

Hurry back!



Timberjack

Help mark the 70th anniversary of the world premiere of the Republic Pictures motion picture in Missoula including filming sites in Bonner, McNamara Landing and Belmont Creek in early September 1954 and at the parade and premieres in Missoula on Feb. 4, 1955. See story pg. 5

Bonner Milltown History Center & Museum

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

2025 Roundtables explore new elements of Bonner history

BMHC's Sunday history roundtables for 2025 are in the works. One change to note -- *We will be starting all three an hour earlier than in past years, so from 1-3 p.m.* Here's the lineup:

Jan. 19: "Timberjack at 70." Help mark the 70th anniversary of the world premiere in Missoula of the Republic Pictures motion picture. A full 90-minute showing at the Bonner School gym will be complemented by displays of Bonner's history created by Bonner School sixth graders.

Feb. 16: "Unlikely Suspects, Bucking Beasts, and Other Unexpected Clark Fork Stories." Missoula anthropologist Sally Thompson will share tales from Hellgate Canyon and beyond at the KettleHouse taproom. Thompson's two recent books, *Disturbing the Sleeping Buffalo: 23 Stories That Awaken Montana's Past*, and *Black Robes Enter Coyote's World: Chief Charlo and Father De Smet in the Rocky Mountains* have been met with rave reviews from Montana history scholars and aficionados.

March 16: A panel of principals in the **removal of the Milltown Dam** will recall the 3 Rs of the Milltown Superfund cleanup: Remediation, Restoration, and Redevelopment and detail the why, how, and effects of the project at St. Ann Catholic Church followed by the annual pasty dinner.

Interpretive planning

By Parker Mickel

After living in our corner of the Post Office building for fifteen years, the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum (BMHCM) is full of hundreds of fascinating pieces of history. Artifacts, books, photographs, and more fill our walls, and at this point, it has become difficult to know how to make it all accessible to the public. In comes the purpose of the Preserving Missoula County's History grant, which has provided the funding needed for the History Center to afford an interpretive planning project.

Starting in November, the History Center has been working with Lisa Bickell, of Field to Frame, on our interpretive planning. This process will allow us to identify the History Center's stories and how to best tell them. A CORE planning group has been, and will continue to, meet with Lisa Bickell to develop a plan. Look out for communications in the spring, when we will invite

interested individuals, professionals, and businesspeople to review a draft plan. After hearing the thoughts of attendees, the History Center will complete the interpretive plan in late 2025, to serve as the blueprint for future exhibits, events, and outreach.



Year in review....

The following pages are dedicated to some of our favorite memories. We hope you were able to enjoy them along with us.

Community history tidbits

By Parker Mickel

In 2022, the History Center began delivering tidbits of local history during community council meetings. These short bites of history have covered a range of topics including, but not limited to, the 2011 sale of the mill property, the streetcar, World War I, and Bonner School Superintendent Will Akin. These tidbits will soon become available on the History Center's website, so that more folks can enjoy a flash of history.



Roundtables explore our history

By Minie Smith

Roundtables continue to be a key feature of the BMHCM's year and year 15 was no exception. The three Sunday afternoon events provided an excellent opportunity to explore details of the history of Bonner and surroundings. If you happened to miss one, you can find them on our website <https://bonnertownhistory.org/roundtables> and on Missoula Community Access TV's website <https://mcat.org/>

To review 2024's Roundtables: "Bonner History Reflected in the Historical Museum Collection," "Freeing the Blackfoot: Removal of the Bonner Dam and the Cleanup of the River," and "A Confluence of Cultures in the Bonner Area," please see related story, page 13.



Kali, Judy and Gary learned a lot at the MAM "Meeting in the Middle" conference in Lewistown.

Meeting in the middle: MAM Conference in Lewistown

By Kali Zaglauer

This year the Montana Association of Museums held their 56th conference in Lewistown. The conference was entitled "Meeting in the Middle," as Lewistown is the geographic center of Montana. Museums from across the state, big and small, came together to attend meaningful workshops and presentations as well as enjoyable conversation.

On March 21st Judy and Gary Matson and I hopped in the car and drove to Lewistown. The BMHCM was incredibly generous to sponsor my first ever conference as a professional historian. After a nice stop at McDonalds and getting settled, we were ready to attend the many workshops that were offered. We had a divide and conquer approach, and I selected workshops that could provide opportunities to the BMHC. Some of the programs I chose were FBI Crime team for art and cultural crimes, creating an accessible museum, and fostering unique visitor experiences.

One of the coolest applications was a workshop entirely focused around LEGOs! "Engaging the Public with LEGOs and History," where the state library came to show their experience with implementing history based LEGO challenges, categorized for different ages. Kids and adults can be handed a visual prompt, a primary source, and use LEGOs to create the historic structure in person.

