

Fall 2025

Virginia City Preservation Alliance, Inc.

Volume 29 Issue 1

# MY ROBBERS ROOST TREASURE

## THE LINDERMAN CABIN SERIES BRINGS MONTANA'S COLORFUL PAST TO LIFE!

COURTESY OF: MARY STASSI, VCPA BOARD MEMBER

*I found a treasure at the Robbers Roost.  
No, it is not gold, nor silver or jewels,  
yet it is a lovely treasure that will  
please many, the likes of me.*

I started four years ago with the VCPA. I love the history of the buildings they care for, and my favorite of them all is the Caretakers Cabin at the the Robbers Roost, which I discovered in the Spring of 2022 when I joined the annual June clean up of the grounds. As we worked in front of the Caretakers Cabin we noticed some interesting looking plants among the tall grass, fighting for space and water. My friend, Pat Jacobs, recognized them; tiny sweet peas, they were, and I felt the need to care for them.

The following week I went back on my own and began working on what I would call my 'treasure'. As I dug out the grass around the sweet peas I discovered stones covered by nearly six inches of soil. As I dug more, I found a pre-existing border of very unique and beautiful rocks and stones along the entire East facing wall! I was mesmerized!

There before me lay a garden which was created many, many years ago and I have been able to bring it back to life for all to share. For the balance of the year, my spouse, Lance, and I would go out every Sunday and tend to the garden, and other areas that needed a bit of care. All the while, the nighthawks watched from the fence, the music of sandhill cranes danced in the background,

the wind, through the willows, whispered tales of the past, and the small stream giggled (gurgled) happily that there was no more ice to stop its flow.

This special place has a way of soothing my soul and connecting me to the beauty of life on this earth.

Stop by. See, feel, experience it all. It's well worth your journey. ❀



*Found faded, now flourishing — these lovely blooms are back to life  
at Robber's Roost. A little care goes a long way.*

## About the Virginia City Preservation Alliance.

**VCPA Organization.** The Virginia City Preservation Alliance is organized and operated in accordance with the Montana Nonprofit Corporation Act and the tax exemption requirements of Internal Revenue Code Section 501(0)(3). The VCPA maintains the following website:

[www.virginiacitypreservationalliance.org](http://www.virginiacitypreservationalliance.org)

**VCPA Board meetings** are held on the second Monday of each month in the meeting room of Thompson Hickman Library, Virginia City, at 6:00 PM (except that meetings for December-March are held at 12:00 Noon).

### Virginia City Nugget.

*The Virginia City Nugget* is published by the Virginia City Preservation Alliance to communicate with Members about VCPA activities and events, as well as to provide Members with historical information on relevant topics involving Virginia City, Alder Gulch and the western mining frontier.

### Mission Statement

The principal purpose of the Virginia City Preservation Alliance is to preserve, restore and put on public display structures and artifacts relating to the history of the town of Virginia City, Montana; to tell the story of the western mining frontier; and to protect the integrity of the local community.

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## Virginia City Preservation Alliance Hosts Annual Meeting, Highlights a Successful Year of Programs and Preservation Efforts

SUBMITTED BY VIRGINIA CITY  
PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

The Virginia City Preservation Alliance (VCPA) held its annual meeting on November 16th at the Elling House Arts and Humanities Center, bringing together members, supporters, and community partners to reflect on another impactful year. President Pat Jacobs opened the meeting with a warm welcome and an overview of the organization's accomplishments in 2025, expressing her sincere gratitude to each board member for their hard work, dedication, and ongoing commitment to the VCPA's mission of preserving and promoting the history of Virginia City.

Jacobs extended special recognition to Eric Barsness, Historic Preservation Officer for Virginia City, for his leadership of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee. His guidance and expertise continue to play a vital role in advancing preservation initiatives throughout the community.

### A Year of Community Events and Educational Programming

The VCPA's programming continued to grow in both reach and participation. Jacobs highlighted the Grand Victorian Ball, which saw an outstanding turnout of more than 100 attendees, one of the event's strongest showings to date. She also celebrated the success of the Linderman Cabin Lecture Series, which once again delivered engaging and informative talks on regional history, culture, and heritage.

Members were encouraged to stay tuned for announcements regarding the 2026 lineup, which promises another year of dynamic events and educational opportunities.

