Could a win-win situation be taking form for eleven endangered buildings at Helena’s Fort Harrison? A Florida-based consortium, Communities for Veterans, plans to rehabilitate the 1890s and 1900s buildings for homeless veterans’ housing. To make the project pencil out, Communities for Veterans has applied for low-income housing tax credits and plans to apply for federal historic preservation tax credits.

Several years ago, sixteen duplex units were slated for possible demolition after the Veterans’ Administration (VA) deemed them too costly to rehabilitate and re-use. Happily, the VA opted first to seek an “enhanced use lease” option for the buildings and Communities for Veterans stepped forward in response to their Request for Proposals.

Should the project be successful, the Fort Harrison buildings will provide veterans with unique and charming apartments in the former Officers’ Quarters duplexes. An 1894 newspaper article described the structures, “… All the workmanship is the best of their [kind] and the same can be said in regard to the construction of the various buildings … The stone used is from Great Falls, Ulm and Billings … the [millwork] finish is hardwood and California redwood, the floors to be laid with quarter sawed [sic] Georgia pine … when the post is finished … [it will] be in all particulars one of the finest and most complete in the country.”

Describing their developing “Freedom’s Path” veterans’ housing projects in Northport, NY; Chillicothe, OH and Augusta, GA, Communities for Veterans spokesperson Craig Taylor-- himself a Vietnam War-era veteran-- expressed his admiration for Montana’s high per capita veteran population, the second highest in the US. He also conveyed Communities for Veterans’ determination to do something significant for the veterans who account for 16.2% of Montana’s total homeless population according to a 2010 HUD/VA report to Congress.

Craig Taylor believes Communities for Veterans’ $5.3 million tax credit proposal to the Montana Board of Housing will stand in good stead as “we are uniquely experienced to do this, we have the guts, competency and commitment; and with more vets returning from tours in Iraq and Afghanistan the system needs to be prepared.”

MPA earnestly hopes that the proposed “Freedom’s Path” project will receive the rehabilitation funding it, and Montana’s at-risk veterans, so richly deserve.

Get more detailed information at www.PreserveMontana.org
Dear Friends,

Many in Congress are looking to scale back good domestic programs and one under fire is the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit. In 30 years, this program has leveraged $90 billion in investment and rehabilitated more than 37,000 historic buildings -- all while more than paying for itself. In Montana alone, preservation tax credits have leveraged over $45 million in rehab investment, over $9 million in federal credits to business owners, and dozens of landmark Montana buildings have been preserved (2011 data). So it's hard to believe this program is in danger in Washington.

While some in Congress are calling for total elimination of the credit, more progressive leaders have introduced the "Creating American Prosperity through Preservation" or CAPP Act, which would greatly enhance the credit's impact on "Main Street" and in low-income areas. You can learn more about this important legislation at www.PreservationNation.org, and contact our Congressional delegates to urge support for the CAPP Act. This program is essential, especially in Montana, to creating jobs and vibrant communities where residents new and existing, young and old want to live, work and visit.

Chere

Western Clay Manufacturing Co. Survey Update

In early February, the University of Pennsylvania's Architectural Conservation Laboratory (ACL) presented findings of their cultural resource survey and assessment of the Western Clay Manufacturing Co. site at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena. Last July, MPA with funds from the JM Kaplan Fund, were thrilled to have ACL members conduct a cutting-edge conditions assessment, including large format phototography, laser scanning, and in-depth analyses of the rare and amazing downdraft beehive kilns.

The comprehensive report includes hand-wrought and digitally produced architectural drawings and 3D models that not only reveal the current condition and integrity of its buildings, but also show the evolution of the site. With this innovative report in hand, MPA and the Bray Foundation hope to bring ACL back to stabilize the beehive kilns and perform in-depth analysis of the tile works building. Stabilizing what remains at the site will allow the Bray to strategize a creative future for this rare surviving piece of American industrial heritage.

Although hundreds of brick and tile works factories once dotted the US, only a fraction survive today, and almost none preserves the buildings and machinery, kiln technology, and overall industrial landscape as does the Western Clay Manufacturing Company.

Join us today! Membership to MPA helps support our efforts to preserve the best of Montana's heritage for the future. Members receive a one-year subscription to our Preserve Montana newsletter, notices of upcoming events, updates on statewide preservation issues, and discount admission to workshops throughout the year.

Pillars of Preservation:
- $2500 Club
- Corinthian $1000
- Ionic $ 500
- Doric $ 250

Basic Membership:
- Barn Hugger $ 100
- Friend $ 75
- Family $ 50
- Individual $ 25

NAME __________________________________________________
ADDRESS ________________________________________________
STATE/ZIP _________________________________________________
E-MAIL _________________________________________________

Please make checks payable to:
Montana Preservation Alliance, 120 Reeder's Alley, Helena, MT 59601

Preserve Montana is published by Montana Preservation Alliance, a 501(c)(3) private nonprofit organization serving the statewide preservation community.
Preservation in Progress

As we “leap” past February and Spring forward into March, there is no shortage of inspiring preservation projects both getting started and coming to a fruitful end.

