



Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum

"Keeping our local area and timber heritage alive for the enjoyment and education of the public."

A New Year (our 15th) and new Roundtables

January 21, 2-4, KettleHouse Taproom: We'll consider new aspects of the Bonner area's history this winter starting with *"Bonner history reflected in the Historical Museum collection."* HMFEM Executive Director Matt Lautzenheiser and Director of Education Kristjana Eyjolfsson team up to relate stories of the Bonner collection at the Historical Museum. We're all familiar with #7 and the library car, but they are bringing some smaller items that may be new to you.

February 18, 2-4, KettleHouse Taproom: The Bonner Dam on the Backfoot River existed from 1885 until it was removed in November, 2005. Tony Liane documented the removal and following events. He will share photos and stories of this historic dam removal in the program *"Freeing the Blackfoot: Removal of the Bonner Dam."*

March 17, 2-4, St. Ann Catholic Church: They're back! Better than Butte pasties will be served following our March program *"A Confluence of Cultures in Bonner area neighborhoods."* Dine in or carry out.



Blackfoot River Legacies

By Cheryl Hughes

On September 24th, a beautiful fall day, the BMHCM gathered with many friends, old and new. On the lawn of the Kettlehouse Brewery in Bonner overlooking the Blackfoot River, we came to hear from several noted guests about "Blackfoot River Legacies."

Myrna Dumontier, a wise Salish elder from Valley Creek, near Arlee, shared the early Montana stories and photographs of her family and their lives and passions along our Two Big-Hearted Rivers - both the Blackfoot and the Clark Fork. Myrna is the daughter of Salish icon and elder Louie Adams. Myrna works extensively with the youth across the Northwest in order to ensure their tribal traditions are firmly understood and implanted in those young peoples' future lives.

In addition, Chris Lane, a local musician and artist, entertained us with several beautiful musical arrangements that focused on the Blackfoot River and his family's love and reverence for its history. John N. Maclean, a longtime friend and neighbor at Seeley Lake, shared his thoughts about the connections between

the three books: *Home Waters; A Chronicle of Family and a River; A River Runs through It* and *Big Two-Hearted River*. John is an award-winning author and journalist who retired after thirty years with the *Chicago Tribune*. He largely served as their Washington correspondent. After leaving the *Tribune*, he wrote five non-fiction books about wildland fire that are considered a staple of fire literature. In June of 2021, John N. published a revered and revealing backstory of his father's novella. That award winning chronicle of the Maclean family is called *Home Waters*. He is the son of Norman Maclean, author of *A River Runs through It*. As an avid fly fisherman, John N. wrote the extensive introduction for the just-released Ernest Hemmingway's centennial edition of *Big Two-Hearted River*.

A new friendship was forged as we invited WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited to join us in sponsoring and promoting the event. It's hoped that this is the beginning of a long friendship between our two organizations. (See photos page 12)



Welcome, new volunteers!!

By Judy Matson

Welcome, new BMHCM committee members and volunteers! We have been energized by the interest of two new committee members this year. Committee members Cheryl Hughes and Kali Zaglauer share their expertise in programming and interpretation. Volunteers Joyce Morgan and Chico, everybody's favorite pup, and Ginny Woods staffed the Center during public hours on Wednesdays throughout the year and Monday mornings during the summer.

Cheryl Hughes is a retired 9-12 grade English teacher from Missoula, Montana where she created a niche for her students in the world of place-based education. She also explored the world of Native American literature and then taught in an interdisciplinary freshman transition team where she was allowed to take students to explore the places and people that the authors of their assigned literature wrote about throughout Montana. In 2016 she retired and began doing consulting work for educational programs with the National Museum of Forest Service History, the Montana Conservation Elders and now the Warrior Spirit Project. She served as a Master Teacher for NEH Landmarks workshops "Richest Hills" (2011, 2013, 2014) with the Montana Historical Society and in 2015 received an award from Western Literature Association for her teaching in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. Cheryl's experience has enabled engaging programs and grant opportunities.

Kali Zaglauer grew up a self-described Army brat moving from state to state and fell in love with the Missoula area after graduating from the University of Montana with a degree in

History, a minor in Political Science, and a certificate in Public History. She interned for the State Historic Preservation Office and is associate producer of the PBS documentary "Hidden Stories: Montana's Black Past." After hearing stories from her father about working briefly in the mill and taking countless walks at Milltown State Park, Bonner became a special place to conduct local public history. Besides being a student at Grand Canyon University pursuing an MA in History, Kali works as an interpretive historic tour guide for Missoula's downtown area. Kali's expertise in interpretive design will be a welcome upgrade to our exhibits!

Joyce Morgan is a third generation Montana girl who was born in Deer Lodge and raised at fish hatcheries in Central Montana. She moved to Missoula in 1980 and worked at different businesses doing mainly office work. One of her passions has always been doing volunteer work in her community. "If people don't volunteer and contribute, we will lose our community," she observes. Joyce and her canine companion Chico volunteer Wednesday mornings and have enjoyed meeting all the visitors. Joyce has also volunteered at our programs. Stop in and say hi on Wednesday mornings. *It is with sadness we note the passing of 13-year-old Chico, As Joyce said, "She loved everyone." Condolences to Joyce.*

Ginny Woods hosted visitors on Monday mornings during the summer. Ginny's traveling so her bio is unavailable at this time. Watch for it in a future edition.