It was time to put these ideas to action. During the annual Bonner School field trip to the museum, I purchased a couple pounds full of LEGOs and provided the kids with a few prompts, and they thoroughly enjoyed this activity as the field trip was winding down. I can definitely see us improving this and implementing it more in the future.

We saw several familiar faces and many more new ones, making new friends at dinner and during workshops. Thank you BMHCM for an incredible experience! (photo of Kali and kids with LEGOs page 4)



Where is this building and what was its original use?

Answer pg. 14

You're Invited!

If you want to learn more about the history of the Bonner area, the Tuesday morning coffee from 9 to 12 at the Bonner History Center next to the post office is worth a visit.

The coffee offers the opportunity to meet your neighbors while enjoying a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate. Come in for ten minutes or stay for the entire 3 hours. Usually 6 to 8 regular senior citizens attend with over 300 years of experience of living and working in the Bonner area. Together with the History Center's large collection of local information and local artifacts, your visit will be enjoyable and time well spent.

Come and enjoy Bonner hospitality!

Can you hear me?

By Gary Matson

One of the popular topics at the MAM conference was how to engage museum audiences of all ages. What gets your attention? A newsletter or postcard in the mail? An email? A text message? A Facebook post? An Instagram post? What about YouTube, TikTok, or Snapchat?



Logos of USPS, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat

Likely you answered "Yes" to any of the above depending on your age.

A big challenge facing museum administrators is how to navigate all of these forms of communication so that our museums are welcoming (and noticed by) visitors of all generations.



There's a new CIG in town!

By Judy Matson

I am now a CIG – is that a good thing? In the museum world, the answer is "yes." "Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG)" is a certification offered by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) to help presenters develop programs that are more "purposeful, enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic."

That's a fancy way of saying we want you to enjoy your museum programs!

In early June six applicants met with instructor Kristjana Eyjolfsson in the T-1 building at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. After 32 hours of instruction

A new intern

By Parker Mickel

An intern has joined the ranks of the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum—me! My name is Parker Mickel and I am a fourth year student at the University of Montana. I will graduate in the spring of 2025 with a bachelor's degree in history, minoring in theater education, and certificates in public history, global leadership, and LGBTQ+ studies. I came to BMHCM in early summer of 2024 and will continue to be involved until my graduation; this internship will fulfill a requirement for my public history certificate.



Parker explains the history of the Margaret Hotel during a Bonner history stroll.

Growing up as an Air Force brat, I lived in states across the country (and even spent a few years outside it); however, with much of my family living in Montana all their lives, I've considered Montana home for many years. Montana only became further endeared to me as I began to learn its history for my degree. As a lifelong lover of history, I was particularly drawn to intern at BMHCM because it presented a unique opportunity to closely consider many parts of Montana's history in a case study fashion: the lumber industry, the Copper Kings, environmental issues, small communities (Bonner, Milltown, West Riverside, and Piltzville) concurrently with large communities (connections to Missoula), and more.

Upon graduating, I will move to Richmond, CA to teach history with Teach For America. Although I will no longer be able to volunteer with BMHCM at that point, I know that Bonner's unique and riveting history will continue to stay at the forefront of my mind.



on the principles and techniques of interpretation, we each delivered a 10-minute presentation – mine on "The Bonner Company Town." It's been many-a-year since I've been a student and giving a graded presentation was definitely out of my comfort zone, but I passed!



Hosting Kristin Vogel's Bonner School first grade class on a history walk is one of the best days of the year! Fun fact - the students who made the very first history walk graduated from Bonner School this year!!



Learning to play marbles with Linda



Kali's right - kids love LEGOS!



Bob Starr's fire engine fascinates the kids



Hooligan demonstrates laundry before automatic washers and dryers!

Native plant garden

By Parker Mickel

If you have parked in the lot behind the History Center and the Post Office, you might have noticed some new mounds of dirt close to the building. If you haven't noticed them yet, you should go check it out! That is the History Center's new garden featuring plants native to Montana.

The garden, still in process, will include informational sign postings and a water feature. Work began in March of

this year after Mike Heisey gave the History Center permission to use the area. As of October, the plants are in the ground and growing, thanks to the help of Dylan Huisken and Bonner School's own sixth grade history classes. The students will come back in the spring to check on the plants and help with weeding.

The garden was made possible through the Rural Impact Grant Program created in 2023 by the Missoula Board of County Commissioners.



Timberjack revival scheduled for January

By Kim Briggeman

Come Feb. 4, 2025, it'll be 70 years since the world premiere of the motion picture *Timberjack* in Missoula. That day and night featured a star-studded parade down Higgins Avenue, searchlights that crisscrossed the snowy sky above the Fox Theater at a corner of West Front and Orange, and a second premiere at the Roxy on South Higgins a few hours later.

