



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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PUBLIC INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN WESTERN MONTANA ORAL HISTORIES PROJECT AT THE WESTERN MONTANA FAIR

The Missoula Historic Preservation Commission, in association with the Western Montana Fair, will continue its oral histories project for the second year during the fair. Volunteer historians will be on hand at the fair Aug. 7 and 8 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. to record stories from western Montana residents who wish to participate. They will also be able to photograph and scan historic artifacts and memorabilia.

The Western Montana Oral Histories Project was initiated at the Western Montana Fair in 2012. The Missoula Historic Preservation Commission and Missoula Historic Preservation Office are continuing the oral history project this year at the fair. The scope and purpose of the project is to record the stories and personal histories of the residents of western Montana to enhance the written and physical historical record of the region. History informs the present: These individual histories provide a broader understanding of where we are now by understanding how we got here. The research questions are designed to record the experiences, memories and impressions of our past and present Missoula community, including western Montana history and stories. Photographs, memorabilia, written diaries, letters and personal stories – all of these enhance our appreciation of our community.

This project's format is similar to the Story Corps series on National Public Radio. We will record each participant's story to create both audio and video records. We strongly encourage all participants to bring in photographs, artifacts and memorabilia to help tell their stories. All stories will be archived for future use either in historical research or for educational purposes.

Permission may also be asked of participants to make copies of their photographs and other written material. At all times, the materials will be readily available to the public.

This year, the commission is especially interested in stories associated with the Missoula Underground (the tunnels and basements/voids beneath historic downtown Missoula); ranching and farming in western Montana; industrial and railroad history; local mills; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Postal Service; general personal histories; and impressions of the fair itself.

The oral histories interviews will take place at the Fair History Building (behind the Culinary Building and next to the Commercial Building). Participants are encouraged to make an appointment to speak one-on-one with the oral historians prior to arriving at the fair through the Historic Preservation Office at 552-6638.

Leslie Schwab, the City of Missoula's (new) Historic Preservation Officer, is available to discuss the project. For an interview, call 552-6638 or e-mail lschwab@ci.missoula.mt.us.

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