

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

I appreciated seeing the large crowd of members at our annual meeting June 5 in Lewistown. We all enjoyed a wonderful lunch provided by the friendly team of ladies of the Central Montana Cattlewomen. The annual meeting was well-attended, no doubt in part because of our strong support for scholarships for our members' children.

During the annual meeting I reported on the maintenance and system investment activities throughout 2024. I mentioned our project plans for 2025 and our expectation for the cost of electricity to increase over the next several years. Also discussed was our involvement in legislation, and our strong relationships with delegates at both the federal and state levels. We are also working to strengthen our wildfire mitigation plan and expect to provide it to several local agencies for their input in the coming months. Overall, we had a successful meeting.

We were honored to award 47 \$1,000 scholarships this year. As mentioned in my report at the meeting, we recently developed a new form that allows members to designate benefi-



ciaries for their estate capital credits. Members will also have the option to donate their estate capital credits specifically for student scholarships. I hope this new option is popular with our members, so that we can continue to support all our students for years to come.


Paul Brady was elected to serve as a director for District 1. We look forward to working with Paul as he begins his

The Fergus Electric Annual Meeting was a great success

new role with our cooperative. I also want to thank Paul Descheemaeker for serving his local electric cooperative as a board member and leader for the last 14 years. I appreciated spending time with him as we traveled together on cooperative business matters. Paul served as board president throughout my time with Fergus Electric, and he represented his district and our membership well.

See more Annual Meeting photos on page 8.

Our construction schedule is currently full and planned out for the next 12 weeks. This year we have seen several larger project requests that require a line crew for multiple weeks. We appreciate the patience of those members who recently submitted their project, not expecting our schedule to be so full. We complete projects on a first-come, first-serve basis. We look forward to completing everyone's projects as we work through this busy construction season.

Enjoy the beautiful weather and longer days. We all know the season won't last as long as we would like. 



HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY



CLOSURE

Fergus Electric Cooperative's offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, July 3 and 4.

FULL CIRCLE

Fergus Features columnist talks about her book publishing journey

COLUMN BY CATHY MOSER | FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC

The first week of April, I walked into the Fergus Electric Cooperative office holding a copy of my newly released book, *When Montana Outraced the East: The Reign of Western Thoroughbreds, 1886-1900*. I asked Janine Rife Didier if Fergus Electric would consider writing a feature for *Rural Montana* about my first-time author journey and book. Her reply made perfect sense: “Why don’t you write it. You know the story better than anyone else.” I agreed to write the feature as well as future stories for the *Rural Montana* “*Fergus Features*” column.

Returning to the column feels like reconnecting with an old friend. In 2015, I was hired as the *Fergus Features* columnist. Before that, my success as a freelance writer had been the topic of one *Fergus Feature*, with later articles telling of my love for Mountain Bluebirds and my involvement in bluebird conservation. I stepped away from the column in 2017 to devote every spare minute to my dream of writing and publishing *When Montana Outraced the East*.

The concept for the book came in hand with my freelance work. Combing through 1880s and ‘90s newspapers, on occasion I’d spot snippets that told of thoroughbred horses from Montana winning important eastern races. Montana was still very much a frontier back then, and I wondered, How did that come to be? cursory research in 2011 told me that I had found a gem of a story. With whom could I share it?

Molly Holz, editor of *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, the Montana Historical Society’s flagship publication, was as intrigued as I about the thoroughbreds’ place in Montana



Marketing is the final journey after writing and publishing a book. Author Cathy Moser does a book signing at a Barnes and Noble in Great Falls. | PHOTO COURTESY OF MIRIAM BAKER



Frontiersman Samuel E. Larabie left Wisconsin in 1863 for adventure in the Montana Territory. Becoming an assayer, he made his fortune as a banker in Deer Lodge. Larabie owned and raced many Montana thoroughbreds on eastern racetracks, including Kinley Mack. | PHOTO COURTESY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DEER LODGE

history. My subsequent article, “*In the Winner’s Circle: How Montana Thoroughbreds Upset the Nineteenth Century’s Racing Establishment*,” was published in winter 2014. Molly then encouraged me to write a book about the horses and

their wealthy owners.

