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Montana Historical Society

Autumn 2012

HISTORY WORTH CELEBRATING!

The New Montana Heritage Center

Be a part of Montana's new home for history

By MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg

Our stories mean a lot to us. We are able to celebrate the great chapters of our past because the Montana Historical Society, for 147 years, has collected, shared, and celebrated the extraordinary influences of our ancestors—from ancient Native American cultures to the ranchers, miners, settlers, merchants, and artisans who followed. The impact of the Society is more widespread than ever and increasingly important to:

- record, preserve, and celebrate the rich history of Montana's diverse culture;
- help shape the future based on the lessons of the past;
- teach the lessons of our past to Montanans of all ages; and
- attract visitors whose love of history draws them to our state.

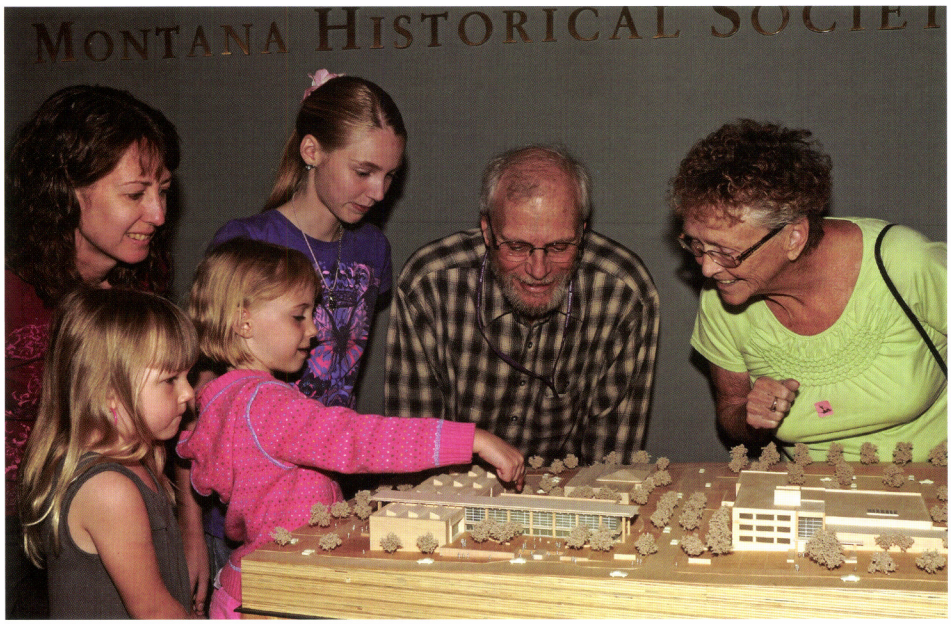
In these ways and many more, the treasures of the Montana Historical Society enrich our state and enhance our quality of life.

While looking to the past, the ultimate obligation of the Montana Historical Society is to Montana's future. To fulfill that obligation, the leaders of the Society have developed a bold vision—one that will provide greater access to our treasures in an expanded and welcoming facility and increases our service to Montana. A larger space and stronger fiscal health will ensure the Montana Historical Society will always collect, preserve, interpret, and display the stories that have shaped our lives and our land.

The Montana Heritage Center—the Montana Historical Society's future home—has been designed to capture the scenic grandeur of the site and provide space to show and interpret the many facets of Montana's exciting past. After

Heritage Center *(cont. on p. 4)*

"The Society is a large, untapped resource—good for Montana, good for the economy, good for capturing tourism."—MHS patron



Visitors check out a scale model of the new Montana Heritage Center. It has something for everyone: an outdoor amphitheater for special events, a new museum exhibit area, classrooms for visiting school groups, a research center worthy of its world-class archives, a 300-seat auditorium for public and private events, an enlarged Charles M. Russell exhibit, and more. With you, the Montana Historical Society can make this vision a reality.

Director's Corner

MHS DIRECTOR BRUCE WHITTENBERG

The stories told at the Montana Historical Society every day are not cold stories about "history" or Montana, they are stories about people. In 1952, a young sign painter showed up at the Montana Historical Society to practice his craft, and the rest is history. This young sign painter was Bob Morgan.

