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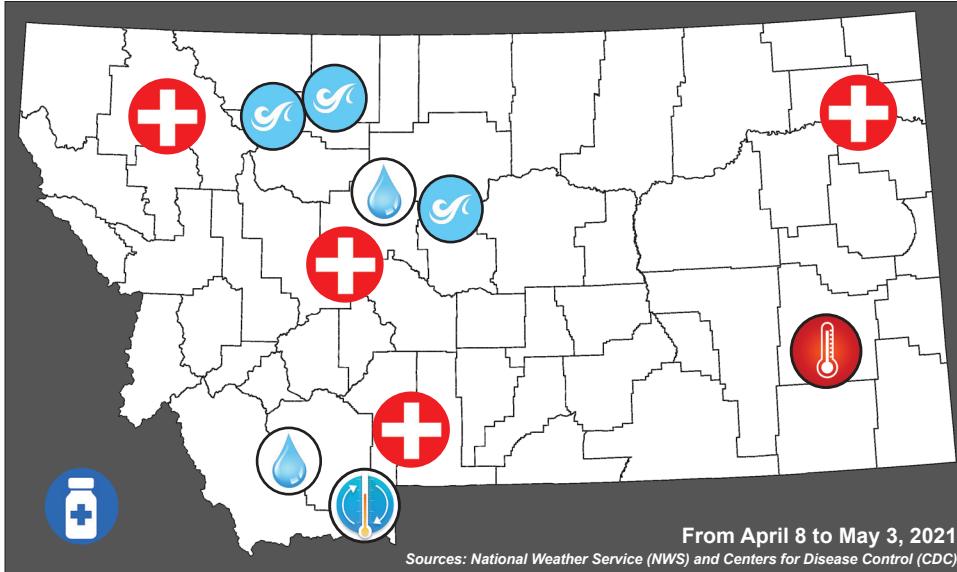
Vol. 4, Issue 5 • May 2021

MONTANA PRESS

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MONTANA ALMANAC



Higns and Lows Across the State

The highest temperature reported during the recording period was 88 degrees at Mizpah on April 30 along with near-record high temperatures recorded across the state. The lowest temperature of the period, 5 degrees, was recorded at West Yellowstone on April 9. Montana's official high temperature was only 48 on April 11 and temperatures 10 to 20 degrees below normal continued through the middle of the month across the state. On April 13, Townsend tied the record low temperature with 14 degrees (1902).

Windy Weather

Peak wind gusts of 73 mph were reported at Deep Creek on April 7 and 66 mph near East Glacier on the same day. Montana's average wind speed for the water-year is 10.1 mph so far, the 30th windiest of record and windiest since 2007. Great Falls has had their windiest water-year since 2002, while Havre has had their windiest since 1979.

Continuing COVID-19 Health Emergency

Many individual county health departments across the state, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), require all residents to wear masks when visiting any public establishment. The CDC provided guidance to Americans that double masking with multi-layer cloth or surgical masks can be up to 92 percent effective at stopping community spread of the virus and recommends use of masks to continue as the population is vaccinated. At press time, community transmission in Montana continued to be noted as substantial. Overall, rate of death and hospitalizations had decreased but 14 counties in Montana reported a high level of community transmission, including Gallatin, Park, Madison, Flathead, Pondera, Teton, Choteau, Golden Valley, Valley, Richland, Rosebud and Silver Bow; 15 additional counties reported a substantial level of transmission. Positivity rate in Montana was averaging four percent and hospitalizations were reported to be rising. In relation to the rest of the United States, Montana's cases, deaths and hospitalizations remain significant to high and it is one of the top eight states reporting high numbers of new cases. Counties provide data directly to the CDC regarding COVID cases, transmission, vaccinations and deaths and this data can be found aggregated weekly at covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker. To date, the U.S. reports 587,012 total deaths (an increase of 33,000 over the past month) and a total of 32,994,498 cases, an increase of about 2.3 million cases in the last month. At press time, 66 individuals were hospitalized with complications from the virus in Montana and a total of 1,578 Montanans had died after contracting COVID-19.

Vaccination Push Across the State

Vaccines now being administered have been shown through medical trials to provide significant protection to individuals to prevent or lessen the impact of developing COVID-19. Vaccines are now available for free across Montana for anyone over 16 year old through local health departments and national pharmacy chains such as Wal-Mart, CVS, Walgreens and Albertsons/Safeway. By May 3, approximately 729,328 doses of vaccines have been administered in Montana and 337,159 Montanans are reported fully immunized in the state.

Drought and Deluge

The NWS Montana drought monitor reported extreme drought in Wibaux, Dawson, Richland, Sheridan and East Roosevelt counties and severe drought in Daniels, McCone, Prairie, West Roosevelt, Valley and north Phillips county. Looking ahead, NWS noted that there is potential for the drought to get worse over the next few months across the eastern half of the state. Scattered snow showers, freezing drizzle, graupel and rainstorms continued across the state during April and pea-sized hail was reported around Malstrom Air Force Base and Highwood on April 8 and in Beaverhead and Madison counties on April 24. On April 18 and 19, a weather system dumped 15" of new snow at Wolf Creek and up to 6" and 9" of snow in areas across western and northwestern Montana. Multiple rounds of precipitation impacted central Montana on April 24, with some locations above 4,000 feet receiving upwards of 1' of new snow. By April 28, warm, dry, and breezy conditions across the state led to increased fire danger across much of central and eastern Montana.

Sources: National Weather Service, Centers for Disease Control and Montana DPHHS.

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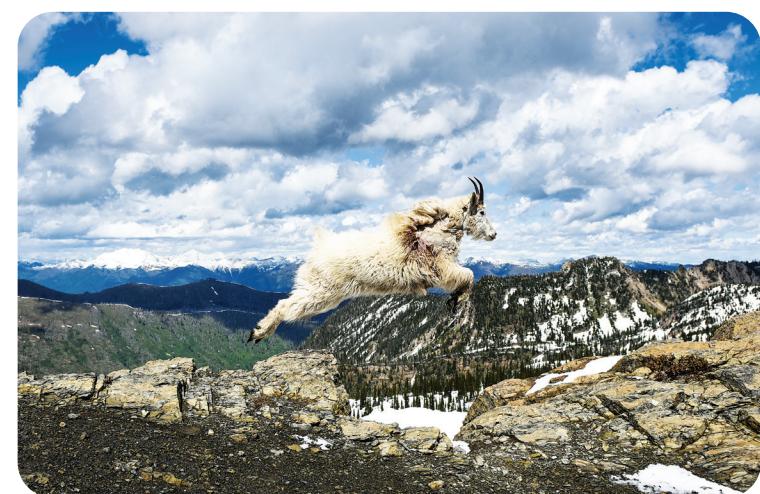
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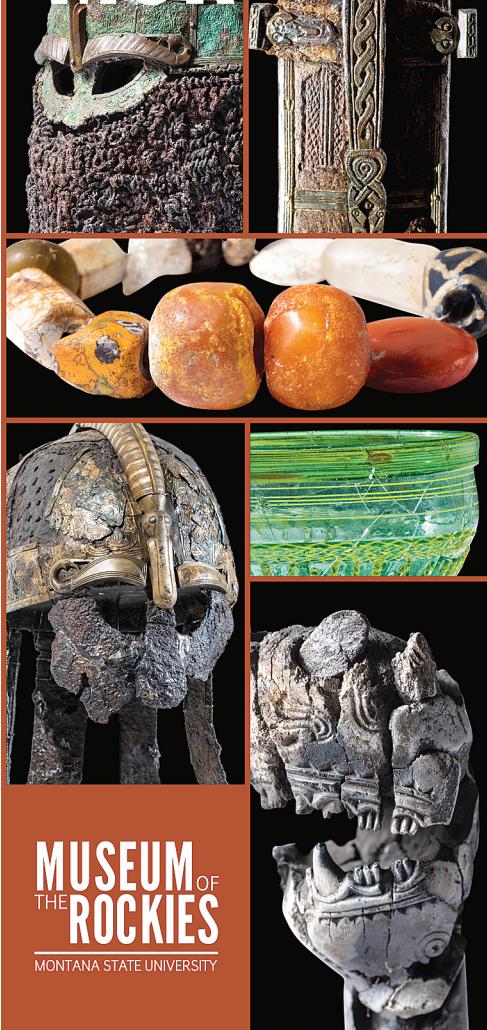
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ON THE COVER A number of guitars, including a limited edition Tom Petty SJ-200 Wildflower acoustic guitar, sit ready to be strung and hand-finished in the Gibson acoustic guitar factory in Bozeman, Montana.

MONTANA PRESS MONTHLY

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BYGONE DAYS

Bygone Days are compiled from archives of Montana newspapers. Current years featured are 1897, 1937 and 1962. For daily Bygone Days, follow @MontanaPress on Facebook.

The Anaconda Standard
May 1, 1897

"Fell Among Friends. Little Homer Cole of Butte Wanders From Home. When Dan Elgin saw him last night on Commercial avenue he was a dirty, ragged little urchin and the tears were cutting furrows through the dust which covered his face. Into eyes reddened by long crying he was digging a pair of small, grimy fists, while full-grown sobs in rapid succession were threatening to shake off his clothes and boots. He was lost and he knew it. Furthermore, he was hungry and tired. The piteous little picture appealed to a soft spot in Elgin's heart and he tucked the little fellow under his arm and took him over to the Palace hotel, where Proprietor McDonald gave him a good hearty meal and put him to bed, not before, however, the little chap had fallen asleep in his chair from pure exhaustion. He said his name was Homer Cole and that he was 8 years old. His mother lives at 25 West Silver street in Butte, and he has three brothers and three sisters. Wednesday afternoon he and another boy by the name of Carmel Haney boarded the B., A. & P. train for wherever it might take them, getting on the front platform of the baggage car. The world was big, so they had been told, and they wanted to see some of it. The ride was over for them when they got to Gregson and their aspirations were nipped in the bud by the railway officials, who put them off. It was almost dark by this time, but nothing daunted they trudged on towards Anaconda, which they reached long after dark and found a place to sleep in the old depot in the southern part of town. A breakfast was given them in the morning, but during the day they got separated and then Homer's troubles began. Hungry and tired and footsore, he did not know which way to turn, when Dan Elgin appeared and took him in tow. And it was about time, for the little fellow was wearing a pair of his

father's rubber boots and he had done so much walking that his feet were completely blistered. His troubles were over when he reached the Palace. Everyone was anxious to play the part of the Good Samaritan and the little fellow found lots of friends.... Yesterday a subscription was taken up and W.A. Cobb, with the assistance of Miss Green, started out and bought a complete new outfit from shoes to cap and sent him home to his mother yesterday afternoon with a letter asking his mother not to punish him for his little journey in the world."

The Anaconda Standard
May 1, 1897

"Elk Meat Seller Sentenced. Special Dispatch to the Standard. Bozeman, April 30—Considering that Eli Langanacs, who yesterday pleaded guilty to selling elk meat here, is only the tool of those who kill and get him to dispose of the game for them, Judge McPherson gave Langanacs a light sentence to-day. He was fined \$50 and in default of payment he will spend a month in the county bastille. Nevertheless it is stated on good authority that the cunning Frenchman has no less than \$1,500 in the bank, but he prefers to serve out his sentence. Game Warden Keown has made no further arrests, but has a number of cases, which he has referred to the county attorney, of those believed to have killed elk."

The Fergus County Argus
May 5, 1897

"Calamity Jane was in town this week selling a book which purports to be her 'life.' As the biography of a pioneer of Billings the work meets with a ready sale.—Billings Time."

