



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
May 4, 2016

This week we are celebrating the 220th Face of Fillmore. In all reality, I had planned on pointing out the 200th, but the holidays came and went and plans for that were completely overlooked. If I wait until 250, I may forget it again. Chalk it up to the “Brain Bubbles” that come oftener with each birthday.

Since its beginnings in September, 2007, the Face of Fillmore has appeared in the Chronicle every other week, almost without fail. There has been a time or two when life got in the way and the time a few weeks ago when I received a call from Shellie Dutson asking if everyone was OK at my house because there was no Face of Fillmore. I said, “That’s because I wrote one last week.” She was quick to point out that was two weeks before. Thank goodness for people with patience.

In all that time, thanks to the great people of Fillmore who so willingly send pictures and information my way, I have gotten to know lots of them better as well as the details of what has made Fillmore tick for all these years.



Lucretia Hancock Robison

In commemorating this event, I have chosen a person from Fillmore’s past who I would like to have known. Like all mothers, we want our children to be loving and make a positive mark on the world. Lucretia Hancock Robison did both.

Lucretia lived in Crete, Illinois with her husband Joseph Robison before leaving for Utah. They married in 1829 and were the parents of thirteen children, many of whom turned out to be mayors, businessmen, church leaders, as well as loving children to their parents. In 1851, the family came by covered wagon to Utah with a group of pioneers, leaving behind their prosperous farm with its beautiful home and gardens. They had sold the farm for \$2200, which Lucretia carried in cash sewn into the hem of her petticoat. It should be pointed out that this was a

very well-to-do family who came with several covered wagons not the one per family type of situation we think of. Leaving in the spring of 1854, they arrived in Salt Lake City on July 16th. They camped in the southeast part of the city and reported to Brigham Young. They were soon instructed to go to Fillmore and help the fifteen families already there build the fort. Here they eventually built the first stone structure outside the fort, which is now the motel across Main Street from the courthouse.

It was as the family left their former life that two of my favorite stories begin. One of those is a real tearjerker while the other is more heartwarming.



Joseph Robison home – first stone structure outside the fort

The Robison family left their family farm near Crete, Illinois, with its comfortable home and beautiful gardens to join the Saints on their trek west, taking with them seeds for planting an apple orchard and other seeds and plant starts that would be the beginning of a new life.

Leaving behind their old life, but more importantly, they left a son – Alfred – who was a grown man and had not embraced Mormonism. While Joseph and their son Joseph V. visited the Illinois farm in the years after their coming to Fillmore, it appears that Lucretia never did. To add to her sadness at leaving a son in Illinois, she also lost a ten-year-old son Proctor in 1857 and ten years later, another son Henry. (Two small children were also buried in New York State.) In the ensuing years Alfred had a change of heart and longed to be with his family, so he wrote to his mother, asking for forgiveness for his bitter parting from the family and telling her he wanted to visit her in Utah. By some unfortunate happening, the letter reached Fillmore but was never delivered.

Seven years after Lucretia's passing in 1899 at age 92, the letter was discovered behind a cabinet in the local post office. Alfred had died eight years before his mother.

It can well be imagined that Lucretia felt another sadness as she left Illinois, leaving a large field of her favorite peonies or “pinies” as she called them. These were her connection to her childhood home in upstate New York and the father that had disowned her when she joined the Church. After some time, it became necessary for Joseph and his oldest son to ride back to Missouri to obtain supplies and feed for their cattle. While they were in Illinois, young Joseph thought what a wonderful surprise it would be for his mother to have some of her precious peonies at her new home. He rode horseback to Crete to their former farm and dug up some of the starts. He packed them in saddlebags and kept them moist on the long trip back to Utah. It was snowing in Fillmore when they arrived, but he brushed away the snow and planted the starts in a protected spot near the barn. He told his mother nothing about them. In the spring, he was excited to see three green shoots appear. He kept them a secret until the following spring when a few of the large red blossoms appeared. Imagine her surprise as he presented them to her.

My thanks again to those who have helped with information for the last 220 columns with hopes of a great many more.



Peonies from starts from the Robison farm in Illinois