Candy: Eddy Gallagher is the curator of the Missoula Historical—

Ed Gallagher: It’s the Fort Missoula Historical Museum.

C: Okay. Fort Museum Historical, no.

EG: Not quite. Fort Missoula Historical Museum. We call it the Fort Missoula Historical Museum, which doesn’t mean that it is a museum of Fort Missoula, but it describes where we are, not what we are. It’s to avoid confusion. There’s another museum in town—the art museum [Missoula Art Museum]—and we’re quite often confused with that. So we named our museum the Fort Missoula Historical Museum.

C: How did the Museum get started?

EG: Well, it all started, actually, at least ten years ago. There were several people in town, when they closed down the museum at the University [University of Montana], there were several people very disappointed and interested and started a new one. Ross Toole was one, Dean Jones was another. Tried to find a building to house a historical museum. Tried to buy the Milwaukee Depot, and they wanted a lot of money for it. We tried to get people in town interested in it, and of course, no one could raise the money at the time. But this particular building that we’re in right now—the indoor museum—was the old commissary warehouse at Fort Missoula that served the soldiers when this post was active.

The way we got ahold of the building, or I should say the way that Museum started, started out as an idea after we weren’t able to get the Milwaukee Depot. We came up with the idea of having—if we could get the land—of having an entire historic park—frontier town, early day Missoula, an actual mining camp, an actual cow camp, an actual farm homestead. Excuse me. It was started by the Western Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society. We were trying to preserve some of the older buildings and historic buildings in and around Missoula, and in the mining camps adjacent to it. Some of the retired soldiers showed up at one of our meetings, handed us the deed to a noncommissioned officers quarters that was at Fort Missoula, which we hadn’t even seen or heard of before hardly. But we came out and looked at it, and it was a fine log building but it happened to have a big brick warehouse right near it and lots and lots of land that was in the process of being turned over from military to the county. So right away we saw our chance and pursued it for several years. Finally persuaded the county to turn it over to us—to the former museum board, then, separate from the Western Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society.
C: So this building and the officer's quarters is right out...is the small log building right outside, right here.

EG: Right, that's right. We hope to refurnish that building just as it would have been, say in the 19...or 1890s when it was in active use. Actually, Candy, anywhere from...This fort started in 1877. Next July 3 will be the 100th anniversary. But the building there dates about, oh, somewhere in the [18]90s. There's some discussion on exactly how old it is, and we're unable to verify it to pinpoint the exact date. But the post was active, actually, from 1877 clear up until after World War Two, so the building saw use from the time it was built up until just a few years back.

C: Are you funded by the city?

EG: By the county. At first, the land was turned over to the city but not the buildings. The log building—the Ghost Town Preservation Society owned it. Then the city turned the land over the county and the Ghost Town Preservation Society has or will turn the building over the county when its refurnished.

C: Excuse me for stopping you, but that might make the mic cut out.

EG: Oh, I see. I'm nervous, okay.

C: You don't have to be nervous. We're all friends.

EG: Okay.

C: Are you happy with the buildings and the location?

EG: Yes. It was made to order. It couldn't be better. Even if we could have been able to get the Milwaukee Depot—and it still would be nice to save it because it is a beautiful structure—but out here we have plenty of parking space, plenty of room. Very happy. We have a river right across from us. I think it's ideal. It's made to order for us.

C: So I noticed as I was driving in there's a recreation area. Is that part of the Missoula Museum, Historical Museum?

EG: Is this out here on South Avenue?

C: Yeah. As I was driving in through the Fort way.

EG: That is the county, a county park. But in this museum complex—in this 28 acres—we will have a small park for the people who come out to look at the Museum. Be picnic tables and places for the kids to play and so on.
C: Oh, that’ll be nice. I noticed that you have quite a few displays out around the grounds. Do you have plans for a lot more of these? Moving in more building and—

EG: Oh yes, I already have about a dozen buildings that have been given over to the Museum that we’re unable to move yet because of lack of funds and equipment.

C: What about artifacts? Have you had a lot of those given to the Museum?

EG: Yes, the people have been very good.

C: I noticed you’re redoing displays and, maybe not redoing, maybe just freshly creating them, but I noticed there’s a lot of work going on out here. What are your plans for the main building?

