



Miracle of America Museum

MEMBER:
MUSEUM ASSOC.
OF MONTANA
AND
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OF MUSEUMS

Summer 2023

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

36094 Memory Lane Polson, MT 59860 406-883-6804 www.miracleofamericamuseum.org • info@miracleofamericamuseum.org

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Memorial Day parade features nine MOAM entries

So today, Memorial Day, I begin this newsletter. Thanks to volunteer drivers, we drove nine vehicles in the parade following the honor guard and fortunately they all performed well. Our WWII Freedom Truck, the 1½ ton 6 x6 Dodge had a fuel blockage on the way home, but driver **Jamie Shepard** finally coaxed it through the shop gate. No matter how much

we prepare there always seems to be a fly in the ointment somewhere. Earlier in the month, someone had reached through the fence and turned the ignition key on in our Rat Patrol jeep. That cost us another \$135 battery.



Four MOAM vehicles in July 4th Parade

This year's big Polson July 4th parade crowd applauded MOAM's four vehicles. All made it back to the museum under their own power. We thank volunteers for devoting a good part of their holiday to share the Miracle of America with the public!



Here's one of the bus tours that enjoyed a tour of Miracle of America Museum. This group of seniors arrived on June 11 from all over the US.

MOAM to use GPCF grant to improve displays

Greater Polson Community Foundation favored us with a \$2,600 Project Grant to pay for improved framing and mounting material for 25 large historic displays of documents mainly from Lake County, but also imagery of antique items on display. An example is shown here of an instructional manual/sales catalog. We will show each page to go along with the real saw rig we have. Both were donated by **Bill Samsel** now of Missoula. The historical information on display will have a positive impact for our visitors.



MOAM earns \$25,000 tourism grant

More big news so far this year is that we were awarded a \$25,000 grant to promote our annual Live History Days event. These grants are awarded by the state tourism agency to draw more visitors into Montana who will spend money here, come back again and tell more visitors about our great state. The amount sounds like a lot, but advertising is very expensive. We are concentrating on Northern Idaho, Eastern Washington, and Southern Alberta. More relaxed border restrictions between Canada and Montana should help us. We'll poll visitors to see if our ad campaign is successful. The grant committee was impressed last year with our following the rules and our thoroughness, so we received a higher award this year.



MT Historic Preservation grant helps rebuild barn

Even though we got less than we asked for, we were awarded \$70,351 from the Montana Historic Preservation Grant committee for the rehabilitation of the barn.

Sadly the contractor who implied he would work us in between larger jobs is no longer available, so we are now hurting for a framing crew.

It will be a quick and easy project, and material is all ready. If you, or someone you know can help, please let us know.

Students learn important life lessons

Three classes, two of 1st graders from Ronan, and one of 4th graders from Kalispell came in about the same time. I probably took one field trip reservation while on the forklift and forgot to add it to my master calendar, but we got it all covered. It is hard for teachers to schedule a bus, as sports traveling takes precedence over other field trips.

I lead the children on three lecture tours, which I enjoy. For their age, they were pretty attentive groups.

We invite parents and school children to encourage teachers to consider field trips here. Parents are always welcome as chaperones or to assist with our reasonable fee.

I always stress by word and using symbolism, that our freedoms in America – that not every country enjoys – is dependent on responsibility. A few displays teach getting along with siblings or neighbors. One is our two-headed calf with the heads almost facing opposite directions. They fought over who would get milk and didn't take turns or share, so they starved to death.



Elephant Trunks in Conrad's privy? Museum tour yields oddity

I like to multi-task. A family wedding at Heritage Park was the main reason for a trip to Kalispell. A second reason was to pick up a unit of ¾" tongue and groove plywood flooring for the second story in our barn when we can find a carpenter crew. It was donated by **Weyerhaeuser's** plywood division, a very generous donation, indeed.

The wedding was right across from the Conrad Mansion, so we scheduled a guided tour. The guide made it very interesting and took great pride in the early elephant trunk toilet in the original bathroom. (That knowledge came in handy during our later visit to Phillipsburg, as you shall learn.) While the admission is twice what we charge, I recommend a visit.



Another museum we discovered recently was on a buying trip to Phillipsburg. Be sure and check out the basement of the town museum. (Not wheelchair accessible.) It's an excellent mining exhibit complete with an assayer's office. The main reason for the trip was to attend the estate sale of a kindred spirit, the late Joe Johnson whose collection was

housed in the old three story schoolhouse. Stashed away in a basement janitor's closet was a nice, clean elephant trunk toilet that I wouldn't have noticed had I not taken the Conrad Mansion tour the preceding week.

Other neat items too numerous to mention were fairly priced by Joe's son. Several manikins, some even in period clothing will be squeezed in to some of our displays.

My favorite item was a sculpture jointly done by Joe and Bill Ohrmann whose art gallery/small museum was in Drummond. Envision Charlie Russell sitting on a chunk of log painting a partially reclining pretty Indian maiden. On his easel you see what Charlie is accomplishing.



MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

Chief picker, **Howard Hudson** is cleaning out his folks' shop plus he's always perusing garage sales and has been hauling goodies in faster than I can sort them. I think the most meaningful gift was a complete jigsaw puzzle with colorful box. It was assembled and mounted by family, **Gary and Frances Abbey and Cindy and K C Sorensen**.