The Anaconda Standard
May 10, 1897

"Their First Run. Members of the Wheelmen's Club Go to Warm Springs and Back. While Anaconda was batting Butte all over the diamond at the park yesterday afternoon, about 30 cyclers were pumping here and Warm Springs, and pumping hard, too. At 1:30 o'clock the start was made from the city of the Wheelmen's club, and a merry spin it was, barring a few slight accidents and one more serious than the rest. In the party were a few lady cyclists and their presence seemed to inspire the brave boys to do better work than is usual on such occasions. The start was marred by an accident to Marion Church, who was thrown and sustained injuries that prevented him from carrying out his part of the programme. Aside from this the run to the Springs was made in good time and without serious mishap. It was different on the return. There was a strong wind, through which the riders had to bore. Three ladies had to be towed into port, and that was no easy task. Ropes were fastened to the ladies' wheels and the boys did the pulling while the ladies balanced their wheels and made the work as light as possible. All reached home in safety, but the boys were tired and exhausted, because they said they were."



Move the wheels in a small circle. Holding them vertically before the eye they will seemingly turn round and round.

The Fergus County Argus
May 12, 1897

"Missoulian: A sheepherder in Fergus county bitten by a rattlesnake chopped off his finger to save his life. His friends claim he was pricked by a cactus spike and mutilated himself in order to secure some sheep dip he knew was at the ranch house nearby. This is not plausible, though, for Fergus county sheep dip is more deadly than rattlesnake pizen [sic]."

The Big Timber Pioneer
May 20, 1937

"Wendell Wright's Showing Gives Him Tryout for Movie Screen Star. Livingston Enterprise: What probably millions of young people dream about but comes true to only a chosen few has become a reality for Wendell Wright, 20-year-old Boulder river young man and an amateur bronco rider and bulldogger. He is in Hollywood—film mecca of the world—for a screen test. Last summer during Livingston's annual Roundup and Fourth of July celebration Wendell was participating in some of the events—mostly amateur bronc riding and bulldogging. Among the thousands who watched the young man perform was Bob Cobb of the famous Brown Derby restaurant in Hollywood. Impressed with Wendell's appearance, Cobb asked him if he had ever considered going into the motion pictures. At first the Boulder lad thought Cobb, friend of many a movie star, was joking and said so. When Cobb assured him he was serious, Wendell admitted that if he had the opportunity to enter the movies he would 'grab it real quick.' A picture of the Boulder youth was given Cobb. And there the matter seemed to stand. The Roundup ended, Wendell returned to his home on the Boulder, Cobb to Hollywood. A few weeks ago Wendell received a letter from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio officials. Would he come to Hollywood? How much expense money would he want? Would he go to Hollywood? He would! Wires flew thick and fast for a few days and Wendell left a week ago yesterday for the Wonder City for his screen test. Cobb, apparently highly impressed by Wright's picturesque appearance, arranged for studio officials to give the young man an opportunity. Wright is tall, dark and handsome, and it is assumed that if he 'makes good' he will be given parts in 'westerns.' He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Wright, operators of a small dude ranch on the Boulder."

The Big Timber Pioneer
May 20, 1937

"Many Towns Hold Rat Drives But Zortman Miners Protect Them as Valuable Friends. Several towns in Montana keep up a continual fight against the rat menace and it is hard for the residents of those towns to believe the story told by a Zortman miner that rats are welcome there and protected. Jim Martenic, who recently visited Roy from the Zortman mines, stated that the formation in the mines is rather loose and cave-ins are common. Sand is the choice home of the rats and there are many living in the mine. The management instructs the men to protect them and if any man is found molesting them he is apt to lose his job. Their value is based on the fact that they give the workers notice that a cave-in is coming. It seems they have a super sense in detecting the slipping of dirt long before man notices it. Then the rats begin to run. When miners see the rats running, they run in the same direction. Within a few minutes the cave-in comes. Men who have worked there for a long time say rats have actually saved many miners from injury or possible death. In digging out cave-ins they have never found a crippled or dead rat. Mr. Martenic said that, although he disliked rats before, he feels friendly toward them now."

The Dillon Daily Tribune
May 28, 1962

"Two Dillon Juveniles Flee Robbery of Dell Store in Stolen Truck After One Wounded—Both Caught At Armstead. Two Dillon boys, one 15 and the other 16, led authorities on a wild chase Saturday before being caught and lodged in the county jail. Sheriff Lloyd Thomas said the boys stole a county truck at Armstead and drove to Dell where they burglarized the Dell Mercantile. Herb Rogers, owner of the store, was awakened by the prowlers at 3 a.m., in time to fire two shots at them, wounding one in the hand... the fugitives were chased to Armstead where they jumped from the speeding truck which struck a cabin belonging to Mrs. Brown. The impact was so great a wall was moved 10 inches off the foundation... The wounded boy was caught following the crash while the other hid in brush on the Beaverhead river. Deputy sheriff Bill Flynn found him Saturday night, cold and hungry. About \$8 in money, cigarettes and a lantern were stolen at the Dell store, the loot being recovered. The boys will be given a hearing in juvenile court today, Sheriff Thomas said."

The Big Timber Pioneer
May 31, 1962

"Getting The Word To All The People. A patrolman and a deputy sheriff appealed to the people of Whitehall, in an open letter, in the Jefferson Valley News, to keep their children from flouting the driving laws. It said, in part: 'You wouldn't, I am sure, teach your children to go shoplifting. Driving without a license and shoplifting are both violations of the law, both are misdemeanors the only difference being, no one difference being, no one gets crippled or killed by a shoplifter. 'One parent told us a long as other children were driving, his child was going to drive. I suppose if the other children had taken poison, so would his child. Some reasoning.' The officers announced that they will enforce the law as it is written. If they find a child driving illegally, they will take the car away from him, deliver him home, and issue a summons to his parents." ★

MONTANA VOICES

Opinion: Out of Control Partisan Propaganda

When the disastrous 2021 legislative session finally adjourned Montanans breathed a collective sigh of relief that, at least for now, the creation of dangerous, unconstitutional, and inhumane laws had come to an end. But now follows the tidal wave of Republican propaganda from legislators and Governor Gianforte lauding their so-called “accomplishments” in terms that would make a spin doctor dizzy.

To help my fellow citizens understand the difference between reality and the alternate reality in which Republicans apparently dwell, here's a quick translation of some of their post-session “talking points” taken from a variety of media articles and a recent column by a Republican legislator:

“Reforming taxes to promote job growth and wages” = enacting tax breaks that disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

“Upholding individual rights and freedoms” = investigating environmental groups who challenge government decisions under their First Amendment rights, busting and fining those who protest pipelines.

“Expanding our 2nd Amendment rights, and protecting life” = allowing people to carry concealed weapons without a permit almost anywhere, including college campuses and bars. What could go wrong?

“Allowing for education savings plans to apply to K-12” = divert funding from public schools to private schools

“Back the Blue” = Ignore warnings from law enforcement that widespread concealed carry would endanger their already dangerous job and lead to increased fatalities. Meanwhile, nullifying enforcement of federal gun laws.

“Strengthened emergency powers” = prohibits the governor and/or local health authorities from taking necessary steps to protect public health in an emergency such as the coronavirus pandemic.

“Reforms to FWP, public lands and wildlife management” = Stacking the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission with outfitters who make money selling opportunities to kill public wildlife

“Better balance predator controls and wild game policies” = allow hunting of black bears with dogs, use of snares and bait for wolves or anything else that might get caught in them like dogs, non-target threatened and endangered species such as grizzly bears, wolverines, lynx.

“Implement last November’s I-190 marijuana initiative” = ignore the priorities for use of marijuana tax revenues approved by 57% of the voters -- more than voted for Gianforte -- and divert them from conservation and public lands access to other uses.

“Allow recreational, or adult-use, marijuana in our society” = Allow county commissioners to nullify the state law and initiative if their county didn't vote to approve it.

“Utilizing federal funds to address critical infrastructure” = spending \$2.7 billion

from President Biden's \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act that not a single Republican member of Congress voted for.

“Helping our citizens by protecting our personal checkbooks” = cutting the \$300 federal unemployment assistance upon which 24,240 Montanans rely and dropping out of a program that extended unemployment benefits to self-employed, the underemployed, independent contractors and individuals who have been unable to work due to health or COVID-19 affected reasons.

The list goes on and on, but suffice it to say what you won't hear much about are the growing number of legal challenges to the constitutionality of laws that interfere in private contracts to benefit Colstrip's outmoded coal plants, discriminate against transsexuals, degrade Montana's water quality by removing numeric standards for pollutants, overturning the 40-year old nuclear initiative that requires a vote of the public before nuclear facilities may be constructed in Montana, overturning the citizen initiative to prohibit guaranteed big game licenses to non-residents to benefit outfitters, voter suppression measures, and prohibiting private property owners from having bison on their own land while giving county

commissioners the ability to ban bison transfers to their county entirely.

But despite their despicable efforts to prohibit the restoration of native bison – the national mammal – to Montana, there's good news, too. The Department of Interior has announced the beginning of planning to bring bison back to federal lands on the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge and U.L. Bend Wilderness Area. And given the legislature's and governor's attacks on native wildlife and the environment, we can expect more, not less, federal actions to protect and restore Montana's natural resource heritage.

And finally, here's a heart-warming story of the Blackfeet Nation's cross-border efforts to share Covid vaccines with three Canadian tribes in the Blackfeet Confederacy – as well as non-tribal Canadians – seeking vaccinations. Despite the enmity shown by the former president for Canadians, it's the Blackfeet who step up to do the right and humane thing by helping out our northern neighbors in their time of dire need.

Make no mistake, there's a battle on for the soul and future of Montana and who and what we want to be. The first step is to reject the fictitious political propaganda which rose to astronomic heights under Trump and continues under Montana's Republicans. Only by seeking out the truth and acting jointly and individually to restore respect, dignity, and honor to our state and nation will we succeed in keeping the heart of what makes Montana the “Last Best Place.” ★

—GEORGE OCHENSKI

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MONTANA BOOKS

Maggie Shipstead Flies High with “Great Circle”

Prohibition-era Missoula provides the launchpad for “Great Circle,” rising star Maggie Shipstead’s breakout third novel. Based in Los Angeles, Shipstead manages to circumnavigate the globe and the nuances of Hollywood in a most timely historical setting.

After their rescue as infants from an ocean-liner sinking in 1909 and following their mother’s death, Marian and her twin brother Jamie are shipped to their troubled uncle in Missoula, where they are raised amid the chaos of Prohibition.

As a pre-teen, Marian falls hard for flight after a married pair of barnstormers take her aboard for a taste of rolls, loops and nosedives. In Montana she meets bootlegger Barclay Macqueen, who provides the financing for her aviation training, albeit at a most unromantic cost. When their disastrous marriage crashes, Marian takes off, becoming a bush pilot in Alaska, ferrying Spitfires for the Royal Air Force during World War Two, and in 1949, she attempts her dream, a pole-to-pole circumnavigation of the globe, which may have ended in her own unconfirmed crash in Antarctica.

In the midst of this tale, Shipstead shifts with ease to a present-day, first-person narrative of Hollywood film star Hadley Baxter, herself an orphan, who has been cast to star in the screen version of Marian’s aviation adventures. The challenges that both women share in pursuit of their passions echo loudly in today’s tempestuous times.

The author, a graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and a former Wallace Stegner Fel-

low at Stanford University, literally hit the road after graduation, taking an around-the-world celebration trip followed by several years as a travel writer. Her previous novels include “Seating Arrangements” (2012), set in New England, and “Astonish Me” (2014), set in late twentieth-century California.

MONTANA PRESS: You’ve certainly found your fun with both writing and travel, it seems.

