

MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (MPNHA)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 24, 2025



MPNHA Supports Broad Range of Community Projects Across Central Utah in 2024

The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) has been a driving force behind numerous community improvement projects in Central Utah over the past year. Monte Bona, director of MPNHA, says, “In keeping with our management plan approved by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, we continue to develop projects and programs with our partners at the grassroots level.”

The MPNHA helps communities preserve their history and develop cultural and recreational resources by providing funding, connecting project managers with other funding sources like grants and foundations, and facilitating in-kind work contributions. Since its designation as a National Heritage Area, MPNHA has successfully leveraged about \$5 million in federal funds into \$67 million in projects, making it one of the most impactful heritage areas in the country.

Over 2024, the MPNHA has supported a wide range of projects, from historic building restorations to beautification efforts, all aimed at preserving Central Utah’s unique heritage. Below are highlights of some of the projects:

Fountain Green DUP Museum Upgrade

The historic Fountain Green Bishop’s Storehouse, now a museum operated by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers (DUP), received significant upgrades this year. The \$18,000 project—funded with \$9,200 from MPNHA and \$8,800 from Fountain Green—focused on ensuring the preservation of invaluable pioneer artifacts housed in the museum.

Upgrades included overhauling heating and cooling systems to maintain climate control for artifact preservation, repairing ceilings, remodeling the bathroom, restoring original baseboards, upgrading fire alarms, and repairing brickwork to improve structural integrity. Additionally, gutters were improved to prevent water damage. These changes will help the museum continue to serve as an educational resource for future generations.



Monroe School Restoration Project

The Greystone Monroe School, built in 1887, is undergoing a \$350,000 restoration. The project includes structural repairs, conservation of historical elements, and accessibility updates to bring the building up to modern standards while preserving its original charm.

MPNHA contributed \$60,000 to the project, with the remainder coming from local matches. Once completed, the school will serve as a community hub for educational programs and cultural events, preserving its historic role in the Monroe community.

Moroni Cannery Renovation

In Moroni, the 1945 Cannery building, which later served as the city shop, is being transformed into a fine art studio. This \$24,000 project—split equally between MPNHA and local matching funds—includes installing plumbing and a bathroom, replacing exterior doors, and adding a 6-foot privacy fence.



The project also involves connecting the building to city water and sewer systems and upgrading heating and electrical systems. These changes will ensure the building's functionality while preserving its historical character.

Mt. Pleasant Equestrian Center Expansion

The Cleone Peterson Eccles Equestrian Center in Mt. Pleasant is expanding its infrastructure to support larger events and improve spectator experiences. This \$600,000 project, with \$40,000 from MPNHA and \$300,000 from the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity, includes new bleachers for 800 spectators, upgraded panels and gates, and groundwork for arenas.

Concrete foundations, gravel surfaces, and arena sand will enhance functionality and competition quality. These improvements aim to establish the center as a premier destination for equestrian events in Utah.



Panguitch Tree Removal for Historic Preservation

A large, dying tree that posed a danger to the Panguitch DUP Museum and its visitors was removed in a \$2,000 project. MPNHA contributed \$1,000, with Panguitch providing the remainder. This small but essential project highlights MPNHA's commitment to preserving historic sites and ensuring public safety.

Hanksville Rodeo Arena Restoration

Hanksville's historic rodeo arena, once frequented by Butch Cassidy, is being restored as part of a \$20,000 project. MPNHA and local contributions each provided \$10,000 to repair gates, corrals, and bucking chutes, ensuring the arena remains a vital community gathering spot and preserves its rodeo traditions.

Marysville Mercantile Restoration

Justin and Misti Sutherland are restoring the historic Marysville Mercantile Building to create a candy and ice cream shop. This \$75,000 project, with \$37,500 from MPNHA and the rest from the Sutherlands, will revitalize the building and contribute to the town's tourism and economy. The project honors local history by incorporating the Sweets Chocolate brand, a nod to Marysville's heritage.

Mt. Pleasant Train Depot Infrastructure Project

The historic Denver Rio Grande Railroad Depot in Mt. Pleasant is undergoing a \$41,212 infrastructure upgrade. The depot serves as a trailhead for the heritage trail linking Mt. Pleasant and Spring City.

