



Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission (MHC)



Report to the Montana Legislature
For 2009–2010

MHC

Protecting state historic sites in
Virginia City ~ Nevada City ~ Reeder's Alley

Report to the 2011 Legislature

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Our Mission:

The Montana Heritage Commission preserves and manages historic resources in Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder's Alley and promotes the appreciation of history through quality visitor experiences.

In 2013 Virginia City will celebrate its 150th birthday. Gold was the draw in 1863 that brought pioneers to Alder Gulch and to set a new wagon track for the Bozeman Trail from Casper, WY. to Virginia City. Today, our job is to provide cultural heritage tourism and hands-on learning experiences in the best preserved gold-rush community in Montana.

The Montana Heritage Commission has made investments in our revenue and visitor infrastructure. We have preserved historic buildings and established growing partnerships to broaden our impact. This report shares just a few highlights from the past two years to illustrate some of our successes.

Our Vision:

To be leaders for cultural heritage tourism, and share authentic Montana history with every visitor.

Goals:

1. Improve the visitor experience via improved facilities, programs and public amenities.
2. Increase revenue generating operations and programs.
3. Manage and care for state cultural resources.

This report is required per MCA 22-3-1003 (12)



Photos from left to top right:
Nevada City stage rides, Alder Gulch miner 1871, Gypsy Arcade donor recognition, solar lighting on historic building, Nevada City education forum, volunteers dubbing cabin in Reeder's Alley.

Partnerships

The Montana Heritage Commission (MHC) is a small state agency and partnerships are critical for us to leverage funding and staff resources. Partnerships help us gather expertise and skills to achieve our goals. Some of our partners we have worked with over the past two years include:

- Sacred Order of the Hibernians (Butte/Helena)
- Montana Historical Society
- Montana History Foundation
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Washington State University
- Montana State University - Project Archeology
- University of Delaware
- Ruby Valley Conservation District
- Trout Unlimited
- US Forest Service
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks
- Town of Virginia City
- Madison County
- Montana Conservation Corps
- AmeriCorps (NCCC)
- Montana Preservation Alliance
- Volunteers for the MT Heritage Commission
- Youth Challenge (Dillon)
- Friends of the Cumbres Toltec Railroad
- University of Montana – Western
- Elderhostel (Dillon)
- Virginia City Preservation Alliance
- MT Ghost Town Society
- Rarus Railway
- Virginia City Area Chamber of Commerce
- Mai Wah Society
- Butte Montana Archives

MHC collaborates with these entities and others to share resources, manage state land and cultural resources, offer educational programs, maintain buildings, improve waterways, implement conservation projects, build trails, and leverage funding.

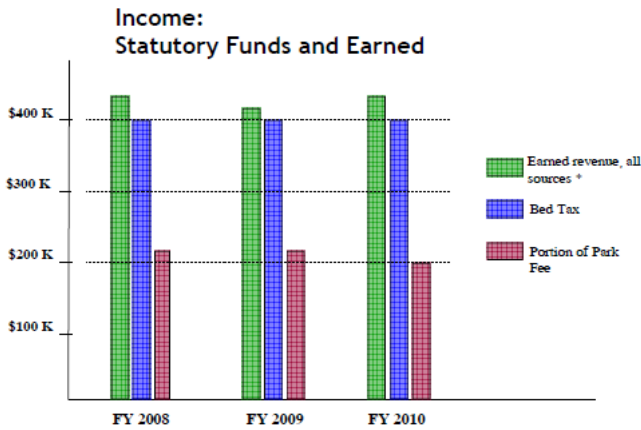
Our own volunteers log over 20,000 hours every year in Virginia and Nevada City. The most visible group is the living history volunteers in Nevada City. This level of volunteer service equates to hundreds of people who give their time for the living history program, archeology field work, guided tours, collections care and management, and restoration work on railroad equipment.

THANK YOU! to all our partners and volunteers who help protect and care for our historic assets in Virginia City, Nevada City, and Reeder's Alley.