The Morgan family with a banner presented to him by the MHS staff, at the "Bob Morgan Day" celebration

Over the decades that followed, Bob Morgan rose through the Historical Society to become assistant curator, curator, acting director, and on to a career as a renowned and beloved artist. Bob is now our curator emeritus and also emeritus member of the MHS Board of Trustees. His impact on the Montana Historical Society cannot be overstated and lives on vividly today. Bob's art captures all of Montana from Fort Benton to Billings to Helena. It captures a spirit of life and progress. Bob Morgan's art is a gift to Montana. In fact, Bob Morgan is a gift to Montana.

When I became the director of your Montana Historical Society in 2011, Bob was one of the first to welcome me and offer support. I'm blessed to have the opportunity to visit with Bob regularly—to listen to stories, soak up his wisdom, and share his love of the Historical Society and Montana. I call him "friend" but see him as our hero.

September 13, 2012, was declared "Bob Morgan Day" in Helena, and over two hundred people gathered at the Helena Regional Airport to celebrate with Bob and his wife and "manager," Genevieve. Like Charles M. Russell, Bob's idol and inspiration, Bob has become Montana and Montana has become Bob.

For almost 150 years the Montana Historical Society has collected and shared the stories of so many fascinating people. These stories are told every day through our programs, in our publications, and through the research center, archives, and museum collections. Bob has played a role in all those parts of the Society.

Special people, leaving a special legacy that is the heart of Montana. So to Bob and Gen, from all of us at the Montana Historical Society, congratulations on a life well lived and more to come. ✪

About Us

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

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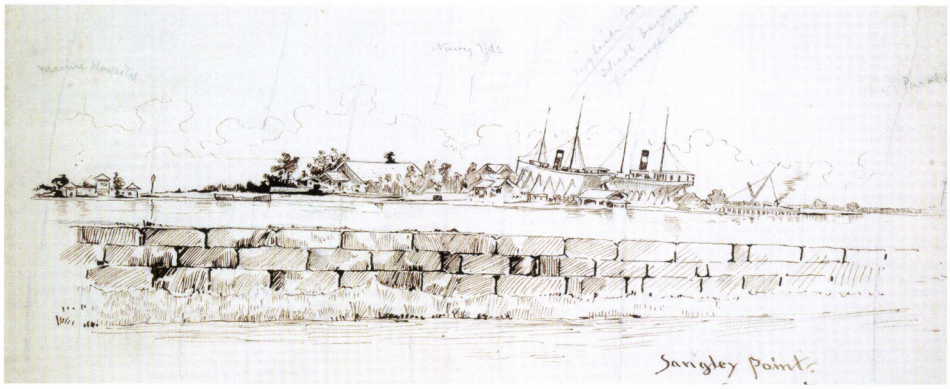
Something New, Something Old

TREASURES FROM THE SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

Timing isn't always everything, but in this case a donation certainly was.

The MHS museum team was already at work on the new exhibit "An Artist's Journey: The Life and Works of E.S. Paxson" when Robert and Brenda Kay Haseman of Helena offered to donate three sketches by the famous Montana artist earlier this year.

The works were important not just because they were Paxson's. They also shed new light on his experiences serving with the Montana volunteers in the Philippines during the Spanish American War. The drawings provide details of scenes, with handwritten notes like "near road [where] Holmes was shot."



This Paxson pen and ink drawing depicts Fort San Antonia Abad near Manila, which was the site of heavy fighting in the Spanish American War.

The three sketches are now on display in the new exhibit. The staff at the Montana Historical Society and the Hasemans hope you come see them. ✪

The Museum at Central School is a great tribute to history as well as historic preservation.

ON THE ROAD TO MONTANA'S GREAT MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

The Museum at Central School in Kalispell Tells Story of Flathead Valley

No trip to the Flathead Valley is complete without a visit to the Museum at Central School in Kalispell. It is a triumph of historic preservation and history.