For hundreds of those who worked in the timber industry or lived and went to school at Bonner, it was an especially memorable experience that still reverberates today. That's because for a few days the previous September, Hollywood came to Bonner and the Blackfoot. Filming took place first on the Big Blackfoot Railway near the mouth of Belmont Creek 20 miles up the river. A fistfight scene was shot at McNamara Landing, across the river from today's Johnsrud Park. Other scenes brought the stars and production crew of more than 90 people to "downtown" Bonner, which became the Talka Lumber Co. and Vermillion Landing, and where students were released

recalled. "At length we moved off spot and late in the evening arrived at McNamara's Landing, where we tied up for the night. Next morning, Sept. 8, the sun was bright, skies were clear and the day became warm and pleasant. We immediately left for Belmont Creek with a train of logs."

Miller said it looked like a carnival when his train got to Belmont. It was engineered by Dan Ryan who, like the Shay-type Willamette engine he guided, had come out of retirement for the occasion.

To Mike Nelson, a lifelong resident of the area, *Timberjack* was "the biggest thing that ever happened in Bonner." Nelson was in fifth grade at the time. This past September, just a few weeks before he passed away at age 80, Nelson dug out an old snapshot that Olga Karkanen had snapped 70 years earlier. In it a 10-year-old Mike stands next to actor Adolph Menjou, who's smoking a cigar seated cross-legged on the tracks behind Bonner.

Dennis Sain was 14 that September. His parents took him and his brother from their home in the Rattlesnake to McNamara Landing to witness a fight scene that occurs early in the movie. Several locals were chosen to participate. The onlookers were hushed with an "All quiet on the set" from director Joseph Kane. The first take was scrubbed because Kane didn't consider it realistic enough. The second time around, the toughs and actor Sterling Hayden made sure there was more authentic animosity and real blood was drawn. Kane was satisfied.

The Hooligan, Glenn Max Smith, was 12 years old when Hollywood came to town. He calls *Timberjack* "Bonner's greatest Hollywood adventure." One of the early members of the Bonner Milltown History Center after a career working at the mill, Smith had a "cross-mutt dog" that caught the eye of actor Chill Wills. As Smith recalls Wills, probably jokingly, offered to pay him \$10 for the dog. That transaction never came to be. Diana Karkanen Hendrix, whose family also lived in Bonner, heard stories growing up of how Hoagy Carmichael came into the Karkanen house and played tunes on their piano. George and Clara Buckhouse fondly remembered some of the actors dropping into George's Café for a cup of coffee during their down time.

After five days in the area, cast and crew moved on to finish outdoor shooting at Polson Bay on Flathead Lake, in the Hog Heaven area northwest of Elmo, and in Glacier National Park. But the week they spent in Missoula, Bonner and the Blackfoot remains a source of countless stories and memories.

In the winter of 2015, 60 years after *Timberjack*'s premiere in Missoula, the history center hosted a fundraising screening at Bonner School. The gym was packed. We'll try it again on the 70th anniversary at our January 2025 roundtable (Jan. 19) at the school, where the community will once again welcome back *Timberjack*. 🌲



School kids and adults alike watched the filming.

from school to watch.

Walter Miller of Alberton was a conductor for the Milwaukee Road in 1954. He was put in charge of the locomotive that was used in the movie. It was the same engine that was displayed in the Margaret Hotel Park in Bonner for years and today is a featured exhibit at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. Miller recorded the filming of *Timberjack* at Belmont Creek with a home movie camera and wrote about it in the January 1955 issue of the Milwaukee Road Magazine, available online today at <https://milwaukee-road-archives.com/MilwaukeeRoadMagazine/1955January.pdf>.

"We were dispatched by auto to a siding called Bailey where our crew assisted the officials of the Anaconda Lumber Company in making ready an old-time steam Shay engine which had been in storage for seven years," Miller

Bonner students with movie stars



Hoagy Carmichael and Donna Madsen



Sterling Hayden with (l-r) Betty Jo Akerson, Donna Madsen, Janet Thibodeau, Marie Dewit, Geraldine Olson



Our star of the show

The movie and parade



A movie lobby card



Dan Cushman and Vera Ralston in the parade

TIMBERJACK FACTS

The cast: Sterling Hayden as Tim Chipman, Vera Ralston as Lynne Tilton, David Brian as Croft Brunner, Adolphe Menjou as 'Sweetwater' Tilton, Hoagy Carmichael as Jingles, Chill Wills as Steve Riika, Jim Davis as Poole, Howard Petrie as 'Axe-Handle' Ole, Ian MacDonald as Pauquette, Elisha Cook Jr. as Punky, Karl 'Killer' Davis as Red Bush, Wally Cassell as Veazie, and Tex Terry as Charlie.

By 1954, Carmichael was a widely respected composer, collaborating with lyricists on 50 hit records, including "four of the most-recorded American songs of all time," according to Wikipedia: "Stardust," "Georgia on My Mind," "The Nearness of You" and "Heart and Soul." Carmichael and lyricist Johnny Mercer won the Academy Award in 1951 for Best Original Song for the motion picture "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."