The cover is of Artist Edward Moran's portrayal of a turning point in history. As history has shown, the winter at Valley Forge almost decimated the Continental Army with deaths, starvations and desertions. Three of the lower commanders had made up their mind to tell General Washington that their troops couldn't take anymore hardship and would leave for home. They discovered Washington, kneeling in fervent prayer beseeching God to help hold his rag

tag army together to win the War for Independence.

The three men didn't have the heart to fulfill their plan and went back to rally the troops. Washington's prayer was answered shortly in the form of Baron von Steuben, who began training the men to act soldierly, and take orders. He basically whipped them in to the fighting force that Gen. Washington needed to prevail against the Redcoats.



It was wise old Ben who said. . .

"A nation of well informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights that God has given them, cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins."

For several years, the museum has given several boxes of these pocket U.S. Constitutions that also include the

Declaration of Independence.

Thanks to **James R (Dick) Matejovsky** of Polson for generously providing them to us. Dick has also given out hundreds on his own at conventions and meetings he attends.



MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

Skidding logs through the forest could be perilous as the towed end of the log could snag on rocks or stumps. The pictured log skidding bell when dogged into the log end created a smooth leading edge that helped guide the log through. For smaller operations, this blacksmith made skidding bell would make easier work for both horse and logger. It was donated by **Noel Kiser** of Thompson Falls.

Many visitors stop here because they have heard of our rare and unique motorcycle collection. I'm the first to admit that there are many cycle specific museums with much larger collections

than ours, but then they don't have the other things we display. So I feel no need to apologize. One visitor, **John** from Forks, WA who has John's Beachcombing Museum, liked our cycle display so well, he sent us his late father's Indian motorcycle hat. It looks nice on the seat of our 1941 Indian 4 cycle. **Bob Lassils** of Great Falls donated a unique home built snowmobile powered by a Wonkel rotary engine. Homebuilts are often more ingenious than factory mass produced ones.

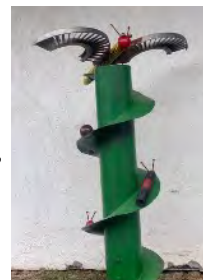
Speaking of that, the **Western Montana Vintage Snowmobile**

Enthusiasts will again do a summer show here in conjunction with our **36th annual Live History Days July 15 and 16**. Don't miss it!

It's impossible to list everyone who have donated the variety of items here – perhaps in a slower quarter we can try and catch up.

MOAM adds porta-potty–We do wish to mention here that because of the size of the property, we felt we needed to purchase another porta-potty. This one is wheelchair accessible and will be placed near the entrance of the winter building and also make it handier for those in the blacksmith and gun shops.

Those who know Gil's penchant for creative and whimsical sculpture will appreciate his latest, titled, "Metamorphosis" on display with his many other intriguing pieces at the museum.



Wisconsin "T-head" roars to life

Carmine Mowbray and her brother **Jeff Howard** visiting from Redmond, WA spent a couple of days getting our 1912 Seagrave Firetruck's six-cylinder engine running. It was exciting to have it roar to life and smooth out, probably the first time in 70 years.

We're also grateful for Carmine for formatting our newsletters each quarter.



This large-displacement Wisconsin engine powers the 1912 Seagrave firetruck that came from San Diego. Most folks think of Wisconsin engines as powering equipment no bigger than lawnmowers!

We Salute our Members and Donors

The lifeblood of our museum is our financial donors, whether it be the widow's mite, monthly or annual memberships, or major one time gifts. We are still praying for major donors to build a village church and to expand nearby property which would be a major benefit.

Joining our donor ranks this last quarter include the following (in alphabetical order):

Anonymous, Kristina Barnes, Bishop Insurance, Frank and Michal Delgado, John Gale, Eric and Carolyn Hall, Head over Heels, Grace Larson, Cousin Millie Mangels, Rocky Mountain Twist, Donna Rolfson Trust, Darold Schaffer, Roseanne and Lee Selders, Butch Stewart family, Katie Walker, and Whitefish Credit Union.

Annual Support Levels: Single \$50; Family \$100; Corporate \$200; Life \$1,000.

If someone wished to provide a large enough gift to build our village church they could be memorialized on a plaque. It is estimated at \$190,000. We have a large bell for the steeple, several stained glass windows, pews, antique organs, etc. May we show you the plans?

Membership includes free admission, newsletter and discount in our Gift Shop, plus the satisfaction that you are supporting our mission to preserve history.



**WE'RE OPEN 9AM TO 5PM
ALL YEAR LONG!**

*Come relive the good ol' days right here in Polson!
Music, food and family activities. Bring your visitors and join the fun!*

JOIN US JULY 15 AND 16, 2023 FOR MIRACLE OF AMERICA'S 36TH ANNUAL LIVE HISTORY DAYS!

Enjoy live demonstrations of blacksmithing, glassblowing, flint knapping, leather working, spinning, re-enactors, and more.

See live demos of vintage snowmobiles, a working sawmill, steam engines!

Ride on military vehicles, miniature train, and climb aboard firetrucks, a fighter jet, get in jail, and dodge the UFO's!

Food concessions.

Admission: Ages 2-12 \$5; 13 and older \$10; includes rides and self-guided tour of museum and pioneer village.



Enjoy the Museum's YouTube Channel!

We've added QR codes, and WiFi is available throughout the grounds to enhance your enjoyment of our displays. Learn "the rest of the story!"

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