The Northwest Montana Historical Society, which was formed in the 1960s, raised $2.4 million to restore the old Central School, built in 1894, and has mounted eighty-two exhibitions since it was opened as a museum in 1999.

The building itself is worth the trip. A 22,000-square-foot stone-and-brick structure, it is one of the few remaining examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in the state. The MHS State Historic Preservation Office was proud to help place the building on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

The museum tells the story of the Flathead Valley's Native Americans, its early European settlers, and the communities that have sprung up over the years.

Museum executive director Gil Jordan heads up eight hundred supporting members and sixty active volunteers who work such projects as an 1895 classroom experience for third graders, a native plant garden, oral histories, and traditional quilt workshops.

Located in the historic downtown Kalispell district, it is open M–F, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

SOCIETY STAR PROFILE

Kendra Derrer Uses Love of Art to Curate Her First Exhibit

A love of art and history and a career in museum work recently culminated when Kendra Derrer curated her first exhibit, "An Artist's Journey: The Life and Works of E.S. Paxson," now on display in the Montana Historical Society Museum.

"I always had an interest in art and thought about becoming a graphic designer," she said. "Art generally tells a part of history no matter who the artist is."

Derrer has been assistant registrar at MHS for about five years. She did her undergraduate work at Rockford College in her native state of Illinois and received her master's degree in historical administration from Eastern Illinois University.

Derrer already had a good understanding of Paxson and his importance as a Montana artist at the turn of the last century from the large collection of his work in the MHS collection. To flesh out the exhibit took a great deal of research in the MHS Research Center and visits to other places like the Missoula Museum of Art and Culture and the Mansfield Center, where there are other Paxson collections.

"In creating an exhibit you are trying to convey a story. You have to figure out the story you are going to tell and how to do it in a way that the public will understand and enjoy," she said.

For example, she said in reading Paxson's journal she discovered that he was a friend of legendary Montana pioneer Granville Stuart, who came to search for gold in the 1850s and played a major role in the development of the Montana Territory. "It is a part of the exhibit because you get a glimpse of an important connection that tells you more about Paxson," she said.

Kendra Derrer with a painting of Sacajawea in her exhibit "An Artist's Journey: The Life and Works of E.S. Paxson," now on display in the MHS Museum.

Derrer grew up on a farm in Illinois and is proud of her heritage. "We realize agriculture is an area we could do more with in collecting and exhibiting," she said. "It does take up a lot of space, which we don't have." It is another reason MHS is working on the planned Montana Heritage Center.

In her spare time, Derrer likes to hike and has even taken up snowshoeing so she can hike year-round.

Heritage Center *(cont. from p. 1)*

years of hard work, consensus-building, and careful design, we have arrived at plans that will unite six Montana Historical Society programs in two buildings with one vision—to celebrate Montana's history and provide greater access for Montanans and our visitors.

In 1950 Montanans came together and built the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building, the current home of the Montana Historical Society. Now is the time for our generation to step forward to create a new MHS, one large enough to preserve and protect our ever-expanding collections and provide a modern venue where they will be displayed for future generations of Montanans.