I had the foundation article for a book, but writing a book proposal for a publishing house, well, that was all new ground. I consulted multiple “how to write a nonfiction book proposal” books. Each had a different formula for structuring a winning proposal. One night going from book to book to book, I became frozen with fear. I was probably writing the proposal all wrong. Of course, I called my mother. She listened as I unloaded my fears of blowing my chance. She settled me down and her advice, “Write it how you want to write it,” made crystal clear what I needed to do. The “how to” books went to the bookshelf. I listened to my heart, trusted my gut, and I wrote. Leave it to a mother to help deliver a successful book proposal.


The book’s narrative begins in the 1860s, with frontiersmen reaching Montana and reacting to arresting

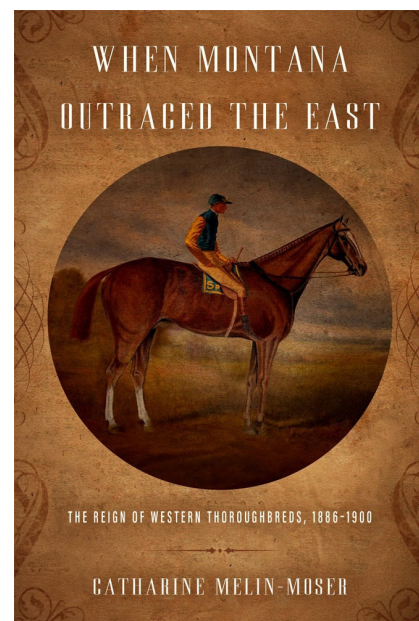
scenes of grass sweeping over the plains and every valley, bench and foothill. I wrote about the grass, and of Noah Armstrong of Twin Bridges, Samuel E. Larabie of Deer Lodge, and Marcus Daly of Butte and Anaconda, all importing thoroughbred horses to their Montana farms and turning the animals loose on bunchgrass. Marcus Daly said of the grass, "I have a theory that the state of Montana will produce the best horses of the world, and I am testing it. The climate here is cold, but the air is pure, and it increases the lung power of the horses. . . . As to the coldness of the climate and the charge that colts will not grow here in the winter, if this is true, I expect to overcome it by good stabling and good food. Our grass here is better than that of California or Kentucky, and it makes better bones and better feed."

The thoroughbreds bred and raised in Montana were fast and beautiful, and acted out their quirks while notching out famed races as well as setting track records on the hallowed grounds of eastern racetracks. Each horse that I wrote about, from quick-wired sprinter to weight-hauling iron horse, made his imprint on the sport between 1886 to 1900, forever intertwining the histories of Montana and American horse racing.

I never tire of the implausible stories of the men and horses I have come to know so well, and I like to connect with them in ways that keep them in the present. The bank building Samuel Larabie constructed in 1912 on Main Street in Deer Lodge still stands. When I visited the town last April, the shop clerk permitted me to go downstairs. In the basement where I placed my hand on the handle of the big black vault door, I wondered, How many times had Samuel touched the handle? I stood at his gravesite in Deer Lodge; I've also brushed away dead grass from Noah Armstrong's gravestone in Seattle. Marcus Daly is at rest in New York City.

The final stage of writing and publishing a book is to market the heck out of it, and I've been crisscrossing Montana to make myself available for book signings and Power Point slide shows. It's been fun to meet new people who want to share their own connections to the horses, the men and the places in my book.

