



*Anne McDonnell  
A Tribute*

*Appreciation for a quarter-century of dedicated historical effort.*

**The New Historical Society of Montana, a permanent memorial to a quarter-century of devoted service by Anne McDonnell. From an original painting by Ross Pollock.**

In the preface to Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Montana High, Wide and Handsome* there appears this statement: "And no one who writes, or even reads, Montana history can adequately tell what he owes to Mrs. Anne McDonnell, assistant librarian of the State Historical Society Library in the Capitol. I can only add my thanks to those of other students who regard her with affection as a friend as well as the ultimate authority."

Eleanor Banks in *Wandersong* wrote of Anne McDonnell: "She is the untiring friend of all who seek to learn the story of her great state God bless her."

In perhaps twenty books, Anne McDonnell is thus praised. Yet few people read "acknowledgements" and few of those who do know how genuinely meant are the accolades to Anne McDonnell. The fact is, Anne McDonnell knows more about Montana's history than any living person. But it is not simply a matter of knowing facts. She has that rare ability to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. It is an ability that many a professional historian lacks.

Now, after a quarter-century on the job, Anne McDonnell has retired. During the course of her tenure she was the Historical Society. Today it is a research center of consequence, and this is the

case largely because of her wisdom and competence. In the last three years, what with a new building, a Russell collection, and (at long last) an adequate budget, the Society has begun to attract considerable attention. Those of us presently on the staff would like to point out that there still would be no Society worth mentioning had Anne McDonnell not built well and solidly.

Anne McDonnell will be at work with us again before long. At least, we're sure enough of it to have reserved a desk for her and to assure her friends that we have no intention of letting her get away. The other day we got a letter as a consequence of having got mixed up on a subscription to this magazine. The writer was justifiably irritated. He ended his letter by saying: "well, no doubt you're doing the best you can, but Anne McDonnell must be out of town." She was.

We don't intend to give a testimonial dinner at which we present a gold watch to Anne. She knows how we feel about her and a gold watch wouldn't express it. But if there is substance to what the Historical Society is doing now, Anne McDonnell stands behind it—and she always will.