



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
January 22, 2008

The Face of Fillmore is dotted with antique homes, ready to reveal the history of days gone by. Truly the saying, “If the walls could talk,” applies here.

I randomly chose for this column, the home of Kary and Susan Kesler on the east side of south Main Street. While there are other larger and older homes, this one is often unnoticed, tucked back behind their family business. A look at this home makes one wonder about the history that has happened there.

I called to make an appointment for a brief visit. That turned into a real adventure with several stops along the way.

Kary and Susan welcomed me into their home and gave me a guided tour of it, explaining the changes that had taken place over the years. The home is more spacious than it appears from the outside with a living room and kitchen larger than I had seen in most older homes. The west wall in the living room is round and lined with huge windows. A fireplace sits in the southeast corner next to a double doorway into the dining/kitchen area that had at one time been a bedroom. Across the entry way with what appears to have been the original door, is the master bedroom. This is connected to another bedroom and the stairway to the bedrooms upstairs.

The brickwork on the exterior of the home is unique to that period. Two sections of small brick laid directly on top of each other instead of the staggered laying is typical of the brick work at the turn of the 20th century. I could not help but wonder many years from now, when people look at our new brick homes with the popular large blocks inserted on the corners, if they will say that type of brick laying was typical of homes at the turn of the 21st century.

Kary showed me the file he has kept over the years with notes as people told him information about the home. One unnamed woman had stopped to tell him she was born there. Paul Robison told him he had lived in the home as a child and again as an adult. The Merwin Trimble family occupied the home for a time. Notes about the original owners told that Maude and James Alex Melville built the home and lived there with their children Ethel and Oleta. A third person is also mentioned, Fay, who may have been another child. Alex was described as an attorney and prominent man in Fillmore. He served as city councilman when John Kelly was mayor.

My next stop was the courthouse to find out who else had owned the home. Debbie Arnold in the recorder’s office directed my search into the past records of Fillmore then pointed me upstairs to the assessor’s office to find out exactly when the home was built. Before I was through, I had also contacted the Territorial



Statehouse Museum to see if there were any early pictures of Mr. Melville, and visited the public library, as I had been told there was a book about the older homes in Fillmore. I was not able to find a book but brought home an interesting pamphlet about some of the older homes and their histories.

The Kesler property was originally in the name of Joseph V. Robison. He was in his third term as mayor when the land grants were reissued, and his name is to be found on most of the original land grants issued in Fillmore. In 1871 Joseph V. Robison sold it to Hyrum Safford, who sold it to Albert Day in 1883 and Eugene W. Kelly bought it in 1900. In 1903, it was sold to the Melville's and the home constructed in 1904. The Melville's owned it until 1945, when G. Wayne Robison bought it and then sold it to Floyd Robison in 1952. Later on brothers Ashby and J.R. Robison bought the property and in 1947 the family business was built between the house and Main Street. Floyd bought back the home in 1977 and later sold it to his nephew Kary.

It is interesting to note that while Ashby lived there, he was a counselor to Roy Olpin in the stake presidency, and the home was visited by many general authorities of the LDS Church.

The Face of Fillmore is covered with dozens of early homes with pasts waiting to be discovered. If you live in one, take time to do just that. It will be of value to your family and future owners. If your home is not a historical one, remember that someday it will be and again, its "genealogy" would be treasured by generations to come.