

Volunteer Corner

Please call ahead if you are able to attend one of the following volunteer days:

- The third Wednesday of every month 9 am - noon** with Barb Craig
- The second Thursday of every month 6 - 8 pm** with Leann Pelvit, Deb Bradley and Sandy Turner
- The second Saturday of every month 1 - 4 pm** with Marlys Dynneson

Special points of interest:

- ☺ **Volunteer information p. 1**
- ☺ **Upcoming Events p. 3**
- ☺ **Artist of the Month p. 3**
- ☺ **From the Archives p. 2**
- ☺ **Sale; Gallery Featured Item p. 4**

President's Letter

Dear Friends of the MonDak Heritage Center,

What a wonderful start to 2006 for the MonDak Heritage Center we have had. The center bloomed with an early Spring when the quilts were displayed for the 25th Annual Quilt Show. A Quilters' Reception was part of the show, and there were classes relating to quilting and quilt care given during the month.

New to our Museum Shop, David Meehan with Busted Sod Pottery, Jody Kappel, Chuck and James Soft and Chewy Granola, Prairie Bling Jewelry by Heather Cotter and Margo Zadow Sterling Silver Jewelry.

It's a Mystery -- There were "dead" bodies, lots of tale telling, some lying and delicious eats for the Mystery Dinner, "Murder on the Prairie." With everyone in costume and tampering with the witnesses, it is any wonder that the "crime" was ever solved, but David Seitz, the "Funeral Director," done figur'd it out! Be on the look-out for the next "Crime in the Museum!"

In March, for those who missed it, a great time was had by all who attended the Annual Meeting of the MonDak Historical & Art Society. The meeting was short. Elections were held for the five open positions on the Board of Directors. Congratulations to the new directors: Margaret Bradley, Janice Norby and Duane Pust and to the two returning directors: Bill Forrester and Jerry Hughes. A very sincere "Thank You" to Barb Craig, Rick Forcella and Leann Pelvit who have retired from the Board, for their time and service over the last years. After elections everyone settled in with some refreshments to enjoy the entertainment provided by DW, the singin', guitar pickin', cowboy poet. Just so's you'all don't miss all the fun NEXT YEAR, here's a "heads-up" - the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Membership of the MonDak Historical & Art Society will be on Sunday, March 11, 2007, at 2:00 pm.

Also in March, in fact, just last weekend, the "**1st Annual Wing Fling**" was held at the MDHC. 35 one of a kind birdhouses, bird feeders, bird related items and even a butterfly house and a bat box were donated to the MonDak Heritage Center for the fund raising auction. The bidding was wild and wonderful under the expert guidance of Danny Goss of Searer & Goss Auctioneers! The evening began with refreshments (we do do a lot of eating around this place!). The museum rang with lots of laughter. AND, THANKS to all who participated with donations and purchases, the evening raised **\$1700.00** for the MonDak Heritage Center!!!!

In March, four representatives from the MDHC went to Ft. Benton for the Annual Museums of Montana Conference. This conference is always profitable for knowledge gained through the workshops and in conversations with the rest of the small museums around the state. There were workshops on preservation, fund raising, board development, creating exhibits that teach and round-table discussion groups to share information, among the many offerings. Next year the conference will be held in Missoula. We may not be able to attend, but in 2008 it will be on the east side of the state again, and we will participate.

As always, we are in need of more volunteers in all areas of operation at the Center. If you love history or art or computers or people or any combination of these and other talents, we would love to have you come in and let us know. This is a hopping place with thousands of things to do and get done and the more people, the more fun it all becomes.

Coming in June: For teachers, grades 8-12, a **FREE Teachers' Workshop on Teaching the Holocaust**, is being offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Education Department and the MonDak Historical & Art Society, at the MonDak Heritage Center, **June 12-13**. If you or a friend is interested, please contact the MDHC at 433-3500 for more information. Registration deadline is May 5, 2006. This workshop is being offered as preparation for school tours of *The Schindler Exhibit*, which will be at the MonDak Heritage Center **August 25 to September 23, 2006**.

