

Summer 2026

Discover!

the **Bitterroot Valley**



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Stevensville, Montana

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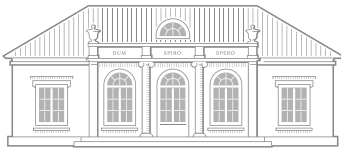
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Rainbow after July cloudburst over Bitterroot farm.

Welcome...

Welcome to Discover the Bitterroot, a mid-summer guide published by the Bitterroot Star. The Bitterroot Valley is widely recognized as one of the top destinations in Montana. There are numerous community events throughout the summer, including farmers markets, picnics, rodeos, concerts and much more. Along with that, the outdoors of the area would make even the pickiest of outdoorsman drop his jaw. For locals and visitors, we hope this guide helps you find what you are looking for. Enjoy your summer, and maybe, when you are in Stevensville, stop in and see us at 115 W. 3rd, Suite #108.

-- John Dowd, Editor.

Cover photos: clockwise

- 1) The Ravalli County Fair, with a rodeo, carnival, live music, vendors and thousands of entries, offers a big slice of Americana.
 - 2) Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival, a beloved annual musical tradition, will be seeing its last year.
 - 3) Historic St. Mary's Mission in Stevensville, est. 1841.
 - 4) Fly fishing near Lolo.
 - 5) The popular Scarecrow Festival happens the first weekend of October in Stevensville.
 - 6) Center photo- The Greased Pig Races winners during the Creamery Picnic.
 - 7) Background photo - The Bitterroot Mountains loom over the valley, providing a scenic view from nearly everywhere in the area.
- You'll find more info about these events and places in the pages of this publication. Happy discovering!**

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Something for everyone...

There is something for everyone in the Bitterroot Valley, from art to history, to wildlife to outdoor sports and recreation.

Historic St. Mary’s Mission in Stevensville is the oldest church in Montana and Stevensville was the first pioneer settlement in the state. The mission is open to the public mid-April through mid-October and tours are available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day. There is also a gift shop and visitors’ center. For more information can be found at saintmarysmmission.org.

The Daly Mansion, built by Copper King Marcus Daly, is open every day through October 1 for tours of the grand old house. In addition, there are a number of special events scheduled at the Mansion during the season. For more information visit www.dalymansion.org. The mansion is on Eastside Highway about two miles north of Hamilton.

Also for history buffs, there are outstanding museums in Ravalli County. Ravalli County Museum is at 205 Bedford in Hamilton and the Victor Heritage Museum is on the corner of Main and Blake in Victor. The Stevensville Historical Museum is on South Main in Stevensville and St. Mary’s Mission has a museum in its visitors’ center. Old Fort Owen is a state park and is open daily for self-conducted tours. The history of the fort is available on-site. Darby’s Pioneer Museum is in downtown Darby and Darby also boasts a Forest Service Museum on North Main.

Recreational opportunities range from golfing, fishing, floating, boating, swimming, hiking and camping, biking and picnicking, to wildlife-watching, tennis and horseback riding.

There are two public golf courses in the valley. The Hamilton Golf Course is 18 holes and is east of town on Golf Course Road. The Whitetail Golf Course is northeast of Stevensville and the 9-hole course is accessible off Wildfowl Lane and is adjacent to both the Bitterroot River and the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

Painted Rocks Reservoir and Lake Como are known for their boating, swimming and fishing. Lake Como is 17 miles south of Hamilton off of Hwy 93 and Painted Rocks is 23 miles south of Darby on West Fork Road. The full course of the Bitterroot River is popular for fishing, floating, boating, canoeing and swimming. There are a number of public river accesses and raft and other craft rentals are available throughout the valley. For a complete listing, stop by the

Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce in Hamilton, just east of the intersection of Hwy 93 and Main.

The 50-mile long Bitterroot Trail for bicyclists runs from Missoula to Hamilton. Bicyclists can take a one-mile detour into historic downtown Stevensville, where they can rest up and also enjoy the amenities of Stevensville’s downtown. Stevensville has two of the Bitterroot Valley’s six craft breweries and a distillery. There are also breweries in Lolo, Hamilton and Darby, as well as a mead winery in Victor and a cider, a distillery and two wine tasting rooms in Hamilton.

The Chamber also has information on where to rent horses and the Bitterroot National Forest office at 1801 North First in Hamilton has hiking and camping information, as well as maps for hikers and campers.

One of the bird and wildlife watching treasures of the Bitterroot is the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge two miles north of Stevensville.

Lost Trail Pass in the south end of the valley boasts both the Lost Trail Powder Mountain Ski Area and a natural hot springs swimming spot at Lost Trail Hot Springs. The hot springs area has lodging and food service, as well. Or you can head up Hwy 12 in Lolo to get to Lolo Hot Springs. There are also public swimming pools in Hamilton and Stevensville and children’s playgrounds in each community with water features at Hamilton, Stevensville and Florence.

The Bitterroot offers an authentic shopping experience as well, with hometown hospitality and personal service, and includes everything from antique shops and art galleries to sports equipment stores to rustic and western clothing and home furnishings. Darby, Hamilton, Corvallis, Victor, Stevensville and Florence all have their own unique shopping areas.

The Bitterroot has a number of festivals between now and October, including Daly Days, Bitterroot Brewfest, Creamery Picnic, Celtic Games, the Ravalli County Fair, Scarecrow Festival, Apple Day and Apple Night, and rodeos in Darby and Hamilton.

Live theater performances can be seen at Shakespeare in the Parks at Sapphire Lutheran Homes in Hamilton as well as the Hamilton Playhouse in Hamilton and at Stevensville Playhouse in Stevensville. Several musical events are scheduled throughout the year through Bitterroot Performing Arts Council, Tuesday at Twelve series and Sapphire Lutheran Homes' concert series.



Flying over Darby. Photo by John Dowd.

Get outside in the Bitterroot Valley

by John Dowd

Montana is well known around the country as a stepping off point for adventures in the outdoors. Something many may not know, even those in the area, is how special the Bitterroot Valley is in how much unprecedented access it has to a huge variety of outdoor adventures. It is even unique among other areas in the state.

Climbing

The Bitterroot Valley is home to some of the best rock climbing in Montana. The well known Blodgett Canyon area west of Hamilton hosts a number of renowned climbs, like “Shoshone South Face,” “My Mom’s Muscle Shirt” and “Timebinder.” The area has more than 30 climbing routes just within the canyon, and there are many more up and down the valley.

In fact, the whole Bitterroot area, on the west side, has uniquely solid granite that makes for some epic climbing, in all climbing disciplines. Much of western Montana is home to “rotten” rock, which makes for sketchy climbs. Even with cliff faces, good climbing necessitates good solid rock that doesn't crumble. The Bitterroot has that in spades.

Rappelling

For those just interested in coming down walls, there are also a number of great places to go, including west of Lolo on both sides of Highway 12. Many of these spaces are already equipped with climbing anchors installed in the rock, and trails to get up to them.

Hiking

All of Montana is known for its breathtaking views and spectacular backcountry access. However, the Bitterroot is special in that it provides a direct doorway to the largest contiguous wilderness space in the U.S. The Selway-Bitterroot Frank-Church Wilderness takes up a huge portion of Idaho and Western Montana. If a person wanted to get “lost in the wilderness,” the Bitterroot provides a great place to do that.

