



Long Range Building Request

MHC Background:

In 1997, the 55th Montana Legislature established the Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission (MHC) to acquire and manage historic properties for the State of Montana. This legislation approved the purchase of Virginia and Nevada Cities comprising 248 buildings, 160 acres of land, and hundreds of thousands of artifacts. These large historic town sites were the first properties managed by the MHC. Since 1997, the Montana Board of Land Commissioners approved two additional acquisitions of historic Reeder's Alley and the Pioneer Cabin in Helena. Reeder's Alley was received through a private donation on November 19, 2001. The Pioneer Cabin at the front of Reeder's Alley was received from a private donation on June 19, 2006.

The Montana legislature authorizes the MHC to care for heritage resources "in a manner that protects the properties and encourages economic independence" (MCA 22-3-1001). Our statutory purpose is to acquire and manage, on behalf of the state, properties that possess outstanding historical value, display exceptional qualities worth preserving, and are genuinely representative of the state's culture and history. MHC has worked hard to expand the economic and revenue generating uses for our state buildings.

MHC is responsible for the management and economic use of these historic properties including; building improvements, structural stabilization, site maintenance, artifact conservation, and protection of diverse historic features. MHC serves as a resource for the public and professionals interested in learning more about Montana history, historic building preservation, archaeology, conservation of artifacts, education, living history, and historic site management.

Historic Significance:

Virginia City is Montana's Territorial Capital (1865-1875). The size, scope, and quality of the historic site helped make Virginia City one of the first National Historic Landmark Districts in Montana (1961). Nevada City is an assemblage of approximately 60 historic buildings, some original to the site, and from across Montana and Yellowstone National Park. Nevada City operates as an outdoor museum and hosts dozens of public educational events, with unique hands-on experiences for visitors of all ages. Reeder's Alley and Pioneer Cabin are the oldest remaining miner's settlements in Helena. These historic sites are significant to Montana and national history as places of western settlement and the formation of Montana society. The economic value of maintaining these sites benefits state businesses and the tourism industry.

Request and Use of Funds:

Our total funding request is for \$3,000,000 for the maintenance of historic properties of the Montana Heritage Commission. Funds will be used to hire architect and engineering services, private contractors, and utilize in-house preservation staff to conduct the needed repairs and upgrades. MHC regularly seeks non-state funding sources in the form of grants, donations and other income to leverage and expand our preservation goals. However, state funds are needed to care for state owned historic buildings and protect their contents and economic value, as MHC generated revenue is not generally used for preservation needs.

Title: Virginia City and Nevada City
Location: Madison County, Montana
Funding Request: \$3,000,000

Project Need and Description:

MHC seeks continued funding to conduct critical safety and building stabilizations on revenue generating properties in Virginia and Nevada Cities. Our business operations and earned revenues depend on our hotels and rental properties to serve our leaseholders and visitors service businesses. We also have some building projects in “mid stream” that need to be completed. Funds will be used for completing urgent life-safety and structural deficiencies in Nevada City and to complete critical building stabilization and maintenance to foundations, sill logs, utilities and drainage. Funds will cover architectural and engineering assessments, private contractors, and an in-house archaeologist and preservation staff to conduct the necessary work.

To date, more than half the properties have received some treatment to protect or stabilize the buildings. The scope and scale of our historic properties, and the deferred maintenance accumulated over the years, means significant maintenance and safety needs remain. Most of our buildings also protect and house valuable historic artifacts. Repairs to buildings will have a positive impact on collections by protecting certain exhibits from environmental dangers such as mold, vermin, and water, and theft. This funding request will protect these state assets and continue our work to stabilize and preserve our high priority properties, and allow us to create new economic and revenue generating uses in these state buildings.

Virginia City Needs:

Virginia City is listed as a National Historic Landmark, due to 183 contributing original 1863 Montana Gold Rush buildings. During the tourist season, its main street boardwalks are filled with an estimate of 75,000 to 90,000 camera-wielding tourists yearly. Virginia City transports people back in time, and it is the hope of the MHC that while the nostalgic feeling never goes away, we can keep our buildings safe, standing and in great condition both for our revenue generating concessionaires and for our visitors for future generation to come.

Total Cost Estimate: 1.5 Million

Opera House:

The Opera House, built in 1900 as a livery, is one of Virginia City's most utilized buildings as the home of the Virginia City Players. The façade of the Opera House is rapidly deteriorating. The mortar on the capstones and at least two courses of stone are visibly crumbling. This causes a danger to the pedestrians walking below, especially in the busy tourist season, when the Opera House is also very much a daily attraction. The loose mortar and stones need to be re-stacked from the stable level. The stones will be re-stacked using a compatible mortar to maintain historic integrity, as well as structural soundness. Any old mortar should be consolidated as needed. This project would either be completed by the in-house Preservation Specialists, or contracted out stone masons with knowledge of historic stone and mortar work.

