

Church Seeks Histories of Modern-Day Pioneers

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When members of the Church think of pioneers, they generally imagine those who traveled to the western United States by boat or on foot in the 19th century.

Many might not realize that they are pioneers on the frontiers of today.

The Church History Department is currently seeking histories of modern-day pioneers. While the department welcomes all personal history submissions, it is particularly interested in the histories of converts, people living in an area where a new temple is being or has been built, missionaries serving in a new mission, and those who are applying the gospel in their lives while not living with the company of many other Latter-day Saints.

“The personal histories of others can help those who may have gone through the same

experiences or lived in the same place or same era,” said Brad Westwood, manager of acquisitions in the Church History Department.

Personal histories can be full life histories or bits and pieces, such as memories from a mission, personal experiences as a parent, or other specific stories surrounding a pivotal event, Brother Westwood said.

“We believe that all of God’s children are equal in His sight,” Brother Westwood said. “We all have an important story to tell—we all have a probationary experience in this world, and we know that history helps build testimony.”

One hundred years from now, Brother Westwood said, someone who might not have a family history record of his or her own might read yours and say, “So this is what it’s like to be a convert.”



SCREEN CAPTURE FROM JOSEPH MILLETT VIDEO

A short film on the life of Joseph Millett, available in English at news.lds.org, tells a faith-promoting story available today because it was preserved through personal histories.

As people learn about their relatives or other pioneers—including the struggles they encountered, the lessons they learned, and the wisdom they gained—they can find counsel and help for their own lives.

When a history is submitted to the library, it is cataloged and available for visitors to view and read. The manuscripts or books are housed in the Church History Library's climate-controlled environment, which prolongs preservation.

Brother Westwood offered this advice to those considering sending their personal histories to the Church History Library:

Write for public consumption. Although diaries and journals are wonderful historical sources, they are often about daily events and personal thoughts that are not always suitable for the public. Sometimes these can jeopardize someone's privacy. If histories include information that can harm someone's good name, they will be accepted but will not be available for public display.

Write stories in segments and installments. Often, trying to begin with your earliest memories as a child and covering everything until the present day can be daunting. Begin with one story at a time. For example, start by writing only about your mission. Once it is complete, move on to a different segment of your life.

Use primary sources. If you have a letter, transcribe it or put it in a book. If you have a photo, include it. If you used information from a specific book, make a note of it. Scrapbooks can play a part in personal history. However, those who make scrapbooks typically do not give context or write about events portrayed in pictures, Brother Westwood said. He suggests taking a few minutes to write about what is going on in pictures placed in a scrapbook.

Consult and interview others. "We typically think of our personal history as our own view, but

the more perspectives you get in it, the weightier it will be," Brother Westwood said. Interviewing other people brings a new perspective and may help you improve your history.

Write about spiritual experiences, pivotal moments, and key factors, people, and events. "People love a story well told," Brother Westwood said. Write about experiences with a beginning, middle, and end. "Don't spend 60 pages on your life before you were two. You probably won't write it, and people aren't going to read it."

Write about what you are passionate about. Brother Westwood suggested that instead of writing chronologically, you might write thematically or on a topic that interests you.

Most important, members should not submit a personal or family history to the Church without distribut-

ing it first among family members, as it should strengthen the family from which it came.

Brother Westwood believes that those who take the time to record a personal history, writing honestly about the hard times and the good times, will be able to see the hand of the Lord in their lives and will leave a legacy and memories that will strengthen their families and other members of the Church.

If you are a modern-day pioneer and would like to share your experiences, submit your history to the Church History Department. You can deliver or mail your history to: Church History Library, 15 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600, USA, Attention: Acquisitions.

Hand deliveries can be made from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

You can also e-mail your history to ChurchHistoryAcquisitions@ldschurch.org or call the Church History Acquisition call center at 1-801-240-5696. ■



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Personal histories can help others strengthen their faith.