



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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Entertaining the people of Fillmore has always been a top priority. From the first dances held on the dirt floor of the old adobe meeting house to the present day activities, a variety of entertainment has been enjoyed by the people who settled our town and those who have come later on.

One of the historical entertainment sites was the old Alcazar Amusement Hall. Built in 1908 mostly of lumber, the hall was one of the largest and most unusual in Southern Utah. It cost \$5800 to construct and was located on the southeast corner of Main Street and First South, where Dearden Equipment now stands.



Picture shows the site where the Alcazar Hall once stood and was taken not long after the fire. Probably from the roof top of the courthouse. Notice the new sidewalks. These were a recently finished project by the city.

One of the unusual features of this hall was the hardwood floor supported by springs, which gave dancers an interesting experience as they swirled around the floor. Tony Dearden Sr. used to tell how they found some of the springs from beneath the floor when they were excavating to build the garage.

The Alcazar Amusement Hall was built, owned and operated by Brigham Tomkinson, grandfather of Roy Tomkinson and others. Mr. Tomkinson did all of the maintenance on the building. His grandson, Roy, tells of his grandfather polishing the hardwood floor. He would tie gunny sacks to the feet of his Clydesdale horse and harness a bale of straw behind it. Then, sitting on the straw, he would take the reins and drive the horse around the floor until it was highly polished.

Brigham Tomkinson was a man whose name is visible in many interests around Fillmore and the surrounding areas. He owned quite a large portion of land. He sold the location for the general store to G.R. Huntsman Store (Bradshaw Auto building) on Main Street, as well as donating the land for the First Ward Chapel.

In July 1915, Mr. Tomkinson drilled the first successful artesian well west of Fillmore, turning this section of desert into rich farmland and setting off a wave of well drilling in eastern Millard County. The center of this activity was first named *Crystal*, then *Flowell* after the freely-flowing wells.

His name is also linked to freighting from Fillmore to Pioche, Nevada, and also to the lumber industry in the mountains east of Fillmore.

It was in this location that a near-tragic incident occurred, perhaps brought to mind by the recent flash flooding tragedy in Southern Utah.

One of the lumber operations was owned by James A. Melville, William H. King and Joshua Greenwood. It was originally in Dodd Canyon, then moved to Three Forks Canyon and finally to White Pine Canyon where the timber was more plentiful. A crew of young men were hired to run the sawmill and lived with their families in a log cabin in the canyon including Brigham Tomkinson and his wife Nellie Melville Tomkinson, Cannon Melville and his wife Mary and their young son, Thomas and Mary Davies and Bill Dutson.

On July 13, 1886, Brigham and Can were milking cows in a corral surrounded by large pine trees, when a sudden storm came up. Lightning struck five of the trees and the men had to use cross cut saws to cut the trees away to make a trail to get the cows out of the corral. During this, Can heard a loud roar, a flash flood was bearing down on the location. He called to the people in the cabin to run uphill as fast as they could. This warning saved their lives. The rushing water tore the wheel off the wagon and the sawmill was completely carried away. The only part that was recovered nearby was the boiler. The wagon wheel was eventually found twenty feet up a tree.

Brigham Tomkinson was a good businessman and knew that it would be more profitable to make Alcazar Hall a multi-purpose building. Thus it was used for other things besides dancing. For a few years, it was used by the high school as a gymnasium. It was also used as a roller skating rink and parts of the skates were discovered beneath it years later. In 1914, Mr. Tomkinson and his partner at the time, M.S. Smart, operated a movie theater in the building.

“At 3:30 on Wednesday morning the people of Fillmore were awakened by the dread cry of FIRE! And quickly dressing, they gathered on Main Street to watch flames consume the Alcazar Hall. It took about one hour and forty-five minutes for the hall to burn to the ground.” (From the June 17, 1917 Chronicle)