Cost estimate: \$10,000



Failing capstones on façade of Opera House might cause safety issues and look unseemly on one of VC's most popular attractions.

Buford Store:

The Buford Store, built in 1875, is the first brick store in town. Unfortunately it is an un-reinforced brick structure. Two years ago the building was compromised when someone climbed onto the roof and pulled down six feet of the brick parapet, which needs to be stabilized and rebuilt. There has also been seismic activity which has further deteriorated the mortar which holds the building together, along with the wind, rain and ice. One wall is leaning treacherously towards the roof. The brick wall will need to be re-stacked, using the original bricks, and the parapet should be re-laid with appropriate historic mortar.

Cost estimate: \$15,000



Rubber sheeting and plywood buttresses are employed to keep the brick parapet from collapsing all-together. These are temporary measures until the problem can be addressed with masonry.

Montana Post:

The original portion of this important Montana building (1863) is in jeopardy below the ground level. It was built with no footing and we have already lost a section of stone. The only thing holding the building up are stabilization timbers placed over ten years ago. Drainage desperately needs to be addressed. In this crucial building, there needs to be a major excavation for the foundation, which includes jacking up and stabilizing the building, replacement of rotted sill logs and sill plates, a new concrete foundation, a repair of rotting floor framing and sheeting, a re-pointing of stone walls inside and out, addition of gutters, and window and door replacement and repair. The northeast corner of the exterior of the building is already showing signs of cracking. A seismic retrofit should also be considered, as with all stone buildings built without reinforcement.

Cost estimate: \$60,000



Thought the stabilizing timbers are in good shape, this is a temporary solution to an eminent problem that will eventually arise within all unreinforced stone structures in Virginia City.



A view of the bowed out interior wall, and the exterior wall of the Montana Post building: Cracks are already appearing on the outside above where the section of stone has failed in the basement.

Greenfront “Hotel”:

This high profile structure has a fascinating history, once being a brothel in the heart of Virginia City’s “Chinatown”, and as it sits next to the Depot where throngs of tourists congregate during the summer season, it should be interpreted as such. Although the “Restaurant” portion of the two buildings that make up the Greenfront was preserved in 2010, the “Hotel” has not. Although this dynamic of side-by-side structures shows the dichotomy and challenges of state funding, the MHC would like them to be a working display for tourists to visit as they wait for the Alder Gulch Short line train to arrive. The Greenfront “Hotel” will need: complete excavation, removal of rotted sill logs, new fieldstone foundation constructed, new sill logs hewn and placed, French drain installed for drainage, gravel installed, clapboards repaired or treated, exterior painted for protection, new roof, and interior finish work.

Cost estimate: \$20,000



On the left: Un-preserved “Hotel”



The “Restaurant” on the right has been stabilized and sits well above grade



Preserved building has new foundation and sill logs



Non-preserved building has virtually no foundation and rotted sill logs



The interior of both buildings needs finishing before a display can be placed

Hickman House:

The excavation for the Hickman House was started by the MHC Preservation Crew but never completed. The historic building, built in 1869, would be extremely useful as housing for MHC seasonal workers, and needs to be completely excavated, jacked up for stabilization by replacement of rotted sill logs and sill plates, a new foundation poured, replacement of rotted floor framing and sheeting, gutters added, window and door repair, replacement of rotted porch, complete demolition of interior, and replacement and re-roofing of the accompanying outbuilding. Plumbing and electrical upgrades are also necessary.

Cost estimate: \$100,000



The interior of an addition to the Hickman House sitting on floor joists exposed to the element, interior decay



Saw dust from burrowing insects, rat feces and a cat skeleton



Black mold could cause serious health issues



The rotted porch and failed stone foundation of the Hickman House



Virginia City Depot Bathrooms:

The bathrooms that sit off of the corner of the Virginia City Depot porch are a safety risk. There is little to no support holding them up. If this issue is not addressed soon, they are in danger of collapsing, which would more than likely happen during the busy tourist season, when there is high traffic in that area. They need bracing and stabilization, and a plumbing upgrade.

Cost estimate: \$20,000



The Virginia City Depot bathrooms sit precariously at the corner of the porch with little structural support

Cogswell Cabin:

The Cogswell Cabin is failing almost beyond the point of repair. It needs an entire new foundation system, and the roofing and framing stabilized and re-built, and a new roof. One log wall has completely rotted away, and all bottom logs need to be replaced. If we do not preserve this building in entirety it will collapse. It is extremely relevant to the social history of Virginia City, housing some of the earliest African American entrepreneurs in Montana and will hopefully be interpreted as such in the future.

