

# On the Road to Montana's Great Museums and Galleries

Tucked away on Highway 83 on the road to Glacier National Park and worth a visit is the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society Museum in Condon.

The museum opened July 4, 2013, with a celebration of pride in the nation and a love of local history.

"People are proud of the history of the valley. It was a labor of love. There are less than 1,000 people here (in the valley), if you count the summer folks," Steve Lamar, spokesman for the museum said.

Last year 140 volunteers contributed 6,141 hours to the museum, he said, and that number is growing every year. The museum is open free to the public Thursday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

"People can call for an appointment. Our people love to show the

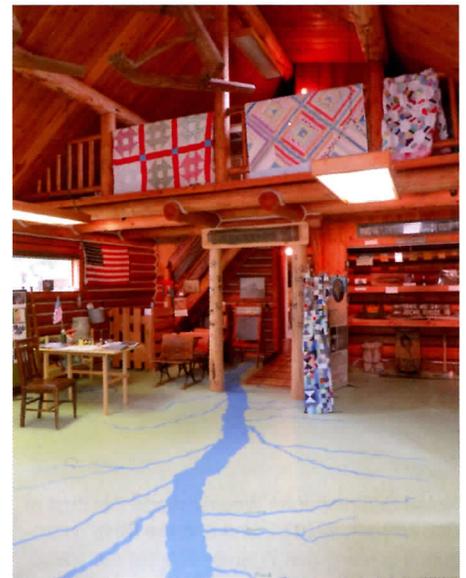
museum off, and somebody is usually available to do it," Lamar said. You can call him at 406-754-2745.

The museum exhibits are well interpreted and displayed "We want to tell the story behind the exhibits," he said.

MHS Outreach and Interpretation Program Manager Kirby Lambert attended a planning meeting for the museum about two years ago and recently went back. "I was truly amazed at how much they have accomplished in a relatively short period of time," Lambert said.

There are many unique exhibits from the area's history of logging and community building including a restoration of the original Liquid Louie's Bar, a community gathering place in the 1940s.

The valley was one of the last places in the nation opened to homesteading in 1906. More than



The inside of the Upper Swan Valley Museum.

200 people took out homesteads, but only 102 proved up on their property, Lamar said.

It is well worth a visit to see how Montanans survived in that part of the state. ★

## SOCIETY STAR PROFILE

### Kate Hampton Destined to Find the Real Montana

It's a long way from Baltimore to the special places of Montana, and the stories they tell.

MHS State Historic Preservation Coordinator Kate Hampton said it all began in 7th grade when she missed a day of school.

"We had to do a report on a state. The only two states to pick from were Idaho and Montana. I picked Montana," she said with her infectious smile.

After graduating from Towson State in Baltimore, she completed her destined journey by getting her master's degree in western history at the University of Montana in 1995. Her first job was with Historical Research Associates in Missoula, and one of her first assignments was to hike the back country of Grand Teton National Park in search of its special places and stories.

"I thought; I can't believe I am



Kate Hampton finding Montana's special places.

getting paid for this. I fell in love with discovering and documenting place as history," she said.

She brought that love to MHS in 2000, working first as its State Historic Preservation Office National Register Coordinator. She has traveled to virtually every corner of the state working with communities to find and tell their stories and save their historic treasures.

"I really enjoy the community workshops we put on across the state," she said. "The people are always so warm. I revel in their telling of family histories and the significance of the places important to them. You can see the pride in their faces."

Although she says she didn't want to be a history teacher, she acknowledges that it is a big part of her job. "When they learn how their stories relate to larger historical themes, people rally around their history," she said.

Her father-in-law is noted Montana historian H.D. Hampton, and she took one of the last classes he taught at UM. "He is a great teacher. He trusted me enough to house sit for him," she said.

Another bit of her destiny. She married his son Wade, and they now have two children – of course Montana natives. ★