

*Interpretation
Plan*

for the

**Historical Museum
at Fort Missoula**

April 21, 2008

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Interpretation Plan for the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula

Introduction

The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula strives to be an active community resource that uses the local history of Missoula and western Montana to educate, offer access to the local environment, and to function as an inspiring educational and recreational experience for visitors and citizens alike. Residents and visitors to the Missoula region are historically and culturally connected to area and HMFMM offers experiences and exhibits that encourage appreciation of the area's unique local heritage. These collective experiences will engage visitors, encouraging them to care more about preserving the cultural, historic, and natural resources of western Montana.

HMFMM will fulfill these goals by telling the stories of the people who founded and developed this unique local culture and how they exemplify the evolving story of our relationship with the area – the stories that “Keep Missoula County’s History Alive.” This approach will emphasize modern-day connections with the past, and emphasize the evolution to today’s multifaceted culture. This continuum will also reveal how these values can be applied to a better future for Missoula and beyond.

To accomplish this, the Education Department will concentrate on developing and offering multi-sensory, object-based, exploratory tours, exhibits and programs.

Goals of the HMFMM Interpretive Program

- **HONOR** the rich heritage of the Missoula region
- **SUPPORT** today’s culture
- **SHAPE** an energized, promising future

HMFMM Mission Statement

The mission of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is to keep Missoula County’s history alive for the education and enjoyment of the public.

HMFMM Vision Statement

The vision of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is to inspire a sense of place and history for Missoula County by collecting, studying, interpreting, and preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage. This includes the Museum's core areas of collecting: the history of the city and county of Missoula, the history of Fort Missoula and the military presence in the area, and the history of forest management and the wood products industry in western Montana. The Museum's focus further includes, but is not limited to: family history, women's history, Native American history, environmental history, and minority-based history.

Our vision for the Museum is for a place and institution that:

- 1. Is a welcoming place where people are drawn together to share their passion and interest in our history and sense of place*
- 2. Supports and gives voice to the region's diverse cultural perspectives*
- 3. Has sustainable, modern facilities while retaining its traditional character*
- 4. Creates and maintains educational programs and exhibits that are professionally presented, inspiring and intellectually challenging*
- 5. Has collections that are conserved per American Association of Museum accreditation standards, and will provide a continuing source of inspiration and learning*
- 6. Has a paid staff and volunteer corps that are creative, enthusiastic, and supportive of each other, the Museum's mission, and the community.*
- 7. Participates in discussions at the national level on matters pertaining to the Museum's mission, and for the good of the profession.*
- 8. Believes in and participates in open strategic partnerships.*

Core Values

The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is committed to

- Openness – of purpose, governance, and communication*
- Integrity – in fair and ethical practices, and the respectful treatment of all*
- Excellence – in leadership, cooperation, and in use of the highest museum standards as established by the American Association of Museums*
- Relevance – in identifying and responding to new challenges*
- Stability – of its mission, vision, and resources, particularly its collections*
- Respect – for different viewpoints, diverse cultural values, and the traditions of the Museum*
- Balance – in dealing with all aspects of museum operations fairly and honestly*

Implementation Strategy

Insofar as its resources permit, the Museum collects, preserves and interprets objects and informational materials related to the exploration, founding and evolution of the community and county of Missoula, the development of Fort Missoula and the myriad aspects of the military presence in the area, and of the history of forest management and the wood products industry. The Museum collects, preserves and interprets objects from the period of the earliest exploration to the present in order to present a coherent and

total picture. These objects and informational materials are made available for study and the enjoyment of all, in a pleasant, secure, safe and accessible setting. While, the Museum does not collect Native American objects the Museum will enter into cooperative partnerships to help save and interpret local Native American history.

Goals/Themes of the HMFMM Interpretive Plan

In the HMFMM Vision Statement's Implementation Strategy, the HMFMM has identified three primary storylines that will be used to fulfill the goals of the HMFMM interpretive program. They are:

1. TELLING MISSOULA'S STORIES:
 - the stories of the men, women, families, and minorities who founded and developed what became Missoula County;
 - the stories of the ordinary people who lived, worked, played, and died in Missoula County;
 - the stories of Missoula and Missoulians past, present, and future.
2. TELLING FORT MISSOULA'S STORIES
 - the story of the Fort Missoula Alien Detention Center for Italians and for Japanese-American men during World War II, and the significance that the story holds for today and the future;
 - the story of the black 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps;
 - the story of the men and women who served in the military, and of those who worked at home, in and from Missoula County, and the lessons learned from their experiences;
 - the story of the Native Americans who came into conflict with the U.S. military in western Montana.
3. TELLING FORESTRY STORIES
 - the story of the importance and development of the wood products industry in western Montana;
 - the story of the US Forest Service;
 - the story of fire and its impact on all aspects of life in Missoula County and the west;
 - the story of the Society of American Foresters who are keeping the craft alive.

Implementation of the HMF M Interpretive Plan

Each topic is detailed below, with its primary objectives, a listing of pertinent interpretive resources, the topic's interrelationship with other programs and with the overall HMF M plan, along with a proposed timeline for program launch.

