

Explore the McQuarrie Memorial Museum, where pioneers are remembered all year-round

Written by [Mori Kessler](#) July 23, 2017

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ST. GEORGE – While Pioneer Day comes once a year, there is a group of women in Washington County and throughout the rest of Utah that is immersed in promoting and preserving the state’s pioneer history all year-round. They are the [Daughters of the Utah Pioneers](#).



Inside the McQuarrie Memorial Museum in St. George maintained by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers. The museum is bursting at the seams with pioneer-era relics and history and is well worth a visit, St. George, Utah, July 21, 2017 | Photo by Mori Kessler. St. George News

“At the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers organization we preserve (pioneer) histories, as well as photographs and artifacts,” said Teresa Orton, director of the McQuarrie Memorial Museum in St. George.

The museum, which is chock-full of items and photos from Washington County’s early Mormon settlers, is one of over 100 such [pioneer museums](#) maintained by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers across Utah, Idaho, Nevada and Wyoming.

“The main purpose is to promote a remembrance and presentation of our early pioneer artifacts and histories and photographs,” Orton said.

The museum itself is one devoted to those who settled across Washington County, and not just St. George, she said.

“To settle Washington County was very difficult,” Orton said, “(There was) a lot of hardship involved in surviving here.”

From floor to ceiling, the museum is full of displays showcasing the items the settlers used in their daily lives, exhibiting everything from the clothing they wore to the musical instruments they played at social gatherings and dances.

Across the walls are old photographs and portraits of the county’s early citizens that feature last names like Ence, McArthur, Bentley, Hafen and many others. There’s hardly a space that isn’t covered.



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Many items also have stories to them as well.

In the corner of one room sits a large loom whose owner let anyone in the community use it, Orton said, while in the corner of another room sits an old drum set. The drums were used for more than just music, she said, and doubled as a way to get the attention of St. George residents for various reasons.

Some of the locally produced clothing, either folded up or hanging in glass cases, also have stories. They are the product of the area’s short-lived cotton and silk industry.

“I just love this museum,” Orton said, adding that it reminded her of home, as it was covered in photographs of early settlers, some of whom were her own great-great grandparents. “I spend a lot of time here.

Orton is a fifth-generation St. George resident.

Another aspect of the museum Orton said she enjoys is reading the histories of the early settlers collected at the museum.

“When you get some of these ladies’ histories, or some of these men, and you see the many, many things they did in their lifetimes, you think, ‘My gosh, they must have have been 200 years old when they died.’”

Those histories are collected in a book titled “Under the Dixie Sun” that is sold at the museum.

Like everything else in the museum, the building that houses it all has a history too.



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Dedicated June 17, 1938, the museum was the result of a campaign the Washington County-based Daughters of the Utah Pioneers began some years earlier.

Much like their northern Utah counterparts had begun to do around 1912, the Washington County company of “DUP,” as it is also known, formed as a means to preserve the history and relics tied to the original settlers of the region.

Around 1912, the original Mormon pioneers that came to Utah between 1847 and 1869 began to die. The same was true for the original settlers in southwest Utah by around 1921. So, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers began to collect and save what they could for posterity.

However, for the Washington County chapter, there was a little problem – they didn’t have a dedicated building to store their mounting collection of historic items.

At the time, some people were keeping pioneer-era items in places where they could become weathered and worn and eventually lost, Orton said. So, the Washington County-based DUP set to writing letters asking for contributions for a pioneer museum.



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One of those letters was sent to Hortense McQuarrie Odlum who lived in New York City. The granddaughter of an early St. George mayor – and also rather well-to-do moneywise – Odlum traveled to St. George and contributed \$17,500 to the project and took over management.

“She spearheaded the building of the original building,” Orton said.

Odlum hired the architect and the building crews and also negotiated with the city of St. George and the Washington County Commission to donate land for the museum.

A plaque in the museum states the building is to commemorate Odlum’s parents and grandparents for the parts they played in the Dixie Cotton Mission and colonization of southwest Utah.

The building would be expanded in 1985 thanks to a donation from Ferol McQuarrie Kincade, Odlum’s cousin. The additional space was used to house pioneer-era keepsakes from Kincade’s family.

