



***Discovery Road***  
**presents**  
***Tree Stories***

**Our amazing world among trees**  
**Pies, Monks and Temple Square**

The Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) and *Discovery Road* are introducing a new documentary that explores how trees have always been part of our world no matter where we are and what we do. The half-hour documentary episode titled “*Tree Stories*” travels to Capitol Reef National Park for a close-up look at the fruit orchards plants by pioneers who settle the area long ago. The years of work planting and harvesting fruit from the trees is part of the story but there is much more. The settlers needed trees for cover, timber and eventually for fruit bearing reasons. Today, countless tourists enjoy a day hiking and seeing the national park. They also find the visitors center filled with educational programs and souvenirs. One of the biggest attractions for visitors is the chance to pick fruit from the historic orchards and buy homemade fruit pies at nearby historic dwellings.

“Our average right now is maxed out at 38 dozen. So, we have strawberry rhubarb, peach, apple, mixed berry, cherry and right now our seasonal pumpkin pie. And seventy-two-thousand six-hundred and twelve pies were sold last year, and we are averaging and we are at that number at the moment. What you are standing at is the Gifford House. The last family that

was actually in this area. Behind you in the pasture used to be a motel. The families would bake the pies here for everybody that stayed at the motel behind you.” said Jason McElveen, Utah History Association.

The beauty and wonder of trees are a worldwide phenomenon. The grandeur, strength and abundance are astonishing. Individual giants, great canopies right along with historic and famous trees have graced the landscape like a living canvas for the people. Throughout the state of Utah trees of all sizes and shapes have been part of the history, culture and heritage of the people. Timber to build a better life, trees to protect community, jumbo trees to ponder or perhaps the umbrella of a magnificent oak tree as a place to launch a dream. Undoubtedly trees are part of the story of the American West.



**FRUIT TREES IN THE NATIONAL PARK- Capitol Reef National park is filled with history and incredible sights for the visitor. It is also where tourists can pick fresh fruit from historic fruit orchards if they are visiting the park during the harvest season! Photo-credit Discovery Road.**

“They didn’t take trees for granted. But it was really important to how they lived as you can imagine. They needed the wood for their housing, for their log cabins. So, when the first settlers would go out on the frontier they would look for nice stands of trees on their potential property. And the trees really

provided the basic necessities of life. So, they would use the logs for their cabins. They would use the logs for their fencing. This was before barbed wire was invented after the civil war. And, they would need their wood for their stoves. Cooking was generally done on wood burning stoves. And things like that. They always took note of the trees,” said Mark Miller, Professor of History, Southern Utah University in an interview with *Discovery Road*.



**HISTORIC MORMON CHURCH-The Pine Valley Chapel in southern Utah was built from local timber and stands as a lasting reminder of the workmanship and quality of the house of worship. An array of beautiful trees now fully grown surround the picturesque setting located 30 miles north of St. George, Utah. Photo-credit *Discovery Road*.**

“When they arrived there, the leader said, ‘This place is a little bit like heaven and we should endeavor to make it more so.’ And that is what they tried to do for the next seventy years. No matter who you were or what your religion they cared about you. They sold and bought cattle with the neighbors. They sold hay to the neighbors”, said Michael Patrick O’Brien, author and historian.

On the outer edge of Huntsville in the Ogden Valley, along the far stretches of gentle hills, off in the distance you can still see a special place nestled quietly among a clump of trees. It is where many decades ago Trappist monks made their claim to an ordinary way of life filled with hard work, prayer and humility.

It's the place that helped keep O'Brien on the right road after his parents divorced. Spending time with Trappist monks at The Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity and seeing their everyday lifestyle left a lasting impact on him. His story is brought forward in the *Discovery Road* tree documentary, *Tree Stories*.



**MONASTERY LEFTOVERS**-Producer James Nelson surveys one of the remaining outbuildings at the Trappist Monastery in northern Utah. Visible behind Nelson are some trees planted by monks decades ago as they were settling the area. Photo-credit *Discovery Road*.