EG: Well, this front gallery of the main building will be a changing gallery. It’ll change on the average of every two months, and we’re in the process of doing that now. We took down a Christmas show over the weekend, and we’re putting up another one. The rest of the building will be more or less permanent. Although, it won’t be permanent in the sense that we will never add to it or change it around, but it won’t be rotated every two months. So that way we hope to keep the thing fresh and interesting, and as we get newer, more colorful artifacts for either area, we will incorporate them into the displays.

C: You cover all aspects of Missoula since the first Indians were here?

EG: Yes, actually we have a—through the courtesy of Dr. Malouf in the Anthropology Department at the University—we have a display on early Indian life in Western Montana. [door opens] It’s hard to talk about the Missoula area without including a lot of Western Montana—for that matter, a lot of American Northwest. The noise that you just heard is Jeff opening the door—our director opening the door of the safe that we got from there from Ed Thomas of the Dickson-Thomas Agency. If you’ll notice above the door there it says Joseph M. Dixon. Very valuable piece, and we really wanted to thank Mr. Thomas for donating it.

C: Yeah, it’s beautiful.

EG: We know that he could have sold it for quite a bit of money, but he chose to donate it instead. The people of Missoula have been very good.

C: Have they been greatly interested in coming out? How was your turnout over the summer?

EG: It’s been very good.

C: I notice there’s a few people out here today, even as cold as it is.

Ed Gallagher Interview, OH 198-001, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
EG: Yes. They have been trickling in pretty steady.

C: Good. What...Maybe we should just open up with how you see the Museum and how you'd like to see it develop.

EG: Okay. [pauses] Well, naturally we'd like to see this museum be one of the finest museums in the entire world, but that's quite a while in the future. Right now we'd settle for heating and lights.

C: That brings us to the needs of the Museum. And that's one of the big needs?

EG: Yes, actually we're funded by the county, and I think that our budget next year will take care of that. We have a lot of problems concerning money, which means manpower. With money, you can get the manpower and the machinery. So far we've had to borrow manpower and machinery. The Army Reserve in the National Guard, as well as a lot of the local ranchers and businessmen, have been awful good to us, but it's pretty hard to coordinate a crew of volunteers with the loan of the machine. So a man will call us on Saturday afternoon and say you can have my truck for four hours this afternoon, and we have no manpower and vice versa. So actually, I guess you'd say money one is one of our biggest problems. Which I'm sure is a problem everywhere with anything you undertake.

What we see in the immediate future for the Museum is right now getting this building that we're in—this old commissary warehouse—in shape. Redo the wiring and put in a better heating system. As you can see, right now we're just using wood stoves, and we have this old wiring that's been here since the building was built. At the same time that we're doing that, we're trying to keep the Museum open to the public because we feel that the public deserves it and also to stimulate interest in the Museum. So you can see our problems. Like out there in the other room, we have displays up, and at the same time trying to build. But I would like to see, in the next year, the heating and light in and that main gallery in shape.

Then, at the same time of course, Candy, you can see out here we're working on the buildings of our various areas. I don't know if I explained those to you adequately. We have 28 acres. This will be our indoor museum. It's something like six or seven basic areas, which means basic happenings that happened that shaped western Montana. Of course, starting out right here with this old NCO [non-commissioned officers] cabin, that will have a military display in there. That'll be the, unfortunately, all that's left of the old military buildings on the Fort.

C: Oh, is that right? That's the only one.

EG: I might add something, I've been looking...I've heard that there was an old done what's called a sutler saloon just off the post—an old log cabin. I found several log cabins just off the post on Reserve and on South, and I haven't found anyone who can verify where this old saloon
was. If it does still exist and I could get the cabin, of course, I'd like to move it in. We have some military artifacts there.

Then our next area will be farming. This log building out here came from Miller Creek. It was an old homestead cabin, and we will add to that as we go with the barns, chicken house, garden, and so on, and farm machinery. To make it so that we can actually farm the land with the machinery we have, so it'll be just a miniature farm. So that when you walked into that area you'll be in a farm.

C: Oh, that's a good idea!

EG: We also plan to have a small mining camp with the sluice boxes, the miners’ cabin—all the artifacts that go with it—gold pans, picks, possibly a stamp mill. We have a hydraulic mining nozzle and a few mining tools now so that we can demonstrate exactly how...basically how a mining was done. Everything from the simplest of panning with a gold pan to hydraulicing it off the mountainside with water and stamping it with an ore crusher—a stamp mill is a thing that crushes the ore. Of course, we won't get into the mining as near as extensively as Butte has, but there was still a lot of mining in the area so we have to illustrate that.

