



Bluegrassin'

Volume 21 Issue 2

March—April, 2019

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting, preserving and sharing our love of bluegrass music in a spirit of family and friendship.

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Upcoming Bluegrass Events

- March 1—Lochwood, Highlander Brewery, Missoula, 6-8 pm
- March 2 —Lochwood, Blacksmith Brewery, Stevensville, 6-8 pm
- March 9—Winter Jam at Ruby's, Missoula (see pg. 9 for details)
- March 16 & 17—Bannack String Band, Benefit Concert, First Presbyterian Church, Missoula (see pg. 2 for details)
- March 23—Hootenanny, Stevensville (see pg. 9 for details)
- March 24—Open Jam, Montana TapHouse, Whitefish, 6-9 pm
- March 29—Lochwood, Top Hat, Missoula, 6-8 pm
- Mar 30 – Sapphire Mountain Bluegrass, Symes Hotel, Hot Springs, 8-10 pm
- April 13—MRBA Spring Festival, Lone Rock School, Stevensville (see pg. 4 for details)
- April 19—Lochwood, Top Hat, Missoula, 6-8 pm
- April 20—Lochwood, Bitterroot Brewery, Hamilton, 6-8 pm
- April 26—Acousticals, Philipsburg Brewery, 5-8 pm

Notes:

1. Please check websites or call the venues for show times.
2. If you play in a band, (or know of a local bluegrass band) please e-mail the band's web page or Facebook page link to the editor to list events in newsletter. Thanks.

Recurring Shows and Jams

- ◆ **Missoula**—Pickin Circle, Montana Distillery (631 Woody St.)
Tuesdays, 6:00 pm
- **Helena** - Bluegrass Jam, Staggering Ox, Tuesdays, 6:00 pm

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Howdy all. It's almost the first of March, and spring is coming. We have a Ruby's winter jam on March 9, and it may be the final one at Ruby's (see page 9 for further info). Let's have a big crowd to show how much the MRBA has appreciated these wonderful jams, and the fantastic support from Phyllis, her family, and the staff at Ruby's Inn through all these years.

I don't know where we will have the jams next winter, but this summer Tari and I will beat the brush and see what we can find in Missoula. We need a place where we can have a pot luck, that has many different jam rooms, and rooms to rent would be a bonus. Also, it needs to be a place we can afford. It's a tall order, but any good ideas would be appreciated, especially with contact info.

I have just scheduled a Hootenanny for the Stevensville Playhouse on Saturday, March 23, from 1-4 pm. For those of you who don't know, the Playhouse has built several rooms behind the stage - lots of room for jamming and practicing. The big thing about our events is the advertising. If you could help put up posters or spread the word, that helps make it all work. Mike

Volunteers & Desserts Wanted—2019 Spring Festival

Hey Folks, The Lonerock Festival kitchen will again serve turkey, hot dogs, soups and delicious desserts. Over the years we have discovered that some of the favorite desserts are pies, cobblers and cheesecakes. Any homemade dessert is always a welcome gift to the festival. Since many of our regular kitchen crew will be on stage this year at various times, extra hands in the kitchen are much appreciated. We will have a sign-up sheet, so if you are so inclined, please stop by. Thanks for your support of this annual fundraiser. See you there! Any questions call Susan [360 489-7114](tel:3604897114).

Benefit Concert - March 17

The Best of Bannack, the Bannack String Band, will play for a benefit at the First Presbyterian Church,
235 South Fifth Street, Missoula,
from 6pm to 9pm on Saturday, March 16, and at the church services on Sunday, March 17,
at 9:30am and 11:30am, with the Brother Van story.
(Wally Congdon)

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association

PO Box 1306, Missoula, MT 59806

Website: www.mtbluegrass.com email: mrba@mtbluegrass.com

President - Mike Conroy, mikevconroy@gmail.com or phone 406-821-3777

Vice President - Dallas Olson

Secretary/Treasurer - Anne Merrifield, happypasture9@gmail.com, 406-360-1877

Board Members - Tari Conroy, Kate McMahon, Isaac Callender, Verna Molenda

Merchandise Manager - Dallas Olson

Newsletter Editor - Kate McMahon, kate@appcom.net, 406-863-9255

MRBA Webmaster - Phyllis Erck mrba@mtbluegrass.com

Bluegrassin' is a bi-monthly publication of the **Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association**

Got Something to sell?
Advertise in *Bluegrassin'*

Full Page – \$25.00,
1/2 Page – \$15.00,
1/4 Page – \$10.00
Classified – \$5.00

Contact:
 Kate McMahon
 kate@appcom.net

Get MRBA Newsletter by E-Mail

If you would like to get your newsletter delivered electronically via e-mail send a message to:

happypasture9@gmail.com

Electronic version has color photos & hyperlinks to websites.

