

# The time is nigh!



## Celebrations at the Montana Heritage Center on December 2, 2025 and June 25-28, 2026

It's been over five years in the making, but on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, the doors to the Montana Heritage Center will open to the public.

We'll celebrate this major achievement with a traditional blessing and ribbon cutting ceremony starting at 3 p.m. in the Central Commons of the new facility, located at 225 N. Roberts in Helena.

Conducting the ribbon cutting will be Director Molly Kruckenberg, Governor Greg Gianforte, Dennis Washington, and Norm Asbjornson. Following this event, there will be curated tours for the public on December 4 and 5 with a special Christmas pop-up event on Saturday, December 6. Stay tuned, more details will be available soon.

*But wait, there's more!* Because many of our friends and supporters find December a challenging month to visit, we're holding a multiday Grand Opening Celebration June 25-28, 2026. Join us for a series of events at the Montana Heritage Center, including luncheons, curated tours of the various galleries and spaces, and Montana history-themed activities. We are also partnering with the Helena community to offer a variety of activities for the entire family throughout the celebration. Mark your calendars, make your trip plans. You won't want to miss this event!

Learn more at [montanamuseum.org/  
grand-opening-celebrations](https://montanamuseum.org/grand-opening-celebrations)



### December 2, 2025

#### Blessing, Ribbon Cutting & Press Event

Montana Heritage Center • 3 p.m.  
225 N. Roberts • Helena



### June 25-28, 2026

#### Montana History Celebration

Montana Heritage Center and  
various locations across Helena

FROM THE MTHS DIRECTOR

# We are so excited to share the Montana Heritage Center with you!

The past five years have been a journey for the Montana Historical Society. What began as a concept and vision will shortly be reality. The creative ideas, thoughtfulness, and dedication of the MTHS staff are taking shape, and soon we will be able to share them with you.

The Montana Heritage Center capital campaign is almost complete. We are now raising the final \$1 million to reach our \$60 million goal. We appreciate all the support our members have shown this project over the past many years. Your generosity has made this transformation possible.

On December 2, Governor Gianforte will officially open the doors to the Heritage Center, welcoming you to explore our galleries, gift shop, café, event spaces, and research areas. As we celebrate the achievement of this long-awaited goal, we are also celebrating the new ways we will be sharing Montana's history with you.

Throughout the Montana Heritage Center, you will find many ways to actively engage with, explore, and learn from our past. Interactive and immersive exhibits, paired with our amazing collections, tell Montana's stories in our galleries. In a beautiful new reference space, researchers of all ages can delve into the rich materials that document our past. Tours, events, and experiences will engage visitors with

Montana's landscapes and people.

A blessing of the Heritage Center by our tribal partners will kick off our opening events, starting December 2 and continuing throughout the winter and spring. Guided tours, holiday events, lectures, and many other experiences are planned to welcome each of you to come explore the Heritage Center and connect with our stories.

As the weather warms in 2026, we hope you will join us for our community-wide grand opening celebrations, from June 25 to 28. Four days of history-themed events at the Heritage Center and around the Helena community will kick off our first summer of visitors. Watch for more information on these events.

Between the ribbon cutting and grand opening events, the Larry Len and LeAnne Peterson Library and Archives

will open in spring 2026. We will share the date with you soon and look forward to welcoming you into this inspiring new space for research and discovery.

But before we even get to the December 2 ribbon cutting, I invite you to join us at the annual Montana History Conference in September, where you can get a sneak peek at the Heritage Center during our opening reception. Come connect with us for an early look at the public spaces in the building!

—Molly Kruckenberg, Director



Molly Kruckenberg



A sneak peek at the exhibit installations in the Homeland Gallery



**Help us Cross the Finish Line!**

With just \$1 million left to raise, we're in the final stretch of our \$60 million capital campaign to complete the Montana Heritage Center. Thanks to the generous support of donors across the state and beyond, we're almost there—and now we're asking you to help us cross the finish line! Every contribution, no matter the size, brings us closer to opening a world-class facility that will preserve Montana's history for generations to come. Donations are being accepted through July 30 at [mths.mt.gov/donate](https://mths.mt.gov/donate).

## A Note from the Designers: Welcome to the *Society Bulletin*

We are thrilled to introduce you to the newly redesigned *Society Bulletin*—formerly the *Society Star*. Our goal was to create a member newsletter that is vibrant and engaging, with surprises on every page. The *Society Bulletin* features department highlights, upcoming events, ways to get involved, and even a Montana history-related word search. Whether you read it cover to cover or just pause on a page or two, we hope it feels inviting, informative, and made for you.

