

WELCOME TO THE CENTRAL MONTANA MUSEUM

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We're so glad that you've stopped to visit us! In the heart of Montana amidst the Belt, Highwood, Judith, Moccasins and Snowy Mountains, lies our home in a valley known as the Judith Basin. This area, which we proudly refer to as "Central Montana," stretches westward to Arrow Creek, north to the Missouri River, and south/east toward the Musselshell River.

Our museum features many photos and displays depicting the changes that resulted when enterprising folks from all walks of life journeyed to the Judith Basin to try their luck at gold mining in the nearby mountains or to file on homestead claims. We hope that you'll find our exhibits and interpretation enjoyable and informative in their portrayal of Central Montana's chronological progression through the years.



One of our more recent displays is really the oldest! It is a full-scale replica of the skull of a Torosaurus dinosaur that was found in the Valentine area in eastern

Fergus County. Displays of more recent history, beginning in the 1870's when the area was largely unsettled and buffalo roamed the open prairies, also reside at the museum.

Other displays include: small-scale old-fashioned city street; Native Americans, Fort Sherman, Carroll Trail; Reed and Bowles Trading Post; Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce; Fort Maginnis; Reedsfort; Janeaux's Stockade; Metis; stockmen (horses, cattle and sheep); mining (gold, sapphires and coal) and production of oil and gypsum; one-room school; Croatian stonemasons; Judith Theatre; Central Montana communities; military; freighters; stage coaches; Fergus, Judith Basin and Petroleum Counties; railroads; and the depression, dust storms and the dirty Thirties.



At the appropriate time intervals, we've included exhibits of some of the area's most notorious characters including:

- Rattlesnake Jake Owens (outlaw)
- Charles M. Russell (cowboy/famous artist)
- Granville Stuart (cattleman/Vigilante leader)
- Bertie Brown (moonshine entrepreneur/rancher)
- Ed McGivern (sign maker & pistol fast draw record holder)
- Charlie Cooley (businessman/civic leader)
- Jimmy Kaaro (circus performer/trick roper/animal trainer/lawman)
- Jane Burnett Smith (bronc rider/stunt rider/author)



The museum houses a variety of collections including: dolls; toys; wedding dresses; fire arms; forts; fossils; historic replicas and dioramas; swords; Indian artifacts; mounted wildlife trophies; wax sculptures by Alex

LaFountain; Clarence Cuts the Rope paintings; military; photos; cameras; musical instruments; hats; office machines; bakery, creamery and dairy equipment; telephone switchboard and telegraph machine; quilts, sewing machines, spinning wheels and a loom; irons and washing machines; carpentry tools and many others. In addition, replicas of a music room/parlor/dining room; kitchen; and a newspaper printing shop from years past; and items from



St. Joseph's Hospital are on display. Of special interest are a wagon and trunk owned by James Fergus, the founder of Fergus County; a replica of a red river cart used by the Metis; a sluice box used by placer miners;



and a Norden Bombsite.

The following educational electronic media are available for viewing, too. Please ask the Museum Attendant for assistance if you'd like to watch them.

- A DVD demonstrating the quarrying and cutting of local stone used to construct many beautiful buildings in Lewistown by the talented and creative stonemasons who immigrated here from Bribir, Croatia. It was from their hard toiling and handiwork that Lewistown was molded and holds the proud distinction of being called the "City of Stone."
- A very interesting video of the coal mining industry entitled "Against the Darkness."
- A DVD featuring interviews with ancestors of some of the area's most prominent people as well as accounts of the Rattlesnake Jake shootout; a history of local schools; the Torosaurus dinosaur; and an interview with the author of two Central Montana tour guides.

