

# **Memoirs of a Neighborhood**

## **359 East 100 South**

**by Clark N. Nelson, Sr.**

**The home albeit a duplex at 359 East 100 South was by no means new or remodeled, yet with an architectural façade suggesting tapestry and grace.**

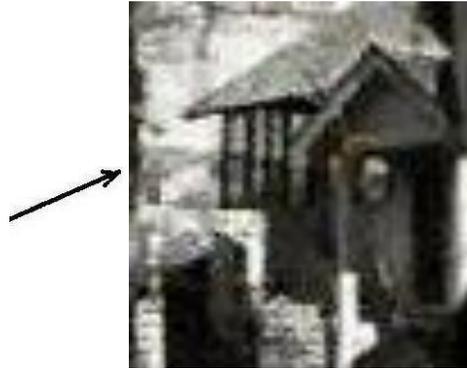
**My paternal grandmother Euphemia Miles Nelson Whipple was the owner of the home and property. She was living in the east side when I was there except for one instance to be covered within actual sequence of occurrence.**



**359 East 100 South - approximate date - 1963**

**A family get-together at the west side frontage**

**This home/duplex featured a full-width screen porch at the rear. Entrance from the west side began at an exterior stairway just north of the kitchen door; screen porch depth was something like ten or twelve feet, affording enough for storage trunks, single or double beds, with comfortable sleeping during the hot, dry summer months.**



**A cropped image from an old and faded photo with arrow pointing toward the northwest corner of the screen porch at the rear of the home as it was during the years I lived there.**

**There was also a full-width front porch; a smooth concrete surface, with porch rails, post caps, and portals similar to an ocean liner promenade deck; the depth of this porch was around eight feet.**



**1933 - Ray B. Nelson and his dog on the front porch**

# West Side Walk Thru

Beginning at the west side front entrance and working back:

Living Room - sofa, chair, coal-burning stove, window swamp cooler, upright piano, adjoining double doors, paned glass, curtains, doors closed, curtains drawn;

Bedroom - largest room on the west side – double bed - single bed - dresser with mirror and bench;

Small Kitchen – kitchen dinette with buffet - coal-burning stove – electric range;

Small Sunken Bedroom;

Small Sunken Bathroom.

# East Side Walk Thru

Beginning at the east side front entrance and working back:

Living Room – card table – assorted furniture - adjoining double doors, paned glass, curtains, doors closed, curtains drawn;

Large Kitchen - largest room on the east side;

Bathroom;

Modest Bedroom;

Door and Stairs leading to the screen porch.

The only part of this property with grass and shrubs was the front yard, always maintained as it should be. The soil and grass were held in place by a concrete retaining wall around two feet in height. I mowed that grass so many times with an old-fashioned push mower. There were two steps at the center of the retaining wall affording access to a paved walkway leading to an additional five steps affording access to the front porch. There were always two or three evergreen shrubs on each side of those five steps.



At the five steps to the porch



The retaining wall can be seen in this photo



An evergreenshrub in the background



A rare deep snow covers the front yard

Prior to my having a drivers license, I usually took a shortcut on my way home from school. This shortcut took me along the eastern edge of the property north of the VFW Post and 349 East 100 South.

There was always a German Shepherd at the rear of the house on that property with a long chain attached. That dog was always barking and growling at me, so I always made sure I had enough room to continue without being attacked.

Then one afternoon, that German Shepherd must've been closer than ever before because it barked, growled, then ran and jumped on me. It clamped it's teeth around the bicep of my right arm, much like a vise-grip, and wouldn't let go. I continued pulling back trying to break free, when it suddenly let go, then looked at me as if to say, "I'll chew you up good next time".



I believe that I just might've installed the very first miniature golf course in Washington County; the catalyst for such having been the motion picture 'Follow The Sun' (1951) with Glenn Ford and Anne Baxter, focused upon the magnificent comeback by the renowned golf pro Ben Hogan; a stirring saga that seemed to kindle a local interest in golf.

I suppose it was either 1951 or 1952 when I considered the area from the rear of the home and continuing down along the west side, as a possible spot for a miniature golf course, albeit minus any real grass or putting surface.

I began by raking the entire area, stepped off four (4) cup locations, placed four (4) empty tuna cans, or other cans quite similar, at an appropriate depth, then made a putter shaft from a 1" x 1" stick of wood tacked on a right angle putter blade that I made from a strip of lattice, then bought a handful of golf balls from the Firestone store on Main Street.