Don't miss the center spread with our events calendar where now and in the future, you can always find what's coming up at the Montana Historical Society.

—Your Design Team:

**Luke Duran**, Publications Designer

**Colton Tash**, Communications and Public Information Officer

**Ginny Sullivan**, Public Relations and Development Officer





## EXHIBITIONS

# Charles M. Russell Gallery *featuring the Mackay Family Collection*

A trip to the Montana Heritage Center won't be complete without a visit to the Charles M. Russell Gallery. The new gallery, almost three times larger than the previous exhibit space, will feature art and artifacts from the MTHS collection, including masterworks such as *When the Land Belonged to God*, many major oils, watercolors, sketches, letters, and sculptures.

The gallery will also tell the larger story of Russell's life and his incredible legacy. It will explore the key importance of his wife and business partner, Nancy Mann Russell, as well as interactions with his

close friends.

Bringing Charlie's story to life is a long-held dream of Museum Program manager Jennifer Bottomly O'looney, who notes, "From the time Russell came to Montana as a sixteen-year-old to his death in 1926, he was a keen observer and storyteller. His art captured a pivotal period of Montana's history. But his character, sense of humor, and deep appreciation for the beauty of Big Sky Country is what makes his work so important. Sharing Russell with the world is truly the telling of Montana's story."



**Above:** Nancy Russell seated at her desk in the couple's home around 1907. PAC 2000-40.23, MTHS Photograph Archives

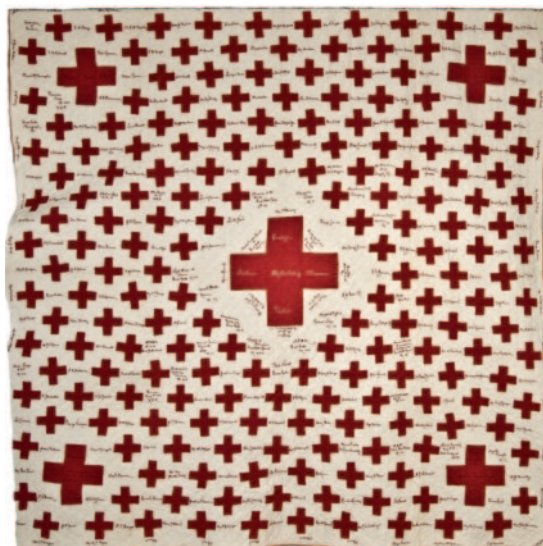
**Top:** *When the Land Belonged to God* by Charles M. Russell X1977.01.01, MTHS Collection

## ROTATING EXHIBITS

# Sharing the Collections

With more than 65,000 pieces of art and artifacts in the Society's Museum collections, the Montana Heritage Center's expansion allows more spaces to display and highlight objects important to Montana's story. Exhibit cases will bring objects out of storage and into the public realm, while the hallway outside Big Sky Hall provides space to hang art and photographs. The Central Commons will also showcase large artifacts currently being stored off-site.

The Museum staff are excited to be able to share more of the collection with the public. We look forward to welcoming you on December 2.



To raise money for the war effort, supporters were asked to donate from 25 cents to \$1 to have their name included on quilts. Raising more than \$1,060, this Red Cross quilt is covered with more than 1,300 names. It was made in 1918 by the Ladies Auxiliary of the United Commercial Travelers Council 349, in Cascade County.

X1982.71.01 Red Cross Quilt

MTHS PREMIER EVENT

# A Place in Time: Join us for the 52nd Annual Montana History Conference

We're pulling out all the stops for an unforgettable Montana history experience! Join us for the 52nd Annual Montana History Conference, "A Place in Time," to be held September 25-27, 2025, at the Best Western Great Northern Hotel in Helena.

This year's History Conference showcases an impressive line-up of speakers, including first-person interpreter Hasan Davis as York, the Corps of Discovery's only Black member; Montana historian Kirby Lambert unveiling the new Montana Press book, *A History of Montana in 101 Places*; Montana journalist and conservationist Todd Wilkinson reflecting on Montana identity; and Piikuni elders Smokey and Darnell Rides at the Door sharing Blackfeet oral traditions.