Trails leave out of nearly every drainage, from Lolo south to the Idaho border. Many of these trails go high up to spectacular views, and vary in length from a couple miles, like the St. Mary’s Peak Trail, which is about 3.2 miles one way, to entire systems like Blodgett Canyon Trail, which leads to a huge network of hundreds of trail-miles through the backcountry.

Flying

Speaking of backcountry, the Bitterroot Valley is home to two airports,



Plane at Moose Creek Airstrip. John Dowd photo.



Rappelling near Lolo. John Dowd photo.

Stevensville and Hamilton, which act as hubs for general civilian aviators. From the valley, they can get access to several maintained backcountry airstrips, like the one at Moose Creek in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This is one of the best ways to get into the backcountry, and is still relevant for commercial and federal operations.

There are also skydiving options at Stevensville’s airport and several airplane tours that leave out of both Stevensville and Hamilton airports. Stevensville also has options for those interested in learning to fly.

Hunting

Backcountry, and fore-country hunting, are also not hurting for access in the Bitterroot. The area is home to hundreds of thousands of U.S. Forest Service, Block Management land, and even public access private land, so finding places to go is easy.

The area is also unique in the number and diversity of game species. From areas south past Darby, there is fantastic mule deer and Bighorn sheep country, and east of Stevensville and Corvallis is some of the best elk country. Black bear, turkey and grouse are also widely found in the valley. Other less common species available are chuker and hun south of Darby in choice areas, some pheasant

continued on page 8

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continued from page 6

Outdoor access- Bitterroot does not disappoint

scattered through the valley and even mountain goats in the Bitterroot mountains.

Wildlife viewing

For those more interested in shooting photographs than bullets, the variety of wildlife in the valley provides excellent opportunities to capture shots of wild creatures in their natural habitat. For those into birdwatching in particular, there are several locations like the Lee Metcalf and Teller wildlife refuges. Seasonal waterfowl, and other migratory species, frequent the area. With water access along the Bitterroot River still relatively available compared to some other areas of Montana, it can be easy to find these otherwise elusive animals.



Moose up Skalkaho. John Dowd Photo.

Fishing

Fishing of all kinds is a mainstay in the valley. It is so important that the State of Montana takes out a contract to keep water stored in both Lake Como and Painted Rocks Reservoir, to help prolong the fishing season, and to keep the fish healthy.

Many access points along the Bitterroot River offer boat launches, and on any given day, guides and drift boats can be seen fly fishing the cool Bitterroot waters.

Water sports

The Bitterroot River allows floating, and many will grab their kayaks, canoes and rafts to float down the easy parts of the river. The only thing about the Bitterroot River that people should be concerned about is the early spring flow increase. The river is known for dangerous water flow changes, and drowning is a concern. In the later season, the danger drops. People should still be concerned about the many tree snags.

Lake Como and Painted Rocks Reservoir also offer boating opportunities. Both also have day use areas and camping options.

Goodbye, Boring Brown Bag.
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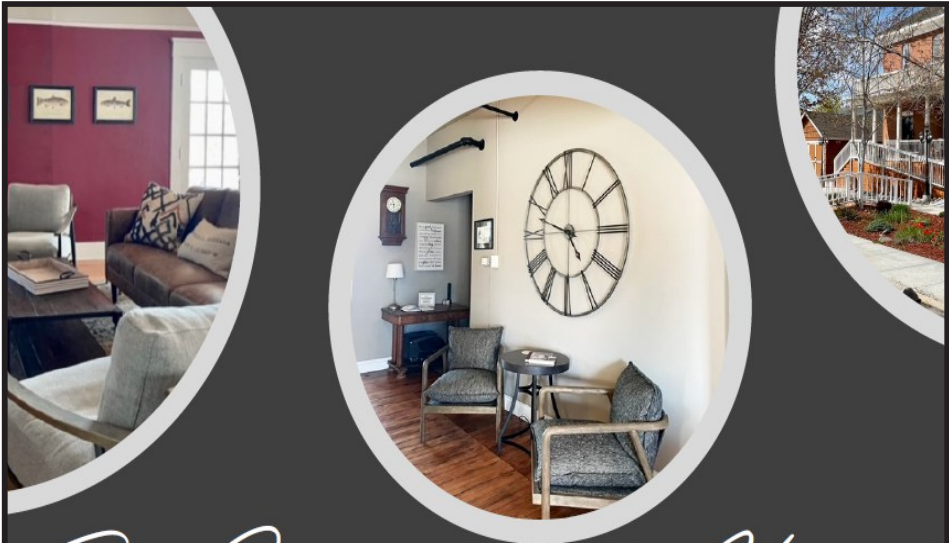
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Camping

There are plenty of camping locations. Some places are established campgrounds, like ones at Painted Rocks Reservoir, which must be reserved ahead of time, while others are primitive and are first come, first serve.

Camping in the area is varied, and there are places close to the river, and high up in the mountains. For those looking to get away for a family weekend, it is hard to beat a good spot by a creek, with plenty of firewood, which is not at a shortage in Ravalli County.

Winter sports

In those same high mountains, in the winter, the trails are home to adventure seekers looking to cross country ski. The valley also houses Lost Trail Ski Area, which has a number of lifts to accommodate all levels of downhill skiers, and there are numerous trails for cross country skiers at the nearby Chief Joseph area. The trails that in the summer house ATV's and side-by-sides, in the winter find use from the snow-mobiles and snow-shoe hikers. In the valley, ice fishing on the lakes and ponds is another common activity.



Painted Rocks Reservoir dam. Star file photo.



Hiking in the Selway-Bitterroot. John Dowd photo.



Backcountry horse-back riding. Photo courtesy Bitterroot National Forest.

