

THE HADLEY YEARS

Ken and Patricia Hadley

Our connection to the Tithing House began many years ago. My father, Silas A. Bushman, was a teacher. During the 1930s Depression, there were few positions available, and even those did not pay very well. By the time there were four children in the family, he was fortunate to get a position with the government to teach young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps who wanted to finish high school. This meant very regular paychecks.

It also meant we would be transferred to various locations. After serving a year in west Nevada, my dad was transferred to Leeds, Utah, where a large CCC camp needed a math teacher. I don't recall much about the details—I was just 3 ½ years old—but I do remember when the whole family was excited when we learned we could rent and live in a house by ourselves! No one in Leeds had a very big house during the Depression, so the Tithing House felt just right to us.

There was an outhouse in the back yard, and the only plumbing inside was a water tap coming through the kitchen wall. We filled buckets of water for cooking and bathing. We took turns bathing in a round metal tub with water heated on the stove. Our stone walls were 18 inches thick, protecting us from summer sun and winter cold, so we were comfortable in our little stone house, surrounded by a handsome stone wall. To me, both at the time and in my memories it was an idyllic life. Although we lived there less than four years, Leeds remained my “home town” in my thoughts.

Because of this we always stopped in Leeds if we were going south from Salt Lake City. We learned that the LDS Church sold the property to Joseph Beesley in 1964, and we watched with interest as a large garage was added to the back of the property. Later a ramp was built from the driveway to the front door. Still, it seemed that no one ever moved in to stay and the visits were less and less frequent. After I married Ken and he learned of my interest in the Tithing House, he said we should try to buy it. The first effort was met with a resounding “no,” but we didn't lose hope.

Plumbing was added at some point along the way and unfortunately a pipe broke when no one was at the house. A neighbor noticed water seeping out of the building and called the city to alert them. The water was turned off, but there was much damage done to the interior. When the Beesley parents died, we spoke to one of the sons, who had been thinking about selling the house. At last agreeing upon terms, we became the proud new owners of the Leeds Tithing House.

As we surveyed the building, Ken recognized that changes had been made. The main wall had been moved, the ceiling had been lowered, and some kitchen appliances had been added. The changes were obviously made to make the building more livable for a family. We discussed our interests and decided that since he had to gut the interior anyway, we would prefer to restore the building to its original layout and let it be a museum, open to the public. We will remodel the garage for living space.

In the first year we put on a new roof and Ken tore out all the inside walls. Next, he had the fun of rebuilding the interior to its original plan. At this point, we decided to design the front room to represent the tithing office and the bedroom to represent the families who rented the house in the 1930s and '40s. We bought maple flooring for the bedroom and put glass bricks in part of the bathroom wall. For the “office,” we located some wider pine flooring, and will hide any appliances in old-style furniture and crates. We were given a great old Majestic wood-burning stove to add the final touch.

The new Tithing House is still a labor of love in memory of its past uses.