

# Raising the profile of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage

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MT. PLEASANT, Utah — Monte Bona is on an LDS mission of sorts.

The head of the Heritage Highway Alliance wants to raise the profile of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area, get the word out and increase tourism.

Not a small task, Bona acknowledges, but possible with some ongoing effort.

"We've got a lot of brick and mortar work going on," he said. "Concurrent with that, we need to work on our interpretive mission."

Bona has looked at other areas like the MotorCities National Heritage Area in Michigan and gleaned a few ideas.

He wants to use today's technology to tell the area's history and create a site that schoolchildren in Utah and in neighboring states want to visit.

"When teachers (in Salt Lake City) want to educate their kids about Utah's pioneer heritage, they take them to This is the Place park," Bona said. "But that only tells part of the story."

The missing material is that concerning central Utah, which acted as a barrier to settlement and shaped the pioneer communities and character.

Bona believes the money being spent on interpretative centers will go a long way toward bringing in visitors.

One example is the center now being finished in Escalante.

There, visitors can learn about the San Juan Expedition of 1878, which included the pioneers' road carved in the sandstone known as "Hole-in-the-Rock."

Another project is the heritage garden being developed privately in Manti across from the LDS temple.

Bona said the projects currently visible to the public include the Karen H. Huntsman Library and Heritage Plaza on the Snow College campus in Ephraim, the Casino Star Theatre in Gunnison and the San Pitch Recreation and Heritage Center in Mt. Pleasant.

Others include a center at Big Rock Candy Mountain in Sevier County and possibly in Marysvale.

Bona said \$45 million is being dedicated to Heritage projects in five Heritage districts. More than 100 partners are involved in the projects.

"We hope to encourage people to travel the Highway 89 corridor," Bona said. "We have 450 miles of heritage to share."

For more information see [mormonpioneerheritage.org](http://mormonpioneerheritage.org).

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