

The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

People often ask me how I come up with ideas for the Face of Fillmore. I have to thank the good people of our town for that. It seems that as soon as I decide I have run out of subjects to write about, someone gives me a great idea and I am off to my computer to make the next column happen.

Take for example an early morning bike ride I was on a few months ago. I had been on my regular route to the post office and was just parking behind the drug store to pick up a few items. Dan Rowley pulled up behind me and said, "Did you know?????" That is how the conversation usually begins, and chances are, I didn't know.

Dan's comment had to do with the house just north of ours. Did I know that that house had been occupied by a series of highway patrolmen? With reminders of names from him, I did know that, I had just never put it together.

The first of the patrolmen to occupy the home was Ralph Benson. Then came Gail Rasmussen who served as a patrolman from 1955 to 1980. Lyle Evans was the next. He bought the home in 1969 after moving from Green River to Fillmore. He and his wife Shirley raised their three children in the home and retired there.

I remember well our first Sunday in Fillmore. We found out that we belonged to the Second Ward and what time Sacrament Meeting began. We sat on the north side of the chapel and there, three rows in front of us, were Lyle and Shirley Evans. I felt like I had come home. The Evans' lived for a time in Price and were friends of my parents.

When we decided to build a home in Fillmore, we approached Lyle about buying part of his lot. After that, we always felt after that like we were next door to Grandma and Grandpa.

Following my conversation with Dan Rowley, I was curious about who else had owned the lot that we now own part of.

The first deed was, of course, to the Mayor of Fillmore, Joseph Vickery Robison in 1871.

Eight years later it was sold to Nicholas Paul, who was had the most unusual background of any of the owners of the property.

Nicholas Paul was born in England in 1823. As a young man, he settled in South Africa, where he joined the Latter-day Saints in 1853. He became a leader of the church in the Cape Town area. The family immigrated to Utah in 1860, settling Fillmore. He was one of the builders of Fort Deseret and was head mason on the construction of Cove Fort. After years of conflict

over water rights, polygamy, and other church policies, Nicholas Paul became a leader among those opposed to the church in Millard County. He died under mysterious circumstances in the Black Rock Desert in 1901.

In 1883 William Henry Bishop purchased the property. W.H . Bishop was born in 1821 in New York State. He married Eliza Ann Pratt in 1841 and they were the parents of five daughters and five sons. He came to Utah in 1848. In 1860, his occupation was listed as blacksmith in Fillmore, Utah. He passed away in 1884 and is buried in Fillmore.

A prominent citizen of Fillmore, Almon Robison, bought the property in 1900.

Almon Robison was born in 1845 in Crete, Illinois, the tenth of eleven children. The family moved to Fillmore when he was eleven years old and lived in the first stone home outside the old fort. (The Spinning Wheel Motel) He attended school in Fillmore and returned to Illinois to help other family members move west. While he never had any children who lived to adulthood, he is said to have had a great influence on the young people of the area. He died in 1919 and was said to be one of the wealthiest people in Southwest Utah.

From 1913 to 1954, the lot changed hands a few times back and forth between Orvil Warner and Alvaretta Warner. In my research, I believe Alvaretta was Orvil's mother, although I am not positive of that fact.

In 1954, the property was purchased by Layne Bottomfield. A neighbor remembers that it was the Bottomfield family who built a small house on the property.

Layne Bottomfield was a native of Fillmore. He joined the Marines, then returned to Fillmore where he was a dry farmer. He married Goldie Rachman also of Fillmore. In 1956, they moved to Pleasant Grove and he was employed as a chemist at Dugway Proving Ground. He passed away in 1998.

When the Bottomfield's moved to Pleasant Grove, they sold the home to Clifford Taylor Gass in 1956.

Clifford Gass was born in Circleville in 1897, his wife Eunice also in Piute County a year later. They probably married in Piute County as well, because some of their children were also born in Piute County while others were born in Richfield. Both of the Gass sons were veterans of World War II. The older son, Val, being a survivor of Pearl Harbor.

Ralph Benson, the first highway patrolman to live there, bought the property from Mr. Gass in 1957 and that was the beginning of occupancy by the highway patrolmen. **He** served in the U.S. Marine Corp. during World War II. In 1952 he joined the **Utah Highway Patrol**. He retired as a lieutenant in 1984.

Gail Rasmussen became the next owner. He began his career with the patrol in 1955 and served for 25 years. He moved to San Pete County, where he retired and then worked for the county there.

Lyle Evans bought the home in 1969 and spent the majority of the remainder of his life there. He was born in Parowan in 1929 and lived to age of 94. He began as a patrolman in Price, transferring to Green River and then to Fillmore. His legacy of service in his career and in his church and community are well remembered.

Lyle Evans sold the home to Camden Gillins in 2021, who sold it to Billie Gingrass in 2022. She told me that the reason she moved to Fillmore was to be near grandchildren. I can't think of a better reason.

One other transaction important to our family happened in 1977, when we bought the south end of the property from the Evans' and built our home there.