Crystal Alegria of the Extreme History Project and filmmaker Kimberly Hogberg will premiere episode three of *The Story of Us* documentary, which features the compelling stories of three trailblazing Montana women: lawyer Ella Knowles Haskell, art dealer Nancy Cooper Russell, and rodeo queen Fannie Sperry Steele.

Register early to get a seat on one of the many popular local tours to discover Helena area history. Two all-day tours include an in-depth look at the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and Kohrs Mansion in Helena, as well as the ever-popular Made in Montana tour, which will feature a river cruise through history and bottom-to-top tour of the Holter Dam. Other stellar tours include visits to Little Shell Tribe historic sites, Black history sites, Jewish and Chinese cemeteries, the Sieben Ranch, the Charter Oak Mine, and the Western Clay Manufacturing/Archie Bray Foundation campus.

A host of workshops on Thursday, September 25, offer something for every lifelong learner. Opportunities include a daylong Indian Education for All workshop for educators, a living history workshop for museum and historic site professionals, as well as half-day cemetery preservation and historic preservation workshops.



Nationally acclaimed storyteller and living history interpreter Hasan Davis will bring to life the remarkable and often overlooked story of York, the enslaved Black explorer who was an indispensable member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Photo: Hasan Davis

Look for your conference program to arrive by mail in early July. Online registration will open on July 25.

Registration is \$230 until August 25 and \$265 after. Some workshops and tours have extra fees. Book your hotel room now and find up-to-date information at [bit.ly/MTHSHistoryConference](https://bit.ly/MTHSHistoryConference).

## A Place in Time

SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2025 ★ HELENA

Register online at: [bit.ly/MTHSHistoryConference](https://bit.ly/MTHSHistoryConference)



## CELEBRATING YOUTH

# Hands-on with History at Archaeology Day

On March 8, nearly 400 students from 4th and mixed grade classes around the Helena area participated in Archaeology Day, hosted by the Montana Historical Society at Montana Wild. This program gave students a chance to discover the past through hands-on and demonstration stations that included archaeological excavation, atlatl throwing, oral history, stone boiling, pemmican making, and a scavenger hunt.

In response to a follow-up survey, one teacher commented, "The kids loved it! They were very engaged the whole time, asking questions and being active listeners."

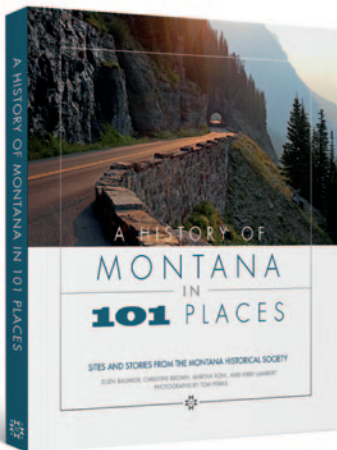
Another teacher remarked, "It was hard to rank the stations because I truly feel that all of them were excellent."

Staff and volunteers enthusiastically shared their expertise with the young learners, encouraging them to discover the importance of learning from the past to live in the present and shape the future.



## PUBLICATIONS SPOTLIGHT

### Coming this fall: *A History of Montana in 101 Places*



The Montana Historical Society Press's newest book, *A History of Montana in 101 Places: Sites and Stories from the Montana Historical Society*, takes readers on a wide-ranging tour of the Treasure State. From locations that Indigenous people inhabited and traveled through long before the arrival of Euro-Americans to modern buildings, this book offers fresh insight into Montana history by focusing on a diverse selection of its historic places.

A companion to *A History of Montana in 101 Objects*, this exploration of the state's built environment and cultural sites tells the story of Montana through a unique lens. With enlightening essays from Ellen Bauml, Christine Brown, Martha Kohl, and Kirby Lambert based on their decades of cumulative experience researching and writing about Montana's historic places, and original photography from Tom Ferris, this richly illustrated book deserves a place in the collection of anyone who loves Montana history.

To reserve a copy, please contact Karen Ogden at [karen.ogden@mt.gov](mailto:karen.ogden@mt.gov)



304 pages, 253 photographs

Release date: September 2025

\$29.99 softcover, ISBN 978-0-9721522-0-4

\$49.99 hardcover, ISBN 978-1-7370960-9-2

Available at the Montana Historical Society Gift Shop or through Farcountry Press, [farcountrypress.com](http://farcountrypress.com).

With the front cover featuring Charlie Russell's *Cowboy on a Horse Talking to a White Woman*, the Summer issue of *Montana The Magazine of Western History* is out now!





