

MONTENZUMA

Heritage Museum

2025 Annual Report



From the Director

This past year marked a season of growth and transition for the Montezuma Heritage Museum. Building on the dedication of the many people who made the museum possible, we expanded our community impact in meaningful ways. In 2025, we presented an exciting lineup of public programs and short-term exhibitions that doubled program attendance, welcomed more local students through field trips, and refreshed our branding with a new logo, rack card, and mission-focused video. None of this would have been possible without your support, and it has been an honor to help carry your vision forward.

Elizabeth Quinn MacMillan, *Executive Director*

Mission

Our mission is to educate, enrich and inspire our residents and visitors through the preservation, presentation and interpretation of the county's and region's rich and diverse history.

Board of Trustees

Brian Bartlett, *President*
Tom Hayden, *Vice President*
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Julie Paige, *Corresponding Secretary*
Dolly Gardner, *Historian*
Claudia Martin
Susan Rain
Karen Sheek
Helen West

Volunteers

Brian Bartlett	Tulli Kerstetter	Emmett MacMillan
Kristen Corbitt	Joyce Lawrence	Vince MacMillan
Joel Gamache	Claudia Martin	Susan Rain
John Gilliat	Julie Paige	Karen Sheek
Tom Hayden	Sandy Pyle	Barbara Stagg
Terri Helm		Helen West

Cover | George Menefee (top center) and other cowboys in (believed to be) Mancos ca. 1890



Voices from the Past

This reader's theater performance, developed from oral histories, memoirs, and letters from the museum's archives, was inspired by a 1920s poem, *In Memory of Pioneers*, by early Yellow Jacket homesteader Augustus "Gus" Stevenson.



Across the Navajo Desert: Theodore Roosevelt's 1913 Expedition to the Rainbow Natural Bridge

Historian and Wetherill descendant, **Harvey Leake**, discussed Theodore Roosevelt's 1913 expedition to the natural bridges of San Juan County, Utah, led by well-known guide, John Wetherill.

History Revealed: The CCC in Cortez

Ryan Spittler, shared his research into Civilian Conservation Corps. Camp SCS-14-C.

Quilted Stories: Past & Present

Local quilt expert, **Patricia Joy**, shared her quilt collections, connecting quilts to various times in history and our personal stories.

Block Party!: A Hands-on Quilt Making Program

Amy Cao led this hands-on program with participants decorating their own quilt squares connecting art and history.



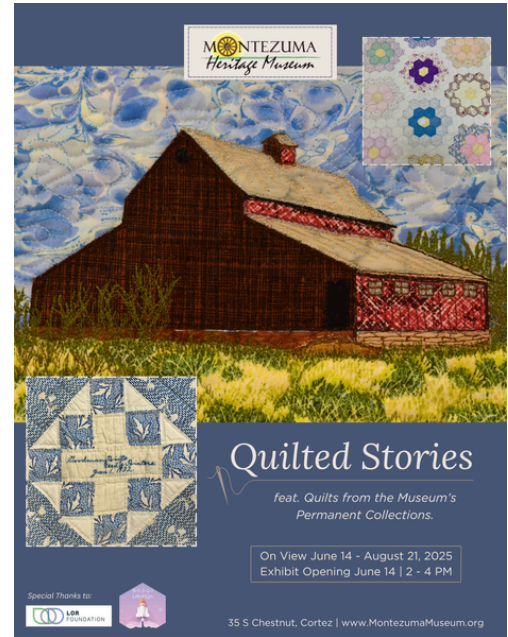
Chuck Wagon Supper w/ Cortez Cultural Center featuring an authentic meal by Canyon Trails Ranch.

Penitente Shepherds & The Signs They Left Behind

Pete Montaño shared his family's unique history as Penitente shepherds in Southwest Colorado.

Tell Our Stories

Programs & Exhibits



In 2025, an 81321 Grant also funded a run of temporary exhibits, including **Quilted Stories**, which featured quilts from the permanent collections, and **Native Scenes, Native Stories**, showcasing Diné artists Keith Smith and Ed Singer.

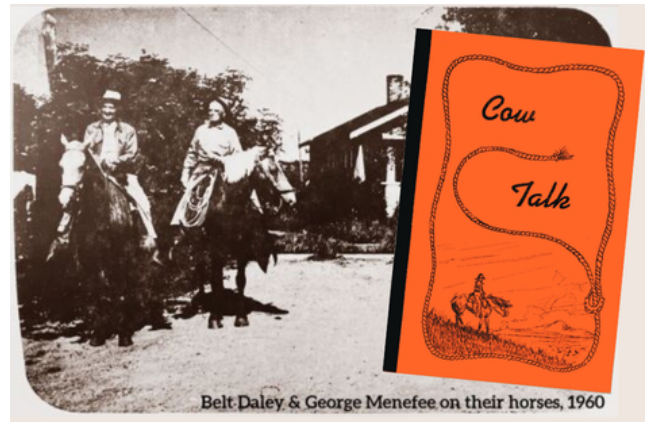
Free public events, including exhibit openings, lectures, and artist demonstrations, accompanied the exhibits.