### Financial Overview: A Strong Year of Support and Stewardship

Treasurer Chris Leonard presented the



# PARTNERSHIP CORNER

*The Virginia City Preservation Alliance would like to regularly highlight local groups and foundations that are dedicated to preserving Montana's rich history. Discover the inspiring work they're doing to protect and promote our cultural heritage! This month we are featuring the Montana Historical Society's National Register Sign Program.*

## ANACONDA HOTEL (FAIRWEATHER INN) Virginia City National Historic Landmark District

COURTESY OF: THE MONTANA NATIONAL REGISTER SIGN PROGRAM

The oldest section of this building, dating to 1863, was first a simple one-story building that housed a restaurant called the "Young American Eating House." A butcher shop followed from 1866 to the 1880s, and then in the 1880s the building was a hotel/saloon. It became the Anaconda Hotel and Saloon in the 1890s under proprietor Frank McKeen. Renaming it the Fairweather Inn after the discoverer of gold in Alder Gulch, in 1946 Charles Bovey raised the height of the old hotel to two stories and added a "new" façade that duplicates the gold rush-era design of the then-demolished Goodrich House in Bannack. ☞



*Old Anaconda Hotel and restaurant, lower Wallace Street, north side, Virginia City, Montana, now the Fairweather Inn, built on the site of the Anaconda Hotel in 1946. Source: PAc 956-235, Montana Legacy Photograph Collection, Montana Historical Society Research Center Photograph Archives, Helena, MT. Creator: Unknown photographer Date: 1940-1949*

organization's financial report, underscoring the essential role that strong membership and generous donations continue to play in supporting the VCPA's mission. Contributions this year helped fund a wide array of preservation and educational efforts, including:

Building and grounds improvements to VCPA-managed properties.

Support for community history initiatives and preservation projects, such as the ongoing renovation of the historic Virginia City Schoolhouse.

The Centennial Bell Award, an honor presented annually since 1990 to an outstanding Montana history teacher in recognition of excellence in education and a celebration of Montana's statehood.

A video of this year's Centennial Bell Award ceremony can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/Wn8ofv8Rrho?si=ZJOXYpfsMZMtu8re>


### Western Saloons

The evening concluded with a captivating presentation by Virginia City resident and western saloon historian Lance Otto. His talk explored the rich and colorful world of historic

saloons, featuring an impressive display of vintage whiskey bottles, spirits containers, and other artifacts. Otto's deep knowledge and passion for the subject offered attendees a unique window into the social history of Montana's frontier-era drinking establishments.

### A Call for Year-End Support

As the VCPA looks ahead to 2026, the organization encourages members and community supporters to consider making a year-end, tax-deductible contribution in support of its 501(c)(3) mission. Financial gifts this season will directly aid several important initiatives, including the purchase of a new riding lawn mower to maintain VCPA-managed historic grounds, and providing matching funds for a grant application to the Foundation for Montana History. These matching commitments will help advance essential preservation work at the Linderman Cabin and Robber's Roost, as well as long-needed west façade repairs on the historic Hangman's Building. Every contribution, large or small, strengthens the VCPA's ability to protect and steward the irreplaceable heritage of Virginia City for future generations.



# ECHOES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Thanks to our friends at The Madisonian, we have been given permission to run old clippings from their archives! We will run advertisements, article clips, cartoons and more!

The Buford Mercantile Co. ad (right) ran in December of 1919 issue of The Madisonian.

Stay tuned for the next installment!

## OUR GROCERY STOCK

Will compare favorably with any in the state in completeness, while as to quality, our goods are absolutely the best that money will buy. Our winter supplies are here, ready for your inspection. You will find our prices right. Send us your order.

## Our Hardware Department...

Is replete with everything pertaining to the line, including Cooking and Heating Stoves, Tools, Cutlery, Guns and Ammunition, etc. Come in and see our stock. We surely can please you.

# Buford Mercantile Co.

VIRGINIA CITY, MONTANA



## HIGHLIGHTED PROPERTY

# THE SAUERBIER BLACKSMITH SHOP

## From Dance Hall to Frontier Workshop

ARTICLE BASED ON RESEARCH FROM ONLINE ARTICLES BY MONTANA STATE LIBRARY,  
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & HISTORICAL MARKER DATABASE

*On the south side of Wallace Street—tucked between Main and Jackson Streets—stands one of Virginia City’s most fascinating survivors: the historic Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop. Its unassuming façade hides a layered past that mirrors the evolution of the town itself, from gold-rush revelry to frontier industry.*