## MTHS TOURS

# MTHS offers tours of the Original Governor's Mansion and Montana Capitol this summer

As we dive into summer in Montana, there's no better time to get better acquainted with the true stories of our Treasure State. Montana Historical Society tour guides have mobilized this summer to provide informative daily tours of the "Peoples House" and the Original Governor's Mansion. Each dynamic tour lasts approximately one hour, and they are free to participants of all ages.



### Montana Capitol Tours June 1–September 15

*Meet on the first floor of the Capitol, no reservations required*

- ▶ **Monday–Friday:** Tours at 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- ▶ **Saturday:** 9:30 a.m., 11:30 and 1:30 p.m.
- ▶ **Sunday:** 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

### The Original Governor's Mansion Tours June 1–September 15

*The Original Governor's Mansion is located at 304 North Ewing, Helena. There is no admission fee, and admission is on a first-come, first-served basis, no admission fee or advance reservations.*

- ▶ **Tuesday–Saturday:** Tours at 12, 1, 2, and 3 p.m.
- ▶ **Closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays.**



**MTHS is pleased to welcome two new tour guides to our expanded tours program. Please welcome these wonderful additions to our tours staff.**

**Kaelie Giffel** A thoughtful interpreter and exhaustive researcher, Kaelie has become the tour team's resident expert on Jeannette Rankin. Hailing from North Carolina, Kaelie also works part-time for the Montana Jewish Project and recently earned her PhD from the University of Washington in English Literature.

**Leah Tietz** may have recently retired as the director of the MUS Self-Funded Worker's Compensation Program, but she is a born teacher and tour guide. As a 4th-generation Montanan, Leah has a knack for sharing our state's history, stories, and treasures with diverse audiences. Leah doesn't just teach history, she lives it. Ask her about her gorgeous eastside home, which was built in 1888, or about her stories of growing up as an outdoor kid in Flathead County.

For more information about MTHS tours,  
contact Darby Bramble, Museum Education Officer • [darby.bramble2@mt.gov](mailto:darby.bramble2@mt.gov)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

# Original Governor's Mansion Garden Party

Join us for the summer Garden Party at the Original Governor's Mansion on **Saturday, August 2** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The whole family is invited to explore the historic house and grounds, which was built in 1888 and served Montana's governing families from 1913 to 1959. There will also be live music by local ensembles, traditional lawn games, and cookies and lemonade for all to enjoy. This is a unique opportunity to discover the Victorian mansion and historic carriage house at your own pace without a traditional tour—we will have staff and volunteers stationed on each floor to answer any questions. Don your floral best and join the fun!



## Did you know?

In **1865**, the Montana Historical Society was created in Bannack by Montana's first territorial legislature, making it one of the oldest institutions of its kind west of the Mississippi.

MTHS was made a state agency by the Montana state legislature in **1891**.

In **2015**, the agency celebrated its 150th anniversary.

With a ground blessing in **2020**, construction began on the Montana Heritage Center.

In its greatest expansion, the Montana Heritage Center opens in December **2025**.

### August 2

#### Garden Party at the Original Governor's Mansion

304 N. Ewing St. • Helena  
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### August 19

#### China Row Walking Tour

Forestvale Cemetery  
490 Forestvale Rd. • Helena  
7 p.m.

*Note: Prior registration required*

### August 21

#### From the Prairies to the Mountains: A Sneak Peak Walking Tour of the Nature Trail at the Montana Heritage Center

Montana Heritage Center  
225 N. Roberts • Helena  
7 p.m.

### September 4

#### Fall lecture series begins

#### Rooted at the Edge: Ranching Where the Old West and the New West Collide

Author Donna Erickson  
Lewis & Clark Library  
120 S. Last Chance Gulch.  
Helena  
6:30 p.m.

### September 25-27

#### Montana History Conference

A Place in Time  
Best Western Great Northern  
Hotel • Helena

The Montana Historical Society hosts public programs on a wide variety of topics relating to the Treasure State's history and culture. Most programs take place on Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. (excluding holidays and a summer break). Every fall the Society holds its annual Montana History Conference. Special lectures, exhibit openings, curator tours, and family programs also enliven the year.

To arrange speakers for your group or organization, or other questions regarding public programs, contact Laura Marsh at (406) 444-4789 or [laura.marsh@mt.gov](mailto:laura.marsh@mt.gov).



