

MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (MPNHA)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT: Discovery Road crosses Atlantic to connect past and present

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WHERE: Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

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Discovery Road crosses Atlantic to connect past and present

In the next series of episodes of “Discovery Road,” the TV show produced by the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) and aired on the Utah Education Network (Channel 9), local channels CentraCom Channel 10, Manti Telecommunications Channel 3, KJZZ TV, and KTTA-8.1, crosses the Atlantic Ocean to build connections from the past into the present.

In four upcoming episodes, co-hosts James Nelson and Maryda Nicole Gallo bring you stories from England and Wales where some of the early Mormon converts came from. In several cases, they also interview people now living in the MPNHA who descended from pioneers who originated in those same English and Welsh communities.

And in addition, they interview people living in England and Wales today who came from the same ancestral families as the Utahns but who are from branches of the families that did not convert to Mormonism.

“If you really want to tell the story, you have to go where the builders of Zion came from,” says Monte Bona, director of the MPNHA and producer of Discovery Road. “The common thread in these segments is that one family member leaves and all the rest remain—one person making a fateful decision to become a Mormon pioneer.”

The dreams I left behind

The first of the four episodes is titled, “The Dreams I Left Behind.” The name comes from a song with the same title written by Clive Romney, founder of an organization called Utah Pioneer Heritage Arts. The song serves as the theme song for the episode.

The episode tells the story of Richard Graham, a convert who left Yorkshire, England, with his wife in 1867. He ended up settling in Milburn, Sanpete County, a farming and ranching area a few miles north of Fairview.

One of his descendants is Robert Graham, who grew up in the Fairview area, attended Snow College, became an attorney and ultimately became treasurer of the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, the largest philanthropic foundation in Utah. On May 1, Snow College bestowed an honorary degree on him.

In the late 1990s, more than 100 years after Richard Graham came to America,



Robert Graham, who is interviewed in the first episode, receives an honorary degree from Snow College in early May. He is a descendant of Richard Graham, who left Yorkshire, England in the 1870s.

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Martin Graham, a descendant of the same Graham family but whose ancestors did not join the LDS Church, immigrated to America to join the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania.

Martin Graham, who earned his a Ph.D. in England, is also president of a pharmaceutical research company in Pennsylvania.

Martin Graham assumed he was the first member of his family to come to America. Then he started looking into his genealogy and found Robert Graham out in Utah.

In the Discovery Road segment, Martin Graham's sister, Angela Graham Dodd, is interviewed in Yorkshire. Later, the episode shows a reunion at the Joseph Smith Building, an LDS facility in downtown Salt Lake City, where Martin Graham and his wife get together with about 100 members of the extended Robert Graham family.

Don't let them be forgotten

The second episode in the four-part series is titled "Don't Let Them Be Forgotten" and tells the story of Martha Robinson Blackham of Lancashire, England, a member of a large family who converted to the LDS Church in the mid-1800s.



Grave marker of Martha Robinson Blackham in the Moroni City Cemetery.

The area where the Blackham family lived was dominated by cotton mills that were dangerous and had terrible working conditions. Those conditions, combined with LDS proselyting, in motivating people to leave the country.

In the segment, Discovery Road moderator Maryda Gallo interviews a University of Utah historian about the 19th-century cotton mills in England. The segment also includes BBC interviews with workers at some of the cotton mill museums in the Lancashire area.

Two Blackham brothers crossed the Atlantic and made their way to Keokuk, Iowa, where they joined a Mormon company of 52 wagons and 400 people company led by Capt. Cyrus H. Wheelock. They left Iowa on June 1, 1853, and reached the Salt Lake Valley on Oct. 6, 1853.



Martha Robinson Blackham

When her brothers wrote home about their safe arrival in Zion, Martha decided to take her three children and follow them. Her husband, Samuel, did not join the church and refused to leave England. A family biographer of Martha wrote that Samuel liked "the pub" more than Mormonism.