MAGGIE SHIPSTEAD: Yes. This book, the writing I had done for travel magazines was kind of symbiotic; it was very helpful for my research to be able to travel for free to some of these remote places. And then also I would randomly go to places that then found their way into the book. I went to the Cook Islands just on a layover going to and from New Zealand, and then when time came to figure out a route around the planet, I was like oh, I’ve been there; why not go?

MP: Where did your travel fever begin?

SHIPSTEAD: I grew up in Orange County, California. I was there until college, and then when I left, I had no plans to live in California again. I was out of California for about eight years I guess, and then when I had this scholarship at Stanford and came back as an adult, I kind of saw the appeal of California more clearly than when you’re a teenager.

MP: You started writing “Great Circle” in 2014. What took you so long?



“By far the most likely end of Amelia Earhart’s story is that she ran out of fuel, crashed into the ocean, and drowned. But people have a really hard time accepting that and have spent most of a century concocting alternative stories. Why? That question is very interesting to me. But Amelia’s character and personality have little in common with Marian’s. There’s no real life woman I modeled her after, but I absolutely drew inspiration from the bravery and determination of early female pilots—Beryl Markham, Elinor Smith, Jean Batten, Amy

Johnson, Bessie Coleman, Jackie Cochran, just to name a few—and from women who, like Marian, transported military planes during World War II.”

—Maggie Shipstead

SHIPSTEAD: I had to figure out the timeline, but I started in earnest in 2014, which was when I settled in L.A. And before that, I’d had some false starts, including I spending February and March of that year in Missoula, and then I had this period of three years where I didn’t live anywhere.

MP: By choice, presumably?

SHIPSTEAD: Yes. I was done at Stanford and “Seating Arrangements” had come out and “Astonish Me” was on its way out, so I had income from my books. And usually, you move to a place because of a job or school or a relationship, and I didn’t have any of those things, so it became sort of paralyzing just to figure out where to live. And Missoula was one of my candidates.

MP: What drew you to Missoula?

SHIPSTEAD: I was just curious about it. I’d heard good things; everybody likes it. I thought about New York and I had a lot of friends in L.A., which is closest to my parents but not too close, but this was sort of the wild card in a way. So yeah, I went there for two months, and at that point, while I knew I was going to write “Great Circle,” I thought I was going to set it in Nebraska for some reason. Maybe there were some famous pilots from Nebraska; that was probably it. But it wasn’t until after I left that I realized that a really interesting setting would be Missoula.

MP: Where it’s hard to go to sleep because you can’t stop looking around.

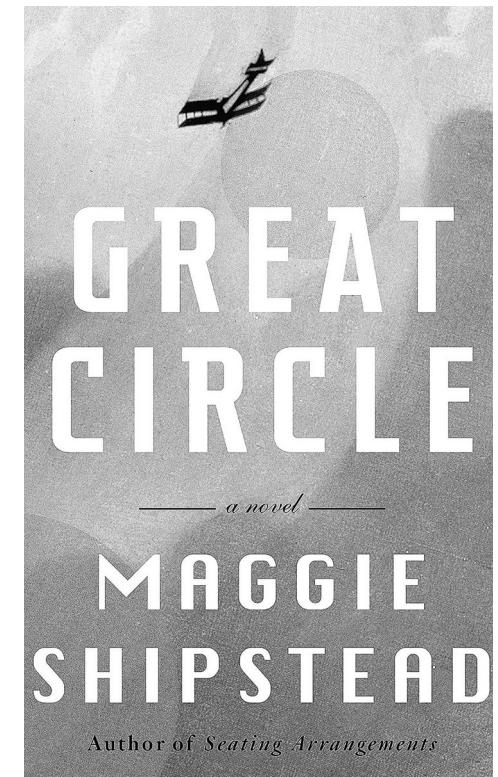
SHIPSTEAD: Yeah; I’d rented part of a house from a friend of a friend so I was up on the side of Mount Sentinel. You can kind of picture it as this sort of modernist house right where the trails started and I had a dog, so I could open the door and be out on this trail every morning and overlooking the whole valley. It was just spectacular.

MP: When did you acquire the pilot perspective that inspired “Great Circle?”

SHIPSTEAD: I found the seed of the idea in 2012 when I was still working on edits of “Astonish Me” with my editor. I was in New Zealand at the airport in Auckland, and there’s a statue of the pilot Jean Batten, who was from New Zealand and was the first person to fly solo from London to Auckland. It was just a cool statue and there’s a quote from her on it that said, ‘I was destined to be a wanderer.’ And that kind of stuck in my head and inspired the first line in “Great Circle,” which is “I was born to be a wanderer.” I was still sort of busy with “Astonish Me,” so for a couple years, I just had it in my head to write a pilot book, but no real plans beyond that. I never sort of plot out or outline my books; I just kind of have to start. So I really didn’t know what I was getting into when I finally did start in 2014. It just sort of snowballed.

MP: How did Missoula interrupt your fictional wanderlust?

SHIPSTEAD: I did come back to Missoula in 2016 after I’d started working on the book in earnest and knew that I was setting it there, so that gave me a chance to do a little more purposeful research. Something really serendipitous happened: I was at the little aviation museum at the airport and started poking around, and these two guys came and started wheeling this historic aircraft out of the big doors, and in just sort of an offhand way, one of them was like, “Oh, tell that lady if she wants to come, she can come along.” And I was like, me?! So I went out with them and went up in a 1927 Travel Air, which is the kind of airplane I had Marian learn to



fly. So I got to fly in the plane, in the place! It was incredible! I don’t know their names. They were my little guardian-airplane angels.

MP: Did they let you take the pilot seat?

SHIPSTEAD: No, they were pretty wise! I didn’t learn how to fly. I sort of considered it. I was up in a glider once and was at the controls briefly and found it very unsettling, so I don’t think that was for me. But my brother is just leaving the Air Force after 20 years; he doesn’t fly anymore but he flew C-130s, so he was also a really useful resource, someone with that lifelong knowledge that he needed to fly.

MP: In the book, infant twins Marian and Jamie share a pre-Depression start on their rocky flight as well.

SHIPSTEAD: What I kind of started with when I started writing was this: I knew Marian would disappear while trying to fly around the world north to south, so I kind of picked the year for that and then worked backwards. I wrote pretty much beginning to end, although it got restructured a couple times in terms of where and how her around-the-world flight fell in the book. I had this idea for the ocean-liner disaster, and so I think where they were born was determined by when shipping was the way it was and when there could have been a plausible disaster like that.

Once I had the starting point and the end point, (the book) sort of filled itself in and I was able to use (historic aviator Charles) Lindbergh’s flight as the big landmark in Marian’s life. I also knew pretty early on that I was going to have her transport war planes in the war, although I did a lot of research before I decided that she would do it in the U.K., because there were sort of comparable female pilots in the U.S. So those were my plans when I started, the war and her disappearance, but everything else sort of grew pretty organically.

MP: Introducing Hollywood Hadley into the mix helps the book really take off. How did she work her way into the story?

SHIPSTEAD: I knew pretty early that I didn’t want the book to be this dense, solid loaf of historical fiction; I wanted a way to come at it from a different angle. So Hadley with her intense, first-person voice was what I started with, and that became a way to write about L.A. as well. And I think Hollywood is fascinating. I have a lot of friends here who



work in the (entertainment) business one way or another, and I wanted Hadley to be a way of getting at how unknowable people's lives really are, especially once you factor in some time and distance. So the reader sort of gets Marian's life through Marian and knows the truth so far as Marian sees it, and then can also see how things get lost and distorted over time, which is a natural process.

MP: Did you have reading and writing in your head as a kid?

SHIPSTEAD: Not so much writing but definitely reading. I was the kind of kid who'd get in trouble in elementary school for hiding and reading, but I never wanted to be a writer, not even really through college. It wasn't until I was in grad school for writing that kind of forced the issue. It's like I didn't know what to do after college. I'd been an English major and had taken a couple writing workshops and I worked at a law firm because when you're verbal, people say to be a lawyer, and then I just applied to Iowa not really bothering to do my research about other programs, and I kind of assumed that I wouldn't get in and planned to reapply the next year. But then I got in, that was kind of a huge crossroads in my life. I think it was actually to my advantage that I didn't have a lot of investment in the idea of being a writer when I got there; it's something that happened and that I pursued because it kept working out. So yeah, I wasn't really guided by a romantic vision of a typewriter, anything like that; I was just "This is what I can do," and of course it's very important to my identity now.

MP: As things worked out, writing wound up feeding both your passions by leading to your career as a travel writer.

SHIPSTEAD: Right. And I think these past seven years working on "Great Circle" have changed things a lot, because before that, I had two books in two years. I was much more wrapped up in the literary scene and paying attention to what everyone was doing

and worrying about stuff, and then, because this book just took so long to write, I moved away from that and became interested in other things. My life took on a slightly different shape that ultimately was very helpful.

MP: I know it's early but with "Great Circle" this question is so obvious: any movie bids yet?

SHIPSTEAD: I have an agent at CAA whose problem this is, so I know she's working on it, but no, nothing yet. And my other books have both been optioned. I just don't worry about it. If it happens, great, but I can't control those moves.

MP: So how do you plan to spend the next seven years?

SHIPSTEAD: I would prefer not to take that long to write a book. This was an incredibly difficult project. I sold a collection of short stories with it, so that collection will come out next year, probably next summer. I have started writing another novel. I've had a few false starts; I've tried things that didn't work, and then finally, I have one that I think has legs, so I've written a hundred pages or so. But this month and next are kind of lost causes; it's all doing stuff for "Great Circle." Hopefully I'll get back to doing some travel writing, too. I haven't been on an airplane for more than a year, so it will be interesting.

MP: Any Montana plans?

SHIPSTEAD: Not at the moment. I would love to go back. Actually, right before the pandemic, I traveled to The Ranch at Rock Creek, and that was my first time just flying into Missoula since I finished the book. So it was kind of all emotional to come back and be reminded of how much I liked being there. ★

—JAY MACDONALD

Country Bookshelf in Bozeman will host an online discussion with the author on May 18. Visit www.countrybookshelf.com for more information.

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Bozeman's Historic Gibson Guitar Factory



PHOTOS BY LINDSAY WELLS

Despite being over fifteen hundred miles apart, Bozeman and Kalamazoo, Michigan have spun a rich history together thanks to Orville Gibson, the creator of the Gibson Guitar brand.

Gibson began making instruments in 1894 and over a century-plus the company, now officially known as Gibson Brands Inc., remains tied to legendary musicians ranging from Chuck Berry and Bob Dylan to Sheryl Crow and Neil Young.

In recent times, Gibson consolidated their headquarters to Nashville, Tennessee and now has three main branches: two Nashville plants creating electric guitars and, since 1989, a Bozeman, Montana plant producing acoustic guitars.

"There are a lot of people who don't even know Gibson is here," says Robi Johns, who works in Product Development Acoustic at Gibson Brands and has been an employee at the Bozeman plant since day one. "We did not advertise that. We did not flaunt it. But as the years went on, we are getting more and more attention from Bozeman. The people are just surprised at all of the acoustics that are going around the world, many of which are famous models which go back one hundred years, all built right here in Bozeman."

A 2019 *American Songwriter* article aptly describes the "human touch" luthiers and artisans use in creating Gibson guitars, noting that "some people consider it a piece of art as much as a musical instrument."

"After the backs, sides, necks, fret boards and other parts of the guitars, made of raw woods including walnut, Indian rosewood, and Hawaiian koa, are machined, skilled craftsmen and craftswomen meticulously perform delicate trim work by hand," *American Songwriter* explains. From there the instrument is analyzed for the slightest faults where, if any are found, they are returned for refinement. The ultimate result is the shipment of guitars that continue the reputation of an iconic brand of instruments... heard on countless legendary recordings since recording was in its infancy."