Join the Montana Historical Society Community Events mailing list



# Montana Students Shine at State History Day Contest

This April, 119 middle and high school students from across Montana gathered in Bozeman for the annual state History Day contest. They brought 70 original projects—ranging from documentaries and performances to papers and websites—all centered on the 2024 theme: Rights & Responsibilities in History. Nearly a third of the entries highlighted Montana or Indigenous history.



Lolo Middle School 6th graders Quinlyn Frank, Cierra Hadnot, and Quora Miller received the Dave Walter Travel Scholarship for their Battle of the Little Bighorn documentary.



Special awards returned for the first time since 2019, thanks to the Montana Historical Society. Thomas Johnson, a freshman at Jefferson High, won the Martha Plassmann Prize for his documentary on the 1897 Butte Chinese Boycott. Lolo Middle School 6th graders Quinlyn Frank, Cierra Hadnot, and Quora Miller received the Dave Walter Travel Scholarship for their Battle of the Little Bighorn documentary, which will be featured in *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.

The Montana 250th Commission also recognized outstanding student work. Prizes went to projects on the Bonus Army marchers, the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, and the creation of the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

"Watching students connect historical themes to modern-day issues was powerful," said commission chair Chris Averill.

Forty-five students qualified for the National History Day contest held June 8-12, 2025 at the University of Maryland. For a full list of winners, visit [www.nationalhistorydaymt.org](http://www.nationalhistorydaymt.org).

"Watching students connect historical themes to modern-day issues was powerful."

—Chris Averill

Students came from communities across the state, including Bigfork, Harlowton, Lolo, Superior, and Wolf Point. The event opened with a keynote address by Montana Poet Laureate Chris LaTray (Little Shell Chippewa/Métis), setting an inspiring tone for the day.

Throughout the event, students presented their research to 60 volunteer judges and participated in workshops, museum visits, and a meet-and-greet with National History Day executive director Dr. Cathy Gorn. "These students give me hope for the future," Dr. Gorn shared. "Their deep research and passion show they are becoming informed and engaged citizens."



**Button Design** Students who compete at History Day's national contest trade buttons with students from every other NHD affiliate and wear them throughout the contest. The Montana 250th Commission sponsored Montana's History Day button design contest. Entries were open to any Montana 4th-12th grader. **Madeline Pomeroy**, an 11th grader at Bigfork High School, created this year's winning entry.

*"The pin I have designed seeks to encompass the natural beauty that we have the right to enjoy and the responsibility to protect."*

N R A J J U Y W Q Q L C L W A R M G D W W A M M  
M Y B Z T F X R O L N E N I P A S O R E D N O P  
J Z B C Z Q M L I W Y W D F B E T X O X Z O U K  
F V B L Y R T N U O C Y K S G I B O C N M P R P  
T X N V U W W V F V C K G A A G T V Z B S W N O  
W F S R H E K Z D J L Y I F M T D T L S A Z I J  
G S K G A S B R M G W H U C K L E B E R R Y N X  
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L S C H F E Q Y N G V B J N E A P L W Y R M C B  
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K R N Z G E T B A R G K H T R E M W B N L A K G  
X L A U N A A P L U A U R E R I H P P A S G S L  
D K Y T W D N Z U R O E M A A Z N W A P P A J L  
E N I I Z O A E L Q E Q B G T T O S H D A T V Y  
Z B C L M W M B L S P I U Y Y A G B Y U E E Y V  
I Q X S P L E T A J Y X Q W L W L R S Y H M O U  
N Z X U D A L O B J K F F O W Z G P A U D G B J  
R E N B Q R O O Y A X Y J K M Y Z G Y S D S R O  
T B B T M K D U C K B I L L E D D I N O S A U R  
M S C O B E Y S O I L P A Z Z F O L R W R W G D  
L Z H I U J S U H L C S C V S N B A P G R O Y P  
E W E S T S L O P E C U T T H R O A T T R O U T

## Word search key

Grizzly bear  
Montana Lullaby  
Sapphire  
Moss agate  
Ponderosa pine  
Westslope cutthroat trout  
Bitterroot  
Bluebunch wheatgrass  
Duck-billed dinosaur  
Oro y Plata  
Western meadowlark  
Montana Melody  
Big Sky Country  
Mourning cloak  
Scobey soil  
Huckleberry

State Symbols word search

Can you find all 16 state symbols hidden in this puzzle?