Martha ended up in the ill-fated Martin Handcart Company in which scores starved or froze to death on the Wyoming plain. But Martha and her children survived. Martha and her brothers ended up in Moroni in Sanpete County.

Today, scores of Blackham descendants live in Sanpete County and other parts of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area.

The family is known for public service. Descendants interviewed in the segment include Leonard Blackham, a former Utah commissioner of agriculture and former state senator; David Blackham, a pharmacist and mayor of Mt. Pleasant; and Bruce Blackham, mayor of Gunnison and a former Sanpete County commissioner.

A heritage of music

For the third episode, Discovery Road goes to Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, to probe the story of Moses Jones, who, after converting to Mormonism, came to America alone because his wife refused to join him. He also left six children behind. In fact, in 1884, he had his Welsh wife declared dead.

After reaching Zion, he was assigned to settle in Wales in Sanpete County and become a coal miner. He married a Scandinavian immigrant who was living in Manti, about 20 miles away.

The segment talks about how deeply music runs in the blood of the Welsh people. Brigham Young was so impressed when he heard Welsh saints singing as they crossed the plains that he ultimately called on converts from Wales to help organize the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.



Moses Jones

In the Discovery Road episode, host Maryda Gallo interviews Rosalind Hall, a descendant of the children Moses Jones left behind.

Hall grew up in Merthyr Tydfil, is LDS, and as an adult was recruited from Wales to teach music at Brigham Young University in Provo. She is a contemporary Welsh immigrant to America and Utah. The Discovery Road interview with her took place on BYU campus.

Hall now directs the BYU Men's Chorus. Once she asked the men in her chorus if they had Welsh ancestry. About two-thirds raised their hands.

Another musical Mormon family, the Osmonds, also have roots in Merthyr Tydfil. Olive Osmond, mother of Donny, Marie, Merrill and the other singing stars, traces her ancestry to the town. In fact, Discovery Road visits gravesites in a Merthyr Tydfil cemetery of some of the Osmond relatives who stayed behind.

The episode includes an interview with Merrill Osmond about his ancestry and the role Welsh settlers played in advancing music in the LDS church.

A convert becomes a ring leader of the Wild Bunch

The fourth episode will also focus on Wales. The segment is pretty much planned, Bona says, but it won't be filmed until later in June.

The final segment takes viewers to Swansea, Wales, and focus on a sister and brother, Hannah and Louis Allen, who converted to Mormonism and left their homeland as teenagers. Hannah was 17 and Louis 11. Their parents and siblings stayed behind.

At the time Hannah left Wales, she knew nothing about the Mormon practice of polygamy. After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, she was targeted to become a plural wife.

Hannah and Louis fled to the northeastern tip of Utah, where Louis went down the proverbial wrong pathway. He ended up helping organize the Wild Bunch, the famous outlaw band that included Butch Cassidy. The group had a hideout at Brown's Park, which the Green River flows through.

The contemporary descendant interviewed in the episode is Mark Allen of Park City and Spring City in Sanpete County.

Mark Allen has restored the historic Spring City Inn as a bed and breakfast and is involved with "Under the Horseshoe," a series of radio dramas that are presented in a restored movie house in Spring City. In fact, Mark Allen wrote a radio script for "Under the Horseshoe" about his ancestor.

Some of the stories about the Great Britain connections to Mormon history have already aired in Sanpete and Sevier counties over Channel 10, a cable channel run by CentraCom Interactive.

The MPNHA is a federally designated area of central and southern Utah running along the beautiful and historic U.S. 89. The area includes an All-American Road (Utah State Route 12) and the Capitol Reef Scenic Byway (Utah State Route 24), both of which intersect with U.S. 89.

The MPNHA takes in Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, Wayne, Garfield and Kane counties. The Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance is the local coordinating entity of the MPNHA and receives annual funding from the U.S. National Park Service.

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Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area and Utah's Heritage Highway

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, both of which 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.