

2015-2016

Biennial Report



Biennial Report to the Legislature

Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission

(MHC)

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.



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



### Background and History

In 1997, the Montana Legislature purchased Virginia City and Nevada City from the Senator Charles Bovey family for 6.5 Million.

In 2000 Reeder's Alley was gifted to the state by Darrell and Kathy Guston.

(Today the value we insure our properties and artifacts at is 43.98 million.)



The Montana Heritage Commission takes pride in managing some of the most valuable and fascinating historic sites in Montana--Virginia City and Nevada City, plus Reeder's Alley and the Pioneer Cabin in Helena. Our goal is to promote and preserve these sites while encouraging Montanans and our children to become excited about the rich history of this great state. Virginia City was the site of our territorial capital from 1864-1875.

(MHC offices now occupy Montana's Territorial Capital Building in Virginia City, MT)



### Strategic Highlights

- MHC has over 276 historical registered structures and over 1.2 million Americana artifacts it preserves, repairs and catalogs.



- According to Montana Office of Tourism, 2015-2016 Traffic Counts, Virginia City and Nevada City are Montana's number one state owned tourist attraction for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year with over 500,000 tourists coming from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year.



- MHC has contractual business relationships with over 42 concessionaires that help business and economic development across Montana. According to the Northern Rocky Mountain Economic Development District our economic footprint is \$72.1 million for the state of Montana and contributes to 1186 jobs.



= \$72.1 Million in economic footprint and 1186 jobs for Montana!

- MHC has spent **\$2,116,649** for promotion and preservation of Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder Alley, Montana for 2015-2016.



### Strategic Priorities

**Strategic Priority I Preserve:** Establish a more effective system to ensure proper allocation of resources, preservation and maintenance prioritization, and cataloging of Historic buildings and artifacts.

**Strategic Priority II Sustain:** Establish a financial sustainability plan that represents balanced reliance on State and Federal appropriations, private funding, and revenue generation in support of achieving long-term sustainability.

**Strategic Priority III Promote:** Expand marketing and promotional efforts to strengthen image and identity of the historic resources managed by The Montana Heritage Commission.

**Strategic Priority IV Experience:** Enhance visitor's physical experience by providing engaging, memorable, and a unique understanding of where Montana's history began.

**Strategic Priority V Partner:** Broaden local, state, and federal support and understanding of the important contribution heritage makes to Montana's economy, cultural identity and sense of historic community.

**Strategic Priority VI Manage:** Build the management and strategic capacity of the Commission, Board, Management and Staff to support effective and efficient administrative functioning



### Program Goals for 2019 Biennium

- Finalize and implement strategic and business plans to help us achieve economic sustainability for operating costs and to contribute to the promotion and preservation of the areas we manage.
- Complete the sale of real and personal properties that do not have any significant history to Montana's heritage and to clean up our historic sites, generate revenue and reduce maintenance expenditures.
- Utilize educational outreach programs, internships and interpretation programs to improve the public enjoyment and understanding of our historic sites.
- Improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure to generate revenue, enhance life safety, and allow public use of our properties.
- Improve marketing and promoting the sites to increase visitation to Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder's Alley.
- Seek additional public and private funding support through grants, donations, and appropriations to further our goals.
- Complete critical historic building stabilization projects, and address urgent life-safety goals with occupied buildings.
- Continue the conservation and care of valuable historic artifacts by making them more visible to the public by entering them into an electronic database that makes it more visible, organized and viewable by the public.
- Conduct required archaeological research and mitigation for projects affecting state lands.
- Recruit and utilize volunteers to increase efficiency of operations and leverage limited state funding.
- Make strategic investments in the development of our sites, properties and buildings to improve site interpretation, public access, historic fabric and visitor experiences.
- Work closely with local government and non-profit partners to leverage funding and achieve goals of mutual interest.



## Income and Expenses

### **Income:**

Statutory Funds and Earned Revenue

- The Montana Heritage Commission operates on bed tax allocations, a voluntary vehicle license plate fee, and MHC earned revenue which includes long range building appropriations and all MHC property rentals, hotels, entrance and train fees, along with land/property sales/private donations.



### FY 2016 Income Breakdown:

\$944,902 in MHC Earned Income  
\$400k in Statutorily Appropriated Bed Tax  
\$267,732 in Voluntary Vehicle License fees

### **Expenses: MHC Operations**

Virginia City, Nevada City and Reeder's Alley

- Operating Costs include all personal services, preservation, promotion, repairs, maintenance, insurance, administrative and fees.



### FY 2016 MHC Operations Breakdown:

\$963,384, Personal Services, Preservation, Repairs  
\$120,308, Promotion  
\$107,397 Insurance and Admin Fee (14.10% of personal services used)



## Historic Building Preservation and Maintenance

(Montana's Territorial Capital Building from 1864-1875)



(1864)



(2016)

MHC Repairs and Preserves over 276 Historic structures and buildings in Virginia City, Nevada City, Montana and Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana.

