



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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Gracing the Face of Fillmore beginning in the early 1870's was the elegant Huntsman Hotel. Located on the southeast corner of Main Street and Center Street, this hotel was among the finest in its day. The hotel boasted 24 guest rooms with large porches on the first and second floors. These were decorated with fancy hand-carved posts and railings done by Hans Hanson. There was a beautifully decorated dining area as well, as even a barbershop. The spacious brick building had a frame addition on the back, which served as living

quarters for the family. There was also a large barn for where guests could put their horses for the night.

Built in 1872 by Gabriel and Eunice Huntsman, the hotel often provided lodging for Brigham Young and other statesmen when they conducted business in Utah's territorial capitol.

Gabriel Huntsman was the son of James and Mary Johnston Huntsman, the seventh of their eleven children who were all born in Parry, Ohio. The family came west and were assigned to help settle Fillmore.

Gabriel was among the missionaries called in April of 1856. He left with a team and wagon, leaving behind a wife and five-month-old baby named Gabriel



The Huntsman Hotel, home of the Gabriel Huntsman Family; built in 1872 by Hans Hanson, who had the contract; James and Ralph Hawley laid the brick. All of the fancy wood work was done by Hans Hanson. There were twenty-four rooms, an attic, and a two-roomed basement.

Riley Huntsman. During his absence the crops of the local people were seriously damaged by grasshoppers and an infestation of worms. Because he was a member of the United Order, however, his family was supplied with food and some other supplies during his absence.

He was later called on a mission to eastern Canada and once again he had to leave his family. This mission was cut short as he and other missionaries were called home when the U.S. Army was ordered into Utah to quell the "Mormon Rebellion" in 1858. In October 1871, Gabriel Huntsman left on another regular church mission to the eastern states and later served again in Canada.

Gabriel had a store in Fillmore as early as 1855. At least once he combined one of his missionary trips to the Missouri River country with freighting goods to be sold in his store.

After Gabriel's death, his son Gabriel Riley and his wife Hannah purchased the hotel and ran it. During that time modern plumbing was added and some remodeling done.

Stories about Gabriel Riley Huntsman have become legendary, with many accounts surrounding him, whether true or not. He was said to have been a large person who swore a lot, but was very kind to people. One Fillmore resident reported that, "If anyone had a fire he was the only one who had a hose long enough to be of much use. He was a huge fellow, and he'd appear with the hose wrapped around him. On the way to the fire he'd cuss the people for not getting there sooner."

He was often called "Doc" Huntsman, but wasn't a medical doctor. No one could say where he got that name. Some thought the name might have been given to him because he used to give a little medical first aid even pulling teeth in the earlier days of Fillmore.

The story is told that Doc Huntsman bought a new car, a Maxwell, which was the top of the line in those days. He was driving along Main Street when a cow decided to cross the street in front of him. His car hit the cow, killing the animal and badly damaging the vehicle. An extremely angry Doc Huntsman got out of the car to check out the damage. "What **** fool let his cow roam the streets? I'll sue the devil out of him." Then he saw the brand on the dead cow. It was his own!

Gabriel Riley and his wife owned the hotel until it was torn down in 1938.

(For an interesting account of the Huntsman family in Fillmore, search "Gabriel Huntsman" on your computer.)



Fifty-eight years later, in 1996, a replica of the Huntsman Hotel was constructed at This Is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City, giving everyone to experience this piece of Fillmore history.

This and other buildings at the park make for an enjoyable and educational trip. Hands-on activities such as participating in a pioneer classroom allow visitors to experience pioneer life first hand. In late May our granddaughter Haley Speakman and friend Page Martinez are pictured here, pulling the handcart as part of their fourth grade

field trip from East Elementary School in Tooele, Utah.

A sincere thank you to those who help preserve the great history of Fillmore.