While in Montana for Timberjack, Carmichael recalled the year he and his family lived on West Pine Street in Missoula around 1910, when he turned 11.

Timberjack was directed by Joseph Kane, ran 94 minutes, and was made and released by Republic Pictures. The screenplay was on a 1953 novel of the same title by Dan Cushman of Great Falls. It was shot in Trucolor by Jack A Marta, produced by Herbert J. Yates and was scored by Victor Young.

Your donations are important to us

Because BMHCM is here, Timberjack is being celebrated on its 70th anniversary. But will we be here to celebrate its 100th anniversary?

The answer is "YES" with your help!

As you've observed, BMHCM supporters love preserving and experiencing our local history. At this point, no volunteer loves number-crunching to the point that we can maintain a membership data base. The good news is that makes *everyone* a partner in BMHCM! Please join in on our programs and activities - and please join us in financially supporting BMHCM!

It's easy:

1. Drop cash in the donation box at the Center
2. Mail in a check or cash donation in the enclosed envelope
3. Make a donation via our Givebutter account. It's free to

BMCHM to use this service and you can choose whether or not to add the credit card administration fee to your donation. If you don't, Givebutter makes up the difference and we receive the total amount of your donation.



The Timberjack Project....

The project's creation story....

Press release, Regina Holland, The Rural Experience in America Project

Kali Zaglauer and Cheryl Hughes recently participated in the 2024 Rural Experience in America, Community Civics through Historical Inquiry project funded by a grant from the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources program.

Kali was selected from a nationwide applicant pool to learn and work alongside historians to design educational works of public value. Students examined the following questions: What is rural America? How have rural places shaped the history of the nation? Whose stories are told? How has US rural and agricultural history shaped my community?

Kali completed two online courses entitled, "Teaching with Primary Sources Basics Course" sponsored by the Library of Congress and "Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Primary Source Questions" sponsored by the Right Question Institute. Both courses

focused on using primary sources through the Library of Congress collections.

The second phase involved three online courses led by a historian, educational specialist, and master teacher. Participants examined change and development in rural America.

For the third phase of this project, participants traveled to Washington, D.C. with a community partner from their hometown. They worked alongside a public historian to create a public history project, The Timber Industry in Bonner, to be implemented with Bonner School sixth grade teacher Dylan Huiskens and his students. Kali's community partner was Cheryl Hughes from the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum. For their project, Kali and Cheryl each received a stipend to help cover their travel expenses and implement their public history project.



In September Bonner School sixth graders visited The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula on a field trip dedicated to showing them Timberjack and Bonner artifacts as well as introducing them to techniques for properly handling artifacts and preparing exhibits.



Field trip



The project....Timberjack revisited

By Cheryl Hughes

Earlier this fall, the BMHCM Committee gathered and brainstormed as to how best to use the \$750 grant that was awarded to our museum by the National Council for History Education. We invited Dylan Huisken, a 6th grade history teacher at Bonner School, to join in our project with the theme, "Timberjack Revisited." We suggested he would have his students create individual history projects, based not only around "our" featured movie but life itself here in Bonner. We pledged that BMHCM could help support his instructional efforts and use our Rural American project resources and money to put a personalized spin on the "Timberjack Movie Re-Premier."

We used the movie theme as the anchor for the student work and offered grant money to fund the students' day-long visit to the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula in early September. There they saw Bonner artifacts and reviewed what they might choose for their individual projects. They also were tutored in how to make an effective museum display.

We offered to supplant Mr. Huisken's classroom efforts by volunteering time and materials to make those projects a reality. Not only did we offer time in the classroom, but two of our members, Dennis Sain and Glenn Smith, spent several hours in the classroom sharing their related stories and experiences of their time spent in the Bonner area.

The students researched (and even learned to use the Montana History Portal thanks to the generosity of the Montana State Library) to create student projects.

Those projects (projected on trifold posters) were proudly displayed during the parent teacher conferences in the Bonner School library in mid-November.

The final phase of this grant project with Bonner School is to invite the students, their families and the Bonner Milltown community to come celebrate the film's history AND the projects that students built for a **REAL LIVE AUDIENCE**.

That event is scheduled to take place on a Sunday, Roundtable Event Day - January 19, 2025 with a showing of the movie *TimberJack* at 1 p.m. in the Bonner School gym.

Introductory remarks by Kim Briggeman and Dylan Huisken will be presented and student projects from the grant will be on display.