Cheryl



Joyce and Chico



Kali

Volunteer Opportunity

Looking for a rewarding volunteer experience?

Be a host during public hours at the History Center: 2 hours mornings or afternoons.

Times available: Morning: 10-noon on Tuesdays. Afternoon: Hours TBD Monday through Friday

If you're interested, please contact us at bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com

Tuesdays = coffee and conversation

By Andy Lukes

It's an offer you can't refuse! Whoever walks through the door at Bonner History Center's Tuesday morning coffee from 9 - 12 is welcomed as an honored guest. The coffee group will do its best to answer any questions or information requests that the guests may have as well as welcoming their stories of the Bonner area. The coffee group is part of the living history of the Bonner area and always willing to share. During the past year 6 - 12 people will stop by ten minutes or 3 hours depending on their schedules. We still offer the best cup of free coffee, tea and hot chocolate in Bonner.



Old Roads and Rabbit Holes

By Tony Liane

Our History Center group has continued to meet at the History Center at 10:00 to noon on Fridays. You may have noticed that we have changed our name from Old Roads and Trails to Old Roads and Rabbit Holes. This doesn't mean that we don't research and discuss old trails anymore, just that our weekly discussions have led us down many rabbit holes of interest to some or all of our group. We have added new members to our group and usually have 8 - 10 people in attendance. Some have started referring to us as Roadies.

During the past year we have continued to research and discuss the Blackfoot, Milwaukee, and Northern Pacific railroads and have poured over maps that have been found. We continue to look for evidence of the Road to the Buffalo that generations of Native Americans and Meriwether Lewis followed to cross the Continental Divide. We continue to discuss old logging in the Blackfoot Valley and have had interesting and informative discussions on mining in Western Montana. We spent some time talking about when and how Montana counties were created and how they changed over time. We have taken group or individual field trips on portions of the Mullan Road, up Cowboy Gulch, and on Marco Flats to look for evidence of the old Native American trails and old county roads and bridges. We took a daylong trip up Bear Creek to the sites of Secret Gulch, Bear Town and Reynolds City, Yreka and Coloma in Elk Creek. We took great interest in the rock work done by Chinese miners in Deep Creek and spent a few quiet minutes at the Reynolds City Cemetery.

We plan to continue our research and discussion on all of these topics and any other Rabbit Holes that we find ourselves going down. Our group continues to welcome new members who have interest in or information to add to the history that surrounds us.



Outside exhibit invites exploration

By Judy Matson

The small 26'x26' plot behind the History Center offers big opportunities for exploring the past. Thanks to the essential help of Dennis Sain and his Kubota, the plot is leveled and ringed with several large boulders. (see photo below)

During the winter, spring and summer of 2024 a design committee will envision the space in preparation for fall planting. Linda Briggeman and Judy Matson are currently on the design committee assisted by BMHCM committee members Cheryl Hughes, Kali Zaglauer, and Dennis Sain who will consult on fundraising, interpretation, and railroad history. Collaboration with the Montana Natural History Center, Missoula County, and experienced native prairie gardeners add to available resources.

How will this blank canvas be developed? By incorporating native plants that flourished before white settlement, boulders revealing ancient geological stories, and the brief but colorful history of the Big Blackfoot Railroad, this plot can serve as a sampler to the varied facets of history all within view of this place we're privileged to call home.

In the spring we plan to bid farewell to persistent weeds including small-flowered crane's-bill, salsify, dandelion, knapweed and black medic by covering the plot with black plastic to create hot, dry conditions that will overcome the plants while the design takes shape. And finally, in fall 2024 we'll host a planting party.



Volunteer opportunity

Want to help with the design or volunteer your specific expertise for the new exhibit?

Contact Judy and Linda at bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com.



Dennis Sain prepares the exhibit site.

If these walls could talk - a look at historic buildings

By Kim Briggeman

About a dozen people, most from two Missoula preservation groups, joined us on Sept. 23 for a tour of four historic buildings in Bonner, Milltown and West Riverside. That led to a smaller group tour in October that included executive director Jenny Buddenberg and board member Jim McDonald of Preserve Montana, along with Steve Nelson, partner in Bonner Property Development, and Judy Matson and Kim Briggeman from the History Center.

Buddenberg and McDonald voiced enthusiasm and support for the restorations of both the former 1885 Northern Pacific railroad depot that sits on private land in Milltown, as well as the former 1905 Catholic Church on school grounds near St. Ann Church. Other stops on the tours were the 1920 Milltown Library (now Grizzly Insulation) and the 1907 Finn Hall in West Riverside (Chinook Enterprises, a pet food warehouse).

While each of the buildings has a fascinating backstory, all four share similarities. Built more than a century ago for community use, they reverberated with voices of the various foreign tongues that helped build Bonner. Each has been moved from its original location at least once, but all remain standing as privately or school-owned properties. All four have been preserved as storage facilities.

