

MONTANA HISTORY CONFERENCE

2026



Culture Keepers, Catalysts, and Cowboys

The 53rd Annual Montana History Conference

Billings, Montana ★ September 24–26, 2026

ONLINE REGISTRATION OPENS IN MID-JULY

bit.ly/MTHSHistoryConference



Front cover: Human cannonball sisters Duina and Victoria Zacchini launch from their double-shot cannon at the 1949 Midland Empire Fair in Billings, Montana. Artistic rendering.

Above: A scene along the Yellowstone River near Billings, ca. 1890. MTHS Photo Archives 951-844.

Back cover: Walter Shirlaw, August 1890. Eleventh census of the United States, Report on Indians Taxed and Indians not Taxed in the United States (Except Alaska); Department of the Interior, Census Office, Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1894. Courtesy of Shane Dunning.

Conference Logistics *(see map on page 39)*

Headquarters: DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 27 N. 27th St., Billings. Group rate is \$169/night plus 8% tax, \$4/day city fee, and \$5/day garage parking. Breakfast is NOT included but is provided by MTHS with purchase of full conference registration. Call (406) 252-7400 to reserve your room with group name/code: *Montana History Conference Attendees*.

Other accommodations: Best Western Plus ClockTower Inn, 2511 1st Ave. N. Group rate is \$129/night plus 8% tax and \$4/day city fee. A 3% fee is added to credit card payments. Free parking included. Breakfast is NOT included but is provided by MTHS with purchase of full conference registration. Call (406) 259-5511 to reserve your room under the Montana Historical Society Overflow Block.

Group rates expire on August 24.

Conference Check-In: Visit MTHS staff on the 3rd floor for name badges, tote bags, conference information, and to find the MTHS pop-up Gift Shop.

Hotel Accessibility: A limited number of ADA rooms are available at both hotels. All conference rooms and restrooms at the DoubleTree Hotel are wheelchair accessible.

Teacher Credit: Up to 20 OPI Renewal Units are available for conference attendees. Forms and additional information available at the conference registration table.

Culture Keepers, Catalysts, and Cowboys

The Montana Historical Society is delighted to be back in the Magic City for the 53rd annual Montana History Conference. This year's three-day exploration of history will examine Billings and eastern Montana's past through its storied places, events, and people, highlighting new and old topics with the aim of uncovering fresh perspectives and insights.

The Thursday agenda offers a wide variety of workshops for educators, preservationists, writers, and grant recipients, while an array of tours will take participants to the Little Bighorn Battlefield, Pictograph Cave, Chief Plenty Coups State Parks, agricultural history landmarks, and more. Walking tours on Thursday and Friday led by expert guides from the Western Heritage Center will offer colorful stories from Billings's early days.



On Friday and Saturday, immerse yourself in history during four keynote and six concurrent sessions featuring historical topics ranging from military and agricultural history, Indigenous culture, photography, music and dance, environmental history, politics, women's history, and more. Capping off the conference, Saturday's Hidden Billings tour promises behind-the-scenes glimpses inside lesser-known landmarks. After enjoying this vibrant conference in the company of history lovers from across the state and nation, we hope you'll extend your visit in Billings and take advantage of the many heritage and cultural amenities that this historic community has to offer.

Each year many great partners make the Montana History Conference possible. We especially want to thank our supporting sponsors at the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation and A&E + SMA Design. Deep appreciation goes to our statewide and local sponsors and exhibitors, including Bill and Anne Cole, *Distinctly Montana*, The Foundation for Montana History, Friends of Pompeys Pillar, Montana Archaeological Society, Montana Book Wrangler, Museums Association of Montana, Montana Burial Board, Montana State Library's Montana History Portal, Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers, and the Yellowstone Historical Society.

Last but not least, the conference would not be possible without organizing help from our partners at the Western Heritage Center, Preserve Montana, Yellowstone County Museum, Moss Mansion, Huntley Museum, and Billings TrailNet.

All of us at MTHS look forward to greeting you—our good friends—in the Magic City.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly Kruckenberg". The script is fluid and cursive.

—Molly Kruckenberg, *Director*

NEITHER
the LIFE
OF AN individual
NOR THE
HISTORY
OF A society
CAN BE
UNDERSTOOD
without understanding
BOTH

- C. Wright Mills -

DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

TOUR ACCESSIBILITY

Not all tours are ADA accessible. Please read accessibility notes included with each tour description on the online registration form. Accessibility questions? Contact Christine Brown at Christine.brown@mt.gov or call 406-444-1687.



Please note: The conference schedule is subject to change. Unless otherwise noted, all events will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel.



Thursday, September 24

► **7:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Conference registration**, 3rd-floor foyer

WORKSHOPS

► **9:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. • Educators Workshop** (\$35 per person; lunch included)

Guiding Student Research In this three-hour workshop, current and former classroom teachers will share strategies and hands-on activities for having students search for, select, analyze, and contextualize primary sources while researching Montana places and events.

► **9:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. • Historic Preservation Workshop**

(\$35 per person; lunch included)

Historic Preservation Strategies Lovers of historic buildings are encouraged to attend this informative workshop aimed at building your historic preservation toolbox. The workshop begins with the annual round-robin presentations from local preservation advocates highlighting efforts statewide. Additional presentations will feature the benefits of social media to engage broad audiences on preservation topics and historic places, and preservation architect **Ed Gulick** of High Plains Architects will teach us about building codes and feasibility for preservation projects. Participants are encouraged to register for and attend the Historic Rehabilitation Tour, “Bridging Eras” after the workshop.

► **1:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M. • Heritage Food Workshop** (\$25 per person)

The Sweet Spot: Sugar Beets in Montana Beginning in the early 1900s, Montana farmers began growing sugar beets, and by the 1920s, sugar processing facilities were operating in Billings and shipping affordable sugar across the state. In this workshop, participants will learn about the history of sugar beets, the use of beet sugar in food production, and the significance of sugar in cultural celebrations and daily life in Montana. The group will share in some sugar-related tastes, including a beverage, a savory treat, and a dessert.



Hauling beets to the sugar factory, Billings, Montana, ca. 1907. MTHS Photo Archives, Photomechanical Postcard Collection, PC 001 Bill-ag.03b.

► **1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M. • Writers Workshop** (\$25 per person)

Publishing the Past: A Workshop for Authors This three-part writers workshop focuses on the ins and outs of getting books and articles into print, including a discussion with renowned author **Russell Rowland**. The workshop kicks off with a panel discussion featuring the Montana Historical Society's editors, business manager, and graphic designer. Then, in break-out groups, participants will have the opportunity to talk in depth with panelists on topics ranging from how to identify a potential publisher, what presses look for in research and writing, design principles and visual communication, the editing process, how a work is marketed and financed, and the author's and publisher's roles once a book or article is published. The workshop will conclude with a craft talk by Russell Rowland, author of six books, all set in Montana, and two non-fiction narratives. He also co-edited, along with Lynn Stegner, Wallace Stegner's daughter-in-law, the anthology *West of 98: Living and Writing the New American West*. Rowland will discuss how growing up in Montana has influenced his many literary projects and why Montana attracts so many writers and shapes their work.



Russell Rowland

► **1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M. • Grant Management Workshop** (\$20 per person)

We Got the Grant, Now What!? Join grants manager **Sara Smith** of the Foundation for Montana History for a practical hands-on training designed to help grant recipients and prospective applicants build the skills they need to confidently manage any grant. This workshop will guide participants through the full grant life cycle, from understanding award agreements and allowable expenses to budgeting, documentation, and final reporting. Past Foundation for Montana History grantees will also share their experiences managing grants, while highlighting their successful history projects.

GUIDED TOURS

- **8:30 A.M.–4:00 P.M. Battlefield Tour** (*School bus departs from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; \$35 per person; lunch included.*)

Battle of the Little Bighorn Travel back to June 25–26, 1876, with former Little Bighorn Battlefield historian and Little Bighorn College professor of history **Tim McCleary**. Traveling past ridges, steep bluffs, and ravines much unchanged since 1876, this in-depth tour will stop at key points where Lakota (Sioux), Tsétséhéstàhese naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne), and Hinono'ei (Arapaho) tribes and US 7th Cavalry Regiment troops camped, divided, advanced, skirmished, and retreated in the most significant battle of the Great Sioux Wars.

