



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Westerners

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Kalispell, Montana

May 14, 2025

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MAY MEETING

Monday, May 19, 2025

“Bootlegging Adventures
in Northwest Montana”

Presenter: Darris Flanagan of Fortine

Where: Second floor of the Northwest
Montana History Museum,
124 2nd Ave. East, Kalispell

Time: Gab 'n' Greet, raffle sales and book
sales and signing start at 6:00 p.m.
Soft drinks, beer and wine will be
available.

Historic Presentation: 7:00 p.m.
No reservations are required, but
seating will be limited; so come early.
Call 406-309-0938 with questions.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Fortine author Darris Flanagan will describe a time when locals would sit on hills in the Eureka area and watch the headlights of revenuers chasing rum-runners. Based on research for his book, *Bootlegging Adventures in Northwest Montana*, many of his tales come from first-hand accounts and local news articles.

The Eureka area was a hot spot for bootlegging, he notes. Canada had done away with prohibition in 1920, the same year it was adopted by the

United States. Export houses were quickly set up north of the border to tap into the new market. Not only was northwest Montana's sparsely populated and wooded terrain particularly attractive to smugglers, but coal trains crossing the border made it even more porous.



Booze came across largely by automobile, but also by boat, airplane, and even oversized coats. The profits were immense. Local officials were soon on the take and farmers rented out their barns to hide shipments headed south.

Gun play was not unknown. Jack Curtis, a federal agent who had previously been wounded in Arlee, got into a shotgun versus pistol battle in

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1922 near the border. He survived by inches, with bullets through his cap and coat. The next year he was shot at four times, with two more injuries.

Rum-running involved a second journey south to the markets in Butte and elsewhere. Many smugglers relied on disposable stolen cars.

Not all the liquor came from Canada. Many residents set up moonshine operations in the woods, with Still Creek remaining as a reminder of the time. But, as Flanagan notes, it took a careful balance of temperature and timing to avoid contaminating homemade booze with wood alcohol.

Prohibition lasted until 1933, though Montana revoked its state law in 1927.

About the Presenter

Darris Flanagan is a lifelong resident of Northwest Montana. He grew up on a ranch near Eureka in the historic Tobacco Valley. He graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in history with an emphasis on teaching. He taught in Fortine, Dayton, and finished his career in Somers as a history teacher and guidance counselor.



After retiring he returned to the family ranch, where he keeps busy playing cowboy, doing volunteer work and writing. He now is chairman of the Tobacco Valley Museum.

He has authored over sixteen books on Northwest Montana history. In 2018 Darris was awarded the Montana Keepers award from the Montana Historical Society's Board of Trustees which honors exemplary commitment, effort, and impact in identifying, preserving, and presenting Montana's historical and cultural heritage for current and future generations.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

We were in Helena recently and checked on the progress at the Montana Historical Society's Museum.



The construction is done, and the museum is headed for grand reopening in November. What was once a street and empty lot in 2020 is now a brand new addition.

More than 65,000 artifacts have moved into the new building. The building features a specialized cooling and heating system designed to preserve the artifacts. A security system will provide added protection.

Work is continuing on about 30,000 square feet of exhibit space. Included, of course, will be the Charlie Russell art exhibit.

The existing 95,000 square foot building is getting updated windows, elevators, plumbing, electrical and HVAC.

In the Montana Homeland Gallery, ten zones will cover Montana's history from 14,000 years ago to the present day.

Indigenous history, based on input from the tribes, will be woven throughout the timetable.

The experience will include video, audio, lighting and even smells.

A mock elevator in the mine shaft exhibit will use sounds, air currents and more to give the experience of penetrating deep into a Butte mine.



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The cost of the museum project is \$104 million, with nearly \$60 million of that coming from private fund raising.

With the exception of the museum store, the complex has been closed since construction began.

TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Pat Walsh and Scott Tanner knew the answer to last month's question about the location of the Anderson-Reddick service station.

The art deco building is on the southeast corner of 4th St. East and 1st Ave. East in Kalispell.

There have been changes to enclose the service bays, and for years it has been the home of KCFW Television. Like many of the city's distinctive buildings, it was designed by famed local architect Fred Brinkman.

This Month's Trivia Question

What Kalispell establishment was the target of the fiery temperance advocate Carrie Nation in 1910?

Submit your answers to the editor at richardahull@charter.net and we will print the names of all those who get them right.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



● **May 26**

Downtown Kalispell Historical walking tours resume. Tours are most Mondays through Sept. 29. Register on-line at nwmthistory.org (click on menu icon in upper-right corner,) or at the front desk. Ph. 406-756-8381 for information.

● **June 4**

The History Book Club discusses *The Flicker of Old Dreams* by Susan Henderson. The Wednesday gathering is 2 p.m. at the Northwest Montana History Museum.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

● **June 16:** "Wild West Shows" with emphasis on the variant headlined by Montana Frank. By Nick Mitchell of Kalispell.

● **July 21:** "Red Buses of Glacier Park" by Ray Djuff of Calgary, Alberta.

DUES REMINDER

It is time for the annual renewal for members. Please support our organization and its goals by paying at the May meeting. A membership application is available on our website at nwmwesterners.com.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

Northwest Montana Westerners meetings are held on the third Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

Meetings begin with a Gab 'n' Greet session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. for a chance to get acquainted. The speakers often have their books for sale.

The presentation starts at 7 p.m. and is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books are raffled off as a fund raiser. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be on sale by museum staff.

An advertisement for Dr. A. Howe Eye Specialist. It features a logo of an eye at the top. The text reads: "Dr. A. HOWE EYE Specialist Glasses Adjusted for errors of Refraction Loss of Accommodation and Muscular Defects KALISPELL Phone 198 and 163".

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Copy must be in the Editor's in-box on or before the first of the month in order to make that
month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

The next edition of Pony Tracks will be issued June 11, 2025 (or there abouts).

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