Late in the year, encouraged by Preserve Montana and supported by Bonner School and the History Center, a movement was launched by parishioners at St. Ann Catholic Church to reobtain and move what remains of its original church (roughly half) to current parish property. Hopes are to use grant funding, donations and volunteer labor over the next several years to

Missoula hosts the Mullan Road Conference

By Kim Briggeman

The annual Mullan Road Conference returned to Missoula in 2023, and members of the Bonner Milltown History Center played key roles in its planning and execution. Kim Briggeman, Cheryl Hughes, Anna and Dennis Sain and Judy Matson were all part of a small committee for the event which ran Friday through Sunday, June 9-11.

Briggeman led one of the pre-conference hikes on Friday on a portion of Three-Mile Grade east of Turah, built by John Mullan's forces in the winter and spring of 1862. There was a full slate of presentations on Saturday at Heritage Hall on the Fort Missoula campus, with speakers from near and far examining topics such as the Salish-Kalispel perspective on the Mullan Road; John Creighton, the head wagonmaster of the road-building expedition, and Mullan's "Big Side-Cut" camp on private ground west of Alberton. Our banquet speaker was Greg Dumontier, an entrepreneur and devoted historian from the Flathead Reservation who kept the crowd mesmerized with a talk called "Building

restore the building to its original size and to create some sort of chapel/museum.

The building, which was designed by A.J. Gibson, Missoula's foremost architect of the late 19th and early 20th century, has served Bonner School as desk and chair storage space since the early 1980s.

This iconic photo of the 1905 St. Ann Church located between Bonner School and Our Savior's Lutheran Church is from the Jack L. Demmons Historic Photo Collection.



Roads to Serve a Broader Purpose... Connections Without Conflict in Salish Country."

The next day Greg and his wife, Myrna Dumontier, met the group at Council Grove State Park on a bus trip along the Mullan Road west and east of Missoula. Myrna talked about her deep family connections that predated white settlement in the area, and the two performed a haunting rendition of the Salish Honor Song. The Sunday bus trip went from Heritage Hall to Interstate 90 and as far west of town as the Triple Bridges area beyond Cyr, then returned to Missoula via the closest route possible of the original road. We turned around at the Mullan Monument in West Riverside.

Next year's Mullan Road Conference is tentatively slated for early June in the Spokane area. The original Mullan Road was the first to traverse the Rocky Mountains in the Northwest, stretching from Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton.




A few of our favorite things

By BMHCM Committee Members

It's true. Stepping into the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum (BMHCM) is a bit like entering a Cyrus O'Leary's restaurant sans the tantalizing smell of burgers and fries. The similarity lies in seeing engaging artifacts displayed seemingly without plan, but charming nevertheless.

We have to admit that BMHCM volunteers feel the same! With that in mind, we're starting a "My Favorite Artifact" project where each of us, in 100 words or less (sometimes more), describes a favorite item in the museum. It's harder to do than you'd think! A few are featured in the newsletter and more will be appearing in future Facebook posts.

We invite you, next time you stop by, to join the fun and let us know what your favorite exhibit is! 

A Grass Roots Tribute

As a new member of the Bonner History Center crew, I have a limited familiarity with many of the treasures held in the four museum walls. In my opinion, the most important asset is the collection of incredible humans who show up to celebrate the history of timber and the communities who carved out a living there at the Confluence.

Another item I have found that is vital is the publication *A Grass Roots Tribute: The Story of Bonner, Montana* written originally by the Bicentennial Committee of Bonner School in 1976. *A Grass Roots Tribute* is in its third printing as of December, 2008.

This compilation will give newcomers all the information they might need to figure out the grander picture for a mere \$20 bill. The contents, including historical photos, maps and figures will explain the geological story, early Indian use of the area, and even Lewis and Clark's walk through the neighborhood.

As well, it outlines the development of the trade area, the early lumber activity - i.e. Bonner Mill. You'll learn of the community of the school, the PTA, the churches and the lumber companies of Milltown and Bonner. The jottings of Milltown will explain the Western Lumber Company, the Milltown Dam, and the Finnish, French and Swedish communities. You'll take a ride on the Bonner Milltown Streetcar and learn about the activities of the area.

Overall information includes Piltzville, the lower Blackfoot, West Riverside, Pine Grove and Marshall Grade. The clubs, the community traditions, the sporting activities and life in this little valley fill the pages of this important publication. It belongs on your bookshelf if it is not already there. See one of the Bonner History Center Committee members to get your copy. It would make a great Christmas gift.

-Cheryl Hughes



True-to-life dioramas

Employing his many skills as a model railroader and model builder, Dennis Sain has created four dioramas depicting scenes of past logging equipment at work in the woods.

The first is a 3T-D7 Cat skidding logs with a fantail+ a Hyster high speed winch working button button chokers.

The second is a rubber tired loader with a working Coeur d'Alene grappel loading right-of-way.

Third is a representation of Art Koch posing with his last truck (#45) after selling his logging truck fleet to AFP and retiring.

The fourth portrays the Shay #5 locomotive hauling a log train

-Dennis Sain.

Next time you stop by the History Center, take a close look at these award-winning dioramas. Not only is the equipment to scale and accurate, Dennis has enhanced the scenery. Look for garnets in the rock piles and a bull elk in the background!

See another favorite on page 7



Take Cheryl's suggestion and pick up a copy of *Grass Roots Tribute* for yourself and/or others. Copies are available at the Bonner School, the River City Grill and the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum. \$20. If writing a check, please make it payable to Bonner School.