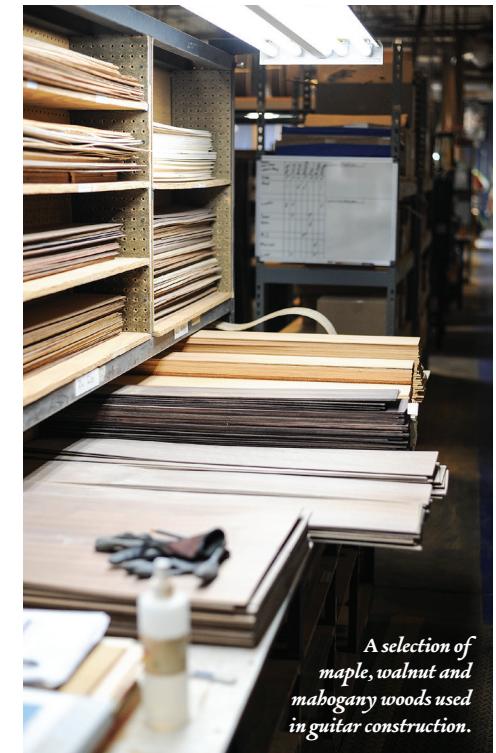
On March 3 of this year, Gibson executives arrived in Bozeman and broke new ground as part of a massive expansion plan.

"The new expansion will effectively double the size of the acoustic facility," Gibson representatives explained, noting that a custom shop highlighting the craftsmanship in Bozeman was also planned. The number of employees will rise from 180 as of March, 2021 to at least 280 by this year's end.

Gibson CEO James Curleigh says the seed for growth began in late 2018 as the company looked ahead.



According to John Hannigan, Brand Manager of Gibson Brands in Bozeman, wood from the same species is used to create the back and sides of a Gibson guitar. The top is usually Sitka spruce. The neck can be a variety of woods and is attached to the body with a dovetail neck joint and hot hide glue, a traditional technique known for transferring tone in the instrument.



“Very quickly we realized the acoustic market was an acoustic opportunity for Gibson, and the acoustic facility was all ready for investment,” Curleigh explained in a late March interview. “Some of it was in quality and some of it was in capacity. We said, ‘Why not do the whole thing at once?’

“What it’s going to allow us to do is to get that balance of innovation and craftsmanship and automation in a modern way, but at the same time we make hand-crafted instruments, so it gives us the perfect balance for all that to happen with this idea. In terms of talking to the folks in Bozeman, we could literally hit the ground running. Great team, great starting point, great guitars coming out of Bozeman. We just needed more of them. And that’s what we’re doing.”

FLATIRON MANDOLINS & BANJO COMPANY

While expansion of the facility will be completed at the end of 2021 (with the custom shop opening in early 2022), Bozeman’s plant origins date to the late 1980s. Robi Johns says the groundwork for Gibson’s affiliation with Bozeman was laid in part by Flatiron Mandolins and Banjo Company.

According to Guitar-List.com, Chuck Morrison began building mandolins in Colorado in 1975. The following year, Steve Carlson, co-owner of Bozeman’s “Backporch Pickin’ Parlor,” purchased two Flatiron mandolins (named after the “giant slabs of rock that overlook Boulder [Colorado]”) from Morrison to sell at his shop. After learning that Morrison had considered getting out of the business, Carlson convinced him to move Flatiron’s operations to Bozeman and to expand production. Morrison and Carlson opened the first Montana Flatiron Mandolin shop in 1979, in what once was the Bozeman Hotel.

Shortly after taking over, Carlson slowly but steadily grew Flatiron in the early to mid-1980s, thanks to stellar craftsmanship by luthiers such as Bruce Weber and Ren Ferguson.

In a 2014 YouTube interview with *Acoustic Letter*, luthier Ren Ferguson remembers the inauspicious first encounter between Carlson and Gibson back at the 1986 NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) International Sound and Music Expo. According to Ferguson, Carlson approached a Gibson executive with a Flatiron mandolin, stating that Gibson “built terrible mandolins and we build the best in the world” suggesting that their Bozeman company would like to be Gibson’s supplier.

“The executive took the mandolin, looked at it and goes, ‘Huh,’ handed it back to him and said, ‘I think I’ll just sue you and put you out of business,’ Ferguson recalls. A cease-and-desist order soon followed, resulting in Flatiron concentrating on banjo production.

Ferguson adds that Stan Jay, one of the founders of New York’s acclaimed Mandolin Brothers music shop, had business ties to both Gibson and Flatiron. Jay was selling too few mandolins due to the spat and “eventually he convinced Gibson to consider buying us,” Ferguson recalls. A deal was struck in 1987 with Gibson purchasing Flatiron. Until just a few years ago, Gibson still employed a few original Flatiron employees.

“These instrument builders were very skilled, and they were building mandolins here,” Robi Johns recalls. “These mandolins were very highly-acclaimed and also displayed the qualities and characteristics of Gibson’s famous mandolins from the late nineteenth into the twentieth century. So the builders were already here, that’s why it ended up in Bozeman.”

The new Bozeman plant soon began producing Gibson’s signature acoustic guitars. Robi Johns says the first guitar was shipped from Bozeman in July of 1989. In the workshop’s infancy, approximately 15 guitars

a week were created, with some of the tools used shipped from the original Gibson plant in Kalamazoo.

According to a 2008 Billings Gazette article, “All of Gibson’s electric and acoustic guitars were then being produced in Nashville, and the new owners wanted to free up as much production space as possible for the firm’s biggest seller, the Gibson Les Paul solid-body electric guitar.”

“Gibson was not fulfilling that (acoustic) part of the market, based on their history up to that time,” Johns explains. “Gibson left the acoustic market alone; it was developing in Nashville with the electric market. In a way they didn’t choose Bozeman: Bozeman kind of chose Gibson.”

The guitars that we build are not highly automated, as you know,” says Robi Johns. “They require a ton of hand work. I remember seeing a garage of these green, old body-bending machines from Kalamazoo. So the biggest challenge was the tooling variations.”

The varying tools resulted in a “pretty rough” first decade at Bozeman despite the market and demand already in place. While Bozeman’s plant grew, a plant in nearby Belgrade produced Gibson Flatiron instruments, namely banjos and mandolins.



The machinery in the Gibson Factory is built and maintained by a machine shop on the premises. Some machines like the rib bending machine (above, left) have components dating back to Kalamazoo and have been maintained to produce guitars for decades. Each fret is hand-pressed with delicate precision (far right) as is the logo and decorative inlay on each headstock.



A new expansion of the plant in Bozeman (at right) will include a Custom Shop, showroom and the possibility of tours returning. At present, Gibson's acoustic guitars can be viewed and purchased at Music Villa in Bozeman.

Pick guards crafted of nitro celluloid, with designs dating from the late 1930s to a "Hummingbird" design from 1960. The guards, like other areas of the guitar, are hand painted or inlaid with mother-of-pearl and abalone and feature hand-engraved artwork.



The "sunburst" finish (at right) was initially developed by Gibson. Every burst is hand-sprayed and no two are exactly alike.

The lacquer finish is made of nitrocellulose which sinks down in every grain of the wood and evaporates over a lifetime, allowing the wood to naturally age, mature, and resonate. The dovetail neck joint, the nitro lacquer and a unique domed-top construction are all hallmarks of a Gibson acoustic guitar.

In late 1996, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* reported Gibson moved its mandolin production to Nashville and closed its Belgrade operations.

"We noticed that by 1993 people were highly acclaiming our instruments," Robi Johns recalls. But it wasn't until about 1999, 10 years later, that we hit a stride. We hit the market and we're consistent."

That penetration continues. Bozeman doesn't rival Los Angeles or New York as a music-industry mecca. Yet neither of those cities are home to creating custom guitars for so many musical giants.

Johns says he is proud that over 100 custom models have been crafted here since 1989; Sheryl Crow, Bob Dylan, Slash, and Pete Townshend are some of the artists showcased.

While plans for signature models celebrating Orianthi and Noel Gallagher loom, Gibson recently issued a limited edition run of 100 of the Tom Petty SJ-200 Wildflower acoustic guitar. The "big jangle" sound from that instrument inspired the late artist to pen and craft much of the material found on his 1994

"Wildflowers" album.

"For a long time, Gibson had transactional relations with artists," CEO James Curleigh explains. "We'll make a guitar, you sign the deal and then we move on. Now, we have real passionate relationships with these artists, including with the Tom Petty estate and his daughters."

"For most of the legendary artists, whether they are living or have passed on, we were often building the model that was very sacred to that artist's period of music, (something) that was most impactful for that particular artist," Johns adds.

PREPARED FOR OPPORTUNITY

As was the case with nearly every other music-related business, the global pandemic initially hit Gibson hard, resulting in the Bozeman factory temporarily shutting down in March 2020. The vast majority of dealerships were also temporarily closing their doors. CEO Curleigh says the goal was to brace for the worst while trying to "prepare

for opportunity," which included Bozeman's expansion.

The biggest surprise, amid the pandemic's uncertainty, was how the amount of free time people had resulted in huge demand for acoustic guitars, something Curleigh refers to as the pandemic's "creative moment."

"Last June, July, August folks said, 'Look I got enough toilet paper, I think I'm going to be okay!'" Curleigh explained, "'Sure, I'm going to be more vigilant, but I've got time, and I want to learn something. Is it to cook? Organize my photos on my iPhone? Or is it to play guitar?' A lot of people said, let's play guitar. That's what happened."

As for their personal favorite Gibson acoustic models, Curleigh says he loves the new Tom Petty model, but the black J-45 model with the white pick guard is his pride and joy. Robi Johns says he enjoys the 1930s-era "Jumbos" that evolved into the J-45 because "the tone is so warm and rich in the mid-range."

Curleigh says he is pleased with how the bond between Bozeman and the Gibson brand blossomed over time and he expects expansion plans will plant firmer local roots.

"I think in today's world, there's no option not to engage with the community," he says. "It's not just about being a good neighbor; today, literally, we have the highest number of craftsmen and craftswomen in our Montana factory in our history."

"There's such a good Americana feel to Bozeman and Montana. It just feels right for a town like Bozeman, especially for our acoustic facility," Curleigh concludes.

As for Robi Johns, his roots have been firmly planted in Bozeman for decades. His love for Gibson guitars preceded his current job while his love of Bozeman came upon his arrival.

"I found the Bozeman environment to be inspiring for creative arts like many others have felt," he says. "I found the beautiful value of living in Bozeman as a place where my heart could be free and be creative and be healthy. That's what's kept me here."

If somehow the late Orville Gibson could

drive down 1894 Orville Way and stop in the Bozeman plant, what would he think?

"He would say, 'Wow that's as tight as it gets! There's not an inch of that facility that isn't being used!'" Curleigh opines while staring at a portrait of Gibson. "'You've taken this concept of Gibson to another level! I think he would also say 'What's next?' and 'How do we connect with the next generation?'"

"Orville would thank us actually," Johns adds. "Orville had this vision where the techniques and methods used to build an instrument should be designed and guided to enhance the performance of each instrument in the hand of the player. We've held true to that in Bozeman, Montana."

"We don't build it the easy way; we don't use bolt-on necks; we don't just whip together the bracing; we don't just make the guitar flat; we use a dovetail neck to body joint and use a slower process. All of this putting the beautiful instrument together was designed to make it sound and perform better for the player. That's not going to go away. That's really the beauty of what we do." ★

—JASON MACNEIL



To learn more about Gibson guitars and the guitar-making process, visit GibsonTV.onyoutube.com.

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STATEWIDE ENTERTAINMENT LISTINGS

Music, Performances and Events Across Montana

The monthly calendar is a sampling of events and activities across the state. All events listed are subject to change. Send event updates to: info@montanapress.net.

