

“TODAY IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY”

Gail Miller

Transcript of Address

Mormon Battalion Monument Plaza Dedication

This Is the Place Heritage Park

21 August 2010

Today is a beautiful day. It's a long awaited day, for the unveiling of these wonderful statues of the Mormon Battalion created by Doctor Neal. And for Larry and me, it's been an honor to be associated with this project and with Steve over the many years since we've known him. We've watched and supported this project and the progress of it from its [in]ception to completion. Larry even sat as a model for one of the figures.

These statues will serve to preserve our history and honor those who served in the Mormon Battalion, and will preserve their memory for hundreds of years to come. I know that the families of those who served in the Battalion will come here and look upon these statues with pride and with reverence as they tell their children – and their children's children – about the sacrifices and hardships faced daily by these brave men, women, and children who answered the call of their country at a time that was strained and inconvenient, but who understood that it was a blessing in disguise in helping them come west and leave the persecution that they suffered along the way.

These statues represent steadfastness, cooperation, sacrifice, progress, and liberty and freedom. And they will stand as a lesson and an inspiration to us and succeeding generations. Not only do they preserve a piece of Church history, they also preserve a piece of the United States' history.

As was promised by Brigham Young, this battalion never engaged in bloodshed. But instead, they were able to enrich the land and the communities in and around San Diego after their long and arduous trek across the country. They did that with efforts such as building the first brickyard and firing 40,000 kiln dried bricks, building the first courthouse there, digging 15 to 20 water wells and lining them with bricks, laying pathways and fences, plastering and whitewashing buildings to preserve them from the elements. And they served to protect the settlers of San Diego by building and manning Fort Stockton (now Presidio Park). They sent men to encamp to build forts to protect settlers in outlying areas such as Mission San Luis Rey [and] the El Cajon Pass. They helped to build Fort Moore, and raised the flag of the United States over the tiny pueblo of Los Angeles for its first Independence Day celebration. California was immeasurably enriched by the Mormon Battalion.

Today, we unveil these statues, giving them a place of honor in this beautiful park and in our hearts. History comes alive again with the remembrance of those who went before us, and reminds us that the work is never done. We must continue the course, and build on the

foundation that was laid for us to complete the work – that being to make our communities, our state, and our country – and the world – a better place. Each of us has an important mission, just as these men, women, and children did. Let us never forget the price they paid, in order that we may have the right to continue to live in a free land, and practice our beliefs and our convictions as we desire.

Thank you, Steve, for your vision and your talent and your drive to make this happen. And thank, Elder Ballard, for your support and advice all along the way. Thank you, Ellis Ivory, for providing such a beautiful place for them to stand, and for helping everyone come together. And thank you to all who were involved in making this project come to completion. It is truly magnificent.

God bless America, and God bless all of us.