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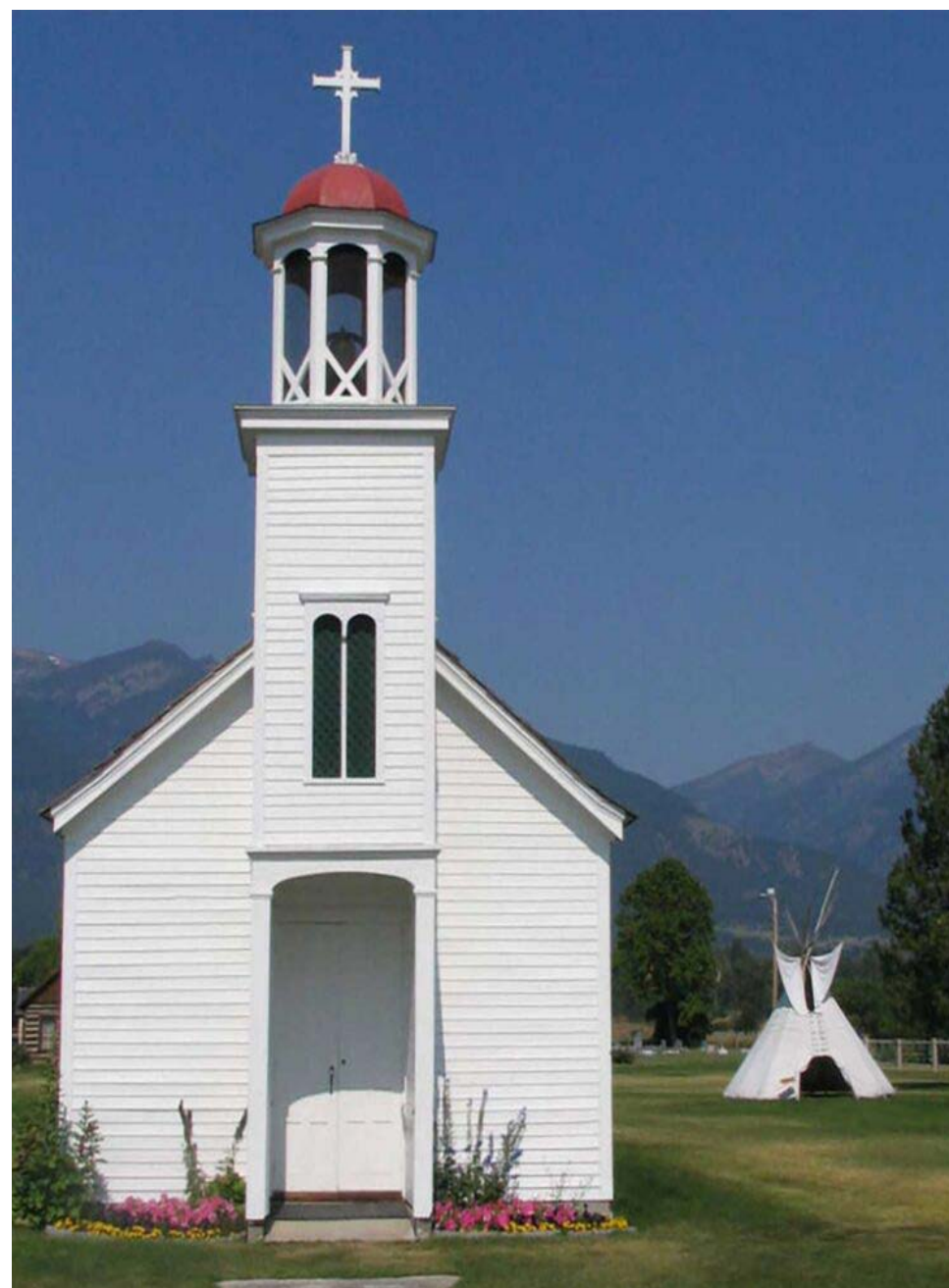
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Historic St. Mary's Mission in Stevensville, a great place to learn about the history of the area.

missionary encounter marks this as one of the rarest and most remarkable stories in American frontier history.

Among the missionaries who journeyed to the Bitterroot Valley alongside Fr. Pierre-Jean De Smet, one of the most remarkable was Fr. Anthony Ravalli, S.J. A man of many talents and deep compassion, Fr. Ravalli left a profound and lasting impact not only on the Catholic mission but also on the Native peoples and settlers of the region.

Fr. Ravalli arrived at St. Mary's Mission in 1845, just a few years after its founding. Born in Ferrara, Italy, and trained in both theology and medicine, he was the first physician in what is now Montana. His work extended far beyond the church walls, he treated the sick, crafted medical remedies from native plants, and even built tools and equipment needed for everyday use. His knowledge of architecture and mechanics allowed him to help design and construct mission buildings, including the chapel, using only the most basic materials available.

He earned the respect and admiration of the Salish people not only for his skills but for his kindness and humility. Fr. Ravalli immersed himself in their language and culture, becoming a trusted friend and advocate. His legacy is so enduring that Ravalli County, Montana, bears his name today, a testament to his contributions to the region's spiritual and physical well-being.

When visiting Historic St. Mary's Mission, guests can enjoy guided tours through beautifully restored buildings, including the historic chapel, the living quarters, the blacksmith barn, and Chief Victor's cabin, which now serves as a Salish museum. Another highlight is Father Ravalli's cabin, featuring Montana's first walk-by pharmacy. This historic building was once home to the beloved mis-



Vintage photo of St. Mary's Mission. Photo courtesy Wikipedia.

sionary, who also served as a doctor, pharmacist, architect, and artist. The museum and visitor center feature a rich collection of artifacts, historical photographs, and interpretive exhibits. The on-site gift shop offers books, locally made items, and historical keepsakes. Located at 315 Charlos Street in Stevensville, MT, the Mission is open seasonally from April through mid-October, with guided tours available Tuesday through Saturday. All proceeds support the Mission's preservation. Special events are held throughout the year, including lectures, cultural presentations, and seasonal celebrations. Historic St. Mary's Mission is a living story of cultural exchange, spiritual determination, and frontier resilience. Whether you are a history enthusiast or simply exploring the Bitterroot Valley, Historic St. Mary's Mission is truly a hidden gem in Montana's historical landscape. For more information, visit www.saintmarysmisson.org or call (406) 777-5734.

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Good times to end at Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival

by John Dowd

The Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival has been a seasonal favorite for many in the Bitterroot Valley, but this summer will mark the end of an era. For those seeking an old-time country vibe and a relaxed atmosphere surrounded by music and family, it is hard to beat the Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival, which takes place at Highland Ranch south of Hamilton. This year, the festival will celebrate its 17th and final year on July 24-26.

Mike Conroy and his wife, Tari Conroy, have been organizing the festival since it began 17 years ago. While they are looking forward to one last weekend of music, Mike said the decision to end the festival came down to a simple reality.

"We're getting old and worn out," said Mike Conroy.

This year's festival will feature 13 bands, including the return of Dry Buck, a longtime festival favorite from Idaho. "We wanna end with the same ones that have helped us all through the years," Conroy said, referring to the musicians who have been a part of the festival over the years.

For Mike and Tari, the festival has always been about preserving the feel of a traditional bluegrass gathering. They dreamed of creating an "old-style" bluegrass festival tucked away in the hills, with one microphone and an old wooden stage. Seventeen years later, they say that vision has remained unchanged.

To celebrate the festival's final year, organizers will hang poster boards on trees throughout the grounds featuring photographs from past festivals, giving longtime attendees a chance to look back on the memories made over nearly two decades.

"We're hoping it's a big year and everyone remembers it fondly," Conroy said. Mike described the event as a family-friendly festival held in the beautiful setting of Highland Ranch. Visitors can look up from the audience and see the surrounding mountains. The grounds offer plenty of shade and a steady breeze, making it feel cooler than Hamilton during the summer. A small flowing irrigation ditch behind the seating area has long been a favorite attraction for children and dogs alike. Dogs are welcome, provided they remain on a leash.



Tari and Mike Conroy, Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival organizers.

Food vendors will be on site, and visitors are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs, as no permanent seating is provided.

Camping opens Thursday morning, July 23, at 8 a.m. Camping is available for \$20 per night.

Sunday morning will once again feature the festival's traditional two-hour

open gospel stage, one of Mike's favorite parts of the weekend. Musicians can sign up in advance by calling ahead, and festival organizers are available to join performers on stage if they would like accompaniment, helping keep the music going throughout the morning.

One of the things Mike has always appreciated most about Hardtimes is its commitment to traditional bluegrass. "It really is an old-time bluegrass festival," he said. "It's not new-age or jam grass."

