

CHAPTER 6

MONTANA: LAND AND PEOPLE

- What makes Montana special?
- Who are some great Montanans?



Artist Charlie Russell loved Montana better than any place else. He painted this picture of buffalo crossing the Missouri River and called it When the Land Belonged to God.

Have you ever sung the song "America the Beautiful"? It starts with these words:

"O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!"

The person who wrote “America the Beautiful” was trying to express the greatness of the United States, but she could have been talking about Montana. Montana is known for its **spacious** (large) skies. That’s why one of our nicknames is “Big Sky Country.” Drive through the “Golden Triangle” area north of Great Falls in August, and you will see “**amber** (yellow) waves of grain.” Look at Montana’s mountains at sunset, and you will see “purple mountain majesties.”

The land and sky make Montana special. Montana’s people do, too. Montanans are artists and farmers, ranchers and scientists. Here are just a few of the people whose stories are interwoven with the story of our state.

CHIEF DULL KNIFE/MORNING STAR, LEADER (CA. 1810–1883)

Dull Knife was also called Morning Star. He was a Northern Cheyenne chief who signed the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. A few years later, the U.S. government broke the **treaty** (agreement between nations). Dull Knife and his people tried to live and hunt as they always had, but in 1877, the U.S. Army forced them to move one thousand miles away to Indian Country (which is now Oklahoma).

The Northern Cheyennes suffered in Indian Country, where it was very hot. There was not enough food. Many got sick and died.

Chief Dull Knife and Chief Little Wolf risked their lives to bring their people back to Montana. The journey was long and dangerous, and many people died. A year after Chief Dull Knife died, the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in southern Montana was established.

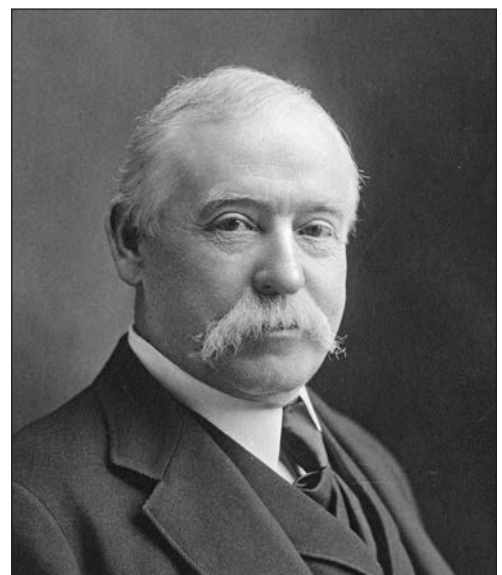
Dull Knife believed strongly in education. That is why Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation is named in his honor.



Chief Dull Knife

MARCUS DALY, “COPPER KING” (BUTTE, 1841-1900)

Born to a poor family in Ireland, Marcus Daly came to America at age fifteen. He became a miner in California, and then moved to Nevada. In Nevada, he learned how to recognize rich veins of ore. Daly went to work for the Walker Brothers, who sent him to Butte, Montana, in 1876 to help them decide if they should buy a silver mine there.



Marcus Daly

Daly soon realized that Butte had more copper than silver. He also realized that copper was going to become valuable. Copper wires are used to **transport** (move) electricity, and people living in cities were just starting to use electric lights. To bring electricity to everyone's house required a lot of copper wire. Daly quietly bought up copper mines. He soon founded the town of Anaconda and built the world's largest copper smelter. By the time of his death, he was one of Montana's richest men.

EVELYN CAMERON, PHOTOGRAPHER (1868-1928)

Evelyn Cameron and her husband Ewen first came to Montana on a hunting trip they took for their honeymoon. They loved it so much that they decided to move to Terry, Montana, to ranch.

Ewen was a scientist who studied birds. He was not interested in ranching, so Evelyn had to do most of the work herself. Even though it was hard, she loved it. She wrote in her diary: "I like to break colts, brand calves, cut down trees, ride & work in a garden."

She also liked to take photographs. In 1894, Evelyn Cameron



Evelyn Cameron with her camera and tripod, September 4, 1921.

got her first camera. She took beautiful pictures of the people, animals, and landscapes of southeastern Montana. Her photographs have been **published** (printed) in several books and are also in the Montana Historical Society's collection.