Our next area will be the trapper’s cabin, complete with traps, snowshoes, so on and so forth. Adjacent to that, then, on the outskirts we’ll have our frontier town about of 1890—anywhere from, say, 1860 on up to 1890.

C: Will that town be a replica of Missoula at that period?

EG: No it will be a replica of the typical frontier town. By that, I mean a mining camp or anything that might have sprung up and could have either grown into a town like Missoula, as did Hell Gate out here in Mullan Road, or something that started out as a mining camp and then became a ghost town like Red Lion, Garnet, or something like that. But we want to keep it so that it could conceivably...everything in the town could work. You can walk into the print shop and print, walk into to the blacksmith’s shop and shoe a horse, and so on.

Adjacent to that there's one ethnic group that hasn't had much attention because they vanished without leaving much trace, and that was the Chinese. Montana, especially western Montana, had thousands of Chinese. So on the outskirts of our frontier town, between that and the trapper’s cabin, we’ll have a small Chinese settlement. The frontier town—I already have a livery stable, about six cabins, to be moved in and numerous artifacts that we have in storage now and more that we're acquiring that will be incorporated into the frontier town. There's already an old printing press set up in the print shop in The Missoulian office. That building, by the way, is an exact replica of what the early Missoulian office looked like. Actually not an office, the entire print shop. We're trying to avoid replicas if possible. We're trying to get the authentic building. If that building will be destroyed on its location, we will move it in. If it can be possibly preserved on its location, we choose to leave it there. But it’s...with our population
grows and industry and everything and vandalism, it's becoming more and more difficult to preserve an historic building on location. The people have been more than willing to donate them to the Museum. For one thing, I suppose, to get rid of the headache of having to worry about it. Another thing, when they come down here and look and hear our plans, they become interested in it and like to be a part of it.

Then, Candy, the other major area will be the timber industry. We have a lookout tower that we haven't been able to haul in yet. We have a couple of ranger's cabins. We already have on the site a lookout cabin. It was just a cabin where the man lived with his fire tools, and for a lookout, he just climbed a tree. But we'll move that over in the timber area. Then our logging area, we'll hope to have an entire logging camp, complete with horse barns, bunkhouse, and small sawmill set up on the outskirts of that. Which will take us into the 1920 Missoula town. As you can see we already have a streetcar, a fire engine, a firehouse. We moved in a nice house just this fall.

C: This is all on the south portion. Is that the south portion?

EG: Yes, yes. Now all of these areas, by the way...Of course, we'll have an area with to illustrate various machinery. Obviously, the homesteader or farmer didn't have one of every kind of farm machinery made, so we'll use this area here to illustrate various types of farm machinery. Also, possibly adjacent to some other areas, we might have to do the same thing. But in the 1920 Missoula town, it'll be about a city block, and we hope to illustrate not what downtown Missoula looked like in 1920, but what the outlying portion—the new portion of Missoula—looked like as it moved further on the outskirts. So we'll have a small drug store, a small general store, and so on. Also we hope to have those functional, so that you can walk in the drugstore at least on a...sometimes during the summer when we have a celebration have everything working so you can walk in the drugstore and have an ice-cream cone, walk in the barber shop, get your haircuts and so on.

C: That sounds really fun.

EG: Well, it sounds like it's a lot of work. It sounds like a pretty far-fetched dream, and some years ago when there were four or five of us sitting around at a Ghost Town meeting, dreaming about it, we were pretty exuberant at the time. But there were people then that said it's absolutely impossible, so you might say we really lucked out. One of the key things was the Ghost Town Society getting together and hatching the plan, but the major thing was when the retired officers came out, gave us the deed to that one cabin, and we came out and looked at it. Well, you remember, you helped us with it when we were going around building little dioramas trying to show the public what it could be like. By the way, that was a very successful campaign. The questionnaires came in overwhelmingly—about 99.9 percent—in favor of the plan.

C: Good. The fact that you had the cabin donated, then did you go out and buy the deed for the other 28 acres, or was that contributed?
EB: No, we didn't have to buy the 28 acres. See, when the cabin was donated, here we were stuck with a cabin on land that we didn't own and nowhere to put it. But we started looking into the land situation. We found that it belonged to the army, but the army was in the process...It was used by the Forest Service at the time, but the army was in the process of liquidating a lot of the land. Under a surplus land act or something, they had to get rid of it. So they turned it over to the county—several hundred acres. As you can see now, there's a ball park on part of it, the high school has part of it, but we jumped right in and lobbied to get the land in this area where our building was and where this brick building is that we could use for the inside museum.