The festival will once again be held at Highland Ranch, located 10 miles south of Hamilton. Turn off U.S. Highway 93 at mile marker 37 onto Forest Hill Road. The address is 424 Forest Hill Road, Hamilton.

Adult weekend tickets are \$40, while children's weekend passes are \$20. Children ages 6 and under are admitted free. Friday and Saturday day passes are \$25 for adults and \$12 for children under 18. Sunday admission is \$15 for adults and \$7 for children.

For more information, visit hardtimesbluegrass.com or call (406) 821-3777.



The Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival stage and audience.



Last pic is Johnny Campbell and Phillis Erck from Nashville, getting ready to go on stage. Photo courtesy Mike Conroy.

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Historic apple harvesting.

Apple festival keeps Bitterroot history alive

On October 4th, the Ravalli County Museum in Hamilton is proud to host its 45th annual McIntosh Apple Day festival. This community event celebrates the cultural heritage of the Apple Boom and McIntosh Apples in the Bitter Root Valley.

The first apple trees in the Bitter Root Valley were planted at St. Mary's Mission by Jesuit priests in the 1840s and Stevensville-area apple production began in earnest in the late 1870s. Area residents raised mainly crab apples, but experimented with many varieties. The idea of raising apples as a focused enterprise grew slowly, until in 1891, 10,000 fruit trees were shipped to the Bitter Root from a nursery at Payette, Idaho. By 1896, The Bitter Root Orchard Co. had the largest apple orchard in the world with 40,000 trees on 380 acres of land.

One of the more popular varieties in the valley was the McIntosh Red. The McIntosh was chosen because it ripened extremely well in the Bitter Root climate. The early frost, usually in early September, sets the tartness of the apple, making it very flavorful. Other varieties more native to the Yakima Valley in Washington did not adapt well to Montana's growing season. By the turn of the century, many of the valley's apple producers began exhibiting their produce at state and regional fairs and expositions. This furthered the idea that McIntosh apples could be a major crop of the valley.

Often called the "Apple Boom," the years of abundant apple production left their mark in the Bitter Root Valley. The promise of



McIntosh apples for sale.

apples as a profitable enterprise had a hand in the building of the "Big Ditch" to bring irrigation water to fields and orchards, the planning and establishing of new communities and the fame of the Bitter Root McIntosh Red apple. While the Apple Boom was relatively short-lived, its legacy lives on.

With the completion of the Big Ditch bringing more water to the valley, an extensive advertising campaign was started to bring more investors to the Bitter Root. Boxes of McIntosh apples and other locally raised fruit were shipped to Chicago and other larger cities. Many brochures told of how a person could invest a small sum of money in a choice parcel of land, plant McIntosh apple trees, and then wait. In five years the trees would bear fruit that would be promoted with agricultural products of other investors, to be sold all over the world. All of this sounded like the perfect opportunity for anyone with a few dollars to spare, and many either invested from a distance or packed up lives and families to move to the Bitter Root and try their hand at apple growing.

For the first two decades of the 20th century, the Apple Boom seemed destined to continue, with yields rising, orchards expanding and prices remaining high. In 1921 the boom hit its peak with 637 boxcars of apples being shipped out by rail in one season. Unfortunately, as often happens with "booms" there was also a "bust". Three consecutively devastating years brought hail damage, and late frosts. By the spring of 1924, when a hard freeze damaged not only buds, but trees themselves, the small returns from apples resulted in many losing their life savings and orchard lands went up for taxes.

There was an exodus of farmers who had gambled their futures on the Apple Boom, but those who stayed did succeed with what they planned and they helped create a thriving agricultural area. Many former fruit growers sought prosperity through dairy farming or truck gardening.

Continued on page 16



Caramel apples for sale.

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Others began raising beef cattle and grain crops, still others moved closer to the valley's small urban area and became skilled at various trades, but a few commercial apple orchards are scattered throughout the valley. Outside of established orchards, you can find McIntosh apple trees in many yards and fields all over Ravalli County. These trees stand as a testament to the heritage of apple growing in the Bitter Root, and the pioneering spirit of those who worked to build the Apple Boom, one tree at a time.

With McIntosh apple pies, apple butter, apple fritters, and apple cider available for sale, live music, children's activities, silent auction, food and craft vendor booths and more, Apple Day is a celebration of the history of the valley and everything apple! After a fun-filled day of food, activities and vendors, return to the Museum grounds for Liquid Apple Night, a hard cider fest under the stars and twinkle lights. More live music, food vendors and hard cider from local cideries make this family friendly event a great way to wrap up the day and enjoy a lovely autumnal evening. Annual events, Apple Day and Apple Night are the Ravalli County Museum's biggest fundraisers of the year which help keep the Museum's activities and events free to the public as they celebrate the Cultural Heritage of the Bitter Root Valley and its residents.



Historic apple harvesting.



Apples getting washed and quality tested, floating in water, at Swanson's Orchard in Corvallis. Photo by John Dowd.



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Creamery Picnic is a must-do

by John Dowd

The Creamery Picnic is Stevensville's annual summer celebration, hosted by the Stevensville Civic Club, and one of Montana's longest-running community traditions. This year's 113th annual Creamery Picnic will be held Aug. 7 and 8 at Lewis & Clark Park, bringing thousands of people together for a weekend of family fun, entertainment and hometown tradition.

One of the Creamery Picnic's greatest charms is that many things remain the same year after year. Parade spectators line Main Street, friends and neighbors reconnect, families gather for reunions, children enjoy free ice cream and visitors spend the day listening to music, playing games and relaxing in the shade.

"Keeping with tradition," is the goal, according to new Stevensville Civic Club President Eli Madero. Stevensville's Creamery Picnic is the oldest annual community celebration in Montana. The first picnic was held in 1911 after a fire destroyed the Bitterroot Cooperative Creamery on June 20 of that year. The creamery, managed by John Howe, was a major part of the local economy, and the fire threatened Stevensville's livelihood.

According to the town history "Montana Genesis," Howe promised that if workers and community volunteers could rebuild the creamery by Aug. 1, he would throw the biggest picnic Stevensville had ever seen, complete with free butter, buttermilk and ice cream. The community finished the job on time, and the first Creamery Picnic welcomed approximately 1,000 guests, serving 51 gallons of ice cream beneath the shade trees lining Stevensville's streets.

More than a century later, attendance has grown to roughly 12,000 people over the course of the weekend.

The popular Kids' Parade on Friday evening and the Grand Parade on Saturday morning remain the centerpiece events, drawing large crowds downtown to watch decorated floats, marching groups, horses, antique vehicles, fire engines and costumed children. The weekend continues to be a favorite time for class



Competition is fierce among the entrants in the Creamery Picnic Grand Parade, one of the oldest and biggest parades in Montana.

reunions, family gatherings and visits from former Stevensville residents returning home.

Many favorite activities will return this year, including the Masonic Lodge pancake breakfast, the local fire department's annual Fill the Boot fundraiser, the Stevensville Farmers Market on Saturday, free horse-drawn wagon rides from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday and the firefighter games from 2 to 4 p.m. between Main Street and Buck Street.

The Stevensville Booster Club's cornhole tournament, introduced a couple of years ago, also returns after a successful debut. Participants can register for the tournament, as well as other Creamery Picnic events, through the Creamery Picnic website, creamerypicnic.com.