(P.S.—It will help keep down printing and mailing costs for the Association.)



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MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
Membership Application

Date _____ Last Name _____ First Name _____
 Mailing Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone # _____
 E-mail _____ Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15.00) _____

Do you want the newsletter delivered electronically? _____ YES _____ NO

Renewal _____

New Member _____

Please mail your application to: MRBA, PO Box 1306, Missoula, MT 59806

* * * **MRBA Spring Festival** * * *

Stevensville, MT - April 13, 2019

We're getting geared up again for a great festival with great bands and a whole lot of fun! **If you would like to volunteer to help at the festival with the ticket tables, in the kitchen, or staffing merchandise sales, please call Mike or Tari at 821-3777.** You can also just check in that day with the organizers, and they'll find a spot for you to help. Sunday morning we will have a free biscuit & gravy breakfast for folks camping at the school.

Directions to Lone Rock School, 1112 Three Mile Road, Stevensville (watch for signs):

From South: Traveling north on Highway 93 from Hamilton, turn right at Stevensville turnoff, drive one mile, turn left when entering Stevensville onto East Side Highway. Continue 5-1/2 miles. Turn right onto Three Mile Road. Continue on Three Mile Road for 3 miles. School is on the left just past the fire hall.

From North: (Lolo):

Turn left at Florence (Conoco station) onto East Side Highway. Continue on East Side Highway 6-1/2 miles, turn left onto Three Mile Road. Continue on Three Mile Road for 3 miles. School is on the left just past the fire hall.

Lone Rock 2019 Festival Schedule

12:00—12:25	Kids in Bluegrass
12:30—12:55	Mosers & Friends
1:00—1:25	Ridge Runners
1:30—1:55	Bluegrass 101
2:00—2:25	Darby Sireens
2:30—2:55	Bird Hop
3:00—3:25	Pinegrass
3:30—3:55	Mike & Tari Conroy Band
4:00—4:25	Acousticals
4:30—4:55	Skookumchuck Bear Claws
5:00—5:25	Spring Thaw
5:30—5:55	Elk Ridge Ramblers
6:00—6:25	Salmon Valley String Band
6:30—6:55	Lower Rattlesnake Ramblers
7:00—7:25	Silver Gravely Revue
7:30—7:55	Shenanigans
8:00—8:25	Tin Cup
8:30—8:55	Smokestack String Band
9:00—9:25	Sapphire Mountain

Band members, if this time slot will not work for your band, please contact another band to see if you may switch with them. This is the schedule we will put out unless notified of a band switch before the day of the festival.



Come join us for our special **20th year** of the
**Montana Rockies Bluegrass
Association
Festival and Fundraiser**

Saturday April 13, 2019 at the Lone Rock School
18 bands will play to help support our great association.
If you would like to volunteer to help please give us a call.

February Jam

You must be some kind of crazy
(or just love playing music) to venture
out in minus-21 windchill
temperatures to play some
bluegrass.

Can you name these hardy souls who
braved the cold weather and made it
to the February Jam at Ruby's?



Bluegrass Profiles

By Kate McMahon

A while back, someone suggested to me that it would be fun to publish interviews or profiles of MRBA members. To follow up on that excellent idea, I created a bluegrass questionnaire and asked attendees at the annual Christmas Party to complete the form. Each newsletter, I will print a few of the profiles that I collected at the meeting.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered to share their info.

Steve Chapman

I play these instruments: Guitar

Favorite Bluegrass Songs to Sing: Jimmy Brown, Banks of the Ohio, Shady Grove

Favorite Bluegrass Banjo Tunes: All of 'em

Favorite Bluegrass Fiddle Tunes: All of 'em

First Bluegrass Festival Attended: HardTimes Festival (2010)

Favorite Bluegrass Festival: HardTimes (all)

Favorite Bluegrass Music Camp: Conroy Memorial Campout (every year)

Favorite Bluegrass Band: Any Doc Watson

Name of Bluegrass Band: n/a

Jim McCauley

I play these instruments: Mandolin, Bass

Favorite Bluegrass Songs to Sing: "Just Lovin You", "Hold What Ya Got"

