



THE MONTANA HISTORY FOUNDATION

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An exhibit highlighting the life and legacy of Basque immigrant and Montana rancher John Etchart opens this week in Helena. The temporary exhibit will be on display in the Goodkind Block Partners Building from August 28th-September 6th and then at the City-County Building from September 6th-30th.

The exhibit is based on the research of Dr. Iker Saitua, a postdoctoral fellow in history at the University of California-Riverside. Dr. Saitua is also the author of *Basque Immigrants and Nevada's Sheep Industry: Geopolitics and the Making of an Agricultural Workforce*.

John Etchart, the focus of the exhibit, came to the United States at the age of 18 from his home in Aldude in the Basque Country of southern France. Etchart originally moved to California, where his brother had immigrated several years prior. The two worked on a sheep ranch in the San Fernando Valley, but eventually moved to Nevada to begin their own sheep operation.

In 1910, Etchart found himself in Montana and set up his own sheep grazing business in Valley County. It was there that he cemented his place in the industry, continuing to accumulate land and grow his operation, eventually becoming the county's largest sheep operation. Etchart became a noted member of his community and was known as a prominent livestockman in the American West.

The exhibit will display in two distinct parts. The first will share objects and artifacts of Etchart's related to ranching in Montana and the American West. The second part includes informative banners on Etchart's life, starting from his early years in the Basque Country through his time in northeastern Montana.

The exhibit is sponsored by The Montana History Foundation and supported by the Department of History at Carroll College and the Etchart family. For more information, please contact Dr. Iker Saitua at (951) 897-0464.

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