College Park, Maryland, in June 2024. Aniya was also chosen as Montana's representative to showcase her exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. Her teacher is Tina Strauser.

(Miles Community College), Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025

Northern Regionals, Kalispell (Flathead Valley Community College), Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025

Western Regionals, Helena (Helena High School), Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025

State Competition, Bozeman (Montana State University) Saturday, April 12, 2025

Sign up at www.national-historydaymt.org or email nationalhistorydaymt@gmail.com for more information. ▼▲▼

Three National Register Listings Approved for Montana

A grocery store-turned-café, a park that once housed war prisoners, and a general store/post office recently were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Streamline Moderne-style **Regis Grocery** (now a café) was built in 1942 in Red Lodge and is a distinctive corner grocery store, serving the neighborhood for 57 years.

After the death of owners Joe and Viola Regis, a group of local women purchased the property for a café and community center. After renovations in 2001, the Regis Grocery opened as the Regis Café and remains in operation today.

The Regis represents the once ubiquitous corner grocery stores that are now a vanishing resource

within neighborhood landscapes. This cultural phenomenon helped to maintain the vitality of small neighborhoods by its easy "walkability" as well as vital location to hear neighborhood information.

Riverside Park in Laurel represents a locally significant public landscape with historic resources associated with community



Manley's General Store

development, New Deal programs, military history, and community recreation activities. The property is "Listings" (cont. on p. 5)

Celebration Held for History Teacher of the Year

A celebration was held in November to celebrate Jenifer Powell being named the 2024 Centennial Bell Montana History Teacher of the Year.

Before retiring in June 2024, Powell was the seventh-grade social studies teacher at Corvallis Middle School, where she demonstrated an exceptional dedication to teaching and a profound passion for imparting knowledge of the history of Montana to her students.

She and her former students came to Helena on Nov. 8 – Statehood Day – for a ceremony to celebrate her commitment to teaching Montana history. Powell’s students rang the Centennial Bell at 10:40 a.m., the exact minute Montana became the 41st state in 1889. Students also led attendees in the Montana state song and recited the preamble to the 1972 Montana constitution.

Powell received \$4,250 from the program’s sponsors: Montana

Television Network, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, and the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers, who also presented a plaque and two copies of the book “Dreams across the Divide.” The 1889 Coffee House provided lunch for Powell, her former students, and her guests following the ceremony.

Powell’s prize money will be used to help fund fieldtrips, supplies, speakers, and anything else that will enhance learning in Corvallis schools.

This is the 35th annual Montana Statehood Centennial Bell Award Ceremony. Former newscaster Norma Ashby Smith of Great Falls established the program in 1990 to perpetuate the awareness of Montana’s birthday. On even numbered years a Montana history teacher at the 7th-12th grade level is chosen. On uneven years a Montana History teacher at the 4th-6th grade level is chosen. ▼▲▼



Jenifer Powell (left) and Abigail Kochel celebrate Powell’s designation as the 2024 Centennial Bell Montana History Teacher of the Year. Kochel was the 2021 Centennial Bell Montana History Teacher of the Year and also served on this year’s selection committee.

“Listings” (cont. from p. 4)

nestled along the south bank of the Yellowstone River approximately one mile south of the Laurel Downtown Historic District.

Riverside Park’s beginnings date to 1923, when a private owner constructed a dance hall. Within a year after the City of Laurel’s purchase of the property in August 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration’s Transient Relief Service and later the Works Progress Administration, and National Youth

Administration initiated a period of building construction and occupation that lasted through 1939.

The U.S. military used the property as a World War II prisoner of war camp that occupied the district from 1944 to 1945. Subsequently, local civic organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America, Laurel Rod and Gun Club, Laurel Rifle Club, American Legion Post 123, Girl Scouts, Laurel Jaycees, and the Laurel Lion’s Club leased the buildings and park property for social and sporting activities.