- **8:45 A.M.–4:00 P.M. Agricultural History Tour** (*Coach bus departs from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; \$35 per person; lunch included.*)

Made in Montana Explore the roots and branches of Montana agriculture from dryland farming efforts to large-scale irrigation projects to industrial crop storage on this daylong journey into the area's industrial and farming past. Participants will visit Gabel Farms, a third-generation sugar beet farm; tour the Molson Coors Brewing Company elevator, the repository for 2.7 million bushels of malting barley; and explore the Montana State University Southern Agriculture Research Station established by I. D. O'Donnell in 1908. The agricultural odyssey continues with lunch and a tour at the Huntley Museum, a 10-acre open-air and indoor museum chronicling the US Bureau of Reclamation's early twentieth-century efforts to irrigate crops like sugar beets and alfalfa along the lower Yellowstone River. The tour concludes at the United Grain Pompeys Pillar elevator, a major area wheat storage facility.



Cattle and Cowboy Days, Marjory Gieseker, Woodcut, 1935. MTHS Collection, X1937.05.16.

- **9:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M. Indigenous History Tour** (*Coach bus departs from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; \$35 per person; lunch included.*)

Culture Keepers Get immersed in Indigenous heritage and culture on this daylong tour to Pictograph Cave, Chief Plenty Coups State Park, and the Arrow Creek battle site. At Pictograph Cave, learn about hunters who left behind artifacts and over 100 rock paintings, some dating to more than 2,000 years ago. Next, visit Apsáalooke (Crow) Chief Plenty Coups State Park to learn how Plenty Coups' bravery, leadership, and vision helped bridge the gap between two cultures. Participants will tour the house, grounds, and visitor center vault where personal items from



Chief Plenty Coups State Park. Photo courtesy of Christine Brown.

Plenty Coups' home are preserved. Continuing back to Billings along Pryor Creek, meet an Apsáalooke culture keeper at the Battle of Arrow Creek site to hear the story, passed down through generations, of a significant 1861 conflict where tribal members defended their territory against allied Tsétséhéstáhesē naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne), Lakota (Sioux), and Hinono'ei (Arapaho) forces.

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- **10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M. Yellowstone River History Tour** (*Vans depart from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; \$35 per person; lunch included.*)



Pompeys Pillar National Monument overlooks the Yellowstone River. MTHS photo.

Downstream Through History Take a trip backwards in time to learn how people and events along the Yellowstone River shaped history from the present day to ancient times. Start with a visit to John H. Dover Park to learn from staff at the Yellowstone River Parks Association how homesteader John H. Dover established a cattle ranch on an island in the Yellowstone and how the 1872

Battle of Poker Flat—an engagement between the multi-tribal coalition led by Sitting Bull and a military-escorted railroad survey crew from the Northern Pacific Railroad—was a turning point in the ongoing conflict on the northern Great Plains. The tour continues downriver to Pompeys Pillar National Monument, a remarkable sandstone landmark featuring inscriptions significant to early explorers and Indigenous people.

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- **10:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M. Moss Mansion Behind-the-Scenes Tour** (*Starts at Moss Mansion, 914 Division St.; \$35 per person.*)

Trunks & Treasures Join a seasoned site historian at the Moss Mansion for a behind-the-scenes look into the P. B. Moss family's opulent lifestyle. Participants will go where regular tours don't go and dig deeper into this family's fascinating legacy. Peek in drawers and other hidden spaces, read personal letters passed between members of the Moss family, look at interesting personal and business artifacts from the early 1900s, and step into the rarely seen third-floor ballroom.



Moss Mansion postcard MTHS Photo Archives, Photomechanical Postcard Collection, PC 001 Bill.

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- **10:00 A.M.–11:30 A.M. Walking Tour** (*Meet at Western Heritage Center, 2822 Montana Ave.; \$15 per person.*)

Bars, Brothels, and Bok Choy: Exploring Minnesota Avenue

Before the skate park and modern businesses, Billings's Southside was filled with bars, brothels, and even a Chinatown. Join a historian from the Western Heritage Center to wander the remnants of these establishments and bring back to life the stories of these large, and almost forgotten, communities.



► 10:00 A.M.–11:30 A.M. Walking Tour

(Meet at Billings Depot, 2310 Montana Ave.; \$15 per person.)

Celebrities and Scandals Explore the celebrity visits and shocking scandals of the Billings Historic Depot Neighborhood. Prohibition, sedition, and local deaths share the walk with famous names like Charles Lindbergh, Calamity Jane, Tom Cruise, and more!

Portrait of Calamity Jane. Courtesy of Western Heritage Center Photo Collection, 85.6.126.

► 1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M. Historic Rehabilitation Tour

(Meet at the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; free)

Bridging Eras: Reimagining Two Historic Billings Icons Explore the revitalization of two iconic downtown Billings landmarks: the 1910 Masonic



Billings Masonic Temple, ca. 1910. MTHS Photo Archives, Photomechanical Postcard Collection, PC 001 BILL-ob.04c.

Temple, designed by Link and Haire in the Second Renaissance Revival style, and the 1965 James F. Battin Federal Building, Montana's first example of New Formalism, designed by J. G. Link & Co. Spanning fifty-five years of architectural history, both projects leveraged historic preservation tax credits to catalyze building rehabilitation. Now reimagined as mixed-use residential and commercial space and the Billings City Hall, respectively, these

buildings demonstrate how creative design and preservation strategies can adapt historic places for modern community use. Hear directly from the developers and architects about the challenges, solutions, and impact of bringing these cultural landmarks back to life.

► 1:30 P.M.–3:00 P.M. Walking Tour *(Meet at Western Heritage Center, 2822 Montana Ave.; \$15 per person.)*

Born a Railroad Town The Northern Pacific Railroad created Billings in 1882. Not long after, railroad tracks running through the center of downtown split the town in two. This tour explores the founding of Billings and explains how the railroad continues to impact the community today.

► 1:30 P.M.–4:00 P.M. Electric Bike Tour *(Vans leave from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; bike rental, helmet, and waiver required; \$50 per person.)*

From Rimrocks to Railroads: Cycling Through Billings History Cycle your way through Billings history on this 14-mile e-bike tour of Billings led by former Billings TrailNet executive director **Kristi Drake**. From Zimmerman Park, riders will follow the scenic Skyline Trail and Chief Black Otter Trail to



the Yellowstone Kelly interpretive site. Continuing through legacy trees born from sacred roots at Skeleton Cliff, riders will stop at Coulson Boothill Cemetery and the former site of Coulson—the riverboat town predating Billings. Coasting toward downtown Billings and ahead a few decades, the tour culminates with stops at the stately Austin North house, Billings First Church, and the majestic Moss Mansion.

Photographer Edgar I. Syverud riding near Osnabrock, North Dakota, ca. 1909.
Photographer Henry B. Syverud. MTHS Photo Archives Lot 045 v1p171.

► **3:00 P.M.–4:30 P.M. Walking Tour** (*Meet at Western Heritage Center, 2822 Montana Ave.; \$15 per person.*)

Bars, Brothels, and Bok Choy: Exploring Minnesota Avenue

Before the skate park and modern businesses, Billings's Southside was filled with bars, brothels, and even a Chinatown. Join a historian from the Western Heritage Center to wander the remnants of these establishments and bring back to life the stories of these large, and almost forgotten, communities.

ON YOUR OWN TOURS (*no advance registration required; entry fees vary*)



The Parmly Billings Public Library on Circus Day, ca. 1915.
MTHS Photo Archives Pac 2013-50.

► **10:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Western Heritage Center** (*2822 Montana Ave.; \$8 per person*)

Housed in the former 1901 Parmly Billings Memorial Library, the Western Heritage Center offers permanent and seasonal exhibits about south-central Montana and the Northern Plains. September exhibits include *At Home in Yellowstone*, exploring historic and contemporary Indigenous connections that make Yellowstone home to twenty-seven nations; *Man's Best Friend*, historic photographs of our beloved furry

friends; and *Let Wonderland Tell Its Story: William Henry Jackson's Albertypes*, a rare collection of gelatin-coated glass plate photographs from 1871 depicting the earliest images of Yellowstone National Park.

► **10:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Yellowstone Art Museum**
(*104 N. 27th St.; \$8 per person*)

Featuring a vast collection of contemporary and historic art from the Northern Rockies and American Northwest, the museum's fall exhibitions include

Bicentennial Indian, Fritz Scholder (1937-2005). Yellowstone Art Museum.