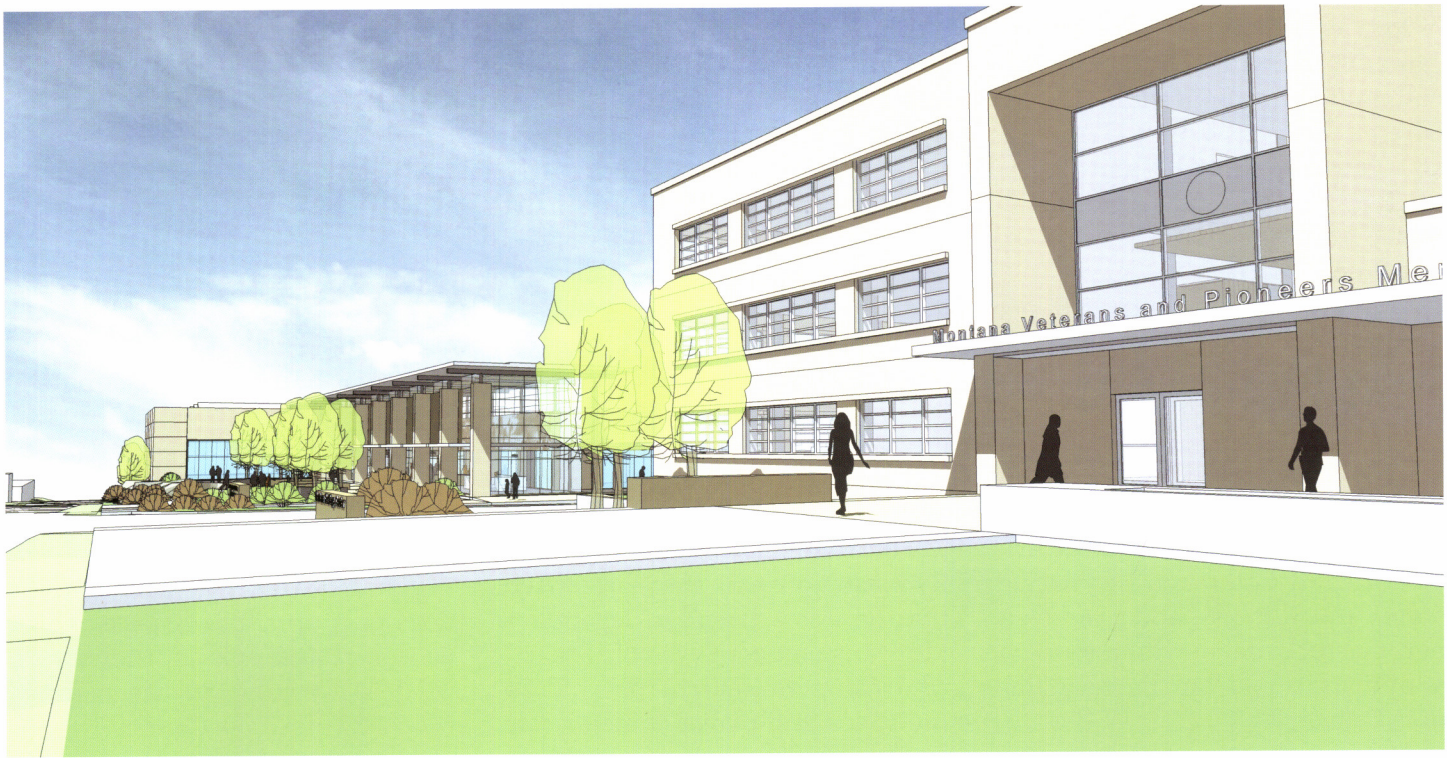
The new facility will be located on the Capitol campus, a few steps from the State Capitol. In addition to new areas to show historical and art collections, it will provide meeting space, food service, and other amenities for all who come to our capital to explore and experience Montana.

The Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building will be renovated to bring it up to a standard worthy of our valuable heritage and to honor those who dedicated the Society's first new home more than sixty years ago.

> "If we had a great facility, we'd be the Smithsonian of the West. Our collections are that good."
>
> —MHS patron

Located directly across the street from the Montana State Capitol, the Montana Historical Society currently hosts thousands of students and their teachers from every corner of the state, who visit to learn about state government, take MHS tours of the State Capitol, visit Montana's Museum, and explore the offerings of our research, education, and historic preservation programs. To hear their excited voices, see their faces, and watch them learn what it means to be a Montanan reminds us why this is a special place. The plan for the Montana Heritage Center includes new construction on state-owned property just across the street and north of MHS, renovation of the existing building, and connecting the two with a concourse gallery under Sixth Avenue. The new Montana Heritage Center will be a welcoming "front door" to Montana and an important enhancement to our State Capitol campus.

Advance planning has identified the total space needs for the Montana Heritage Center to be 119,805 net square feet (nsf). The new building will provide 45,330 nsf, while the existing space



The existing Montana Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building will be connected to the new building with a Grand Concourse under Sixth Avenue to create a new and welcoming focal point for the Capitol campus. The existing building will be renovated to include a new and expanded Charles M. Russell Gallery, a modern research center to better serve the public, a temporary exhibit gallery, a multi-use space, and two large classrooms to serve the thousands of students who come from across the state each year to learn about their heritage.

