Taking Care of Montana!

Welcome Back Governor Bullock & 2017 Legislators!

With the business of Montana’s 64th Legislature now in full swing, there are many issues of interest to those who love Montana and look to see her heritage protected. Even in times of tight budgets, there are ways to support and sustain heritage buildings and places, promote heritage tourism, and plan for the future of Montana’s cherished historic resources.

Our legislators are now doing the heavy work of drafting and carrying bills and MPA will be following legislation in three key areas.

Infrastructure
Thanks to Senator Jim Keane (D), Butte for leading the way in sponsoring two bills that will sustain some of our state’s most important historic properties. HB 14, Governor Bullock’s Jobs in Montana Act includes authorization to issue bonds to fund rehabilitation and expansion of the Montana Historical Society, Helena and Romney Hall at Montana State University, Bozeman. Also, HB 5, the Capital Projects bill includes funding for improvements at numerous historic sites including the Capitol complex, Lewis and Clark Caverns, Ft. Harrison Cemetery, Helena; and Bannack. We hope to see the Montana Heritage Commission and Virginia City added to the bill.

Tourism & Taxation
Each biennium MPA follows bills that affect Montana’s historic State Parks and state-owned heritage places. We’re watching HB 484, sponsored by Virginia Court (D), Billings would increase funds for State Parks and Virginia and Nevada cities. We are also tracking bills that will support increased funding for historic sites through lodging use fees.

Arts, Culture, & Antiquities
HB 9, the Montana Cultural and Aesthetic Trust Fund bill helps a host of cultural organizations do their work. We’re also watching for new bills calling for changes to Montana’s antiquities laws. Stay tuned to PreserveMontana.org for more!

SAVE THE DATE! June 2018, Road Show in the Glacier region!
Dear Friends,

It has been my philosophy for a long time that preserving historic places is a calling both noble and timeless. My work in the realm of preservation has helped me gain insights into how we are part of the never-ending flow of time and beauty, life and people through this world. It seems to me a very deep and existential part of being human, to learn the stories of how we all came to be and try to understand the world we inhabit. In my work, that includes soaking in wisdom across the stillness of time, by listening to the lessons laid down by people who walked this path before us.

People who believe in preservation understand, when they step through a historic doorway into the past or feel ancient stories running deep in the earth, that these places need protection because they are the essence of who we are. The wilderness of our past is alive within each and every one of us. And we all share a responsibility to protect that past as legacy for those who come after us, to the fullest extent that we can.

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR AS MPA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Preservation Progress

Throughout the winter months MPA is busy writing grants and planning for next summer’s projects. We are so grateful to the many funders who make our work possible.

We are delighted to partner with Glacier National Park to lead a summer preservation field school with the Western Center for Historic Preservation’s Vanishing Treasures program. Students and tradespeople will learn masonry, roof, and log repairs while stabilizing the rustic Burton K. Wheeler camp at the head of majestic Lake McDonald. Many thanks to the Glacier National Park Conservancy for their grant support.

MPA is excited to start a new phase on Lewistown’s Broadway building. With grant funding from the MT Department of Commerce’s Community Development Block Grant program and the Big Sky Trust Fund, Mosaic Architecture of Helena and Prairie Wind Architecture of Lewistown were selected to create a “Preliminary Architectural Report” (PAR) for the Broadway. The PAR will include a condition assessment, possible new uses for the building, plans for rehabilitation, and cost estimates. The PAR process will coincide with an economic analysis conducted by CTA Architects and Engineers, Red Lodge and Vancouver, BC to help identify community needs and ensure the local economy can support proposed new uses for the building. A series of community presentations and listening sessions will kick off March 6 in Lewistown.

A $7,200 grant from the Historic Preservation Education Foundation will boost our efforts to restore the Placer School near Winston. The Placer will soon enjoy a new roof, and thanks to master carpenter Kirby Matthew, shop teacher Clint Watson, and students from the Townsend High School, the wood windows and doors will soon be restored.

Thanks to grants from Humanities Montana and the Montana Cultural Trust, MPA will continue our work to document and promote preservation of Montana’s one-room schoolhouses. The grants will allow us to continue the schoolhouse survey, hire an intern to help with research, and create a public presentation on our work in Beaverhead County.
Threatened Properties Update

Central School, Helena  URGENT!
The decision to deny or approve a demolition permit for Helena’s Central School now rests with the Helena City Commission after its preservation commission denied the permit on February 8. The City Commission will hold a public hearing on February 27. Because Central School simply needs seismic upgrades and remodeling, MPA has encouraged the City to deny the permit.