Visions of America: The Spirit of Independence, a 1974 collection that features artist responses to the prompt, “What does independence mean to me?”; and *Will James in Hollywood*, an exhibit exploring the Billings-based artist and writer’s time as a cowboy stuntman on the silver screen.

► **10:30 A.M.–5:30 P.M. Yellowstone County Museum** (1950 Terminal Circle; free)

Established in the historic Paul McCormick cabin in 1956 and expanded in 2025, the museum and grounds of the Yellowstone County Museum explore the history of Montana’s Yellowstone River Basin through a range of dynamic exhibits and events.



► **12:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M. Moss Mansion**
(914 Division St.; \$15 per person)

Learn how the Billings elite lived during a guided tour at 1:00 P.M. of this stately 1903 red sandstone home designed by New York architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh for Preston B. and Mattie Moss (or arrive anytime to take a self-guided tour).



Photo courtesy of Moss Mansion.



**THE FOUNDATION
FOR MONTANA HISTORY**

Call for Proposals!

*Apply for up to \$15,000 for your
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Proposals Due January 15th, 2027

Applications Open November 2nd, 2026

Apply at:
www.mthistory.org/grants

\$250,000 Available!

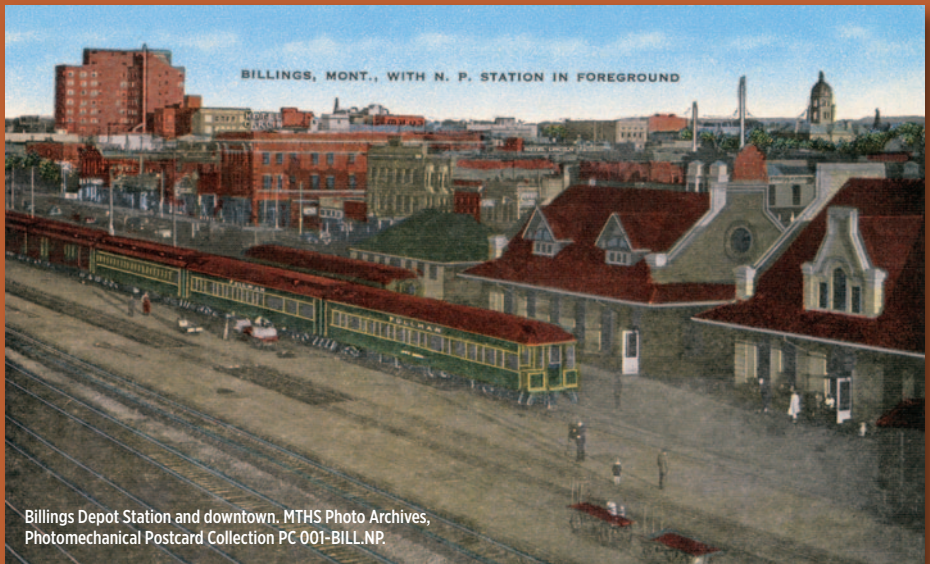
grants@mthistory.org | 406.449.3770

► 5:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M. **Opening Reception** (Billings Depot, 2310 Montana Ave.)

Join fellow Montana history enthusiasts at the historic Billings Depot for heavy appetizers, no-host drinks, pop-up history exhibits, and live music. In addition to permanent exhibits about Billings railroad history, enjoy special exhibits including former Billings mayor Bill Cole's impressive collection of rare nineteenth- and twentieth-century historic maps, and *The Montana Tapestry: People and Places from 1776 to Today* from the Montana 250 Commission. This traveling exhibit highlights Montana's changing cultural, social, and physical landscapes from 1776 to today.



► 7:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M. Be sure to stay for live Western folk music from award-winning musicians John Lowell and Joanne Gardner Lowell. John has been performing in the Mountain West for the past forty-three years. He's toured the world with his bands Kane's River, Growling Old Men, Wheel Hoss, the John Lowell Band, and Coppo, Kaerner and Lowell. He has been featured on Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion* and was awarded the 2024 Montana Governor's Arts Award.



Billings Depot Station and downtown. MTHS Photo Archives, Photomechanical Postcard Collection PC 001-BILL.NP.

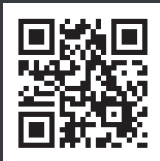


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YOURS TO
DISCOVER.**



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The Montana Heritage Center is a celebration of everything that makes Montana extraordinary. Visit today and discover the natural beauty, diverse cultures, and captivating stories of the Treasure State.



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Friday, September 25

► **7:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Conference registration**, 3rd-floor foyer

► **7:30 A.M.–9:00 A.M. Breakfast & Warm Welcome**, 3rd-floor ballroom

Making Magic Kick off the conference with a presentation from Billings mayor **Mike Nelson** and former mayor **Bill Cole**. Both city leaders have worked toward preserving Billings history and will share their vision for what makes the Magic City and eastern Montana a significant historical and cultural crossroads for Montana history lovers.



Bill Cole

Mike Nelson

► **9:15 A.M.–10:30 A.M. Concurrent sessions**

Through the Lens Following in the footsteps of famed photographer Edward S. Curtis, two photographers who were both employed on the Crow Reservation, Fred Miller and Richard Throssel, documented the Apsáalooke (Crow) and Tsétséhéstáhesé naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne) at the turn of the twentieth century. In **The Photography of Fred Miller**, MTHS



Portrait of Bull Don't Fall Down by Fred Miller, ca. 1900.
MTHS Photo Archives Lot 035 B04F11.03.

Indigenous curator **Nina Sanders** explores how Miller, between 1898 and 1910, captured Indigenous lifeways in southeast Montana, including chiefs, elders, children, burial scaffolds, dances, landscapes, and surviving participants of the 1876 Little Bighorn battle. In **The Life and Legacy of Richard Throssel**, Western Heritage Center community historian

Lauren Hunley shows how Throssel's relationship with the

Apsáalooke inspired a level of trust and how his position as an accepted insider helped create one of the most authentic collections of early twentieth-century photographs of southeastern Montana's Native people.



Portrait of an unidentified Apsáalooke (Crow) man by Richard Throssel.
MTHS Photo Archives Lot 035 B08F01.02.

► **9:15 A.M.–10:30 A.M. Concurrent sessions**

Agricultural Transformations Few programs have had a greater impact on Montana's rural youth than 4-H. In **Tales from the Four-Leaf Clover Patch:**

A History of 4-H in Montana, lifelong 4-H'er and MTHS graphic designer **Luke Duran** recounts highlights from the organization's 120-year history and the ways it has changed over the decades, even as its mission remained the same: to encourage Montana youth to develop their "heads, hearts, hands, and health."

In **Reclaiming Submarginal Montana**, historical geographer **Christopher Maschino** analyzes how the New Deal's Land Utilization Program reclaimed millions of acres of patented homesteads deemed "submarginal" in eastern Montana—and, in the process, mobilized CCC and WPA labor to remove nearly all visible traces of homestead occupation. The program pioneered the emerging concept of "land use planning," developing methods to determine the most "appropriate" uses of the land. This presentation demonstrates how this New Deal experiment forged the cultural landscape that Montanans continue to inhabit.



Montana 4-H club members display their home-made flag, uniforms and club charter in this 1929 photo. Photo courtesy of Jim Lindstrom.

Saving Land and Water The 1950 Yellowstone River Compact defines how the waters of the Yellowstone River are to be shared between Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota. In **Yellowstone River Compact: Tracing Motivations**, Montana State University–Billings dean of the College of Business **Susan Gilbertz** looks at how this flawed compact came to be, the legal battles over water that followed, and the region's competing demands



over water. Clean water was a key concern of C. Louise Cross, a 1972 constitutional convention delegate from Glendive.

In **C. Louise Cross, ConCon Catalyst for a Clean and Healthful Environment**, attorney **Emily Cross** spotlights the work of her grandmother as an activist and constitutional delegate serving on the Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee in the fight for environmental protections.

C. Louise Cross signing the Montana Constitution in 1972.
MTHS Photo Archives 952-269.

► **9:15 A.M. – 10:45 A.M. Architectural Walking Tour**

(Starts at corner of 10th and 32nd streets, near McKinley School; drive on your own; \$15 per person.)

Homes by Cohagen Tour Architect Chandler Cohagen was one of Billings's most prolific architects, designing two dozen historic homes in the tree-lined streets of the North Elevation and Grandview subdivisions between the 1920s and 1940s. Walk with a Western Heritage Center guide to learn about some of Cohagen's most notable homes.