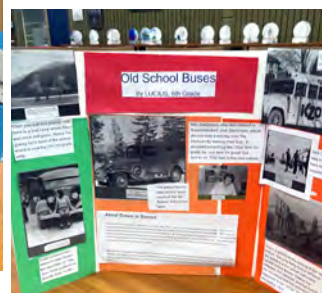
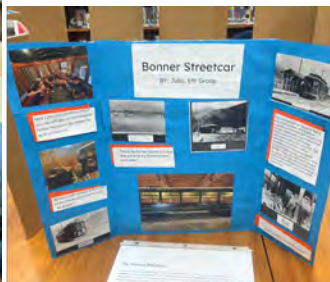
We look forward to working in the future with Bonner School as this Rural Schools Project captured the interest in the BMHCM of the teachers up and down the hallways at our neighborhood school. They are hoping **THEY** can work with us in the future. Mission accomplished!



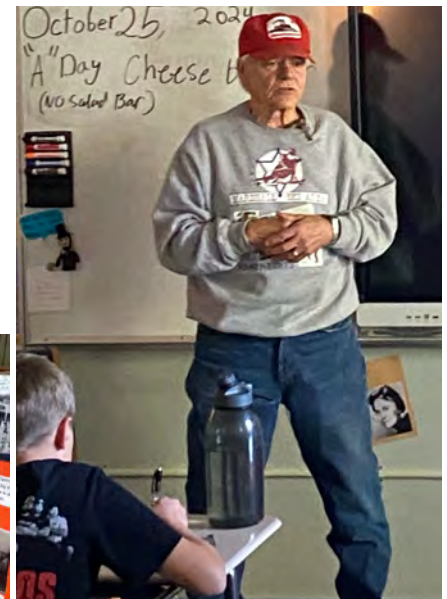
At Bonner School



Hooligan spins yarns for the sixth graders



Examples of posters that will be on display at the January 19 screening of Timberjack. Topics include Finn Hall, the Margaret Hotel, Bonner Streetcar, Old School Busses and many others. The event will be reminiscent of Old Timers' celebrations when the history photos were displayed!



Dennis Sain responds to questions about being a "river pig" and skiing at Marshall Mountain.

Dennis and Hooligan will both be on hand to visit on January 19.

Missing our friends

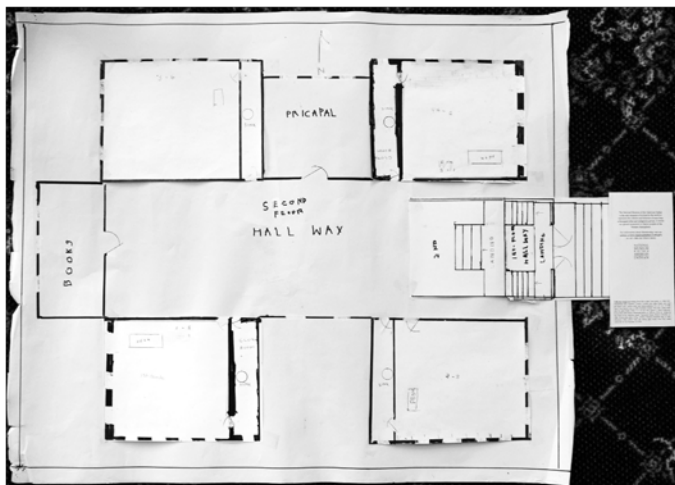
By Minie Smith and Kim Briggeman

Sadly, a few of our long-time supporters are no longer with us. Although there were several who passed, we would like to recognize two special folks who were particularly active.

Willie Bateman

Willie was one of our founding members and a wonderful source of information on old times in the Bonner area, having lived in Turah from the time he was 7 to the time he died at 95! His great interest in Indian relics began in the 4th grade when he was attending Bonner School and found an Indian hammer near the school. From then on, he tried to find out as much as possible about the arrowheads he would find "by reading history and articles on archaeology." (quoting from a BMHCM interview)

Willie was very involved with and contributed a lot of history and several items to the History Center. For example, he brought in a flour scoop that his dad had made for his mother from a tin can and he donated the remains of a homemade lemon squeezer that she had used. Willie donated a scrapbook of articles he had cut out and saved. The best item that Willie contributed was a large map of the old Bonner School. He made the map from memory and told stories about his years there as a boy.



Willie enjoyed knife making and created some beautiful knives. He was a self-taught expert in geology and rock-hounding. A self-taught artist, he loved painting landscapes and made furniture for his family out of fallen trees he found in the forests in and around his area. He was an excellent trapper on the Clark Fork River drainage where he knew every creek in the valley. He also trapped in parts of Idaho. Willie was our go-to for Mullan Road knowledge of the area.

Mike Nelson

Mike was a treasure trove of information for us, especially regarding Milltown and Bonner School. His memory was phenomenal. To quote his obituary: "Mike started his working career as a paperboy in Milltown where he earned a dollar per week. He knew everyone in Milltown by their first name and could recall their address even after many years."

On several occasions he gave driving tours of his hometown to help members of BMHCM put together history tours of Milltown and its old buildings. Mike delivered Missoula Sentinels and, with the help of his dad Tom, heavy Sunday *Missoulians* on bike and on foot during the 1950s. He gave Kim Briggeman one of those detailed tours down memory lane in the spring of 2024, some 65-75 years later.