Food remains a major attraction each year and Madero said visitors can expect a few new food trucks and vendors joining returning favorites. "Usually we try to have a good mix of food vendors to keep everyone happy," Madero said.

Live music will be featured throughout the weekend, with two separate venues hosting performances Friday evening. Local artist Cow Sh*t Kate will perform in Lewis & Clark Park from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., while Tight Line will perform downtown on Main Street during the same hours.

Saturday evening, the band 406 will take the stage in Lewis & Clark Park from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The beer garden also returns this year, featuring Bitter Root Brewing and Wildwood Brewery.

Children will once again receive free ice cream following the parades, continuing the tradition that began with the very first Creamery Picnic more than a century ago.

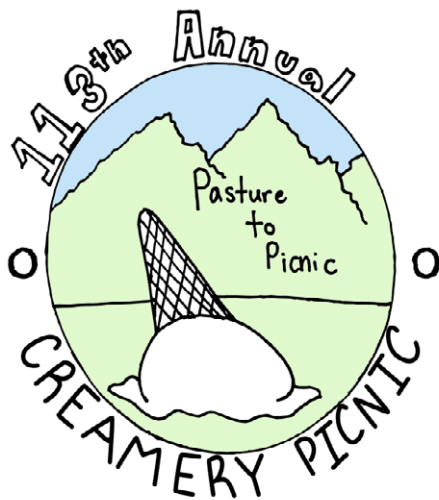
Madero said the Stevensville Civic Club is always looking for additional volunteers to help make the weekend a success. "We could always use help," he said.

Volunteer shifts include some that are just two hours long, making it easy for people already planning to attend the festivities to lend a hand while still enjoying the celebration. Madero said there are also perks for volunteers who help during the event.



The greased pig races are one of the most popular events at the Stevensville Creamery Picnic.

WELCOME TO THE STEVENSVILLE CREAMERY PICNIC



Friday, Aug. 7th
3 pm - 10 pm

MAIN STREET

Kids Parade • 6 pm

Street Party with Tightline • 7 pm to 10

LEWIS & CLARK PARK

Cow Sh*t Kate • 7 pm to 10 pm

Saturday, Aug. 8th
9 am - 10 pm

MAIN STREET

Grand Parade • 11 am

(line up starts at 9 am at Stevi High)

LEWIS & CLARK PARK

406 • 7 pm to 10 pm

Local Brewery:

Blacksmith Brewing Company & Wildwood Brewing



Kids Activities
Friday & Saturday!
Pig Races
Corn Hole
Tournament



Beer Garden
Friday 4pm-10pm
Saturday 12pm - 10pm
Local Breweries!



Food & Craft Vendors
Young Entrepreneur Vendors!

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Bitterroot Health News

Important updates from the one of the nation's Top 100 Critical Access Hospitals

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Bitterroot Health new pediatrician starting soon!

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degrees in Chemistry and Philosophy from Carroll College before attending the University of Washington School of Medicine through the WWAMI

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Farmers markets, that offer the bounty of the Bitterroot's fertile soil, as well as plenty of local crafts, take place weekly in Hamilton, Darby, Stevensville, Lone Rock and Florence. Watch for the signs.



Main Street, Darby. There's plenty to see and do in Darby, a former logging town that's enjoying an economic renaissance, in part due to the popular "Yellowstone" television series which was based here.

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‘Wow Moments’ to watch for at the Fair

by Sarah Glass

Ravalli County Fairgrounds Director Melissa Saville and her associates are always looking for the next “wow moment” to feature at the annual Ravalli County Fair in Hamilton. The 2026 fair, taking place at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds Wednesday through Saturday, Sept. 2-5, is no different. Along with the historical and agricultural staples like antique tractors, fiber arts demonstrations, and Mutton Bustin’, visitors can expect to see the Bitterroot Mountettes equestrian drill team, 4-H exhibits, a livestock sale, herding dog demonstration and more.

New to the fair this year is a pole barn shade shelter that was built by MQS. “It’s actually been on our wish list for a couple years,” Saville said in an MQS social media video. “We knew that we needed some shade here for the many horses that come to our facility.” New vendor, Pine & Iron, will also be bringing axe-throwing to the fair this year.

Entertainment at the Community Stage is scheduled to take place throughout each fair day this year. This attraction is free. This area will showcase popular musicians like Sam Nelson, the 406 Band and Tasha Fain with her violin. The stage will also host the Annual Bike Giveaway. “We have businesses around the valley donate a bike, a skateboard, a scooter,” said Saville. Additional Community Stage performances include a Poetry Contest Reading, Dueling Dragons Tae-Kwon-Do and the Bitterroot Line Dancers.

For fairgoers 10 and under, there will be a Wild West Fun Park. This area offers a shaded area for parents and their children, as well as a laser quick-draw competition and balloon animals.

The Tired Iron Collector’s Club will have antique tractors on display; a Bitterrodders Car Club car show will be taking place each day on the North Lawn and Rastelli Circus Spectacular, presented by Franco Entertainment Productions, will be featuring circus acts including stilt walkers, aerial and high-wire performers, contortionists and hula hoop performances.

Whether visitors attend the fair for the food, the rodeo, martial arts demonstrations, live music or rides, the Ravalli County Fair continues to strive



When the dust flies and the gates swing open, it all starts at the chutes!

to be “the best county fair you will ever go to.” Tickets are available for purchase online at rcfair.org. The fair schedule is available to view at ravallicounty.gov/560/Fair-Schedule.



The public is invited to enter their amazing animals at the fair. Whether they are strong, fast, or sassy, those at the fair want to see them shine.



Cale Moon played last year as the fair's featured act on the Free Stage. This country singer's music is inspired by everyday life as it happens in the lives of everyday folks.



Top row left, mutton busting. Photos by John Rudow.
Top row right, 4H member washing sheep. Photo by John Dowd.
Second row left, ferris wheel lit up. Photo by John Rudow.
Second row right, Ethan Wright in the youth tractor pull. Photo by John Dowd.
Bottom row left, Hamilton Mayor Dominic Farrenkopf and Locea Fifield at the dunk tank. Photo by John Dowd.
Bottom row right, 4H sheep showmanship. Photo by John Rudow.



