



The Museum Keeping Missoula County's History Alive

The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula was established in 1975 to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Missoula County and western Montana for the education, recreation and cultural enrichment of visitors and area residents. It is located on 32 acres at the core of historic Fort Missoula (1877-1947), an area included on the National Register of Historic Places. The Museum has over 25,000 objects in its collection, including the main Museum building, formerly a Quartermaster's Storehouse (1911).

The Museum's indoor galleries contain both long-term and temporary exhibits that address topics from the area's early exploration to modern times. These exhibits, together with the Museum's outdoor interpretive area – a complex of original and relocated historic structures – depict the life and material culture of the region. Major themes (Fort Missoula, Missoula County and the forest products industry) are introduced in the main Museum building and expanded upon in the outdoor interpretive area.

The Museum site is open year-round and operated by professional staff and volunteers, including the Friends of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, who work to provide visitors with a unique opportunity to explore the region's history and learn more about its heritage.

The Museum was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 2000.

Visitor Information

Summer Hours:

(Memorial Day - Labor Day)
10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Saturday
12:00 - 5:00 pm, Sunday

Winter Hours:

(Labor Day - Memorial Day)
12:00pm - 5:00 pm, Tuesday - Sunday
Closed Monday

The museum is closed all major holidays except July 4th, Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Nominal Admission Fee

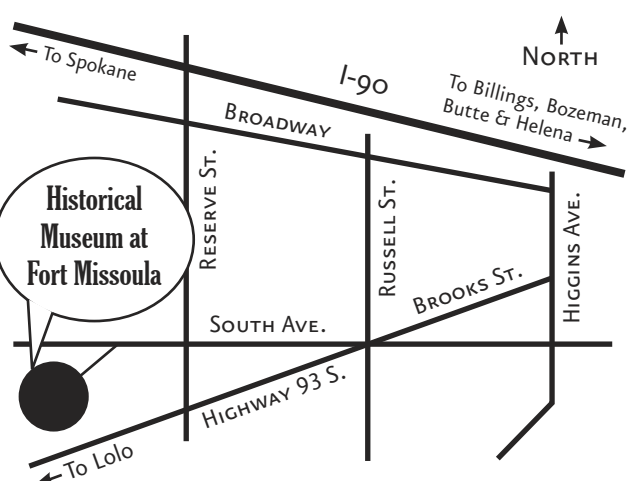
The museum office and research library are open weekdays 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, or by appointment.

The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is wheelchair accessible.

To protect our collections and displays, PHOTOGRAPHS AND/OR VIDEOS ARE NOT ALLOWED in museum exhibit areas.

NO SMOKING, FOOD OR BEVERAGES in any museum building.

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Fort Missoula

Fort Missoula was established as a permanent military post in 1877 in response to requests from local townspeople and settlers for protection in the event of conflict with western Montana Indian tribes. Intended as a major outpost for the region, area residents were also quite aware of the payroll, contracts and employment opportunities a fort would provide. Fort Missoula never had walls; rather, it was an "open fort," a design common for posts located west of the Mississippi. Open forts required troops to take the offensive and actively patrol the areas to which they were assigned.

Construction of the fort had barely begun when the Company Commander, Captain Charles C. Rawn, received orders to halt the advance of a group of non-treaty Nez Perce Indians, led by Chiefs Joseph, Looking Glass and others, who refused to settle on reservation land in Idaho. Rawn's soldiers were ordered to arrest and disarm the Nez Perce as they followed the Lolo Trail into Montana Territory; however, the Indians simply went around the soldiers' hastily constructed earth and log barricade in Lolo Canyon (later called "Fort Fizzle"). They escaped south through the Bitterroot Valley and into the Big Hole Valley where they faced Rawn's men and others at the Battle of the Big Hole. The Nez Perce continued their flight until October when they surrendered in the Bear Paw Mountains, just short of the Canadian border. The soldiers meanwhile continued with the Fort's construction and maintained the Mullan Road.

The 25th Infantry arrived at Fort Missoula in May 1888. The regiment was one of four created after the Civil War that were made up of black soldiers and white officers. The 25th Infantry Band delighted the local settlers and was an important part of the community. In 1896 Lieutenant James Moss organized the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps to test the military potential of bicycles. The Corps undertook several short journeys – through the Bitterroot Valley to deliver dispatches, north to the St. Ignatius area, and through Yellowstone National Park – before making a 1,900-mile bicycle trip from Fort Missoula to St. Louis. The Army concluded that while the bicycle offered limited military potential, it would never replace the horse. The 25th Infantry returned to Missoula by train. When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, the 25th was one of the first units called to fight. The regiment served

bravely in Cuba and the Philippines, but was reassigned to other posts after the war.

