

Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT: “Discovery Road” local television series premiere
WHEN: 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 30, 2012
WHERE: KJZZ Television, Channel 14
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Local heritage-themed TV series invites viewers to “discover” U.S. 89

MT. PLEASANT — A television series premiering at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 30, on KJZZ TV (Channel 14) will introduce and explore the people and places of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area* (MPNHA).

“Discovery Road” features a ’55 Pontiac (owned by Manti residents Chad and Tammy Moore, and affectionately named “Love Me Tender”) which travels along U.S. Highway 89, All-American Road State Route 12, and Scenic Byway State Route 24. As the car drives along these roads, viewers will “discover” the things that make the MPNHA worth driving to themselves.

“The whole idea behind the show is to get people to do what they used to do on Sunday afternoon — take a drive,” said MPNHA Executive Director Monte Bona.

Using music, storytellers and the characters in the communities along the way, “Discovery Road” will present Utah’s history, scenery and culture in an entertaining and educational manner.

The first episode will look at the Spring City residence of the sometimes-controversial early LDS Church apostle Orson Hyde. Hyde was among the early Mormon polygamists who sometimes had to hide from federal agents who came to town on the local railroad to look for them. Local folklore calls the train the “Polygamist Express” because train engineers would sometimes blow a steam-whistle signal to alert the “brethren” that feds were on board and that it was time to skedaddle.

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“Discovery Road” hosts James Nelson and Gina Persinger — along with the star of the show, “Love Me Tender,” a ’55 Pontiac — stop in Spring City just off of U.S. ‘Heritage’ Highway 89 during taping.

The episode will also tackle the question of whether another Spring City resident, the outlaw Hyrum Bebee who spent time in prison for shooting a Mt. Pleasant City marshal in 1945, could actually have been Harry Longbaugh — the infamous “Sundance Kid.”

It will also look at the beautifully preserved historic home of a local judge and state legislator, Judge Jacob Johnson, who was also a good friend of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (whether or not he was Bebee), who visited him often at the home.

Along the way, the drivers of the car — hosts James Nelson and Gina Persinger — discover a local milkshake called “the Bishop,” illustrating the indelible mark the Mormon faith and culture have placed upon the area. They’ll also visit the 1920s-era Beaux-Arts style Casino Star Theatre in Gunnison, an example of both the incredible antique architecture in the area and the efforts to restore and preserve such historic treasures.

““The past is a lot of fun, but it is a lot more fun in the present,” says Scott Wyatt, president of Ephraim’s Snow College in an interview in the program.

The series is being produced by the college’s Mormon Pioneer Heritage Institute in coordination with the MPNHA. Wyatt envisions an extended run of the series with regularly-occurring episodes.

For viewers and, hopefully, travelers alike, “They’ll enjoy the ride,” host and producer James Nelson says.



“Discovery Road”-cameraman Marty Metcalf films at the Manti LDS temple for an episode of the upcoming heritage- and culture-based series highlighting the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area.

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***The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area (MPNHA) is a federally designated area of central and southern Utah running along the beautiful and historic U.S. Highway 89 — including the All-American Road Utah State Route 12, and Capitol Reef Scenic Byway Utah State Route 24, which both intersect with U.S. 89 and together form the MPNHA’s Boulder Loop. The area includes the counties of Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane.**

The Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance is the local coordinating entity of the MPNHA and receives annual funding from the National Park Service. Its purpose is to preserve, tell and interpret the stories, history and heritage of the area, and to promote its culture and value.