Montana History Foundation Conveys $1M McFarland Curatorial Center

The History Foundation has served as the steward of a 1997 cash donation that built the McFarland Curatorial Center in Virginia City, Montana and has recently conveyed the building to the Montana Heritage Commission. Completed in 1999 at the cost of approximately one million dollars, the McFarland Center has served as the conservation lab and repository for thousands of artifacts related to the history of Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana. The building, its contents, and its fixtures all become property of the State of Montana as a result of the transfer. The State already owns the land beneath and around the building.

The building was made possible by a gift from Ruth McFarland in memory of her husband Lee. Since its completion, the center has been operated by the Montana Heritage Commission, the agency that manages state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City as well as Reeder’s Alley in Helena, Montana.

The original donor, Ruth McFarland, died last year. In honor of her wishes that the building be owned and held in perpetuity by the State of Montana, the History Foundation recently conveyed the building to the Montana Heritage Commission.

“We are delighted to make this gift to the people of Montana,” stated Bill Jones, chair of the board of directors of the Montana History Foundation. “The McFarland family made a very significant gift over twenty years ago and they were very pleased with the completed project. We are delighted to fulfill our promise to convey this beautiful facility to the people of Montana.”

“The Montana Heritage Commission is very appreciative of the donation and collaborative relationship with the Montana History Foundation. The donation of the McFarland Curatorial Center will be a huge asset to the historical site of Virginia and Nevada City which houses over 1.2 million Americana artifacts,” stated Elijah Allen, executive director of the Montana Heritage Commission. “The McFarland Curatorial Center will be used to repair, preserve and help educate the public on Virginia and Nevada cities history for future generations. A very big thank you to the Montana History Foundation for their continued efforts to help enrich, educate and preserve Montana’s history and heritage across Montana.”

Please feel free to contact the Montana History Foundation for more information on this story.
Exterior view of the Lee C. McFarland Curatorial Center

A view inside the artifact storage. The linens seen here are from the Great Northern Railroad and Sault St. Marie and Atlantic Railway Line.

Looking into the artifact storage area inside the McFarland Curatorial Center.
Inside the textile room, where antique textiles are properly stored and safely handled.

A view of the conservation lab and HVAC system.

The Grip or Push arcade machine is just one of many unique items stored in the center from Virginia City or Nevada City, Montana.