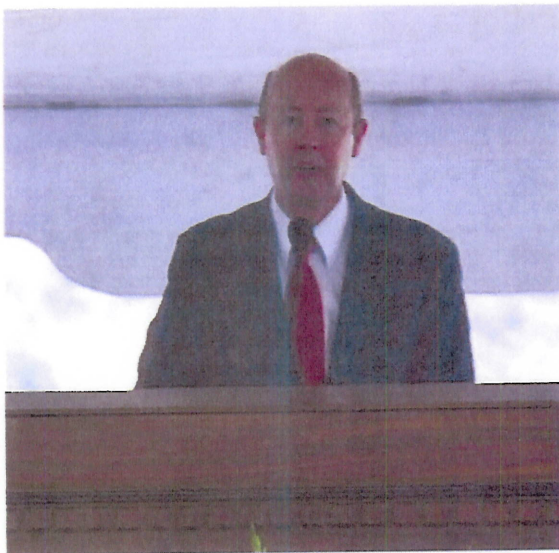


Elder Marlin K. Jensen said he was grateful for this designation. While visiting the families in Arkansas, he learned to appreciate their Southern drawl and music and grew to admire and love them. He then expressed regret for the behavior of the Mormon militia who violated all the Christian principles that LDS members accept. "It tugs at my heartstrings," he added, "and I can't tell you how sorry I am for what happened so long ago, and that is shared by church leaders." What might have happened had the wagon train been allowed to go on to California without incident, Jensen pondered.



Speaking of this historic occasion, Terry Fancher observed "so many people, so many years - and it all comes together today." Great granddaughter of victim John T. Baker, Cheri Baker Walker, recalled being extremely sad when in the 1970s she visited the old poorly kept Massacre site. It's gratifying to see the new monument get the attention it deserves. "Today," she said, "standing by this monument, I have a much better feeling than when I first came here."



Assistant LDS Church historian, Richard Turley Jr., described how some Mormons and Native Americans besieged a California wagon train in mid-September 1857. Mormon militia leaders promised protection if the emigrants surrendered. After they gave up their weapons and began walking toward Cedar City, the militiamen turned on these pioneers and shot, stabbed, or clubbed them to death. Turley expressed regret and remarked that "No one alive today is responsible for this horrific crime, but we are responsible for how we respond to it." He added, "We cannot change the past, but we can remember and honor those who were killed here."



As a memorial, the presidents of the Mountain Meadows Association, the Mountain Meadows Foundation, and the Mountain Meadows Descendants spoke. Terry Fancher recalled when Juanita Brooks came to Arkansas and spoke after she wrote the first definitive study of this tragic event. After quoting from the Bible, she urged all people to seek wisdom and understanding. The presidents then alternated in reading the names of their relatives who died or survived the Massacre.



Phil Bolinger told Associated Press that he was thankful people's attitudes had changed to support this Landmark designation. "Our ancestors," he noted, "were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time." Patty Norris reported to news reporters that she was overcome with joy. "I'm ecstatic and excited," she declared and then added, "I'm sure that all those who died out there that day would be grateful for those who worked on this [recognition] for so long."

In addition to identifying burial sites of the survivors, Scott Fancher, a member of the Foundation, noted that the Foundation had worked diligently for Landmark recognition. He added he and other members succeeded in getting the history of the Massacre included in the curriculum in Arkansas. The friendship quilts represent healing the wounds of hatred, forgiving terrible mistakes, and honoring the dead during the past two decades. The major drive for National Historic Landmark status began in 2007, when LDS leaders met with various groups. The cooperation in this effort dramatically illustrates how important it is for the members of the Foundation, the Descendants, the MM Association, the landowners, and the LDS Church to join hands in working together.

