JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting, Monday, January 12, 6:30 p.m.
at the ***National Headquarters, 3301 East 2920 South, Salt Lake City, Utah***

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Randy Baker, Mills Chapter President

Our December chapter meeting was the Olympus HS madrigals keeping with the chapter tradition of entertainment that helps feel the true spirit of Christ in the Christmas season. Strengthening our feelings of the Savior should be part of connecting with our ancestors. I hope this new year is one for you to connect with the values your ancestors left you with.

I am happy to report that our January Mills chapter meeting will have Glenn Rawson, renown producer of the "History of the Saints" documentary, as our speaker. Glenn also narrates the series and his passion for the church, and his presentation skills make church history come alive. We are most fortunate; and I am most appreciative that we are able to have Glenn come. I hope you can come and enjoy this treat of hearing such a wonderful man. Friends and family are also welcome.

We note the passing of one of our chapter members, Gayle Smith. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wonderful family. The following link will give you insights to his amazing life: Gayle Joseph Smith Obituary (2025) - Salt Lake City, UT

We (as a Mills Chapter Board) hope that your 2026 will be a good year for you and your family, and that the small things we do as a chapter will contribute to making a good year for all in connecting with your ancestors' values. Your thoughts and ideas contribute to making sure we are supporting you.

Thank you for making the Mills Chapter so wonderful.

THE MISSION OF THE SONS OF THE UTAH PIONEERS

- Come to know our fathers and mothers and turn our hearts to them
- Preserve the memory and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory and Western US
- Honor present-day pioneers worldwide who exemplify these same qualities of character
- Teach these same qualities to the youth who will be tomorrow's pioneers

Pioneer Minute

Riley Cutler

Pioneer Christmas Stories

Board member Riley Cutler shared with us two pioneer Christmas stories for our December meeting.

Oswald Barlow and His Family's First Christmas in St. George

Oswald Barlow was born July 20, 1829, in Prestwich, Lancashire, England, the eldest of eight children of James and Ann Barlow. Born before their marriage, he was originally named Fogg but adopted by James. Skilled in fabric dyeing, masonry, and stone cutting, Oswald also played fife and drum. He and his family joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1840. At 18, he married Catharine Nightingale; their son James was born in 1849.

Oswald immigrated to America in 1850, crossed the plains with Brigham Young's company, and worked as Young's teamster. In 1853, he married Mary Jane Oliver and later reunited with Catharine and James when they arrived in Utah. Called to Payson during the Utah War, Oswald served as a captain against Johnson's Army. He later opened a dance school, played in Utah's first martial band, and was known for his musical talent and entertaining skills.

In 1861, Oswald was called to the Dixie Cotton Mission to settle southern Utah. He loaded up both families (now including nine children) into one covered wagon drawn by two yokes of oxen. While on the road, four of the children had mountain fever. This, along with many hardships, made the journey a trying one. After three weeks of traveling, they arrived in St. George on December 3, 1861. As soon as they arrived, the Saints made preparations for a Christmas social. A large tent (owned by Asa Calkins) was set up in the Adobe Yard (where the pioneers had set up camp), and here they held their first church meetings, as well as that first Christmas social. It was a grand celebration with wrestling matches, hop-step and jump contests, foot races, and a program of singing. Later that evening, a dance was held. It was Oswald Barlow's orchestra that provided the music for this first dance. The older people danced inside the tent, and the space outside the tent was cleared for the young people to dance. They were surprised by the warm weather in Dixie, that such activities could be held out of doors in December. It was many of the young pioneer children in attendance that recorded their memories of this first Christmas social.

After arriving in St. George, the Dixie Pioneers camped for 2½ months before lots were drawn. Apostle Erastus Snow assigned Oswald Barlow to build homes, and his family endured severe hardships before prospering. A skilled stone mason, Oswald worked seven years on the St. George Tabernacle, built the courthouse, and constructed homes across Utah and Nevada.

He led St. George's first martial band from 1863, which played at celebrations, militia drills, and official visits. Known for its "cocked hats and feathers," the band remained active for decades under later leaders, including Oswald's son-in-law.