Improvements include connecting the depot to the municipal sewer system, replacing an outdated septic tank, and updating electrical systems. These upgrades ensure the depot remains a vital part of the area's railroad history and tourism efforts.

Discovery Road Series



The award-winning TV series Discovery Road, hosted by James Nelson, continues to showcase the MPNHA region's history and culture. The series, which airs nationally through NETA, features storytelling, music, and interviews to bring Utah's heritage to life.

The \$72,000 project, funded with \$36,000 from MPNHA and matching funds, covers research, writing, and production. New episodes are available on the MPNHA website and Utah Education Network.

Big Rock Candy Mountain Railroad Project

At Big Rock Candy Mountain, a \$50,000 project is underway to highlight the historical importance of railroads in the region. Supported by a \$25,000 grant from MPNHA and matching funds, the project includes interpretive elements to engage visitors and connect them to the area's cultural heritage.

Piute County Courthouse Restoration

The 1903 Piute County Courthouse in Junction is undergoing a \$62,000 façade restoration, with \$26,000 from MPNHA and the rest from local contributions. The project will preserve the building's Edwardian architectural style and ensure compliance with historic preservation standards.

Mt. Pleasant Main Street Program

A \$20,000 initiative to revitalize Mt. Pleasant's historic commercial district is underway. Funded equally by MPNHA and the Utah Main Street Program, the project focuses on enhancing economic vitality while preserving historic character.

Fairview Museum History Project

The Fairview Museum is leading a \$36,500 initiative to digitize historical photos, journals, and documents and record oral histories. With \$18,250 from MPNHA, the project aims to preserve Sanpete County's pioneer heritage and connect past and present generations.

Wasatch Academy Craighead Building Modernization

The 1938 Craighead Building at Wasatch Academy is undergoing a \$40,000 electrical upgrade, funded equally by MPNHA and local contributions. The project will improve safety and functionality while preserving the building's historic integrity.



Panguitch Floral Project

Panguitch's Main Street is being beautified with flowerpots and decorative brackets as part of an \$8,000 project. MPNHA provided \$4,000, with matching funds covering the remainder. The project enhances the street's historic charm for both residents and visitors.

Kanab Main Street Plaza Project

A \$50,000 project in Kanab aims to revitalize downtown with a new plaza for heritage events and community gatherings. MPNHA and local contributions each provided \$25,000. Planned upgrades include lighting, speaker outlets, and decorative features.

Salina DUP Cabin Accessibility Project

The DUP cabin at Miss Mary's Museum in Salina is receiving accessibility upgrades, including electrical service and a sidewalk, as part of a \$7,450 project. MPNHA contributed \$3,725, with the rest from local funds.

Wayne County Heritage and Accessibility Project

Wayne County is improving its historical and recreational infrastructure with a \$25,000 project, supported by a \$12,500 grant from MPNHA. Enhancements include electrical upgrades at Allred Point Pavilion and restoration work on the Boulder Mountain Wildcat Trail, with interpretive signage to highlight the area's history.

MPNHA's Impact and Future Plans

In addition to these projects, MPNHA leveraged \$500,000 in federal funds into \$2 million for eight out-of-county initiatives in communities like Kanab, Panguitch, and Marysville. To prepare for additional opportunities, MPNHA has set aside \$60,000 from this year's budget for future projects.

All ongoing projects must be completed by September 2026. Bona emphasized the importance of these efforts, saying, "These projects are about preserving Utah's rich history and ensuring it continues to inspire future generations."

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About the MPNHA:

The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area is a federally designated area of central and southern Utah running along the beautiful and historic U.S. Highway 89 — including the All-American Road Utah State Route 12, and Capitol Reef Scenic Byway Utah State Route 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.

About the Utah Humanities Council:

The Utah Humanities Council works to empower Utahns to improve their communities through active engagement in the humanities. To accomplish this, through its programs and grants it partners with individuals and groups across the state who want to put humanities ideas into actions that have a positive impact on their communities.