History walks popular with all ages



First grade history walk, May 2023

Bonner School first graders made their annual walk to the History Center. At the school Linda Briggeman demonstrated how to shoot marbles. Along the way Andy Lukes demonstrated loggers' tools. Students got laundry experience using a scrub board with Ginny Woods and Rick Swanson followed by doing laundry with a "modern" wringer washer with Fred Beyer and Glenn Smith and using clothes pins to hang the clothes up to dry on a clothes line.



Looking for the Road to the Buffalo

Acclaimed author John Maclean joined us in October for one of our hikes on the Blackfoot Road to the Buffalo, across the river from the Bonner mill site. Old Cowboy Trail is thought to be near the route of an ancient Indian trail, the one Meriwether Lewis and party followed on July 4, 1806, on their way to Great Falls.

(Kim Briggeman and Judy Matson photos)



Bandmann Walk

We walked to and on both 1883 trestle grades, west and east, and stopped at the far end near where the Bandmann Ranch house once stood. It burned down in February, 1911, taking most of Daniel Bandmann's valuables with it.

(Gary Little photo)



Marshall Grade and Mullan Road

More than 20 people took part in a BMHCM history hike in November to the top of Marshall Grade and across Marshall Creek. Besides the spectacular vistas the walk afforded, it followed a rare and historic stretch where the original Mullan Road of 1859-1862 and the Lewis and Clark Trail of 1804-1806 coincided.

(Cheryl Hughes photos)

A glimpse into the past: Kenneth Ross

By Kim Briggeman

One of the more intriguing artifacts in the History Center collection is a sturdy cardboard "transfer case," the size and thickness of a large atlas. On its spine is written "K. Ross" and "1918." Inside are dozens, maybe hundreds, of Kenneth Ross's personal and business documents from 1917-1919. As general manager of the Anaconda Co. mill for most of the first 25 years of the 20th century, Ross was the face and conscience of Bonner, even though he lived on Gerald Avenue in Missoula.

Several years ago Mike Heisey found the case in one of the Bonner houses he was fixing up and turned it over to the History Center. A too-brief sampling of its contents:

* Three typewritten letters, one of April 13, 1918, to Ross from White E. Gibson, special assistant attorney general from the Department of Justice, warning Ross of IWW, or Wobbly, activity in Montana. White enclosed a copy of a letter of Aug. 8, 1917, from union activist James Rowan in Spokane to fellow agitator Arthur Smith in Missoula, and Smith's report to Rowan dated the next day.

Smith's letter concludes, "I also got a meeting to-gether here (in Missoula), and they voted to buy a gathing (sic) gun, you can't get a second hand one here. AND I won't send any one to Milltown or go myself with out protection. And damn if I can buy one on \$18.00 per week and move room every night."

* A typed letter dated Jan. 5, 1918, war time, from Ross to C.F. (Con) Kelley in New York, president of the Anaconda Copper Mining Co., reporting on the status of the eight-hour work day at lumber mills in the Northwest. Millworkers in most of Montana as well as in Eastern Oregon and Bend had voted to stay with the 10-hour day. The mills in the Idaho Panhandle and Eastern Washington adhered to the "8-hour movement." At Bonner, Ross and his lieutenants posted notice in camps and at the mill that men working on an hourly basis would get a 5-cent per hour raise; those working on a monthly basis got \$10 a month more. "We made no mention whatever of any change in the work day and expect to have no opposition to operating nine hours," Ross said.

* A stack of telegrams and handwritten notes addressed to Ross after his wife's unexpected death in May 1919. Mary O'Keefe Ross, 52, died from complications after minor surgery in Spokane. She was reportedly one of the first three white children to be born in Montana Territory, the daughter of Baron and Mrs. James O'Keefe.

Condolences came from the likes of Con Kelly and John D. Ryan in New York; A.B. Hammond in San Francisco; Mrs. John Rankin (Jeannette's mom) in Washington, D.C., and son Wellington Rankin, a prominent attorney and future Attorney General in Helena. One telegram came from Ross himself in Spokane to his 19-year-old son Bruce, 905 Gerald Ave. It was sent at 10:05 p.m. on May 15, the Thursday on which Mary Ross died and said, simply, "Will be on four Friday morning with body."

From our website ...

(www.bonnermilltownhistory.org)



The arrival of Kenneth Ross as mill manager in 1899 perhaps played a pivotal role in the shaping of Bonner's society. An experienced mill manager, Ross was also skilled at human relations and under his 26 year administration, Bonner flourished. He made sure his workers were well treated: the company made no profit on house rentals or at the company store, established in the late 1880s. He provided a public library at the urging of County Librarian, Mrs. Ruth Worden, and agreed to let Charles Hart establish the community or "Victory Gardens" in 1918 that were worked and appreciated by gardeners until the late 1940s when the mill expanded.

Land for the Bonner School as well as two community churches, St. Ann Catholic Church and Our Savior's Lutheran Church were provided by the mill in the early 1900s. Though the structures have changed, those three community pillars still stand side by side today.

Kenneth Ross' successors continued his style through the years and Bonner suffered less from labor unrest than did other ACM properties.