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A SEASON OF MUSIC

NOVA Center in Billings presents local sopranos singing their way through the season. Local singers will showcase their talents on Fri., May 14, Sat., May 15 at 7:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Sun., May 16. Limited seating, masks are required, and audience members will be socially distanced. For info: NovaCenter.org.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN JAZZ COLLECTIVE

Live at the Babcock Theater in Billings, experience Duke Ellington's 1968 Grammy Award-winning Far East Suite on Sat., May 15 at 7 p.m. For info: RockyMountainJazzCollective.com



A THOUGHTFUL RESPONSE

Using visual thinking strategies, The Square in Great Falls hosts a discussion of two outdoor artworks and two music ensembles by the Great Falls Symphony Orchestra's Cascade String Quartet and The Chinook Winds on Sat., May 15 at 11 a.m. at the Paris Gibson Museum.

Seating is limited.

For info: The-Square.org.



IAN MUNSICK

Pioneering a new brand of country, this Wyoming-born singer/songwriter's upbringing was a mix of working the ranch and working crowds, pulling a thread from Chris LeDoux through Post Malone. Live outside at the Red Oxx Lawn in Billings on Sat., May 15 at 5 p.m. For info: ThePubstation.com.



"FLOURISH: COME HELL OR HIGH WATER"

Gallery 709 in Missoula is featuring works by the artists from the 2020 Open AIR Residency program. From fiber arts and video inspired by the shores of the Flathead Lake Biological Station to sculptural works fabricated by the machines in the new state-of-the-art public library to a dance film, oil paintings, and mixed media inspired by the diverse history of the Historical Fort

Missoula, works will be on display at Montana Art and Framing in Missoula. For info: OpenAirMt.org.



LIVE COMEDY



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Summer is just around the corner and once again the Brewery Follies Show is gearing up for another wacky, fun-filled season at the H.S. Gilbert Brewery in historic Virginia City. Two shows a day, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m., through the summer from Memorial Day weekend through September. For info: BreweryFollies.net



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THE MAGICAL HOURS OF SHIFTING: THE ART OF DALE LIVEZEY



Helena oil painter Dale Livezey strives on the canvas for lively and expansive views of the panoramas and prospects surrounding him. Compulsively, he returns to the same split interdependent themes of landscape again and again – radiance and dark, daybreak and nightfall, the crack of dawn and twilight.

While grand outlooks make up a major portion of the subject matter Livezey depicts, the nuanced and subtle interplay of each painting's earthy tones somehow always looms singular, with eyes drawn to this multihued distinction.

"Many of the compositions that I paint are the same," says Livezey, who was born in rural Ohio. "But I seem to come back to trying different colors. It's not hard to come back to that same beauty again and again – the beauty of the land and its composition. So I can do the same compositions, but with totally different colors. When the composition works right, it is hard not to come back to it again..."

Dale Livezey started painting at age 10, fascinated by the store-bought paint-by-number kits that his mother enjoyed as a hobby. Soon, he wanted his own set of oil paints, purchasing his first set at age 12, copying landscape images out of wildlife magazines. At the age of 20, he moved to Helena, Montana, triggered by the fond memories of family camping vacations and visits to all of the major national parks in the West while he was growing up.

"I've always remembered things like rolling into Dubois (Wyoming) and the night and snow, the evening light, the sage brush and nighthawks flying around. Or taking a trip to Tucson, and seeing the cactus and the roadrunners and the lizards. I like to say that I got here (to Montana) as soon as I could. I worked with a relative here (in Helena) at an antique-car restoration shop and worked as a commercial painter."

VISIONS OF SIMPLIFIED LANDSCAPES

Livezey's attitude toward the capabilities and the possibilities of art was altered dramatically after he attended the Western Rendezvous of Art at the Montana Historical Society.

"I had never in my life known that people could make a living doing their art, sustain themselves with it, or that people could be excited to buy it. It blew me away. Art, I learned, could be something to explore and take seriously. I took a painting workshop that



"Out of the Shadows"



"Spring Storm"

was on location, and in my mid-20s, I started having visions of simplified landscapes and visions of the type of paintings that represent what I do now. It was about simplifying things and focusing on the color of those magic hours of sunrise and sunset."

The lengths Livezey takes to find the right locations and depict the right mood of day are awe-inspiring. Indeed, the essential factor in understanding why so many people now collect his work is the artist's sincerity.

Livezey's earnestness holds sway in the artistic renovation of time, the rearrangement of the pigment of colors of earth and air, his ability to capture the tricky range, color and

quality of the hour and to transport it with a deliberate series of brush strokes in passive and dynamic meditation.

"Sunrises and sunsets are changing and fleeting and I'm visually captured by the great change," he explains, "and there are the psychological effects of witnessing something like the sunset or the shifting of the day. Somehow, as human beings, I think the sunset leaves us feeling grounded, sitting still, watching those magical hours of shifting."

"Yes, we could get philosophical knowing that the day is ending, that the evening is coming, that there will be food, sustenance, followed then by the quiet time before bed.

Sunset sparks the feeling of the unknown and something that could be intimidating.

"The mood of the moment is in addition to what it is we are seeing.... unknown emotional qualities to both sunrise and sunset. And I've always been intrigued by darkness, its progressing to the just before dark place and what emotional qualities are there. It is unknown and a little scary and intimidating. As a kid, I remember trespassing in the woods and navigating in the dark trees after the sunset, and it scared me, and it thrilled me."

Livezey's landscapes of sunlit bright ridges, low horizon lines, and whopping skies stand out for the compassion and control of their rich, vibrant colors, the minimalist splendor of their sovereignty, and the mood and rule they peacefully replicate and express. There, too, is the conscientious interaction of the painter's palette to behold. The flavor of colors applied to one of his paintings is the spin-off of both spontaneity and scrupulousness.

"Still today, there are tons of challenges to working with oil," says Livezey, "There are many techniques to learn in the manipulation of paints. Every pigment has its own unique qualities, and how it behaves with mixing with other colors. I've developed various color palettes, representing colors at various times of day – but I only have a few of those palettes down, and there are so many more of them to be developed."

SEEKING HIS OWN UNIQUE VISIONS

Self-criticism for Livezey is always there, nagging the artist, urging him to do more with less, to create larger themes, to stray with experiment. He understands, however, that his training, the development of his style and his most prominent themes, and his continued success are all things predicated on familiarity.

"I probably only have a half a dozen good ideas the entire year, and everything else is an offshoot of those good ideas," says Livezey. "There's lots of repetition to my art. I'm not one of those creative people who continue to come up with new great things. My next great idea might be a bend in the river, or the hills receding into the background."

"It is easy to feel drained of ideas and enthusiasm, so I am staying excited by working on location and putting myself into that feeling. After 18 to 20 years of living paycheck to paycheck, sale to sale, just treading water, I am incredibly grateful to be at the point of being a full-time artist."

Livezey has fought hard to manage the execution of a career as a painter. He's won more rounds than he's lost, and the only decision that counts has been rendered in the bolstering support of his audience.

When A.B. Guthrie's 1947 novel "The Big Sky" was reissued in 1992, Livezey's sky painting *Evening Glow* was selected as its cover, a moment that galvanized the artist's intent to be a delegate painter of Montana and the American West. Other affirmations in self-assurance have occurred since then, reinforcing the artist's devotion to minimalist art, humble palettes and unaffected auras distilled and symbolized.

Livezey sums his career up quite modestly, "I view myself as a contemporary painter who is still seeking his own unique visions of simplified landscapes." ★

—BRIAN D'AMBROSIO

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Music, Performances and Events Across Montana



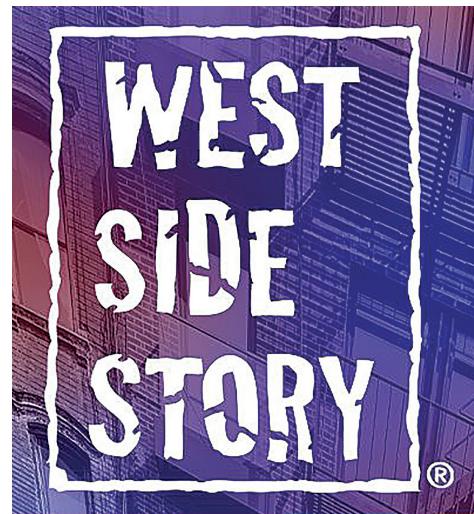
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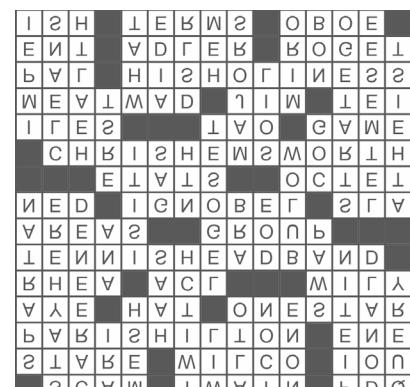
The "West Side Story" Symphony Concert originally scheduled for March 14, 2020 has been rescheduled for Fri., May 21 at 7:30 p.m. and Sun., May 23 at 5 p.m. at Faith Chapel (517 Shiloh Road) in Billings. For info: Billingssymphony.org.



DOCUMENT DETECTIVES

On May 25 at 1 p.m., Fort Missoula historians will host a free webinar, "Researching Black History in Montana and Missoula," exploring a blend of under-told history and a peek behind the scenes of how the history was pieced together. For info: FortMissoulaMuseum.org.

JONESIN'?



The Oak Ridge Boys ELVIRA 40

OAK RIDGE BOYS

These Tennessee songsters have won every possible award in the country music industry and enjoyed chart-topping success on the pop charts as well. The concert at the Fergus Center in Lewistown on Sat., June 5 - 6:30 p.m. will benefit Central Montana Medical Center. Tickets available at the Lewistown Art Center at 535-8278 or online at CMMC.health/oaks.

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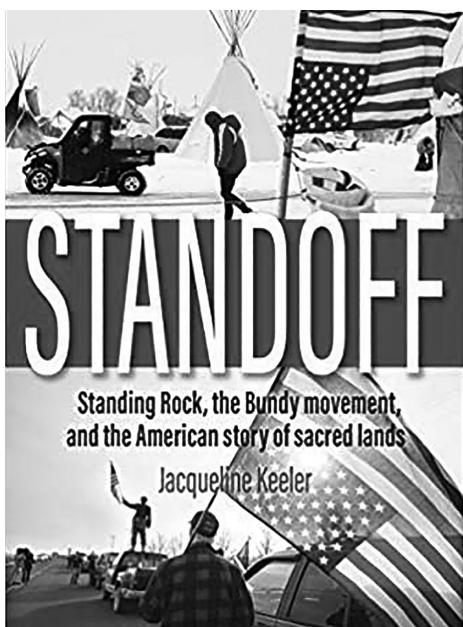


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MONTANA BOOK EVENTS



**JACQUELINE KEELER
BETSY GAINES QUAMMEN**

Wed., May 12 - 6 p.m.

After the Capitol insurrection in 2021, what role does the West play in ongoing rebellion?