Favorite Bluegrass Banjo Tunes: Salt Creek, Soldier's Joy

Favorite Bluegrass Fiddle Tunes: Whiskey Before Breakfast, Red Haired Boy

First Bluegrass Festival Attended: WinterGrass, 1997 (Tacoma, WA)

Favorite Bluegrass Festival: HardTimes (every year)

Favorite Bluegrass Music Camp: n/a

Favorite Bluegrass Band: Gibson Brothers, New South Fork, Spinney Brothers

Name of Bluegrass Band: Bittergrass String Band

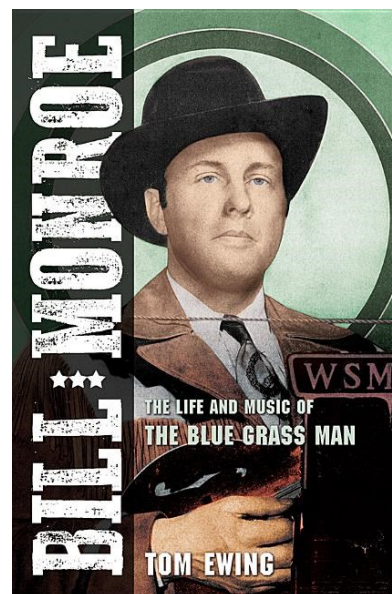
Members: Susan McCauley, Sue Pearson, Cleo Guenther (rest in peace), Tim Hunter

Book Review

Bill Monroe: The Life and Music of the Blue Grass Man By Tom Ewing

(Review reprinted from <https://bookmarks.reviews>)

The Father of Bluegrass Music, Bill Monroe was a major star of the Grand Ole Opry for over fifty years; a member of the Country Music, Songwriters, and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame; and a legendary figure in American music. This authoritative biography sets out to examine his life in careful detail—to move beyond hearsay and sensationalism to explain how and why he accomplished so much. Former Blue Grass Boy and longtime music journalist Tom Ewing draws on hundreds of interviews, his personal relationship with Monroe, and an immense personal archive of materials to separate the truth from longstanding myth.



Ewing tells the story of the Monroe family's musical household and Bill's early career in the Monroe Brothers duo. He brings to life Monroe's 1940s heyday with the Classic Bluegrass Band, the renewed fervor for his music sparked by the folk revival of the 1960s, and his declining fortunes in the years that followed. Throughout, Ewing deftly captures Monroe's relationships and the personalities of an ever-shifting roster of band members while shedding light on his business dealings and his pioneering work with Bean Blossom and other music festivals. Filled with a wealth of previously unknown details, Bill Monroe offers even the most devoted fan a deeper understanding of Monroe's towering achievements and timeless music.

Editor's Note: Tom Ewing was the guitarist/lead singer of Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys for ten years. I met Tom Ewing a few years ago when I was passing through Rosine, KY and stopped at the Bill Monroe Home Place. Tom was sitting out front having a cup of coffee and was kind enough to pose for a picture with me and the MRBA newsletter. He told me he was writing a book about Bill Monroe so I was thrilled to see he had completed the project. The book has received many positive reviews and is regarded as the definitive biography of the "Father of Bluegrass". Tom Ewing is also the editor of Bill Monroe Reader (A compilation of articles about Bill Monroe.) Both books are available from the University of Illinois Press—<https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/35wgg6rh9780252041891.html>

Editor, Kate McMahon

*Ellie
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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM RUBY'S INN!

Dear Ruby's Customers,

It's with mixed emotions that I announce the upcoming closure of Ruby's Inn. We will reopen a beautiful new Hotel and Ruby's Conference Center in the summer of 2020. The March Ruby's Jam will be our last one for a while. My parents, Lou and Ruby Erck, were always thrilled to have the Bluegrassers at their hotel and loved the music. On their behalf, thanks for choosing Ruby's as your place to stay and play through the years. We look forward to seeing you all back when we open the new hotel.

Please join us for the final Ruby's Jam in the old Convention Center on Saturday, March 9. Let's give her a sendoff to be remembered.