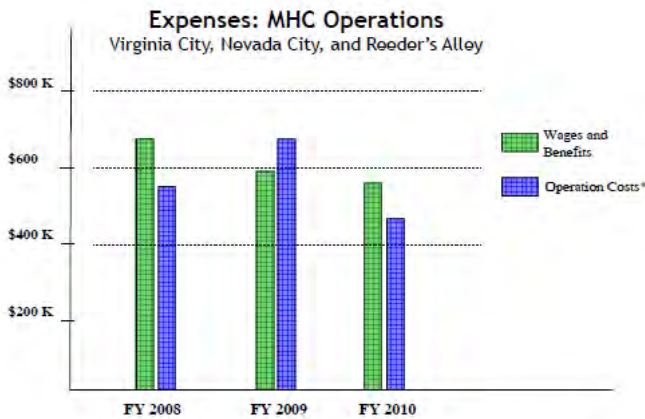


Photos top to bottom:
Friends of the Cumbres Toltec RR sponsor a luncheon for MHC, MSU Project Archeology and teachers, Madison County Emergency Services Dam Inspection, Public History field school filming.

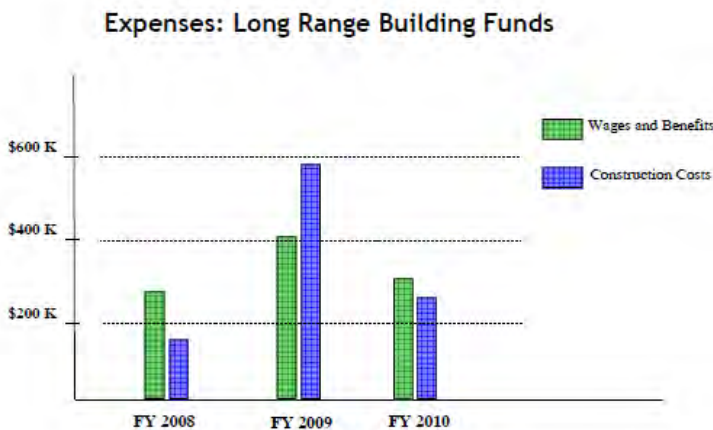
Income and Expenses



* earned revenue includes all MHC properties, leases, gate and train fees, rents, and private donations.



* Costs include all utilities, professional services, repairs and maintenance, insurance, state administrative and other operating costs.



The Montana legislature approved funding to preserve and maintain state historic properties managed by MHC: \$2M in 2007, and \$750,000 in 2009. Wages are for MHC employees only that work on state buildings. Other costs are professional services, contractors, construction materials, and equipment. MHC transitioned from federal grant funds to state long range funds in 2008.

Source: figures are reported from Department of Commerce accounting



Photos from top down:
Reeder's Alley event, box car repairs, copy of 1868 Lemhi-Shoshone treaty signed in Virginia City, visitors, MT Conservation Corp. clean up

Grant Funding

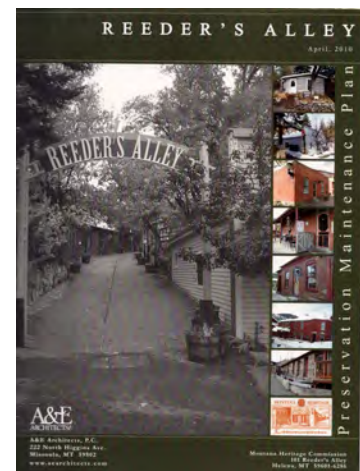
- The Montana History Foundation

The MHF (a private 501-C-3) has provided project support to the Montana Heritage Commission in 2009-2010 for the restoration of historic music machines, a new train sound system for public tours, new educational interpretive panels, and a blacksmith demonstration site in Nevada City. The foundation continues to provide private fundraising support for Virginia City. Grant funds exceeded \$35,000 in 2009-2010.



- Historic Preservation Grant – HB 645 Department of Commerce

MHC was one of 30 applicants awarded a historic preservation grant for the Gilbert Brewery in Virginia City Historic Landmark District. The brewery is a significant historic site and the oldest commercial brewery in Montana, and home to the famous Brewery Follies. The grant will provide foundation stabilization of the two-story stone malting tower next to the theater. The grant award is \$100,000.



- National Trust for Historic Preservation

MHC was one of four grant recipients for the African American Scholarship grants awarded to a unique academic collaboration with Washington State University to research the life of Sarah Bickford. Sarah Bickford was a prominent black woman who owned and managed the Virginia City water system for nearly 40 years. The grant award is \$15,000.

