

MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (MPNHA)

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RELEASE: February 28, 2018



in partnership with

New resort brings railroad back to Sanpete County in unique way

MT. PLEASANT— After years of planning and discussion, Track 89 North, a railroad resort where visitors will be able to stay overnight in restored train cars, is taking shape on the south end of Mt. Pleasant.

A crane has lifted seven 37-ton train cars, including a caboose, into place along a segment of railroad track adjacent to an old Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG) railroad depot. Two more cars are expected soon. The site is just off Main Street and west of the city park.

Over the next few months, the train car exteriors will be restored to pristine condition through a process of power-washing, rust repair and painting. When the exterior refurbishment is complete, the cars, which were purchased from Union Pacific Railroad, will be remodeled to be used as lodging suites.

The project is a public-private partnership of Mt. Pleasant City, the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) and developers George Jones and David Grow.

In February 2016, Mt. Pleasant City, which owned the property where the resort is going in, issued a 50-year lease with an option to buy to Jones and Grow. Last month, the developers purchased the property outright. The purchase includes the historic Denver & Rio Grande (D&R) depot and an old caboose just outside the depot.

“We’re putting so much into the property we want to be an owner rather than a renter,” David Grow said.



A caboose is hoisted into place at Track 89 North, a railroad resort being constructed on the south end of Mt. Pleasant.

Jones and Grow previously developed the Track 89 Caboose Village Resort, another railcar motel near Big Rock Candy Mountain in Marysville Canyon south of Richfield. At that location, 10 railcars provide unique lodging for 2-8 visitors each. Two more are cars are installed and being refurbished.

Funding for the establishment of the Track 89 North railroad resort was provided by Mt Pleasant City in co-ordination with the MPNHA, with matching funds from Jones and Grow.

An agreement between the partners requires that historical character of the rail cars be maintained and that the D&RG depot be preserved. Currently, the depot serves as a tourist information center. The agreement provides that a portion of the building continue to be dedicated to that function.

The developers have promised city officials they will have the boxcars available for lodging by May 2019, but they “anticipate a much faster track,” Grow said.

Part of the D&RG depot will house the resort registration and check-in facility.

In addition, Jones and Grow have leased part of the D&RG depot to a non-profit organization, Wellspring Ministries of Utah, which plans transform it into a community gathering place. The group will set up a specialty coffee cafe with espresso drinks, smoothies, hot chocolate and healthy food items. The tentative opening date for The Coffee Depot is the end of May.



Current information center just to the west of the railroad depot, which has served as an information center for years.

Grow said his organization is currently looking for a vendor for the caboose located next to the D&RG depot. He thinks the caboose would make a great hot-dog stand during the tourist season.

Many communities in the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area have connections to the railroad, says Monte Bona, MPNHA executive director.

In 1893, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad expanded its line from Chester to Manti. In Manti, the line connect with a line running south to the Sevier Valley and north, through Mt. Pleasant, to Thistle Junction.

At its peak, the line ferried passengers to Marysville, where tour companies would meet the train and take tourists to Bryce Canyon and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

Over time, use of the railroad waned, and in 1949, the D&RG dropped passenger service in Central Utah. Freight trains still rode the rails until the Thistle mudslide of 1983 shut down the line completely.

Bona sees the railroad resorts in Mt. Pleasant and at Big Rock Candy Mountain as a first step to bringing a railroad museum and interpretive center to the area, one of the goals of the MPNHA management plan.

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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.