Have a wonderful Spring. Come in out of the rain and tour the MonDak Heritage Center. See what's new and what's not.

Carrell Evans
President, MonDak Historical & Art Society



From the archives...



We think of most settlement of the West happening in the 18th century with cowboys and prospectors and railroad men, and, in later years, homesteading farmers. The Lower Yellowstone Valley, however, is a different place. Far enough North and West to be one of the last places in the lower 48 touched by white settlement, it wasn't opened to homesteaders until 1908, although squatters had been coming in well before. Because the stories of the homesteaders have the gloss of history, they are enshrined in books and museums. Therefore, we often think that most of the settling was done by World War I, especially after the bottom dropped out of wheat prices and a large fraction of dry-land farmers went bust.

The story of James Patrick Brennan proves that such is not the case. The plush Lower Yellowstone was an oasis for farmers for many years. Even after the first World War, the irrigation project proved so successful that Holly Sugar decided to put a factory in Sidney. With the factor in place in 1925, Holly only needed the beets to process. They needed farmers, preferably experienced beet farmers, not the green, inexperienced homesteaders who came to the area in the 1910's. They wanted real farmers, and to find them, the Holly Sugar Co. sent James Patrick Brennan to the river valleys of Colorado.

James Brennan began his life in the Midwest. Like many men his age, he decided to try his luck on a homestead in the West. He moved with his family to Antler, ND in 1901. Like many men his age, he proved a failure as a farmer and went bust in the early 20's.



While such disappointment may have sent most men back to the Midwest or farther West to California, Brennan saw something in this area. He saw that he could make money here, not as a farmer--he'd tried that and failed--but as a seller. James Brennan knew that there were dreams sowed in the fields of Richland County and he knew that he was the man to sell them.

According to his own accounts, Brennan traveled over 50,000 between the years 1928-1931, when he went to Colorado looking for beet farmers. Brennan traveled mostly in the fertile valleys of the South Platte and Arkansas rivers in eastern Colorado. In all, Brennan brought over 100 beet farming families to the area. In the photograph above, you'll see some of these families who packed up their lives in Brush, Colorado and moved them hundreds of miles to the north. Familiar surnames in this group include Bach (the first Coloradan who Brennan recruited), Rasmussen, Gear, Corey, and Hagler, to name just a few. Many of them are still here, later generations still doing the job that Brennan brought their families here to do. They are finding the success that Brennan never could find for himself, but success that Brennan knew was possible in the fertile valley of the Lower Yellowstone.

For more on J.P. Brennan and the further settlement of the Lower Yellowstone Valley see our website at www.richland.org.

Why Your Membership & Memorials Matters:

Support from our Members is the lifeblood of the Museum, providing 1/3 of the Museum's operating budget. As public and government funds for the arts diminish, private contributions become increasingly important. The MonDak Heritage Center thrives because of individual support from valued friends like you.

Name: _____

Business: _____

Your membership counts:	
Senior	\$15.00
Senior Couple	\$25.00
Individual	\$20.00
Family	\$35.00
Business	\$50.00
Benefactor	\$100.00-\$499.00

We have new Memorial envelopes!
 We will send you a new envelope every time you give a memorial. This will make giving more convenient for our Patrons.
Thank You for your Support!

Calendar of Coming Exhibits and Events

March

Youth Art Show

March 15—April 15

Area Schools 7-12 grade display their artwork for all to enjoy. Please come and support our youth by viewing the show.

April

Eric Johnson

April 1-April 30

Printmaking: Surreal abstract relief prints using vivid , bold colors.

College Art Exhibit

April 19-May 20

Area college students will exhibit their art.

May

May 8 – May 31

27th Annual Custer County Traveling Art Exhibit

This Juried Exhibit features 20 works from the 27th Annual Southeastern Montana Juried Exhibit and will tour Eastern Montana until the end of the year.

* **Mark Browning** from the Custer County Art & Heritage Center will host gallery talks all day.