Cost estimate: \$100,000



No south interior wall remains in the Cogswell Cabin to shelter it from the elements, and the protective muslin is clearly beyond repair with weather and water damage.

Prasch Blacksmith Shop:

This building has appeared on the “never finished” list for a record amount of time: work began over ten years ago. It is one of the many buildings on the main street with a fascinating history, having been a “hurdy-gurdy” dancehall when it was originally built, then converted to a blacksmith shop in the 1870s and used as such up to 1946. Once completed, it can be opened for the public once again as a display. It needs footings poured (the holes have already been dug) and a timber-framed structure built internally to support the building. The floor itself needs replacement and the two forges need stabilization and chimneys. Gutters are also needed. Externally, the narrow alley between the Prasch and Saubier Blacksmith Shops needs to be re-graded for improved drainage, as ice and snow gather each winter and accelerate wood rot.

Cost estimate: \$60,000



Gilbert House:

Built in 1864, this was the home of the Henry Gilbert family, who ran Montana's earliest standing Brewery in Virginia City. A \$100,000 grant was just awarded the MHC to stabilize the malting tower of the Brewery, which eased a dent in the building's preservation needs, yet no attention has been paid to the

Gilbert home, a building which could serve many uses, commercially and for MHC housing. The structure is slowly sinking below grade due to an underground spring. The long list of stabilization and preservation treatments needed includes: Abatement of frass mold, dust, and organic material, mitigate lead and asbestos hazards, archaeological assessment and services, create positive drainage and water diversion from area, major excavation for foundation and/ or pilings, and drainage system, jack up and stabilize building, replace rotten sill logs and plates, pour foundation or pilings, restore or replace porches, consolidate or replace chimneys, flash chimneys and roof valleys, replace flooring system throughout, window and door repair, preservation, and replacement, add gutters, and upgrade electrical, plumbing, flooring, and insulation.

Cost estimate: \$200,000



Pottery Shop & Bottling Building:

This structure was built as a bottling building within the Gilbert Brewery Complex. It was used by Sue Ford Bovey as a Pottery Shop. It is a victim of Daylight Creek's dangerous curving due to the vegetation that has grown up in the area in the last few decades, and would benefit from a hydrology assessment.

Other than that, it needs: creation of positive drainage and water diversion from area, excavation for foundation, or pilings, and drainage system, jack up and stabilize building, pour foundation or pilings,

restore east concrete wall, restore northeast concrete brick corner, re-point existing brickwork, stabilize flooring throughout, window and door repair, preservation, and replacement.
Cost estimate: \$50,000



Cabbage Patch:

The Cabbage Patch is a grouping of structures located with Block 154, one of Virginia City's oldest sections of town. It is a popular place for tourists to congregate, and it could be made into a small park area if it were cleaned up and stabilized. The buildings, though small in stature, need: abatement of frass, mold, dust, and plant material, create positive drainage and water diversion from area, excavation for foundation, or pilings, and drainage system, jack up and stabilize building, replace rotten sill logs and plates, pour foundation footings or pilings, restore or replace roof systems, consolidate or replace siding, stabilize interior walls and ceilings, restore or replace floor framing and sheathing throughout, stabilize and restore outhouses, repair fences, window and door repair, preservation, and replacement

Cost estimate: \$50,000





Buford Block/E.L. Smith Store/Assay Office:

The E.L. Smith Store and The Wells Fargo Office display (within the Buford Block) are part of a grouping of several historic structures on the south side of Wallace Street that contribute to the mercantile past of the Virginia City Historic Landmark District. They contain displays that receive thousands of visitors a summer, house thousands of dollars worth of artifacts, and also contain successful businesses, the Wells Fargo Coffee House and the Stage Coach and Trail Rides office. The buildings possess significant deterioration due to compounded moisture problems and structural failure of crucial members. These buildings will need: abatement of frass, mold, and dust and organic material, remove artifacts and curatorial services, repair or replace rotten joists, rafters and structural members, restore lathe and plaster walls, major excavation for foundation, replace rotted sill logs and plates, pour foundation, create positive drainage for area, restore and re-point all historic masonry and brickwork, and stabilize the original storerooms for concessionaire use.

Cost estimate: \$150,000



The E.L. Smith Store has structural issues both inside and out





The Wells Fargo Office has major interior damage to the historic lath and plaster, and the exterior needs oiling



The brickwork on Virginia City's upscale restaurant, the Wells Fargo Coffee House, is in need of re-pointing

City Bakery:

The City Bakery is a Bovey partial reconstruction; as the original building had crumbled almost repair. It is currently being used by a concessionaire. The rear exterior of the building is in bad shape. The existing concrete block wall needs to be removed, excavated for footings and rebuilt. A crack monitor places on the building only five years ago shows a disturbing rapidity to its deterioration.