### **Some of the highlights of the past year were:**

- Complete repair and preservation of electrical and plumbing which included bathrooms in the rooms of the Fairweather Inn in Virginia City, MT.
- Structural repair and fire-suppression, heating and electrical upgrades at the historic Opera House in Virginia City, MT.
- Structural repair, roof and flooring of the Governor Thomas Francis Meagher home.
- Structural repair, roof and flooring of the Sarah Bickford Cottage.

(Sarah Bickford was inducted into the Montana Historical Society Hall of Fame in 2015)

- Completion of the Reeder's Alley interpretive and convention center, where tourists can come learn about Montana's history and also people can reserve center for social gatherings. All earned proceeds go to future preservation projects.
- Masonry repair of the Pioneer Cabin at Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana.





## Collections and Archeology

*“Virginia City has one of the largest Americana artifact collections in the United States”  
-New York Times-*

**Our Current Americana Artifact Inventory Count is 1,287,116**

We preserve, stabilize and track collections using museum practices and standards for historic sites, catalog the objects, establish a written and electronic record, research the objects and their significance to Virginia City and Nevada City and the rest of the collection.

We educate the public through research & exhibition of these historic objects.

- We are in the process of transferring our artifacts to an electronic database so the public can view them online and get a better perspective of each artifact.

Please visit our artifact collection at:

[www.virginiacitymt.com](http://www.virginiacitymt.com) (Collections tab)





**Education Outreach and Living History Interpretation**

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 Virginia City and Nevada City from May-September to learn about Montana history and the territorial capital at Virginia City.

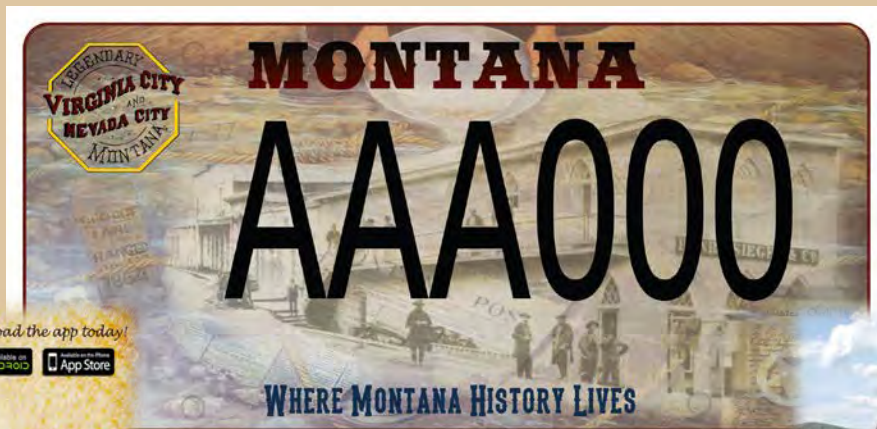
- In 2015 the Chicago Times ranked the Montana Heritage Commission Living History program as the 4<sup>th</sup> best living history attraction in the United States.
- The Montana Heritage Commission Living History program has been nominated for tourism event of the year and partnership of the year at the Governor's conference on tourism.
- Approximately 5,000 students come each year for school tours across Montana.





## Promotion and Business Development

- According to the Northern Rocky Mountain Economic Development District we have over 42 business relationships with concessionaires in Virginia and Nevada City along with Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana. The economic footprint was \$72.1 million for Montana and helps to employ over 1186 people.
- We were able to increase tourism visitors to MHC visitor services by 413.06% from 2012-2016 and earned revenue by 127.12% which put \$2,116,649 in (2015-2016) towards preservation, promotion and maintenance of Virginia City and Nevada City and Reeder's Alley in Helena, Montana.
- We created an aggressive marketing campaign that included a variety of marketing venues such as Print ad, TV, Radio and E-commerce such as Virginia City App, Facebook, and redesign of MHC websites along with creating a marketing campaign that is designed for affordable family packages. We are proud to be recognized as the number one state owned tourist attraction for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year with over 500,000 tourists coming from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year.



**WE'RE MOBILE!!  
FOR YOU**

We know you are using your mobile phone more every day! Get Virginia City and Nevada City info when you want it, and where you want it..... ON THE GO!

**Features**

- >Local Business Info
- >Lodging
- >Audio Tours



★ FAMILY FUN PASS ★

## 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:

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





## **MHC Commissioners**

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### **MHC Staff**

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Kate Slawski

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Jeff Cleverly  
Donny Steeley

**Visitor Services**  
Becky Digiovanna  
Tanya Engle

**Education Outreach**  
**Living History**  
Creative Edu ventures



## THANK-YOU

“To all our present and past donors who donated to preserve Montana’s Heritage”!

## HONORARY

(Significant volunteers and philanthropists preserving Montana’s Heritage)

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Ruth McFarland  
Donnelley Foundation  
Tom and Barbi Donnelley  
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Montana History Foundation  
Montana Department of Commerce  
US Department of Interior  
Montana Historical Society



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