A rendering of 240 Avenue H by architects McIver, Cohagen, and Marshall, ca. 1919. Courtesy Western Heritage Center.

► **9:15 A.M. – 11:15 A.M. Moss Mansion Behind-the-Scenes Tour** *(Starts at Moss Mansion, 914 Division St.; \$35 per person.)*

Trunks and Treasures Tour Join a seasoned site historian at the Moss Mansion for a behind-the-scenes look into the P. B. Moss family's opulent lifestyle. Participants will go where regular tours don't go and dig deeper into this family's fascinating legacy. Peek in drawers and other hidden spaces, read personal letters passed between members of the Moss family, look at interesting personal and business artifacts from the early 1900s, and step into the rarely seen third-floor ballroom.

Step Into the Story of

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

★ MONTANA ★

HISTORY, CULTURE & ADVENTURE AWAIT

REAL PLACES.
AUTHENTIC STORIES.
UNFORGETTABLE
EXPERIENCES.

★ FIVE HISTORIC SITES YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS ★



Western
Heritage Center



Moss
Mansion



Yellowstone
County Museum



Huntley Project
Museum



Pictograph
Caves

Big Sky, Rich History, Warm Welcome
Courtesy of Mayor Bill Cole (2018-2025)

► **10:30 A.M.–10:45 A.M. Break: coffee, snacks, and books**

► **10:45 A.M.–12:00 P.M. Concurrent sessions**

Not in Our Town Revisited In the mid-1990s, a series of racial and antisemitic attacks against members of the Billings community galvanized concerned citizens to organize against racism and violence. As a result, churches, law enforcement, schools, businesses and other groups worked together to reduce racial hatred. They called their response “Not in Our Town,” and it ultimately sparked a national movement. Retired high school teacher **Bruce Wendt** will lead a discussion with a few of the people who participated in Not in Our Town to look at the movement’s origins and its legacy.



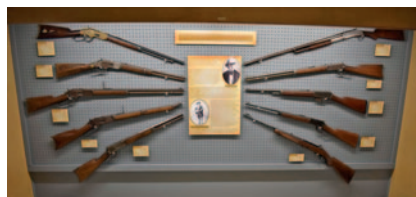
John Martin or Giovan Crisostimo Martino.
Denver Public Library.

After the Wars In **Artistry, Serendipity, and History: How an Acclaimed Artist Came to Witness the Head Chief Young Mule Incident**, author **Shane Dunning** explores how Scottish American artist Walter Shirlaw came to be in Lane Deer in 1890 where he witnessed the Head Chief Young Mule incident, a significant and tragic episode of Tsétséhestáhesee naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne) history that exposes difficulties of the early reservation period. Retired journalist **Kim Briggeman** retells the story of bugler John Martin (Giovan Crisostimo Martino), an Italian immigrant turned frontier soldier, who served in George Armstrong Custer’s battalion at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Martin later became a minor celebrity in New York as **The Sole Survivor of the Custer Massacre**.

Bearing Arms Firearms are inseparable from the history of the American West. Or are they? In his presentation, **A Brief History of Billings in Seven Unique Firearms**, Yellowstone County Museum curator **Christian L. Coppedge** uses the stories of select guns from the collection of the Yellowstone County Museum to shine a light on important moments and people, from the Battle of Canyon Creek (Nez Perce War of 1877) to the Great Centennial Cattle Drive of 1889.

In **‘A Scarcity of Good Weapons in This Country’: Gun Culture in Early Montana**,

Rocky Mountain College professor of history **Tim Lehman** asserts that guns were less available in Montana Territory than commonly assumed. Examining the role of firearms in frontier-era violence, he uncovers how communities, including Billings and Miles City, actively sought to curb the use of firearms through legislation and social pressure.



Winchester arms exhibit at the Yellowstone County Museum.

► **10:45 A.M.–12:00 P.M. Concurrent sessions**

Strengthening Ties MTHS museum curators **Amanda Trum**, **Nina Sanders**, and **Aaron Genton**, along with members of the Tribal Stakeholders Group, will discuss how they collaborated to develop a partnership that informs interpretation for the new Montana Heritage Center—and the institution’s broader initiatives in collections, education, outreach, and publications. Presenters will share lessons learned from this multi-year collaboration, offering practical insights into building enduring, equitable partnerships that honor sovereignty, share authority, and reshape museum narratives for the future.



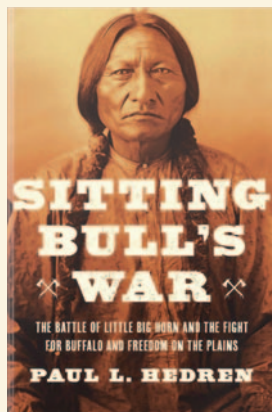
The Sovereign Nations Homelands exhibit is part of the new Homeland Gallery at the Montana Heritage Center. MTHS photo.

► **12:15 P.M.–1:45 P.M. Lunch & Keynote**

Presentation, 3rd-floor ballroom

Sitting Bull’s War Historian and author **Paul L. Hedren’s** latest book, *Sitting Bull’s War: The Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Fight for Buffalo and Freedom on the Plains*, is the saga of a people clinging to a traditional life on the buffalo prairie. His keynote lecture highlights the story and will immerse conference goers in the remarkable sources that enabled Hedren to tell such a dramatic tale.

Paul L. Hedren is a retired National Park Service historian and superintendent whose thirty-seven-



year career led him from Minnesota to Wyoming, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, and Nebraska. He’s a lifelong student of the Great Sioux War, and a prolific writer. His many books and articles have received numerous honors, including a Spur Award from the Western Writers of America, a Western Heritage Wrangler Award from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, and multiple Best Book awards from the Little Big Horn Associates.

► 2:00 P.M.–3:15 P.M. Concurrent sessions

Taking Care of Business In **The Power of Everyday Leaders: Sidney's Story from Prairie to Prosperity**, MonDak Heritage Center executive director **Nikki Bailey-Will** tells the story of the men of the Billings Commercial Club (later the Billings Chamber of Commerce) who advocated for bridges and good roads, industrial development (including the Holly Sugar Factory), and civic improvements like a local hospital. Together they helped Sidney grow from a fledgling community to "Montana's Sunrise City." In **The Billings Brewing Company: A Lesson in Failure**, Montana State University assistant professor of American history **Cody Patton** looks at the rise and fall of one of the few breweries that managed to survive Prohibition only to close in the 1950s, a victim of shortsighted business decisions in the face of increasing competition.

The Yellowstone Valley Stage at Sidney, Montana.
MTHS Photo Archives 952-976.



Unlikely Activists Musician, poet, and activist Roxy Gordon arrived on the Fort Belknap Reservation in the late 1960s as a VISTA volunteer, where he established a short-lived newsletter. In **Fort Belknap Notes: A Newsletter at the Crossroads of Art and Activism**, Montana State University librarian and archivist **Heather Mulliner** looks at how national movements (from the counterculture to Native activism to the War on Poverty) converged on Fort Belknap, shaping both the newsletter and the man who created it. In **Dr. Sadie Lindeberg: A Quiet Activist**, **Victoria Lyons**, the founder of High Noon History, explores the fifty-plus-year career of a remarkable Miles City ob-gyn, who delivered over 8,000 infants and arranged numerous adoptions while also performing safe, discrete medical abortions in a time when the practice was illegal.

Exploring the Yellowstone Seventy years before Lewis and Clark searched for the elusive Northwest Passage, French Canadian fur trader Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye and his sons began their search for what the French called the Western Sea. In **Tracking La Verendrye to Eastern Montana**, retired journalism professor **Lorna Veraldi** presents her conclusions that the explorer's sons reached eastern Montana sixty years before Lewis and Clark. **Shannon Kelly**, associate editor of *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, compares two explorers in **Down the Roche Jaune: François Antoine Larocque and William Clark's Early Explorations on the Yellowstone River**. Larocque,



a fur trader, traveled west initially with an Indigenous party in 1805, while Clark's group followed the river east in 1806 to its confluence with the Missouri. Both men's journeys helped establish networks for trade, science, and empire.

A present-day view of the Yellowstone River as it carves through the Bighorn Canyon.
Photo courtesy of Shannon Kelly.



Schedule At-A-Glance



Conference schedule is subject to change.

