

**Minutes**  
**The 66<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the**  
**MONTANA HERITAGE COMMISSION**

August 27, 2008 – St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Virginia City, MT

**MISSION**

Manage, develop and operate Heritage Commission properties by preserving, stabilizing, rehabilitating, interpreting and exhibiting buildings and artifacts; overseeing and encouraging profitable commercial enterprises while creating and maintaining credible relationships with all stakeholders and partners, and protecting these historic resources for the educational benefit and enjoyment of all.

**Commissioners Present:** Mary Oliver, Chair; Bill Howell, Vice Chair; Colin Mathews; Ken Soderberg - proxy for Joe Maurier; Marilyn Ross; Patty Dean; Bill Mercer – proxy for Richard Sims; Barb Charlton – proxy for Andy Poole

**Staff Present:** Paul Reichert, Executive Director; Kelly Casillas, Legal Counsel; Julie Johnson, Site Coordinator; Janna Norby, Curator of Collections; Jeff MacDonald, Lead Preservation Specialist; Jeff Cleverley, Preservation Specialist; Mike Ciani, Preservation Specialist; Don Steeley, Preservation Specialist; Bill Peterson, Curator of Education; Cecile Gevock, Archaeology; Jack Frost, Maintenance; Tenlee Atchison, Program Coordinator

**The board approved the minutes from the June 18, 2008 meeting.**

**Sub Committee Reports to Full Board**

**Preservation and Archaeology**

The University of Oregon found during their stay and research this summer, that the Finney house in Nevada City may have been placed there later than previously thought. A full report will be submitted to MHC upon completion. Kingston Heath, University of Oregon made a short informal presentation to the board. He described how the team was able to peel back the layers of time through the architecture and the clues were found within. Archaeology discovered that the Finney house sits on fill dirt which suggests that it has been moved to this site. Research shows that Finney was not the original owner and did not occupy the residence until 1891. Evidence points to the original cabin being moved on the site and added to over a ten year period. Newspapers found in the roofline and in the false front referenced specific events with dates from circa 1881 and 1912. Frank Finney does not become owner until 1891 which changes some of the oral history handed down. This reinforced the need to do our own research in order to compliment and help verify the oral history.

The committee also discussed current work taking place on the Brewery. The Brewery is a great educational resource in the preservation arts, interpretation and collections departments. Affiliations for leveraging funding are potentially high with this site. Preservation work is ongoing currently on the Kraemer/McGovern/Strasburg buildings. The focus may change to the Hickman house on Idaho Street. Preservation of that home can benefit the site by providing staff housing and will finish the completion of that residential block.

Challenges exist due to the unique set of needs within the site and traditional state government constraints. We continue to creatively strive toward better communication and education with the public so that they may understand the complex and intricate history that the site holds.

**Interpretation/Collections**

MHC was awarded a \$10,000 Save Our History Grant from the History Channel. This grant connects Vermont to Montana through high school research and study.

MHC is currently working on a loan proposal with the Mai Wah Society. The loan would help complete the Mai Wah Chinese displays in Butte with a long term agreement for use of MHC collection items. In

return the Mai Wah Society will help with our own Chinese history research. This agreement may become a model for best practices for future loans with other sites. More research and work needs to be done prior to the agreement becoming final.

### **Maintenance**

Nevada City Depot bathrooms are nearing completion. The water line will go in after the Labor Day holiday. An electric fire pump is needed in addition to the diesel pump for fire security. There may be possible funding from DNRC. Staff shared a new way to fill the tender on Engine # 12 in Nevada City that would eliminate water pressure problems in Virginia City. This committee felt this would be a worthy project to pursue and requested staff continue forward with plans. There are some challenges regarding the maintenance with music machines. The committee would like to get personnel trained and in place before next season.

An Americorps group worked in VC/NC for approximately seven weeks this summer. This group helped repair and catch up on a backlog of routine maintenance needs on facilities throughout both towns. Their enthusiasm and willingness to do just about everything was just what the doctor ordered.

