



2019 - 2020 | Biennial Report

MISSION

Preserve · Promote · Protect · Partner



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

Our Mission

The Montana Heritage Commission preserves and promotes Montana's Territorial Capital history and resources through quality visitor experiences and preservation of state-owned buildings and artifacts.

MONTANA HERITAGE *Commission*

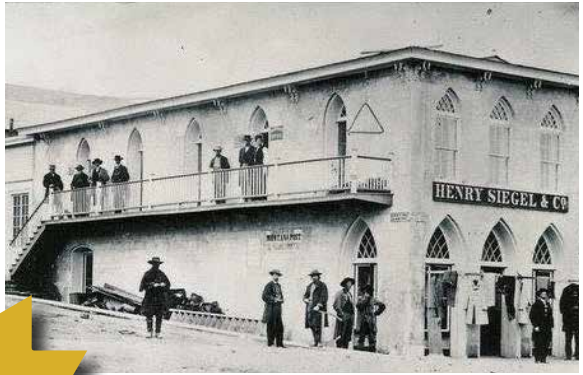


Background and History

In 1997, the **Montana Legislature** purchased **Virginia City** and **Nevada City** 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 at is \$47.98 million.



Front of Content Corner (Montana's Territorial Capital-Legislative Offices in 1865)

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 preserve and promote 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 Montana's Territorial Capital Building in Virginia City, Montana.



Current photo of Montana's Territorial Capital-Legislative Offices

Strategic Highlights



We Preserve Montana's Territorial History, for our Future

**MHC operating
budget FY 2020:**

\$1,877,343 (expenses)

÷ **\$74.6 Million** (economic footprint)

= **3,873%** Return on Investment

**Investing in history pays
for Montana!**



**74.4 million economic
footprint in Montana**



**Contributes to 1,226
jobs in Montana**



**Has stewardship over 276
heritage properties from the
1860s to 1875 time period**



**Over 500k tourists visit Virginia and
Nevada City from Memorial Day to Labor
Day each year, making it Montana's #1
state-owned tourist destination**



**Reeder's Alley is one of the few
original structures from Helena's
territorial time period**



**Over 1 million Americana artifacts
from the 1860 to 1960 time period**

Strategic Priorities

The Montana Heritage Commission has the following (4) strategic priorities:

- (1) **PRESERVE:** Establish a more effective system to ensure proper allocation of resources, preservation and maintenance prioritization, and cataloging of historic buildings and artifacts.
- (2) **PROMOTE:** Expand marketing and promotional efforts to strengthen image and identity of the historic resources managed by The Montana Heritage Commission.
- (3) **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.
- (4) **PROTECT:** Implement programs to enhance inventory to be compliant with insurance guidelines, fire suppression services and safe practices for our tourists to avoid injury and exposure to litigation.



2023 Biennium Program Goals

➤ Implement approved preservation and maintenance projects based on available funding from revenue generated from tourists and funding from the Montana Legislature and Governor's Office.

➤ Promote at key locations that have demonstrated higher traffic referrals such as National Parks, visitor centers and expand our collection of tourism data through e-commerce and trackable marketing venues.

➤ Engage and educate state, local and non-profit partners to increase a sustainable funding resource for the long-term stabilization of state-owned resources and continue to enhance the visitor experience under our stewardship.

➤ Improve and increase educational outreach programs, internships and interpretation programs to enhance the visitor experience and understanding of our history.

➤ Seek all available funding support through grants, donations and legislative appropriations to further our preservation of state-owned buildings and resources; and increase our economic footprint, job creation, and business development.

➤ Recruit and utilize volunteers/interns to give educational opportunities and to increase efficiency of operations with limited state funding.

➤ Continue to educate and implement best practices from other historic and tourism sites on financials, marketing and enhancement of visitor experiences.

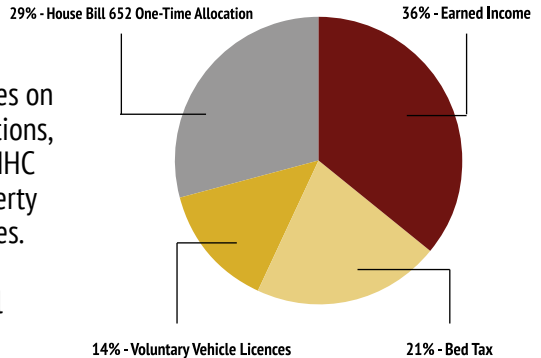
➤ Improve ways to streamline inventory for artifacts and historic buildings to make it transparent to the public, visitors to historic site and compliance with insurance and protection of state-owned assets.

Financials

HOW ARE WE FUNDED?

