



## The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard  
January 29, 2014

The subject for the Face of Fillmore for this week came quite unexpectedly while running a Relief Society errand, delivering a birthday greeting to Susie Robison. Susie and her husband Jay live west of the baseball fields in Fillmore in a new home they built only a few years ago. Entering their circular driveway, it is impossible to miss a tall cement pedestal with a large bell on top. When I asked Jay what the bell was all about, he told me it came from a ranch his dad had been part owner of located in Spring Valley, Nevada, and had been the dinner bell there. He invited me to come back another day and he would tell me all about it.



My return visit was very enlightening and I brought home with me a nearly 400 page book compiled by Nora Healey. I also found out there were many Fillmore and Flowell connections to this ranch.

Nora Healey and her husband Paul were called on a building and maintenance mission by the LDS Church to the ranch. Nora's assignment was to compile a history of the ranch and the surrounding area, which is the book I took home to read. I didn't sleep a lot that night. I just kept reading and looking at the fascinating pictures included in this well-written volume. Entitled Cleveland Ranch History, it was copyrighted by the church in 2006. In it are stories of the ranch and its people since its beginning, some of which are the very types of stories old Western movies are made of. With Nora's permission, I will share some of that history and its connection to Millard County.

The history of the Cleveland Ranch, located in North Spring Valley, Nevada, begins with its original founder, Abner Coburn Cleveland. Mr. Cleveland was reportedly a cousin of President Grover Cleveland, although factual evidence of that has not been located. A.C., as he was known, was born in Maine in 1839. He traveled by ship to California in 1858 and became a gold miner and then became interested in raising cattle. He went east over the mountains to Nevada and attempted mining again as well as being involved in the lumber business. In 1868, he married Kate Peters of Carson City. Within eight years of his coming west, he became involved in politics, being elected to the state legislature, running two times for governor of Nevada with plans to run for the U.S. Senate. The couple settled on what would become the impressive Cleveland Ranch in 1875. He became well known for improving breeds of cattle and was very successful in his ranching. The ranch became so prominent in the area that it even had a post office which opened in 1882.

A.C. Cleveland died from a heart attack at his ranch in 1903. His funeral was attended by a huge number of people who respected him in all his dealings.



Cleveland Ranch

Mrs. Cleveland was left to run the enormous ranch. Even though she was a strong pioneer woman, she was having trouble running the “large spread” and decided it would be best to sell it. W.N. McGill offered to buy it from her, but he was the one person she refused to sell it to. McGill’s first wife was Kate Cleveland’s niece. There had been some problems between the two women years before and they had not spoken since. For whatever reason, Mrs. Cleveland was angry with W.N. McGill, as well as his wife. This family feud continued the rest of their lives.

In 1909 Thomas Judd, the bishop from Lund, Nevada, offered Mrs. Cleveland \$100,000 cash for the ranch. The price seemed like a fair one to Mrs. Cleveland so she took the money.

A very short time later, the ranch was deeded to W.N. McGill! After investigating, Mrs. Cleveland found out that the money had come from McGill with Judd acting as his agent to buy the ranch. She was furious!! She vowed to kill McGill. She followed him for three years, carrying a short barreled 32 caliber pistol in her purse.

The closest she ever got was one night at the Northern Hotel in Ely, Nevada. She stood at the foot of the stairs, her gun drawn, as McGill was coming down the stairs. Two men grabbed her from behind and took her gun, allowing him time to escape and leave the area.

One of the first connections to the ranch and Millard County took place in about 1938, when Susie Robison’s grandmother, Audean Gregerson’s mother, was hired as the cook on the ranch. Her name was Nettie McDowell Hale, but she is recorded in some places as “Hattie”. Part of her job was to ring the dinner bell to get everyone’s attention. I have no doubt it could be heard for a great distance. I was impressed with its volume when Jay rang it at his home.

An interesting story involving Hattie was told to Nora Healey by Doyle Littledyke, a former resident of the ranch. There had been a prowler at the ranch. Hattie lived in the cook house. One night the prowler tried to break in through her window. She ran to the big dinner bell outside and the ringing of the bell scared off the intruder and alerted the men in the bunkhouse that there was a problem. For several days afterward, the men kept their guns close-by in case he returned.

Doyle Littledyke had another connection to Fillmore. His uncle Alma was a custodian at Millard High School in 1915. He was also a wildlife conservationist who was instrumental in such projects as planting the first pheasants in the county, planting fish in the streams as well as the Clear Lake project.

The Cleveland Ranch was sold to various owners in the ensuing years. Then in 1976, Jarold and Junior Robison of Flowell and Frank Davies of Fillmore became co-owners of the ranch. Several homes and a bunkhouse were found on the ranch and some of their family members moved into those, including Jay and Susie Robison and their son Jarvis. They tell of the time they spent at the ranch and the way they enjoyed that way of life, even though the work was physically hard, but very rewarding. This trio owned the ranch for three years, selling it in 1979 to Richard Moody of Delta.

A few other connections between the Cleveland Ranch and others in that vicinity and the residents of Fillmore area can be pointed out.

The Swallow family ranch, located in South Spring Valley, was established about the same time as the Cleveland Ranch in North Spring Valley. George Swallow moved to Nevada from England. Several members of his family followed, settling in Fillmore. Some moved to the Swallow Ranch and helped to run it. George’s oldest son, Richard, inherited the ranch and purchased the nearby Geyser Ranch. The ranch was owned by the Swallow family until the 1960’s. The Swallow history is in the Territorial Statehouse Museum, titled, “Our Swallow Heritage”.

The Rogers family, relatives of Daisy and Jay Rogers, moved from Oasis to a neighboring ranch 1916. George Washington Rogers and his wife Maggie along with their three children settled the Rogers Ranch.

In 2000 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints purchased the Cleveland Ranch and several other properties and began the Delmar Valley Cattle Ranch. Several projects took place soon after to modernize

the ranch and its facilities. Care was taken to preserve the old buildings in pictures and accounts of residents there.

The main cabin which was home to A.C. and Kate Cleveland was restored as part of the project. Paul and Nora Healey restored the south and west sides of the cabin and repainted the outside and some rooms inside. It was their privilege to live in the cabin from October, 2004 to April, 2006.

Today portraits of A.C. and Kate Cleveland hang in the log house where they once lived. These are on loan from the White Pine County Museum to the church for as long as it owns the ranch that A.C. established years before.