



**2013 - 2014  
BIENNIAL REPORT**



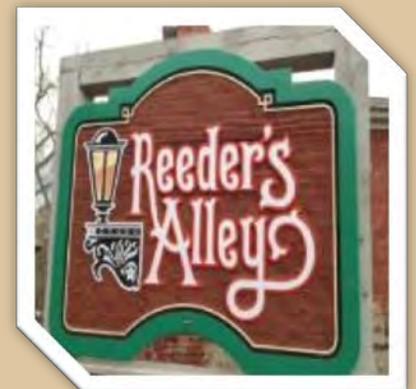
**Biennial Report to the Legislature**

**Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission**

**(MHC)**

**Our Mission:**

The Montana Heritage Commission preserves and manages historic resources in Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder's Alley and promotes the appreciation of history through quality visitor experiences.



This report is required per MCA 22-3-1003 (12)

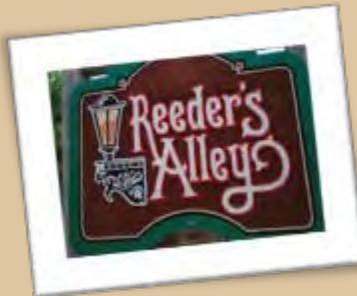
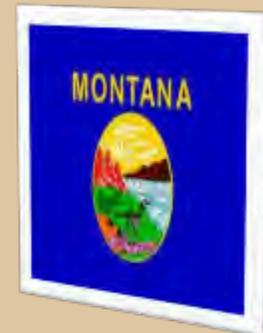


## Background and History

In 1997, the Montana Legislature purchased Virginia and Nevada Cities from the Senator Charles Bovey family for 6.5 Million.

In 2000 Reeder's Alley was gifted to the state by Darrell and Kathy Guston.

(Today the value we insure our properties and artifacts is 44.7 million.)



The Montana Heritage Commission takes pride in managing some of the most valuable and fascinating historic sites in Montana--Virginia City and Nevada City, plus Reeder's Alley and the Pioneer Cabin in Helena. Our goal is to promote and preserve these sites while encouraging Montanans and our children to become excited about the rich history of this great state.

Virginia City was the site of our territorial capital from 1864-1875.

MHC offices now occupy the original Montana Legislative Offices.



### Strategic Highlights

- MHC has over 248 historic buildings and 1.2 million artifacts it preserves and repairs.
- According to Montana Office of Tourism, 2013-14 Traffic Counts, Virginia and Nevada City is Montana's number one state owned tourist attraction. (401,736)



- MHC has business relationships with over 42 concessionaires that help business and economic development and employs several hundred people across Montana.



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- MHC has over 300 signed volunteers that help with historical interpretation, artifact restoration and preservation. (MHC volunteers log in over 20,000 hours per year)
- MHC has **reduced** personal expenditures by over \$400k since 2012 and **increased** visitors at MHC visitor services by 165% from 2012-2014 which resulted in overall earned revenue increasing by 58.34% from 2012-2014. This has resulted in more money going to preserving and promoting Montana's Heritage.



= **\$1,193,043** for Preservation and Promotion of Virginia/Nevada City and Reeder Alley, Montana for 2013-2014.



## **Strategic Priorities**

**Strategic Priority I Preserve:** Establish a more effective system to ensure proper allocation of resources, preservation and maintenance prioritization, and cataloging of Historic buildings and artifacts.

**Strategic Priority II Sustain:** Establish a financial sustainability plan that represents balanced reliance on State and Federal appropriations, private funding, and revenue generation in support of achieving long-term sustainability.

**Strategic Priority III Promote:** Expand marketing and promotional efforts to strengthen image and identity of the historic resources managed by The Montana Heritage Commission.

**Strategic Priority IV Experience:** Enhance visitor's physical experience by providing engaging, memorable, and a unique understanding of where Montana's history began.

**Strategic Priority V Partner:** Broaden local, state, and federal support and understanding of the important contribution heritage makes to Montana's economy, cultural identity and sense of historic community.

