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The Belgrade Bull Cometh

Mural fundraiser hits mark

By Dennis Gaub, Staff Writer Dec 28, 2018



Keith Mainwaring holds a photograph of the Belgrade Bull, the subject of a mural he wants painted on the side of Montana Camp on Main Street. The Belgrade Bull is a famous in rodeo lore for being unrideable.

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Dennis Gaub

A project to commemorate a unique aspect of Belgrade's past moved closer to reality this week when local resident Keith Mainwaring announced he has raised enough money to create an outdoor mural depicting the Belgrade Bull.

"I have finished my fund raising. Next step is to finalize the image with Wendy Marquis, the artist," Mainwaring said in an email.

Early last summer, Mainwaring began his effort to raise \$4,000 to cover project costs. He visited local businesses and regularly set up a table outside stores to explain the project and obtain donations from residents. He also pitched the mural at local events such as the summer community market, Fall Festival and the Festival of Lights.

In a June 28, 2018, article in the Belgrade News, Mainwaring, a retired carpenter, said he first heard about the famed Holstein bull in the late 1950s when he was a ranch hand in Ennis.

"I was working with this old rancher, and he said, 'Keith, did you ever hear of the Belgrade Bull? He was a heckuva bull – he bucked off everybody who tried to ride him,' " Mainwaring recalled last summer.

The bull was dubbed "Corbett," a nickname derived from James J. "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, a boxer who won the world heavyweight title in 1892 with a legendary 21-round knockout of John L. Sullivan in New Orleans.

Annie Miller – whose living local descendants include Dean Miller and his sister, Mary Ellen Fitzgerald – raised the bull and sold him to Al and Pres Johnson in 1893. The bull reportedly was gentle when fenced, but he quickly gained a reputation among cowboys around Montana and elsewhere in the West as being unrideable.

Newspapers around Montana, on the West Coast and in the Midwest carried accounts of Corbett's saga. The bull was sold to a Wild West show that toured the United States. It went broke in Indiana, and Corbett was sold to a dairy farm in the Hoosier State in about 1915 and ended his life there.

The Belgrade Community Coalition is coordinating the mural project. It will involve having Marquis, a Belgrade-based artist, paint the bull on canvas. The painting will be given to SCS Wraps, a Bozeman firm that specializes in outdoor imaging projects. SCS will make a high-quality photo image and place that on vinyl. The vinyl version will be put on a 10-foot-by-20-foot metal sheet, which will be installed on the west wall of the Montana Camp antique store on Main Street.

Montana Camp owner Debbie Moro and BCC representatives plan to have a dedication ceremony to dedicate the mural when finished – when “it’s warm enough for a party,” Mainwaring said.