## Billings Educator Honored as History Teacher of the Year

Darla Stone, a 4th grade teacher at Beartooth Elementary School in Billings, has been named the 2025 Centennial Bell Montana History Teacher of the Year. Selected unanimously by a statewide committee, Stone was recognized for her dynamic approach to history instruction and her commitment to Indian Education for All (IEFA).

Stone's teaching emphasizes connection—between past and present, and between her students and Montana's rich cultural heritage. "Teaching 4th grade Montana History is one of my favorite parts of the year," she said. "Students at this age are so curious. It's a perfect time to explore the stories and landscapes that shape our state."

Stone has taught in Billings for nine years and remains deeply involved in the classroom. She collaborates closely with the Billings Public Schools Indigenous Education Department, presents at state

education conferences, and advises the Billings Student Tribal Council. Her work regularly brings in tribal representatives and local historians to provide students with authentic voices and perspectives.



In recognition of her achievement, Stone will receive \$4,250 to enhance classroom learning through materials, field trips, or guest speakers. The award is sponsored by the Montana Television Network, Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers, and the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, with additional support from the

Montana Historical Society and 1889 Coffeehouse.

As part of the 36th Statehood Centennial Bell celebration, Stone and her students will ring the Bell at 10:29 a.m. on November 7, one day before the official anniversary of Montana's Statehood Day (November 8 falls on a Saturday). The bell will still ring at the exact minute Montana became the 41st state in 1889.

## HONORING MONTANA'S STORYTELLERS

### Jon Axline and Chris La Tray Receive Heritage Awards

**Two outstanding Montanans—Jon Axline of Helena and Chris La Tray of Missoula—have been honored with Montana Historical Society Heritage Awards for their exceptional efforts to preserve and share the state's history and cultural identity.**

Axline received the Montana Heritage Guardian Award, the Society's highest honor. As the longtime historian for the Montana Department of Transportation, Axline has spent more than 30 years researching, interpreting, and promoting Montana's historic places and stories. His body of work includes more than nine books, a dozen articles, and 57 National Register of Historic Places nominations—documenting Montana's past from small towns to remote roadways.



Jon Axline

Chris La Tray

Chris La Tray, a citizen of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Montana's current Poet Laureate (2023–2025), received the Montana Heritage Keeper Award. La Tray has become a powerful voice for Indigenous history and identity, particularly the story of the Little Shell Tribe, which gained federal recognition in 2019.

Through his memoir *Becoming Little Shell*, a newsletter, and numerous public presentations, La Tray has brought attention to the experiences, struggles, and resilience of his people. His work blends storytelling, history, and personal reflection to foster understanding across communities.

The Montana Heritage Awards are presented each year by the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees to individuals or organizations who demonstrate exceptional dedication to preserving or interpreting Montana's history and culture. This year saw a record number of nominations from across the state. Both awardees will be honored at local community ceremonies organized by the Montana Historical Society. These events will offer a chance for friends, supporters, and community members to celebrate their achievements and reflect on the importance of preserving Montana's diverse heritage.

"Jon and Chris are champions of Montana's stories," said Molly Kruckenberg, MTHS director. "Through their unique approaches—one through historical documentation, the other through lived experience and creative expression—they remind us of the many ways history can be told, remembered, and honored."

## DEDICATION



This photo of Chuck Johnson was used for the memorial plaque unveiled at the Montana State Capitol on March 21, 2025.



Newspaper-themed treats were served at the dedication honoring Chuck.

# Legendary Journalist Chuck Johnson Honored

The Montana Historical Society was honored to play a role in a plaque dedication honoring the late Charles S. “Chuck” Johnson, Montana’s longest-serving statehouse reporter. The plaque was unveiled at the State Capitol on March 21, 2025, in the hall adjacent to the Old Supreme Court Chambers.

“It’s fitting and necessary that we pay tribute with this plaque to the longest-serving statehouse reporter, historian, and dean of Montana journalism, the late Chuck Johnson,” said state Senator Mary Ann Dunwell. “I have been honored and humbled to be able to work with others to make this dedication possible for a person who lived each day with integrity, humility, and boundless curiosity.”

Johnson passed away in March 2023 at age 74. After his retirement in 2015, he served on many boards, including the Montana Historical Society and most recently the Montana Free Press.

Born in Great Falls, Chuck moved to Helena with his family as a child. He attended Helena High School where he took his first assignments as a reporter writing for the student newspaper. He won a scholarship to the University of Montana and went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s degree in history from UM.