CHARLES M. RUSSELL, ARTIST (1864-1926)

A sculptor, painter, and storyteller, Charlie Russell is Montana's best-loved artist. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and grew up hearing stories about the Old West, which fascinated him. His parents thought he would get tired of the West once he tried living there, so they found him a job on a Montana sheep ranch when he was sixteen. Charlie hated sheep, but he loved Montana. He worked as a trapper and a cowboy, and all the time he drew, painted, and made sculptures.

Charlie loved painting cowboys. He also loved painting Indians as he imagined they had lived in the days before white settlement. In 1896, Charlie married Nancy Cooper, who became his business manager. Nancy shared Charlie's work with the world and made him famous. Today his artwork can be seen in museums across the United States, including in Helena and Great Falls, Montana.



Charles M. Russell in his studio painting The Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1918.

JEANNETTE RANKIN, POLITICIAN (1880–1973)

Jeannette Rankin was born in Missoula, Montana. After graduating from college, she worked as a social worker. She soon decided that politicians needed to do more to help the poor. At the time, women could not vote, so Jeannette Rankin became a full-time **suffrage activist** (someone working to win women the right to vote). Once Montana women could vote, Rankin ran for office. She won and became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress.



Jeannette Rankin

Jeannette Rankin stood up for what she believed in, even when it was unpopular. She was a **pacifist** (someone who believes that problems cannot be solved by fighting). She would say, "You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake." She served in Congress at the beginning of World War I and again at the beginning of World War II. Both times she voted against going to war.

TAYLOR GORDON, SINGER (1893–1971)

Taylor Gordon grew up in White Sulphur Springs, Montana. His family was the only African American family in the town. When he was seventeen, he got a job with rancher and circus owner John Ringling. He traveled across the United States with Ringling and ended up in New York City in the 1920s.



Taylor Gordon

Taylor Gordon went to Harlem, an all-Black neighborhood in New York City. He became part of the “Harlem Renaissance.” (***Renaissance*** means rebirth.) The Harlem Renaissance was a time when Black artists, musicians, and writers celebrated their **culture** (shared customs and ideas) and heritage. Taylor Gordon began performing a **traditional** (old) type of African American music called spirituals. He became a hugely popular singer who performed across the United States and in Europe.

HARRIETTE CUSHMAN, SCIENTIST (1890-1978)

Harriette Cushman was born in Alabama. She went to college in New York and earned degrees in chemistry and **bacteriology** (the study of bacteria). She went on to study **poultry** (birds raised on farms, like chickens and turkeys). In 1922, she took a job in Bozeman as Montana's first poultry specialist. She was one of the first women to work as a poultry specialist.



Harriette Cushman

Harriette Cushman traveled throughout Montana, teaching farmers everything they needed to know to raise healthy poultry. She started many 4-H groups, so that kids could learn how to raise poultry, too.

Cushman's work was especially important during the Great Depression, when many farmers were struggling to make a living. She helped farmers find buyers and get good prices for their eggs and turkeys. Many people said that they would not have made it through the Depression without Harriette Cushman's help.

SUSIE WALKING BEAR YELLOWTAIL, NURSE (1903-1981)

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail was born in Pryor, Montana. Like many other American Indians, she went to boarding school. Her teachers wanted her to give up her Crow language and culture, but Susie loved her culture. All her life, she helped other people learn about the Crow people and their culture.

In 1923, Susie graduated from a nursing school in Boston. She was the first Crow tribal member to become a registered nurse. Working as a nurse, she often saw things that were unfair, and she always tried to make them better. She worked her entire life to improve Indian health care on the Crow Reservation and beyond.

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail also encouraged other tribal members to become nurses. She received many awards for her work, but her favorite was from the American Indian Nurses Association, a group she founded. The association named her “Grandmother of American Indian Nurses.”



Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail, with her husband Thomas

GEORGE OIYE, SOLDIER (1922-2006)

George Oiye grew up near Three Forks, Montana, where his dad worked at the cement plant. In high school he was co-captain of the six-man football team and the starting quarterback.

Oiye's life changed dramatically on December 7, 1941, when the United States declared war against Germany, Italy, and Japan. People started treating anyone who looked Japanese as "the enemy." George's parents were both born in Japan, and George's father lost his job. George tried to enlist in the army, and at first, the army refused to take him because of his family background.

In 1943, the United States set up a special unit for Japanese American soldiers. Oiye joined and became a staff sergeant. His unit won more medals than any other fighting unit of its size in American history. George Oiye himself was awarded a Bronze Star for his bravery on the battlefield.