In light of the challenges faced by the HMF M in the form of financial and personnel limitations, as well as the growth and development of the Museum campus to include new facilities directly impacting the Interpretive Program, the Museum plans a phased implementation of this plan in accordance with the Museum's adopted Strategic Plan and in conjunction with the results from the American Association for State and Local History's Performance Management Review.

TIMELINE: A Phased Approach

To accomplish these goals, the following sequence of program implementation is proposed, and the thematic priorities are established.

Phase I will focus on:

- taking an inventory of current programs and resource kits and deciding what ones to keep and what ones to jettison;
- completing a resource kit to accompany the exhibit, *The Road to Today: 250 Years of Missoula County History – "Missoula History Through Children's Eyes;"*
- developing an Education logo;
- developing a cell phone tour of the grounds;
- adding one hands-on activity at an outdoor exhibit building.

Phase II will see an expansion of the above themes with:

- developing a plan to turn the Homestead Cabin into a living history/hands-on educational center;
- planning for the educational use of the ADC Post Headquarters building;
- installing new and more informative interpretive signs on the grounds;
- acquiring a Native American resource kit from the Montana Historical Society;
- implementing a cell phone tour of the grounds;
- adding one hands-on activity at an outdoor exhibit building.

Phase III will see an expansion of the above themes with:

- implementing the living history program in the Homestead Cabin;
- creating a resource kit involving the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps;
- developing a kiosk with photographs of the Alien Detention Center for installation in the permanent exhibit;

- developing a Homesteading resource kit;
- using the ADC Post Headquarters building for programming;
- adding one hands-on activity at an outdoor exhibit building.

Phase IV will see an expansion of the above themes with:

- developing the NCO Quarters into an exhibit;
- developing a forestry-related resource kit.

On-going goals are:

- increasing outreach to school groups;
- increasing outreach to non-school groups;
- developing more hands-on activities in all exhibits;
- continuing to offer compelling and outstanding teacher workshops;
- continuing to offer the free, Uncover Montana program series every summer in conjunction with partners;
- participating in all Friends special events with educational, entertaining programming offerings;
- developing exhibits, in conjunction with other department; with exhibits to include thought-provoking, family discussion evoking questions; and tiered labeling;
- creating more take-home projects and informational handouts for people to leave the Museum with;
- maintaining a docent program that concentrates on professional training and growth;
- developing tours/talks for each building;
- continuing to pursue partnerships in all programming areas.

Area by Area Goals

This section of the Interpretive Plan takes each area of opportunity and lists the general goals of each. For the timeline of implementation of these goals, with the following caveat:

- Some of these programs are on-going
- Other programs are in the above description of phases
- Some programs are dependent on the acquisition, completion of the buildings required for implementation
- All programs are contingent on adequate and appropriate funding.

Departmental

- Inventory current programs and resource kits, deciding what to keep, what to jettison, and what to develop
- Increase outreach to schools
- Increase outreach to civic, community, non-education organizations

- Continue to develop and offer quality teachers workshops
- Continue to offer the “Uncover Montana” program series in conjunction with partners and developing additional programming
- Participate in all Friends special events with educational, entertaining programs
- Maintain and increase a professional, volunteer docent program with professional training
- Develop partnerships to help spread the message of the Museum and to share the burden of programming

Building #322

To provide a broad perspective of Missoula County history, the interpretive program in the main Museum building will concentrate on the exhibits that are installed there:

- Permanent Exhibit
 - Develop resource kits based on life in Missoula
 - Missoula History Through Children’s Eyes
 - Native American Experience
 - 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps
 - Homesteading
 - Forestry-related kit
 - Produce more take-home material for families
 - Develop a kiosk with photographs of the Alien Detention Center with the Collections Department
- Heath Gallery Exhibits
 - Plan and develop new exhibits for the Heath Gallery in conjunction with the Collections Department, Development Office, and Executive Director
 - Advocate from the audience’s perspective in all areas
 - Advocate for children
 - Develop appropriate hands-on opportunities for each exhibit
 - Produce family-oriented, thought-provoking questions for inclusion on text panels
 - Propose editorial comments on text and label panels to keep such tiered, limited, and accurate
 - Assist in the development and scheduling of programs

Forestry Interpretive Area

The history of forestry and the woods product industry is of considerable importance to the history of development and sustainability of Missoula County’s economy and social climate. To that end, the Education Department will

- Work with the Society of American Foresters in programming special events, i.e., Forestry Day
- Develop a forestry-related resource kit
- Develop appropriate hands-on opportunities in the Timber Building and Miller Creek Guard Cabin
- Continue to develop and offer tours of the lookout, locomotive, and other areas

Drummond Depot

The historically driven theme of railroads is represented by the Drummond Depot, which interprets the significance of the railroad industry in helping to establish Missoula's central position as a transportation and communication hub of western Montana. To that end, the Education Department will

- Develop a hands-on telegraph component for the exhibit
- Work with the Missoula Model Railroad Club and Western Montana Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society in the planning and conducting of special events
- Eventually develop a resource kit about railroad history