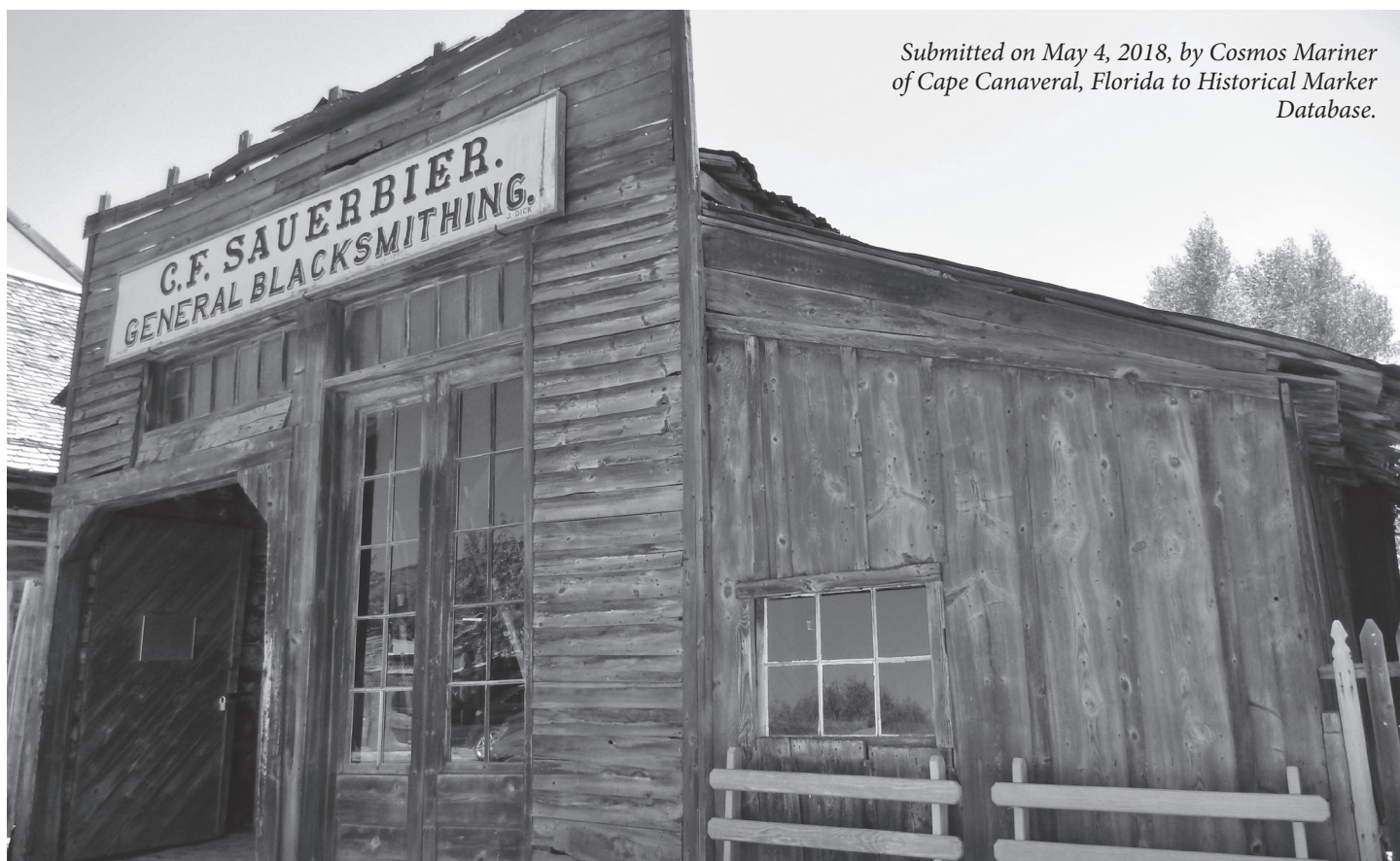
### **Beginnings in 1863: A Cabin, a Boomtown, and a Dance Hall**

The story begins in June 1863, the explosive first season of the Alder Gulch gold strike. Among the earliest structures raised during this chaotic boom was a small V-notched log cabin—still encased within the building that stands today. Within just a few years, the simple

cabin was expanded and embellished, evolving into what contemporary accounts describe as a notorious dance hall.

Though its wilder days have long since passed, traces of that early chapter remain. Tall French doors and a few surviving dentils along the façade hint at a brief moment of elegance (or at least ambition) amidst the rough-and-tumble mining camp.