Riverside Park currently

operates as a recreational and camping area, a meeting spot for local social service clubs, and as a wedding and party venue.

Manley’s General Store in Garneill (Fergus County) is five miles north of the town of Judith Gap, between the Little Belt and Big Snowy mountain ranges. Manley’s Grocery Store stands as a local landmark representing one of the last remaining vestiges of the homestead community and the place where the town and surrounding area found identity through common experience.

Built in a commercial

brick style in 1911, the rectangular brick building has served the community as a general store, post office, and community hall. Since its construction and continuing to the present, the building serves as a reminder of the homesteading boom years of the early 1900s and the importance of a community gathering place in a small town.

Learn more about the board, the nominations they reviewed, and information about upcoming and past meetings at: <https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/NationalReg/ RBagenda> ▼▲▼

New Employees



Briar Bell joined MTHS as a collections intern for the Museum Program in September 2024, helping with all things collections, including file reconciliation, cataloguing, and The Big Move. She is looking forward to learning as much as she can about the story of Montana by digging into the MTHS collections.

After many childhood museum visits, Bell knew she wanted to work with something museum related, and by high school she had chosen art conservation as her eventual goal. After gaining more experience in the field, she plans to start applying to graduate school for conservation Fall 2025.

Born and raised in Helena, Bell took a break from Montana to attend St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. In May 2024, she graduated with dual degrees in studio art and art history. She spent her free time there singing in choirs and operas, working in the wood and metal shop, and writing about rare books and archives for

the library. Her education enabled her to explore and develop diverse interests (talk to her about Russian lit., modern art, and the history of advertising).

She also has interned at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., where she learned to love collections, and during this past summer, Bell gained conservation experience as an intern at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming. Bell is excited to have the opportunity to continue to learn about museums, collections, and her home state while staying in the comfort of her hometown.

When she isn't at the Historical Society, you can find Bell bookbinding, making paper, or cooking her most recent food obsession (currently French omelets).



Shannon Kelly is a new associate editor with the MTHS. She grew up in Post Falls, Idaho,

and enjoyed exploring history and the outdoors across the Northwest and Montana. She earned a bachelor's degree in history and minored in Native American studies and religious studies in 2015 at the University of Idaho, where she was the trombone section leader for the UI Marching Band. Kelly earned her master's degree in public history from Colorado State University in 2017. As part of that graduate program, she completed a curatorial internship at Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS in Deer Lodge, Montana, in summer 2016. Following school, Kelly researched and wrote a history for the UI Marching Band while also working as an elementary literacy paraprofessional.

She worked at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Fort Mandan, North Dakota, as a seasonal interpreter from 2019-2021 before being promoted to lead interpreter, then interpretive resource specialist from 2022-2024. This past spring through fall, she traded the windy Missouri River bottoms of central North Dakota for a marmot-filled seasonal park ranger position at Pompey's Pillar National Monument. Throughout all these experiences, she has contributed articles to various publications and has been writing a book

on the winter experiences of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

"Like many in this field, I've learned to be a jack of all trades by accident," Kelly said. "I think my backgrounds in writing, interpretation, museums, and preservation all inform each other."

She is excited to embark on her new adventure with the MTHS and be part of such a well-respected publication. The opportunities for outdoor adventures are truly exciting for her as she finds herself living in real mountains fulltime since leaving Idaho. Kelly is a devoted "cat mom" to Cheddar and Biscuit, who have seen more of Montana than most humans.



Elise Perpignano joined the Montana Historical Society in September 2024 as the experiential graphic designer for the exhibits team. In this

"New" (cont. on p. 7)

“Move” (cont. from p. 1)

They anticipate wrapping up construction by November 2025. Meanwhile, staff and outside consultants are working to develop the exhibits for the expanded Homeland and Charles M. Russell galleries, as well as preparing the changing gallery for the initial opening with

the MTHS Poindexter collection of modern art.