In 1959, near his Milltown home, a 15-year-old Mike jumped into the Blackfoot River twice to save two younger boys from drowning. He became the first of two Bonner boys to receive a national Carnegie Hero Award for his heroics.

Mike lived here his whole life and had the same Milltown PO Box 4 all that time. He and Linda raised Sara and Matthew in the Bonner School district and retained Mike's childhood home in Milltown, where Matt, now 47 years old, lives with his wife Heather.



Just weeks before he died in September, Mike shared memories and a snapshot related to the shooting of Timberjack. It shows him at age 10 standing next to actor Adolphe Menjou, who is sitting in a chair on the tracks behind the Bonner houses. He contributed a number of other photos that he and his mother, Gerda, collected, including one of the Milwaukee Railroad's covered bridge that spanned the top of Milltown Reservoir in the first half of the 20th century. After the wooden cover was removed it came to be known by locals as the "Duck Bridge." Mike explained recently that was because it was a prime duck hunting perch.



We are indebted to the families of Robert Lamley and Ken Peers, two of our long-time supporters, for memorial gifts to BMHCM commemorating their lives and service. We have established a memorial fund and will save these special donations for a suitable project honoring them.

Summer history strolls offered learning and friendship

By Parker Mickel

This summer, the History Center led weekly history strolls around various parts of the community. Bonner, Milltown, West Riverside, and the confluence were each strolled twice, and in total, 56 individuals participated.

The strolls consisted of a leisurely walk through

whichever area was the subject of the day. BMHC folks recounted the history of various landmarks, supplemented by stories provided by participants. A huge thank you to everyone who attended our history strolls and to those who shared their stories while walking.



Milltown



Bonner School



Tony Liane - Blackfoot River



Milltown Library



West Riverside



Bluff overlook

Following old trails

Kim Briggeman led history hikes, a.k.a history ambles, to destinations including Marshall Grade and Cowboy Trail in search of Meriwether Lewis's 1806 route along the Road to the Buffalo.

We're looking forward to more ambles in 2025. Perhaps Cowboy Trail (it never gets old) but also to Bonner Mountain and new trails on Woody Mountain. Where would you like to explore?



A Cowboy Trail amble



Ready to explore Marshall Grade



Bandmann Flats trail to Tunnel 16 1/2

New outdoor exhibit to highlight Bonner's railroad history

By Kim Briggeman

A Milwaukee Road switch stand from the Big Blackfoot Railway started it all. Once upon a time the stand operated on the near end of the railroad bridge at the upper end of Bonner, switching log trains onto the spur that led into the Anaconda Co. mill. Dennis Sain salvaged it in the years after the railroad was closed. It has stood largely unrecognized and unexplained for many years behind the Bonner Milltown History Center. By next year it'll be the end piece of an exhibit interpreting Bonner's railroad history. The display will occupy a 4-foot strip along the north side of the building, adjacent to the new native plant garden.



Judy and Dennis discuss the new exhibit site.

In late October 2024, word came from Jennifer Elison of the Garnet Preservation Association that our application for a \$5,000 grant was successful. GPA administers funds amassed by the sales of "Explore Montana Ghost Towns" license plates. The money will be used to design and produce two interpretive signs, tapping the expertise of Lisa Bickell of Field to Frame Interpretive Design.

Included in the outdoor exhibit will be two shortened rails manufactured in 1893 for the Great Northern Railroad. They were pulled from the Blackfoot River during the removal of the Bonner mill dam in 2005. Ties from the old mill rail spur will be used to line the exhibit space. Other relics include a railroad mileage marker from Clearwater Junction and a bridge washer from one of two original NP bridges in 1883 at Bandmann Flats. Both are donations from railroad historian and history center friend Bill Taylor of Lolo.

Railroads were part of Bonner's story before there was a Bonner, dating back to Northern Pacific's arrival in 1883. Construction of the Big Blackfoot Railway from Bonner to McNamara Landing began in 1911 and eventually extended beyond Clearwater Junction to Cottonwood. ⚙️



Exhibit site

You CAN teach an old dog new tricks!

(Left) In the spring we took a geology field trip with Bruce Baty to learn about local geology. (Middle) This fall Jennifer Birnel taught us how to use the Montana History Portal. (Right) Some of us have tried donating to BMHCM via QR code, a type of bar code invented in 1994.



(Thank you for donating - we appreciate your support!)

On the road with the Roadies

Field trips lead Roadies to new discoveries

By Tony Liane

The Roadies are still meeting at the Bonner Milltown History Center every Friday from 10 AM until we get tired of talking and digging! One faithful member always brings donuts for all to enjoy with our coffee. Sometimes there is a plan for a particular subject to discuss but most often Roadies bring maps, books or photos, recently discovered, that they think will be of interest to the group. We have a lot of fun crawling down rabbit holes and you would be amazed at the historical information that is dug up!