Thursday, September 24

7:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Conference Registration—3rd-floor foyer

WORKSHOPS

9:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M.	Educators Workshop
9:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M.	Historic Preservation Workshop
1:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M.	Heritage Food Workshop
1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M.	Writers Workshop
1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M.	Grant Management Workshop

TOURS

8:30 A.M.–4:00 P.M.	Battle of the Little Bighorn Tour
8:45 A.M.–4:00 P.M.	Made in Montana Agricultural History Tour
9:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M.	Indigenous History Tour
10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.	Yellowstone River History Tour
10:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.	Moss Mansion Behind-the-Scenes Tour
10:00 A.M.–11:30 A.M.	Bars, Brothels & Bok Choy Walking Tour
10:00 A.M.–11:30 A.M.	Celebrities & Scandals Walking Tour
1:00 P.M.–4:00 P.M.	Historic Rehabilitation Tour
1:30 P.M.–3:00 P.M.	Born a Railroad Town Walking Tour
1:30 P.M.–4:00 P.M.	Billings History E-Bike Tour
3:00 P.M.–4:30 P.M.	Bars, Brothels & Bok Choy Walking Tour
10:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M.	On Your Own Tours (see pages 10-11)
5:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M.	Opening Reception—Billings Depot

Friday, September 25

7:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M.	Conference Registration—3rd-floor foyer
7:30 A.M.–9:00 A.M.	Welcome to Billings (see page 14)
9:15 A.M.–10:30 A.M.	Concurrent sessions (see pages 14–15) ▶ Through the Lens ▶ Agricultural Transformations ▶ Saving Land and Water
9:15 A.M.–10:45 A.M.	Homes by Cohagen Walking Tour
9:15 A.M.–11:15 A.M.	Moss Mansion Behind-the-Scenes Tour
10:30 A.M.–10:45 A.M.	Break
10:45 A.M.–12:00 P.M.	Concurrent sessions (see page 17-18) ▶ Not in Our Town Revisited ▶ After the Wars ▶ Bearing Arms ▶ Strengthening Ties

12:15 P.M.–1:45 P.M.	Lunch & Keynote Presentation (see page 18)
2:00 P.M.–3:15 P.M.	Concurrent sessions (see page 19) ▶ Taking Care of Business ▶ Unlikely Activists ▶ Exploring the Yellowstone
2:00 P.M.–4:15 P.M.	Set in Stone Parks Tour
2:00 P.M.–3:45 P.M.	Mountview Cemetery Walking Tour
3:15 P.M.–3:30 P.M.	Break
3:30 P.M.–4:45 P.M.	Concurrent sessions (see page 23-25) ▶ Home on the Range ▶ Keeping Culture ▶ Along the Trail
5:00 P.M.–6:00 P.M.	Cocktails & Conversations
6:00 P.M.–7:30 P.M.	Banquet & Keynote Presentation (see page 25)
7:45 P.M. – 9:15 P.M.	Montana History Pub Trivia (see page 25)

Saturday, September 26

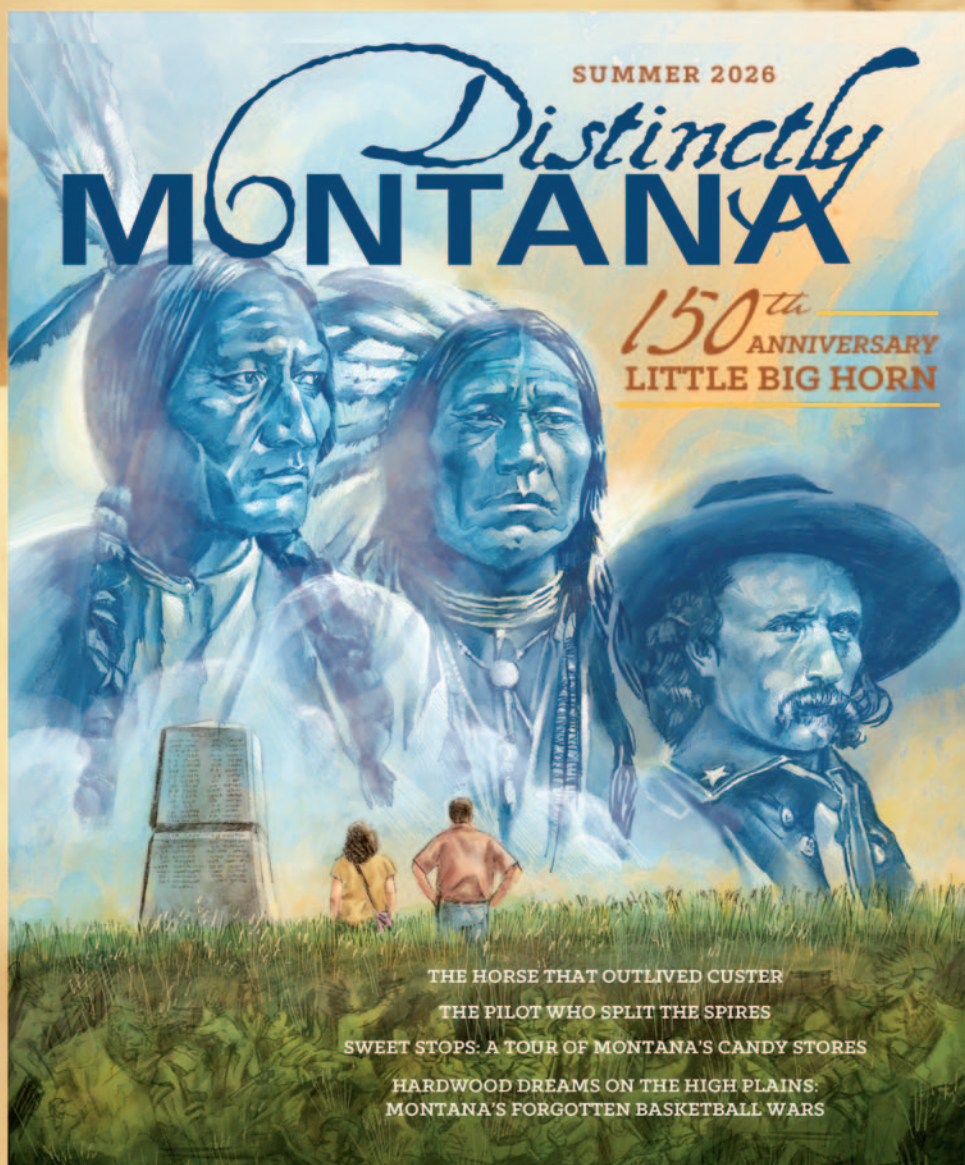
7:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.	Conference Registration —3rd-floor foyer
8:00 A.M.–9:00 A.M.	Grab and Go Networking Breakfast
9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M.	Concurrent sessions (see page 28-29) ▶ Uncovering Discrimination ▶ The Red and White Corner ▶ Preserving Ancient Stories
10:15 A.M.–10:30 A.M.	Break
10:30 A.M.–11:45 P.M.	Concurrent sessions (see page 29–30) ▶ Telling the Full Story ▶ Spotlighting Song and Dance ▶ Making History ▶ Teaching Montana History Recap
12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.	Lunch & Keynote Presentation (see page 31)

Post-Conference Fun

1:30 P.M.–5:00 P.M.	Hidden Billings Tour
1:30 P.M.–4:00 P.M.	Billings History E-Bike Tour
2:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M.	Chinese and Japanese Memory in Mountview Cemetery Walking Tour
1:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M.	On Your Own Tours (see pages 10-11)



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AFTERNOON TOURS

- **2:00 P.M.–4:15 P.M. Parks Tour** (*Vans depart from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; free.*)

Set in Stone Tour Join MTHS historian and community preservation coordinator **Kate Hampton** for a delightful historic roadside respites tour featuring two



Architectural salvage among stone sculptures at Pathway Through the Bible near Joliet. Photo courtesy of Kate Hampton.

historic parks made from geologic treasures. **Pathway Through the Bible** near Joliet offers visitors an “outsider art” sculpture park designed by local artist Adolph Land between 1957 and 1976. Representing Land’s remarkable engineering skills and limitless imagination, these abstract installations convey Bible stories using regional and imported stones, tiles, and cast masonry. The tour then travels to **Laurel’s**

Riverside Park, where masonry buildings made from Yellowstone River cobbles reflect the park’s use and development from the 1920s to federal relief service programs from 1934 to 1939 and the intermittent occupation of the site as a World War II prisoner of war camp from 1944 to 1945.