2026 Bitterroot event calendar

July

The Last Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival
FRI-SUN, July 24-26
See online schedule.
424 Forest Hill Rd., Hamilton
13 great bands from as far away as Nashville.
3 days of family fun.
www.hardtimesbluegrass.com

Hamilton Montana Car Show
FRI, July 24
6 p.m.
400 W Main St., Hamilton
Tuners, hot rods, bikes and people. All makes, models, No entry fee.
www.facebook.com/groups/292485537845825/

Bitterroot Brewfest
SAT, July 25
2 p.m. - VIP, 3 p.m. General Admission
Daly Mansion - 251 Eastside Hwy, Hamilton
60+ beers from Montana and 12 food trucks.
Live music.
bitterrootchamber.com/bitterroot-brewfest-2026

Wild West NRA Rodeo
FRI-SAT, July 31-Aug. 1

5 p.m. - Gates Open, 7-9:30 p.m. - Event
Darby Rodeo Arena - 200 Rodeo Rd., Darby
Bareback, Saddle Bronces, Barrel Racing, Bulls, Team Roping, Steer Wrestling, Lady's Breakaway, Men's Tie Down Roping.
www.darbyrodeo.org/2024-events-tickets

August

Robert's Run
SAT, Aug. 1
6 a.m. start
Hamilton High School - 327 Fairgrounds Rd., Hamilton
1 mile, 5K, 10K, Tri-fecta. Register online.
Festival with kid's games during and after the race.
runsignup.com/robertsrunmt

2026 MVPA-HA Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery Convoy
WED, Aug. 5
11:45-12:30 p.m. expected arrival
Ravalli Co. Fairgrounds - 100 Old Corvallis Rd., Hamilton
View the traveling convoy of 40-50 vehicles representing military history from World War I through recently retired military vehicles.
www.mvpa.org

Stevensville Creamery Picnic

FRI-SAT, Aug. 7-8
Fri: 7 p.m., Sat: 3:30-9 p.m.
Lewis and Clark Park - west end of West 2nd St., Stevensville
FRI - Kids parade at 6 p.m. on Main St.
Street dance and live music at 7 p.m. SAT - Grand Parade at 11 a.m. Downtown. Greased pig races, firefighter games, kid's games, market, beer garden.
www.creamerypicnic.com

Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering
SAT-SUN, Aug. 15-16
Sat: 9-9 p.m., Sun: 9-4 p.m.
Daly Mansion - 251 Eastside Hwy, Hamilton
Highland athletic competition, live music, Scotch/Irish whiskey and mead tasting, Celtic wars, kids activities, and more.
www.begg.org

Darby Xtreme Bulls
SUN, Aug. 23
12 p.m. - Gates Open, 2-4 p.m. - Event
Darby Rodeo Arena - 200 Rodeo Rd., Darby
Top PRCA Bull Riders competing for \$60,000.
www.darbyrodeo.org/2024-events-tickets

Shakespeare in the Park - 'The Merchant of Venice'
SAT, Aug. 29

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SHOW: OCTOBER 30



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shakespeareintheparks.org

September

Ravalli Co. Fair & Rodeo
WED-SAT, Sept. 2-5
See online schedule.
Ravalli Co. Fairgrounds - 100 Old Corvallis Rd., Hamilton
Family fun, delicious food, live entertainment, carnival rides, market vendors and more. Free rodeo nights, unique exhibits, livestock shows, local food vendors, and activities for all ages.
ravallicounty.gov/560/Fair-Schedule

Broncs, Bulls, & Barrels
FRI-SAT, Sept. 18-19
4 p.m. - Gates Open, 6-8:30 p.m. - Event
Darby Rodeo Arena - 200 Rodeo Rd., Darby
Barrel Racers, Bareback, Saddle Bronc, and Bull Riders. SAT - Kids rodeo in the morning followed by Royalty Pageant.
www.darbyrodeo.org/2024-events-tickets

October

Stevensville Scarecrow Festival
Oct. 2, 3-17 - SAT, Oct. 3 Event
9-4 p.m. Setup, 4-9 p.m. Viewing and Voting
Downtown Stevensville

Kids activities, maze, facepainting. Vote for your favorite scarecrow. Pet costume and pumpkin carving contest. Monster Mash dance party and more.
stevensvillescare-crowfestival.org

McIntosh Apple Day & Liquid Apple Night
SAT, Oct. 3
9-2 p.m., 5-9 p.m.
Ravalli Co. Museum - 205 Bedford St., Hamilton
Biggest bake sale under the Big Sky. Family Friendly. Hard cider, live music, delicious food.
ravallimuseum.org

November

Rocky Con 2026
SAT, Nov. 14
10-6 p.m.
Bedford Building - 223 S. 2nd St., Hamilton
A full day dedicated to tabletop gaming, from classic board games and strategic war games to immer-

sive RPGs and everything in between.
rockycon.org



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Belted kingfisher with his catch. John Dowd photo.

Nature-watching paradise

The Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge is a great place to watch birds, as well as other wildlife. The refuge is just north of Stevensville off the Eastside Highway, on the valley floor along the Bitterroot River.

Warm-water sloughs are near the road, and the paths. Watch for wood ducks, mallards, cinnamon teal, pileated woodpeckers, magpies, northern flickers, nuthatches and chickadees along these paths through open, mixed black poplar (cottonwood) and ponderosa pine forest. Water birch, snowberry and serviceberry grow in thickets that attract yellow warblers and yellowthroat warblers. Look for nesting holes in dead cottonwoods and pines. These holes are mostly created by flickers, and used by a large number of cavity-nesting species of birds.

Watch for sandhill cranes, tree swallows, Canada geese, killdeer, Northern harriers, red-tailed hawks and bald eagles. Nearly all of the different color variants of red-tailed hawks can be seen in the refuge, and, more rarely, peregrine and prairie falcons and sharp-shinned, northern goshawks and Cooper’s hawks. Many more species such as trumpeter and tundra swans and snow geese can be seen during migration times in spring and fall, and in recent years, trumpeter swans have been nesting here.

The most perfect time at the refuge is early in the morning. Pack a picnic breakfast and a thick blanket. Park your car and spread the blanket out on the slope of grass above the pond.

Screaming osprey will put on a show of diving, emerging and shaking like dogs as they fish right in front of you. Western pond turtles and muskrats will emerge as the sun warms the day. Blackbirds, warblers, sparrows and wrens will be singing all about, and the calls of coots, geese and ducks from across the water add to the symphony.



California quail perched on barbed wire. John Dowd photo.



Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. USFWS photo.



Swallowtail on showy milkweed. John Dowd photo.

Bitterroot beer - bastions of brews

by John Dowd

For those looking for a taste of Montana, and a place to unwind with friends, the Bitterroot Valley is home to several highly regarded breweries. Each one brings its own charm and perspective to the Montana brewery scene, and many have won awards and can be found in stores across the state and even beyond.

Bitter Root Brewing

Bitter Root Brewing in Hamilton was started in 1998 by Tim Bozik. Bozik’s daughter, Nicole Musburger, spoke about her family’s brewery. Now a partner, she said their brewery is all about family. They sell beer throughout the area, and into Idaho. They also bring a lot of brewing experience, and are especially proud of their longevity in the community.

They have six year-round beer regulars, and up to 10 small-batch varieties they

play around with. According to Musburger, the most popular of these has been their small batch “Hoppy Lager.” They also have a few small batch non-alcoholic options thrown into the mix. This includes a hop water and mango seltzer, among others. According to Musburger, “we always want to make sure there are other options,” for customers that are younger, or may not want to consume alcohol.

The space is kid-friendly and family-friendly. Musburger added that they are truly “family owned and operated, and not just blood,” explaining that family goes beyond physical relation at Bitter Root Brewing. Many of their staff have been there a long time. They also treat many of their customers, long time and new, as family too.

Bitter Root Brewing has a full restaurant that is well regarded. Their kitchen serves food sourced from across Montana, and as local as they can get, which also means the menu can change seasonally. They are proud of their “super tiny kitchen that puts out really incredible food,” as Musburger described.

Bitter Root Brewing is open seven days a week, from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 101 Marcus Street in Hamilton. For more information, interested parties can contact them at (406) 363-7468.