Sergeant George Oiye

ANNA BOE DAHL, PRESIDENT OF THE SHERIDAN COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (1892-1986)

Anna Boe Dahl moved to northeastern Montana in 1917. After teaching school for two years in Dagmar, she married farmer Andrew Dahl. Anna and Andrew's farm did not have electricity, which made life very hard. According to Anna, all the work had to be done by "muscle-power."

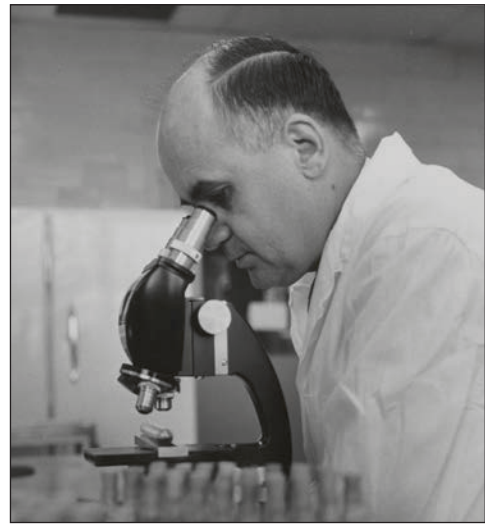
Power companies would not build the power lines needed to bring electricity to isolated farms like the Dahls'. It cost too much money. So, Anna Dahl worked with her neighbors to set up the Sheridan County Electric Cooperative (called the co-op). When it started providing power in 1948, the co-op brought electricity to over six hundred families in Sheridan County. It soon expanded to serve parts of Roosevelt and Daniels counties, too. Dahl continued to work with the co-op to help farm families like hers until she retired at age seventy-five.



Anna Boe Dahl and children

MAURICE HILLEMANN, SCIENTIST (1919–2005)

Not every great Montanan stayed in the state. Maurice Hilleman was born on a farm outside of Miles City, Montana. He credited the lessons he learned as a child on the farm and his education at Montana State University for his success. He became one of the most important scientists in the United States.



Maurice Hilleman

Hilleman was a microbiologist. **Micro** means small. **Biology** is the study of life. Microbiologists study tiny living creatures like bacteria and viruses. As a microbiologist, Hilleman specialized in creating vaccines to fight against **diseases** (sickness), like measles and mumps, that are caused by viruses. During his career, he developed over forty vaccines that are estimated to save nearly eight million lives a year.

JIM MURRY, LABOR LEADER (1935–2020)

Jim Murry grew up in Laurel, Montana. After high school, he went to work in the oil refinery there. Jim was active in the oil refinery workers' labor union. (A **union** is an organization that stands up for workers' rights and fights for better pay.) He went on to lead the Montana AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO brought together many unions—

from oil workers to teachers—so they could work together to try to improve the workers' lives.

Jim Murry worked for the Montana AFL-CIO from 1966 to 1981. This was a hard time for Montana workers. Increasing **mechanization** (using machines to do the work that people once did) meant that it took fewer miners to dig copper in Butte or cut **timber** (wood for building) in Libby. There was also less copper to dig. To help the workers who lost their jobs, Jim brought training programs to Montana. These programs helped people learn new skills, so they could find new ways to make a living.



Jim Murry

ELOUISE PEPION COBELL, BANKER-ACTIVIST (1945-2011)

Elouise Cobell grew up on the Blackfeet Reservation in a home without electricity or plumbing. She studied business in college and started the Blackfeet National Bank. It was the first national bank owned by an Indian tribe. She also became tribal **treasurer** (the person who keeps track of money).

Cobell discovered a problem. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA),

a part of the U.S. government, controlled a lot of Indian land. The BIA **leased** (rented) that land to ranchers or mining companies. The BIA was supposed to pay Indian landowners the money it made from leasing their land, but it had not kept good records.



Elouise Cobell with President Barack Obama

When the BIA refused to fix things, Elouise Cobell sued them in court. After thirteen years and several trials, Cobell and her team proved that the BIA owed many Indian landowners money. To settle the lawsuit, the U.S. government agreed to pay these landowners \$3.4 billion.

WHAT WILL YOUR CONTRIBUTION BE?