- **2:15 P.M.–3:45 P.M. Walking Tour** (*Starts at Mountview Cemetery, near the Veteran’s area, off Central Ave.; drive on your own; \$15 per person.*)

Graveside Stories Join a Western Heritage Center guide for a walk through Billings Mountview Cemetery, located on Central Avenue. Participants will explore the original layout of Billings’s first cemetery, hear past citizens’ stories, and view the historic mausoleum.

- **3:15 P.M.–3:30 P.M. Break: coffee, snacks, and books**

- **3:30 P.M.–4:45 P.M. Concurrent sessions**

Home on the Range From the 1890s to 1940, eastern Montana was saturated with scores of thousands of horses. Author and inductee to the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame **John L. Moore** recounts the history of **Three Famous Montana Horse**

Operations: the FUF Ranch, which raised war horses; the Chappel Brothers Cannery, which rounded up wild horses for food; and Arthur Parsons’s 44 Ranch, whose operation was “stolen” by a South Dakota felon. Montana Historical Society archivist **Cassidy Vander Voort** looks at a more modern episode in Montana’s ranching history in her presentation **Remembering ’89: The 1989**

Centennial Cattle Drive, Collective Memory and Montana’s Statehood. Created to honor the work of Montana ranch families, the cattle drive from Roundup to Billings involved cattlemen, cartoonists, waggoneers, and tourists as well as thousands of cattle and horses.



A view from the driver’s seat during the 1989 Centennial Cattle Drive. MTHS Photo Archives PAC 2003-20 F19-Cattle drive.

► **3:30 P.M. – 4:45 P.M. Concurrent sessions**

Keeping Culture Following civil rights legislation in the 1960s, Montana shifted from historical policies and practices of Native language suppression to supporting bilingual education and tribal language revitalization. State and federal efforts, including the Indian Education for All Act, aim to reverse the negative educational impacts of forced assimilation, while fostering academic success and positive identity. This presentation, featuring insights from bilingual education leaders **Steve Chesarek**, **Sharon Peregoy** (Apsáalooke/Crow), and **Dr. Richard Littlebear** (Tsétséhéstáhesé naa Suhtaio/Northern Cheyenne) reviews this history, the unique funding and challenges of Native American language programs, and the ongoing efforts to protect these languages as vital cultural resources.

Along the Trail Established in 1863, the Bozeman Trail offered a faster route to Montana's goldfields but spurred major conflict by cutting through prime Indigenous hunting grounds. Closed since 1868, the trail has mostly disappeared from view. In **"The Bozeman Trail in Montana,"** cartographer and author **Ralph Saunders** discusses the sources and methodology he used to map the actual location of the Bozeman Trail and offers tips for touring.

An excerpt of a 1922 map of the Bozeman Trail by Grace Raymond Hebard.
MTHS Library and Archives C-77. Arthur H. Clark publisher.



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In **Crazy Woman's Fork: Where the Line was Drawn!** retired National Park Service superintendent **Jon G. James** explores how he used tribal oral histories, pictographs, written accounts, and government records to describe an 1866 attack by Tsétséhésta'hese naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne) and Lakota (Sioux) warriors on a wagon train heading to Fort Phil Kearney, then under construction to protect travelers on the trail.

EVENING FESTIVITIES

► 5:00 P.M.–6:00 P.M. Cocktails and Conversations (Juniper Room, 22nd floor)

Make your way to the elegant 22nd floor, the former headquarters of the Montana Petroleum Club, for a pre-dinner social hour complete with 360-degree views of the Billings skyline. No-host bar.



Evelyn Cameron self-portrait, 1911.
MTHS Photo Archives PAC 90-87.NB079D.

► 6:00 P.M.–7:30 P.M. Banquet & Keynote Presentation, 3rd-floor ballroom Sponsored by A&E Design

More Than a Picture: Drawn to eastern Montana's rugged, vast spaces, British ex-patriate Evelyn Cameron and her husband homesteaded near Terry in 1891. Here she discovered photography, and her legacy of diaries and photographs are a remarkable chronicle of life in the West at the turn of the twentieth century. In **The Photographic Storytelling of Evelyn Cameron**, historic interpreter **Mary Jane Bradbury's** portrayal of Cameron takes us

beyond the photographs themselves to look at the artistry of this self-taught photographer, who explored the deeper story of the landscape of the prairie and the people who made it their home.

Mary Jane Bradbury is a speaker, educator, and actor. A Chautauqua speaker for Humanities Montana and the Colorado Humanities, she offers a variety of historic character portrayals as well as workshops designed to teach participants of all ages the value of bringing history to life through storytelling.



► 7:45 P.M.–9:15 P.M. Montana History Pub Trivia

Stay late, grab a group of friends, and put on your smartest thinking cap to test your Montana history knowledge during four fun rounds of trivia. Compete to earn the coveted title of Montana History Trivia Champions!

Heritage Keeper Awards

The Montana Historical Society's Board of Trustees' Heritage Keeper Award honors up to two individuals or organizations per year for their outstanding work, commitment, and effort in identifying, preserving, and presenting the history and heritage values of Montana for current and future generations. The award recognizes individuals, families,

Paul Snyder | *Board of Trustees' Heritage Keeper Award Recipient*

Paul Snyder has spent more than thirty years as a dedicated steward of Montana's history, contributing his time, personal funds, and unique craftsmanship to preserve the state's vanishing past. Born in Malta and raised on the High Line, Paul's deep roots fueled a lifelong mission to ensure that Montana's stories were not lost to time.

Paul's most visible legacy is the restoration of the state's only remaining Great Northern "Bruck"—a rare half-bus, half-truck vehicle. Now a centerpiece at the Stumptown Historical Museum in Whitefish, the Bruck stands as a testament to his love for history and restoration. His volunteerism spans the state, from the Phillips County Museum in his hometown to the Montana Heritage Commission in Virginia City. At The History Museum in Great Falls, Paul was indispensable when he guided the 2007 archives move, oversaw critical facility repairs, and personally handcrafted the woodwork for the Ozark Club room.



A veteran and retired commercial pilot, Paul crisscrossed the state to document Montana's favorite community center—the local saloon. His travels to photograph and research historic backbars culminated in the classic book, *Make Mine a Ditch*. This one-of-a-kind collection preserves stories of Montana social life as told through dozens of antique wood, glass, and metal cabinets found in almost every historic Montana barroom.

Whether he was behind a camera, at a woodworking bench, or in a boardroom, Paul was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. Despite his decades of service and his impact on museums across the Treasure State, Paul has only ever received local recognition. His selfless dedication to Montana's material and cultural history—moving far beyond his own hometowns to protect the heritage of the entire state—makes him a quintessential candidate for high-level recognition. Paul Snyder's life's work as a heritage keeper ensures that future generations will have a tangible connection to the history that shaped them.



The Great Northern Bus 101 "Bruck."
Photo by Eric Larson.



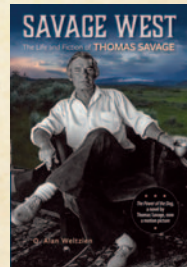
organizations, educators, historians, and others whose efforts have had a significant impact on generating interest in, and the preservation of, Montana's diverse history. The MTHS Board of Trustees hosted separate celebrations earlier in the year in the award recipients' home communities.

Dr. O. Alan Weltzien | *Board of Trustees' Heritage Keeper Award Recipient*

Recognizing Dr. O. Alan Weltzien as a Heritage Keeper in 2026 is particularly timely during the fiftieth anniversary of Norman Maclean's *A River Runs through It and Other Stories*. Since 1990, Dr. Weltzien has dedicated his career at the University of Montana–Western to “practical humanities,” ensuring that Montana's literary heritage is lived in the landscapes that inspired it. As a scholar and advocate, he has bridged the gap between academic rigor and public engagement, most notably as a leading authority on Norman Maclean and as the primary force behind the rediscovery of novelist Thomas Savage. His edited volume, *The Norman Maclean Reader*, is widely regarded as the definitive commentary on Maclean's work, while his biography *Savage West* and his efforts to bring Savage back into print rescued a vital voice of southwestern Montana from obscurity. Weltzien is also celebrated for his “Savage Tours,” guiding students, citizens, and Oscar-winning director Jane Campion through the physical sites of Savage's novels, transforming cultural contexts into lived experiences.