Jacqueline Keeler and Betsy Gaines Quammen discuss the future of rebellious movements in the West. Keeler is a Dine/

Ihanktonwan Dakota writer living in Portland, Oregon. She is editor of the anthology "Standoff:

Standing Rock, the Bundy Movement and the American Story of Sacred Lands." Quammen is the author of "American Zion," a story of the ongoing feud between

Mormon ranching family the Bundys, the federal government, and the American public. For info:

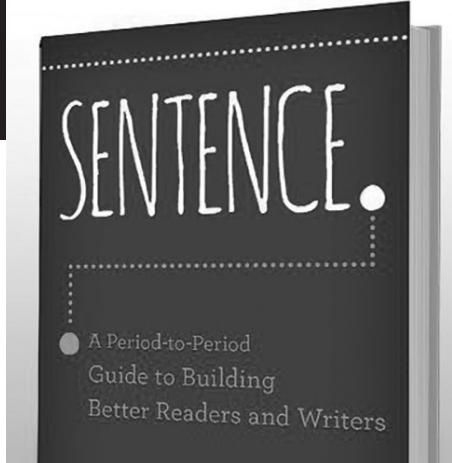
[CountryBookshelf.com](#).

CHLOE DAVIS

Thurs., May 14 - 7:30 p.m.

Do you know where "Yaaaas queen!" comes from? Do you know the difference between a bear and a wolf? Do you know what all the letters in LGBTQIA+ stand for? Explore the impact of the LGBTQIA+ community on English language with a landmark reference guide by Chloe O. Davis, a graduate of Hampton University and Temple University who has centered her creative platform on amplifying the narratives of Black culture and heightening the awareness of the LGBTQIA+ community. Davis' work as a dancer, actor, and creative allowed her to travel to all fifty states and internationally where she spent fifteen years researching, writing and creating

"The Queens' English, The LGBTQIA+ Dictionary of Lingo and Colloquial Phrases." For info: [CountryBookshelf.com](#).



**MAGGIE SHIPSTEAD
JULIAN SANCTION**

Tues., May 18 - 7:30 p.m.

Winner of the Dylan Thomas Prize and the *Los Angeles Times Book*

Prize for First Fiction, Maggie Shipstead will discuss her new work of historical fiction, "Great Circle," the story of a daredevil female aviator determined to "chart her own course in life, at any cost" with Julian Sanction, a senior features editor at *Departures* magazine, where he writes about culture and travel. For info: [CountryBookshelf.com](#).

**GERALDINE WOODS
JP KEMMICK**

Thurs., May 20 - 7:30 p.m.

Writers Woods and Kemmick discuss Woods' book, "Sentence.: A Period-To-Period Guide to Building Better Readers and Writers."

Woods taught English at every level from fifth grade through Advanced Placement, most recently at the Horace Mann School. JP Kemmick grew up in Billings, Montana. He has been working as a youth writing mentor across the Northwest for over a decade and holds an MFA in fiction from the University of Montana. For info: [CountryBookshelf.com](#).

**J. ROBERT LENNON
SHARMA SHIELDS
LEYNA KROW**

Thurs., May 27 - 7:30 p.m.

Three masters of the short story discuss the new short story collection of author J. Robert Lennon, "Subdivision." Lennon is the author of 12 books and teaches writing at Cornell University. Sharma Shields is the author of a short story collection, "Favorite Monster," and two novels. Leyna Krow is the author of the short story collection "I'm Fine, But You Appear To Be Sinking." For info: [CountryBookshelf.com](#).



OUT & ABOUT

MONTANA TABLE: WILL THE REAL PORK CHOP JOHN PLEASE STAND UP?

When it comes to American food, perhaps nothing is more synonymous with American culture than the hamburger.

There is a lesser-known sandwich that is about as American as apple pie: the pork chop sandwich.

If you grew up in Montana, you may know the place that made pork chop sandwiches famous in the state is Butte's Pork Chop John's, serving up fried pork sandwiches since the 1920s. The restaurant has even gained national notoriety of late, appearing on the Food Network's "The Best Thing I Ever Ate" in 2019.

At the heart of Pork Chop John's signature dish is a serving of pork sirloin that's been pounded thin and fried until golden crisp.

A "loaded" sandwich from the restaurant comes with mustard, pickles and onions. But for those who dare, one can also get a "loaded deluxe," which is additionally topped with lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise.

The restaurant serves other American fare, hamburgers included, alongside its main event.

Since 1932, Pork Chop John's has been operating from its 8 W. Mercury St. location where much hasn't changed over the years. With a drive-up window and just 10 bar stools, the restaurant's legacy is a lot bigger than its modest interior would lead one to believe.

LEGENDARY SANDWICH NAMESAKE

The original Pork Chop John was John Burkland, a Swedish immigrant who started the business as a sandwich cart in the 1920s.

Kehli Kankelborg Hazlett is a food historian and author of "The Foodways of Butte, Montana: Food and Culture in an Industrial American City," which she wrote as her thesis for Montana Technological University. Hazlett is currently the assistant director for the Center For Global Studies at the University of Wyoming.

The origins of the sandwich are actually Germanic, says Hazlett, who describes how immigrants in midwestern cities like Chicago turned the German schnitzel into a sandwich to sell to working people.

Often sold from mobile food carts, the sandwiches offered a portable food that people could eat as they made their way to work, often at a factory or a mine.

"The bell would whistle or ring and the workers would come out and there were different carts out there [to greet them]," says Hazlett, adding that "Americans have been known for our to-go food."



Like his counterparts in places like Chicago, John Burkland started his business out of a food cart and sold his sandwiches to working people: the miners of Butte.

In 1932 he moved his business to the Mercury Street location. Burkland eventually sold the business to his son-in-law John Bernard Semmens, who sold it to John Orizotti in 1969.

Ed Orizotti, who now runs Pork Chop John's with his brother Tom, says his dad grew the business substantially, adding a second location on Harrison Avenue and extending the restaurant's hours.

"It was just busy times in Butte at that point," Orizotti says, recalling days when the line for a sandwich extended around the block as Butte residents made their way home after a football game or a night on the town.

"Butte was doing well with the mining, the economics of Butte were very good," he recalls

In addition to its retail business, Pork Chop John's distributes its signature dish throughout Montana and to parts of Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Idaho, and Washington, making around 12,000 to 15,000 pork sirloins per week during non-pandemic times.

Today the Orizottis have machinery to help them do the job, but in the old days they pounded sirloins by hand.

"I made a hundred an hour when I was pounding them. And that was a lot of work," said Orizotti who, along with his six siblings, all worked at the restaurant at one time or another.

John Orizotti was the third person named John to own Pork Chop John's. According to his son Ed, his business was his pride and joy. He even tagged his vehicles with license plates that read "PCJ 1" and "PCJ 2."

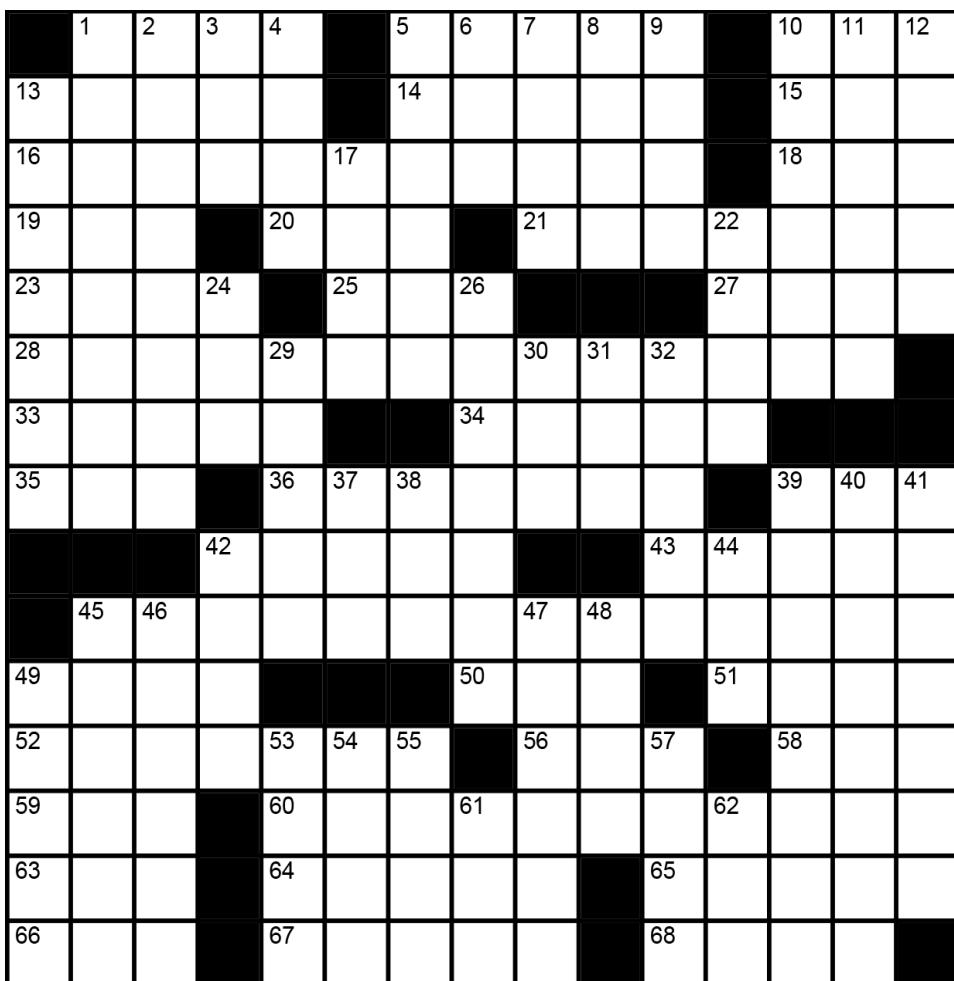
"I always wanted to be Pork Chop John," John Orizotti told The Montana Standard in 1981.

A well-known member of the community, Orizotti was simply known as "Johnny" to the people who knew him. While not the original John, he was an original nonetheless.

"He took a lot of pride in being Pork Chop John. He really did," his son Ed Orizotti adds.

The business still serves its signature dish, the original Pork Chop John sandwich, from its locations at 2400 Harrison Avenue and 8 West Mercury Street in Butte. ★

—ANNIE PENTILLA



JONESIN' CROSSWORDS

"Well, Sorta"
...Partway There

ACROSS

- 1 "We're calling with an urgent message about your car's warranty," e.g.
- 5 Creator of Pudd'nhead Wilson
- 10 "Right now"
- 13 Care Bear —
- 14 "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot" band
- 15 Debtor's letters
- 16 Hotel heiress who popularized "That's hot"
- 18 Hurricane heading, sometimes
- 19 Affirmative vote
- 20 It may be doffed
- 21 Bad movie rating
- 23 Actress Seehorn of "Better Call Saul"
- 25 Torn ___ (athlete's knee injury)
- 27 Crafty
- 28 Gear seen frequently in 1980s court matches
- 33 Districts
- 34 Organization
- 35 Australian outlaw Kelly
- 36 Satirical "Prize" given by the Annals of Improbable Research
- 39 Patty Hearst's kidnappers, for short
- 42 Californie et Colorado
- 43 Septet plus one

- 45 He plays Thor
- 49 French islands
- 50 Truth, in Chinese philosophy
- 51 39-Down, for one
- 52 Roommate of Frylock and Master Shake on "Aqua Teen Hunger Force"
- 56 John's "The Office" character
- 58 "Groove Is in the Heart" DJ/producer Towa —
- 59 Bud
- 60 Title for the Pope or the Dalai Lama
- 63 Rhinitis-treating M.D.
- 64 "Damn Yankees" composer Richard
- 65 Big name in thesauruses
- 66 Suffix meaning "sorta" (found in the theme answers)
- 67 Conditions' partner
- 68 English horn's cousin

DOWN

- 1 "Don't move"
- 2 Lurched and swerved
- 3 Former White House press secretary Fleischer
- 4 Fit snugly
- 5 Ninja's platform
- 6 Actor/blogger Wheaton
- 7 Choral voice range
- 8 Graphic representation
- 9 Not a bit
- 10 Cobbler's container
- 11 Scrooge's nephew
- 12 Search engine input

- 13 Austere
- 17 "Witness" actor Lukas
- 22 Bartering result
- 24 "SNL" alum Gasteyer
- 26 Millennium Falcon in 7,500 pieces, e.g.
- 29 "Lord, ___?" (Last Supper question)
- 30 NYSE trader
- 31 Anonymous Jane
- 32 Claus von ___ ("Reversal of Fortune" character)
- 37 Station's supply
- 38 To the ___ degree
- 39 It's played on a 10x10 board
- 40 "Hmmm ..."
- 41 One beyond belief?
- 42 Lead-in to "while"
- 44 Gear component
- 45 Disinfects
- 46 Wellness
- 47 University focuses
- 48 Garden store supply
- 49 Louvre Pyramid architect
- 53 "Beg pardon?"
- 54 Delegation member
- 55 High-end camera type
- 57 Artist Joan
- 61 Bottom of a pant leg
- 62 San Francisco's ___ Hill

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WE RECOMMEND...