A computer image depicts the remodeled lobby of the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building.

The Montana Historical Society truly is Montana's memory. The new facility will provide a welcoming new research center. A more modern, technology-friendly space will help people of all ages learn more about their history and heritage.

As you come from the new building through the Grand Concourse, you will be greeted with a powerful view of the expanded Charles M. Russell Gallery. The Montana Historical Society has a tremendous collection of art, and the Russell collection remains at its heart.

has 66,995 nsf. The new facility will include a public gathering space and event center, an outdoor courtyard and amphitheater, and museum exhibits as well as an area for state-of-the-art museum collection storage. The renovation of the Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building will expand the research center and library, double the size of the C. M. Russell Gallery, add much-needed classrooms for educational programs, and bring the State Historic Preservation Office into the MHS building. The renovation will also restore the public areas of the facility to their original character and feel.

Architectural plans approved by the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees call for a construction budget of $37.5 million, which won necessary approval of the Montana legislature in 2005. That legislature also approved $7.5 million in bonding authority to begin planning for the project. Since that time, private donors and foundations have provided an additional $2.5 million. Private donors support this project with the expectation that state government will step up with the additional funds needed to make the Montana Heritage Center a reality.

We are recruiting people in leadership roles from across Montana who will validate this momentous and important effort and ensure its success. Legislative leaders from both parties have indicated support and recognize the value of this investment. You will hear much more about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a heritage campus at the Capitol worthy of Montana's history.

The Montana Historical Society is working hard to earn your support. We want to make the dream of the Montana Heritage Center a reality worthy of the nearly 150-year history of the Montana Historical Society. One thing our history shows us is that Montanans have never been afraid to take on a challenge. That's the spirit that makes Montana the Last Best Place. In that spirit, we ask for your support.

Please lend your name to this effort. Consider a gift to the Montana Heritage Center Campaign.

Thank you. Come visit us at your Montana Historical Society. ⊛

Planning for You and the Future of the Past

The fifteen-member Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees is composed of people from all walks of life from all across the state. Together with the MHS staff and all those involved in the planning of the new Montana Heritage Center, they always keep one thing in mind: you.

While the MHS Museum and its world-class collections are a source of pride for all of us, the Society is made up of five other programs that help preserve Montana's history and heritage.

Here is a thumbnail sketch of what the new Heritage Center means for you and future generations of Montanans:

Research Center

- A significantly larger central research library that will be consumer friendly
- Easier and quicker access to MHS collections for patrons
- Improved wireless connections
- Exhibit space featuring highlights from the research center's vast photo and archive collections
- Safer storage conditions to protect the collections with direct access to the public reference room
- Improved digital technologies to make collections available across the state and world

Museum

- A new Montana heritage gallery chronicling the stories of Montana's peoples—Native Americans, early explorers, and up to the present day, reflecting on how our past affects our future
- Double the size of the Mackay Gallery of C.M. Russell art
- New changing exhibit spaces to better show off the superb collections of art and artifacts
- Greater access to collections information through digital technologies
- State-of-the-art climate control to safeguard collections for future generations
- Outdoor public spaces with an amphitheater, sculpture garden, and room for more for events

Outreach and Interpretation

- Classroom and interactive space for the thousands of students from across the state who come to Helena to learn about their history and heritage (no current facilities exist)
- Services for students and other large groups including storage lockers for backpacks and coats, which currently must be piled up in the hallway

Planning for your needs comes right down to a place for kids to properly store backpacks and coats, which now must be stacked up on the floor.

