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### **Indian Ledger Art Exhibit Opens at the Bair Museum in May**

This summer, the Bair Museum will host an exhibition of selected work from the Charles H. Barstow Collection of Crow and Gros Ventre Indian Ledger Art from Montana State University Billings Library of works on paper. The 20 drawings from this remarkable collection are an intriguing look at the tribal history and traditions of the last decade of the nineteenth century. The exhibition will be on display from May 13 to August 11, 2013.

The American Indian tribes of the Northern Plains were confined to reservations in the last part of the nineteenth century. Many turned to creating pictorial art as a means to preserve and pass on their history and heritage. They used manufactured materials on hand, including pencils and ink, and paper torn from ledger books, school notebooks and office forms.

Major Charles Barstow was chief clerk for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Crow Agency from 1879 to 1897. Barstow provided Indian warriors materials and encouraged them paint and draw. The ledger drawings mimic the function of traditional buffalo hide painting – narrative of social status, youthful adventure from capturing horses and “counting coups” to dancing and courtship.

Barstow’s collection of 66 drawings was rediscovered in 1930 in Roundup, Montana, and came to MSU-through the efforts of Ruthann Wilbur Hines.

*“Surviving from a period of tremendous change, the ledger drawings of the Barstow Collection are characterized by great immediacy, intimacy and even urgency of expression. They are tinged with romance and nostalgia, but also suffused with fierce pride and a spirit of resilience.”* Gordon McConnell

The Bair Art Museum also provides a unique close-up look at the Bair family’s Native American collection and a user-friendly touch screen allows everyone to explore the collection’s objects.

In May, the Bair Museum will be open Saturdays and Sundays (weekends only) from 10 am to 5 pm. Starting Memorial Day, May 31, the museum will be open 7 days a week through Labor Day.

#### Caption

Drawing of Crow War Dancers by Barney, 1897, pencil, colored pencil and crayon on paper, 7 5/8 inches x 9 5/8 inches. Charles H. Barstow Collection, Special Collections, Montana State University Billings Library