

Forging Ahead

The 2016 Utah State Historical Preservation's officers wrote:

“This year, 2016, marks the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, which created a national historic preservation agenda and specific roles for the federal government, the states, and eventually local governments in promoting the preservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites. ...This local-government emphasis laid the groundwork for regional efforts that envisioned broader, regional preservation of not just buildings but entire communities, their economies, and lifeways. The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area is the offspring of that expansive, multi-year effort.

“No other county in Utah can match Sanpete County for its coordinated historic preservation efforts over the last 20+ years. Individual communities in the county have been pursuing their own preservation agendas since the 1970s, and many of them became “partners in preservation” with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service... but the creation of the Sanpete Heritage Council in the mid-1990s brought communities throughout the county together to develop broader goals and coordinate projects to maximize their effectiveness. This council evolved into the Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance, which is now the coordinating body for the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area.”

to restore its original schoolhouse for use as a museum and research facility;

In 2016, the school received another Heritage Award, this time for Adaptive Use, for the school's restoration of a historic presbyterian church for use a music conservatory.

This year, the school received a a Utah Heritage Award from Preservation Utah, for work done in 2016 to restore a historic home, later a faculty residence, for use as a guest house and dormitory.

•In 2015, The Days of '47 Committee in Salt Lake City, the group that drives the annual celebration of the arrival of Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley, named MPNHA Executive Director Monte Bona a “Pioneer of Progress” in its Historic and Creative Arts category.

Also in 2016, the MPNHA received a particular recognition and distinction, though not an official award, from the Utah State Historic Preservation Office, an arm of the Utah Department of Heritage and Arts, Division of State History. A report published by the state's Historic Preservation officers contained a statement which is herein quoted (left).

The recognition serves to point out the reason the MPNHA does what it does. It's useful to remember that the MPNHA—including its forerunners, the Heritage Highway 89 Alliance and the Sanpete Heritage Council—was born in Sanpete County.

A stellar example of the kind of thing that led the state history officers to write as they did is the Old Spring City School. As described in Part Two, Spring City in Sanpete County is the home of a historic and architecturally significant elementary school built in 1899. In the 1970s, the building had devolved to where it was being used for manufacturing camper shells. Townspeople began to clamor for tearing the old building down, but the local chapter of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers purchased the building to save it.

Nearly 40 years later, the Spring City Council was set to vote on a \$647,000 funding package to restore the building. The meeting was packed. Prior to the vote, the mayor asked, somewhat timidly, “Is there anybody opposed to this?” There was dead silence: Everyone in the room was there to support the restoration effort.