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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete County Travel and Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.

Pioneer Day ‘Birthday Bash’ Celebrates Mt. Pleasant’s Founding Father, U.S. Highway 89 Designation

Mt. Pleasant City is throwing a party March 24th for its founding fathers and to celebrate the designation of U.S. Highway 89 as a national historical designation.

“Every year, we honor the people who made this city what it is today with a special Pioneer Day luncheon,” says Joann Winward, a member of the Mt. Pleasant Historical Association; which sponsors the annual event. “This year, we have another thing to celebrate: the passage of the National Mormon Pioneer Heritage area, which recognizes the historical significance and heritage of U.S. Highway 89. So we decided to make the highway the theme of this year’s party.”

The theme of the luncheon is “Keep on Truckin’ Down U.S. Highway 89.” The event starts at 11 a.m. with a box lunch at noon at the South Ward “Yellow Church,” 295 S. State Street in Mt. Pleasant. “U.S. Highway 89 has a rich history in Sanpete County”, Winward says. It was the route the region’s early settlers used in 1860 to take cattle for the winter to Sevier Valley. In 1862, oats were delivered to Ruby Valley by wagons and oxen teams via this route, and it soon became the main road for mail delivery.

In July of 1861, Brigham Young authorized spending \$4,000 from tithing funds to complete U.S. Highway 89 so that it ran from Sanpete County to Spanish Fork, and it officially opened to the public in 1882.

Today, the cities and towns in the six-county area are the best remaining example of how Mormon pioneers colonized the west. A bill establishing the National Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area was signed into law by President George W. Bush last fall. Many local residents spent years working on the measure and even helped draft the original bill.

The national designation recognizes the history, architecture and culture along "the heritage highway," and includes U.S. Highway 89 from Fairview to Kanab, the Boulder Loop (state highways 12 and 24), the All-American Road (highway 12) and the six counties through which the route passes: Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane.

“In my time, boys could hitch hike along U.S. Highway 89 to visit girls in the surrounding towns of Fairview and Spring City,” Winward says. “By the time we graduated from high school, we would ‘drag’ the highway in our cars.” People are invited to swap stories about the highway, and the region’s history in general, during the Pioneer Day luncheon. The event will also include a reception, silent auction, bake sale, and musical performances by the Snow College L.D. Singers. Cost for the box lunch is \$7. There will also be copies of Mt. Pleasant history books for purchase.

“There is a little bit of something for everyone,” Winward says. “It’s a way for us to honor the pioneers who settled the area. We invite anyone who has ever lived in Mt. Pleasant to attend, and anyone who is interested in Mt. Pleasant to attend.” The annual celebratory lunch is one of the two main programs supported by the Mt. Pleasant Historical Association. The group also looks after the Relic House, a Museum that displays relics ranging from pioneer quilts and clothing to blacksmith shop tools and equipment. The Relic House was one of the first homes in Mt. Pleasant to be built outside of the fort that housed the area's first settlers. It was built by William S. Seely, who was the first LDS bishop and also the town’s first mayor.

Mt. Pleasant City was officially founded in 1859. Nearly two-thirds of the city's earliest settlers were Scandinavian pioneers who immigrated to Utah from Canada, the United States and England.

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