Dr. Weltzien's influence extends deep into the public sphere through accessible scholarship and community service. His contributions to *Montana The Magazine of Western History* exemplify his ability to connect the built environment with literary narrative. He has served on the board of Humanities Montana and the editorial board for the *Montana Professor*, and has represented the state's intellectual culture on a global stage through two Fulbright lectureships. His appearance in the Montana PBS documentary about Ivan Doig and his frequent public lectures demonstrate a rare gift for inspiring diverse audiences. Furthermore, his published poetry and travel essays offer a personal medium for drawing citizens closer to the natural and cultural worlds of the West.

For over three decades, Weltzien has been a tireless steward of the Montana experience. Whether hiking Mann Gulch with journalists or immersing students in the windswept environs of Horse Prairie south of Dillon, he has ensured the voices of Montana's greatest writers remain vibrant and their landscapes are never overlooked.





Saturday, September 26

► **7:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M. Conference registration**, 3rd-floor foyer

► **7:30 A.M.–9:00 A.M. Grab & Go Networking Breakfast**

Visit the ballroom early for breakfast and coffee while you chat with friends or arrive late and take a bite to go as you head into the morning's concurrent sessions.

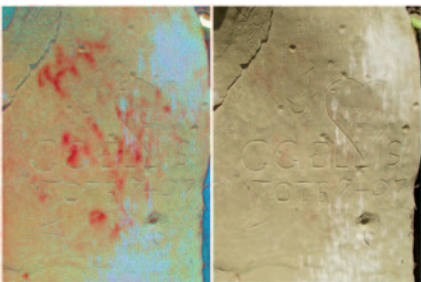
► **9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M. Concurrent sessions**

Uncovering Discrimination Many Montanans insist that “Chinese tunnels” ran beneath the streets of Billings and other Montana cities, either because the Chinese were forced underground due to anti-Asian prejudice or because they provided convenient hiding places for illegal activities. In **Beneath These Streets? Chinese Tunnel Myths and Historical Reality in Montana**, University of Notre Dame associate professor and Fellow with the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies **Mark Johnson** explores the tunnel myth as an entry point into deeper questions about race, memory, and community identity. In **The National Anti-Mormon Debate and the Idaho Mormon Problem, 1882–1887**, University of Montana PhD student **Lauren Tecca** focuses on the various politicians and community members involved in Mormon conflicts in Idaho. The presentation connects to the wider national movement against the Church and argues that Idaho is a critical site for our understanding of the “Mormon Problem” in the nineteenth century.

The Red and White Corner Home to the most active Communist Party unit in Montana, Plentywood has long been known as Montana’s “Red Corner.” In **The Life of Herman Krogman: Communism, the Great Depression, and Gardening**, retired American University of Sharjah professor of history **Vernon Pedersen** and The History Museum (Great Falls) archivist **Megan Sanford** explore the left-wing politics of Herman Krogman, who evolved from Communist Party loyalist in Plentywood to Trotskyite in Billings, and finally to New Deal liberal. Plentywood was also home to a large number of Scandinavian homesteaders, who brought their love of winter sports to northeast Montana. While skiing history has been well documented in western Montana, in **Chasing the Ghosts of Eagles: Nordic Sports in Northeast Montana**, high school teacher **Michael Herdina** explores these immigrants’ enthusiasm for skiing and ski jumping, and the ski jumps they left behind in Plentywood, Scobey, and Medicine Lake.

► **9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M. Concurrent sessions**

Preserving Ancient Stories In **Apsáalooke Biographic Warrior Writing**, Little Bighorn College professor **Timothy McCleary** explores the narrative drawings of Apsáalooke (Crow) warriors whose pictographic symbols expressed war achievements. Although symbols varied among tribal nations, the symbolic writing on rock, robes, tipi liners, and ledger paper were easily read by friend and enemy alike. Professor emeritus **Timothy Urbaniak** examines the **Petroglyphs, Pictographs, Historic Inscriptions, and Technology at the Cultural Crossroad of Pompeys Pillar**. He discusses the catalog he created of over 2,000 pictographs, petroglyphs, and historic inscriptions that document the waves of Indigenous peoples, explorers, trappers, soldiers, and homesteaders, all of whom left their mark on the pillar and sandstone cliffs north of the river.



Professor Tim Urbaniak explains the technology used to identify inscriptions that are invisible to the naked eye. Photo courtesy of Tim Urbaniak.

► **10:15 A.M.–10:30 A.M. Break: coffee, snacks, and books**

► **10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M. Concurrent sessions**

Telling the Full Story How do small rural communities tell big, complicated stories in ways that feel honest, inclusive, and alive? In **Shared Ground, Shared Narrative: Public History That Holds Both Homestead and Indigenous Truths**, Kingsley History Project board chair and homesteading descendent **John Amsden** and Tsétséhéstáhesé naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne) artist **Miah Chalfant** explore how an interpretive exhibit and a public mural can work together to make Montana history relevant today—connecting the homestead-era Kingsley community with the deeper Indigenous history of place. In **Frybread, Fences, and the Yellowstone: Who Gets to Call This ‘Montana History’?** Author **Melanie Sands-Snyder** (Chippewa Cree) explores the cultural landscape of the Yellowstone corridor and the often overlooked Indigenous presence woven throughout the region’s defining narratives of cattle ranching, railroads, and homesteading.



A group of Apsáalooke (Crow) women stand near a fence, ca. 1896.
MTHS Photo Archives Lot 035 B12F10.07.

► 10:30 A.M. – 11:45 A.M. Concurrent sessions

Spotlighting Song and Dance Music and dance are deeply rooted in Montana's history, but their legacy and impact haven't always been appreciated. This panel explores song and dance in early Montana and how these forms of self-expression contributed to community and identity. In **"The Fun that Kills": Dancing and Moral Reform in Montana, 1900–1930**, University of Montana graduate student **Danielle Brown** looks at the controversies surrounding social dancing during the early twentieth century, exploring the public debates around dancing—in urban dance halls and rural schoolhouses—and how legislation that suppressed public dances created long-term effects. In **The Last Best tSongs: Cowboys, Miners, and Montana Soundscapes, 1890–1950**, University of Montana graduate student **Arizona Duff** examines the songs and sounds of early working Montanans. From occupational sounds like hoofbeats and hoists to labor songs detailing workers' lives, lessons, and experiences, she examines what early audio recordings and oral histories can reveal about the lives and social landscapes of Montana's working class.



Arthur Rothstein, Cowhands singing after day's work. Quarter Circle 'U' Ranch roundup. Big Horn County, Montana. Photograph, June 1939, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division.

Making History In this screening of ***Walking Between Two Worlds: The Urban Indigenous Youth Experience***, first-time high school filmmakers from the Billings Public Schools' Indigenous Education Department worked with Montana's MAPS Media Institute to explore how young Indigenous people navigate maintaining cultural identity in urban environments. Through interviews with tribal elders, community leaders, educators, and cultural knowledge keepers, the youth show how they stay connected to their traditional culture while overcoming feelings of alienation, stereotypes, and the pressure of being "not Native enough." Created through a collaboration between Billings Public Schools, MAPS Media Institute, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, and the Greater Montana Foundation, the film won the 2025 National Student Production Award for Non-Fiction from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the same organization that oversees the Emmy Awards. Q&A with student filmmakers follows the screening.

Teaching Montana History Recap Teachers! Wondering how to put what you have learned from attending conference sessions to work in your classroom? Join Outreach and Education historian and former classroom teacher **Melissa Hibbard** to discuss ideas and make plans for how to bring information back to your students and apply what you've learned.

► 12:00 P.M.–1:00 P.M. Lunch & Keynote Presentation

The Battle at Arrow Creek: Best Practices in Researching and Retelling Tribal Histories. Drawing from Apsáalooke (Crow) and Dakota (Sioux) oral histories preserved across generations, Crow Tribal Historic Preservation officer **Aaron Brien** examines the Battle at Arrow Creek (Battle of Pryor Creek), a major intertribal conflict that took place approximately twenty miles south of present-day Billings in 1859 or 1860. Brien will recount the planned invasion of Apsáalooke Country by a massive alliance of Dakota, Tsétséhéstáhesē naa Suhtaio (Northern Cheyenne), and Hinono'ei (Arapaho) warriors and the strategic, spiritual, and communal defense mounted by the Apsáalooke. Brien will also emphasize how retelling Indigenous histories requires a shift away from extractive academic models toward approaches grounded in tribal sovereignty, consent, and relational accountability. His presentation offers a model for researchers, institutions, and public historians seeking to strengthen both ethical practice and historical integrity.