**I then passed the word along that I had installed a miniature golf putting course. Within three or four days several youngsters in the neighborhood were already enjoying the 4-hole course.**



**A stained and weathered wooden building sat several feet to the rear of the home, a building we knew as the ‘wash house’, something like twenty feet by eight feet; an electrical outlet at the southeast corner for a washing machine, with an electric light fixture overhead.**

**My dad once managed a Conoco service station owned by Pete Milne located on the same property as Milne Motor Court on 100 North. My brother Larry would rush out and wash the windshield for those stopping for a fill up.**

**This was back when those working in a service station wore uniforms. My dad’s Conoco uniforms were occasionally stained with oil and grease. I remember my mom building a fire just outside that wash house, boiling water in a wash tub, adding lye soap, dropping my dad’s uniforms in the washtub, and pushing them around with a wood mop handle. The compartment at the west end of this old wash house was generally used for storing feed and saddlery.**



**Throughout this particular period, the property east of the home was always vacant, except for a large shade tree, a hog wire and fence post corral with hay, a water trough, a salt lick, along with a gentle mare called ‘Sally’. I rode Sally on a number of occasions but I actually preferred riding bareback. I used a saddle and bridle a few times but not very often.**



**One of the most unusual spots in our general neighborhood was the street commonly referred to as ‘Flood Street’, 400 East between Tabernacle and 100 South. Whenever subject to rain showers the slope and lay of the land below**

**Tabernacle became a natural storm gutter overflow, catching a runoff from Tabernacle and other points north.**

**Be it a ski ramp in Aspen, a bobsled in Oslo, a surveyor's nightmare, or paddle wheel runoff, Flood Street was two streets in one, either a dirt or muddy playground the size of a football field. Many games were played there among the youngsters, notwithstanding probable injuries. Flood Street was eventually paved with asphalt but it could still be slick as glass when wet.**



**The following three sobering events come to mind as I recall those years at 359 East 100 South:**

**1. 1944 - my grandmother had baked and carefully packed a birthday cake for her son Miles who was serving in Europe with the U. S. Army. However the cake was ultimately undeliverable due to movements common to armed forces moving about; the cake was returned.**

**Contents within the box had been reduced to little more than crumbs. I was in the east side kitchen with my mom when this occurred, and my grandmother's heart was breaking with disappointment. She stood there looking at what had once been a birthday cake for her son, and wept openly;**

**2. 1945 - I was inside our west side of the home with my mom when my grandmother came rushing in with a tear-soaked face and her hands were trembling; she held out a letter of notification that her son Miles had been wounded in Europe on Christmas Day, 1944. Miles, a member of the 106th Infantry 7th Armored Division had been wounded by shrapnel in the Ardennes, the Battle of the Bulge. The 106th Infantry 7th Armored had eventually been relieved by the 82nd Airborne Division;**

**3. 1947 - My 13 year-old brother Larry passed away from Hodgkin's Disease June 13, 1947. The front porch and living room were filled with compassionate friends and relatives. The customary viewing and visitation were held in our living room on the west side.**

I earned the privilege of operating a vehicle in January of 1953; moreover, I was a resident of 359 East 100 South for exactly three years following my earning that license.

My dad was always buying or selling something, be they horses, saddles, cars, or what have you, notwithstanding the family business on Main Street.

There were times when my dad sold new cars for a new-car dealership, and at times, as a used-car personal venture. I had a number of makes, models, and body styles at my disposal, but only when my dad handed me the keys and suggested that I enjoy them.

I have gathered from memory a list of the used vehicles I drove while living at 359 East 100 South, that were often parked near the street, in front of the residence; also included are those that were purchased for our family and not to be sold; furthermore, that relevant period having been my final three years at 359 East 100 South. Those cars, makes, and models were:

1954 Dodge pickup 1955 Willys Jeep pickup 1949 International pickup 1951 Studebaker Champion 1942 Chevrolet 1952 Chrysler 1948 Plymouth 1956 Cadillac Coupe DeVille 1955 Ford convertible 1956 Buick Century 1954 Olds 98 1954 Bel Air Chevrolet 1955 Chevrolet 1955 Plymouth 1956 Plymouth 1956 Plymouth Station Wagon 19556 Dodge 1953 Chrysler New Yorker.