It was as a graduate student that Johnson covered the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention for the Associated Press, one of his defining assignments as a reporter. He eventually covered 22 Montana legislative

sessions and seven governors throughout his career.

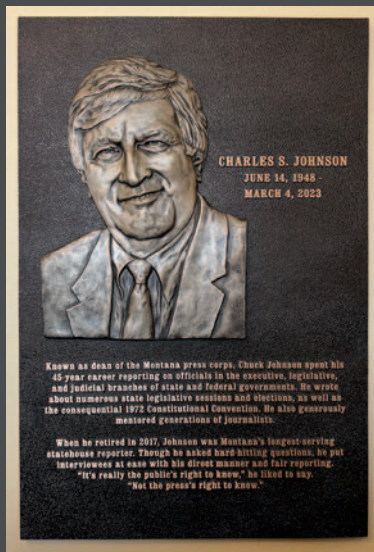
“Chuck was not only a lifelong standard-bearer for tough, fair news coverage in Montana, but also played a direct role in mentoring and encouraging scores of other reporters to follow in his footsteps,” said Mike Dennison, a longtime colleague of Chuck’s.

Johnson was known for his love of language, his sense of fairness, and a passion for history and politics. The University of Montana named him a Distinguished Alumnus in 1993, and Montana State University awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2022.

“Chuck Johnson was a champion of the public’s constitutional right to know what their government is doing,” said Sen. Laura Smith, who along with Sen. Dunwell sponsored the legislation that made the plaque possible. “Johnson’s 45-year reporting legacy will live on thanks to his generous gift of time mentoring the next generation of Montana journalists.”

As stipulated by the legislation, the Montana Historical Society has overseen the production and installation of the plaque.

“We hope that when legislators, journalists, and the general public pass by the plaque, they’ll recall and emulate the gifts of honesty and integrity that Chuck shared with everyone who was lucky enough to spend time with him—even those whose feet he held to the fire,” said Molly Kruckenberg, director of the Montana Historical Society. “He truly was a historical Montana treasure.”



## GIFTS MADE IN LOVING MEMORY

Each year, the Montana Historical Society receives gifts in memory of lost loved ones and friends. These gifts keep Montana’s history accessible to all. Gifts listed here are those received between January 2025 and April 2025.

*In memory of Stephen Hamblock*  
Michael Hamblock

*In memory of Chuck Johnson*  
Jackie Yamanaka and  
Patrick Williams

*In memory of*  
*Dr. William Dawson List*  
Patty and Bob Stemsrud

*In memory of Gerald F. Shields*  
Patricia Shields



## MTHS Archivist Selected for Prestigious Leadership Institute

Anneliese Jakle, archivist/oral historian at the Montana Historical Society (MTHS), has been selected for the 2025 Archives Leadership Institute (ALI) at the University of Virginia. This highly competitive program equips leaders in the archival profession with the tools to enact meaningful change in their organizations and communities.

Since 2014, Jakle has played a pivotal role at the MTHS Library & Archives, leading public programs and workshops in oral history. In recent years, she has also served as the de facto senior archivist, guiding staff and fostering collaboration. Her leadership, commitment to professional service, and success with grant-funded initiatives earned her a spot among only 25 participants nationwide.

"I am beyond honored to be selected for ALI," Jakle said. "I'm excited to build relationships with the seven sovereign nations that call Montana home to

ensure that their records and materials are treated with respect and cultural sensitivity."

As part of her participation, Jakle will launch a project to strengthen partnerships with Montana's Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) and tribal colleges. Her goals include returning tribal-created records to their rightful communities and establishing protocols for reviewing sensitive materials donated to MTHS.



ALI is funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and hosted by the University of Virginia from 2024 to 2026. The week-long, intensive training brings together professionals who demonstrate leadership potential, collaborative spirit, and a strong commitment to diversity and innovation in the field.

To learn more about the Archives Leadership Institute, visit [www.archivesleadershipinstitute.org](http://www.archivesleadershipinstitute.org).



Due to ongoing construction, the **Larry Len and LeAnne Peterson Library and Archives** will open spring 2026. We look forward to welcoming you and will announce an open house date in the near future.



### Welcome new MTHS Staff

#### Outreach & Education

##### **Ashly Tubbs**, 250th Commission Coordinator

Ashly, a multi-generation Montanan and longtime Helena resident, brings a strong background in civic engagement, community outreach, and public service to her new role as MT 250 coordinator. Her previous experience includes roles with the Montana Department of Commerce, Prickly Pear Land Trust, and the Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force, along with a social work degree from the University of Montana.