Each summer and fall we try to take some field trips to historical sites or points of interest to the group. Our first trip this year was to one of the film locations for the 1950s movie "Red Skies Over Montana" sitting high in the mountains above Lolo Hot Springs. Glad we had a good guide!

Our second trip was to Helena to have a private tour of the Montana Historical Society's new museum that is currently under construction and due to formally open the



Delving down a rabbit hole at the history center

Many thanks for new donations by Minie Smith

Josephine Labbe gave the Center a framed Walter Hook print in memory of her relatives, Jim, Don and Ray Labbe. Jim was her husband, Don was Jim's brother and Ray, his half-brother.

Chris Weatherly donated several items, including four hand wrought chain links from the cleanup of the Blackfoot River. (See Roundtables, pg. 13) He also donated two long scaling sticks used by loggers to calculate the amount of timber in a tree or log based on the diameter and length. In addition, he donated a Time-Life Book *The Loggers*. He donated a large notebook by Environcon, focusing on the removal of Milltown Dam. There was a smaller collection of materials about the Bonner Black Bridge.

Related to this, former area Fire Chief Bill Colwell donated a notebook of newsletters from 2007-2010 about the sediment removal effort from the Milltown Reservoir.

fall of 2025. It's going to be a fantastic place for all Montanans and out of state tourists to visit! We then walked over to the State Capitol for another private tour. I had been to the Capitol many times and still learned a lot! It's a beautiful building, full of history, that all Montanans can be proud of!

Our last trip this fall was up the Blackfoot to visit the Ovando History Center. We were met by local volunteers and given a great tour of their museum and they answered lots of questions about local history. We learned a lot about the lady trick rider, Trixi McCormick, and the lady bucking horse rider, Fanny Steel, both famous women in Blackfoot history. We went to see Fanny Steel's ranch, a grove with Ponderosa Pine Indian trees and then on to the Boot Tree! We were happy to be joined that day by four Roadies from Augusta, MT. A good time was had by all on our Roadies outings!

We always welcome visitors and new members who can add to our knowledge of local history or have a new rabbit hole to go down!



In the Governor's Reception Room at the State Capitol

(see 2025 Roundtables, page 1)

Since he and Steve Nelson purchased the mill property in 2011, Mike Boehme kept a scrapbook of news articles and photos of activities relating to the property. Mike donated this historic record to the Center earlier this year.

Bill Taylor, longtime supporter of the Center and railroad historian, donated a bridge washer from the old Northern Pacific rail bridge across Bandmann Flats and an aluminum mileage sign 35 at Clearwater Junction for a planned railroad exhibit. (see story page 11)

Mary Erickson donated a sack from the Amalgamated Sugar Company in Missoula, part of Missoula's sugar beet industry first located where the short lived Great Western Sugar Beet plant had been in 1916.

If we have missed your donation, please be patient with our sometimes slow recording process! We do appreciate all the donations!



PTA seeks to upgrade Bonner School playground to meet the needs of the community

By Annie Bahm

The Bonner PTA is excited to undergo its largest fundraising campaign to date—a much-needed upgrade to the playground at Bonner School. The current playground, which has served our children for over 30 years, is outdated and, more importantly, presents safety concerns. It no longer meets the needs of our students or the community. It's time for a change - one that will benefit not only the students of Bonner School but also the entire Bonner community.

Bonner faces unique challenges, including limited access to modern recreational facilities. The children in this community deserve a place they can walk or bike to—where they can safely play, explore, and grow. The Bonner PTA's vision is to replace the old equipment with modern, ADA-accessible structures designed for children of all abilities. With a target installation date of June 2025, this new playground will not only provide a safe and inclusive space for kids to socialize and stay active, but it will also serve as a central gathering place for all members of the community.

The PTA has worked diligently to design a park that

truly serves the needs of all Bonner residents. Beyond providing a space for outdoor play, this new park will



Rendering of playground

promote a deeper sense of connection and community pride. We believe that an accessible, well-designed park will improve the well-being of children and families and create more opportunities for

social interaction within our small community.

But we can't do it alone. We need your support to bring this vision to life. Please consider contributing to this exciting project and help ensure that Bonner's children and families have a safe, modern, and welcoming space for years to come. Together, we can make a lasting impact on our community!

Please contact Annie Bahm – annie.bahm@gmail.com if you are interested in partnering with the PTA on this project.



2024 Roundtables didn't disappoint

By Minie Smith

Roundtables continue to be a key feature of BMHCM's year and 2024 was no exception.

In January Executive Director Matt Lautzenheiser and Education Director Kristjana Eyjolfsson brought a sampling of Bonner-related historical objects from the collection of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. Along with these objects, they brought lots of stories about other artifacts too large to bring including the Willamette Shay-type engine and the streetcar.