Tell Our Stories Continued...

Thanks to support from the Ballantine Family Fund, the museum was able to work with the Reddert-Brown family to reprint **Cow Talk: The Memoirs of George W. Menefee**, a great history of ranching in the early Mancos Valley. The new edition includes a new foreword by author Lottie Reddert's son, Ryan Brown.

Copies are for sale in the museum store for \$16.99.



Save Our History

Collections Care & Management

The museum continues to receive collections donations, which serve as the foundation of our work. Collections help us tell stories in exhibits, support research, and serve as learning tools for area students.

This year, **the Kent family** donated two paintings by local artist Richard Ellis Wagner. The paintings, collected by Delmer and Gloria Kent, portray the Battlerock and Lebanon schoolhouses. This donation will be perfect for the planned exhibit, *Schools for the Children*.

Every donation requires thoughtful care and ongoing management. We are fortunate to have Joyce Lawrence and Tulli Kerstetter overseeing this work with dedication and expertise. This year, the museum also received a **\$4,000 grant from the Greenwood Fund** to support upgrades to the **June Head Research Library** and archives collections. These funds will allow us to improve archival storage and organization, strengthening our ability to preserve and provide access to historic photographs, documents, textiles, and other materials for researchers and the community well into the future.



Passing On Our Legacy

Educational Outreach



School Visits

In 2025, the Montezuma Heritage Museum reached more than 300 area students through school visits, youth group tours, and other educational initiatives. Elementary, middle, and high school students participated in guided tours, hands-on activities, and curriculum-connected experiences that deepened their understanding of local history and culture through the museum's exhibitions.

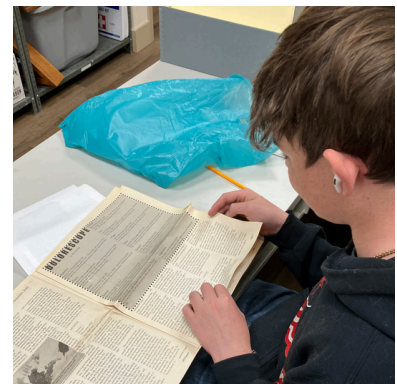
The museum continues to expand and refine its field trip offerings, educational activities, and outreach materials. With support from the El Pomar Foundation, we were also able to continue to offer free admission and help offset transportation costs, ensuring greater access for schools throughout the region.

Special thanks to **Terri Helm** and **Tom Hayden** for generously donating their time and expertise in support of these programs.

Teen Team

The museum also piloted its Teen Team program with support from the **El Pomar Foundation**. This new initiative brought together a small group of local high school students for hands-on, behind-the-scenes museum experiences. During a four-week summer intensive, participants worked alongside museum staff to rehouse collections, develop oral history inventories, and assist with other collections and research projects.

Similar programs have shown lasting benefits for participants, including stronger connections to their community, experiential learning and professional development opportunities, and a long-term appreciation for—and affiliation with—cultural institutions.



Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Impact



The Montezuma Heritage Museum was proud to receive a **Caroline Bancroft History Project Award** from History Colorado for *Ute Mountain Ute: We Are Still Here*, created in close partnership with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The award recognizes not just the exhibit itself, but the collaboration and conversations that shaped it. Working alongside tribal members ensured that the exhibit highlights Ute voices and reflects both history and a living culture. We are grateful for the trust and generosity of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and honored to see this shared work recognized across Colorado.



This year, the museum recognized the Montezuma County officials who played a vital role in making the museum a reality. At our annual luncheon in November, we unveiled a permanent plaque to honor former commissioners **Keenan Ertel, James Lambert, and Larry Don Suckla**, as well as former County Administrator **Melissa Brunner**, for their leadership in securing the museum building in 2019 and helping bring this community-driven project to life.

The plaque now hangs outside the museum for all visitors to see.



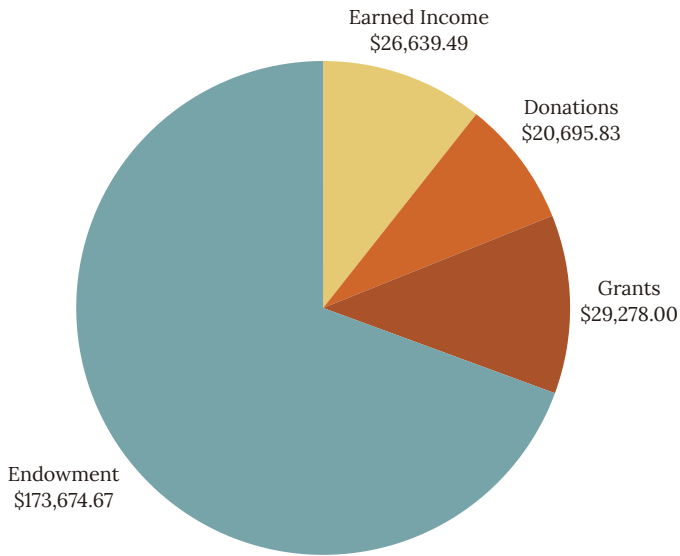
This year, we also recognized **Ann Wilson Brown** for her dedication, hard work, and leadership, all of which were instrumental in bringing the Montezuma Heritage Museum to life.

