

# MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (MPNHA)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**WHAT:** Manti City celebrates LDS Tabernacle Restoration **with Open House**

**WHEN:** Sept. 12-13, 2015

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## Manti celebrates LDS Tabernacle Restoration with Open House

A prime example of Mormon pioneer architecture has been restored in Manti. The historic Manti Tabernacle, which was dedicated in 1903 by Joseph F. Smith, has just undergone a 15-month renovation and will be open for the public to tour two days next week. The tabernacle will be rededicated Sept. 13 at 12:30 p.m.

The tabernacle, which is listed on the national historic register, is one of only three 19th-century LDS Church houses still in use as a meeting house.

“The tabernacle stands as a glowing example of the tenacity, grit and skill of the Mormon pioneers who played an important role in the colonization of the West,” said Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area Director Monte Bona.

“The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area greatly appreciates the commitment that has been made to maintain the character and significance of this magnificent edifice that exemplifies what we hope to preserve as a national heritage area.”

“In our modern age, when its sometimes more expedient to remove old structures and replace them with economical new ones, this act represents a major commitment by the LDS Church to honor the faith of its founding membership,” he said.

The open house, where the public can tour the restored tabernacle, will be held Friday, Sept. 11 and Saturday, Sept. 12 from 3 to 7 p.m. The building will be rededicated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Area Seventy Elder Michael Jensen on Sunday,



**Manti Tabernacle Sept. 2015, after renovations are completed.**



**Manti Tabernacle under construction.**

Sept. 13 at 12:30 p.m.

The tabernacle has a rich pioneer history. In 1860, the impoverished Manti LDS church members laid its foundation, but delayed organizing a tabernacle construction committee for 17 years.

Work was ongoing on the Manti Temple, which was constructed from 1875-1888, during the same time period and most of the pioneers' limited resources were used for that endeavor. It was finally completed in 1903.

"We are pleased to see this magnificent historic tabernacle rehabilitated with such care and skill," said Don Hartley, Utah Division of State History historical architect.

"It was constructed in the late 1870s and has significance not just for Manti and Sanpete County, but church-wide as a symbol of faith and courage. For the Mormon pioneers

in Manti to build both a temple and tabernacle possessing such architectural significance, and at such great material sacrifice and cost when even their own survival wasn't a sure thing, reflects their devotion.

For the settlers who worked on this building and maybe didn't write letters or keep journals, this is their testimony, rendered in stone, still speaking to us across the generations."



**Manti Tabernacle after being constructed in 1903.**

"It's really significant that the church decided to do this restoration," said Matthew Christensen, manager for the LDS church's Manti, Utah facilities group, said. "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints places great value on these historic structures which stand as a testimony to the skill, craftsmanship and the many



**Bas relief on front of chapel in newly restored Manti Tabernacle.**

sacrifices made by the early saints.”

The tabernacle, which was designed by William H. Folsom, the architect for the temple, had two additions to the main structure in 1927 and 1958.

When the structure was built, the early Manti church members did not have the funds to include decorative fascias and soffits on the building. However, in anticipation of a time when they could add them, they left nailer strips embedded near the top of the north and south exterior walls and on the east and west gables.



**Pioneer carved supporting pillars in Manti Tabernacle.**

“They didn’t know how long it would be before they would be able to have the money for them so the strips were left exposed for decades after completion,” Christensen said.

While renovating the exterior, the project team and the church historical department decided to leave the nailer strips exposed to help tell the story about how the building was constructed, Christensen said.

The original structure and the later additions have all been reroofed and the attic has been insulated to modern standards. To complete the exterior upgrade, new landscaping and site irrigation have been installed.

Inside, particular attention has been paid to restoring the chapel. The original fir timber columns of the 1920s balcony were cored out and steel beams were inserted into the columns to maintain their historic integrity while stabilizing the structure.

Cracked walls in the chapel have been replaced, and the historic Christ at the Well mural and wall finishes have been restored.

Period finishes such as a 1900s-style chandelier, carpets, paint, pew fabrics and wood and plaster finishes have been installed throughout the tabernacle.

For more information, contact or MPNHA Director Monte Bona at 801-699-5065 or Matthew Christensen, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Manti, Utah facilities group manager, at 435-835-8887.

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The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area includes 400 miles of glorious scenic byways, a vast array of wildlife, the best of western living, cattle and sheep ranches, and colorful mountain vistas, all within a trip on Utah Heritage Highway 89.