Grant Creek Schoolhouse

The Grant Creek Schoolhouse represents an historical way of life that has largely disappeared from the United States, but one that generations and generations of Americans grew up with. To save and interpret that history, the Education Department will

- Continue to offer the One-room Schoolhouse program every spring for area 3rd grade students
- Eventually develop a one-room schoolhouse resource kit
- Develop a hands-on exercise for the school foyer

St. Michael's Church

The Jesuits and the Sisters of Providence helped to settle, develop, and "civilize" the Missoula Valley. To ensure that this history is preserved and passed on to future generations the Education Department will

- Work with partners to install an exhibit about the Sisters of Providence
- Work with the Collections Department to refresh the exhibit about the Jesuits
- Insure that there are hands-on opportunities in said exhibits

Alien Detention Center Barracks

The Alien Detention Center story is unique to the Historical Museum and to Missoula. The implications of the study of this turbulent time of American history can and must be used to help future generations learn the lessons of human rights, tolerance, and the actions of mankind in the context of history. To that end, the Education Department will

- Develop an in-depth tour of the ADC Barracks that teaches the lessons of discrimination, alienation, and incarceration
- Develop a hands-on exercise for the barracks
- Develop a volunteer driven PowerPoint program that interprets the history of the Japanese-Americans at Fort Missoula, to be used as part of a public program, an independent or school tour on the grounds, and as an outreach program.

Transportation Building

While still under construction, this building will house the restored 1912 trolley, 1918 firetruck, and 1860s. To interpret the history and significance of transportation, the Education Department will

- Work with the Collections Department to develop and install exhibits and hands-on opportunities in the building
- Develop an interpretive tour of the building and the exhibit

Homestead Cabin

While still under renovation, the Homestead Cabin is intended to be the centerpiece of the Education Department to interpret the lives of the ordinary people who settled, lived, worked, played, and died in Missoula County. While history may be writ large with presidents and generals, the real history of any area is to be found in the lives and stories of the individual. To that end, the Education Department will

- Develop a plan to turn the Cabin into a living history/hands-on educational center
- Investigate the possibility of creating an historical garden to be used for interpretive purposes
- Work with the Collections Department to furnish the interior of the Cabin in an appropriate manner for hands-on interpretation
- Develop programs such as
 - Laundering
 - Butter making
 - Candle making
 - Sewing
 - Soap making
 - Canning
 - Spinning
 - Weaving
 - Quilting
 - Ice cream making
- Involve senior citizens in the telling, recording, and interpreting of their stories of the early years of Missoula

Non Commissioned Officers Quarters

This building is currently in the very early stages of interpretive development but as the most significant of the original Fort Missoula buildings, the plan is to use the expertise of volunteer exhibit curator Kermit Edmonds to install a series of eight room vignette exhibits of recreated and original objects to interpret the history of quartermastering and supplying a frontier fort in general and Fort Missoula in particular. To that end, the Education Department will

- Work with Kermit Edmonds in the planning and installation of said exhibit
- Develop a guided tour of said exhibit
- Develop hands-on exercises for the exhibit.

Root Cellar

The Root Cellar is not to be accessed by anyone except staff. However, as one of the original fort buildings (1908), and as part of the story of supplying the frontier army being told in the NCO Quarters, the Education Department will

- Incorporate the story of the Root Cellar in the interpretation of the NCO Quarters.

Tipi-Burner

This building is part of the Forestry Interpretive Area and will be used for storage and for interpretation by the Society of American Foresters. The Education Department will

- Develop a program dealing with the history of air quality in the Missoula Valley.

Grounds

The grounds of the Historical Museum present no logical or particularly chronological theme. They represent the whole range of topics aforementioned and they are a part of any guided or unguided tour of the Museum. Therefore, the Education Department will

- Develop and implement a cell phone tour of the grounds
- Develop and install new and more informative interpretive signs on the grounds
- Develop scripted tours of the grounds
- Offer intermittent costumed interpretation
- Develop hands-on opportunities where appropriate
- Use the grounds for special event educational programs

Alien Detention Center Post Headquarters

The Historical Museum is currently negotiating to obtain this building from the US Forest Service. The building represents perhaps the most unique and most historically important aspect of the history of Fort Missoula, the history of Missoula in World War II, and the history of American racism and discrimination. The Education Department will

- Develop a plan for the educational use of the building
 - Work with the Executive Director and the Building and Grounds Committee to make the building accessible for educational programming
 - Work with the Collections Department to install exhibits about the Italian and the Japanese-American experience at Fort Missoula
 - Develop hands-on experiences for the exhibits
 - Assist in the development of a ADC Research Center
 - Develop programs for the space
 - School programs
 - Community programs
 - Educational storage rooms
 - Educational offices
 - Docent lounge
 - Library

Evaluation

All programs, tours, and exhibits are to be continually evaluated to gain the public's reaction, to discover and improve upon weaknesses, to learn from mistakes, and to capitalize on strengths and successes.

Conclusion

The Education Department of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is dedicated to "Keeping Missoula County's History Alive" through the development and implementation of multi-sensory, object-based, exploratory tours, programs, and exhibits.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: April 21, 2008