



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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The picturesque blanket of snow we have seen the past week helps to refresh memories of days gone by for one Fillmore family.



James Edwards Peterson is well-remembered by townspeople as the man who plowed the sidewalks for residents after a snow storm. The tradition of clearing the sidewalks began over eighty years ago in about 1928. He was born in 1888, the oldest of nine children. He was hired by the city to plow the sidewalks, and for this he was paid 2 ½ cents a block. When he first started he used a regular scraper. Later he designed a V-shaped wooden plow that was built for him. He was dedicated to this job and very dependable. On snowy mornings he would be up before daylight, sometimes as

early as 4 a.m., to start his day of clearing the walks.

Vivid memories of him driving his bob sleigh are shared by family members. Colleen Davies, his daughter, tells of riding with him on many occasions, sitting next to him on the seat of the sleigh and hearing him tell old Danish stories as he drove the team. He also had a great singing voice and would sing as he drove. She tells that the young people in the neighborhood loved to tie their own sleds to the back of the bob sleigh when he went to the farm to feed the animals. He would pull quite a caravan with him to the farm.



Mr. Peterson loved young people and would take groups of school students on sleigh rides after dark. He would entertain them with his stories and songs.

Colleen tells that on Thanksgiving he would hitch the bob sleigh to the team and the family would ride from their home near the Flowell Road overpass to their oldest sister's home near the cemetery for dinner and then home again. This became a family Thanksgiving tradition.

Thelma Peterson painted this picture of Mr. Peterson on the sleigh.

James was the father of ten children: Della, Vernon, Clifton, Afton, Helen, Carl, Vernel, Colleen, Edith and LaVon.

When grandchildren arrived, they became the recipients of old family favorites, like rides in the sleigh. One grandson, Lee Roy Jackson, who is Della's son, is responsible for bringing the old bob sleigh back to life.

When the family farm north of Fillmore was getting ready to be sold, Alan Roper became aware of the old farm equipment there and bought it. One day as he was visiting with Lee Roy, he told him that he thought he might have the old bob sleigh that the family had enjoyed for years. When Lee Roy first saw it, he said he hardly recognized it. (Seen here in the picture.) It was in several pieces and didn't even resemble the sleigh he had remembered riding in with his grandfather.

Lee Roy took on the challenge of restoring the sleigh – a real labor of love for him. Today the sleigh is stored in Roper's Barn for safe keeping and to protect it from the weather. A fascinating part of the history of the Face of Fillmore.