STATEWIDE ENTERTAINMENT LISTINGS

Music, Performances and Events Across Montana



THE WONDERS OF MONTANA

The Montana Audubon Society celebrates Montana's diverse birdlife while highlighting conservation issues with a hybrid virtual and in-person event on Sat., June 5. Festival highlights include regional field trips in Central Montana with outings to nearby National Wildlife Refuges, the Big Snowy and Judith Mountains, and virtual webinars led by Montana Audubon scientists on topics including rare bird hot spots, identifying bird songs, citizen science, and more. For info: MtAudubon.org.



SAVE THE DATE!

Sat., June 26 in Harlowton! Lillie Mae, Marty O'Reilly & the Old Soul Orchestra, The Bones of J.R. Jones, Gilda House, Counting Coup, Swamp Dawg - all featured in an outdoor concert on Main Street in Harlowton! More info: HarloMusicProject.com.



ANYTHING GOES: THE MUSIC OF COLE PORTER

The Billings Symphony teams up with the local talent of the Rocky Mountain Jazz Collective as they pay homage to legendary Cole Porter. Sat., June 5 at 7 p.m. at the Babcock Theater in Billings. For info: BillingsSymphony.org.

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FROM FORGE TO GARDEN: BLACKSMITH TULI FISHER

Shape, function, balance, consistency: Bozeman blacksmith Tuli Fisher pays lavish attention to each of these design principles in every hand-forged garden tool he makes.

Indeed, every item that Fisher crafts – from the planting trowels and dibbles, to the garden rakes, hoes, and shovels – resonates with a harmonizing effect all remain, eliciting comparisons to museum quality art, although firmly utilitarian to their core. Fisher's tools merge the visceral precision of blacksmithing (synthesized rivet joinery) and woodworking (hand-turned walnut handles downy to the touch) with the garden's enlivening spirit, creating items that are eye-ravishing, yet workable, aesthetically dandy, but intended to drape dirtily on the mud-caked wall of the tool shed.

"I'm really excited about them," says Tuli Fisher. "Overall, people are really hungry for and attracted to the personal connection between themselves and their hand tool and the person who made the tool, and attracted to the work that the tool is going to allow them to do. We are all a little wary of imported goods that are replicas of what they are supposed to be."

A native of Indiana, Fisher grew up living with and learning about horses on the family farm. He moved to Montana in 1999 to pursue work as a farrier and ended up graduating from Montana State University with degrees in Museum Studies and History. In 2003 he designed and built his first collection of garden

tools.

Before jumping into life as a full-time blacksmith, Fisher operated a robust horseshoeing business for about a dozen years, his time shoeing horses' hooves giving him the confidence to work with his hands and to realize a project from beginning to end. All the while, gardening tools were a curious part of an ongoing journey into new territory.

"As a blacksmith you are always posed with the question of what you are going to make next," says Fisher. "I did not want to be a guy who would make knives. I thought more and more about making something that wasn't going to hurt anyone. I thought about garden tools, which would allow people to go out and spend time outdoors, and even if they never even used them, at least they could look at them and feel good. Ultimately, I decided that I wanted to make a functional tool that would really help people do something positive in their life."

Touching the smooth grain and surface steel of one of Fisher's hand-forged garden tools is to experience recognizable in a whole new way, to feel the simplification of the abstract; the straightforward craftsmanship of tongs and hammers has been reduced to a pair of natural materials: abrasive-resistant steel and walnut.

To finish a slim trowel with a black walnut grip or a thick gardening fork comprised of solid steel rivets, Fisher employs what would be considered "traditional" blacksmithing techniques; he heats the steel in the forge, shapes it over the heavy anvil, and then delivers a series of hard whacks to it from the hammer.

"The construction of the tools is easy to understand," says Fisher. "And the material – steel and wood – lends itself well to garden tools. The rivets are exposed, and one could clearly see what's holding it together, and you could see and easily imagine how it was built. As opposed to something like, say, a refrigerator, the tools are transparent, and people can imagine how they are being made."

Some might see one of Fisher's garden tools and call it beautiful but overlook its utilitarian essence; others, at first, might be more concerned with its functionality, sizing

up a hand-forged perennial trowel that looks practical and whose beauty is incidental. Perhaps the warmest, most ideal reception is from someone who connects with one of his tools on a lighter, more spirited set of terms – physically, aesthetically, or even financially – and perceives how such terms are all intertwined.

"It's great to know that there are people who see the value in this work. Honestly, though, other hand tools have really made it easy for me, because a five or ten dollar trowel, it might not hold up. Whereas, here you could reasonably assume at first glance that they are going to work for the job that they are supposed to."

Adhering to the art of traditional blacksmithing and heedful its authority, Fisher projects the aspirational drive of the doer who never loses contact with the reality that connects people to their craft. He has experimented with a number of woods other than walnut but has since realized that walnut is the friendliest of the fine grains to work with, a smooth-finishing, appealing, and dark-colored complement to his constructs. Fisher previously fashioned tools out of other types of material, like aluminum, but he concluded that anything that is lighter or softer than steel just isn't sturdy enough to last as one of his garden tools.

"I'm sticking with steel blades that are a little on the thick side," says Fisher. "The first rule of tool making is that they absolutely have to hold up."

When Fisher talks about his tools "holding up," he extends and incorporates the conversation to include references to his goal of building "heirloom quality" items hearty enough to withstand generations spent burrowing in the dirt.

"There is a lot of stuff out there that is made to imitate looking handmade, or imitate looking heirloom," says Fisher. "I use a hammer and an anvil and rivets to join everything together – choosing not to weld it, choosing not to cut corners, because the first thing that people look at to examine one of the tools, is to see if it's really made by hand."

There was a time early in Fisher's career when he was crafting one piece at a time, birth to finish, while simultaneously toying around with design elements, all of which added much extra time to the process. These days he crafts a total of a dozen different kinds of gardening tools in a much more efficient manner, laboring and finishing the similarly designed pieces in small batches.



"Twenty-five trowels in a batch. Twenty-five hoes. Making pieces for twenty-five rakes. The efficiency is multiplied. Plus, larger batches would become less fun, and since there is always the chance of a mistake, I've limited the size of my batches. Even so, I might be up to producing about 3,000 total pieces this year, perhaps even 4,000."

Though he is many years into his calling, Fisher speaks of its innate wonder, revealed to him not only in the forms themselves but, too, in the visual elements and materials that define and document them and he is still thickly enamored of the forge-to-garden loop that fondly straps the business together.

"If you go to the hardware store, you will need to work with things with not a lot of love in them. To have something with intrinsic value, and to turn it out, and to use it to create your own art work – to create your garden – there is a lot of value in that. These tools reflect the garden as art. Similar to the tools, the garden is an expression of what is important to people, and both are a reflection of what someone wants their home or community to look like." ★

—BRIAN D'AMBROSIO



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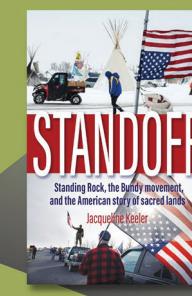
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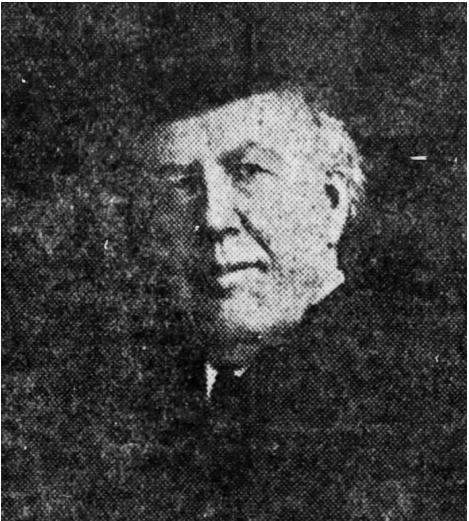
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COUNTRY BOOKSELLERS

END NOTES

FAMOUS AND NOT FORGOTTEN: REVEREND WILLIAM "BROTHER VAN" ORSDEL



Reverend William Orsdel was an apostle and an evangelist, as well as a performer and an entertainer. Oftentimes, he fulfilled all four roles in the very same saloon or dance hall.

From Bannack to Billings and from Virginia City to Havre, the circuit-riding preacher left a colorful mark on Montana history. Orsdel is credited with covering more than 50,000 square miles, while building more than 100 Methodist churches and parsonages in Montana under his tenure.

A typical story about the life and times of the man affectionately known as "Brother Van" could be gleaned in the news archives of his trip to Bannack in the 1870s, while the state was at the crest of its gold and silver mining activity. Covering Montana Territory by saddle horse, he found all the town's gambling houses and bars bristling with patrons one Sunday evening. Stepping up to the saloon, he announced himself as a Man of God, and, since the town had no church assembly, he asked the saloon owner if he could hold service on the premises, right away.

The bartender whistled the packs of beer guzzlers and hell raisers to shush the noise. He announced that the business would be closed for the next hour and that the mysteriously charming preacher would be conducting a sermon.

On this particular night, Brother Van had the gathering's rapt attention, and he chose to sing a popular song of the period, "Diamonds in the Rough," his "rich, booming voice" per-

meating the house. The crowd, "hungry for entertainment," was reported to have "loved the song and asked for more."

Years later, the miners who had been inspired by Brother Van built the Grace Methodist Church at Bannack. Dedicated in August of 1877, the church is one of the approximately 50 buildings that now comprise Bannack State Park.

THE ORIGINS OF "BROTHER VAN"

The son of farmers, William Wesley Van Orsdel was born near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on March 20, 1848. At age 15 he observed the horrors of the gruesome three-day battle of Gettysburg, with more than 50,000 total casualties. Two of his brothers were Civil War veterans.

On several later occasions, Van Orsdel sermonized on his memories of being present in the crowd while he listened to Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" on November 19, 1863. His origins as a Christian worker were harsh: orphaned at age 12, he embraced the Methodist church of his parents and its doctrines and teachings. While employed as an engineer of a stationary engine in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, Van Orsdel took up revivals and found purpose as a revivalist.

In 1872 he came to Montana by way of the Missouri River, arriving on a river boat called the Far West that deposited him in Idaho. It seems that the 24-year-old adventurer's first day in Montana was spent in June 1872 preaching to trappers, rivermen, merchants and their families in Fort Benton, perhaps at a saloon near the dock along the Missouri. That summer or fall he held services in Fort Shaw and Sun River, the latter event immortalized by Charles M. Russell in one of the cowboy artist's earliest pictures.

Fulfilling his vision of "God's power and man's need," as he once said, Brother Van would spend the remainder of his days serving the people of Montana.