Four vehicles from the preceding list are pictured below:



Having lived across the street from the Sun Bowl was always an advantage, considering the annual 3-day/night September event, the Dixie Roundup. What appeared the annual Dixie Round Up warm up favorite in the Sun Bowl was the Bob Wills composition from 1938, with Wills and The Texas Playboys' recording of 'San Antonio Rose'.

One of the most popular figures at the Dixie Roundup was one of the most popular rodeo clowns, Wilbur Plaughter. Plaughter was the PRCA Rodeo Clown of the Year in 1982. Plaughter could do it all in every rodeo event, the all around cowboy. I spoke with Wilbur Plaughter one evening in the front yard at 359 East 100 South; the date was in September of 1952, Dixie Roundup time.



**Wilbur Plaughter**

Prior to the Sun Bowl, that spot resembled the surface of a rogue planet or perhaps a meteor crater, a large open ugly pit with a murky pond of water at the bottom, which most had assumed was a water runoff of sorts, origin having been the Municipal Power Plant. The northern strip running east and west near 100 South had a two-rail race track stretch, leading to and from back to the old grandstand. I still recall watching rodeos at the old rodeo grounds, most of which eventually became a ball park.

When it comes to preparation for the annual Dixie Roundup, I do recall an unsettling occurrence when my dad was one of those working with rodeo queen contestants who were bent on sharpening their riding skills; the year would've been sometime during the early-1950s.

I was sitting in the east end of the old grandstand when three rodeo queen contestants on horseback were approaching from the east; one of those horses

just happened to step in a gopher hole or something similar, and the rider was catapulted forward with the horse following suit. The rider was badly injured. I don't recall the young lady's name, but that spill was a bad one.

Sometime around 1952 my mom and I were in attendance, about four rows up in the south stands across from the municipal power plant. When one of the Brahma bull riders was tossed near the retaining wall, the bull paced back and forth and seemed to be focused on the crowd.

Then in a split second, it turned, then leaped and cleared the retaining wall and heavy strand of cable. It stood there among the crowd as if confused over what to do next. Rodeo fans were running here and there looking for a safe place. My mom and I stood behind a light pole just above the seating area until the Brahma was finally removed from the stands. Later on, following the Roundup, an additional strand of heavy cable was added to the retaining wall to prevent similar hazards.



Something like two years later, while standing at the east entrance to the Sun Bowl, as a Brahma bull was about to be loaded on a trailer, I was afforded the opportunity to mount that bull and ride it around that area. This bull was absolutely tame, so there was nothing to worry about. So I'm thankful that I was once able to mount and ride a Brahma bull, albeit absolutely harmless and only for a short distance.

Throughout those years while living at 359 East 100 South only one other family lived on the east side, other than my grandmother. This was Gray and Lois Wilkin and their son Keith, who was merely a toddler and spent most of his time in a playpen. Gray Wilkin was a popular local rodeo contestant, with what appeared natural-born skills when it came to bronc-riding competition, both

**bareback and saddle-bronc. It's also important to note that Gray Wilkin was the Dixie Roundup Grand Marshal years later.**

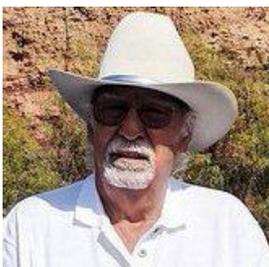
**It was a surprising reunion back in June of 1985 when I happened to be in St. George on business; I hadn't seen Gray Wilkin in at least 30 years, yet he did recognize me at first glance and called my name. My son and I had just walked inside Dick's Café and Gray was sitting at the coffee counter sipping coffee. Gray was also known for his skills in horseshoeing. I understand that he conducted classes in horseshoeing, primarily in Washington County Utah.**

**I've been unable to locate where Gray, wife Lois, and son Keith Wilkin were born, but Gray passed away January 31, 2010 in Panaca, Nevada at the age of 87. Keith Wilkin, the son, passed away May 26, 2011 at the age of 63. When it comes to Lois Wilkin, available records are somewhat vague, albeit she passed away at the age of 92.**

**I knew Gray Wilkin and his family so well, notwithstanding the years that have passed since those times. I will never forget Gray, Lois, nor Keith Wilkin; a fantastic family. I most certainly do miss them.**

**Gray Wilkin in his prime was the genuine cowboy; a tremendous local favorite.**

## **From The 8 Second Ride To The Golden Years**



**Gray Wilkin**



**Gray and wife Lois**