We first met Roland Smart twenty-five years ago when he gave us a tour of the family spread commonly known as *Smart's Corner*. It's located just off 3900 south and 2300 east in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"That's an Ash. Black Ash. Native. The Black Ash. They've got green ash, white ashes but this is an old black ash," Roland Smart said as he took our camera crew around the family property.

"Now, why did your parents plant so many trees?" James Nelson, *Discovery Road* producer, asked Smart.

"Well, it wasn't so many when you figure they owned all the ground from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. And is where their home was. And they just planted trees around their

home and had most of ‘em all in orchards. And later we had it all in orchards and cows.”

Roland Smart’s father died when he was just a boy. He grew up anyway. Tough enough to be a soldier in World War II and Korea. He was one of twelve children. He talked with *Discovery Road* about the history of each tree.

“Well. They’re historical to me. They’re my mothers. My dads. See that room right up there? That is where I was born. Right in that room. Right there upstairs. Now, these oak trees here come from that oak tree down there. But this year they never got watered and they didn’t have no acorn on ‘em.” In this episode of *Discovery Road*, Roland Smart, shows the family farm, tree stands and one big beautiful Bur Oak tree that caused an uproar in the neighborhood and the community. It was a heritage tree and Smart loved it. When the parcel of land holding the tree was sold the tree was cut down. The entire intriguing tree story is born out in the documentary.



**WITNESS TREES** – Our visit to the Trappist Monastery near Huntsville, Utah revealed a peaceful cemetery where many of the monks are buried. The stand of trees offered a grandeur look and a sense of protection for the final resting place. Photo-credit *Discovery Road*.

“I was born and raised here in Salt Lake City. Salt Lake City is my home. Sounds a little bit soupy but the truth is, the earth is my home. And the reason it is is because for one thing the earth was created with the unique mission to be a wonderful place where mankind could make all the improvements they could both to themselves and the surroundings,” Peter Lassig, the late former Landscape Architect at Temple Square stated to *Discovery Road*.



**TEMPLE SQUARE HISTORIC TREES**-People from around the world plan their visits around a stopover at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah. The sweeping umbrella of trees are part of the engaging conversations that take place within the square. Photo-credit The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

“We, of course, are talking about trees as a reflection of their own eco-system and they are a reflection of a stable eco-system. We sit here among the finest trees in the state of Utah, and they reflect the stability of the Mormon church during the lifetime of those trees. These large trees were planted at about the same time the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated,” said Peter Lassig in an interview with *Discovery Road* more than two decades ago. His remarks are evergreen when it comes to trees.

Lassig was the head landscape architect at Temple Square for many years. He was the man in charge of planting, watering, gardening, planning and designing. When it came to trees the affable genius was at his best and our time spent with him on historic Temple Square turned into a marvelous lesson in horticulture and history.

The release of *Tree Stories* allowed *Discovery Road* to pull some invaluable stories and interviews from the archives to underscore important considerations about trees in our neighborhoods and around the American West. The documentary library revealed a compelling story with the man who tended to the trees and gardens on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah.

“It is quite amazing how important trees really are in our everyday lives. It is equally amazing how *Discovery Road* unearthed some fascinating tree stories after we met and discussed the need to have a show on trees. The program is undated and now part of our ongoing series.” Monte Bona, Executive Director of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area declared.

“Our many travels over the years have always had a tree story lurking there in the background. We are delighted to bring some of this intriguing history forward to further discussion and interest in how our world is truly filled with trees.” Nelson says about the *Tree Stories* documentary.

*Discovery Road* is an award-winning ongoing documentary series broadcast on several local and regional cable television stations and platforms in Utah and the region. Programs are also broadcast on National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) stations around the country and Weigel Broadcasting Company stations. The program partners with the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) on history, culture and heritage elements brought forward in the television programs. *Discovery Road* also produces programming for several other national heritage areas in the United States.

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