

Washington County Historical Society Annual Report
Jan. 25, 2022 to Jan. 25, 2023
Submitted by Loren Webb, WCHS President



The new Washington County Administration Building (left rear) and the Cold War-era Washington County Administration Building to the right on Tabernacle Street between 100 and 200 East, St. George, Utah.

Where the present is built on a foundation of the past

The Washington County Historical Society (WCHS) is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization incorporated on April 25, 1983. It was formed to promote and perpetuate the history of Washington County, Utah. WCHS exists to encourage and assist all interested Washington County communities with the organization of their city historical societies and to encourage them to promote historical preservation in their communities.

WCHS has been involved in many activities and projects since it was organized. A major change in 2019 was the agreement with the City of St. George to permit the use of the Pioneer Courthouse to establish a venue for teaching and promoting the history of Washington County through tours, lectures, displays, and various other activities. In 2022, the dedication of the Juanita Brooks statue saw the successful culmination of a 4-year project to honor Juanita for her devotion to researching, writing, and teaching about the history of this area.

The Society maintains a website to make the history of Washington County readily available to the public. It provides a place where history can be submitted and recorded about the County's people, places, organizations, and activities and includes links to other such information elsewhere on the internet.

Officers

President, Loren Webb

Vice President, Sidney Creer

Secretary, Jeanine Vander Bruggen

Treasurer, Susan Crook

Board members

Keith Cannon, chairperson

Loren Webb

Jesse Stocking

Susan Crook

Jeanine Vander Bruggen

Pat Cundick

Committee Chairs

Publicity, Susannah Nilsson

Field Trips, Sidney Creer

Social Media, Jesse Stocking

Pioneer Courthouse, Jeanine Vander Bruggen

Grants, Susan Crook

Website, George Cannon

Consulting, Joe Deceuster

Oral History Interviews, Loren Webb

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Accomplishments

- A volunteer fair was held Feb. 16 at the Pioneer Courthouse, and Jeanine Vander Bruggen reported that it was a good first step in reaching out to the public to encourage the public to support our activities.

- On Feb. 28, Webmaster George Cannon and Treasurer Susan Crook met to build on George Cannon's work with the website by making access to the online databases more appealing, intuitive and user friendly. One main goal was to transfer the content to a platform that could be easily updated and edited without using code.
- The unveiling of the Juanita Brooks statue at the St. George Statue Gardens and the related Women History Month Photo Shoot were very successful, according to Special Projects Manager Jesse Stocking, who noted 300 people attended the March 19, 2022 event.
- In addition to the unveiling ceremony, Jeanine Vander Bruggen gave a presentation at a Daughters of American Revolution Chapter meeting to discuss Juanita Brooks, Maureen Whipple and Lynne Clark. Joseph Crson, a videographer with RedRock Media came to the Pioneer Courthouse and did a promotional video with Jeanine Vander Bruggen discussing Juanita Brooks. The video was published on YouTube - RedRockNow media channel. A Reader's Theater was also held at the Pioneer Courthouse on March 18 with Debora Threedy presenting her play regarding the life of Juanita Brooks during the period of writing the Mountain Meadows Massacre. A Melissa Anderson video was also created for the unveiling of the Brooks statue. There was also a lot of positive press covering the long awaited event.
- Cliff Bandringa created a videotape of the historic St. George Walking Tours as part of a three-part project - History of St. George, Homes of St. George, and Public Buildings of St. George. The videos were placed on YouTube. The cost of the videos was covered by a current City of St. George RAP Tax grant.
- Susan Crook worked with Don Theall who volunteered to assist WCHS in creating a contact list of potential members. That list, coupled with the Mailchimp list, is necessary to prepare a membership drive and to reach potential donors.
- Susan Crook and Jeanine Vander Bruggen met with website consultant Michael Gbusky who helped develop an agreement for WCHS website privacy coverage.
- Susannah Nilsson reported that a 20-minute video on artist Loren Covington was completed. A copy of the video was given to Jeanine Vander Bruggen for use at the Pioneer Courthouse. A lecture on Covington's life was given by his granddaughter, Kathy Tobler on June 2, 2022 in the Pioneer Courthouse.
- Sidney Creer, with assistance from her son-in-law Richard Kohler, held historic field trips in Springdale, Enterprise, New Harmony, Pine Valley, Leeds, and Rockville, Utah. Each field trip has had good attendance with an average of 25 to 35 people attending.
- Susan Crook and Jeanine Vander Bruggen met in the Spring of 2022 with Washington County Commissioner Victor Iverson and County website official Gavin Juaquin to keep each other informed as to progress and needs for upgrading the WCHS website. The plan is to combine the websites for the Pioneer Courthouse and WCHS, remove administrative activities to Google Workplace, and to create a more accessible database for the historical data currently available on the WCHS website.
- Jeanine Vander Bruggen reported that 18 people volunteered at the WCHS booth during the April 20-23 Washington County Fair held at the Washington County Legacy Park.
- Reenactment of the Lawmen and the Muddy River Gang, previously performing at the Silver Reef Museum, was held May 21, June 18, 2022.