C: So it couldn't have happened any better.

EG: No, really. It was a combination of a lot of dreaming and a lot of good luck and a lot of hard work, I guess. Which, I guess, is the culmination to do anything. [laughs]

C: Do you feel that all the work that's gone into it is going to pay off now in the future?

EG: Oh really, it's already paid off. When I look back, of the disappointments we had and the people who told us it was impossible, and then...Being here every day I don't notice it as much, but people that five or six years ago thought it was impossible come out, they're really overwhelmed, and it really does our hearts good. I think it was worth it, and I think in the long run it'll be worth far more to the community as a whole than it is right now. I could give you some rough statistics on it, and that is about ten years ago I was down in Carson City, Nevada, looking at museums when we were trying to promote a museum in Missoula. The average tourist coming into Nevada spent 25 dollars a day. I was at a meeting over in Helena last month. The figure in Montana is up to something like 43 dollars a day, so if you have anything of interest to hold a tourist in town for another day—and that means man, woman, and child—will spend on the average of, what did I say, 43 or 34 dollars. I forget the exact figure but it's between 30 and 40 dollars a day. This one particular curator at the meeting from a small museum, I believe it was...well, in Montana. Anyhow, there were 40,000 people stopped at that museum last year. And that was a small museum. So 40,000 times 30 dollars is quite a lot of money. And this was a small museum. Since Missoula is one of the largest cities in the state, I think that in years to come, if we build up our entire historic complex, that we can figure on 100,000 people stopping at our museum.

C: Is there a fee to enter the Museum?

EG: No. [coughs] Excuse me, Candy. No, there isn't.

C: That’s all right. Do you want to go get a drink?

EG: Yeah, maybe I better.
C: I noticed that you have a lot of books and things in the office here. Are these all available to people to come in and look something up?

EG: Yes, they are. This small bookstore here is operated by an organization that just started last winter called the Friends of the Museum. They'll sell these books and anything pertaining to Western history in the line of the literature, artwork, and so on.

C: Then some of the funds will go to the Museum?

EG: Yes, all of the funds above the expenses go to the operation of the Museum.

C: Other than money, what problems have you had with the Museum?

RG: Manpower has been one of our problems. We haven't been able to get some work, steady help. We had a SETA (?) crew until they cut it off, and other than that there haven't been really any major problems. The public support has been overwhelming. That Fourth of July picnic that we had, we had between 10 and 20,000 people here, and they were all very good. One thing that I noticed was that the day after the Fourth of July, I went around the yards, and I picked up maybe half a dozen cans in paper plates and that was it. It was really nice for that many people to have that much interest and consideration. So we've had no problem with the people of Missoula.

We do have to try to create more money raising activities. We're funded by the county, but it isn't near enough to do all that we have to do. I feel a great urgency to collect a lot of these artifacts right now because a lot of them are leaving the country really rapidly, which means that we need transportation, loading equipment, and so on. Again, the people have been good in lending.

C: Would you like to see more people do volunteer work for the Museum?

EG: Yes, indeed. Yes, we can use all the help we can possibly get.

C: You can use all the artifacts...If people don't want to give them to the Museum, they can just put them on loan, is this correct?

EG: Only in the temporary gallery—for the duration of the two months. We've made it a policy not to take anything on permanent loan, or in the permanent part of the Museum, well, for the obvious reason that you get a display build up and plan on leaving it a year or so, and someone might come in and take the major part of it. So we've have to limit the lending to the temporary exhibits.
We also need researchers. That's one thing that I'd like to do a lot more of myself but just can't get a way to do it. As you can see out here, in between our farm and our frontier town, there's a schoolhouse in the process of being reconstructed. That was the Grant Creek School. It was built, they say, about the turn of the century—1890 or in early 1900. Was built by Mr. Rankin. His daughters Jeannette and Harriet went to school there. Jeanette...or Harriet taught school there. Jeannette, of course, was our first lady congresswoman. So it's quite a historic building, and we're trying to do research on that, as well as do research on, well, on Fort Missoula itself. There's never been a complete history written of Fort Missoula. We know that it was founded by, or built by Captain Rawn, the first building built in 1877. But unfortunately, a lot of the documents were lost, and I'd like to see some scholar get on that subject. I'd like to see someone do more work on the businesses in early-day Missoula. So we have plenty of work to do and it...Everything from packing boards like that guys doing right over there to—

[Break in audio]

EG: Where are you at now?