The efforts of Congressman Joseph Dixon of Missoula led to the appropriation of \$1 million in 1904 to remodel Fort Missoula. A modern complex of concrete buildings with red tile roofs was constructed between 1908 and 1914, including a new officers' row, barracks and post hospital.

The Fort was used as a military training center during World War I, but was almost abandoned by 1921. However, it was designated as the Northwest Regional Headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. Fort Missoula was transferred to the Department of Immigration and Naturalization in 1941, for use as an Alien Detention Center for nonmilitary Italian men (merchant seamen, Worlds Fair employees and the crews of Italian luxury liners seized in American waters). The camp housed over 1,200 Italian internees and, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 650 Japanese-American men.



Fort Missoula was used as a prison for American personnel accused of military crimes, and other personnel awaiting court-martial following World War II. After the post was decommissioned in 1947, many of the buildings were sold, dismantled and removed from the site. Today, the majority of the Fort is in the hands of nonmilitary agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Missoula County, The University of Montana, Northern Rockies Heritage Center, and the Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History, along with elements of the U.S. Army Reserve and Montana National Guard.



Guided Tours/Rentals

To obtain more information about Fort Missoula, the Friends of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, arrange a guided tour or site rental, contact us at:

Historical Museum at Fort Missoula

Bldg. 322, Fort Missoula
Missoula, MT 59804
Phone (406) 728-3476
Fax (406) 543-6277
E-mail: ftmslamuseum@montana.com
website: www.fortmissoulamuseum.org

Historical Museum Tour Map



1. *Main Museum Building, 1911

This brick structure once served as the Quartermaster's Storehouse, where a variety of post supplies were stored. The window bars protected the building's contents from theft. It has been remodeled and now houses exhibit galleries, museum store, research library and offices.

2. Quartermaster's Root Cellar, 1908

This earth-covered concrete structure provided cool storage for large quantities of fresh vegetables and other perishables needed to feed the men stationed at the post. The metal vents on top allowed air to circulate and kept the cellar temperature constant.

3. NCO Quarters, 1878

The oldest structure on the Museum grounds, this log building is one of three original Fort Missoula buildings still standing. The duplex housed noncommissioned officers, civilian employees and regular Army personnel from 1877-1947. It passed into private ownership after 1947 and was being dismantled when it was discovered to be an original Fort building. It was donated to the Museum in 2007 by the Western Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society.

4. Carriage House, 1880

The carriage house was used to store a buggy and tack for families living in the NCO Quarters. It was sold and removed from the Fort in 1958, but was returned to its original location in 1974. It is one of three original Fort Missoula buildings still standing.

5. *Homestead Cabin and Barn, ca. 1900; moved 1974

Once located on the Patrick Hayes homestead east of Missoula in the Potomac Valley, it was donated to the Museum by the Hayes family. It is restored to circa 1920 and is now being used for education programs.

6. *Grant Creek Schoolhouse, 1907; moved 1976

This rural one-room schoolhouse was once located north of Missoula in the lower Grant Creek drainage, a farming area that it served until 1937. The structure has been restored to its 1920s appearance with the help of Eta Chapter, Delta Kappa Gamma Society International. It is used to interpret the history of the region's one-room schoolhouses.

7. *St. Michael's Church, 1863; moved 1981

This church was constructed at Hell Gate Ronde (about 4 miles west of Missoula) by Jesuits from St. Ignatius Mission. When an 1873 survey disclosed that the Jesuits and a local farmer claimed the same land, the church was moved by wagon to Missoula. It stood on the grounds of St. Patrick Hospital until it was returned to the site of old Hell Gate in 1962. The Friends of the Historical Museum moved the church to the Museum grounds to interpret the history of the region's religious development.

8. Trolley Barn, 2007

The Trolley Barn houses the Museum's restored interurban streetcar that ran from Fort Missoula to Bonner from 1912 to 1932; a 1918 American-LaFrance fire engine; and other transportation equipment.

9. *Alien Detention Center Barracks, 1941; moved 1995

This structure is one of the wood barracks constructed by

Italian civilian internees detained at Fort Missoula between 1941 and 1944. After the war's end, the building was moved to The University of Montana for use as a storage facility. An exhibit interprets Fort Missoula's internment camp. The internment area was located farther east, behind #24.