- Dan Fowkles of Southern Utah Productions announces his intention to produce a film about Catholic Father Lawrence Scanlon and LDS leader John Menzies Macfarlane's re-creation of the Mass at the LDS Tabernacle in May 1879. Jeanine Vander Bruggen assisted to find participants to be extras in the film to "fill" the Tabernacle for the shooting on June 22. A grant was written by Bobbi Wan-kier to cover the costs of the film. Twenty-four individuals participated in the film project, including three from WCHS and 5 who were Pioneer Courthouse volunteers. The film crew also visited the Pioneer Courthouse on June 23, 2022 to film the judge's chambers.
- Matthew Godfrey, senior historian over outreach and engagement with the LDS Church History Department in Salt Lake City, was working to develop relationships with outside historical organizations, and because of interest expressed from Washington County Historical Society President Loren Webb, Matt arranged for Nathan Waite from his staff and who is an editorial manager for the Church Historian's Press of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gave an Aug. 31, 2022 presentation in the Pioneer Courthouse on the topic of "The Many Names and Stories of Zion Canyon." The lecture saw a large turnout.
- Jesse Stocking coordinated with Doug Alder to present information on the Juanita Brooks statue project on June 3, 2022, where only close family members and friends were invited. Dick Kohler also assisted with the invitation-only presentation, attended by 15 people.
- Susan Crook wrote a recommendation to honor Rockville resident Jane Whalen with the Preservation Utah 2022 Heritage Award for her preservation work of historic resources in communities along the Zion Canyon Scenic Byway (LaVerkin to Springdale). Whalen spends many hours in the Grafton Historic District collecting donations from the secure on-site collection box, monitoring visitor use (and misuse), repairing vandalism, and undertaking routine maintenance. She was also instrumental in helping to save the 1924 one-lane Rockville Bridge. The awards banquet was held in Salt Lake City in October. Melissa Anderson prepared a 2-minute video as part of the presentation to honor Whalen.
- A 7th grade history lesson project developed by Loren Webb with assistance from Jesse Stocking, received approval from the Washington County School District, but there has been no response or invitations from school teachers for Webb or Stocking to teach the lesson.
- WCHS consultant Joel Deceuster met with WCHS officers on Aug. 24 with the object of making future recommendations on how to create an organization that will maximize the historic value of the Society to reach out to the community and strengthen our influence in preserving and promoting the history of Washington County.
- Jeanine Vander Bruggen, Loren Webb, Susannah Nilsson and Richard Kohler from the WCHS met Aug. 15, 2022 with Jennifer Ortiz, director of Utah Division of State History at the DUP Museum to see how the state agency could better assist local history organizations in the St. George area.
- Don Theall prepared a first of its kind attendance report for the Pioneer Courthouse that showed the Pioneer Courthouse was open 214 days in 2021 with 5,098 visitors. For

January through July 2022, a total of 151 days, and 3,504 visitors toured the Pioneer Courthouse. The report was presented at the Aug. 31, 2022 WCHS committee meeting.