C: Getting closer to the end. [laughs] Is there anything else you want to say about the, you know, the volunteer work people could do?

EG: Well, yes. As I started to say we need people to do research, we need people to type up the research after it is compiled, edit it. We need people to just do hammering and nailing, sawing for us. We need people as public relations officers to go around and inform the public what we're doing, especially on special projects. Like, whatever their pet project might be. They might have the expertise in early-day drug stores. Whatever their field is. There's a place for everyone, anyone who wants to work.

Go ahead, Candy.

C: Well, I was just going to say that it seemed like this would be a really good thing for some of the schools to do for maybe some of their civic projects.

EG: We have had some help from the schools, and they've been very good. Again, it's one of our problems is that we're still somewhat remote, and especially with the school kids, it's quite a chore to round them up, bus them out here for an hour or two of work, and then get them back again. But they have been very helpful.

I guess that should about cover it, Candy?

C: There's one other thing I want—

[End Side A]
C: As far as the Museum being a part of the community, how do you feel about the community and museum?

EG: How do you mean?

C: Do you see the Museum as growing with the community?

EG: Oh yes, indeed! Yes. In fact, you asked when we would have it finished or what our goals are. I don't think a museum can ever be finished, because history goes on. I mentioned that we're working on a 1920 town. If we had the land and the time and the effort, we would like to continue on in years to come into the next era. The '30s—the Depression—and so on and so. I think that it could indeed grow with a community. In fact, I think that it would really have to to be a real fine museum that we would like it to be.

C: I know you said you were going to have a farm. Now it's the farm going to take into account the big boom in orchards that was here around the '30s, I think it was?

EG: Well, we don't have room outside to do that yet. As you know, orchards take quite a while, but in our permanent gallery there we do have a display on the apple boom, as they called it. I'm working on a display now of the sugar beet industry—the sugar factory—that was a very important part of Missoula and the surrounding valleys. So we can't represent every phase of farming outside with the land we have, so in each area we're going to try to portray the typical. Like the typical small farm, the typical small cow camp, the typical lumber camp, the typical frontier town. What we lack on the outside areas, try to fill up on the inside with smaller displays.

C: Okay, there's one question I want to ask you...Whoops, excuse me. That doesn't really have to pertain to the Museum, but pertains more to you and your personal life. Just wanted to know how your work fits into your life.

EG: Well, it fits in really good, because I've always been interested in history and in older artifacts. I was raised on a little farm up in the Flathead, and of course, there was all sorts of colorful characters there. Old stage drivers, Indians who had made the trek from the Bitterroot, trappers, and almost any kind of a person you could imagine. It stimulated my interest at a pretty early age. Then when I left home, I went out working on cow ranches and logging camps and so on, and I got to talk to a lot the old-timers and get, really, a feeling for their way of life. I was really anxious to preserve it in any way that I could. So years ago when we started this Ghost Town Preservation Club [Society] and came up with the idea of the Museum, I never even dared dream that we would get the opportunity that we've had. So it really has fit in. It's an opportunity to do the kind of work that I like. Enough hard physical labor to keep it
interesting, and enough book work to keep it fun. And enough prowling around old buildings and talking to old timers to really make it nice. So it's really been fine.

C: You feel pretty satisfied, then, with your job.

EG: Yes, ma'am, I sure do good. And the people have been very nice to me.

There's one thing I wanted to tell you, Candy, on these particular areas that I mentioned. Now, I forgot to mention this a while back. It won't be just a conglomerate. See those berms of dirt that we're starting over here, like back of the schoolhouse? Now those will all be planted with the appropriate shrubbery—trees and so on. So around the homestead cabin, we'll have, of course, few apple trees, and on the dirt cottonwood trees and shade tree sand so on. So that when you're in that little farm, especially after the trees grow up, you'll be in a miniature valley, so that you won't see anything but the farm when you're there. When you're in the logging camp, which it will be planted with the appropriate trees again—ponderosa pine, Doug Fir [Douglas Fir], and so on, the kind that are typical to the area—you won't see anything but a miniature logging camp and a clearing in the forest. And so on.

C: Boy, it sounds wonderful. So this has taking an awful lot of long-range planning.

EG: Yes. Which means we'll have to enlist the aid of a lot of experts from the Forestry Department at the University, various nurseries, and so on.

C: Well, thank you very much for talking to me.

EG: Well, thank you, Candy. It's been a pleasure.

[End of Interview]