10. Old Parade Ground, 1877-1910

This field was used for flag ceremonies, drills and parades during Fort Missoula's early years. Old Officers' Row looked out onto the area. Larger concrete barracks and officers' quarters were constructed around a new parade ground between 1910 and 1914, when the fort was remodeled (see #20).

11. *Drummond Depot, 1910; moved 1982

Constructed by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company, this "Milwaukee Road" depot served the town of Drummond, about 60 miles southeast of Missoula. The Friends of the Historical Museum moved it here after the railroad closed its Montana operations. It has been restored with assistance from the Missoula Model Railroad Club. An exhibit inside the depot, including the John Barrows Memorial Ticket Office, interprets the history of railroad transportation in western Montana.

12. Tipi-Burner, c.1946; moved 2006

Tipi-Burners were once plentiful in the Missoula Valley, being used by every sawmill to burn waste from the milling operation. The Clean Air Act and new technologies to turn the waste into pressboard and paper led to the end of the Tipi-Burners in the 1970s. Built in Conner, south of Hamilton, it was moved to the Ravalli County Fairgrounds, who then donated it to the Museum in 2004. Scott Kuehn, the Society of American Foresters, and other volunteers made this project possible.

13. *Forestry Interpretive Area

Forest management and timber production are interpreted in this outdoor area, with assistance from the local chapter of the Society of American Foresters and other volunteer groups. The area includes a recreated railroad logging spur, as well as a rare Shay-type engine, logging flat cars, a log-loading slide jammer, shuttle car, wagons, logging equipment and a working sawmill. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company Lumber Department's Library Car served as an early bookmobile for loggers from 1921 to the late 1950s. The "Timber" exhibit examines the early forest industry. The area behind the fence is The University of Montana Forestry Competition Area, used for intercollegiate and pro-am competition.

14. Powder Magazine, 1878

Constructed of mortar and fieldstones, this structure was used to store explosives when the post was active. It is one of three original Fort Missoula buildings, but is no longer used to store munitions. It is owned by the Northern Rockies Heritage Center.

15. *Sliderock Lookout, 1933; moved 1983

Manufactured in Columbia Falls, these pre-packaged lookouts were shipped throughout a four-state region for assembly on a tower or bare ground. The single-room structures were grounded by a lightning protection system and usually contained a fire finder, radio or telephone, bed,

table, stove and cupboards. This lookout was dismantled at its site 40 miles southeast of Missoula, atop Sliderock Mountain, and moved to the Museum with the assistance from the Friends of the Historical Museum and the Missoula Chapter of the Society of American Foresters.

16. *Miller Creek Guard Cabin, ca. 1910; moved 1983

After the disastrous fires of 1910 destroyed three million acres of forest in western Montana and northern Idaho, the U.S. Forest Service became actively involved in fire prevention and control. "Fire Watchers" were posted throughout the region to watch for fires from lookout trees on mountaintops. The men first lived in "rag tent camps" and later in permanent structures like this cabin once located up Miller Creek, south of Missoula. The cabin is used to interpret the history of forest protection and fire management.

17. Gazebo, 1999

This structure is a replica of an 1890s gazebo and is used for special events on the Museum grounds. It is available for rental for weddings and other private events.

18. Iris Gardens, 1983

This area was established and is maintained by the Missoula Iris Society to familiarize visitors with the varieties and types of iris and other flowers that grow in this region.

19. Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History

Located off the Museum grounds, in the 1936 Civilian Conservation Corps Administrative Building, this museum is privately operated. Contact 549-5346 for further information.

20. New Officers' Row, 1910

Located off the Museum grounds, these seven structures were used to house the Fort's officers and families. They are owned by the Northern Rockies Heritage Center.

21. T-2 Post Headquarters, 1906

Located off Museum grounds, this building served as the Post Exchange and Canteen, and later the Post Headquarters. It is owned by the Northern Rockies Heritage Center.