### **Visitor Services**

Julie has moved forward with the birding trail at the fish ponds. She continues to work with Audubon groups and the Ruby Valley Conservation District. MHC is working with the DNRC, Ruby Valley Conservation District, and Fish, Wildlife and Parks on the kid's fish pond recreation site. Julie will be working on a grant for an easier, safer headgate, landscaping, and permanent restroom facilities in the form of vault toilets.

## **Director's Report – Paul Reichert**

### **Americorps in VC**

Thank you Julie for helping secure a group of Americorps for VC this summer. This group of 10 volunteers provided the equivalent of over 2000 hours of labor. What an incredible group of dedicated young adults. They fixed fences, trimmed weeds along the train tracks, painted several buildings, resided the Bonanza Inn, rebuild the Wells Fargo front porch, and generally fixed, repaired and cleaned a huge amount of property for the MHC. My only comment is WOW. A great group of folks and I pray we get some more like them next year.

### **Nevada City Improvements**

Several improvement projects have been completed in Nevada City. Between the Americorps group in June/ July, and our own living history volunteers, a lot of fix up projects have been getting done. New fencing, new gates, replaced porch roofs, and overall site enhancements have occurred. More site fixes are planned; a private contractor will be replacing roofs on about a dozen buildings, and a tree service crew will come later this fall to remove a large amount of deadwood throughout the town site, and new electrical services are being added (underground) to improve operations.

### **Reeder's Alley Works in Progress**

Thank you to Tenlee and Karlee for hosting and supplying our Elderhostel in Reeder's Alley. This report is worth a look: <http://www.reedersalley.com/Includes/08Elderhostel.pdf>

Lt. Governor John Bohlinger spent half the day doing brick repairs. We completed landscaping, rebuilt stairs, fixed brick work, install new fencing, reinked logs, cleaned and organized storage, and painted. This was a huge undertaking but had the help of 20 volunteers for 5 days work, about 600 hours of volunteer time.

*Thank you to Marge Antolik, Don Steeley, Jeff MacDonald, Jeff Cleverley and Mike Ciani for helping us at Reeder's Alley with the volunteers.*

### **New Tenants**

The Alley has four new tenants including the [MT Preservation Alliance](#), a new gift store, massage therapist, and law firm. We are now 100% occupied in the Alley!!

### **Historic Site Plan**

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Meeting was held in July. About 30 people attended the evening event. Many participated and shared their ideas for what they would like to see happen, or what they want the “state” to fix, in and around VC/NC. A more detailed list of projects and programs will be developed from the comments, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> public session will be planned this fall. Paul reported that he wrote a statewide opinion editorial that was printed in Great Falls and Bozeman papers to inform the broader public of this meeting.

### **Land and Legal Issues**

We met with the DNRC Land Board Staff August 13 for a review of the Central City land exchange. No major questions were raised. We were asked to bring this to the next Land Board meeting for preliminary approval. Once approval is given; appraisals and other reviews can be ordered to finalize this plan.

### **Karlee goes to Thailand**

Karlee is baby sitting in Thailand for a month. Her niece is moving from Korea to Thailand for a new military assignment and Karlee is taking care of their 10 month old and 11-year old while they figure out a new country..... rough assignment☺

### **MSU and Museum of the Rockies**

Paul, Amy and Terry Beaubois met with the Director of the Museum to explore the possibility of a partnership between our respective groups. University President Gamble had requested this visit to see if we can find a way to create a new collaboration. The discussion focused on getting our Daems house project funded and the possibility of a Virginia City exhibit or tie ins with the museum’s goal to include more history. A great meeting and we are waiting for some follow up discussions.

### **Special Projects**

Special projects are being submitted to the MT History Foundation in October. The projects include the Gypsy Arcade, a sign program for VC, and seed funds for an MSU project. Other projects are pending further development, and can be submitted later this year.