- National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

The Montana Historical Society and the Montana Heritage Commission are working together with grant support from NEH on two educational field tours in 2011. Forty high school teachers from across the US will participate in two, one week programs that include stays in Virginia City, Butte, Helena and Bozeman.



- Montana Department of Natural Resources Reclamation Grant

The Ruby Valley Conservation District in collaboration with MHC and area partners received a planning grant in 2009 (\$50,000) in response to a safety concern with historic earthen dams on Alder Gulch. Together we completed a site assessment and applied for a second reclamation grant to finish the project. This grant proposal ranked in the top five and will go before the 2011 legislature for potential funding. The grant request is for \$300,000.



Photos from top to bottom:
 Donor recognition, Reeder's Alley
 2010 preservation report, volunteer
 railroad repair crew, MSU
 Architecture School students

Steam Train

The 1910 Baldwin steam train carried passengers in 2009, but in 2010 service was suspended due to the cost of conducting a complete boiler inspection. MHC has launched a private fundraising effort with the help of the Montana History Foundation and the Virginia City Area Chamber of Commerce to raise the funds needed to get the train back on track. We need to raise a total of \$150,000 for transportation, boiler inspection and potential repairs. **To date over \$15,000 of private funding has been raised.**



Education and Outreach

MHC offers a diverse range of educational programs and reaches out to Montana schools K-12. School groups from across Montana visit Reeder's Alley and enjoy guided tours in Nevada City from April-September to learn about Montana history and the territorial capital at Virginia City. Recently, we have expanded our work with state and national universities who are using our historic site as a training ground and research "lab" for public history, historic preservation, and archeology programs.



- History Camp – two, one week camps for children that teaches area history and hands-on experiences of pioneer life.
- School groups lead in Reeder's Alley and in Nevada City
- Public outreach to Montana K-12 schools and civic groups
- Project Archaeology - Montana State University
- Public History Field School - Washington State University
- University of Delaware - student project
- Funshops! - MHC sponsored education programs



Photos bottom left to right:
Family visits fur trader post, new interpretive signs, visitors in Nevada City.
Top to bottom:
Steam train and public viewing, University of Delaware students, living history presentation.



Visitor Businesses and Customer Service

Visitors are vital to our business operations and the local economy in Virginia City and Nevada City. The main sources of earned revenues come from the tourist railroad, Nevada City Museum, building leases to over 30 private businesses, two hotels, and retail services. MHC has made investments to improve revenue generating properties, enhance visitor amenities, and encourage longer visitor stays. Visitor services are the primary sources revenue and a key component of the visitor experience.

- Remodeled classroom space at the Rehearsal Hall
- Improved public picnic areas
- Added RV parking for volunteers and education programs
- Upgraded water system and electric services in Nevada City
- Nevada City restrooms (completed in late 2008)
- Tenant upgrades in Reeder’s Alley
- Fairweather Inn Hotel upgrades
- Clean up Nevada City depot for future park area.
- New Gypsy Arcade display
- New educational displays
- Concept plans for new visitor center at Village Pump
- Improved the Nevada City retail store
- Remodeled the Star Bakery bathrooms



Reeder’s Alley

The Alley is a unique mixed-use neighborhood with a combination of small shops, private offices, a restaurant, and non-profit agencies. The alley is a group of 7 historic properties that have survived 1980s urban renewal and hold a special place in the formation of Helena as the state capital. Some of our accomplishments at the alley include;

- Completed a Preservation and Maintenance Plan that is guiding priorities for building preservation efforts.
- Tenant space upgrades
- Community events
- Roof repairs
- Volunteer projects and improvements to the alley
- Cooperation with City of Helena



Photos top to bottom:
 New room at rehearsal hall, new Gypsy Arcade, visitors , new Reeder’s Alley sign, volunteers build stairs at Pioneer Cabin.



Historic Building Preservation and Maintenance

The primary source of funds for preservation work is state long range building funds. Historic buildings have received stabilization and restoration work to keep the history alive and to protect the state's investment at our historic sites. **State owned real estate and collections at MHC are valued at over \$26M for insurance purposes (2010).**

Every year MHC preservation specialists and private contractors work on dozens of large and small projects. With 248 buildings in Virginia and Nevada Cities the maintenance efforts are continuous. Here are just a few recent highlights of preservation efforts.

