



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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This week the old Stevens Hotel will celebrate the 82nd anniversary of its grand opening, which is a great reason to write about it in this week's Face of Fillmore. Situated just north of the Millard County Courthouse on Main Street in Fillmore, the hotel has not seen paying customers for several years. It is not of the early pioneer era that many of the old buildings in Fillmore are, but spans a large number of years of Fillmore's history in the twentieth century.

Built in 1929 by Daniel Stevens, the hotel was the culmination of years of planning. Every detail in the design was carefully thought out. The building was constructed of steel girders and the foundation was of stone. All of the details in the building were first class down to the last detail. Even the ornate mop boards in the foyer and guest rooms are found in the laundry room downstairs.

David R. Stevens, Daniel's father, began his business in Fillmore in a store farther north on Main Street in a building owned by James King. He hired Joseph D. Smith to be the manager of the store for him and called it "The People's Store". On January 18, 1889, he bought the Fillmore Co-op Store and moved his business into it. This building was located on the northeast corner of the public square where Pioneer Market is today. In January 1897 Daniel took over the management of the store and in 1905 made his first addition to the building, as well as changing the name to Stevens Mercantile Company. He bought the store from his father in 1912 and in June 1917 opened a store in Delta, which was financed from the proceeds of the Fillmore store.

Daniel's ideas for business did not end there. His dream was for a hotel and on March 7, 1928 he began excavation for the project to be just south of the store.

From an old newspaper article published on February 22, 1929, we read their description of his project. "Now, he has just completed the masterpiece of the great part of a lifetime of conscientious and intelligent effort. It is in the form of an imposing business block on Main Street of his home town, and houses a thoroughly modern department and grocery store and a modern thirty room hotel with cafe connecting into this building and its equipment. Mr. Stevens caused to be placed only the finest construction and materials that money can buy, and the result is an addition to Fillmore's business district that causes the heart of every patriotic citizen of this fair little city to quicken with pride."

From old Progress clippings we are able to piece together the hotel's past.



The hotel opened for business on February 15, 1929. It was 18,000 square feet in size on two floors and had 32 guest rooms. All this for the amazing construction and furnishing price of \$60,000.

The Grand Opening special – February 22, 1929 was Porter house steak with all of the trimmings for \$.75.

On New Year's Eve, 1931, the hotel suffered a set back when there was a fire. The night watchman, Milton Frampton, first saw the smoke in the foyer and reported it. Several young men had been waiting there for their dates and the cigarette one of them was smoking started the leather davenport to smolder. Luckily, the damage was not too extensive.

Interestingly, years later on October 20, 1945, when the Café Ilene burned, the Cooper's set up shop in the hotel dining area and kept their business going until their new building was completed.

On December 29, 1933 the Lions Club ladies night saw forty people enjoying a turkey dinner at the hotel with a live orchestra playing dinner music in the background. Then at 10 p.m., everyone went to the Legion Hall for dancing.

Before the high school had facilities for dances, the proms and other formal dances were held in the hotel.

June of 1936 was a busy month.

On the 13th the PTA had a luncheon there for the price of 35 cents.

June 24 saw the visit from some real celebrities. Movie star Bette Davis and her husband Skeet Gallagher along with another couple Ben Lyon and Babe Daniels stayed at the hotel on their way to the Shakespearian festival in Cedar City. The old clipping states that "Both men did their own driving".

In 1938, international tennis star Don Budge stayed at the hotel. He was a member of the American Tennis Team and was on his way to New York for a tournament. He was famous for his playing at Wimbledon.

Following the sale of the hotel to Del Frampton, it was renamed the Del Patio.

The present owners are Janise Lix who has lived in the hotel for a number of years, her brother Jim and his wife Katherine who recently moved here from the Phoenix area and sister Joan who will be moving back to Utah later this year. They are in the process of refurbishing the building into the grand hotel it once was.

On a recent tour of the building, I was first amazed at the enormity of it. It does not appear from the outside to be as large as it actually is. The foyer door on the south was changed to that location to allow for wheelchair access. The walls have been painted a rich forest green with exposed wooden beams in the ceiling, polished brass antique lights on the walls, and beautifully colorful carpet that was just laid, which added the finishing touches to a truly elegant and spacious lobby.

Looking from there to the back of the building is the dining room and kitchen area. A stairway leads to the right upstairs where two long halls reveal a number of guest rooms on either side. I visited one of the rooms – the George Washington suite – and found beautiful old furnishings as if I had stepped back to another time.

I was truly impressed with the amazing project the Lix family has taken on and the careful personal touches they are using to keep the history of the old Stevens Hotel alive for years into the future.