This account is from our website bonnermilltownhistory.org. It contains excerpts from "A Grass Roots Tribute: The Story of Bonner, Montana" and was compiled by Michael Kustudia. Our website was originally a project of the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group, formed in 2003 by EPA and Missoula County for the purpose of capitalizing on opportunities afforded by the cleanup for economic development and community revitalization.

Jack L. Demmons Historic Photo Collection photo

A nightmare in a logging camp: A Hooligan Recollection

By Glenn "Hooligan" Smith



A Sizzling Experience

As the 1940s draws to a close, we see Harry S. Truman as the thirty third President of the United States and most new cars of the early 1950s have evolved from the Box look with buggy style fenders to a square block of slightly melted chocolate. I find myself living in a quaint little A.C.M. company town in Western Montana named after Edward L. Bonner and the huge Bonner Sawmill dominates the majority of this landscape. Rows of immaculate homes landscaped with beautiful decorator trees and green lawns transform this setting into a magical wonderland. This setting was further enhanced by two quaint little churches, a large gray school house, and a well-kept baseball field with a covered spectator stand. For this young Hooligan it was a mind-blowing slice of heaven to say the least.

In the 1950s I found myself living in a Milwaukee Railroad house with actual indoor plumbing. I soon became acquainted with many of the folks who lived here and became fascinated with the stories they told about working in the lumber industry. Many of these great stories would influence my life today, but there were some that rivaled the adventures of "Paul Bunyan" and would perhaps make old "Babe the Blue Ox" blush Pink.

The 1960s sort of snuck up on me and I now find myself working in this huge sawmill and 45 years later, I was called an "Old Timer." My lifelong memories were enhanced with a collection of timber related pictures as well as many great memories and personal experiences. Champion International eventually purchased the Bonner mill and they have asked me to become part of an Editorial Committee for their newsletter *The Tamarack*. Eventually this working adventure would be one of my most enjoyable job related experiences. I was writing articles titled "The Early Days of Bonner" and some of my research was a little racy as well as humorous. I never included the racy stories in the newsletter, but there was one such story I'll share now that I'm retired.

The 1990s were upon us when I received a phone call from a retired fellow employee who lived at Beavertail Hill. His father-in-law was the last engineer for Old #7 and he invited me to his home to share some incredible logging camp stories. As the evening wore on I discovered that each new story was more humorous than the last and just when I thought that I simply could not laugh one more time, he told me about night life in a bunk house car mounted on railroad car wheels.

Sleeping bunks were placed side by side and the occupancy for each bunk was assigned by the logger's working seniority. The bunk located closest to the entrance door was the coldest and that occupant, who held the least seniority, was required to keep the Pot Bellied Stove fired at night. The most senior logger had his bunk in the far and warmest end of the car where he enjoyed a quiet night of undisturbed sleep.

Most winter night nights in the upper Blackfoot Valley would see temperatures drop well below zero and on this particular night, the newest logger with the least seniority was also rather short in physical stature. Shortly before "bed time," he loaded up the Pot Bellied Stove and as soon as the fire was roaring hot, he closed the air drafts on the bottom of the stove.

The "damper" was located at the top of the stove in the second section of stove pipe. In an attempt to close the damper in the chimney, the short logger discovered it was slightly beyond his reach.

Before I continue, and in order for you to appreciate this story - you must understand the design of a Pot Bellied Stove as compared to the anatomy of the short male logger. There was a very precious part of his physical anatomy which normally protruded outward, and the contours of a red hot Pot Bellied stove now set the stage for disaster.

A slight jump was all that was required to reach and close the damper in preparation for a good night's sleep. Now the plot thickens - he managed to jump and close the damper, but became over-balanced when he landed. This action allowed the protruding part of his precious anatomy to contact the super-hot Pot Belly. What happened next was total pandemonium!! But after the pain subsided slightly, an ingenious First Aid procedure was initiated.

A Bull Durham tobacco sack was filled with Vaseline and placed around the logger's charbroiled anatomy. As gray dawn signaled the end of a very long and painful night, the short logger, nicknamed "Stubby," was transported to a Missoula medical facility. Stubby was never seen or heard from again in the Blackfoot Valley logging camps. After hearing this story, I have a totally different perspective about the hearty loggers who worked and lived in a logging camp. Especially the guys like Stubby!!

This recollection gives insight into an experience far removed from modern life. Many thanks to our Bonner Hooligan for recording so many stories of Bonner - the pleasant and not-so-pleasant ones!

Volunteer Opportunity

Put your English skills to work editing Bonner History Roundtable transcriptions! We're employing AI to transcribe rich stories of the past but the transcriptions still need that human touch. Editing a 1 1/2 - 2 hour program takes 10-12 hours. Work from home! Contact Judy at bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com

2023 Roundtables highlight popular subjects

By Minie Smith

The January Roundtable "Celebrating Bonner: Past, Present and Future," offered an in-depth discussion of developments at the mill since Bonner Property Development, LLC acquired the property in 2011. Steve Nelson, one of the three owners along with Mike Boehme and Mike Heisey, recounted the amazing story of improvements to a full house at the Bonner KettleHouse Taproom on January 15. Steve also recognized businesses at the mill and new Bonner homeowners. (see photo below)

The Mullan Monument located across from Town Pump is a familiar sight. In the February 19 program, "The Mullan Monuments: History and Memory," Leif Fredrickson, Director of the UM's Public History Program, discussed of the importance of monuments and the Mullan monuments in particular. When building the military wagon road from Walla Walla, Washington, to Fort Benton, Montana, Lt. John Mullan camped at the confluence of the Big Blackfoot and Clark Fork rivers during the winter of 1861-1862, approximately where the Moose Club is today. A monument was first placed in Bonner in October, 1917 and later moved to Missoula before being returned in October, 1996. In his introduction, Kim Briggeman announced the Mullan Road Conference in Missoula June 9-11 (see article on p. 4).

