

*Testimony for the Senate Finance and Claims Committee*

*April 5th, 2005*

*Room 317, State Capitol*

*by Betty L. Babcock*

*Honorable Chairman Mike Cooney, and Honorable members of the Senate Finance Committee, for the record my name is Betty L. Babcock, former Legislator, Con-Con Delegate, member and President of the Montana Capitol Restoration Foundation. I am also here as a Co-Chair along with Former Attorney General Joe Mazurek of the Steering Committee for the purchase of the Capital Hill Mall to replace the building now occupied by the MHS.*

*Buying the Capitol Hill Mall for a New Montana History Center is a very unusual situation. If this opportunity is missed the state will lose far more than the \$7 and a half million they are considering to allow in HB 540. I feel certain it is very difficult to understand the time crunch that we are facing. The only time this can happen is while the Legislature is here in session. When the next Legislature meets, two years from now the opportunity to buy 13 acres of prime real estate land in one piece and a building with 250,000 square feet, 750 parking spaces all in the right spot, close to the Capitol, is a miracle that will be long gone.*

*That happens to be only half of the miracle. This is the first time I have ever worked on a project where there are major donors waiting and willing to assume the great responsibility of raising the private funds necessary to complete the project. Keep in mind that the state of Montana owns the current building and is paying rent on three others they occupy plus many of the collections and records they have acquired over the years and were mandated to take care of since it was created in 1865 are being stored and it is impossible to display them properly.*

*I have a lot of confidence in the Montana people with years of experience that are*

recommending that we go forward with this project. Many of them have served in the legislature, and high state office before or have been involved with Museums. Please look at the list of "Quick Quotes" that I have enclosed. These are from letters we have received. If you would like to see copies of the complete letters I would be glad to show them to you.

Some members of the Foundation are in a financial position to donate, very generously, and also have friends that they know who are willing to do the same. Only of course if this project merits their support and it is one they can feel proud of and right about recommending to their friends. For instance it has the potential to be here 100 years from now. The wonderful collections, the art and the history and opportunities for educational programs connected to a Library and Museum seem to be the things that interest them. Maybe because it's value increases with time. I'm sure too, it would give them satisfaction to be part of something successful and that makes a difference to our society.

Private donors were not that easy to find and funds didn't become available that readily in the Restoration of the Capitol for we continually heard prospective donors say, "that it is a state building, it is their responsibility, why don't they take care of it". But with a great deal of effort, and the opportunity we had to get back many of the very valuable artifacts, we were able to finish the job for the time being that is. I would say, that with anything worthy while, the job is never done. We have to be sure some one will continue to see that it is taken care of That is true with the MHS. Our history grows and we can't just park it somewhere until we feel like taking care of it. We half to preserve it now while it is happening. Every word said in this Committee and the Senate will be part of it.

I hope with all my heart you will seize this opportunity and make it possible for The New History Center to be part of our future and our heritage will be preserved for generations to come..

Please find it in your heart to vote favorably for HB540

Thank you for serving in the Legislature.

## **“Quick Quotes”**

Like all Montanans I have a keen interest in the history of our state and in making sure we utilize the tools available to share that history and culture with the Montana school children, with the other residents of our great state and with the thousands of visitors who come to Montana to enjoy the last best place.

As you consider this project, I hope you know that you can count on me to work closely with you should there be an appropriate role for the federal government in the project

United States Senator Max Baucus

I am writing today in support of the proposed expansion for the Montana Historical Society. The development of a new Montana History Center would be the most extraordinary and significant gift to Montana and its citizens and will create a lasting legacy for future generations. I hope you share in the knowledge what a precious value our history has in our rich Montana heritage, and support the effort of this statewide campaign.

United States Senator, Conrad Burns

Understanding the past helps us feel connected to generations of long ago and gives our lives deeper meaning;

Education, especially education that teaches an appreciation of the past, is a key to the preservation of our freedom and civilization. The Montana Historical Society provides and supports this kind of education. I appreciate your dedication to your work.

Adequate space for the Montana Historical Society is important. I support your efforts to raise funds for a new site.

Montana's Congressman, Denny Rehberg

Having built and managed the Colonial Inn, I know how important the Tourism Industry is to the citizens of Montana. As it says in the brochure, the Montana History Center will be a “Montana Tourism Centerpiece”. It won't just benefit Helena, but will help our economic development throughout the state.

I hope when it is complete, the bucking horse by Scriver, the “Symbol of the Pros” will be placed very near the front entrance so the tourist and all who come there will see it the first thing. I urge your support and my best wishes for success with this project.

Former Governor Tim Babcock

## “Quick Quotes” continues

With an admitted bias that derives Naturally fro seven years os studying history in college, I enthusiastically support the effort to fund the expansion of the Montana Historical Society and Museum.

The current reputation of the Society, Museum and it publications and outreach speaks well of the desire of the people of the Treasure State to our past---and our future.

Former Governor Ted Schwinden

Each generation, it seems, has its chances to impact the future and write its own history. My great hope is that this generation of Montanans will display the same strength and optimism as those who set our course in the past. Having personally considered these issues in the past, and knowing how difficult it is to find the resources necessary to address all our needs, I, none the less, would still strongly recommend moving forward with the Montan Historical Societies Capital Hill shopping Center proposal .

Former Governor Marc Racicot

This letter is in strong support of a new building for the Montana Historical Society. As a publisher, author, university teacher and historian , I know how important the Society is to preserving, protecting and advancing the cause of Montana history and heritage. I am well aware that the Society has outgrown its current facility, and a new building is badly needed. The Society serves people all across the state, and is a vital asset in many ways.

**Rick Graetz,  
American Geographic  
Northern Rockies Publishing**

How exciting! A Montana History Cent at the site of the present Capitol Hill Ma... With what is now in storage you could have a fabulous exhibits. Montanans , and others will wake up to our fascinating history. What is more important----- future generations will keep learning.

As you say the traffic flow is ideal– local people will be more aware and it will be more lively. I talked with Max yesterday and he need to be fully informed.

Jean Baucus

We are writing to let you know that the Museums Association of Montana is in favor of the state bonding proposal for the Montana History Center . We urge you to support this worthwhile endeavor.

Your support through this bond will enable the Montana History Foundation to better leverage support from the public to help with this project.

The Montana Historical Society has been invaluable in setting standards that all Montana museums look to in their operations. The Museums Association of Montana works closely with the MHS to convey professionalism to all museums in the state. In showing the commitment to provide for the expansion of needed space and the ability to provide the proper care of the states magnificent collection of history, this project will insure the continuation of the MHS lead in helping to make all the state wide museums important to our citizens and visitors alike.

**Paul Shea, President  
Museums Association of Montana**

The more than 50 year old Building that now houses the Society is badly over crowded. Not only do important archives, artifacts and other items have to be stored off site, the Museum exhibit space also is woefully lacking. The Society at its heart is about educating young and old alike what it means to be good citizens and good Montanans. A new building is needed to allow that mission to be accomplished.

Mike Halligan  
Missoula, MT

**Prepared by Betty L Babcock for the convenience of the Senate Finance and Claims  
Committee.  
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