22. T-1 Post Headquarters, 1940

Located off Museum grounds, this building housed the offices of the Commanding Officer and his key administrative staff. It is owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

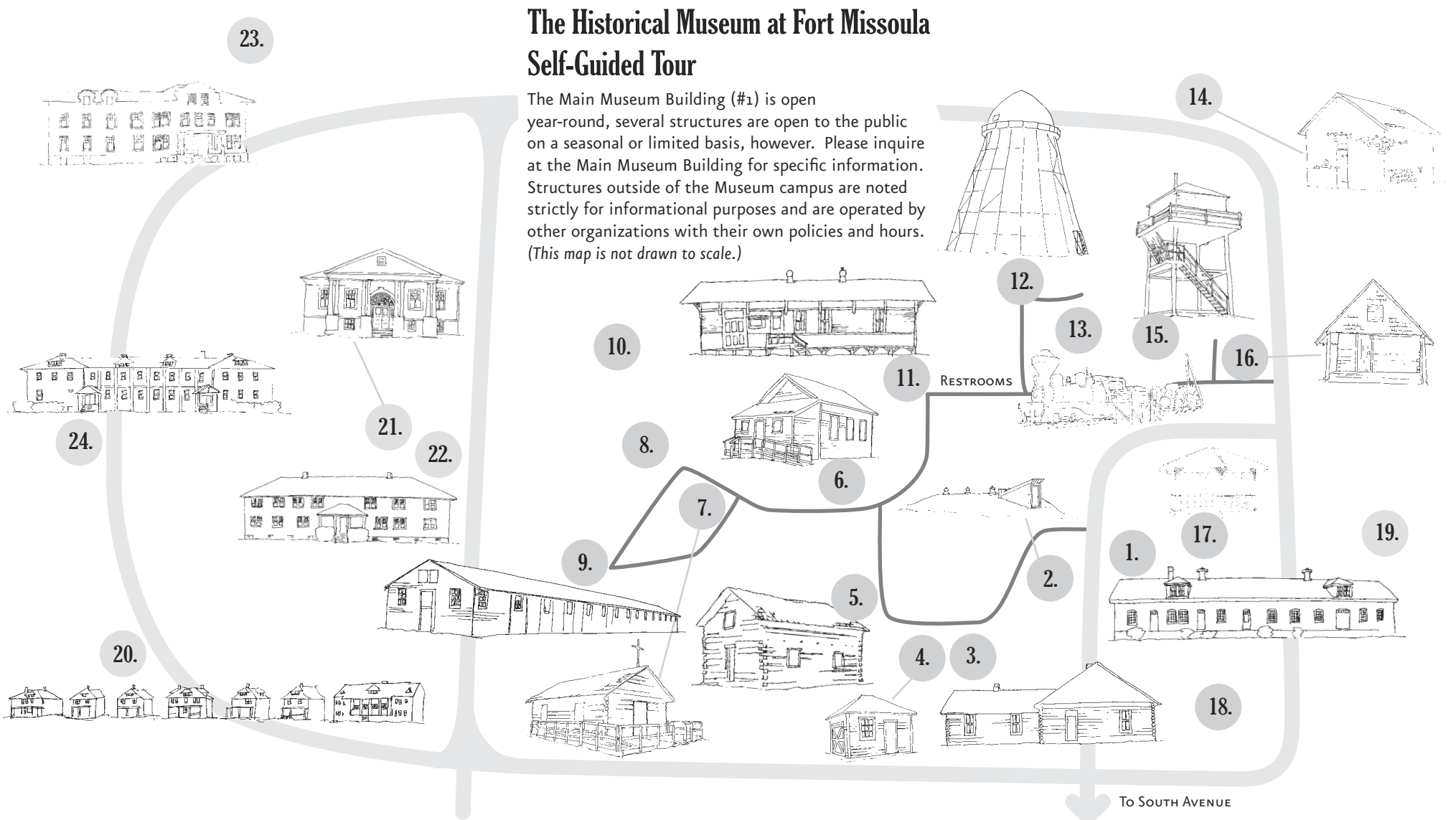
23. T-9 Post Hospital, 1915

Located off Museum grounds, this building served as the Fort's hospital until 1947. It is now owned by the Western Montana Regional Community Mental Health Center.

24. Company Barracks, 1910

Located off Museum grounds, these buildings held a capacity of 170 men in the dormitory area. They later became the property of the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Reserve.

** Denotes that the structure is restored with interpretive exhibits. Except when noted, open to the public on a seasonal basis (hours are posted on the main Museum building).*



The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Self-Guided Tour

The Main Museum Building (#1) is open year-round, several structures are open to the public on a seasonal or limited basis, however. Please inquire at the Main Museum Building for specific information. Structures outside of the Museum campus are noted strictly for informational purposes and are operated by other organizations with their own policies and hours. (This map is not drawn to scale.)