

December 10, 2013

Ravalli County Commissioners  
215 South 4th Street  
Hamilton, MT 59840

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Dear Ravalli County,

This is the time of year when we can reflect on the activities of 2013 and look toward new experiences in 2014. The support and participation of community members, like you, have made it possible for the Museum to present a full year of exhibits, signature events, and programming in 2013. We hope you were able to visit the A.J. Gibson designed Courthouse, stroll through our exhibit rooms, and explore the countless stories revealed.

A recap of the exhibits of 2013 reflects our focus on Local History, Art and Natural History: the influence of early landscape artists; the impact of the Civil War and its influence in the settlement of our valley; the lifestyles of the Renaissance and Victorian eras; the changing roles of women since the turn of the century; and a tribute to our local servicemen during WWII.

As the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, we were proud to host *Wild Land-Thomas Cole*. We were able to partner with local businesses and artists to display a nationally travelled, high-caliber exhibit and link it with art throughout the valley. From inspiring our exhibits to attending our events, the response from the community has been remarkable. The engagement of so many people, with knowledge and enthusiasm to share, has made the Museum's achievements of 2013 extraordinary.



The mission of the Museum is not only to collect and display historical artifacts, but also to offer a glimpse into experiences and daily life of other times and situations. For the history and the objects of the past to add meaning to our modern world, they need to tell the stories of the people, their surroundings, and how they continue to influence us. These narratives and accounts become part of our shared heritage--the hardships and determination of the Lewis and Clark explorers, the traditions of the American Indian people, the courage of families homesteading in the wilderness, the boldness of someone from Chicago traveling by train to the Bitter Root to raise McIntosh apples, the ingenuity of the builders of the Big Ditch. As a community, we examine these diverse elements together and begin to bridge social boundaries, connecting with others whose experiences are different than our own.

***"History is who we are and why we are the way we are."***

*—David McCullough, American author*