SAUERBIER BLACKSMITH SHOP CONT. ON PAGE 6



*Submitted on May 4, 2018, by Cosmos Mariner  
of Cape Canaveral, Florida to Historical Marker  
Database.*



## A Shift in Purpose: The Birth of a Blacksmith Shop

By the 1870s, the building had traded music and dancing for the clang of hammers and the smell of hot iron. Known initially as the Sacramento Blacksmith Shop, it became an essential service hub for the fast-growing settlement.

In 1882, blacksmith Charles F. Sauerbier purchased the shop, launching a family enterprise that would span more than six decades. Charles was soon joined by his son Karl, and together they kept the business running until 1947—long after the gold rush had faded into memory.

### Life at the Forge

In its early years, the Sauerbier shop was indispensable to life and commerce in the mining district. Charles repaired stagecoaches, wagons, and equipment, and shod the ox teams that hauled enormous freight loads into the gulch. The work was demanding, vital, and—thanks to the region's rough terrain—steady.

Today, original tools and machinery remain in place, as though the smiths simply stepped outside for air. The building itself records its long service in the patched boards, mismatched nails, and incremental additions that accumulated from the 1860s through the early 20th century.

### A Living Piece of Virginia City's Story

The Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop is more than a historic building—it's a physical record of the town's evolution from gold-camp chaos to a more settled frontier community. Its layered construction, preserved artifacts, and long-standing role in local industry have earned it recognition as a contributing property within the Virginia City Historic District.

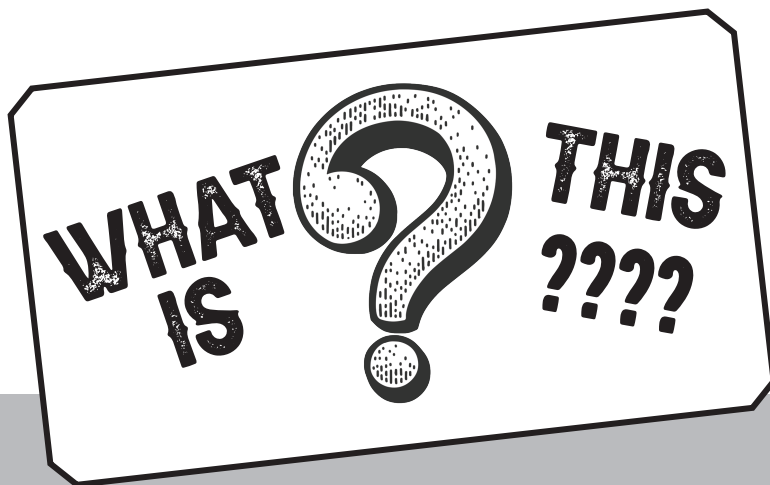
It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior, in partnership with the Montana Historical Society—an acknowledgment of both its architectural significance and its place in the American West's unfolding story. ❧



*Interior of Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop. Submitted on November 11, 2011, by Barry Swackhamer of Brentwood, California to Historical Marker Database.*



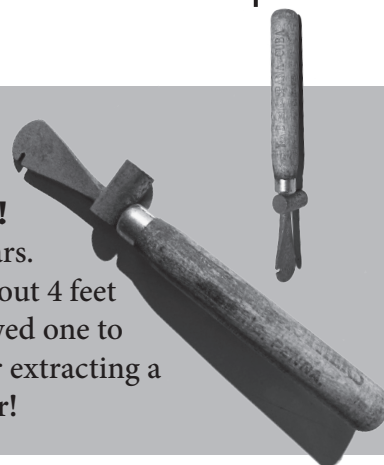
*Sauerbier Blacksmith on Lower Wallace Street in Virginia City, Montana dated 1944. Courtesy of Montana State Library.*



If someone can identify this item, we will publish in the next issue of the Nugget. The first to identify the item correctly will receive a copy of the VCPA publication "Nuggets in Time".

**Our latest guess on this mystery item is from Rick Gohn!**

"It is a cigar box opener. My dad (Bob Gohn), if you recall, sold a lot of cigars. Facing the backbar, it was the small showcase at the right end of the bar. About 4 feet long and three feet deep - it probably held 50 boxes of cigars. This tool allowed one to open the box without tearing the label, that way the lid could be closed after extracting a cigar, thus preserving the freshness of the cigar." We think this is the winner!



**Our NEXT MYSTERY!**



**A guess on this mystery - from MaryAlice Chester:**

"Sure looks like a coffee grinder -- commercial size."