Happy Trails,
Phyllis Erck
Ruby's Inn & Erck Hotels



MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

PRESENTS AN OLD-TIME BLUEGRASS MUSIC

HOOTENANNY

Stevensville Playhouse

Main Street, Stevensville

SATURDAY, March 23, 2019

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

*Signup sheet available if you are interested in
doing a couple of Bluegrass songs*



*Bluegrass musicians come and take a
number and play on the microphone.*

ADMISSION:

\$5.00 non-member

\$3.00 MRBA members

Performing MRBA members free

More Info:

821-3777 or

www.mtbluegrass.com

Brief History of the Mandolin in America

<https://www.mandolincafe.com/archives/briefhistory.html>

The Mandolin Comes To North America

The mandolin entered the mainstream of popular American culture during the first epoch of substantial immigration from eastern and southern Europe, a period of prosperity and vulgarity, when things exotic and foreign dominated popular taste.

It was in vogue in the 1850s, when it shared the parlor with zithers, mandolas, ukuleles, and other novelties designed to amuse the increasingly leisured middle class. A marked increase in Italian immigration in the 1880s sparked a fad for the bowl-backed Neapolitan instrument that spread across the land. The mandolin was even among the first recorded instruments on Edison cylinders. In 1897, Montgomery Ward's catalog marveled at the 'phenomenal growth in our Mandolin trade'.

The Rage of the New Century

By the turn of the century, mandolin ensembles were touring the vaudeville circuit, and mandolin orchestras were forming in schools and colleges. In 1900, a company called Lyon & Healy boasted 'At any time you can find in our factory upwards of 10,000 mandolins in various stages of construction'. From the Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogs, mandolins proliferated across the South. Attempting to beat the competition, the Gibson company sent field reps across America to encourage sales of mandolins, and to establish mandolin orchestras.

From the turn of the century through the 1940s, a handful of American virtuoso mandolinists, mostly immigrants such as Bernardo Dapace, Samuel Siegal, Dave Apollon, and Giduanni Giouale, performed, recorded, composed, and arranged for the mandolin. These artists appeared in concert halls, and vaudeville settings, performing ethnic, popular, and classical music.

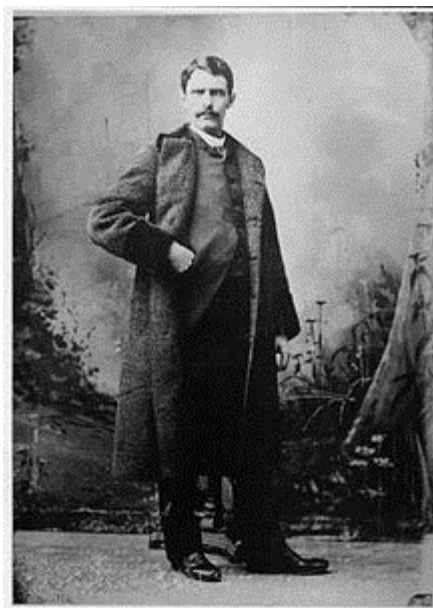
By this time banjo, mandolin, and guitar clubs had become the rage among middle-class youth on college campuses and in towns and cities throughout the South, and a variety of playing styles-- some of them borrowed from guitar techniques-- were made widely available in instruction books and on the recordings of such popular urban musicians as Fred Van Eps and Vess Ossman.

The Evolution Of The Modern Flat-Back Mandolin

Orville H. Gibson was born in New York in 1856, and moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan as a young man. He began designing and building instruments in the 1880s. In 1898, he was granted a patent for a new design in arch-top instruments. His early instruments were highly experimental and ornate. In 1902, a group of businessmen bought his patent, and formed the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Co., where Orville remained as a consultant, but not a partner, until 1915.

The 1905 Gibson A-4 was a revolutionary instrument in its time, breaking radically away from the traditional bowl-back instruments brought to America by Italian immigrants (disparagingly referred to as 'taterbugs'). Instead of having a flat or bent top and a bowlback, Orville's new design was based on principles of violin construction, using a carved top and back. Though this design was subtly modified over the years, it clearly set the standard for what was to become the preferred style of mandolin used in American folk and popular music.

Orville Gibson was apparently obsessed with ornamentation, particularly the scroll. He also emphasized the importance of machines in precision manufacture. His personal hallmark, included as an inlay on many of his early instruments, was an occult star-and-crescent.



The 1910 Gibson F-4 with its lavishly detailed flower pot headstock inlay featured a new scroll 3-point design. In general, this mandolin represented a huge step forward in the development of the modern mandolin look, one that has carried over to the present time. The new mandolin had a full resonant, well-balanced tone with great carrying power.