Cost estimate: \$20,000



Figure 12: Crack monitor on the rear façade of the City Bakery shows the growing displacement of the building at an alarming rate.

Village Pump:

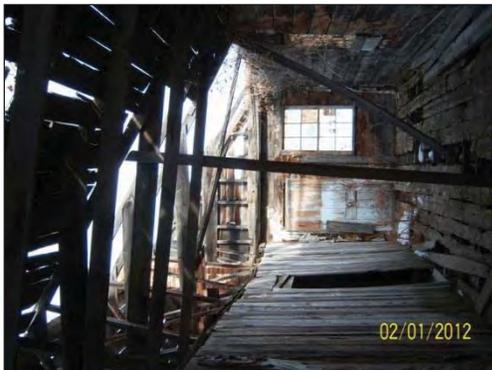
Built by the Boveys and once serving Virginia City as a gas station, this large structure is not only one of the first buildings that tourists see when they drive into town, it could have value as a commercial structure. It currently houses an impressive array of Ford Model T parts. Though it is a more recent construction, the field stone and poured concrete foundation is in poor shape. Cost estimate: \$100,000



Susan Marr House:

Slated for a Virginia City Institute Workshop several years ago, the 1864 Marr house is close to being beyond the point of restoration. It is gravely endangered, yet its walls still stand, rendering it not completely lost by preservation standards. It requires: abatement of frass, mold, dust and organic material, archaeological assessment and services, creation of positive drainage and water diversion from area, major excavation for foundation, jack up and stabilize building, replace rotten sill logs, plates and structural members, repair collapsed roof and re-roof with cedar shingles, window and door preservation or replacement, and if the structure is made usable, a complete electrical and plumbing installation.

Cost estimate: \$200,000



Nevada City Needs: Nevada City is MHC's revenue generating Open Air Museum. Although most of the historic buildings have been brought in from other areas of Montana, they have many needs that must be addressed. Most sit on makeshift concrete foundations and have rotting timbers that need to be replaced or treated with consolidants. Some sit on the ground with no foundations. Many need new roofs. If the MHC is to make the Nevada City Open Air Museum a commercial success, and therefore to make it self-sustainable, as was the original statutory mandate when the State of Montana bought the properties in 1997, Nevada City will need to be in stable, safe condition, and it will need to be believable as a western gold mining boom town. The MHC Living History program is making great strides to be a formidable Montana tourist attraction, and the structures that they interpret in the town must follow suit.

Cost estimate: \$1.5 million

Nevada City Hotel:

Before work commences a soil analysis is necessary to determine foundation system type. It needs a major excavation both for drainage and a new foundation, replacement of rotted sill logs and sill plates, replacement of flooring, window and door repair, and gutters. Also included would be a complete electrical and plumbing upgrade.

Cost estimate: \$400,000



“Bovey Backfill” has failed, leaving cracks and spaces for moisture to accumulate, accelerating wood rot along the entire exterior of structure



The Nevada City Hotel sits on large upright beams, some that do not even touch the ground (above right)

George Ives Jail:

This 1863 original structure is in grave danger of failing. It is one of the few remaining original buildings in Nevada City, which was a blacksmith shop and served as the holding cell for George Ives during the most famous trial in Nevada City. In order to save this building, it will need: a new foundation excavated, “Bovey Backfill” removed, vegetation removed, rotted sill logs replaced, a rock foundation placed, boards and battens replaced, roof replaced, a French drain for moisture, oiling, and new or salvaged hardware. The rodents need to be removed and kept out.

Cost estimate: \$20,000



The George Ives Jail: an original Nevada City structure in danger of collapsing. Bottom right: an archaeological test unit filled with ice is proof that the building needs regarding.

Other Nevada City structure needs:



Figure 13: Original Nevada City building in need: The George Ives Jail



Figure 14: Poor drainage creates a sheet of ice in front of the Sedman House, an impressive structure that needs to be treated by painting



Figure 15: Rotting boards require consolidant

Figure 16: No access to second floor due to stairs in poor shape



Figure 17: Rear portion of Richards Cabin collapsing- safety issue



Figure 18: NR Listed Finney House interior never completed



Figure 19: Collapsing roof is a safety issue



Figure 20: Many porches need work as they are safety concerns



Figure 21: Charlie Bovey Building in desperate need of stabilization- floor is sunken in, endangering collections



Figure 22: Interior of Finney House left unfinished



Figure 23: Failing foundations and rotting logs need to be addressed



Figure 24: Iron Rod Cabin needs a foundation and weatherproofing



The Richards Cabin, an original structure, has major drainage issues



Water damage in the NR listed Dr. Don L. Byam house

