

MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (MPNHA)

For more information:

Robert Stevens

Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

435-835-6877

Email: rstevens@sanpetemessenger.com

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in partnership with

'A Good Road Story' tells stories of Utah auto and roadtrip culture

The latest episode of TV's "Discovery Road" takes viewers on a trip to explore the American love affair with automobiles, road trips and Utah history surrounding the custom.

"A Good Road Story" is the name of the latest installment in the historical TV series sponsored by the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area. The all-new episode opens with a look at Charles Bigelow—a man who made his name racing automobiles and traveling the country. He raced in the inaugural Indy 500, and in other races of the era.

Bigelow, despite receiving little public credit for it, was partially responsible for the popularization of road trips and road culture in the American West, and between 1908 and 1912 he helped spearhead a campaign to encourage Dixie State University students to help clean up Utah roads, and in doing so, improving the odds of people road tripping on them.

Next the episode gives you a look into the beautiful, road trip-inspired art of John H. Clark, which is known worldwide for its vintage depictions of classic cars in national parks.

Clark's Manti garage is full of vintage car memorabilia, and it's also where his iconic artwork is born. The posters, which are deliberately created to resemble vintage marketing material for national parks, are created with just a few colors.

"I got into building cars when I was a kid and as I got older I was very into the history surrounding them," Clark tells the audience in the episode. "Most of the stuff that I do is centered on travel and road trips, and harkens back to the 1950s."

From there, the show takes viewers through a tour of the Hole N' Rock near the Canyonlands National Park. The episode reveals the oddball location for road trippers to visit—a home, years in the making, carved into the rock of a mountain by Albert and Gladys Christensen. The home is made even odder with additions like a petting zoo and a Franklin D. Roosevelt memorial.

The episode also brings you to another roadside stop in Sterling, Sanpete County, where Lilly Thomas ran a grocery store on U.S. 89 for more than a half a century. Thomas and her grocery store were community fixtures and the episode interviews her son, Billy Thomas of Richfield, on the years she spent keeping the store going and the impact she had on the community.

"She enjoyed the friendship and company of her customers," Thomas says of his mother. "That's one of the reasons she was able to keep the store going for so long."

Next the episode takes you through a few pieces of roadside hospitality history, and a look at the nearly vanished roadside



Carolyn and Billy Thomas of Richfield sing a song in tribute to Billy's mother, Lilly, who ran a roadside grocery store for more than half a century.

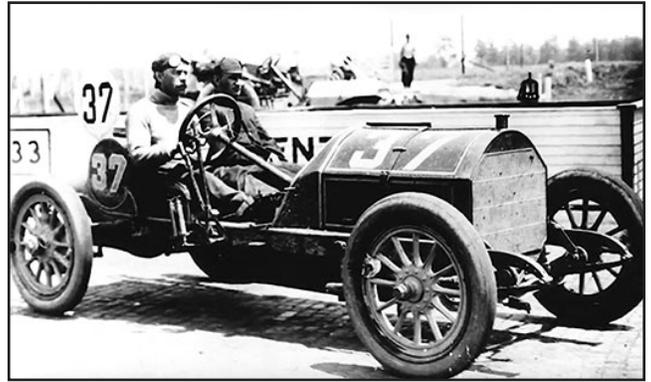
motels of yesteryear. Only a few colorful old motor inns remain, but they have stories to tell.

The episode closes out with a look at car museums and car shows, such as one held in Manti City, the home of the late Ed “Big Daddy” Roth, creator of Rat Fink. Every year in June, the Rat Fink Rod Reunion makes the rural town a destination for lovers of custom and classic cars.

The show introduces Roth’s wife, Ilene, who created the Official Ed Roth Memorial Museum—headquarters of the Rat Fink Rod Reunion—and the local car culture that has grown from Roth’s legacy.

“I go to car shows all over the world with the Rat Fink booth,” Roth says. “The neatest thing about the car shows are the people and it’s amazing to see how the community gathers.”

Discovery Road is aired regularly on the Utah Education Network (Channel 9) and on several local cable channels.



The new episode of Discovery Road, “A Good Road Story,” introduces viewers to Charles Bigelow (seen here in driver seat), who is one of the father figures behind the Utah road trip.

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About the MPNHA:

The Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area 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.