INCOME:

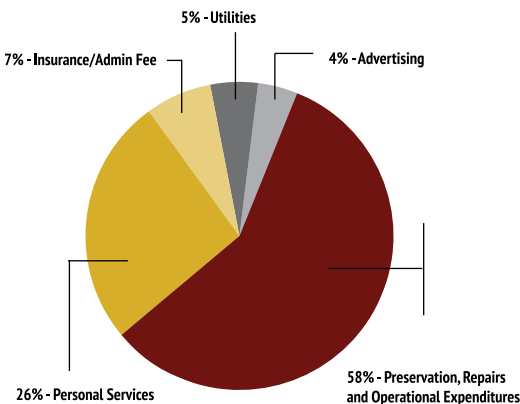
The Montana Heritage Commission operates on tourist related income from bed tax allocations, a voluntary vehicle license plate fee, and MHC earned revenue generated from MHC property rentals, hotels, and entrance to museum fees. Appropriations from legislature have been allocated, in the past but are not an annual appropriation.



FY 2020 Income Summary:

Total Revenue/Allocation - \$1,887,418

- \$689,357 - MHC Earned Income
- \$400,000 - Statutorily Appropriated Bed Tax (has not changed for 23 years)
- \$264,426 - Voluntary Vehicle License Fees
- \$533,635 - House Bill 652 Allocation (one-time allocation)



* Administrative Fee to Department of Commerce is 14.22% of Personal Services

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

EXPENSES: MHC Operations

MHC Operations in Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley Operating costs include all personal services, preservation, promotion, repairs, maintenance, insurance, administrative and fees.

FY 2020 Total Operations Summary:

Total - \$1,877,343

- \$1,091,731 - Preservation, Repairs, & Operational Expenditures
- \$497,425 - Personal Services
- \$123,458 - Insurance/Admin Fee*
- \$92,570 - Utilities
- \$72,160 - Advertising

Collections and Archaeology

“Virginia City has one of the largest Americana artifact collections in the United States.”

— New York Times - July 21, 2002

Our current Americana artifact inventory count is 1,317,281

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

View our artifact collection online at:
www.virginiacitymt.com



Gypsy Verbal Fortune Teller



U.S. Cartridge Box Plate as found in the Bonanza Inn



U.S. Cartridge Box Plate

Preserve



Virginia City Information Center and Village Pump



Current Day

In 2019 the Montana Heritage Commission restored this 1944 gas station and made it into a functioning gas station and Information Center for the many tourists that come visit each year.



1944 Gas Station



2018 - Before Demolition

All revenue generated from gas sales goes toward future preservation projects and protection (The Virginia City Fire Department) of state owned buildings.



The Barbie Durham family opens the Information Center

Preserve

Stay in Montana's History

The Montana Heritage Commission's top priority was updating our accommodations so tourists and Montanans can come "Stay in Montana's History".

Over the past 2-3 years we have upgraded facilities to have 64 available rooms in state owned-properties to accommodate weddings, social gathering and family reunions.

Alder Gulch Accommodations

AlderGulchAccommodations.com

\$149

*Come and
Stay & Play*

*Available
Sun - Thurs*

- One night stay in our historic properties
- Unlimited rides on the train
- Gold panning at the River of Gold
- Entry to the Living History Museum
- Discounts at participating businesses



The Fairweather Inn added 17 bathrooms along with a fire suppression system and furniture upgrades.



The Nevada City Cabins and Nevada City Hotel received updated bathrooms and furniture.



Stay in Montana's History

Heritage Accommodations

heritageaccommodations.com



Dr. Daems and Corbitt Residences were updated for vacation rental.



The Bonanza Inn bathrooms were remodeled, including electrical and plumbing upgrades as well as new furniture in the rooms.



Harding Residence was updated for vacation rental.



Governor Thomas Francis Meagher Cabin was updated for vacation rental.



Preserve & Promote

Discovery-Ellingsen Park



All revenue generated goes into future preservation projects in Virginia and Nevada City, MT.

In 2019-2020 the Montana Heritage Commission completed Discovery-Ellingsen Park that is dedicated to the men who discovered Virginia City and the man who dedicated his life to preserving it.



This park was designed for Social Gatherings, Music Festivals and Weddings.



Promote

The Montana Heritage Commission's marketing campaign has a diverse campaign that encompasses Social Media and E-Commerce, Print Ad, TV, Radio and affordable packages such as the Vigilante Stay and Play pass. Through collaborate efforts with the Town of Virginia City and business owners, **Virginia and Nevada City are Montana's number one state-owned tourist destination** with over 500,000 tourists coming to visit each year.

\$149

Come and Stay & Play

Available Sun - Thurs

- ◆ One night stay in our historic properties
- ◆ Unlimited rides on the train
- ◆ Gold panning at the River of Gold
- ◆ Entry to the Living History Museum
- ◆ Discounts at participating businesses

VIGILANTE
3-7-77
←TRAIL→

MONTANA AAA000
WHERE MONTANA HISTORY LIVES

WE'RE MOBILE!! FOR YOU

Download the app today!

Available on the App Store and Google Play

Features:

- > Local Business Info
- > Lodging
- > Audio Tours

Preserve

Preservation for Seasonal Housing

The Montana Heritage Commission completed much needed Seasonal Housing upgrades with two new bath houses and maintenance on 34 units located at Daylight Village. These units help provide housing for the many businesses that operate during Memorial Day to Labor Day each year. The majority of this funding came from HB 652.