**Strategic Priority VI Manage:** Build the management and strategic capacity of the Commission, Board, Management and Staff to support effective and efficient administrative functioning



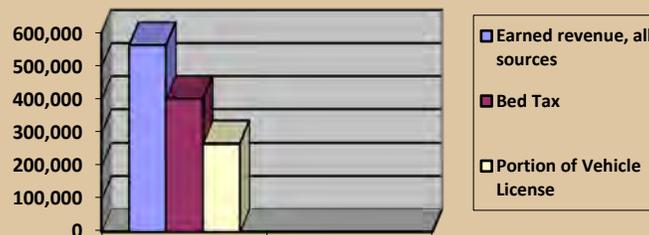
## Income and Expenses

### Income:

Statutory Funds and Earned Revenue

- Earned revenue includes all MHC properties, leases, gate and train fees, rents and private donations.
- MHC visitor services had an increase of 58.34%% in earned revenue from FY 2012 to FY2014.

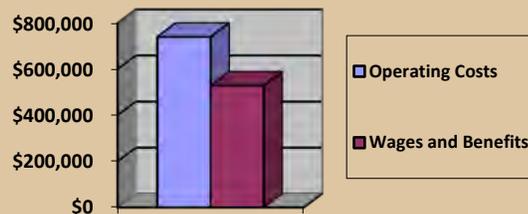
(FY12=\$354,950 and FY 14= \$ 562,013)



### Expenses: MHC Operations

Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley

- Costs include all utilities, professional services, repairs and maintenance, insurance, state administrative and other operating costs.
- MHC has reduced personal services expenditures by close to \$470,000 since 2012.





**Historic Building Preservation and Maintenance**

**(Montana's Territorial Building from 1864-1875)**



**(1864)**



**(2014)**

The primary source of funds for preservation comes from MHC earned income, rents, grants, donations and long range preservation funds from the coal tax distribution. MHC Repairs over 249 buildings in Virginia and Nevada City, Montana and Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana.



Some of the highlights of the past year were:

- Completion of the Reeder's Alley interpretive and convention center, where tourists can come learn about Montana's history and also people can reserve center for social gatherings. All earned proceeds go to future preservation projects.
- Repair of Structural damage at Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana
- Repaired Daylight Village (34 units) which serves as seasonal housing for employees who work in Virginia and Nevada City, Montana and four historic home vacation rentals.
- Repaired and opened five static exhibits on historic Wallace street in Virginia City Montana. (Montana Post, Elling Store, Toy Store, Tobacco Shop, Weston Hotel, Charles and Sue Ford Bovey Visitor Center).





## Collections and Archeology

*"Virginia City has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Americana artifact site in the United States next to the Smithsonian"  
-New York Times-*

**Our Current Artifact Inventory Count is 1,264,714**

### **As curators, our work has many parts:**

Preserve, stabilize & track collections using museum practices & standards for historic sites, catalog the objects, establishing a written & electronic record, research the objects and their significance to Virginia and Nevada City and the rest of the collection and educate the public through research & exhibition of these historic objects

### **Some highlights from the past year include:**

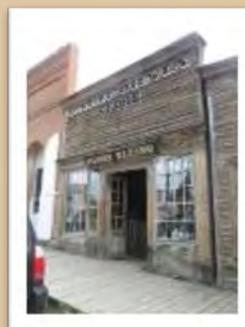
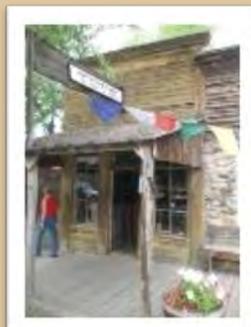
- In process of transferring our artifacts to an electronic database so public can view them online and get a better perspective of each artifact. We entered approximately 3,784 accessioned object records into Past Perfect database during the 2014 fiscal year. Montana Post 2,178, Dance & Stuart 1,113, Pioneer Cabin 489



[www.virginiacity.com](http://www.virginiacity.com)

(Collections tab)

- Repaired and restored the Opera House's c. 1914 Cremona Photo player Organ, the only one known to be in public use.
- We opened 5 new gated displays for tourists to get a closer look inside buildings on Wallace St in Virginia City.
  - Elling Store
  - Weston Hotel
  - Jewelry Store (Strasburger)
  - Toy Store
  - Montana Post (upstairs)





**Education Outreach and Living History Interpretation**

MHC offers a diverse range of educational programs and reaches out to Montana schools K-12. School groups from across Montana visit Reeder's Alley and enjoy guided tours in Virginia and Nevada City from May-September to learn about Montana history and the territorial capital at Virginia City.

