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Mesa Verde National Park

Colorado National Parks

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July 2024

### **A Request for filming that hints at discrimination towards Mormons 1958**

National Park Service of the United States

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Mesa Verde National Park  
Colorado

July 21, 1958.

Memorandum (AIR MAIL)

To: Regional Director, Region Three

From: Superintendent, Mesa Verde

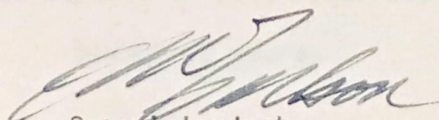
Subject: Moving Picture Permit for Neeleman-Johnson Productions,

We are enclosing a thermofax copy of a letter received Friday afternoon, July 18, from Mr. Douglas Johnson, of Neeleman-Johnson Productions, Provo, Utah, outlining his plans for producing a 15-minute educational film on the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings and the Indians who inhabited them.

You will note that this film is to be distributed by the Audio-visual Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. In view of the fact that this university is a very rigid church school which recently ousted all faculty members who would not endorse Mormonism and teach it in their classes, we are hesitant about granting permission for this film to be made. The narration accompanying the film would undoubtedly have to adhere to the Mormon interpretation of the origin and development of the American Indian. This interpretation, at complete variance with all accepted scientific findings, could not be endorsed, tacitly or otherwise, by the government.

We would appreciate your feelings and comments on this matter. As the film is to be on the Mesa Verde, and permission is requested to use the Museum dioramas and to film the cliff dwellings entered on ranger guided trips, there would be no doubt as to where the filming took place and since permission would have to be granted, it strikes us that this places us in the position of endorsing the view held by the Mormon church. It has occurred to us that we could stipulate that the narration would have to be endorsed by the Service if permission was granted for the filming of this picture. This stipulation, in itself, would probably result in withdrawal of the request to use the Mesa Verde as a setting for the film to accompany the narration.

Enclosed is a carbon copy of our reply to Mr. Johnson.

  
Superintendent

Enclosures

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
A9027 MEVE

	SURNAME	DATE
RC		7-23
AS		7-23
ADMIN.		
OPERATIONS	ONE	7/28
RECREATION		
FORESTRY		
SOLICITOR		
FILES		

7/25



Mesa Verde National Park  
Colorado

July 21, 1958.

AIR MAIL

Mr. Douglas Johnson  
Neeleman-Johnson Productions  
Box 685  
Provo, Utah

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for your letter of July 16, outlining your plans to produce a 15-minute educational film based on the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde National Park and the Indians who inhabited them, for distribution by the Audio-visual Department of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

The rules and regulations governing the filming of motion pictures in any area administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Park Service, of the Department of the Interior, by any person other than an amateur or bona fide newsreel and news television photographers and soundmen, require that written permission must be obtained from the Service having jurisdiction over the area. Applications for permission may be submitted to the local official having responsibility for the area involved. Fees are not charged, but a bond shall be furnished or deposit made in cash or by certified check in an amount to be set by the official in charge, to insure full compliance with all the conditions set by the head of the Service or his authorized representative. Also, the permittee must furnish, without charge, a 16mm. print on acetate safety film of any footage taken to the Division of Information, Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D.C., for administrative use, upon request of the Director of Information or his authorized representative at any time within three years from the date of approval of the application.


Some time will be required to take this matter up with the proper officials for clearance. It will be necessary, therefore, for you to postpone your proposed trip of July 27, to some later date. We will notify you of the decision reached, and if permission is granted, will send you the proper application forms to fill out for your permit, and let you know the amount of deposit or bond required, if any.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

O. W. Carlson





**Neeleman-Johnson**

*Productions*

BOX 685, PROVO, UTAH

July 16, 1958

Park Superentendant  
Mesa Verde National Park  
Colorado

Dear Sir:

At the present time we are in the process of polishing the script of a 15-minute educational film based on the cliff dwellings of the Mesa Verde and the Indians who once inhabited it.

The film, although independently produced by Neeleman-Johnson, will be distributed to schools and universities by the Audio-Visual Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, for educational purposes exclusively.

About half of our script is written around the five dioramas which you have in the Bureau of Information. These scenes serve to illustrate the things the narrator talks of as he describes the Indians and how they probably lived.

It has occurred to us, however, that there might be some rule that might prohibit the taking of motion pictures of these five scenes. Could you please indicate to us whether we may have the right to photograph these scenes.

Needless to say, any educational-type picture would suffer substantially by omission of material on the Indian himself.

There is another thing which has caused us some concern. That is that we have some scenes which must be shot at the site of several of the ruins, necessitating carrying heavy equipment (Camera, motor and batteries, tripod, etc.) down into the ruins. Would it be possible to take our gear down along with an escorted tour, remain after it leaves to have plenty of time to get the proper footage, and then come up with the next group which comes through. It would be a physical impossibility to transport the equipment and shoot in the short time that a tour is in the ruins.

Perhaps we have overlooked these problems until too late. Your reply, indicating whether these two arrangements could

Park Supt.-Jul.16-page 2

be made would be appreciated at the earliest possible date.

We expect to arrive at the park on the 27th or 28th of this month, and remain as long as necessary.

Our organization is just getting started, and this film essay on Mesa Verde is one of three of our first productions, so naturally we hope to do the best job possible. We would be grateful for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Doug Johnson  
NEELEMAN-JOHNSON PRODUCTIONS