

*HISTORICAL BUILDINGS
of Washington County*



Volume 2

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1992

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PREFACE

This is the second volume of a publication that features the buildings which tell the history of St. George. Realizing that the pioneer heritage was vanishing with each old building destroyed in the name of progress, in 1979 the Washington County Historical Society formed a committee, headed by Montruc Larkin, charged with locating pioneer buildings and researching their history. Over a hundred structures have been identified, and we wish to thank the following for their contributions to this project: George Lytle, Ron Lee, Scott Prisbrey, Jay Curtis and Terrill Clove.

In this volume, fifteen drawings by local artist Jon Bowcutt set the stage for the stories by Mary Phoenix which help the reader become a part of the experience of constructing these homes. How do we know what sacrifices were made to erect them? When little money was available for food or creature comforts, what an enormous undertaking it was to secure the far-away lumber and assemble the other materials in order to build the structures which endure today.

The effect of the past upon the present was expressed by David Starr Jordan when he said, "The smallest wave must go on until it crosses the ocean; so the influence of every ancestor must go on to the ends of the generations of life. Each one of us must feel in a degree the strength or weakness of each of them."

Another anonymous writer tells us, "To strengthen our ties to the best in our past and to help discover the best in our future, we have to remember that wisdom is not always found in the strongest eyes, but in the eyes that have seen much and understood. Look around you - - some of the answers to the problems of the future can be found in the past."

This book is for those who treasure their heritage, the past which is the foundation on which to build the future.

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THE ST. GEORGE TEMPLE

450 South 300 East, St. George

Even today, one hundred and twenty-five years after it was erected, the first Mormon temple in the West, the St. George temple is acclaimed by architects as the finest building between Salt Lake City and the west coast. We can imagine how much more impressive it was to its builders, people who were living in small huts and dugouts.

It stands as a tribute to Brigham Young, his vision and his leadership. When the pioneers first came to Dixie in the 1860's, Young was already feeling the winds of mortality swirling about him. The amount of responsibility he carried was crushing, but he did want a temple finished while he was still alive. He had a soft spot in his heart for St. George and its warm climate. However, he feared that the town would perish without help, and he saw a building project which would unite them as a lifesaver.

How could people who had a full-time job just to survive embrace Young's ambitious plan for a temple? But they did, enthusiastically. They believed that following the will of God as expressed by his Prophet was more important even than food and shelter.

In Salt Lake, the church architect was deeply involved with the temple there so Young called his assistant, Miles Romney, to oversee the southern project. After Romney laid one of the cornerstones of the Salt Lake temple, he joined others with special skills called south by Young. People came from all over the territory to labor on the temple's construction, their calls looked upon as missions. All of the tithing from as far north as Nephi was eventually diverted for this purpose. At the height of activity in 1874-75, it is reported that as many as 250 men were involved.

There is an abundance of stories about building the temple, and local families enjoy telling of the contributions of their forebears. The temple still shines forth as a symbol of the dedication of a devout people.



THE COVINGTON HOUSE

181 East 200 North, Washington

In April of 1857, Brigham Young called a group of twenty-eight families to go to Washington to serve as reinforcements for the Cotton Mission, which had been founded a few years previously.

The leader of this group was Robert Dockery Covington, a native of South Carolina. He had even owned slaves before he became a Mormon and was supposed to know something about the culture of cotton.

Evidently everything he touched was prosperous and so in 1880 he began to build this house, worthy of his status as a church, civic and business leader.

The house was unusual in that it was built of stone. The Averett brothers, who did the stone work on Winsor Castle at Pipe Springs and on the Cotton Mill, were the builders. The condition of these buildings more than a century later is testimonial to the quality of their craftsmanship.

While the house had two stories, the upper story was not divided and was one large room with a fireplace. This was handy for such household chores as drying fruit, quilting, weaving and the like. Its space was also valued by the community for meetings, plays and dances. An outside entrance by a separate stairway made it possible for these events to occur without bothering the family activities.

The house has been kept up and restored so that it is basically the same as when it was first built.



THE HARDY HOUSE

46 West St. George Boulevard, St. George

Augustus P. Hardy was a famous frontiersman who was called by Brigham Young to areas which needed his particular brand of fearlessness and bravery. In St. George, his special mission was to work with the Indians. In this he was very successful, for he quickly learned their language and was able to act as their interpreter in dealing with church or civic authorities.

In the late 1870's, he became the sheriff of Washington County. This was a dangerous job, for Silver Reef was in full bloom, and with it came all the problems of a boomtown.