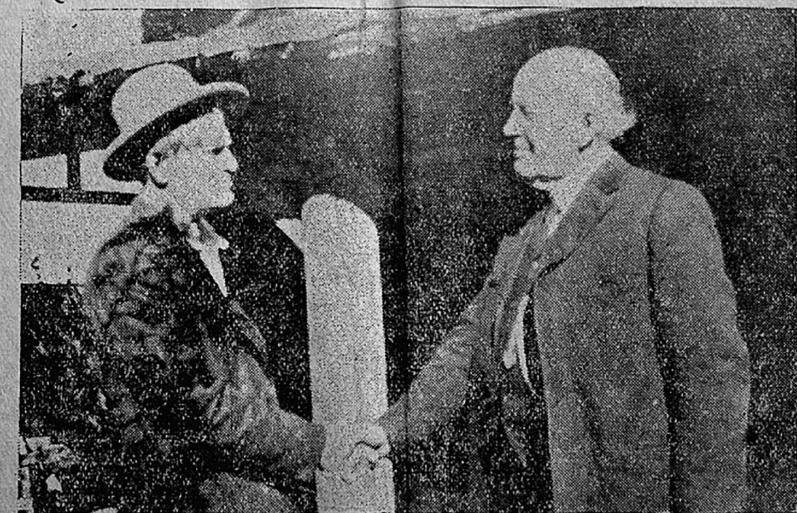
SERVING MONTANA ON HORSEBACK

Brother Van's first "official assignment" came in the summer of 1873 when he was appointed as junior preacher on "the Virginia City-Bannack circuit" along with one Rev. Francis Riggin. Their circuit encompassed typical frontier towns, including the capital of the Montana Territory, Virginia City, and also the developing region in the vicinity of Sheridan, Twin Bridges and present day Dillon. Brother Van traveled on horseback, preaching during the week nights and holding services at the various schoolhouses and private homes in southern Montana and Idaho and holding revival services.

According to one account, at one point the pair served about 18 Methodist Church congregants "in an area covering 200 miles from east to west and 50 miles from north to south." Rev. Riggin would deliver the sermon, and Brother Van would give "the emotional alter call."

There are many spectacular stories regarding the life of Brother Van and perhaps a few of them have been embroidered over the years. One much repeated tale has Brother Van arriving in the Montana Territory without a horse

Russell's Letter to Brother Van



Charles M. Russell shaking hands with "Brother Van". The artist and this old pioneer missionary were close friends. Their first meeting took place at the cabin in the upper Judith country when Russell was but 16 years of age.

and "walking 75 miles from Bozeman to Radersberg." When he arrived "tired and covered in dust," people collared him as a horse thief from a wanted poster who had a \$100 dollar reward on his back.

Realizing he was in trouble when guns were drawn and a noose unfurled, he started singing "O Happy Day," said a prayer, and then introduced himself as Brother Van, a singer and a man of prayer, not a thief. His bit of quick-thinking theatrics apparently worked, for "the town welcomed the new preacher."

Another larger than life tale asserts that Brother Van was on a stagecoach that was blocked by a band of road agents. As the passengers were lined up and the robbers looted their cash and valuables, the thief frisked Brother Van, who, at that point, reportedly asked, "You wouldn't rob me, would you? I'm just a poor Methodist preacher!" The robber, it was said, replied, "Of course not. I'm a Methodist myself."

Several accounts depict Brother Van's relationship with Indigenous people as friendly, especially with the Blackfeet Indians, who reportedly invited him to accompany them on a buffalo hunt. In several accounts Brother Van is portrayed as a willing Indian Scout.

THE LEGACY OF "BROTHER VAN"

U.S. Senator Thomas Charles Power of Helena, once met Brother Van at a church service in Fort Benton, and later shared his impressions of hearing Van preach a sermon in a log cabin with a dirt roof.

According to a quote attributed to Powers, Brother Van was an open-minded man who was singularly preoccupied with his vocation. "His audience was made up of freighters, traders, prospectors, miners and Indians. Brother Van loved them all. There was no caste in this man's religion. He loved all people, no matter what their color or language might be."

In 1888 Brother Van helped establish Montana Wesleyan University in Helena (no longer operating as a college). On July 4, 1902 he gave the prayer at the dedication for the newly-built state capital in Helena. Brother Van also oversaw the establishment of several

hospitals. In 1909 the Montana Preparatory Deaconess School for Children opened. It continues today as the Intermountain Children's Services for emotionally-challenged children.

The parsonage of the First United Methodist Church of Great Falls was considered to be Brother Van's home, or the closest approximation to it for such an itinerant. Built in 1909, the pastor made sure it included accommodations for Brother Van, a place where he could keep his few belongings, have a break, and be included as part of the pastor's family.

Busily gallivanting across the plains, summits, and frontiers of the immense state, Brother Van stayed there only a couple nights a month. The parsonage now is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and includes a museum dedicated to Brother Van and Methodist church history in Montana. Among the approximately 100 churches and 50 parsonages credited with his presence, the Havre Van Orsdel Methodist Church at the corner of 4th St. and 5th Ave. bears his name and his legacy.

The Rev. William Wesley Van Orsdel passed away on December 19, 1919 in the Montana Deaconess Hospital in Great Falls, and was interred in Forestvale Cemetery in Helena. At his eulogy a reverend, a man who had spent many years side by side and saddle by saddle together with the passionate preacher, had this to say:

"He was a bachelor and a wanderer, and he spent his life among us preaching the gospel of hope and good cheer, a gospel of love; building churches and schools, hospitals, parsonages and deaconess homes, until it did not matter where he went, he was welcome."

"He started big work among us as a young man, and finished it as a white-haired and reverend father of the whole church, and a power in the religious life of the commonwealth. He rolled up a record of devotion to humanity, to the uplift of society, to the foundation of religious and charitable organizations, and to the cause of religion seldom matched in the West. ★

—BRIAN D'AMBROSIO



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ARIES (March 21-April 19): Poet Allen Ginsberg despairingly noted that many people want MORE MORE MORE LIFE, but they go awry because they allow their desire for MORE MORE MORE LIFE to fixate on material things—machines, possessions, gizmos, and status symbols. Ginsberg revered different kinds of longings: for good feelings, meaningful experiences, soulful breakthroughs, deep awareness, and all kinds of love. In accordance with astrological potentials, Aries, I'm giving you the go-ahead in the coming weeks to be extra greedy for the stuff in the second category.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): In her poem "Mirror," Taurus poet Halina Poświatowska wrote, "I am dazed by the beauty of my body." I applaud her brazen admiration and love for her most valuable possession. I wish more of us could genuinely feel that same adoration for our own bodies. And in accordance with current astrological omens, I recommend that you do indeed find a way to do just that right now. It's time to upgrade your excitement about being in such a magnificent vessel. Even if it's not in perfect health, it performs amazing marvels every minute of every day. I hope you will boost your appreciation for its miraculous capacities, and increase your commitment to treating it as the treasure that it is.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Gemini poet Buddy Wakefield writes that after the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of 2004, "the only structure still standing in the wiped-out village of Malacca [in Malaysia] was a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. I wanna be able to stand like that." I expect you will indeed enjoy that kind of stability and stamina in the coming weeks, my dear. You won't have to endure a metaphorical tsunami, thank Goddess, but you may have to stand strong through a blustery brouhaha or swirling turbulence. Here's a tip: The best approach is not to be stiff and unmoving like a statue, but rather flexible and willing to sway.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): No educator had ever offered a class in psychology until trailblazing philosopher William James did so in 1875. He knew a lot about human behavior. "Most people live in a very restricted circle of their potential being," he wrote. "They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness, and of their soul's resources in general, much like a person who, out of his whole bodily organism, should get into a habit of using only his little finger." I'm going to make an extravagant prediction here: I expect that in the coming months you will be better primed than ever before to expand your access to your consciousness, your resources, and your potentials. How might you begin such an adventure? The first thing to do is to set a vivid intention to do just that.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): "Someone in me is suffering and struggling toward freedom," wrote Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis. To that melodramatic announcement, I reply, good for him! I'm glad he was willing to put himself through misery and despair in order to escape misery and despair. But I also think it's important to note that there are other viable approaches to the quest for liberation. For example, having lavish fun and enjoying oneself profoundly can be tremendously effective in that holy work. I suspect that in the coming weeks, Leo, the latter approach will accomplish far more for you than the former.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Virgo novelist Agatha Christie sold hundreds of millions of books, and is history's most-translated author. While growing up, she had few other kids to associate with, so she created a host of imaginary friends to fill the void. They eventually became key players in her work as an author, helping her dream up stories. More than that: She simply loved having those invisible characters around to keep her company. Even in her old age, she still consorted with them. I bring this to your attention, Virgo, because now is a great time to acquire new imaginary friends or resurrect old ones. Guardian angels and ancestral spirits would be good to call on, as well. How might they be of assistance and inspiration to you?

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "To hurry pain is to leave a classroom still in session," notes Libran aphorist Yahia Lababidi. On the other hand, he observes, "To prolong pain is to miss the next lesson." If he's correct, the goal is to dwell with your pain for just the right amount of time—until you've learned its lessons and figured out how not to experience it again in the future—but no longer than that. I suspect that such a turning point will soon be arriving for you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): In her poem "Every Day," Scorpio poet Denise Levertov wrote, "Every day, every day I hear enough to fill a year of nights with wondering." I think that captures the expansive truth of your life in the coming weeks. You've entered a phase when the sheer abundance of interesting input may at times be overwhelming, though enriching. You'll hear—and hopefully be receptive to—lots of provocative stories, dynamic revelations, and unexpected truths. Be grateful for this bounty! Use it to transform whatever might be stuck, whatever needs a catalytic nudge.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): I hope you're not too stressed these days. There has been pressure on you to adjust more than maybe you'd like to adjust, and I hope you've managed to find some relaxing slack amidst the heaviness. But even if the inconvenience levels are deeper than you like, I have good news: It's all in a good cause. Read the wise words of author Dan Millman, who describes the process you're midway through: "Every positive change, every jump to a higher level of energy and awareness, involves a rite of passage. Each time we ascend to a higher rung on the ladder of personal evolution, we must go through a period of discomfort, of initiation. I have never found an exception."

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): We can safely say that Anais Nin was a connoisseur of eros and sensuality. The evidence includes her three collections of erotic writing, Delta of Venus, Little Birds, and Auletis. Here's one of her definitive statements on the subject: "Sex must be mixed with tears, laughter, words, promises, jealousy, envy, all the spices of fear, foreign travel, new faces, stories, dreams, fantasies, music." In response to Nin's litany, I'm inclined to say, "Damn, that's a lot of ambiance and scaffolding to have in place. Must it always be so complicated?" According to my reading of upcoming cosmic rhythms, you won't need such a big array of stuff in your quest for soulful orgasms—at least not in the coming weeks. Your instinct for rapture will be finely tuned.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): "One is always at home in one's past," wrote author Vladimir Nabokov. I agree. Sometimes that's not a good thing, though. It may lead us to flee from the challenges of the present moment and go hide and cower and wallow in nostalgia. But on other occasions, the fact that we are always at home in the past might generate brilliant healing strategies. It might rouse in us a wise determination to refresh our spirit by basking in the deep solace of feeling utterly at home. I think the latter case is likely to be true for you in the coming weeks, Aquarius.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): "Not everything is supposed to become something beautiful and long-lasting," writes author Emery Allen. "Not everyone is going to stay forever." Her message is a good one for you to keep in mind right now. You're in a phase when transitory boosts and temporary help may be exactly what you need most. I suspect your main task in the coming weeks is to get maximum benefit from influences that are just passing through your life. The catalysts that work best could be those that work only once and then disappear.

THIS WEEK'S HOMEWORK:

Write an essay on "What I Swear I'll Never Do Again As Long As I Live—Unless I Can Get Away with It Next Time."

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