#### Museum

##### **Samuel Lindgren**, Museum Facilities Specialist

Samuel, a Helena native and lifelong museum enthusiast, ensures exhibits are clean, well-maintained, and functioning properly. A former MTHS volunteer at age 16, he now fulfills his childhood dream of working in a museum while balancing life with his wife and two daughters.

##### **Hans Schrader**, Curator

Hans joined the Montana Historical Society in April 2025 as curator for the collections team after graduating from Wichita State University with a master's degree in anthropology. Currently, Hans is conducting research and writing interpretive text for artifacts to be exhibited in the Montana Heritage

Center Homeland Gallery. He is also assisting colleagues with planning and preparations for the Heritage Center's soft opening in December and serves on the Historical Society's Acquisition Committee. In his free time Hans enjoys antiquing, traveling, and creating art. Originally from Wichita, Kansas, Hans and his wife are excited to explore the national parks and mountain ranges of Montana.

#### Library & Archives

##### **Cassidy VanderVoort**, Librarian

Cassidy and grew up in Billings, Montana. She recently completed her MA in history at the University of Montana and is looking forward to preserving and sharing our stories.

##### **Abigail Coupe**, Archivist

Abigail is an information professional with a background in government research, historical preservation, and expanding public access to records. With experience supporting legislative, legal, and public history work, she is passionate about making historical materials available for a wide range of audiences. She is excited to join the MTHS team and to help steward Montana's historical legacy.

##### **Tabitha Masters**, Archivist

Coming from Michigan with two cats, as many houseplants as possible, and a background in museums, public libraries, and archives, Tabitha has

been interested in history for as long as she can remember. She loves highlighting personal stories of histories past and is excited to dive into them in Montana.

#### Administration

##### **Kay Crum**, Sales Associate

Kay, a Montana native and recent high school graduate, brings fresh energy and a love of history to the MTHS Gift Shop, offering a modern take on what Montana means to younger generations. With retail experience at Ross and at local farmer's markets, she combines her passion for the state's agriculture, history, and natural beauty with a commitment to helping customers find the perfect purchase—making her a key part of the transition into the new Montana Heritage Center.

##### **Chevelle Evans**, Security Guard

Chevelle's duties include safeguarding the museum's collections. Chevelle, a Granite County native, began a career in security as a military policeman in the U.S. Marine Corps, serving at the Presidential Helicopter Squadron HMX-1 and later providing security for high-level operations at Quantico. After leaving the military, Chevelle worked at two detention centers—including Lewis and Clark County's—before joining the Montana Historical Society as a security guard, drawn by both professional experience and a passion for history.



# MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## In this issue:

- 1 Montana Heritage Center Celebrations
- 2 Director's Message
- 3 Exhibitions at the Montana Heritage Center
- 4 2025 Montana History Conference
- 5 Archaeology Day
- 5 MTHS Publications Spotlight
- 6 Summer Tours
- 7 Calendar of Events
- 8 State History Day
- 9 Montana History Teacher of the Year
- 9 2025 MTHS Heritage Awards
- 10 Journalist Chuck Johnson Honored
- 10 Gifts in Memory
- 11 MTHS Archivist Selected
- 11 New MTHS Staff Members
- 12 Homeland Gallery Donation



## MTHS DEVELOPMENT

### Wells Fargo Donation Helps Tell the Story of Montana's Gold Rush

In 2004, Wells Fargo donated a remarkable collection of Montana gold artifacts to the Montana Historical Society, including nuggets, wire gold, leaf gold, gold dust, and gold coins. These treasures will soon help tell the story of Montana's gold rush era within the new Montana Homeland Gallery. Today, the Montana Historical Society is pleased to announce that Wells Fargo is contributing \$250,000 to support the gold rush exhibit featured in the gallery. This dual contribution—both historic artifacts and financial support—will help create an outstanding space where visitors can engage, explore, and interact with Montana's history.

**Right:** Montana Historical Society director Molly Kruckenberg (center left) accepts a \$250,000 donation from regional branch network executive Joy Ott (center right), along with Katie Rollyson and Brandon Martinez, of Wells Fargo. This donation supports gold rush-related exhibits in the Homeland Gallery of the Montana Heritage Center.

**Left:** Jerry Embrey mining near his cabin in Park City just above Unionville, 1898.