Wildwood Brewing

Even though the brewery opened in 2012, Wildwood Brewing near Stevensville has some of the oldest roots in Montana. Owner and chief tap-operator Jim Lueders, was actually the first brewer hired at Bayern, the oldest brewery in the state. He stayed there a short time, then went on to study at Doemens, in Munich Germany. There, at one of the oldest brewing schools in the world, Lueders honed his craft.

He came back to the U.S., and to Montana, where he became a consultant for other breweries that wanted to start up or expand. After many years of doing that, and helping to start up over 30 breweries across the world, in places like Japan, Europe, Africa, Mexico and more, Lueders decided to open his own, named after a special location in the Midwest.

Now, in Wildwood, Lueders brews in refurbished equipment in a century-old



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barn moved out from the Midwest. He is chasing the zero-emissions goal, and brews all natural and organic beer. His building is going 100% solar, and hopes to add more sustainable processes to every step of the beer making journey. According to him, organic is really “the only sustainable way to farm that we have as human beings.”

For him, the process is about the history and creating interesting takes on original recipes. He currently has four constant regulars, that include the Ambitious Lager, Bodacious Bock, Mystical Stout and the Yippee IPA. Lueders said these are “my versions of authentic beers,” and they all have a historic taste and pedigree. Occasionally, he also plays around with small batches, but with just him and his immediate family operating the place, these options are limited.

With a history, an interesting taproom and many stories to tell, Lueders encourages everyone to stop by and see what they are about.

They serve pizza and the kitchen is open from 5 to 7 p.m. The brewery is located at 4018 US Hwy 93 N, Stevensville, and is open from 4 to 8 p.m. every day except Monday.

For more information, interested parties can contact the brewery at (406) 777-2855.

Lolo Peak Brewery and Grill

Lolo Peak Brewery is located at 6201 Brewery Way in Lolo, and has fantastic views of the mountains around Lolo. They have outdoor seating and a rustic interior.

Lolo Peak Brewery and Grill provides a diverse range of offerings, from classics like their Broken Top Pilsner, their Alpen Glow Wheat Ale and several IPAs, to their Old Toby Porter, LouLou Amber, Double Eagle Scotch Ale and more. They have a selection of ciders, wines and seltzers and a full kitchen.

Lolo Peak Brewery and Grill is open Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., and Friday through Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. More information is available on their website, lolopeakbrewery.com or by calling (406) 493-6231.

Blacksmith Brewing Company

Located at 114 Main in historic Stevensville, the Blacksmith Brewing Company serves Montana’s oldest community, and chases that aesthetic. They opened in 2008, and pride themselves in serving all in the community, from farmers and cowboys, to realtors and fishing guides. The inside of their location is decorated like an old forge (which the building once was) with a fun and rustic vibe.

Blacksmith beers can be found on tap across Montana, and especially in the Bitterroot Valley. They have several main-stay beers, including their Brickhouse Blonde, Mayfly Mexican Lager, Wilma Kolsch, Montana Amber, Twisted Paddle Pale Ale and their Cutthroat IPA, among others.

They make their own huckleberry soda, root beer and an award winning hop water, for those who want a non-alcoholic option. They also carry several wines, hard seltzers and ciders.

Blacksmith Brewing Company is located next door to several food places, where customers can get take out and come over to the brewery to enjoy inside, or in the brewery’s designated outdoor seating area.

Dogs and kids are allowed and the company has an online store for merchandise.

They have a “Mug Club” Monday and Thursday, with live music every Saturday starting at 6 p.m. They also host trivia nights on Tuesdays, starting at 6:30 p.m.

Blacksmith Brewing Company is open from Monday to Thursday, 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Friday through Sunday, from 12 noon to 10 p.m. For more information, interested parties can contact them at (406) 777-0680, or visit their website, blacksmithbrewing.com.



**BLACKSMITH
BREWING COMPANY**

STEVENSVILLE, MONTANA

“Where Montana Began”

Bitterroot Brewfest!

by John Dowd

The Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce hosts the famed Brewfest, which this year will take place on July 26, from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. This event is done in conjunction with other Daly Days events at the Daly Mansion in Hamilton. The mansion holds its own festivities in the morning, and the Brewfest goes through the afternoon and into the evening.

According to Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce Outreach Coordinator, Dawn Luedecke, the Brewfest will include brews from a variety of local breweries, as well as other Montana beer makers. Tickets are available online, through the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce website, bitterrootchamber.com. The event will see bands playing music, 12 food trucks and unlimited beer tasting. “What’s better than that? Music, food

and unlimited beer?” said Luedecke, in one of the Bitterroot Valley’s most beautiful setting.

The Brewfest is \$35 in advance, and \$40 at the gate. VIP tickets are also available, which will cost \$75 in advance, and at the gate will be \$80. VIP guests will get special VIP restroom access, a nice beer stein, a flag, unlimited beer tasting and more. Regular guests will get a glass, and all will get access to unlimited tasting.

This year there will be a walking/ bike path to the Brewfest, starting at the north end of Providence Way, in Hamilton. Shuttles from Hamilton High School and the Hamilton downtown parking lot will also be available. The path will end at the Daly Mansion gates. No pets will be allowed. Interested volunteers can contact the Chamber by reaching out to the email, dawn@bvchamber.com.



Higher Ground Brewing

Higher Ground Brewery in Hamilton was opened by two 24-year-olds, making them the youngest brewery owners in the state. Jasper Miller and Fenn Nelson both called the Bitterroot Valley home, and for them it was a no-brainer to open in Hamilton. The space was built by the two, including a 54-foot concrete bar. It utilized local materials, artwork and the “Bitterroot Valley character,” throughout the taproom.

They serve wood-fired pizza and eight mainstay beer offerings. These include an At Ease Golden Ale, a Flash Flood Milk Stout, a Basecamp Irish Red Ale and more. They also have their Morning Glory Hard Seltzer, flavored with passion fruit and mango, for seltzer fans.

Higher Ground Brewing offers several seasonal beers, including a Dust Til Dawn Coffee Cream Ale, which is a light bodied cream ale made in collaboration with River Rising Coffee Roasters, and a Caradactyl Wheat Ale, which is an American witbier crafted with tropical notes and citrus.

They have several other offerings from the kitchen, both for adults and for kids.

Higher Ground Brewing is located at 518 N. 1st Street, in Hamilton, and is open Sunday through Thursday, from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., and Friday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.



Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering

by Scott Sacry

The Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering has evolved over the last 17 years into one of the most anticipated summer events in the Bitterroot Valley. The event is held on the third weekend in August at the Daly Mansion grounds. This year's event is on Saturday, August 15 and Sunday, August 16.

The two-day event is packed full of live entertainment and athletic competition, drink and dance, and food and fun. After two days at the games and gathering, if you're not entertained, you might be unentertainable.

"One of the reasons this event is so popular is that there is something for everyone," said Laura Reichart, the president of the Bitterroot Celtic Society, the group that organizes the event. "There's something for all ages; everyone in the family will find something to do and something to enjoy."

The Setting

"This event is special and successful because of the location," said Reichart. "The Daly Mansion and the grounds are beautiful, it has a relaxing feel to it, it's big enough to accommodate everything, it has great shaded areas, it has a great history. The setting is just special."