The final Roundtable, "Gandy Dancers & Ethnicity: The Immigrants who built Montana's Railroads," featured railroad historian Bill Taylor. Using old photos he illustrated that many who worked on the railroads were Italians and Montenegrins and other Europeans. The railroads also brought in crews of Chinese

who mostly returned to China after completing their work. Mormon crews also helped to build the railroad. Bill reminded the audience that all the folks in the room were descended from folks who were themselves immigrants.

The annual St. Ann's Parish Council pasty dinner returned following a pandemic hiatus.

There have been now 37 programs, all filmed by MCAT, Missoula Community Access Television. Ron Scholl has been the video producer and Walter Peckham has been the audio technician. We do thank them. Past Roundtables are on the Center's website www.bonnermilltownhistory.org.



Roundtables transcribed thanks to a Missoula County Rural Impact Grant

By Judy Matson

As BMHCM enters our 15th year, our committee is seeking ways to make our considerable collection of stories available to students, long-time and new residents, or anyone wanting to know about life and work in the timber industry, the pre-history and future of the Bonner area.

Thanks to a Rural Impact Grant awarded by Missoula County, we have made big strides in transcribing the Bonner History Roundtables. Thanks too to transcribers Kellen Beck, Linda and Kim Briggeman, Alyssa Cornell, Sophia Etier, Dylan Huisken, Judy Matson, and Kali Zaglauer.

Transcriptions of these 12 Roundtables will be available on our website by the end of December. Topics include "Plywood Plant" and "Bonner Company Town," "Health and Safety," "Remembering 3038," "Women Working in the Mill," "Local Railroad History," "Memories of Bonner School," "The History of Timberlands," "Bonner Homemakers," "Churches of Bonner," "A.C.M. Logging Camps," "Fire in the Mountains and the BFPA," "Celebrating Bonner: Past, Present and Future."

<https://www.bonnermilltownhistory.org/roundtables>

While we can no longer offer financial payments for your time, we can offer a volunteer opportunity for anyone who has an extra 10-12 hours at home this winter to edit the transcription of a 1 1/2-2 hour program. Initial transcription is done with AI and the editor corrects the misinterpretation and misuse of words (their for there, etc.) and sentence structure. BMHCM will pre-screen the programs to help identify people and place names and do a final check for accuracy before the program is made available on the website.

If editing transcriptions appeals to you, email us at bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com



Stories of Bonner School are now more accessible thanks to transcriptions funded by a Missoula County Rural Impact Grant.

Santa arrives early this year

If there is such a thing as breaking news in an annual newsletter, this is it! On December 15 Glenn (Hooligan) and Sharon Smith delivered the George's Café sign just donated by River City Grill owner Guy Trenary. The name George's Café stirs fond memories in many former and present Bonner residents and students at Bonner School. Thank you, Guy!



Bob Lamley and Ken Peers honored

By Judy Matson

While most BMHCM news is upbeat, there are somber moments as well. This year we lost two long-time supporters: Bob Lamley and Ken Peers.

Bob was a retired forester who graduated from the University of Montana School of Forestry and started working for the Anaconda Company in 1953. He retired from Champion International Corporation in 1992. His title at that time was General Manager of Montana Region Timberlands which included 870,000 acres of timberlands. Through Bob we have received many items, manuals, and maps relating to the management of the timberlands and he has organized or participated in several Roundtables. Bob was available to provide insights into the history of forest management since 1953. We miss his good humor and stories.

Ken was born and raised in the Milltown area. He was very proud of his 12 perfect attendance records from Bonner School and Missoula County High School, class of 1952. Upon graduation from high school, Ken went to work at the Bonner Mill. When the mill was sold in 1972, Ken and his wife Maureen bought Overhead Door Company of Missoula which they ran until they retired in 1999. Ken and Maureen have donated many documents and photos. Ken was a regular at the Bonner History Roundtables, always offering insights gained from his deep roots in the community.

We are grateful to the families of Bob and Ken for suggesting memorials to the BMHCM to honor their memories. The donations are being kept in a special fund until there is a suitable project to honor them.



In addition to the passing of Bob and Ken, we have learned of the deaths of Iva Rose MacKenzie, Tom Johnson and Jard Hirsch, all long-time supporters of BMHCM. If you know of others, please let us know at bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com

Feeling grateful

By Judy Matson

The Museums Association of Montana (MAM) met March 15-17 in Missoula. Kim Briggeman represented BMHCM so it was a surprise when Tate Jones, the MAM vice-president, called and invited me to the dinner and awards ceremony. The MAM conference is a great event and I gratefully accepted the invitation. As anticipated, there was good food, a chance to meet other museum folks, and an engaging keynote talk on the social impact of rural museums by Sabre Moore, Executive Director at Carter County Museum. (No surprise that small museums have a big impact on their communities – BMHCM is no exception!)

