

The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

The Face of Fillmore once again takes a look at one of our pioneer era homes. Located at 140 West 200 North, the home of Leslie and Elaine Rowley has seen much tender loving care in the way of renovations over the years and has been home to the Rowley family for nearly 60 years.

Elaine shared with me the abstract of the home which shows changes in ownership since Fillmore was first settled. As in all abstracts, the property was originally deeded to the President of the United States – Ulysses S. Grant. He then deeded it to the second mayor of Fillmore, Joseph Vickery Robison. From that point it changed hands several times. Some of these changes were a bit confusing but careful examination helps straighten out the mysteries.

The third owner was John Kelly, who purchased the lot for a mere \$13 in 1871. John was a very prominent citizen in Fillmore. Coming originally from Scotland, John Kelly was an amazing man. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and emigrated to the United States in 1856. Two years later he was called to go to Fillmore and teach school. He wrote essays, letters and poetry for the Deseret News and formed the first dramatic society in Fillmore. He was a very intelligent man. Besides English, he spoke German, French and Greek. He owned a small store, taught school and was the postmaster. He then became the county treasurer and county recorder, as well as superintendent of schools, mayor, and a city councilman.

It was questionable that he was the builder of the home. I personally doubt it, as he purchased the land on Main Street at 180 North and began to build his home there. It was first a basement house and later the upper floors were added. It was completed in 1872. This completion date is very close to the date that John Kelly bought the property on Second North. Since he was so busy building his own new home, I personally doubt he built the one we are looking at this week.

John Kelly's descendants have owned and occupied the Main Street home until fairly recently. Many will remember this as the Alma Iverson home. Alma was John Kelly's great grandson.

In 1884, John Kelly sold the property to Brigham Melville, son of early Fillmore residents Alexander and Jane Dutson Melville. (John Kelly's second wife was a sister to Brigham Melville.)

Brigham could possibly have been the builder of the home. It seems that near the back of the home, there was a blacksmith shop. I would think he would have first built the home for his family before he built his business. (Just a personal opinion.) The present owners have found some interesting items as they have worked in their yard and home. Some of these are

horseshoes and other items that would have been associated with the blacksmith shop. They have also found flat irons, clay marbles and even an old baby bottle dated back to the 1800's.

Brigham Melville had other means of supporting his family financially besides his blacksmith business. He and Joseph Melville worked for the mortician. Among other duties, they would "sit up nights and care for the corpses."

In 1891, Brigham and his wife Savalia sold the home to Seymour E. Brunson and his wife Annie. In 1905, they sold it to William C. Payne. This is the only mention of the water rights being sold with the property.

In 1918, Elizabeth Payne and W.C. Payne divorced and she was awarded the house, the lot, and belongings and custody of the children.

At this point in the records, the dates are odd. Records show that in 1916 Elizabeth Payne sold the property to William N. McBride. In 1922 the estate of Brigham Melville was under the direction Savalia Melville as administratrix. and then in 1923, she sold it to Elizabeth Payne.

In 1926 Elizabeth Payne Warner was awarded a Declaration of Homestead. This is an interesting document which awards the person the right to homestead for life. This surviving spouse I guaranteed her right, shield them from losing the home to creditors and discounts the amount of taxes paid on the home. A Declaration of Homestead is still in effect in the State of Utah, although it has changed since 1926.

In 1935, Elizabeth Payne sold the home to Arthur C. Brown and his wife Nona Hatton Brown. Arthur Brown was born in Scipio and moved to Fillmore where he became the city clerk for several years. He also served as Stake President. During this time the stake had an unusual method of earning money for the stake budget. They had a sugar cane farm on the block where the First Ward Chapel was located. Later on, President Brown and his family moved to Iron County.

In 1966 Arthur Brown sold the home to Leslie and Elaine Rowley. This was the beginning of major changes to the home. Built of adobe bricks, the home was the original pioneer style with an added rock room on the back and a summer porch. Plumbing in the home was very old-fashioned. For instance, the kitchen had a deep, metal sink and the bathroom, a tub with claw feet. The Rowley's went right to work to modernize the home. The rock room on the back was removed. A large room was added to the rear of the home. This was a spacious living room, dining room combination with the kitchen area on the south end. The former living room became the master bedroom and other bedrooms were remodeled. Gray vinyl siding with white trim was added as well as a new metal roof to finish off the new look to the home. Here the Rowley's raised their family with the home being a frequent gathering place for family get togethers.