“The exhibit installation is staying on schedule, but it will be tight,” noted Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney, the museum program manager. “But this has gone incredibly smoothly, thanks in large part to Kendra.” ▼▼▼

ABOUT US

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

▼ MHS Director: Molly Kruckenberg

▼ Membership Services:
Jenni Carr (406) 444-2890

▼ Editor: Eve Byron (406) 444-6843

mhs.mt.gov

“New” (cont. from p. 6)

role she is applying a multidisciplinary approach to create immersive exhibit environments that evoke emotions and tell compelling stories (but currently she’s mostly helping with “The Big Move”). She is particularly excited to design graphic elements that will inform and engage visitors in the Russell and Poindexter galleries.

Perpignano attended Montana State University’s School of Art, earning dual bachelor’s degrees in graphic design and studio arts. After graduation, she spent five months backpacking in Glacier National Park. While she relished the outdoor adventure, she missed the simple luxuries of a cozy bed, warm showers, and occasional cell service, and moved to the neighboring Columbia Falls.

There she continued her oil painting practice, began freelancing as a graphic designer and pursued her

passion for “peak bagging” in Glacier and skiing “mad powder” at Big Mountain. In 2020 she accepted a position as an in-house graphic designer at Sweet Peaks Ice Cream, designing packaging, shop signage, running social media, and sampling the wares. However, the pandemic and subsequent housing market surge forced her to return to her hometown of Helena.

Since 2021, Perpignano has been actively involved in Helena’s creative community. She has served as an artist in residence for Helena Public Schools, worked as a senior graphic designer for a local marketing agency, and teaches at the Holter Museum of Art. Her studio work has been exhibited in several shows, and she has completed two prominent murals: “Wildfire” and “Momentum” in Centennial Park’s tunnels.

When not immersed in creative pursuits, Perpignano enjoys a good meal with pals and spending time outside

with her partner Ryan and their two baby dogs, Rimini (Rimi) and Sicily (Sis).



Peter Van Horn is a new IT Systems Support specialist with the Montana Historical Society. Hailing from Oregon, he moved to Montana in 1989. Van Horn relocated to Helena in 2016, where he enjoys the smell of ponderosa pines, hiking with his dog in the mountains, and Nordic ski racing. He and his wife spend their weekends trying to keep their 100-year-old house standing. Van Horn’s favorite book is “I Who Have Never Known Men” by Jacqueline Harpman.

He holds associates

degrees from Flathead Valley Community College and Helena College (computer science), and a bachelor’s degree in journalism from University of Montana. Some of Van Horn’s previous jobs include whitewater river guide, custodian and landscaper. He loves a good challenge.

Van Horn started working on computers in 2005 when he assembled his first PC from secondhand parts. Since then, he has found it exciting to provide tech support, whether it was in the job description or not. He has volunteered for community projects, such as helping the Lewis and Clark Library migrate software to the cloud. Whether it is software, web services, or hardware, Van Horn dives right in. He still enjoys assembling his own machines when time permits. Van Horn has a lifelong love of learning and looks forward applying his IT knowledge and skills fulltime to serve the MTHS staff and customers. ▼▼▼



MONTANA

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 N. Roberts, P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201

Big Sky~Big History

INSIDE

- ▼ The Big Move is Moving Right Along **1**
- ▼ SHPO Offers Building Preservation Grants **1**
- ▼ Making an Impact **2**
- ▼ Montana History Network Research Fellowship Offered **3**
- ▼ Judges Sought for National History Day Competition **4**
- ▼ Three National Register Listings Approved for Montana **4**
- ▼ Celebration Held for History Teacher of the Year **5**
- ▼ New Employees **6**



Carly White, an outreach generalist at MTHS, models the new vest and shirts that our guides will wear when giving tours of the Capitol, the Original Governor's Mansion, and the Montana Heritage Center galleries.

Thanks
to our
Alliance
Business
Partners!