Boys & Girls Club Photo & Art Show

May 1 - 17

The boys & girls of the Sidney B&G Club would like to invite you to enjoy their photos and artwork from this past school year. Please join us for and artist reception

August 25-September 25

Schindler Exhibit

Artist of the Month

According to the latest census, one out of every 78 workers in Montana is a working artist, making up an important part of the state's economy. Our Artist of the Month program spotlights some of the working artists in our area. Be sure to support our local and regional artists by taking some time to stop and see their work.

April

Mary Waagen
Culbertson, MT

May

Katie Pust
Sidney, MT

June

Jennifer Redlin
Crosby, ND

The MonDak Historical & Art Society Endowment Fund

This fund was established in 1993 with the generous gifts from patrons in the MonDak Region who wanted to see the MonDak Heritage Center established and continued as a repository of the history and art of the MonDak Region and its inhabitants, and as a center for the arts and cultural events for the region. This fund supports the costs of operating a quality museum that is open throughout the year and that attracts some of the top artists and exhibits in the country.

Anyone can contribute gifts of any size to the Endowment Fund to continue the support envisioned by the founders of the MonDak Historical & Arts Society for historical preservation and cultural activities. These gifts not only keep the Heritage Center open today, but are investments in the future of the organization. There are numerous ways you can contribute to the Endowment fund:

- Gifts of Property
- Memorials
- Make Endowment Fund Beneficiary of Insurance Policy
- Charitable Trust or Gift Annuity
- Living Trusts or Wills

By giving an irrevocable contribution to a permanent endowment by means of one of the "planned gifts," you qualify for the Montana Qualified Endowment *Tax Credit* of 20-40% of your contribution, with a maximum of \$10,000. Ask your tax accountant or estate planner for information.

Since its inception in 1967, the Mondak Historical & Arts Society has preserved and presented the artifacts and heritage of the MonDak region and furthered the arts of the community. This organization supported through memberships, donations, memorials, gifts, County, City and fundraisers. Please remember us in your annual giving!



ar-
is

Mondak Heritage Center

120 3rd Ave SE

Phone: 406-433-3500

Fax: 406-433-3503

Email: mdhc@midrivers.com

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
SIDNEY MT
59270
PERMIT NO 237

If your membership expired will you please renew today? Your address label has your expiration date at the bottom.



***Preserving our past
for the future.***

Sign up for our email information: we will keep you in the loop of up coming events, art shows, receptions and volunteer opportunities. Email the Center @ mdhc@midrivers.com.

Sales Gallery Featured Item.... Bill Forrester's *Fencepost Vases*

The homesteaders called it cedar, cut posts out of it, stuck them in the ground, and strung barbed wire between them. It's better known as the Rocky Mountain Juniper, *juniperus scopulorum*, and for the homesteaders, in treeless Eastern Montana, it meant money. In some cases, these scarce cedar posts were actually used as currency. Between the years 1905 and 1918, the homesteaders cut down the mountain junipers at an alarming rate. In his book *Bad Land*, Jonathan Raban does this math to figure the number of posts required: "Each homestead needed five to seven miles of fences....For every mile of fence, one needed to cut and haul some eleven hundred posts." Raban admits that some of the external fences were shared between homesteaders, but despite the advent of barbed wire, fencing still required lots of lumber.



In his aptly titled memoir *Homesteading*, Percy Wollaston says this about the mountain juniper: "The beautiful reds and creamy whites of this wood deserved the treatment of skilled cabinet makers rather than to be used as posts." It's been 90 years, but this mountain juniper wood is finally getting its due. Under the lathe of Bill Forrester, these fencepost become beautiful vases, without abandoning their utilitarian history--the beautiful red and creamy vase acts in stark contrast to the gray, lichen covered and barbed wire wrapped base. Bill's vases give us a glimpse of this region's heritage and a glance at the cultural talent that hints at its potential for the future. Like the homesteaders before him, Bill takes the apparently barren, proves it up, and makes it what it's worth. Perhaps the 90 year wait was worth it.

These vases are for sale in our sales gallery, but items are limited, so get yours now.