Preservation offers a range of options and demolition can be selective. There is still time to express your support for preserving Central School. Send your comments online today to the Helena City Commission at this link: https://lcchelenamt.seamlessdocs.com/f/17PubCommSchoolDemo. Or mail a letter to 316 N. Park Ave., Helena, MT 59623.

The Guardian of the Gulch, Helena’s Fire Tower
The City of Helena shocked many in the community on February 1 with plans to demolish and rebuild Helena’s iconic Fire Tower. The Fire Tower was damaged in an arson attempt in 2016 and further analysis found more than just the fire damaged timbers. With input from a restoration specialist and structural engineer MPA is advising the City to replace only the deteriorated timbers and to upgrade other structural connections, rather than building a new tower to match the original. Doing so will diminish its historic significance and impact the integrity of the Helena Historic District. As it stands now, the City will apply for a demolition permit from the City’s preservation commission and ask for approval by the Helena City Commission. No date has been set for a hearing. Letters can be mailed to the City.

Missoula Mercantile
After a valiant and sustained effort by preservationists to rescue the Missoula Mercantile, a Missoula District Court Judge upheld the Missoula City Commission decision in favor of demolition. Preserve Historic Missoula and MPA gave it our best, appealing to the developer multiple times to work with the preservation community and come out with an inspiring project that would have saved the Mercantile and allowed for a new hotel.

While a portion of the old pharmacy will be saved, the overall design will destroy Missoula’s most significant historic commercial building and have a negative impact on the integrity of the surrounding historic district. As communities across Montana grapple with conflicts between development and historic buildings, it’s clear that stronger local preservation policies are needed to pave the way for both history and a vibrant economy.

Preservation People

U.S. House Rep. Ryan Zinke awaits confirmation to become the next Secretary of the Interior and U.S. Sen. Steve Daines is now Chair of the National Parks Subcommittee. Zinke has long supported preserving our heritage and we were glad to hear of his concern for funding infrastructure in National Parks, which includes historic buildings, during his confirmation hearings.

A hearty and belated welcome goes to MPA intern Madeline Westrom. Madie is a history major at Carroll College in Helena. She is documenting historic rural schools in Lewis & Clark and Blaine counties.

MPA welcomes archaeologist, Sierra Mandelko to Glacier National Park. As the park’s Cultural Resources Officer, Sierra will be helping MPA plan the 2017 preservation field school at the Wheeler Camp on Lake McDonald as well as tours for the 2018 Road Show. Cathy Bickenheuser was selected to lead the USDA Forest Service Region One Preservation Team. Cathy’s track record with restoring historic resources in our National Forest is impressive, and she is sharing that expertise through her new guidebook to hands-on log cabin restoration.

Sadly, Helena has lost a pillar of history and preservation, Ward A. Shanahan. Ward served on the boards of the MT Historical Society and MT History Foundation. His many contributions to saving Montana history are a legacy for all.
Hats Off!

Two major award ceremonies in late January honored the work of some of MPA’s favorite and most outstanding preservationists.

Montana Historical Society Historic Preservation Awards

- Billings Public Schools, Broadwater & McKinley Schools - Outstanding Historic Preservation Stewardship. Lew Anderson, Billings School District Bond Manager accepted the award and remarked that renovating both schools was cost effective and that the updated historic schools are now the most energy-efficient buildings of all K-8 buildings in the district!

- Arvon Block, Great Falls - Outstanding Historic Rehabilitation. This model project revitalized an anchor downtown building and used creative financing to get the job done.

- The Teslow Preservation Group - Outstanding Historic Preservation Advocacy. This small group of dedicated citizens saved the building from imminent destruction last year. Work to replace the damaged roof began just days after the awards ceremony.

- Kirby Matthew - Outstanding Contribution to Historic Preservation. Kirby’s many years of service repairing rustic buildings in our National Forests is awe inspiring.

Governor’s Humanities Awards

During a beautiful ceremony in the Capitol rotunda, MPA’s very own Chere Jiusto! was honored for her many years of service to Montana through her work to preserve historic buildings and landscapes across the state. Chere was humbled to receive the award alongside four other giants of the Montana humanities world. Outstanding is not a strong enough word to describe the work of these dedicated professionals! Left to right: Governor Steve Bullock; Humanities MT Director, Ken Egan; Chere Jiusto; educator Sheila Stearns; Blackfeet Tribal Preservation Officer John Murray; living history advocate Karen Aspevig Stevenson; educator Hal Stearns; educator Dottie Susag; and Humanities MT Board Chair Tobin Miller Shearer.