What was not anticipated was the announcement of the winner of the inaugural Jack Lepley Museum Person of the Year award – me! This award recognizes the contributions of a board member, staff member, or volunteer whose efforts have elevated the stature of their institution to high levels of excellence. I agree that BMHCM is achieving high levels of excellence in many ways, and the reason is the combination of the creativity and hard work of the committee members, the generosity of Steve Nelson, Mike Boehme and Mike Heisey for providing our home, and support from those in the area and across the country.

So again, thanks to MAM and thanks and congratulations to all who join in the happy task of preserving our timber heritage.



Receiving an award created by stained glass artist Lisa Tate makes it extra special.

In addition to being a nationally known blown and engraved glass artist, Lisa is Executive Director of the National Museum of Forest Service History.

Recent donations enrich our collection

By Minie Smith

Over the last year, several people have generously donated books and Bonner related items to the Center. Kim Briggeman donated the 2009 National Register of Historic Places registration form for the town of Bonner (some 80pp) prepared by Western Cultural Inc. Jon Axline donated a copy of his book, *Montana's Historic Highway Bridges*. It covers the period 1860-1956 and will be a useful resource. Author Timothy Browne donated four copies of his book, *The Book of Andy*, one for the library and three to sell. Trudi Minzer donated three logging books by Ralph W. Andrews: *This was Logging* (1954), *Glory Days of Logging* (1956) and *Timber* (1968). They are all good resources of northwest logging.

Mike Winz gave some numbered brass chips from Anaconda's clock house. He was the attorney for Tom Johnson's estate and recognized the chips as related to the clock that he knew Tom had already donated to the Center. Tom had been the night watchman for years prior to 1979 and as such he had worn the heavy clock around his neck. At each numbered fire station where he had to check for signs of fire, he would insert a key (which was attached to the numbered chip) into the clock. This was all done by flashlight so he could see any sparks.

The Center was given an interesting article (1992) by James Daniels on the Corliss engine which he ran as an operating engineer. James took over Bob Barta's job and ran the engine with Walfred "Ole" Olean.

Bob Bateman, author of *Big Blackfoot Railway*, donated 9 photos of the Bonner Junction station, which hopefully will be useful in preserving the 130 year old station. Minie Smith gave a book of short stories about logging in the northwest. She obtained it in a small museum in Oregon (similar to the Center!) and recommends the excerpt on the peavey (p.22).

Craig Thomas, a forester who had worked among other jobs for Champion Timberlands, donated a book that he wrote, *Regurgitations of a Montana Woodsman*. He shared some of his stories at the memorial gathering for forester Bob Lamley last summer, and had worked for Bob. Another donation was a collection of minutes and related papers that had belonged to Jack Root, one time general manager of the Anaconda mill. These documents related to the Inland Empire Sawmill Club from 1953-1960. The Inland Empire referred to Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Western Montana.

Dennis Sain provided us with materials from the Northern Pacific Railroad Historical Association (NPRHA) Convention held in Missoula in 2020: specifically the Winter 2021 issue of *Mainstreeter* and also in an earlier issue of the magazine (summer 2020) on NP's double tracking by railroad historian Bill Taylor.

Dennis donated a film that had belonged to Don Skillicorn, also known as "Skilly," on the Great Northwest Log Haul in the 1970s.

Dennis also gave the Center an original and 2 copies of an article by Robert Dundas on the Heron Lumber Company, the company that operated on the Flathead Indian Reservation. (28pp) These were made available for the Center by the NPRHA.

Every spring in the end of May, the Center puts on a program for the first grade at the Bonner School. Now we have a record of the event and the collection of thank you letters the 14 children wrote.

Thanks to Joanne Stein, sister of George Petaja, we have his Boy Scout scrapbook. He was an Eagle Scout and later 1928-31 was a Scout leader for Bonner. It includes wonderful b/w photos of events with them as well as a letter "B" that George won. She also included a copy of Bob Bateman's book *Big Blackfoot Railway* gifted to George by Doris (George's wife) in 1980, and a copy of *The Path Beyond the Stars*. Written by George's brother Emil, it is accompanied by a photo of him. He died 17 August 2000.

Joyce Morgan, our Wednesday morning volunteer, has donated two books, a) *The Missoula Story*, an undated Chamber of Commerce publication that mentions Anaconda (p.55) and noted that the Anaconda's teepee burner would come down when the new boiler was installed (p51). The second book was by Missoula author Dorothy Johnson entitled *Montana*.

Connie Sheridan McCabe donated a short promotional booklet that Anaconda had produced. (8pp nd) Jason Vaughn, who works for Bonner Property Development, donated a doorbell from the White House (the former office of the Anaconda Company and its successors) and items from the houses which include a floor grate, a door lock and a coal stand as well as four Anaconda-era magazines with articles relating to the mill. Several items located in the old stone warehouse building where Coaster Cycles now operates were donated by Al Gardepe who works there. These include 3 large (19" x 13") Anaconda Warehouse ledgers each containing an inventory of items in the 1950s: a) auto parts drills b) steel components and c) 5 adaptor heaters. Also from Tony Liane, 2 telephone boxes and surveying equipment (2 chain trailer tapes and a staff compass and staff) donated by the Mt. Dept. of Natural Resources, Southwestern Land Office.