**Ding Ding!**



What do you think this is???  
Send your guesses to [vcpamt@gmail.com](mailto:vcpamt@gmail.com)



*Current Board Members*

*Pat Jacobs - President*  
*Gary Forney - Vice President*  
*Chris Leonard - Treasurer*  
*Bill Lev - Secretary*  
*Mary Stassi*

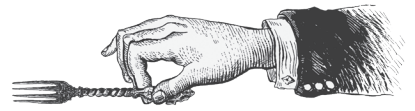
*Marge Antolik*  
*Ashley Polk-Sutherland*  
*Becky DiGiovanna*

**ADVISORY BOARD**  
*Bob Bayley*  
*Barbi & Tom Donnelley*  
*Mark Weber*  
*Lyman Bennett*  
*Roger Williams*





# Recipe Corner



SUBMITTED BY DARING GOURMET



This recipe is a reconstruction based on historical descriptions, adapted for a modern kitchen. In the 1860s, all measurements would have been approximate.

## For the filling:

- 1 lb beef, such as round steak or chuck, cut into small cubes
- 2 large potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp butter, for each pasty

## For the simple pastry dough:

- 3 cups flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup lard or shortening
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cold water

1. Prepare the dough: In a large bowl, combine the flour and salt. Cut in the cold lard or shortening with a pastry blender or your fingertips until the mixture resembles small peas. Add the cold water, a little at a time, until the dough comes together. Form into a ball, wrap, and chill for at least 30 minutes.

2. Make the filling: In a bowl, toss the diced beef, potatoes, and onion together with salt and pepper. Set aside.

3. Assemble the pasties: Preheat your oven to 375°F. Divide the dough into 4–6 equal parts. On a floured surface, roll each piece into a circle about 8–9 inches in diameter.

4. Fill and seal: Place a portion of the meat and vegetable mixture on one half of each dough circle. Top the filling with a pat of butter. Moisten the edges of the dough with water. Fold the dough over the filling to create a half-moon shape, then crimp the edges tightly to seal.

5. Bake the pasties: Place the pasties on an ungreased baking sheet. Cut a small vent hole in the top of each pasty to allow steam to escape. Bake for about one hour, or until the pastry is golden brown.

*Historical note: While some sources mention rutabaga (or "swede") as a traditional ingredient in Cornish pasties, Butte miners often rejected it. The simplified filling of just beef, potatoes, and onion became more typical of the Montana version.*



*Locals say you could follow the scent of baking pasties straight down the hill from Walkerville to Uptown Butte. Some families claimed theirs could "stick to your ribs for a whole shift," while others swore the secret was in the lard or the love. Either way, pasties fueled not just the miners, but the birth of Butte's wild, gritty, and proud culture. 🍴*