In 1922, Gibson, under the influence of their new acoustic engineer Lloyd Allayre Loar, refurbished their entire line of mandolins. The new versions had a number of distinguishing features including an adjustable truss-rod in the neck, adjustable two-piece ebony bridge, and a new tapering peghead contour called the 'snake-head'. Perhaps Loar's finest achievement, at least for devotees of bluegrass music, was his F-5, one of his new Master Model style-5 series. There were approximately 170 F-5s signed and dated by Lloyd Loar himself. These mandolins are in great demand, and today are often sold at astonishingly high prices.

The Influence of Bill Monroe

As the popularity of mandolin orchestras and the mandolin as a parlor instrument in the United States began to wane, it began to take somewhat of a back seat to other instruments. In old-time country music, the mandolin was often present, but generally only as an accompanying instrument, playing along with the ensemble.

All that changed with the emergence of Bill Monroe and the Monroe Brothers. Like most of the other brother acts of the 30's, Bill and his guitarist brother Charlie sang sacred and sentimental songs in beautiful two-part harmonies. But in contrast to the sweet, relaxed tremolo style of mandolin playing so common in the other brother duets, Bill played fiery cascades of rapid-fire notes that brought a power and urgency to the music that simply had not been there before. As Doug Green from the Country Music Foundation has noted, he '... drew his inner fire and turmoil into his music, expressing it with his mandolin...'.

Monroe fused the influences of his two childhood mentors, Uncle Pen Vandiver and Arnold Schultz. Uncle Pen played the fiddle, and had a rich repertoire of songs and melodies that Monroe was to draw from throughout his career. His fiddle-playing techniques became an intricate part of Monroe's style of mandolin playing. Arnold Schultz was a black country blues player who Monroe would see whenever he came through Rosine, Kentucky. Through his influence, Monroe spiced his playing with blue notes and blues licks. The fusion of these influences created a unique and unmistakable style.

This was also the time when radio was sweeping the country. Monroe's mandolin playing was getting to a lot of people via the radio, people who didn't know the mandolin was being used that way. People responded to the raw emotion of his playing, and the Monroe Brothers became one of the more popular brother acts of the era. Monroe later went on to create the bluegrass style (named after Monroe's band, The Bluegrass Boys), which put the mandolin securely at center stage.

The Mandolin Today

Today the mandolin continues to be a popular and vital instrument. In country music, the mandolin has made quite a comeback since the heyday of the Nashville Sound in the 60's and 70's. In the early 80's, the syrupy strings and layered vocals gave way to a powerful neo-traditionalist movement that re-introduced the mandolin to country audiences.

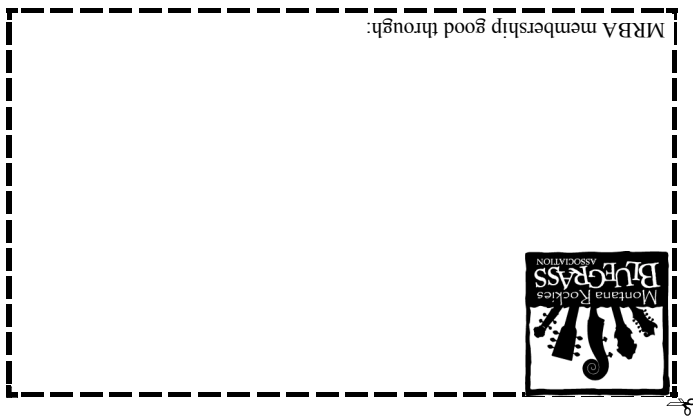
In rock music, the mandolin has been present consistently since the late 60's. English folk-rock, the acoustic-tinged albums of Rod Stewart, and the heady acoustic ballads of Led Zepplin all made the mandolin a familiar sound to rock audiences. Today, the present interest in 'unplugged' music continues to showcase the mandolin.

There has even been somewhat of a resurgence of interest in classical mandolin. Many young artists are recording albums of classical mandolin music, and recently in New York City, a mandolin orchestra held its 70th annual Spring concert. And of course the vibrant, organic folk musics of Ireland, Scotland, England, and the American South continue unabated. Bluegrass music, while far out of the mainstream, continues to attract young players who keep the music alive and growing. And as long as there is bluegrass, there will be a place for the mandolin.



ATTENTION:

We have set up the address label on your newsletter to be your membership card, please clip it out and use it for proof of your membership to the MRBA.



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