### **Long Range Funding**

The interim committee on long range funds has been working on a definition for “*capital projects*”, that potentially could have excluded us from receiving future funds. Karlee and I attended committee and staff meetings to clarify the proposal. Both the Legislative staff and AE staff worked with us to resolve our concerns. MHC will still be eligible to receive state funding support for capital improvements within this definition. NOTE: We have since learned that efforts to create a definition have been dropped.

### **DVD Film Project**

Filming for this project has started. Bill Howell helped to facilitate a joint effort with Travel Montana which has agreed to contribute \$10,000 toward the project. Gold West Country has also contributed \$15,000 to the DVD project. The goal is to have a finished product by the end of this year. Some of the content will be used for website and advertising video.

Technology is constrained by state rules. MHC is blocked from using some sites and our own web site is lacking. Connections are embarrassingly inadequate and slow. Madison County is also having problems with the state system in the VC area.

Paul will arrange for an Executive Committee conference call in order to discuss the direction to be taken when negotiating administrative fees with DOC. This will be done prior to the legislative hearing held on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Financials and Action on FY 2009 Budget**

Earned revenue is down this year. Many factors have played a roll. All revenue areas are low for this time of year.

### **Membership report**

To date there are 86 members of the Friends of Virginia City with 73 renewals for a total of \$6600.00

### **MT History Foundation Special Projects**

A list of projects is currently being proposed by staff, and Paul will submit for approval. The Pioneer Fund endowment is held and administered by the Foundation. It has funded a variety of projects in Virginia City. The DVD project is a visual marketing piece that staff and MHF will be able to take to donors and legislators. This project is almost fully funded and will be complete by the end of November. Bill Howell requested the fall meeting be moved to December to allow for viewing of the DVD.

### **Performance Audit**

The auditor working on our agency has changed. Mike Winegard retired shortly after our last meeting. Paul is trying to give enough information so that the new person can accurately decipher all the challenges.

## **Public Comment & Local Government Presentations**

### **VC/NC trail update**

A draft of the license agreement has been written. Legal descriptions are the only change/addition needed to complete the agreement.

### **Shoshone Interpretive Center**

A letter was written in support of the Shoshone people gaining national park site status for an interpretive center about Sacajawea in Salmon, ID. This was joint letter by Madison County, MHC and the Town of Virginia City. MHC will be mentioned in all advertising by the National Park System.

**The board voted to be included in the letter of support for the Salmon, ID Center.**

## **Governance and Internal Structure**

✓ Proposed Land Sales -- A real estate committee will be reinstated to reevaluate, update and resubmit to the board which properties should be sold and which properties should be rehabilitated prior to the legislature convening. **Marilyn Ross, Colin Mathews and Mary Oliver will serve on that committee. Jeff MacDonald will be the staff liaison.**

✓ Legislation and authorizing statute discussion – Paul has submitted 3 different requests through DOC to the legislature; 1) an addition long range funding request, 2) new state funding for existing operations, 3) statute modifications. Currently MHC receives no general fund and static bed tax revenues but is still mandated to execute wage and insurance increases as dictated by state policy.

Several models exist for stand alone state agencies. Modifying statute in order to operate similar to the Arts Council or the Montana Historical Society would be ideal and allow for some flexibility. Comparisons and other models will be presented to the executive committee prior to the next board meeting.

✓ Update on Land Issues – The timeline for the completion of the land exchange with Central City has been pushed into early winter.

✓ MHC Board members and terms, review – MHC will have 7 new board members at the beginning of next year's season. Colin Mathews and Patty Dean will be the nominating committee for officers next year to be voted on at the December meeting.

**The next meeting will be a conference call meeting November 13 to discuss legislative strategy. 8:00-10:00am**

**The next regular board meeting will be December 4<sup>th</sup> in Helena.**