- The Montana Heritage Commission Living History program was nominated for tourism event of the year and partnership of the year at the Governor's conference on tourism.
- Approximately 5,000 students come each year for school tours across Montana.
- The MHC Living History held the Western Regional Conference for the Association of Living History this past year.



**2014 Montana Heritage Commission Nevada City Living History Schedule**

May 8-9	Montana Territory History Days
May 24-26	The Gold Discovery
May 31-June 1	Nevada City Boom Town
May 31	Lantern Tour
June 7-8	The Murder of Deputy Dillingham
June 14-15	George Ives Trial & Hanging
June 21-22	The Hanging of Red Yeager
June 21	Lantern Tour
June 28-29	Con Orem & Hugh O'Neil
June 28	19th Century Bowling Exhibition
July 4-6	Nevada City Celebrates the 4th of July
July 12-15	The Great Duel
July 12	Lantern Tour
July 19-20	Steve Marshland
July 26-27	Cyrus Skinner & Alex Carter
July 26	Lantern Tour
August 2-3	Miner's Court
August 9-10	Murphy & Brady
August 9	Lantern Tour
August 16-17	The Flour Riot
August 23-24	Women of the Gulch
August 30- Sept 1	Jack Slade's End
August 30	Lantern Tour
September 6-7	Beans Bacon & Bannack Bread
September 13-14	Trails End
October 24-25	All Hallow's Eve

For More Information: call (406) 843-5247  
www.virginiacitymi.com



## Business Development and Marketing

- To increase revenue in 2012-2014 we designed a more family oriented environment with the family fun pass and stay and play packages. These passes let families get a night lodging at historic hotels and cabins and they can ride on the train, go pan for gold and get entrance into the living history museum.
- We focused on an aggressive advertising campaign with over 12,000 TV commercials with popular stations such as ABC, FOX, NBC, CNN, Fox News, History Channel, Discovery Channel, Disney Channel and ABC family. We distributed close to 75,000 brochures across the state and print ads at local target market newspapers. We focused on e-commerce with designing a more tourist friendly web-site located at ([www.virginiacitymt.com](http://www.virginiacitymt.com)), we developed a downloadable app for Virginia and Nevada City for smart phones and also designed QR Scan codes to help tourists be able to go directly to our web-site and also point their phone at any building and they can get historic interpretation of that buildings history.
- We have over 42 business relationships with concessionaires in Virginia and Nevada City along with Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana. These relationships contribute to hundreds of jobs for people in Montana.
- We were able to increase tourism visitors to MHC visitor services by 165% from 2012-2014 and earned revenue by 58.34% which put \$1,193,043 (2013-2014) towards preservation, promotion and repairs and maintenance of Virginia and Nevada City and Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana.





## Partnerships

The Montana Heritage Commission (MHC) is a small state agency and partnerships are critical for us to leverage funding and staff resources. Partnerships help us gather expertise and skills to achieve our goals.

Some of our partners we have worked with over the past two years include:

- AmeriCorps (NCCC)
- Ancient Order of the Hibernians (Butte/Helena)
- Butte Silver bow Public Archives
- Elderhostel (Dillon)
- Friends of the Cumbres Toltec Railroad
- Madison County
- Mai Wah Society
- Montana Conservation Corps
- Montana Historical Society
- Montana History Foundation
- Montana Preservation Alliance
- Montana State University - Project Archeology
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks
- MT Ghost Town Society
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Ruby Valley Conservation District
- Town of Virginia City
- Trout Unlimited
- University of Montana
- US Forest Service
- Virginia City Area Chamber of Commerce
- Virginia City Preservation Alliance
- Volunteers for the MT Heritage Commission
- Washington State University
- Youth Challenge (Dillon)





## MHC Commissioners

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P.O. Box 298  
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Bill Howell (Vice Chair)  
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West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Cyndy Andrus-Tourism  
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Dr. Timothy Lehman-Historian  
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Barbie Durham-Businesswoman  
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Cameron, MT 59720

Shera Konen - Member at Large  
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Jason Davis - Businessman  
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Andy Poole - Member at Large  
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Philip Maechling-Community Planning  
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Bill Beck  
Appointment by the Speaker of the House  
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Appointment by the President of  
the Senate  
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Meg O'Leary, Director  
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for Jeff Hagener  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
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Bruce Whittenberg, Director  
MT Historical Society  
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### MHC Staff

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**"To all our present and past donors who donated to preserve Montana's History!"**

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