



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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City beautification has been a goal in Fillmore for over 150 years. In early pictures, we notice the picket fences around the pioneer homes as they were built. These were to define the yards where flowers and bushes were planted to increase their beauty, and keep the livestock out. The earliest flowers were wild flowers brought from the hills surrounding town or starts of plants carried carefully in wagons and on horseback from former yards and gardens.

When mentioning city beautification, the name of Stella Day will always come to the forefront. Stella was determined to put Fillmore on the map for its beauty and she donated thousands of hours in that effort.

Stella organized a garden club which met often and shared ideas as well as plant starts and hints for improving the gardens of its members. A youth group was also started with the same goals in mind. She could be seen, even in her older years, weeding flowerbeds in city parks. With her encouragement, Fillmore received awards from the Governor's office and others for its beauty and improvements, including being named "The Cleanest Little City in the United States".

Stella was the daughter of Gabriel and Hannah Hanson Huntsman. He is remembered as being the owner of the general mercantile store that was located in the Bradshaw Auto Parts Building on Main Street just south of Center Street. Stella, born on October 30, 1888, was the fourth of six children. She married Richard Ervin Day who died in 1963. They had three children: Belva, Ervin, and Glade. Ervin was a pharmacist and owned the Fillmore Drug, which his daughter continued after his passing. Stella passed away on January 31, 1985, but left her permanent mark in many areas of Fillmore's beautification and her name will always be connected with improving the Face of Fillmore.

Stella wrote a weekly column for the Progress called "Our Town". One of them begins, "The appearance of a town or city is the mirror that reflects the character of its inhabitants. One method of making sure of just what visitors see in that mirror, is to take pictures of our surroundings and study them carefully.

"Often times, our eyes become so accustomed to seeing an old fence, shed or other eye sores that we no longer really see them. But if we take a picture of a beautiful flower bed, a tall well-proportioned tree, or just a spot of beauty in our yard, and if that eye sore is in the background, right away we do



something to get rid of it. A mirror or a photograph show things exactly as they are, not as we imagine or wish them to be. With a little more ‘elbow grease’ the yard may become just as inviting as we imagine they should be.”

She went on to compliment the residents of one street for their hard work in their yards and mentioned that it would be interesting to have taken a picture five years ago, and compared the progress.

Occasionally in writing the Face of Fillmore, someone compares me to Stella Day. I consider that a huge compliment. She had a way with words and could bring about improvement with a mere suggestion in her writing. She complimented those whose yards and gardens looked especially attractive, sometimes mentioning whole neighborhoods at a time. A compliment from her was highly respected. She also had a way of purposely leaving out the names of homeowners who needed to improve. It was obvious in many cases, whose yard didn’t warrant one of her compliments and often that was incentive enough to improve.

One neighbor of mine told of one of Stella’s column in which she berated my neighbor’s father for the disgraceful amount of junk in his yard. The man took this to heart and immediately cleaned up his act.

In recent months, I have wished Stella was still around to help solve a problem in our neighborhood. An unoccupied home is causing an eye sore nearby as well as a health hazard. No one would want to live in this house in its present condition and I am sure an inspection by the board of health would ensure that would not happen. We were told that with three signatures, the owner would be required to clean up the property. Over a year later and twenty signatures and no results. I wish our city fathers were as serious about actually taking action about this public nuisance as Stella would have been.