- Gilbert Brewery, extensive repairs and stabilization of this complex two-story building
- Jack Taylor Cabins', foundation, log and roof repairs
- Greenfront Cabins', foundation and log repairs
- Kraemer / Weston/ McGovern Block, extensive foundation, log and roof repairs to three structures side-by-side.
- Finney House
- Nevada City roof replacements (15 buildings)
- Hickman House
- Numerous maintenance and repairs on state buildings

The MHC Archeologist ensures state cultural resources are documented and recorded with ground disturbing activities on state land. The staff work together on pre-construction assessments, site documentation for potential land sales, and coordinate with local construction that impacts state land.

A complete record of building preservation work and archeology reports is available in annual reports provided to the State Historic Preservation Office. Annual preservation reports are available, please email your request to docmhpc@mt.gov.



Photos from top to bottom:
Jack Taylor cabin new roof and foundation, Greenfront new foundation and repairs, Gilbert brewery temporary bracing, Hibernians volunteer day at Thomas Meagher cabin.



Collections Management

The collections are a vast array of personal property that are in state buildings from antiques and wagons, to artwork and vintage clothing. Collections care is planned before buildings are used or during major construction. Some items are stored at our curatorial center, and many are used as equipment or displays at concessionaire businesses, in visitor service buildings in Virginia City, or in Nevada City for the living history program.

Some of the accomplishments to highlight include:

- New lock system on state buildings to protect collections
- 2009 & 2010 Volunteer projects with Friends of the Cumbres Toltec Scenic Railroad
- Music machines repairs
- Created a new public venue in Virginia City at the Gypsy Arcade
- Completed cataloging at the Montana Post, McGovern Block, Toy Store, Molinari Shop, Finney House, and Buford Store
- Ironrod Post Office repairs and displays
- New public access and building displays at the Dance & Stuart and Buford Store.
- Plans for new public access at the McGovern Store and Weston Hotel.

Collection Loans:

Loans are typically a 1 or 5 year term with options for renewal. Recently, MHC has collection items on loan or in the process of a loan to:

1. Chaska, Minnesota: an original pumper (fire) truck.
2. Mai Wah Society in Butte, MT: plans to receive many original Chinese items
3. Friends of the Cumbres Toltec Railroad: use of several railroad wheel “trucks”
4. Addition loans are located in Fort Benton, West Yellowstone, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, and the US Forest Service.



Side Bar

The Montana Post – the territory's first printed newspaper was founded in Virginia City.

The original newspaper is now digitized and searchable online thanks to the Montana Historical Society.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/pages/>

Photos from top down:

Mai Wah Society catalogs Chinese items for future loan, railroad volunteers relocate two train cars, collections volunteers model determination.

Property Sales

The Montana Heritage Commission formed two committees in 2010 to develop and select a list of property for proposed sale. Montana statute (MCA 22-3-1001 etal.) and our associated administrative rules define the procedures for property sales. Real estate and personal property have to follow different procedures to be listed for sale. Here is our progress to date:



Land Sales: Eight parcels in Virginia City have been approved for sale pending a public hearing. The proposal will come before the Montana Heritage Commission for final action early in 2011, and if approved will be forwarded to the Montana Land Board for formal action. The state Land Board is the decision making authority for all state land sales. MHC managed properties are non-trust state lands.

Personal Property Sales: The Montana Heritage Commission has identified over 50 lots of personal property and equipment that will be proposed for sale. Most of the items are miscellaneous equipment or parts that have no practical use and are not historic elements needed for interpretive priorities. If approved, lots will be sold via a public competitive auction process.



Example of lot sale. Scrap metal and railroad parts.

By law, funds from any sale are restricted funds to be used to care for and protect remaining historic resources (MCA 22-3-1003 (11)).

More Information:

For a map and detail reports about property sales go to:

www.montanaheritagecommission.gov

No Property Acquisition occurred in 2009 - 2010



Sidebar

Site Clean Up

This year was the season to clean out the debris and clutter that had been on state property since the purchase in 1997. Many of our agency partnerships with the Friends of the Cumbres Toltec, Montana Conservation Corp, Youth Challenge and others allowed us to make substantial progress. Our plans are to make the site more accessible and improve visitor services.

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House Speaker Appointment
VACANT

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