25th Annual Arrington Lecture Explores Railroad’s Impact on Utah

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Richard White, Stanford University historian and lecturer, will talk about the transcontinental railroad's impact on Utah’s environment, culture and political atmosphere Thursday, Sept. 19, at 7 p.m., at the Logan Tabernacle as part of Utah State University Libraries’ 25th annual Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture.

White, a United States historian specializing in the American West, is a MacArthur Fellow, Guggenheim Fellow and a recipient of the Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award. White has also been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize twice for his work.

“We usually only hear about the positive advancements that the railroad brought,” Dean of Libraries Bradford Cole said. “Dr. White’s lecture will inform the audience about all the consequences of the transcontinental railroad.”

According to White’s book *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, the railroads “rent holes in the political, social and environmental fabric of the nation, creating railroads as mismanaged and corrupt as they were long.”

Though it has been 150 years since the completion of the Pacific Railroad, White will discuss the lasting implications.

As part of the Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture gift agreement, the lecture must touch on some facet of Mormon History. In “What the Railroad Will Bring: The Promise and Reality of the Transcontinental Railroads,” White will discuss how the railroads impacted early members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints settlers. The lecture topic also honors Leonard Arrington’s legacy as an economist and western historian.

This year’s Leonard J. Arrington Mormon History Lecture is sponsored by USU University Libraries, Spike 150, Smith-Pettit Foundation, Utah Division of State History, USU Religious Studies Program and USU College of Humanities and Social Sciences. This event is free and open to the public.

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