



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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During a recent snowstorm, I found myself sliding my feet complete with warm socks into my furry lined, waterproof boots and tightening them up with Velcro to keep the moisture out. With other inventions to keep out feet warm and dry like Gortex, Thinsulate, padded insoles and dozens of others, how different this is from our pioneer forefathers in early Fillmore.

In reading up on what the popular footwear was during the mid-1850's, I have read over and over that these early settlers mostly wore leather boots than could be folded down at the top and had smooth leather soles. There didn't seem to be anything warm about them.

Reading farther, I found a fascinating invention happened right here in Fillmore having to do with shoes.

Going back a little, one familiar name in Fillmore's history is Joseph Vickory Robison. He built the large white home on the corner of Main Street and First South, right new door to his parents Joseph and Lucretia Robison. The parent's home was the first stone structure outside the old fort and was, in past years, part of the Spinning Wheel Motel.

Joseph V. was a prominent citizen in Fillmore, being chosen mayor at an early age. During his lifetime he held many other prominent civic and church positions, including being a representative to the state legislature, senator, probate judge and a member of the stake presidency.

Polygamy was a common practice at the time and Joseph V. was involved in it. 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. He made plans for what to do when the law came to his house. Through a trap door hidden in the kitchen area of his home, an escape tunnel led to the hidden cellar underneath the tithing house next door. This he used to hide from officials when they came looking for him.

He was, eventually, arrested in 1889 but escaped from U.S. Marshals at Juab County, traveling to Arizona where he and his brother Alonzo had livestock interests. He stayed there until 1894. Joseph V. returned to Fillmore later on where he died in 1914.

Looking back at his earliest days in Fillmore, we find that Joseph V. was called on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to England in 1855, just a year after he moved to Fillmore.

While there he met a man named W.S. Treskett. He persuaded Treskett to come to Fillmore and teach he and his brother Benjamin the art of tanning leather.

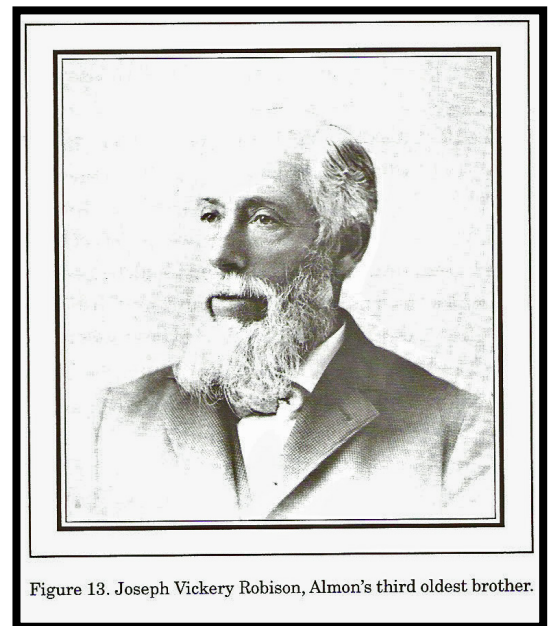


Figure 13. Joseph Vickory Robison, Almon's third oldest brother.

It took a lot of time and money to get the tannery operating. A frame and stone building were built in the north end of Main Street. This included a shoe and harness shop.

It is at this tannery that a fascinating thing happened. Up until that time in history, shoes for both feet were identical. The left foot and the right foot shoes were constructed exactly the same.

In about 1830, the French came up with the idea to identify which foot was which by placing little labels on the insoles of shoes: “Gauche” for the left, and “Droit” for the right. While the shoes were still both straight in shape, the French style was considered the height of fashion and other countries were quick to copy the trend.

Benjamin Robison was not satisfied with this. He worked at his design until he was able to build the first pair of shoes in Fillmore that had a right and left pattern.