- Reduced costs for large events and workshops by using space available in the building
- Safer access for school groups, tourist buses, and RVs with special parking and unloading locations
- Larger seating capacity for special programs and events

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

- One-stop access to all MHS services: For 30 years the MHS State Historic Preservation Office has been headquartered in buildings away from the rest of the Society. With the opening of the new Heritage Center, it will move in with the rest of the Society.
- Improved access to vital SHPO records that are now located in different buildings
- Environmental and safety controls to protect records
- Synergies between SHPO and other programs to tell the Montana story from the perspective of our wonderful historic buildings and places

Publications and MT Historical Society Press

- Expanded storytelling with interesting and informative displays for visitors
- Synergies between the publications department and other programs to better serve all MHS patrons
- *Montana The Magazine of Western History* and the two to three MHS books published each year draw heavily on all MHS programs. Publications will be better able to use all MHS resources to bring the Montana story to people across the state and nation.

Administration

- A welcoming and informative front door for all who come to the State Capitol campus for work or pleasure
- A state-of-the-art information desk to guide visitors to other museums, historic sites, and cultural tourism attractions across Montana
- A multipurpose event center that can seat up to 300 people for public meetings or 150 for a formal dinner
- Indoor and outdoor spaces that can be used for special events, such as the Western Rendezvous of Art, and other private and public use
- More available parking ⊛

The Gift that Keeps Giving

BY REBECCA BAUMANN, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

We are closing in on 2,000 active members here at MHS. With your help, I would like to reach that goal by the end of this year and at the same time solve a gift-giving dilemma. Have you racked your brain for the perfect gift for the person who has everything they need? How many times have you heard "Oh, you don't need to get me anything"? Christmas, holiday celebrations, and birthdays are just around the corner. Do you wonder what to give your spouse, child, parent, sibling, boss, colleague, or that individual you would like to give a special thank-you gift to? Consider giving them the gift that keeps on giving all year long—a membership with the Montana Historical Society.

MHS Museum Store manager Rod Coslet has the perfect gifts for young and old alike. He promises not to "buffalo" you if you call him toll-free for ordering or gift ideas at 1-800-243-9900.

The person you have in mind doesn't live in the Helena area, you say? No problem. Benefits of membership are bigger than the ability to visit the Montana Historical Society or the Original Governor's Mansion. The gift recipient will also receive a subscription to *Montana The Magazine of Western History,* two history-related research requests a year, the annual MHS calendar, a 15 percent discount to the MHS Museum Store (online too), discounts to affiliated Time Travelers museums nationwide, the *Society Star* newsletter, invitations to special events, and more. If you haven't had a chance to visit our store, please do. We have an expanded variety of new books, creative Made In Montana gifts, delicious food items, and beautiful jewelry, plus fun, educational gifts for the kids.

In one easy moment, you can purchase the perfect gift either online, in person, or over the phone. Really, it will only take a few minutes to complete a gift membership and then—you're done! Visit www.montanahistoricalsociety.org or call me directly at 406-444-2918. I will be happy to help you. Our members are the backbone of everything we do, everything we produce, and our future. *Our History Is Worth Celebrating*—every day! We love what we do, and we hope you do, too! Lastly, if you can, please join us for our annual MHS Membership Day celebrated on Montana Statehood Day, Thursday, November 8, 10:00 A.M.–7:30 P.M. Bring a friend, because it's a free admission day at the Society.

Remember MHS with a Year-end Donation

Fall is here and winter is just around the corner.

When you are considering your year-end charitable tax donations, think about what Montana means to you, and how you can benefit future generations. A gift to the Montana Historical Society will allow you to share Montana's rich history with others.

MHS development and marketing officer Susan Near would be pleased to talk with you about your donation plans and outline current needs of the Society. Call her at 406-444-4713, or email snear@mt.gov.

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History can be as pretty as a picture. Nicole Boileau, Kendra Derrer, Sarah Nucci, and Julia Porter dressed up for the Wild West Fest and represented the Montana Historical Society in style. Nucci, MHS curator of history and an expert seamstress, won first place in the fashion show at the event for the second year in a row. Her winning dress, which she made, is a wool gabardine 1870s dress inspired by an original at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Boileau is also wearing a "Nucci," an 1888 bustle silk ball gown. Derrer made her red plaid 1860s dress with a convertible bodice. Porter wore another "Nucci," an 1860s cotton summer sheer. Historic clothing is an important part of the MHS collection.

We are thankful for our members!