Promote

Business Development

The Montana Heritage Commission has business relationships with over 35 private businesses that rent from state-owned buildings.



Montana businesses
keep our historic
buildings standing!



Promote

Vigilante Family or Group Pass is good for 5 people for 2 days that include:

- ✓ Train rides on the Alder Gulch Short Line RR
- ✓ Gold panning at the River of Gold
- ✓ Entrance into the Living History Museum

The Montana Heritage Commission has developed the Vigilante family pass so Montana families and tourists can experience Montana's History in a affordable way, for \$99."



Promote



Films Shot in VC/NC

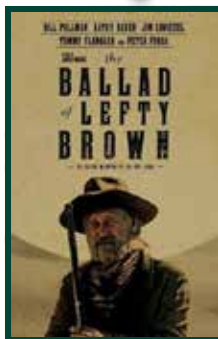


- Little Big Man - 1970
- Missouri Breaks - 1975
- Thousand Pieces of Gold - 1989
- Unsolved Mysteries, "Plummer's Gold" - 1989
- Return to Lonesome Dove - 1993
- The Patriot - 1997
- History's Mysteries: The Vigilantes - 1999
- Bob Viva's Restore America - 1999
- Ligia - 2001
- Enemy of the People - 2001



- Frontier House - 2001
- A Moment of Peace - 2002
- Taking Chance - 2009
- History Channel Ghost Stories Series - 2009
- American Experience Series, "Custer's Last Stand" - 2011
- La Route Du Western - 2011
- Absaroka: Sins - 2013
- Any Bullet Will Do - 2015
- Jack Slade - 2015
- BBC Production, "Mountains" - 2016
- Ride by Night - 2016
- Ballad of Lefty Brown - 2017
- C.M. Russell and the American West - 2017
- Discovery Channel - Expedition Unknown - 2018

**Virginia City wins Film
Friendly Community
of the Year**



Promote

Famous English Photographer David Yarrow and Animals of Montana

Photography shoot in Virginia City and Nevada City Montana, 2019-2020.

Featured below is Cindy Crawford “America’s Supermodel”,
Olivia Culpo - Miss Universe and Kate Bock Sports Illustrated Model of the Year

A portion of proceeds
from the David
Yarrow Book went to
preservation of buildings
located in Virginia City
and Nevada City, Montana.



Promote

Education Outreach and Living History Interpretation

The Montana Heritage Commission Living History program helps tourists understand what it was like to live in the 1860's through interactive interpretive experiences.

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 City and Nevada City.

Approximately 5,000 Montana students come each year for school tours.



The Chicago Times has ranked the Montana Heritage Commission Living History program in Virginia and Nevada City #4 in the nation as a 'Top Living History Destination.'

Protect

The Montana Heritage Commission is active in protecting the states heritage and resources through insurance programs and a strong supporter of the local Fire Departments.

The Montana Heritage Commission was able to upgrade the Nevada City fire pump that services fire protection of restaurants, hotels, cabins and museums located on state property.

It remains the top priority to have fire suppression services in all restaurants, vacation rentals and hotels.



The MHC purchased the state a fire truck to be on site at the NC Museum/NC Hotels and Cabins.



In FY 2020 the Montana Heritage Commission matches fundraising efforts for the Fire Department with this year giving a total \$13,200.00

MHC pays \$47,037 annually to insure (Risk Management) its building structures and artifacts.... (Star) The estimated value of state owned resources in 2020 is \$47.98 Million

Partner

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 the 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 and Staff

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**David Hoffman – Appointment by
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Marge Antolik & Kate Steeley

Preservation Specialists

Jeff Cleverly & Donny Steeley

Tourism Event Coordinator

Becky Digiovanna

Education Outreach Living History

Creative Edu Ventures - Leona Stredwick



Honorary Dedication

John D. Ellingsen

Emeritus Curator for the Montana Heritage Commission | 1947-2020



John designed the VC/NC logo to help promote tourist revenue to preserve Virginia and Nevada City Montana

The Montana Heritage Commission pays tribute to the man who dedicated much of his life to preserving Virginia City and Nevada City. John D. Ellingsen was a keeper of the stories of Montana's past, which he shared liberally. John was a man of great integrity and was kind and thoughtful. He will be greatly missed, but his legacy will live on. John was one of the leading individuals at the Legislature in Helena to lobby

the state to purchase the Bovey properties in Virginia and Nevada Cities, that served as Montana's Territorial Capital from 1864-1875.



In 2019 the Montana Heritage Commission dedicated "Discovery-Ellingsen Park" in recognition to the men who discovered Virginia City and the man who dedicated his life to preserving it.



JDE & Horn Machine- Bale c. 1959. Young John Ellingsen's fascination with music machines started early. John is next to the Wulitzer Band Organ style 150, aka the Obnoxious Horn Machine, which was in the Bale of Hay Saloon, c. 1959. Photo Courtesy of John Ellingsen



Town sign with the logo that John Ellingsen designed



John Ellingsen at Ellingsen-Discovery Park Dedication June 2019



Reference: The Rocky Mountain Economic Improvement District

Montana Heritage Commission

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