How will you contribute to our state, nation, or world when you grow up? Will you become an artist like Charlie Russell, a businessman like Marcus Daly, or a nurse like Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail? Will you stay in Montana and work to make your community a better place to live, like Anna Dahl? Or will you be like Maurice Hilleman, and use what you learn growing up in Montana to help the world?

GLOSSARY

Abandon leave

Adapted changed to fit new conditions

Allies friends

Allotment portion

Allotment policy dividing Indian reservations into separate farms for each family

Amber yellow

Ancestors family members who lived long ago

Ancient very old

Archaeologists scientists who study the past by analyzing objects people have left behind

Artifacts objects created by people

Assimilate/assimilation to be absorbed into the majority culture, in this case, the white American culture

Atlatl a spear thrower

Bacteriology the study of bacteria

Badlands an area created by erosion of rocks and hills with little vegetation

Band group

Bison buffalo

Boom time of great prosperity or rapid growth

Capotes coats made from thick wool blankets

Chinook a warm wind that blows down the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains

Claim take for their own

Climate typical weather condition

Communal group

Constitution document that sets the rules for government

Continent one of the main areas of land on earth

Continental Divide a mountain ridge that separates North America and determines whether water flows east to the Atlantic Ocean or west to the Pacific Ocean

Culture a shared system of behavior, attitudes, and understandings; language, customs, and ideas

Descendants a person's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

Discrimination treating a group of people unfairly

Disease sickness

Distinct separate

Diversity variety

Drought lack of rain

Economy businesses and jobs

Environment land, water, climate

Epidemic rapid spread of disease

Erosion the process by which rock or soil is gradually taken away by wind, rain, or water

Essential most important

Extinct gone

Extinction death of a species

Fell cut down trees

Fertile good for growing things

Foothills hills at the edge of a mountain range

Geography where things are, the study of particular places

Geologists scientists who study the earth

Geology minerals, rocks, and soil and the study of these things

Great Plains the flat land region west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains

Homesteader someone who received land from the U.S. government in exchange for farming that land

Immigrant someone who moves to a new country to live

Immigrate move from one country to another

Indian agent a person (usually non-Indian) who the government put in charge of a reservation

Industries types of businesses

Leased rented

Lumber wood for building

Mechanization using machines to do the work that people once did

Natural resources things found in nature and used by people

Negotiate discuss to come to an agreement

Northern Divide landform that separates water that flows north from water that flows south

Opportunities chances for something better

Oral histories important stories people pass down

Pacifist someone who believes that problems cannot be solved by fighting

Pelts skins

Plains flat land

Poultry birds raised on farms, like chickens and turkeys

Poverty being poor

Prairies flat grasslands

Precipitation rain and snow

Predate come before

Prospectors people looking for gold or other precious metals

Published printed

Pull factors things that make people want to move to a new place

Push factors things that make people want to leave their homes

Push-pull factors things that influence immigration (that push you out of your home country and pull you to another place)

Reservation an area of land that a tribe or tribes reserved (kept) for their own use

Reserved kept

Residents people who live in a place

Resilience strength

Resourceful good at figuring things out

Resources useful things

Sovereign self-governing

Sovereignty self-rule

Spacious large

Specific exact

Strike gold discovery

Suffrage vote

Suffrage activist someone working to win women the right to vote

Surplus extra

Taxes money people pay the government so the government can provide services

Timber wood for building

Time immemorial as long as anyone can remember

Toxic poisonous

Traditional old

Transcontinental all the way across the continent

Transport move

Treasurer the person who keeps track of an organization's money

Treaty agreement between nations

Union an organization that stands up for workers' rights and fights for better pay

Unique not the same as any other

IMAGE CREDITS

CHAPTER 5 - MONTANA: LAND AND PEOPLE

Montana Historical Society is abbreviated as MHS.

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p. 55, bottom, Marcus Daly by Davis & Sandford, New York, 1919, MHS 941-880

p. 56, Evelyn Cameron with her Graflex camera and tripod, September 4, 1921, MHS PAC
90-87.L008

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p. 61, Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail, with her husband Thomas, MHS PAC 87-71

p. 62, Sergeant George Oiye, courtesy Tom Oiye

p. 63, Anna Boe Dahl and children, detail from "Pie Eating Social" by Henry B. Syverud, May 20,
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p. 64, Maurice Hilleman, courtesy Merck Archives, 2021

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p. 66, President Barack Obama greets Elouise Cobell, courtesy Barack Obama Presidential Library