
Mormons on the Motion Picture Screen

OSHER 790-001**Dates:** Wednesdays, 9/23/15-11/4/15, no class 10/14**Times:** 3:15PM-4:45PM**Location:** Commander's House, Ft Douglas**Instructor:** E. Hunter Hale**Course Overview**

This class will examine the way members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) have been depicted on the motion picture screen, beginning with Thomas Edison's 90 second film *A TRIP TO SALT LAKE CITY* from 1905 (and no its not about early SLC!). Two surviving silent features, *A MORMON MAID* (1917) and *TRAPPED BY THE MORMONS* (1922) will be screened and discussed in class as examples of the more than 30 films made during the teens and 1920s depicting Mormons in a negative way. We will discuss the first major Hollywood film to depict Mormon's in a positive way, *BRIGHAM YOUNG* (1940) and how it came to be made. We will learn about the early efforts of Ruth and Nathan Hale (of Hale Theater fame) to produce LDS themed films for teaching as well as the forth coming of the Brigham Young University Motion Picture Studio. The course will examine the results of Richard Dutcher's break-out film *GOD'S ARMY* (2002) that brought about the inspiration for LDS filmmakers to tell their own stories.

DVD's will be available for class members to borrow of key films talked about in class.

Recommended Reading: Zane Grey's *RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE* and *THE RAINBOW TRAIL*; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A STUDY IN SCARLET* (The first of Doyle's novel about Sherlock Holmes). All three are a fun read and the Mormon's are the villains of all three. If the library doesn't have them you can buy them for very little online. In fact they may be online to read for free.

Week One: We will screen the very short *A TRIP TO SALT LAKE CITY* and the very controversial American film *A MORMON MAID* that was done under the Cecil B. DeMille banner! There will be a brief introduction to the kinds and number of anti-Mormon films produced and released during the teen and 1920s.

Week Two: A screening of the notorious British 1922 film *TRAPPED BY THE MORMONS*. Class members will be encouraged to take home and listen to a CD recording of KUEN'S Road West

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

broadcast of *Trapped by the Mormons* with host Doug Fabrizio interviewing James D'Arc of BYU and E. Hunter Hale.

Week Three: Darryl F. Zanuck, the head of 20th Century-Fox, produced a major motion picture of *BRIGHAM YOUNG*. Not only was this one of the studio's most expensive productions but it was also the first commercially made production to tell the Mormon story in a favorable light. We will discuss how and why this came about and the reaction of members of the LDS Church towards the film. We will see a rare newsreel covering the world premiere in Salt Lake City that attracted thousands of people as airplanes and trains brought in a dazzling number of Hollywood personalities.

Class members will be urged to listen to James D'Arc's outstanding commentary track on the DVD of *BRIGHAM YOUNG*.

Week Four: We will explore the early attempts of the LDS Church and members to produce their own films. These will include the efforts of Ruth and Nathan Hale (famous for creating the Hale Theater which remains one of the strongest presenters of live stage productions today) as they set up Seagull Productions and produced three short 16mm productions. We will learn how and why the LDS Church became involved in producing their own films that lead to the BYU Motion Picture Studios. Also I will share with you how my brother Richard and I produced our own 16mm film *SEEDS OF JOY*.

This came about in the 1950s and 1960s and was the start of successfully using the medium of motion pictures in presenting the LDS Church in a positive light.

Week Five: Then in early 2000 a filmmaker named Richard Dutcher struggled to bring to the screen a feature-length film that would open up the challenge for LDS filmmakers to tell their own stories on the big screens. Richard Dutcher's *GOD'S ARMY* was the break-out film that shocked some and inspired others. We will discuss the three Dutcher films that also include *BRIGHAM CITY* and *STATES OF GRACE* and the wave of films (good and bad) that followed that included *THE OTHER SIDE OF HEAVEN*, *THE WORK & THE GLORY* series, *CHARLY*, *SAINTS & SOLDIERS*, *THE R.M.*, *NEW YORK DOLL*, *BAPTIST AT OUR BARBECUE*, *FOREVER STRONG* and many others.

Week Six: We will talk about the amazing success of the new documentary *MEET THE MORMONS* and spend some time talking about the three amazing films of filmmaker and cinematographer T.C. Christensen whose films *17 MIRACLES*, *EPHRAIM'S RESCUE* and his newest *THE COKEVILLE MIRACLE* as well as his work on *EMMA SMITH: MY STORY* have all had successful theatrical runs. We will review the LDS Churches amazing use of social media in sharing the life of Jesus Christ in a manner never before done. And if its ready, I'll share with you a 5 minute video that I have been working on telling a missionary story that my grandfather, Edward H. Hale had in 1905 -- the same year that the Edison film *A TRIP TO SALT LAKE CITY* was released.

This should be a very interesting six week course. Hope that you will join us.

