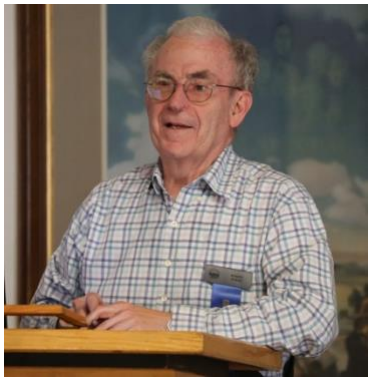
SONS OF UTAH PIONEERS
MILLS CHAPTER Celebrating Utah's Pioneer Heritage / www.supmills.com

JULY 2026 NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting, Monday, July 13, 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 June Mills chapter meeting was a real treat. Our scholarship committee chose some very bright and deserving students for scholarship awards this year. Thank you to Greg Coon for your wonderful leadership. The article in this newsletter shares the details about the recipients. Please also review Evan Coon's remarks at the scholarship presentation because it captures so well the essence of what we are about and why we give scholarships. Thank you Evan and thank you Mills Chapter members for contributions to the scholarship fund.

Part of our June chapter meeting was devoted to hearing from Nathaniel Gee, son of our own Merrill Gee. Nathaniel's presentation about his book on the Teton dam disaster was remarkable. In additional to the report in this newsletter about Nathaniel's remarks some of his remarks were recorded and you can watch and stream then on the following link: Mills Chapter Meeting Resources.

One of the concerns we have had as a Mills Chapter Board lately is the dwindling numbers at our monthly chapter meetings. We believe this is due to a couple of reasons, a few of our dear chapter members have passed away and the aging factor of others where being involved is not so easy. To help promote the mission of the Sons of Utah Pioneers and the Mills Chapter, three of our board members, Steve Cook, Rees Petersen, and Jeff Edwards have developed a superb pamphlet that in a succinct way tells what we are all about. We will be sharing these pamphlets with chapter members to help your friends understand us. Also, your ideas are appreciated in helping distribute the pamphlets and promoting the chapter.

I again urge each chapter member to connect with an ancestor this year, I hope that your personal efforts are rewarding. I also encourage all chapter members to be involved in SUP national events.

Confirming your attendance at Mills chapter meetings is very appreciated. It helps ensure we get the meal order to the caterer correct so that we have adequate food for meetings.

June Meeting Recap

June 8, 2026

Annual Scholarship Awards Dinner

Our annual scholarship dinner was led by our Scholarship Committee with Evan Coon's introductory remarks.

"For our Scholarship Recipients and their families, I would like to provide some quick context. The National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers (known as the SUP) is a National Society with international influence. It was founded in 1933 to honor and preserve the values, memories, and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory and the Western United States. Our Society consists of 46 Chapters including our Mills Chapter. Membership is open to all good men and women of every age and circumstance who have an interest in the early Utah Pioneers. It is not necessary to have Pioneer ancestry.

Our Chapter decided to honor not just past, put present-day and future Pioneers by creating the Pioneer Scholarship: a $1,500 scholarship awarded to local High-School seniors. This year's scholarship recipients all hail from Cottonwood and Olympus.

To be eligible, a student must display what we call "*Pioneer Spirit."* This is more than just a phrase – it represents a way of life grounded in strength, character, and commitment to values that have withstood the test of time. The student must have stood tall in the face of adversity. These students have encountered hardships, but instead of giving up, they chose to rise. Like the pioneers of the past, they meet life's challenges with grit and determination and come out stronger on the other side. Other characteristics of the pioneer spirit include: good character, appreciation of Pioneer Heritage, devotion to family, loyalty to God and country, hard work, service to others, personal integrity, unyielding determination, free from use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol, and no trouble with the law.

Recipients must be attending a college or university immediately after high school or after a religious mission. Eligible students must also have done their best in class to demonstrate their ability to succeed in their future College or University. They provided a high school transcript along with two letters of recommendation.

All recipients were invited with their families to tonight's dinner to formally accept their scholarship."

Meeting Recap

June 8, 2026

Nathaniel Gee

Our June meeting featured Nathaniel Gee, son of chapter member Merrill Gee who introduced him.

He is a professional civil engineer and serves as the Manager of the Dam Safety Oversight and Governance Group for the Tennessee Valley Authority helping guide policy for the TVA's Dam Safety Program.

He spoke to us about his book on the Teton Dam Disaster in Idaho on June 5, 1976 which killed 11 people and caused over $300 million in damage. Many chapter members have personal experiences in helping with the clean-up of the devastation in those communities.

Mr Gee served as Regional Engineer for the LC Region of the Bureau of Reclamation helping maintain some of the largest dams in the United States. He has performed various inspections including rope access and dive inspections of some of nation's largest and oldest dams including Roosevelt and Horse Mesa dams on the Salt River in Arizona, Parker Dam spanning the Colorado River near Lake Havasu City, and the majestic Hoover Dam. Nathaniel received a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Brigham Young University, and a master's degree, also in Civil Engineering

Upcoming Meeting

June 8, 2026

"The philosophical foundations and genius of the US Constitution"

Aaron Combs, University of Utah Institute

Aaron Coombs grew up in the booming metropolis of Fountain Green where there are more sheep than people. He received an associates of science degree from Snow College and then a bachelors degree from BYU in Marriage Family Human Development. Aaron married the amazing Sharon Tidwell and they have four daughters. After becoming a seminary teacher Aaron has obtained an Mastera of Public Policy and Demography Certificate from the University of Utah, and is currently finishing his PhD in Political Theory and American Politics from the University of Utah. Sharon has told Aaron he is not allowed to get any more degrees, so Aaron looks forward to even more time to hang out with his family, run, play the guitar, boat, and fix cars.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUPer-DUPer Day at This is the Place Heritage Park

- Saturday, July 18, 2026
- 10:00 AM 5:00 PM
- National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers (map)

10am Speaker at the Pioneer Center followed by a day of fun and activities in This is the Place Heritage Park.

Days of '47 Sunrise Service

- Friday, July 24, 2026
- 7:00 AM 8:00 AM
- Social Hall Avenue Chapel (map)

Days of '47 Parade

- Friday, July 24, 2026
- 8:30 AM 11:00 AM
- National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers Handcarts

National Encampment - Portneuf / Grove City Chapters

- Thu, Sep 17, 2026 to Sat, Sep 19, 2026
- National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers (map)

SUP 2026 National Trek: Washington DC, Philadelphia

- Tue, Oct 13, 20269:00 PM Fri, Oct 23, 202610:00 PM
- National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers (map)

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