Wilson Dippo, Class of 2012

I used the Nyhus Travel Grant to visit the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library at the University of Montana, Missoula. Under Professor Strother Roberts, I completed an advanced independent study that examined Montana’s American Indian Tribes. Specifically I looked at the first fifty years of reservation life for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai on the Flathead Reservation in Northern Montana. My project traced the ways in which American Indians exerted their agency despite national policy that effectively stripped them of their autonomy. I examined hunting, general allotment, and bison ranching on the Flathead Reservation.

Unexpectedly the bison from the reservation became the nucleus for the herds today in Yellowstone National Park as well as both the Canadian and United States National Bison Herds. The Mansfield Library houses primary documents including correspondence, newspapers, photographs, and government records that cannot be found anywhere else. Of these materials, the records relating to the death of deputy State Game Warden Charles Peyton in 1908 were exceptionally interesting. Peyton confronted a Pend d’Oreille Indian hunting party in at least two different occasions, and in a firefight, the details of which are murky at best, Peyton and three Pend d’Oreille Indians died. While the national press at the time generally reported that Peyton had acted in self-defense, records of the investigation suggest that the reverse may have been the case.

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Faculty Mentor: Strother Roberts