Kristjana brought a man's swimsuit from the 1800s, Don Mackenzie's fishing creel, a gift apparently from Charles Lindbergh, and the 1966 Bonner School graduation program.

Matt's presentation first focused on engine #7 and the movie *Timberjack*. He showed an excerpt from the film that featured the locomotive and gave facts about its origin and local use. He concluded with a presentation about Number 50, the only remaining streetcar that once operated regularly between Bonner and Fort Missoula.

In February BMHCM member Tony Liane told the story of the Bonner Dam and its removal in 2005. Because the Blackfoot was a navigable river and important for recreation and fisheries, DNRC had an interest in the logs and their removal from the river. As Area Manager of the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, Southwestern Land Office,

(DNRC) Tony documented the dam's removal. Although the project ceased in about 2013, logs continue to appear today.

The March Roundtable focused on the nationalities of the original settlers in Bonner and surrounding neighborhoods, mostly folks from France, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The program featured a video interview with Ilona Hangas (Finnish residents). BMHCM members Cheryl Hughes and Kali Zaglauer presented a reenactment of Mary Melcher's interview with Rita Lavoie (French residents).

Long time BMHCM member Rick Swanson discussed growing up in Milltown as a Swede, and then his life long career working at the mill. Cheryl highlighted the contributions to the foods that the Swedes made and her experiences baking in Rick and Pat Swanson's kitchen. Pat Swanson recalled learning to make authentic Swedish recipes from Rick's mother.

Finally, Glenn "Hooligan" Smith spoke about making Norwegian lefse. It could be eaten with butter and sugar, or smoked salmon or meat.

All these delightful items were available to be sampled after the talks were finished. Following the program attendees enjoyed "Better than Butte" pasties, made by the members of St. Ann Church.



Donating to BMHCM with a QR code is quick and easy

1. Open the camera app on your phone
2. Focus on the QR code
3. A yellow oval with the words “givebutter.com” appears under the QR code
4. Touch the oval to open the website
5. Donate to BMHCM!



The mystery building on page 2 is Grizzly Insulation located in Milltown. It was originally the Milltown Library.

Thank You to our donors and supporters!

Kim and Linda Briggeman; Trudi Minzer; Mike Winz; Bob Bateman; Minie Smith; 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; Maureen Peers; Andy Lukes; Alan McQuillan; Bonner Milltown Community Council; Tuesday Coffee group; Tim O’Leary, Bonner KettleHouse Taproom; Michelle Pearson; Cheryl Hughes; Lisa Bickell; Missoula County; Missoula Community Access Television; St. Ann Catholic Church; Friends of Two Rivers; Elaine Nagle; Bev Cheff; Dick Anthony; Rick and Pat Swanson; Fred Beyer; Michael Kustudia; Gary Matson; Pat and Jim Habeck; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula; Wally Otterson; Richard Black; Les and Sue Iverson; Ray and Jan Anthony; Steve Postma; Steve Schombel; Kim Lemke; Roy Plienness; Jim McDonald; Jim Hill; Pat McDonald; Maurice and Cathi Darrington; Chris Weatherly; Eugene Miller; Tom and Tomi Briggeman; Ilona Hangas; 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; Robert Dunlop; Our Savior’s Lutheran Church; Danya Zimmerman; Kali Zaglauer; Leif Fredrickson; Walter Peckham; Sam and Kathy Milodragovich; Mary Bradford; 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; Nancy Braun; Ann Libecap; Bill and Peggy Colwell; Mary Lamley; Anne and Jeff Rupkalvis; Mike Kellogg; Colleen Beers; Chuck and Mary Erickson; Ralph Dufresne; Catherine Schuck; Alan and Karen Wagner; Dusty Deschamps; Bruce and Sue Hall; Brent Shaffer; Mary Ellen Stubb; Kris and Bill Unger; Joe and Barbara Gorsh; Jeff Moore; Virginia and Jack Thibodeau; Chuck Teague; Jo Labbe; Parker Mickel; Bonner School; Dylan Huiskens; Jen Elison; Kristjana Eyjolfsson; Matt Lautzenheiser; Judy Matson; Laura and Steele Campbell; Dylan Moore; Kaaren James; Austin Haney; Steve Bixby; Bruce Mihelish; Steve and Doni Ramos; Sherry White; Eric Hoberg; Scott Kuehn; Garnet Preservation Association. 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

<i>Kim Briggeman</i>	<i>Cheryl Hughes</i>	<i>Lee Legreid</i>	<i>Tony Liane</i>
<i>Andy Lukes</i>	<i>Judy Matson</i>	<i>Gary 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>Kali Zaglauer</i>		

BMHCM is social!

The Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum has a Facebook and an Instagram page.
“Like” and “Follow” us for occasional announcements and photos.

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

Coffee and conversation: Tuesday 9 - Noon;

Old Roads and Rabbit Holes: Friday 10 - Noon

*Email: bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com * Website: <https://bonnermilltownhistory.org>*