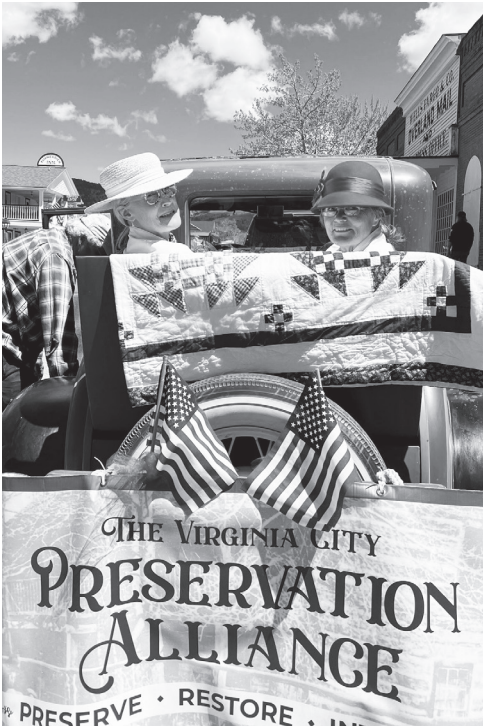


# VIRGINIA CITY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

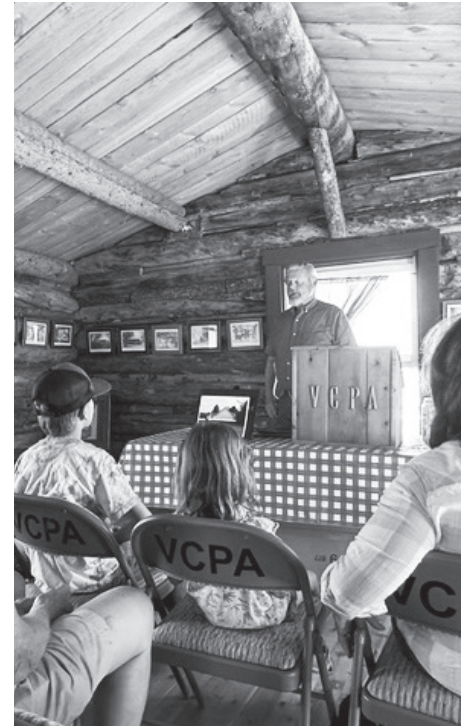
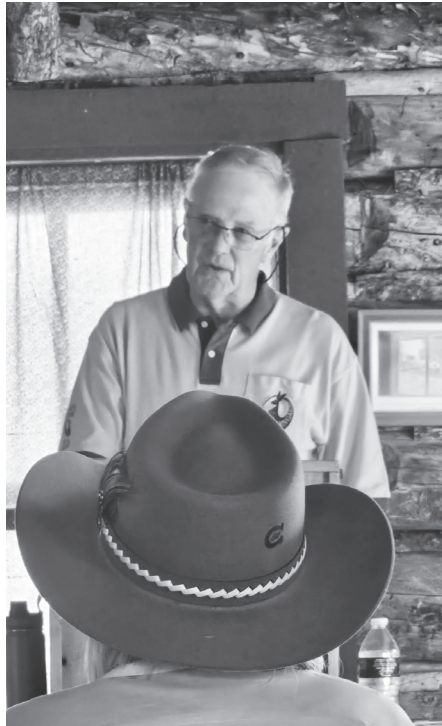
*Summer Event*



*Wrap Up*



Virginia City Opening Day Parade on May 24. Pat Jacobs and Becky DiGiovanna looked the part!



Gary Forney and Bill Lev at two of three Linderman Cabin Series intallments: "THE MADISON HOUSE HOTEL AND THE MURDER OF WILLIAM ENNIS" & "GENERAL SHERIDAN AND HIS NAMESAKE TOWN."



Our Bozeman Trail Event featured Hiking the Last Mile of the Bozeman Trail with tour guides Larry Leonard and Bob Bayley, as well as "The Roads to Virginia City: The Montana Trail and the Early Roads to the Territory" - with Jon Osborn





Becky DiGiovanna tours attendees around for the VCPA sponsored Virginia City Historic Preservation Roundtable.



The beautiful summer blooms at Linderman Cabin - a nice treat for those attending our monthly series.



Above: The Fenton House, in Sheridan, was one of the featured stops on the 2025 Brewery to Brewery Tour.



Right, Top and Bottom: The Victorian Ball was held on Saturday, August 16 and was a great success!

SEE YOU NEXT SUMMER!



**"To preserve, restore and display structures and artifacts related to the history of Virginia City, to tell the story of the western mining frontier, and to protect the local community."**

**J**oin us in preserving the history of Virginia City! The Virginia City Preservation Alliance (VCPA) is dedicated to safeguarding our community's historic buildings and captivating stories. Our goal is to restore and showcase the artifacts that narrate the western mining frontier while protecting our local heritage.

As a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we invite you to become a member. Enjoy our quarterly journal, the Virginia City Nugget, featuring association updates and intriguing historical tales. Membership requires an annual contribution at any gift level,. Dues are due by January 30th of each year.

**\* For 2025 we have extended the deadline to February 28th, 2025.**



Make checks payable to VCPA

*OR*



Renew your membership online at:

<https://www.virginiacitypreservationalliance.com/join>



To join, complete the form below (or go online!) and send it with your tax-deductible contribution to:

**Virginia City Preservation Alliance**

**P.O. Box 55**

**Virginia City, MT 59755**

*Together, let's celebrate and protect the legacy of Virginia City!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**How would you like to receive your copy of The Nugget?:**

- ☐ Hard copy via US Postal Service
- ☐ Email only
- ☐ Email and hard copy

**MEMBERSHIP LEVELS**

- ☐ Individual: \$20.00
- ☐ Family: \$30.00
- ☐ Supporting: \$50.00
- ☐ Contributing: \$100.00
- ☐ Associate: \$250.00
- ☐ Sustaining: \$500.00
- ☐ Patron: \$1000.00
- ☐ Charlie & Sue Bovey Life-Time: \$5000.00

*Thank You!*



Virginia City Preservation Alliance  
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