Live Music

The quality of the live music in 2026 will be as impressive as always. There are many options: Celtica Nova, a Celtic band that rocks the traditional shanty; Swagger, an original band playing Celtic music; the Katie Jane Band, a high-energy Celtic fiddle band; Tempest, a globally-renowned hybrid of high-energy Folk Rock; Dennis Doyle, a Celtic harpist, singer and storyteller; solo harpist Hunter Koss; Cootehill Session Junkies, a traditional Irish band and Irish folk singer Dennis McMorow.

The Highland Games

The Highland Games at the gathering have grown to be the biggest Highland athletic competition in the state of Montana. On Saturday, 60 to 80 athletes will compete in the Scottish American Athletic Association (SAAA) sanctioned competitions, then on Sunday there will be games for juniors and kids.



Opening Ceremonies

A major highlight of the event is the opening ceremonies, which happen at 1 p.m. on both days. This includes the Grand Parade of the Clans, bands, athletes, flags of the Celtic nations, piping awards, the playing of Flowers of the Forest and the introduction of the honored chieftains. The 2026 Honored Clan is Clan MacKay.

Tastings

The tasting sessions are popular events - and most spots sell out quickly, so book a spot early. There's a premier Scotch tasting on Saturday night, a comparative Scotch & Irish Whisky tasting on Saturday and Sunday and Mead tasting on Saturday and Sunday.

Sunday Funday & Kids Activities

On Sunday, participants can try traditional Celtic competitions themselves, including a free Tug O' War, Beards 'n Braids, Skillet Toss, and Bonnie Knees competitions. There's also a traditional Sunday Tea inside the Daly Mansion. In addition, there are plenty of kids' activities, including a bouncy house and a games area.



A Celtic Passion

“I strongly believe that it’s the passion of the people who participate that makes this such a unique event,” said Reichart. “From the performers to the volunteers to the spectators - you can feel the passion. There is no better way to say it other than...it’s fun, and everyone just really likes to be a part of it.”

With upward of 8,000 people attending, parking will be limited at the Daly Mansion. There is free parking at the Hamilton High School with free shuttles to the grounds starting at 8:30 a.m. on both days.

Such a big event wouldn’t be possible without the myriad of volunteers, and more are always needed. To volunteer and for the most current information about the games and gathering, go to www.bcgg.org.



Discover the Daly Mansion

The Daly Mansion, 2 miles north of Hamilton on Eastside Highway, provides a glimpse into the past for those who tour the Mansion and its grounds. The 24,000 square foot Georgian-Revival style mansion consists of 25 bedrooms, 15 bathrooms, and boasts 7 fireplaces throughout. The Mansion sits on a beautifully landscaped 46-acre parcel with mature trees and lush gardens.

The grounds and Mansion were first opened to the public in 1987 after being closed since 1941. At first glance, The Daly Mansion stands as a testament to the rich history of Hamilton and Montana. Yet, as you delve deeper through conversations with our cherished volunteers, locals, and visitors, it becomes clear that this grand estate represents much more than just architectural beauty; it embodies the spirit of community. Today, the Mansion continues to play a vital role in our shared heritage.

The Daly Mansion provides tours to the public, Tuesday-Sunday throughout the summer months. Prices are \$15 for adults (discounts for seniors and military) and \$8 for youth (children under 5 are free). Self guided tours are held at 10 am & 3 pm, guided tours are on the hour 11am-2pm based on volunteer tour guide availability. Sunday tours are all self guided.

The grounds at the Daly Mansion provide the space for many events throughout the summer. The Mansion and its grounds are host to Daly Days & the Bitterroot Brewfest on July 26th, the Bitterroot Performing Arts Council Summer Concert feat. Pure Prairie League on August 2nd, the Daly Mansion Garden Gala on August 9th, Bitterroot Celtic Society's Celtic Games and Gathering on August 16th & 17th, and the Daly Mansion Car Show on August 23rd.

While the property is state-owned, our efforts to preserve, maintain, and keep the Mansion available to the public are not state funded. Tours, events, and donations not only help us fund the preservation of the Daly Mansion, but also ensure that it remains a welcoming space for community



Historic Daly Mansion, built by one of Montana's famous "Copper Kings," Marcus Daly. Sean Malcom photo.

members, special events, and visitors alike.

For more information about the Daly Mansion, to see a list of events, or to contact the Daly Mansion Preservation Trust, visit dalymansion.org



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www.StevensvilleScarecrowFestival.org



Let's rodeo - Darby's got it!

by Scott Sacry

For the last 18 years, the Darby Rodeo Association (DRA) has been hosting rodeos in the Richard Cromwell Memorial Rodeo Grounds in Darby.

What started in 2008 as a small, 400-seat arena has been transformed into a 3,000-person powerhouse venue that is recognized for excellence on a national level.

The DRA will host six major rodeo events in 2026. These events are featured routinely on the Cowboy Channel, and the Yellowstone Darby Xtreme Bareback event in June is the richest standalone PRCA Bareback competition in the world.

This transformation was no small feat and took years of dreaming, planning and building by the DRA, all with the goal of transforming the arena into a premier destination for rodeo, celebration and connection.

DRA board president Cal Ruark has been the driving force behind this metamorphosis and is the arena’s biggest advocate.

“It’s an in-your-face, small arena that just has a different vibration,” said Ruark. “I know it sounds coarse, but it's horseshit in your beer. I’m serious, sit in the front row for one of our events and you know you're at a rodeo. We have created something special here.”

The DRA is a nonprofit, community organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the sport of rodeo and the western way of life. Renovations and improvements are ongoing.

DRA’s commitment extends beyond the arena. The DRA has supported many charitable organizations over the years, raising over \$100,000 for these charities.

2026 Season

The DRA is about halfway through the 2026 season.

The Dutton Ranch Darby Xtreme Bareback Event took place on June 6-7 and is the richest standalone PRCA Bareback competition in the world.

Then the Twisted Nut Rodeo was on July 10-11, which featured bareback riders, saddle bronc riders, bull riders, and barrel racers. There was also a special Kids’ Rodeo at this event.

Wild West Rodeo

The Wild West Rodeo will be held on July 31 and August 1. This is the DRA’s only full-blown rodeo with bareback, saddle bronc, barrel racing, bulls, team roping, steer wrestling, ladies’ breakaway and men's tie down roping.



Steer wrestling. Photo by John Rudow.

NEW - Darby Sho' Down Barrel Race and Darby Xtreme Bulls

Two new events this year are the Darby Sho’ Down Barrel Race, which is a free event held on August 21-22. Then, on August 23, is the 1st Annual Darby Xtreme Bulls Event, which will feature the top PRCA Bull Riders competing for a chance to win \$60,000.

Broncs, Bulls & Barrels

Finally, the Broncs, Bulls & Barrels will be held on September 18-19. The competitors are barrel racers, bareback riders, saddle bronc riders and bull riders. This event will also feature a Kids’ Rodeo.

The Darby Rodeo Association is always innovating, so keep an eye out for new developments. For the most current information, go to DRA’s website at www.darbyrodeo.org.



Mini buckers. Photos by John Rudow.



Twisted Nut rodeo. Photos by John Rudow.





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