

Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area and partners seek historical stories and documents

MT. PLEASANT, Utah — The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA*), in conjunction with two of its anchor partners, is asking people to share their stories and documents of pioneer heritage from the central and southern Utah area.

Since the MPNHA's inception five years ago, it has worked with communities and other partners to provide venues where the area's rich heritage can be kept and shared.

Two such venues are nearing readiness: The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Institute, and the Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Center and Gardens.

As part of their final preparations, they are seeking stories and historical documents to be shared and preserved. Doing so furthers the mission of the MPNHA in two important ways, said Monte Bona, executive director of the MPNHA.

"Among the goals of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area are, one, to enable communities to appreciate and tell the story of the pioneers, their settlements, and their interaction with the land; and two, to provide ways for families and others to share stories from their own heritage," Bona said.

The Heritage Institute and the Heritage Center/Gardens will do exactly that.

"Their work is vital to the Heritage Area's mission to preserve and interpret the heritage of the pioneers," Bona said.

They, partnering with the MPNHA, are asking for the public's help.

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Mormon Pioneer Institute

The Mormon Pioneer Institute is the academic center of the MPNHA, and will be housed on the campus of Snow College in Ephraim.

With an academic focus, it is interested primarily in documented history — letters, personal written histories, transcribed oral histories, pictures, newspaper clippings, etc. — “Mainly, anything of a historical nature that is on a piece of paper,” says Roger Baker, the institute’s director.

The Institute will serve as a repository for such documents, indexing them and preserving them while at the same time making them available for viewing and research.

As Baker traveled through the Heritage Area while the institute was under development, he met many people who had such records.

“They want people to read their histories,” Baker said. “But at the same time, they don’t want to let those histories out of their hands.”

The solution, Baker said, is to have the documents digitally scanned, making copies that will be available to the public while leaving the originals in the safekeeping of owners.

The institute is not ready for scanning yet, while a few final things are put in place. But it’s not too early for people to know what’s happening, to begin thinking about making their documents available for scanning, and then to contact the institute with their interest.

Initially, scanning will be done at Snow College, but scanning will also eventually be done in various communities, either in partnership with communities or libraries, or during occasional tours to communities by institute staff.

When people scan their documents, Baker said, the institute will give them their own copy of the digital image.

“The payoff is that now your history is there for everybody to read, *and* you’ll have a copy yourself so you can give it to your family or distribute it however you want,” he said.

For more information, or to sign up to have documents scanned, contact Baker by email at roger.baker@snow.edu, or by phone at (435) 340-0961.

Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Center and Gardens

The Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Center and Gardens in Manti is to be the major interpretive site for the northern end of the MPNHA.

“The pioneers that settled central Utah were quite an amazing group, quite resourceful and successful,” said Shannon Miller, whose non-profit Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Association has spearheaded the project.

Through pioneer stories passed down through generations, the center and gardens will answer why and how those pioneers achieved so much.

“The answer we came up with, the reasons they were successful, were these values: faith, education, cooperation and industry,” Miller said.

Miller and her association are looking for stories that exemplify those characteristics (such as the story of an Ephraim man who walked 7 miles to Manti each day, and 7 miles back home, to work on the Manti LDS Temple during its construction — an example of both faith and industry, Miller said).

The stories will be summarized and displayed throughout the center and garden.

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“There might be really cool stories out there that we just aren’t aware of. Our appeal is to interested family members that might be able to share their own family stories,” Miller said.

“If people enjoy telling their story, or bragging about their relative, or teaching their children about their ancestor — if people like to hear it, if people think it’s a cool story, then we probably will too,” Miller said. “It doesn’t have to be a faith-promoting story. They don’t have to worry about judging it. If it’s interesting to them and important to their family, then we would love to read it.”

Miller asks that stories be written (about one page) and submitted by Jan. 15, 2012.

Stories may be submitted by email to admin@pioneerheritagecenter.org, or by regular mail to Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Association, P.O. Box 195, Manti, UT 84642.

For more information, contact Miller at (801) 898-9933.

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*The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area (MPNHA) is a federally designated area of central and southern Utah running along the beautiful and historic U.S. Highway 89—including the scenic by-ways of Utah state routes 12 and 24 which both intersect with U.S. 89 and, together, form the MPNHA’s Boulder Loop. The area includes the counties of Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane.

The Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance is the local coordinating entity of the MPNHA and receives annual funding from the National Park Service. Its purpose is to preserve, tell and interpret the stories, history and heritage of the area, and to promote its culture and value.

www.mormonpioneerheritage.org