Please note that cataloging these items is a work in progress, so if your donation isn't listed be sure and let us know. We do appreciate all the donations but realize that some of the items donated earlier have not all been itemized. This winter's project!



Volunteer Opportunity

If you are short on time but want to support efforts to preserve our timber heritage, consider giving a tax-deductible donation. You can use the inclosed donation form and envelope or mail your donation to BMHC at PO Box 726, Bonner MT 59823

Good memories of Blackfoot River Legacies 2 center photos top row: Laurie Lane. All others Alan McQuillan



Thank You to our donors and supporters!

Kim and Linda Briggeman; Jon Axline; Timothy Browne; Trudi Minzer; Mike Winz; Tom Johnson; Bob Bateman; Minie Smith; Bob Lamley; Dennis and Anna Sain; Bill Taylor; Jan Taylor; Joanne Stein; Joyce Morgan; Connie Sheridan McCabe; Jason Vaughn; Al Gardepe; Tony Liane; Bonner Property Development: Mike Boehme, Mike Heisey, Steve Nelson; Ken and Maureen Peers; Andy Lukes; Alan McQuillan; Laurie Lane; Chris Lane; Myrna Dumontier; John N. Maclean; Bonner Milltown Community Council; Tuesday Coffee group; Tim O’Leary, Bonner KettleHouse Taproom; Michelle Pearson; Cheryl Hughes; Lisa Bickell; Missoula County; Ginny Woods; Missoula Community Access Television; St. Ann Catholic Church; Friends of Two Rivers; Elaine Nagle; Bev Cheff; Dick Anthony; Rick and Pat Swanson; Fred Beyer; Arlene Adams; Tom Facey; Michael Kustudia; Jess Martin; Gary Matson; Pat and Jim Habeck; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula; Wally Otterson; Richard Black; Tim and Michelle Wackler (Bob Lamley); John and Kandi Boardman (Bob Lamley); Mary Lamley (Bob Lamley); Lamae Stout (Bob Lamley); Les and Sue Iverson; Ray and Jan Anthony; Steve Postma; Steve Schombel; Kim Lemke; Roy Plieness; Jim McDonald; Preserve Historic Montana; Jim Hill; Pat McDonald; Laverne Otto; Bill Demmons; Maurice and Cathi Darrington; Chris Weatherly; Eugene Miller; Tom and Tomi Briggeman; Ilona Hangan; Joan Sipherd; David and Vicki Otto; Russ and Roberta Bemis; Jerry and Mary Ann Buckhouse; Scott Willis; Lee Legreid; Sandra Wilborn; Rick and Judy Gendrow; Guy Trenary; Dean Goodrich; Don Felton; Sheila Long (Charlie Long); Gary Little; Ilona Hangan (Ken Peers); Mike Hangan (Ken Peers); Harold and Jan Wornath (Ken Peers); Richard and Donna Northey (Ken Peers); Garden City Rods and Customs (Ken Peers); S.E. Lindstrom (Ken Peers); Marlene Anderson (Ken Peers); Jerry and Mary Ann Buckhouse (Ken Peers); Robert Dunlop; Our Savior’s Lutheran Church; Montana Natural History Center; Danya Zimmerman; Kali Zaglauer; Leif Fredrickson; Walter Peckham; WestSlope Chapter of Trout Unlimited; Sam and Kathy Milodragovich; Stan and Doreen Olean; Norman Jacobson; Shirley Olson; Ed and Judy Olean; Bill and Jean Walker; Glenn Max and Sharon Smith; Old Roads and Rabbit Holes group; Land Lindbergh. Undoubtedly we have missed someone. If that someone is you, please let us know so we can set the record straight!

BMHCM Planning Committee Members and Volunteers

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|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Kim Briggeman</i> | <i>Robert Dunlop</i> | <i>Cheryl Hughes</i> | <i>Lee Legreid</i> | <i>Tony Liane</i> |
| <i>Andy Lukes</i> | <i>Judy Matson</i> | <i>Joyce Morgan</i> | <i>Anna Sain</i> | <i>Dennis Sain</i> |
| <i>Glenn “Hooligan” Smith</i> | <i>Minie Smith</i> | <i>Rick Swanson</i> | <i>Ginny Woods</i> | <i>Kali Zaglauer</i> |

BMHCM is social!

The Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum has a Facebook page. “Like” us for occasional announcements and photos recalling our historic past.

The Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum is located in the Bonner Post Office Building

Physical address: 9397 Hwy 200 E., Bonner MT 59823 Mailing address: PO Box 726, Bonner MT 59823

Public Hours: Wednesday 10 - Noon

Call (406) 540-4046 and leave a message to arrange for a visit at another time.

Coffee and conversation: Tuesday 9 - Noon; Old Roads and Trails meets Friday 10 - Noon

Email: bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com

Website: <https://bonnermilltownhistory.org>