

2006 Preservation Awards



The Great Falls/Cascade County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission selected three projects to be honored for the 2006 Preservation Awards:

The Heritage Building in the North Montana State Fairgrounds Historic District, now known as ExpoPark, was the subject of a major rehabilitation in 2005.

Originally the Montana Livestock Pavilion Company, it was incorporated in 1919 to encourage the livestock industry in the state. Directors felt the pavilion would serve a state-wide purpose in its influence on herd improvement and set about to erect the “most commodious and best designed building of its nature between Minnesota and the big shows of the Pacific northwest.”

Architect of the pavilion was George Shanley, who went on to design other buildings and stone entrance gates when Cascade County acquired the property for a fairground. Montana governor, Sam V. Stewart dedicated the “temple for better herds and flocks” on April 19, 1920 in the presence of a standing room only crowd of stockmen from all over Montana, as well as packers and bankers from Spokane, St. Paul, and Chicago. The pavilion continued to be a livestock show place until the county purchased it in 1926 to become part of a larger exposition facility, the North Montana State Fairgrounds. After serving as agricultural exhibit space, it became the Old Town Museum, and now the large exhibition building serves a multitude of exhibit and event purposes.

The rehabilitation, which was a Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) project, included; uncovering, reglazing, repairing or replacing window panes, sills, and frames as needed on 1780 windows and door replacements. Gene Davidson, of Davidson & Kuhr Architects designed the project and the work was completed by Mealey Construction.

The project was initiated by the City of Great Falls, with Cascade County providing county allocated CTEP funding and the City of Great Falls providing the necessary matching funds. The project continued when Cascade County assumed management of the ExpoPark. The City Planning Office administered the project, working with SMG to complete planning and development. The County provided additional matching funds as the project progressed, to paint the interior ceiling.

Over the past quarter of a century, hundreds of historic barns throughout the United States have been lost – victims of changes in agricultural technology, farm closures and consolidations, urban sprawl and neglect. The loss of historic barns erases a chapter from the history of rural America and destroys an important symbol for farm families and urban dwellers alike.

Richard and Barbara McAdams, Simms, were recognized with a 2006 Preservation Award for their efforts to restore their Prairie or Western style barn, over the past two years.

The peak roof projecting above the hayloft opening is one of the most familiar images associated with barns. It is a

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feature that characterizes the prairie barn. Large herds associated with agriculture in the West required great storage space for hay and feed. Accordingly, prairie barns are on average quite large. Long sweeping roofs, sometimes coming near the ground, mark the prairie barn; the extended roof created additional storage space. Late in the nineteenth century, the adoption of the gambrel roof enlarged the storage capacity of the haymow even more.

Warren G. Harding, president of the Sun River Valley Historical Society and HPAC board member, says the barn was built in the early 1900's by H. E. Dawson who was the banker in Simms.

Recreational Trails, Inc. was the recipient of the third preservation award for the collaborative effort and the sensitive design that went into the project to extend the River's Edge Trail through the Tenth Street Bridge.

"Context sensitive design" is a current buzzword in the roadway design industry, and it readily applies to design of trails, as well. The latest segment of River's Edge Trail between the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the 15th Street Bridge is an example of how the design of a project can be sensitive to its broader context – in other words, it is designed to fit well into its surroundings. One of the most challenging segments of the project was underneath the Eagle Falls Memorial Bridge (9th St. Bridge) and the adjacent Historic 10th St. Bridge.

Because of the steepness of the river bank, the nearness to the operations of the Montana Refining Company, the installation of new utilities along the same alignment and the need to keep to a reasonable trail grade, the trail had to tunnel through the north abutment of the 10th St Bridge. Because this structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the tunnel needed to be sensitive to the architecture of the Bridge. The project designer, Neil Consultants, Inc., worked closely with the City of Great Falls, Preservation Cascade, Inc., the Montana State Historic Preservation Office and historic architect Ken Sievert to come up with a sensitive treatment for the tunnel entrances that reflected and complimented the Bridge's lines and coloring. The retaining walls around the bridge were done in decorative concrete blocks, which further improved the fit of the Trail into the context of the site. Lower retaining walls were designed as "rock faced", composed of round river rock, which tied the trail into the natural features of the river and riverbank. Finally, native grasses were planted to restore disturbed soils and help the project to blend into the natural environment. Considering the size of the project, nearness to a major industrial facility, narrowness of the project site and potential impact to both the environment and the historic Bridge, this project is a noteworthy example of successful "context sensitive design."

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