- On Sept. 7, 2022, WCHS Treasurer Susan Crook distributed a list of issues and concerns regarding Pioneer Courthouse repair and upgrade needs with the WCHS committee.
- Website consultant Michael Gbursky of JadeFire Development submitted his proposal of \$16,325 on Sept. 7, for combining the Pioneer Courthouse and WCHS website landing pages. No action was taken on the proposal at that time. However, Loren Webb was asked to go to the Washington County Commission to verify the promised \$20,000 from the county is still available. At a Sept. 14, 2022 WCHS officers meeting, Michael Gbursky was asked to come back with a revised proposal.

Also at the Sept. 14, 2022 WCHS officers meeting, Loren Webb reported that Commission Secretary Sarah Lloyd confirmed the commission approved the full amount of \$20,000. The Commission was asked to hold off on any action until the actual amount to pay for website redesign was finalized.

At the Sept. 28 WCHS meeting, Jeanine Vander Bruggen distributed to officers a copy of Austin Pickett's, Dixie Tech, website proposal. A lengthy discussion was held regarding WCHS website proposals submitted for redesign of a landing page combining both the Pioneer Courthouse website and the WCHS website (excluding the database). Because of concerns raised regarding the process and the needs expressed in the meeting, a separate meeting was held Oct. 5. Further discussion occurred on the WCHS website proposals, but no action was taken.

At a combined Oct. 19 WCHS executive and committee meeting, WCHS President Loren Webb gave a brief summary of the two website proposals. WCHS consultant Joel Deceuster explained provisions of Austin Pickett's proposal. WCHS webmaster George Cannon felt the WCHS was not ready to move forward with approving either of the website proposals. He was asked by Loren Webb to put his recommendations in writing for what he feels needs to be done prior to approving any of the proposals. George subsequently presented his recommendations later that day on Oct. 19, 2022.

On Nov. 16, WCHS consultant Joel Deceuster submitted 2023 Strategic Growth Recommendations at a combined WCHS officers and committee meeting in which he listed 10 major priorities.

At the Nov. 16 WCHS meeting, a proposal to approve the website proposal submitted by Austin Pickett was approved by 3 in favor, 2 opposed and 1 abstention. An additional meeting was held on Nov. 29, 2022 for committee members to meet Austin Pickett and give members the opportunity to add input to the project to create a new website, separating it from the WCHS database. Austin presented a contract to WCHS for the scope of his work which was signed on Nov. 29, 2022 by WCHS President Loren Webb. George Cannon disagreed with the approach recommended but expressed his willingness to work with Susan Crook and Austin Pickett. George has been working on a mockup of his proposal of how the project should look.

- On Sept. 10, 2022, WCHS President Loren Webb sent out through the St. George LDS East Stake Presidency, a mass circulated request for assistance in gaining historical information and pictures about the old 5th and 6th Ward LDS Chapel on 400 East and

100 South, since it is slated for demolition after its sale to the City of St. George. LDS Church officials indicated they had no plans to hold an open house for former 5th and 6th Ward attendees to visit the inside of the premises one last time before the building is demolished. This decision was made despite a request from St. George City officials who were among those asking for the open house.

