



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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The Face of Fillmore this week takes a closer look at a familiar landmark at the corner of First South and Main – the Robison Hotel.

Built in the late 1870's and early 1880's, the hotel was first owned by Joseph V. Robison.

The two story building was built of lumber with the lower floor lined with adobe. Hans Hanson contracted the building for \$1000. He was assisted by his sons John, George and Albert, as well as William and Josiah Gibbs and Alec Fortie. The rough lumber came from the Davies and Dearden and Warner Brothers sawmills located in the Cherry Creek and Strawberry Canyons, but the finishing lumber came from Parowan. The heavy timbers were put together with pegs and later on with nails as the structure took three years to complete. A large lumber barn was built just in back of the house, as traveling was done by horse-drawn wagons. The lime used in the building was burned up Chalk Creek by Jesse Milgate and the plastering was done by John Ashman. The iron hardware was made mostly by local blacksmiths Christian Beauregard and John Jackson Sr.

Joseph Vickory Robison was a prominent resident of Fillmore during the late 1800's. He was mentioned in a recent Face of Fillmore as they young man who brought his mother's favorite peonies from their farm in Illinois. He is the son of the Joseph Robison who built the first stone structure outside of the fort, which lies a half block to the north of the Robison Hotel.

Joseph first came to Fillmore in 1854 and a year later was called on a mission to Illinois. When he returned he was elected mayor of Fillmore, serving three terms in office. He held many prominent civic and church positions during his lifetime, including being a representative to the state legislature, senator, probate judge and a member of the stake presidency.

In 1868 he married Martha Jane Olmstead and the couple were the parents of ten children, nine of which lived to adulthood.

In 1883, Joseph V. married a plural wife, Elizabeth Wright Marshall Robison, widow of his brother, Albert. A son, Joseph A. was born to this union in 1889. Joseph V. was arrest in 1889 for practicing polygamy but escaped from U.S. Marshals at Juab and went to Arizona where he and his brother Alonzo had livestock interests. He stayed there until 1894. He returned to Fillmore where he died in 1914.



Following his father's death, the youngest son Albert Robison ran the hotel for several years, raising his family there.

In 1921, Albert sold the hotel to Andrew Christensen and his wife Mary Alice who were from Kanosh in 1921. Mary Alice was a mid-wife and nurse.

Early during the World War II years, Dr. Evans, who was the only doctor in the county at the time, approached Mr. and Mrs. Christensen about turning the hotel into a maternity home. There was no hospital at the time and Dr. Evans was in need of help.

Some improvements were made at this time. Modern plumbing was added as well as a steam-heating plant in the adjoining building, the heat from which was piped into the main building. The workers on these projects marveled at the fine quality of workmanship that went into the home's construction.

George, the son of Albert, and his wife Hattie Christensen and their children lived in the upstairs of the home during part of this time and it is from their daughter LaNila Christensen Kimball that most of this information was obtained.

Estimates in the number of babies born in the maternity range from 500 to over 900 babies.

A stay at the maternity home was just \$50, which included the cost of the baby's delivery and the ten-day stay that followed. Mrs. Christensen was a very strict nurse and would not allow the new mothers to get out of bed or even to read the Progress, according to Cheryl Wood, one of the babies born there.

Mayor David Christensen and his wife Gaye Kimball Christensen were both born there. Mrs. Kimball gave birth to a baby daughter late one evening and in the early morning hours of the next day; Mrs. Christensen gave birth to a baby boy. The mothers were roommates for the next ten days and years later these two babies were married.

During its heyday, the Robison Hotel has seen many travelers. Teachers and students of the Millard Academy boarded there and grew to love the Robison's as their second family. Tradition has it that Brigham Young, President of the L.D.S. Church and governor was always accommodated in the upstairs front facing bedroom with its spacious balcony, which may have given him a vantage point for addressing crowds of people.

In the years that followed, the home was owned by Helen Winget and later by Karen George.

The home is currently owned by Lee and Kay Davis, who have spent a considerable amount of money and labor into making the home the showplace it once was. The second picture shows the home at the time the Davis's purchased it. Among other problems, the lower part of the staircase was missing. Brandon Bartholomew was able to reconstruct the missing section, making it impossible to tell the old from the new. Other elements were painstakingly kept in mind. In the living room, which was used as the waiting room for the fathers as they paced the floor and waited for the arrival of the new baby, some fathers smoked while they waited. The cigarette ash burns on the floor were not sanded out, in order to keep the memory of the room's past alive.

This spirit of keeping Fillmore's colorful history alive is part of what makes Fillmore such a great historical community in which to live.