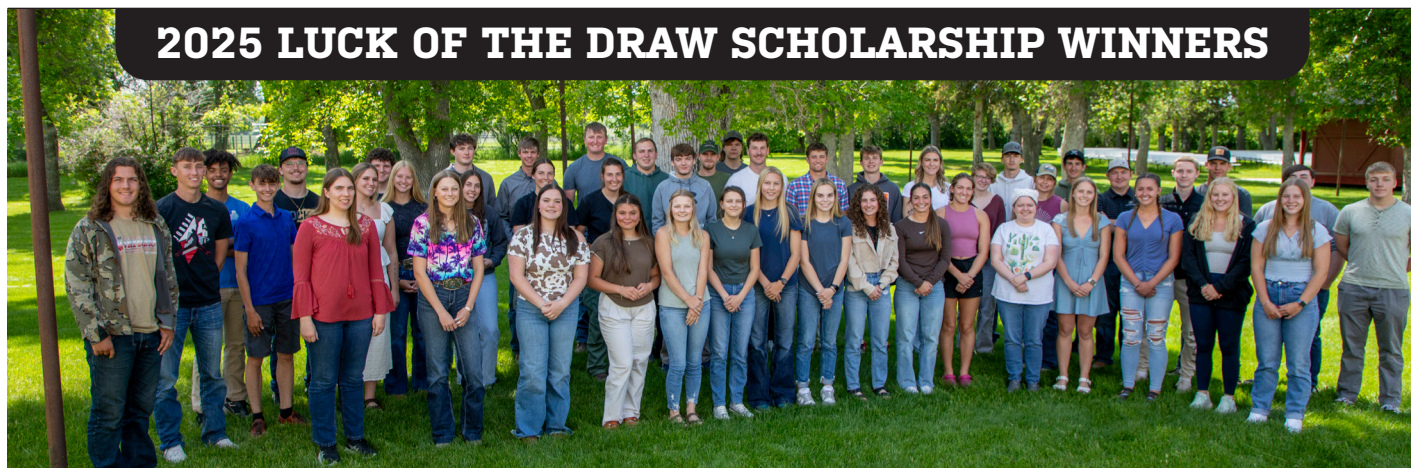
Back home in central Montana, when I walked into Fergus Electric Cooperative to publicize my book, I came full circle. I hope that you liked reading this *Fergus Feature*, my first in a long while, and watch for future columns! 



When Montana Outraced the East: The Reign of Western Thoroughbreds, 1886-1900

The book is available in Lewistown at the Moccasin Mountain Gallery and Gift Shop, 406 W. Main Street. **Contact Cathy** at (406) 538-4813, or at cathymoser.com, for a presentation or book signing.

2025 LUCK OF THE DRAW SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Names of students, in random order: Leon Aminkeng, Abbie Arntzen, Carson Barta, Lexya Burnham, Sawyer Campbell, Cole Carlson, Cody Cochran, Regan Comes, Andrew Cox, Adysen Cundiff, Mazie Davidson, Ashton Deegan, Johanna Demars, Drevin Dodson, Callie Donaldson, Madeline Denton, Isabella Edwards, Allison Elings, Brynlee Epperson, Caden Epperson, Hannah Ewen, Abe Friesen, Gabriel Gee, Angus Glennie, Peyton Hartford, T. J. Hickey, Tyler Icard, June LePage, Mitchel LePage, Kate Martin, Kate Maxwell, Megan Maxwell, McKenzi Milburn, Parker Miner, Brookelyn Ruckman, Lani Ruckman, Dashel Ruff, Hayley Stahl, Wylee Snapp, Jackson Swanz, Allie Uecker, Lily Vickers, Joel Warneke, Anna Welsh, Logan Welsh, Wyatt Wickens, Molly Yager and Royce Holzer | **PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN HALL**

ANNUAL MEETING 2025

FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



The Fergus Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting was June 5. | PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN HALL



General Manager Carson Sweeney speaks at the Annual Meeting. | PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN HALL



(L-R) Ryan Hall, MECA communications director, and Linemen Darek Dygert and Dan Rice talked at the Annual Meeting about what they experienced during their trip to Cocalitos, Guatemala, in February 2025 to complete an electrification project to bring reliable power to a remote mountain village for the first time. | PHOTO COURTESY OF DEEDEE ISAACS

IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$34.00 CREDIT

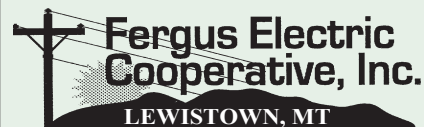
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number, and you will receive a \$34.00 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 319881, Account 19307
Account 379588, Account 180900
Account 90005, Account 368334**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Wade Stewart of Lewistown was last month's winner!

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Tyson Ruff	406-366-9830
Bret Ophus	406-366-7523
Bret Nelleremoe (Roundup).....	406-939-0636
Carson Sweeney	406-366-0971
Melanie Foran.....	406-462-5650
Scott Olson.....	406-366-5822
Dan Balster.....	406-366-0975

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Carson Sweeney.....General Manager

Bret Ophus.....Line Superintendent

Sally Horacek.....Office Manager

Janine Rife Didier.....Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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District 2:	Brett Maxwell, Lewistown, 538-9002
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District 4:	Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202
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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.