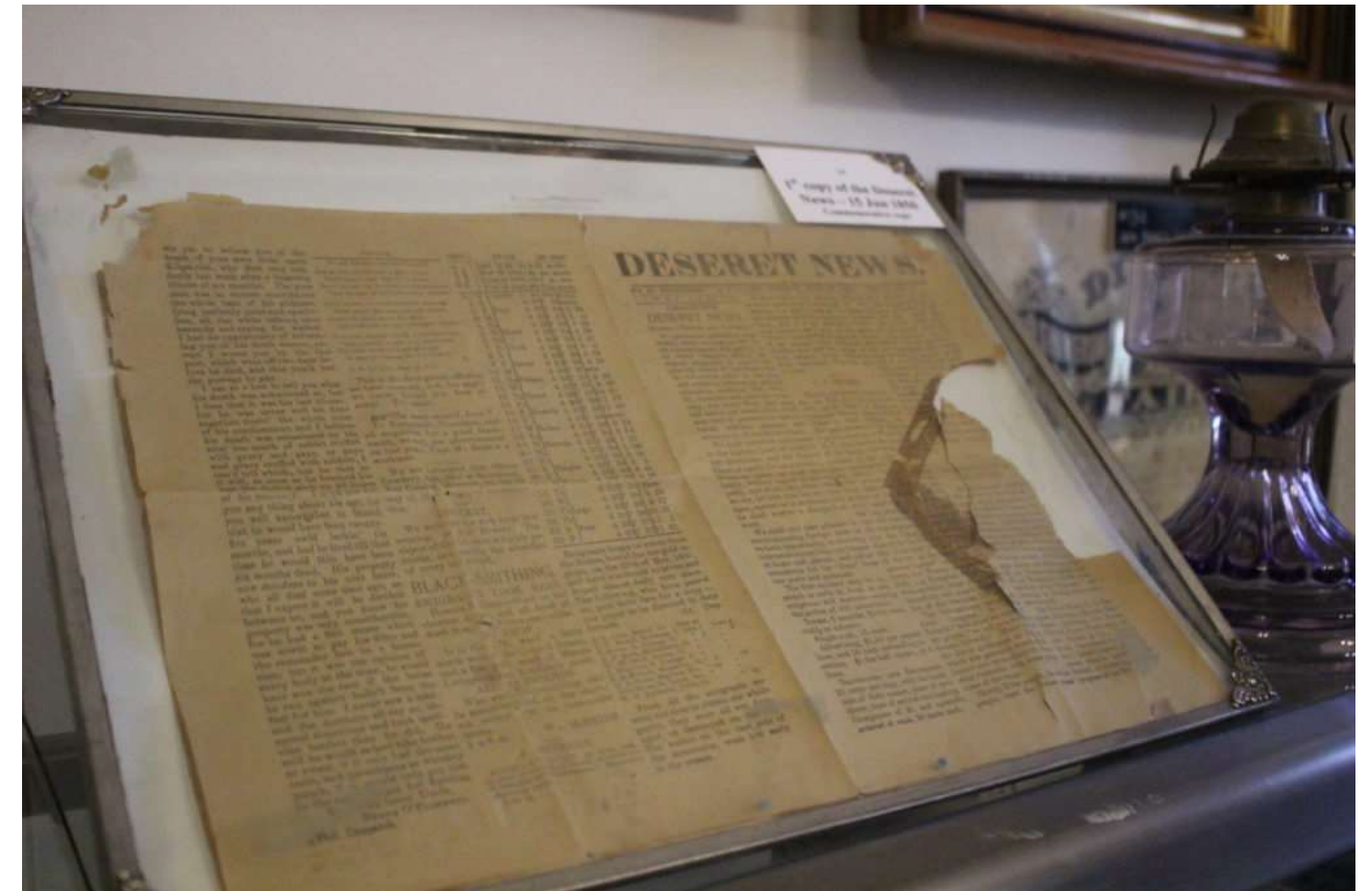
The McQuarrie Memorial Museum is located at 145 N. 100 East in St. George, just north of the St. George Pioneer Courthouse on St. George Boulevard. Admission is free and it’s open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Private tours can be arranged by calling the museum at [435-628-7274](tel:435-628-7274).

Resources

- Daughters of the Utah Pioneers McQuarrie Memorial Museum | 145 N. 100 East, St. George | Telephone [435-628-7274](tel:435-628-7274) | Free admission | Hours 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday | [Facebook page](#).
- Washington County Historical Society [webpage](#) about the Daughters of Utah Pioneers McQuarrie Memorial Museum in St. George.
- International Daughters of the Utah Pioneers [website](#).

Click on photo to enlarge it, then use your left-right arrow keys to cycle through the gallery.



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Email: mkessler@stgnews.com

Twitter: [@MoriKessler](https://twitter.com/MoriKessler)

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About the Author



Mori Kessler serves as a Senior Reporter for St. George News, having previously contributed as a writer and Interim Editor in 2011-12, and an assistant editor from 2012 to mid-2014. He began writing news as a freelancer in 2009 for Today in Dixie, and joined the writing staff of St. George News in mid-2010. He is also a shameless nerd and has a bad sense of direction, often telling people go left while he is pointing right.

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