Excerpt from a letter from Annie Rasmussen Sivertsdatter to her parents in Norway.

(Fairview, Utah January 12, 1871) "I will begin by sending a greeting to you for a Happy New Year from your daughter, Anne. Dear Father and Mother, I want to thank you for the sweet Christmas gift that you sent my two elder sons. Such an unexpected gift and such happiness that filled my heart that I cannot describe it. Thanks, dear folks, for the two pretty spoons that shall be kept as a remembrance for the grandparents in Norway. I had not expected such an expensive gift as those silver spoons, but I am more thrilled to think that you are thinking about me and my sons, than just the value of the silver spoons. And thanks, Father, for the lock of your hair that you sent to me. It really brought tears to my eyes to see it and how gray it has become since I left you some 13 or 14 years ago if I remember correctly. And you can certainly imagine how I have changed since you last saw me. I will be 36 now on the 19th of April. Time goes so fast and you can imagine just how my sons have grown and they speak of you so often. You would be very pleased with them if you could see them, but that is almost an impossibility.

As I mentioned in letter to Mother I have just had another son. He will be 1 year old now on the 10th of May. His name is Ingebrigt; You probably think that his strange, Father, that I haven't named any of my sons after you, but I shall tell you how I feel about this. I have been here in Utah for 8 years and during that time I have only received one single letter from you and I have felt as though you must have almost forgotten about me. At least that you think very little of me. This may be due to my leaving you at Skaun and taking this course which brought me to Utah and which you deemed as senseless and directly against your win, and with this in mind, Father, I haven't felt right about naming my sons after you. However now when I hear that you do think about me and do not hate the teachings of God, I feel very happy. And it may still be that if I am blessed with other sons, which I believe will happen, as this is my mission here on earth, I yet may feel that I should call a son by your name. Father, be not displeased with me because I love you and wish you well always. And also Mother for the kindness she has shown me. She shall not lose her reward for the kindness she shows to me and my sisters and to the servants of the Lord as I have heard through letters that she had befriended these servants or Elders.

We have thought of sending you a portrait of our children this summer if we can get to Salt Lake City. Mother, I was very pleased to receive the picture of your son and as everyone says, I have a very handsome half-brother. Mother, please fulfill my desire by sending me a portrait of you and Father. How that would thrill me, but maybe it is too much for me to ask for you as the times are hard indeed."

January Meeting

January 12, 2026

Glenn Rawson

We are thrilled to have the well known church history expert Glenn Rawson as our speaker for our January meeting where he will talk about his current projects.

Glenn Rawson was born and raised in Idaho. He grew up on a cattle ranch, and to this day still carries a little bit of cowboy in him. When he was 18 years-old he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and later served a mission in Iowa. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in Wildlife and Range Science, and later from Idaho State University with a Masters degree in Education. He spent almost 20 years as a seminary and institute teacher.

In 1997 he began writing and producing stories for the radio. His stories continue to be heard on numerous stations around the country. That work in radio later turned into production work for Church specials. Then in 2008 he joined with KJZZ television in Salt Lake City and the Joseph Smith Papers team to produce a weekly documentary television series entitled, *The Joseph Smith Papers.* In 2010 he teamed with Dennis Lyman and Bryant Bush to produce a new series called *History of the Saints.* In all, he has produced over 800 broadcast stories for radio and television. Glenn and his wife Debbie have seven children and nine grandchildren. They live in Utah. Glenn is a simple storyteller whose goal is inspire and lift people.

Glenn has travelled around the world leading church history and other tours since 2012 and is the author of many books.

Meeting Recap

December 8 – Christmas Program

Olympus High School Madrigals

The Olympus High School Madrigals brought their talents to our December meeting again for our annual Christmas program. They entertained and inspired us with their creative performance for the past two Christmas seasons and we are fortunate to have them back again to put us in the Christmas spirit. Over the last three years, Director Erin Tall has fostered the talent in this group and it really shined through in fun creative ways. What a great way to start our Christmas season! See video of their singing here.