



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
December 7, 2016

In the early 1970's when our family moved to Fillmore, one industry in the area unusual to us was the mining of travertine west of Meadow. Quite honestly, I had never before heard of travertine and found this quite fascinating.

With a little research, I was able to find out from an online encyclopedia just exactly what this was and how it was formed.

“Travertine is a form of limestone deposited by mineral springs, especially hot springs. It has a fibrous appearance and exists in white, tan, cream-colored and even rusty varieties. It is formed by the process of rapid precipitation of calcium carbonate often at the mouth of a hot spring or limestone cave. In caves, it forms stalactites and stalagmites. Marble is another form of limestone related to travertine. When limestone is put under a lot of pressure for a long time (thousands of years), it can turn into travertine, the way peat turns into coal. If the travertine is left under pressure for thousands more years, it can turn into marble, the way carbon can turn into diamonds. So, travertine is a kind of stone that is about halfway in between limestone and marble. Travertine is finer than limestone, but not as fine as marble.”

Being found in abundance in Italy, the Romans used travertine extensively on the main parts of buildings where it was too expensive to use marble. Often, for instance, the steps might be made of travertine while the columns or sculptures were made of

marble. One example of a Roman building in travertine is the Colosseum in Rome.

Travertine deposits are found all over the world. One famous example closer to home can be found at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park.

West of Meadow was the perfect spot for the formation of travertine as hot springs are found in the area. One of these dried up over time, leaving the travertine exposed. The natural formation there served early Indians as the ideal spot to corral their horses and other livestock.

In the 1950's Hal Robison began mining the travertine with the help of crews of men. Large slabs, weighing tons, were cut and transported to a huge saw located in Fillmore. The polishing of the stone slabs was done in the building



A semi load of three large sections of travertine leaves the mine site.



A large crane was used to lift the enormous blocks of travertine

diagonally across Main Street from the Family Dollar. This was a family operation as well as employing other workers.

Phil Robison remembers that his job as a very young man was to put sand and water on the cable that cut the stone.

From the quarry, some of the huge blocks of stone were shipped east to stone cutters there. The ruins of war ravaged buildings in Europe were also being shipped to stonecutters and that proved to be a less expensive source of travertine. The competition proved to be a real problem for the local business.

Building with travertine became popular in the Fillmore area. Many homes had entryways lined in the stone, as well as fireplace faces and sections of polished travertine for the hearths. Even some local monuments like the Chief Kanosh Monument in Kanosh and the Meadow Bell Monument were constructed of this beautiful rock.

The prospects of a more extensive market for the product as well as more local jobs became a possibility as a wealthy financial backer from Salt Lake City became involved. These plans came to an abrupt end as the man was killed in a plane crash.

While travertine business still exists in a limited form, the lasting examples of the beauty it has added to our community are still enjoyed by many.



The front entrance of A.B. Johnson's home in Fillmore