Deer Lodge Rialto Grand Re-Opening

Over five years after it was severely damaged by fire, the Rialto Community Theater in Deer Lodge will re-open in March or April. This remarkable all-volunteer project has hit the homestretch, with only $150,000 needed to finish the $3.44 million effort. Board president Steve Owens, who has heroically led this effort to restore the building to its original grandeur, says the remaining work includes installing the carpet, seating, elevator, and digital projection system, some painting and wiring, and completing more of the historic finishes. MPA has pledged $1,000 to boost this final fundraising effort, and we challenge all our members and supporters to match our donation. Current photos and more information are available at www.deerlodgerialto.com, and donations can be sent to P.O. Box 874, Deer Lodge, MT 59722.

Another Billings Landmark To Open Again

Excitement is brewing in downtown Billings as rehabilitation of the historic Northern Hotel is back on track after owners Mike and Chris Nelson obtained full financing for the estimated $20 million project. Many breathed a sigh of relief when the Nelsons bought the deteriorating 1942 Modern-style hotel in 2009 and commenced with rehabilitation. However, work stalled as discussions with banks and financiers fell through and some feared the project would not proceed. Finally, in mid-February, the Nelsons and US Bank of Billings announced the multi-million dollar 20-year loan. The Northern has always had a major presence in downtown Billings, providing dozens of jobs, as well as lodging, meeting space, and entertainment to visitors locally and nationally. With its reopening, downtown Billings’ already handsome and vibrant historic district will have one more gem back in its crown. The Nelsons estimate the 160-room hotel, including two new restaurants, will open in Spring 2013.

A Pat on the Back!

MPA’s handsome new book, Hand-Raised: The Barns of Montana was one of four books selected as an Honor Book by the Montana Book Award committee. We are certainly honored and thank the committee for the praise and the press! The award ceremony will take place during the Montana Library Association conference in Big Sky, April 11-14.

Another Great Gift

Give the gift of barns again this year! MPA is delighted to announce the Montana Historical Society will release Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana 2013 Wall Calendar this summer. The calendar features Tom Ferris’ beautiful barn photographs, including several not previously published. So, if you liked the book, buy the calendar as a great companion gift!

New Grant News

Preserve Montana Grants Announced

The Montana History Foundation (MHF) announced 13 recipients of their first-ever Preserve Montana Fund grants. The grants total over $49,000 and include funds for many amazing preservation projects, including restoring three one-room schools, preserving archives at six historical museums, repairing three historic buildings, and enhancing the oral history component of the Bonner Milltown History website.

MHF spent the last three years building funds for this grant program and were excited to have so many outstanding grant applications. Congratulations to all the grant recipients! Watch for more details on these great projects in future issues of Preserve Montana.

Radersberg School, Radersberg
Lower Cracker Box School, Glendive
Hill School, Chester
Friends of the Yellowstone Gateway Museum of Park County, Livingston
Our Montana, Inc., Billings
The Stevensville Historical Museum, Stevensville
Upper Musselshell Historic Society, Harlowton
Blackfeet Community College, Browning
Wisdom Community Building, Wisdom
Fergus County Fairgrounds Barn, Lewistown
World Museum of Mining Chinese buildings, Butte
Beaverhead County Museum log cabin, Dillon
Bonner Milltown History Center website, Milltown
WHAT’S HAPPENING?

Montana Archaeological Society Annual Meeting
April 13-15, Best Western Great Northern Hotel, Helena
Highlights include a Friday Engaging Descendant Communities workshop, Friday night registration, social and auction, presentations on Saturday, Saturday night buffet and keynote presentation by Dr. María Nieves Zedeño, and a Sunday field trip. Visit at www.mtarchaeologicalsociety.org for more information.

Touchstone Saving History Workshops
April 16-17, Roundup; May 2-3, Simms/Sun River
MPA and the Montana History Foundation bring a team of traveling professionals to work on-site with small towns and set them up to preserve the historical materials and structures that document their unique rural community. Contact Patty Dean at patty@preservemontana.org for more information.

39th Annual Montana History Conference
Sept. 20-22, Best Western Great Northern Hotel, Helena
Opportunity for All? Homesteading Next Year Country will explore the many themes of homesteading in Montana to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the 1862 Homestead Act. Contact Kirby Lambert at klambert@mt.gov.

DON’T MISS!

The Path Less Traveled: Montana Preservation Road Show
May 31 to June 2, Dillon & Southwest Montana
Hop on the tour bus and immerse yourself in the heritage of the vast Beaverhead Valley. Ride along with local experts and nationally known speakers as we visit buffalo jumps and ancient rock art sites, ruins of industrial buildings, fully restored homesteads, barns, storefronts and more. More details and registration info at www.PreserveMontana.org/events.html.

Beyond Boundaries,
2012 National Preservation Conference
Oct. 30 to Nov. 3, Spokane, WA
This year’s conference is just a “hop-skip-jump” for Montana residents. Highlights include interactive education sessions, field sessions with hands-on exploration, affinity sessions for networking, and on-your-own activities that teach and connect. Visit www.PreservationNation.org/conference for more details.