The house Hardy built for his family had the usual basalt foundation of rocks hauled from the black hill, and double adobe walls. Although the house contained only two rooms downstairs and a half-story upstairs for sleeping quarters, it had some claims to gentility. Dormer windows, very popular in St. George at the time, graced the upstairs, and the lintel over the front door was decorated in a pattern much in vogue in Salt Lake.

The rocks used in building the tabernacle were all dressed by hand so naturally they were not all perfect. When the head mason declared them unfit for the Lord's house, they were given to the faithful for their personal use. Sheriff Hardy received some of these stones, called "spalls", using them in the construction of his home. He also built a small rock house for use as a temporary jail next to his home.

Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, moment in Hardy's law-enforcement career came when a murderer from Silver Reef was brought to St. George to await trial. Infuriated miners came that night, overpowered the sheriff and his helpers, and strung the miscreant to a tree a block or so down the street.

Sheriff Hardy's home is currently an Ancestor Square restaurant, and his jail, too, has seen commercial use.



THE BRADSHAW HOME

190 South 300 West, St. George

This home is considered to be one of the oldest houses in St. George though it is impossible to fix the exact date it was erected because the city of St. George did not get around to recording ownership of homes until 1875.

The pioneers arrived in the Valley on December 1, 1860, and by January 21, 1861, the preliminary survey of the city had been completed. Ownership of lots had been determined by placing names of the men in one box and plat numbers in another with the two being drawn simultaneously. One William Butler drew this particular lot, according to the early census. It is assumed that his house was built in the 1860s since accounts of the farewell party given him when he was called on a colonizing mission in 1886 list him as being a resident of the southwest party of the city.

Originally the house was composed of two rooms, with the customary rock foundation, adobe walls, and a fireplace in each room. Casper Bryner, the second owner of the house, added two more rooms, heated with wood stoves. The thick walls preserved the heat in winter and provided coolness in summer.

This typical pioneer home had many owners, but it is known locally as the Bradshaw house because Bert and Hazel Bradshaw occupied it from 1921 to 1945.

The grainery in the back was furnished by Mrs. Bradshaw and rented to Dixie College students. She used the underground cellar to store meat and vegetables and to help keep milk sweet. Laundry was done outside in a blackened kettle, while another kettle, used for making soap, hung beside it on an improvised hearth.

This house has been beautifully restored by Lavinia Harmsen.



ADDIE PRICE HOME

185 West Diagonal Street, St. George

Addie Price, a widow with three children, built this house in 1881. Mrs. Price was described by local citizens as having "considerable means", and she spared no expense in building her home.

After the fashion of the times, no architect was used; the builder just drew the house design with a stick on the ground and changes were made as deemed desirable. The material was rock for the foundation and double-thickness adobes for the walls. There was the very popular bay window in the parlor and fireplaces in all the downstairs rooms. A porch ran all of the way across both the back and the front, a desirable feature of a Dixie home before the advent of air-conditioning.

On the south, the first floor is slightly below ground level. Here Mrs. Price established a millinery business, which she advertised in the *Southern Utah Star* on July 20, 1895, as having the largest supply of millinery south of Provo. It was very successful, not only for the hats and other dry goods, but because the women told each other that it was not in the business district so they could just run in without having to get all dressed up. In the days of bustles, corsets, rats and hats, we can understand their line of thinking.

Mrs. Price must have been a true character. She seems to have taken the lead in many of the activities that a small town was forced to devise for its own amusement. Her home was the favorite gathering-spot for the young of the community. The shivarees she planned for the newly-married were the horror of the nuptial pair and the delight of the town. The story of the night Addie managed to get herself and her cowbells under the bridal bed lived on long after she had gone to her reward.



THE BENTLEY HOUSE 76 West Tabernacle Street, St. George

The Bentley house was built in the late 1870's by William Oscar Bentley for his bride-to-be, Mary Ann Mansfield. Her diary tells of how she enjoyed watching its construction and dreaming of the day when she would be mistress of this elegant structure with its spacious rooms and ornate woodwork. But, alas, Mary Ann was never to have this privilege. Just two weeks before the wedding, William Oscar, without consulting anyone, sold the structure to his brother Richard. Mary Ann's diary records her heartbreak.

It was Richard's family which grew up within these walls. It is believed that a great deal of the social life in St. George took place here. The elegant Christmas decorations and adult parties were anticipated events of that festive season.