- Jeanine Vander Bruggen reported on a Sept. 26 meeting with Jansen Bennett from the State Historic Preservation Division, Kim Campbell, architect; Greg McArthur, City Council, Marc Mortensen, assistant city manager, Carlos Robles, city facilities supervisor, Cameron Rollins, city facilities staff member, and WCHS officers Susan Crook and Jeanine Vander Bruggen to discuss issues concerning the foundation of the Pioneer Courthouse.
- Susannah Nilsson reported at the 9-28 WCHS meeting that the Swiss Days celebration in Santa Clara was a success. Loren Webb also reported that he and his sister, along with many other families with ties to Santa Clara operated family history booths during the Swiss Days celebration.
- Loren Webb and Sharlene Pickett submitted a compilation of pictures and short biographical information about 5th District Court (state) judges who served Washington County since 1896.
- At the request of St. George City Public Information Officer David Cordero, WCHS webmaster George Cannon added several photos of the 5th and 6th Ward Chapel to the Society's website so the city could provide historical information about the chapel which was torn down in mid December to make way for a new city fire station at the corner of 100 South and 400 East.
- On Nov. 15, 2022, WCHS President Loren Webb went with various representatives of the State Division of Oil, Gas and Mining on a tour of the Paymaster Mine in the Apex Mine complex on Utah Hill. The Division was in the process of fencing off the old wooden headframe, located seven miles south of Old Highway 91 just off of Bulldog Pass/Apex Mine Road. The Division plans to erect an information kiosk near the Paymaster site that contains historical detail about the mine site provided by WCHS and other organizations.
- Jeanine Vander Bruggen and Debra Crocker of the WCHS are working with representatives of Silver Reef Foundation to organize a Jan 12 gala at the Electric Theater in connection with showing a re-enactment film of Father Lawrence Scanlon/John Macfarlane that tells of the cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in putting on a Catholic Mass sung by a Mormon Choir.
- Jeanine VanderBruggen also attended a two day conference in Salt Lake City regarding a planned Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibit, which will include housing the exhibit in Silver Reef.
- At the Nov. 30 WCHS meeting, Jeanine Vander Bruggen described her concept of the organization of the WCHS which would include the Database for preserving history, and the Pioneer Courthouse for promoting history.
- At the Jan. 4, 2023 WCHS planning meeting, the committee agreed with the priorities for the year 2023-2024.

- At the Jan. 11, 2023 WCHS planning meeting, the committee approved revisions to the WCHS mission statement. The committee also made changes to Article 3 of the WCHS bylaws in the objectives. There was disagreement on whether lifetime memberships should continue to not be offered, or whether to reinstate lifetime memberships, and no decisions were made.
- Loren Webb as president of the WCHS, shared brief remarks on Jan. 12, 2023, along with the president of the Silver Reef Foundation Arts to Zion and the producer and director of the documentary, A Matter of Faith; Southern Utah 1879 at the Electric Theater regarding the friendship of LDS member John Macfarlane and Catholic Father Lawrence Scanlon which resulted in Macfarlane training a Mormon choir to sing the Latin Catholic Mass in the St. George Tabernacle in May 1879.

Grants Received and Approved

St. George City RAP Grant funds of \$2,200 were approved.

Grants Submitted and Pending

Sorenson Legacy Foundation - \$7,500

Washington County RAP Tax - \$5,000

Oral History Interviews Project

- Loren Webb prepared a formal proposal for the Washington County Historical Society to sponsor a county-wide oral history project of interfaith leaders in Washington County. The proposal was approved by the WCHS officers.
Loren Webb and Jesse Stocking subsequently interviewed Rev. Alex Wilkie, Community Baptist Church; Michael Kruse, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; Rev. Ralph Clingan, Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church; Pastor Joe Doherty, New Promise Lutheran Church; Rabbi Helene Ainbinder, Jewish Reform Movement, and Laura Lee Fairchild and Judy Holly of the Baha'i Faith. All of the interviews were transcribed by Susan Mower and the transcripts were submitted to Utah Tech University and Washington County Library Special Collections Library and to the Washington County Historical Society website.

Thanks to each of you who have given so much time and energy to work on the various projects and committees you have served on. You are greatly appreciated. It was a busy and productive year overall with a lot of progress made and we look forward to another great year in 2023.