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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete Country Travel and Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.

Show to Feature Unique Works of Artist Larry Neilson

The Fairview Museum is hosting a special show of works by Ephraim artist Larry Nielson in July and August.

Nielson is best known for his wildlife and Native American paintings on old and weathered wood; for drawings of "fat cat" and other critters, and posters that were popular in the 1970s; and, most recently, for a painting he did of a famous military scene that ended up being circulated around the country.

The two-month-long show will feature 67 of these works, starting from his 1970s "retro work" up to his most recent art. This includes a painting Nielson did of the image of the marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima in 1945. That painting was turned into a print that is being circulated around the United States and is very popular with veterans groups.

Neilson's early work included cartoon-like drawings of animals and posters for artists including Janice Joplin, the Beatles, and Jimmie Hendrix. He spent several years working as an artist and back-up singer in Los Angeles.

In the 1970s, he was inspired to draw a picture of a fluffy, "sort-of-arrogant-looking" feline that he dubbed "Fat Cat." He ended up turning it into a poster and for years, Fat Cat was hugely popular. Following the success of Fat Cat, Nielson was inspired to draw other images of cats, followed by a whole series of other critters: elephants, pigs, horses. Recently, Fat Cat and his pack made come back. The smirky orange cat graces the cover of a new book, *Cat Miscellany*, that was published by a press in London, England.

His "weathered wood" paintings are mostly of Native Americans, wildlife, rodeo scenes and Western themes such as rodeos and cowboys. Before making these creations, Nielson always waits for his canvas to "speak to him" before he picking up a paintbrush.

"The wood tells me what to do with it, it is like it has its own spirit," he says. "Every piece of wood is a challenge, a different experience. Sometimes, I see a piece of wood and there is an immediate connection, I know just what it wants me to do with it. Other times, I have to put a piece away for a while, then bring it back out later and I will see something special in it, a face or something, that needs to come out. It is very personal."

Nielsen works mostly from a studio in the garage behind his family home on Main Street in Ephraim, calling it Wind and Wings Wood Works (www.windandwings.com). The Victorian home from which he is based has been in his family for more than 100 years.



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