Aaron Brien is a respected cultural steward of Apsáalooke history raised within a strong oral storytelling tradition. His grandmother's teachings shaped his perception of time as layered and continuous—a worldview central to Apsáalooke historical interpretation. Brien's work embodies the role of culture keeper and catalyst, bridging tribal knowledge and professional preservation practice

while advancing culturally grounded research standards.

POST-CONFERENCE FUN

► 1:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M. Self-Guided Tour

(Starts at Western Heritage Center, 2822 Montana Ave.; \$35 per person.)

Hidden Billings Preserve Montana and the Western Heritage Center invite you to explore the hidden stories and curious spaces inside some of the most beloved (and not often open-to-the-public) historic houses, businesses, and civic buildings in the Magic City. Use the free Explore Montana app or a paper map to tour at your own pace and see local history in a new light.



The Austin North House. Photo courtesy of Western Heritage Center.

► **1:30 P.M.–4:00 P.M. Electric Bike Tour** (*Vans leave from the DoubleTree Hotel's Montana Ave. entrance; bike rental, helmet, and waiver required; \$50 per person.*)

From Rimrocks to Railroads: Cycling Through Billings History Cycle your way through Billings history on this 14-mile e-bike tour of Billings led by former Billings mayor Bill Cole. From Zimmerman Park, riders will follow the scenic Skyline Trail and Chief Black Otter Trail to the Yellowstone Kelly interpretive site. Continuing through legacy trees born from sacred roots at Skeleton Cliff, riders will stop at Coulson Boothill Cemetery and the former site of Coulson—the riverboat town predating Billings. Coasting toward downtown Billings and ahead a few decades, the tour culminates with stops at the stately Austin North house, Billings First Church, and the majestic Moss Mansion.

► **2:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M. Walking Tour**

(*Meet at Mountview Cemetery, 1704 Central Ave.; free.*)



Photo courtesy of Mark Johnson.

Gravestones as Archives: Chinese and Japanese Memory in Mountview Cemetery

Join Mark Johnson, University of Notre Dame associate professor and Fellow with the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, and high school scholar Thomas Johnson on this interpretive walking tour at Billings' Mountview Cemetery. The tour explores the headstones of early Chinese and Japanese residents as vital "historical texts" that document Montana's diverse past. By analyzing linguistic evolution, regional origins, and religious motifs, the tour recovers stories of perseverance and cultural

adaptation that are often missing from dominant narratives. Drawing on original research and linguistic analysis by Dr. Genevieve Leung, the tour transforms the cemetery into a cultural archive, honoring the lives of Asian pioneers and highlighting their significant role in the history of the American West.

ON YOUR OWN

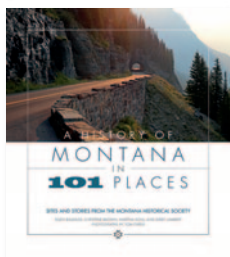
- Yellowstone Art Museum
- Western Heritage Center
- Moss Mansion
- Yellowstone County Museum

See pages 10–11 for details. Check for up-to-date hours and information before visiting.

Montana National Guard soldier from the 2nd Regiment Band.
MTHS Photo Archives. Lot 048 BILL-pa 07.



NEW from the Montana Historical Society Press



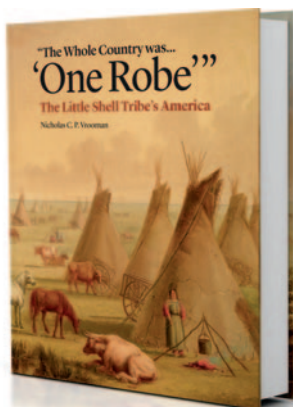
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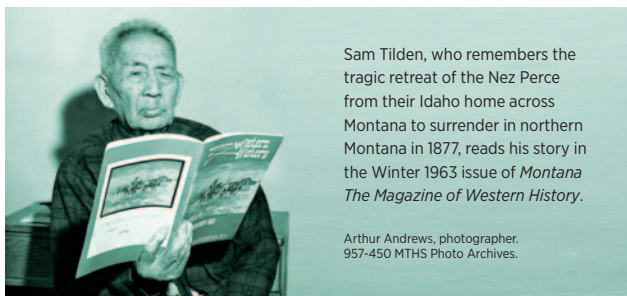
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Sam Tilden, who remembers the tragic retreat of the Nez Perce from their Idaho home across Montana to surrender in northern Montana in 1877, reads his story in the Winter 1963 issue of *Montana The Magazine of Western History*.

Arthur Andrews, photographer.
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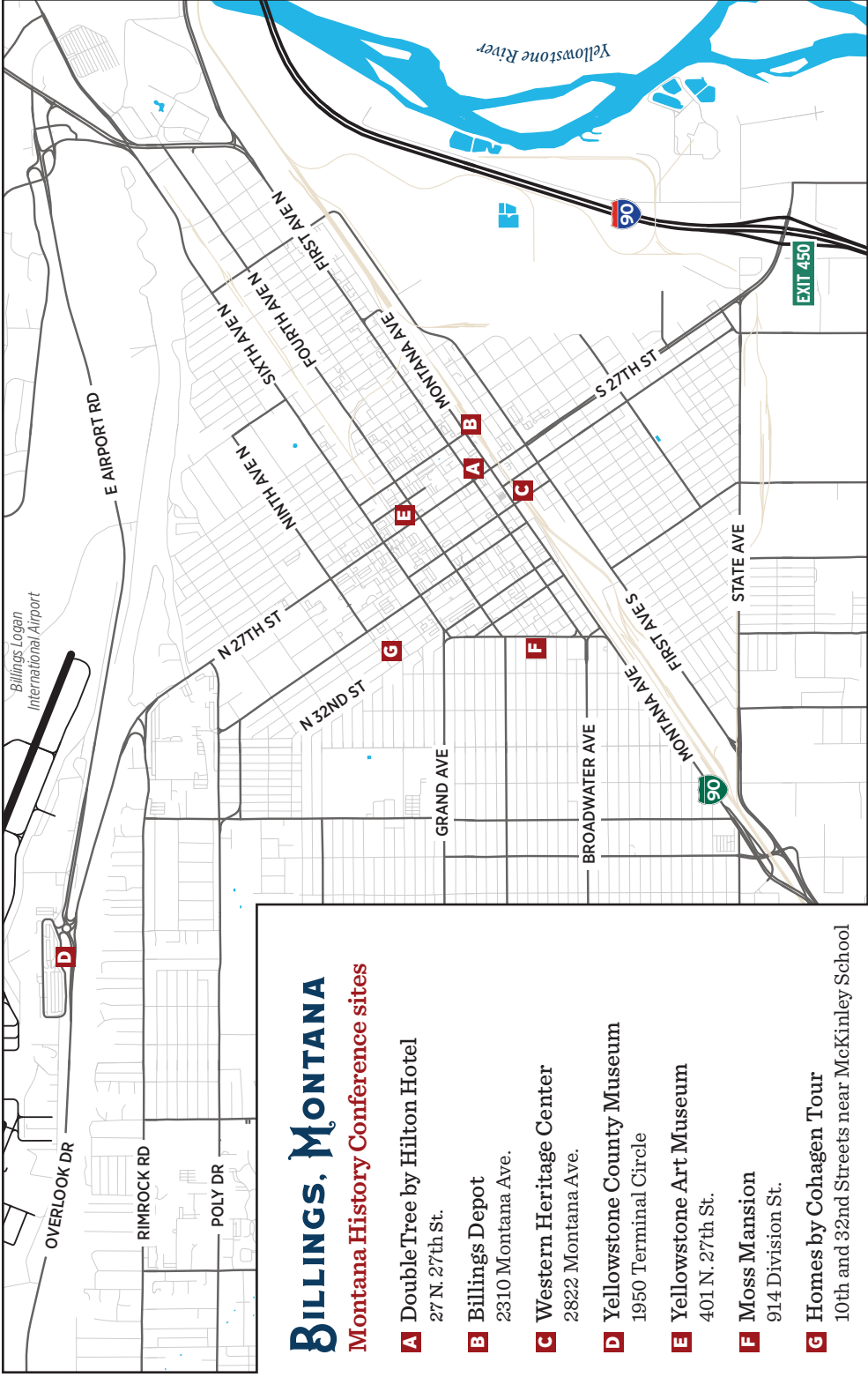
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