The museum lost several key supporters this year, including **Vivienne Kenyon and Charles Grasse**.

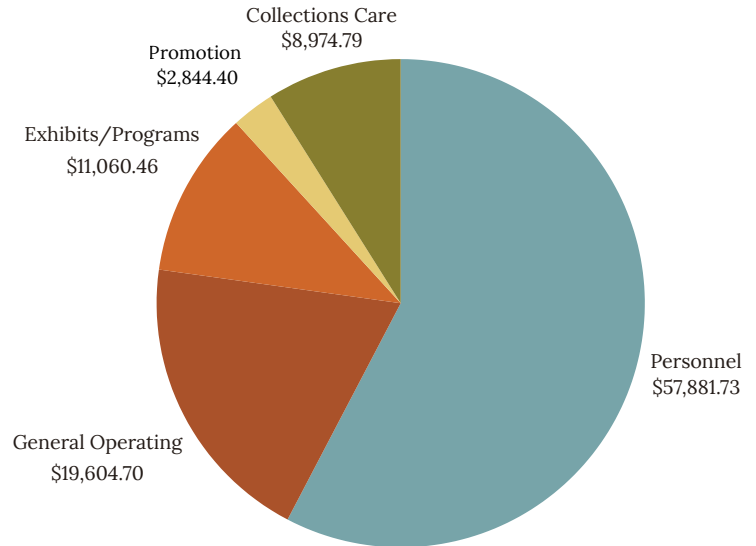
Financials

The Montezuma County Historical Society d.b.a. the Montezuma Heritage Museum is a non-profit Colorado corporation governed by a Board of Trustees. The museum relies on admission and membership fees, individual and business donations, foundation and agency grants, and a modest endowment to fund a professional staff, exhibits, public programs, and collections care.

2025 Income



2025 Expenses



Grantors

Thank you to the organizations whose financial support made many of our 2025 projects and programs possible.

Ballantine Family Fund
 Colorado Historical Records Advisory Board (CHRAB)
 Cortez Retail Enhancement Association (CREA)
 El Pomar Foundation
 Empire Electric Association, Inc.
 Greenwood Fund
 Montezuma County Lodgers Tax
 Onward! A Legacy Foundation
 81321 Launch & The LOR Foundation



1,670

Museum Visitors

590 Program Attendees

300+ Area Students Reached

Members & Donors

Thank you to the members, donors, and businesses whose financial and in-kind contributions provided essential support to the museum in 2025.



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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Scott & Judy Aeschlimann | Doobie Sisters | Iris Johnson | Sylvia McClellan | Don & Jody Schwindt |
| Don & Mary Akin | Tris & Bruce Downer | DeEtta Johnson | Nancy McGarigal | Karen Sheek |
| Cap Allen | Lisa Elenz | Graham & Cookie Johnson | Rachel Medina | Carolyn & Steve Shimek |
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| Angela Atkinson | David Everett | Frederick Kail | Gary & Stacy Merrifield | Neill Smith |
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| Robert & Lou Ann Jacobson Ball | Rene Farias | Shirley Keagy | Jacinthe Messier | James & Ila Starks |
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| Marsha Bankston | Leslie Fitzgerald | Joe & Susan Keck | Edward Miller | Ken & Joyce Stevenson |
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| Jeanne & Joe Becker | Carolyn Goff | Debbie Klein | Notah Dineh Trading | John Thyfault |
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| Gail Binkly | Ross & Maiya Gralia | Vern & Anna Ruth Koppenhafer | Onward! A Legacy Foundation | Mitchell Toms |
| Chris Bjornn | Lynn Greenlee | Jerry & Marianne Koskie | Julie Paige | Mike Tower |
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| Denis Boon | Karen Harbaugh | Uarda Kriner | Tom & Sissy Pittenger | Ute Coffee Shop |
| Ryan Brown | Linda Harbey | Patricia Lacey | Gala Pock | Jeanine Valdez |
| Don & Ann Brown | Lynn Hardy | James & Lavern Lambert | Shirley Powell & John Wood | Grace Greenlee Vandenberg |
| Hal Brown | Milton & Carol Harless | Cheryl Lancaster | Ardeh Ptolemy | Mark Varien |
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| Karel Buckley | Tom & Polly Hayden | Beverly Lawrence | Susan Rain & Stephen Fox | Michelle Waltman |
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| Amy Cao | Carla Hendrickson | Rick & Helen Lee | Ernie Rheaume | Wendy Watkins & Paul Koops |
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| Dolores State Bank | Jodi Jahrling | Kelly R. McCabe, PC | Jack & Judy Schuenemeyer | |

If there are any errors or omissions in this list, please send corrections to: execdirector@montezumamuseum.org



A Cortez jewel. Beautiful!

We earn compliments like these only because your financial support provides the resources required to create a professional museum experience for our community and visitors to the area. By sustaining or increasing your financial investment, you allow us to increase our story telling capabilities and preservation efforts. **Thank you.**