In 1908, Bentley sold the house to pioneer businessman, Thomas Judd. Judd built the present Judd's store as an extension of the dining room and seems to have rented the rest of the building. When Thomas' son Joseph took over, he continued to run the store but boarded up the rest of the structure. It remained in this state until Dr. Mark and Barbara Greene purchased it and made it into a focal point of their Greene Gate Village.



THE ANTHONY IVINS/BESSIE GARDNER HOME

165 North 100 West, St. George

Among the older residences in St. George, the Gardner home is still one of the showplaces in town. It was built in the 1880's by Anthony Ivins, one of the most influential men who ever came out of southern Utah.

Ivins, a prominent cattleman and civic leader, spent the last part of his life as an apostle of the LDS church and as first counselor in the presidency. In 1894, when the church called him to assist in its colonizing project in Mexico, he sold his home to Thomas Gardner. In 1934, it passed into the hands of Gardner's son, Wayne, and his wife, Bessie. In more than a hundred years, it has been owned by only two families.

The original settlers had learned that the alkali in the soil would quickly dissolve foundations made of sandstone so this house had a wide foundation and a basement of black basalt from the Black Ridge. The eight rooms on the ground floor were co-built of double thickness adobe; when the Gardners were doing some remodeling, they found that part of the work was done with a thickness of four adobes. The original lumber and flooring are still in the northern and southern parts of the building, as are the square nails used when the house was built. The original house had a front porch and a rear sleeping deck, both of which have been removed. When the Gardners dispensed with the front porch, they used the extended foundation to enlarge the living room.

One of the distinctive features of the home is its setting. Brigham Young insisted that local homes be built close to the street so that there would be room in the rear for vegetable gardens. For some unknown reason, when Ivins built his home on the south side of his father's lot, he built it deep in the lot. This makes it possible for Bessie to maintain the front flower garden which adds so much to the beauty of the place.



THE GARDENERS' CLUB

48 West St. George Boulevard, St. George

The Gardeners' Club is said to be the oldest pioneer building still standing in St. George. It was built in 1867 on land reported to have been donated by Joseph E. Johnson, whose property it adjoined. Members of the club made their own adobes and took their own teams and wagons to the Pine Valley sawmill to secure the lumber for building the small structure for their meeting place.

When the first settlers came to St. George in 1861, they were instructed by Brigham Young to explore the region's agricultural possibilities so that the colony might become self-sufficient. Noted horticulturist Walter E. Dodge of Santa Clara was joined by Luther Hemenway, J. E. Johnson and others in cooperative efforts to establish and improve Dixie's crops. Johnson published a newspaper, *The Pomologist*, to encourage horticulture, and the club staged displays of agricultural products, giving ribbons to the winners, in what must have been the forerunner of the county fair.

It is difficult for us to visualize this small building as the center of the village's social and civic life until the completion of the Social Hall across the street. However, plays were held here, as were receptions, meetings and fairs. It even welcomed dances, but since space was so limited, a young man purchasing a ticket received a number and was only allowed to take his partner onto the floor when his number was called.

Eventually the building was deeded to James Pace and then to Sheriff Hardy, in whose family it remained until the Pace family secured it again and began the restoration of the corner.

The Gardeners' Club stands today in the complex known as Ancestor Square much as it was at the time of its construction. It is a lasting memorial to the workmanship our ancestors believed in doing.



VIRGIN CITY TOWN HALL

75 South Mill Street, Virgin

Virgin, which was officially founded in 1858, is one of the oldest cities in Washington County.

As soon as the basic necessities were taken care of, the founding fathers realized they would need a building dedicated to education if their children were to have a chance to better themselves.

In the middle '60's, the townspeople began working on what was to become their school building, church and social center. After the fashion of the times, they used a lot which the city planners had designated as a school site. They also needed the brawn and muscle of every able-bodied man and team in the valley to plan and build this structure, even though at the time many of them were still living in dugouts.

The original building had two cavernous rooms, one on each floor. The second story was entered by a wooden staircase which went up the outside of the building. Sanitary facilities were provided by outdoor privies on the northern edge of the lot. Eventually the upstairs room was divided in half. When a church building was constructed to the west of the school, the school's use as an ecclesiastical facility diminished.

When the depression brought the Works Projects Agency to Utah, Virgin benefitted by having indoor plumbing installed in the building, a great blessing to the students. A furnace was installed to replace the pot-bellied stove which roasted those in the near vicinity and froze those in the rear of the room. It is interesting to note that the furnace is still in use.

When the schools were consolidated and Virgin students bussed to Hurricane, the city secured a lease on the building, some of which has been restored to serve as city offices.