

## The Smith Home and Weinel Mill

In 1851 about 20 families had moved into the area about 20 miles north of Salt Lake City. The land was fertile and produced bounteous crops of wheat. The farmers would be in need of a grist mill. Brigham Young chose John Weinel, who had experience with mills, to go there and build a mill. He knew that the streams that ran from the mountains to the Great Salt Lake needed to be harnessed. He chose a branch of Holmes Creek, called Spring Creek. It originated in the foothills from springs and over the years had succeeded in creating quite a hollow. The mill was built from materials located nearby except for the mill stones which were cut from stone from a valley west of Salt Lake.

John had planned to build the best house he could afford and when circumstances finally permitted, a lovely two story adobe home was built across the lane facing the mill on the south. The creek with its trees made a beautiful setting. He also planted catalpa trees on the front and box elder trees to line the lane. He planted two box elder trees at the back of the house for shade and fruit trees – cherry and pear. This was home to John and his two wives until his death in 1889 and Alice's death in 1896. Ellen died elsewhere in 1917.

The joists for the house were logs hewn flat for the floor boards to rest on. There was a living room and a bedroom across the front of the house divided by four removable partitions of beautifully combed-grain painted wood. The fireplaces on the east and west ends of these rooms each had two wood pillars, no masonry, just wood. Next to the fireplaces were built-in wardrobes. The woodwork throughout the house was of the same combed-grain paint. Off from the living room was a small room which they used as a cloak room or closet. A large beam ran the full length of the house and the coal-oil lamps hung from it. Around the two lamps on the high ceiling of the large front rooms were ornate plaster of Paris decorations like large water lilies. When the partitions between the two front rooms were lifted out, they could be stored somewhere leaving one room large enough for two quadrilles at the same time.

The big kitchen with its fireplace was always a busy place. The stairs to the cellar, which went down from the outside porch or shanty on the west side of the house just off from the kitchen, were extremely steep with no handrail and one went down them the same as a ladder. There were two rooms - one whitewashed that was used for the storage of fruits and vegetables and other winter supplies. The other room was in the dark, deep part of the cellar. The shanty also enclosed a sixty to eighty foot deep well.

Upstairs were two bedrooms, a large hall, extra space under the eaves and an attic room which had no windows. The upstairs got extremely hot in the summertime, but could be ventilated by opening the door which led nowhere at the end of the hall.

John Weinel had hired Arthur Smith as a farmhand instructing him to take every tenth

load of hay to the tithing yard. The farm soon became a familiar place to him, so when in 1902 he moved his wife, Alice, and their four small children there to live, it already seemed like home. After the death of Mr. Weinel, Arthur's folks took a mortgage on the property and then talked Arthur into taking it over, mortgage and all.

Now the house would ring with laughter of eleven children and know sorrow as two of the little ones died.

Arthur and his father were farmers not millers. Although they hired others to help with the mill, they never became adept at it. As the grinding stones wore down, flour was no longer milled. It was only used to chop feed for animals.

Arthur raised row crops as well as hay and grain. It was always a problem getting the water to them. When the children were old enough they often helped their father well into the night. There were always plenty of chores to help with in the house, at the barn or in the fields. Alice raised turkeys. She kept the milk and butter where the water was icy cold at the bottom of the mill wheel and called the older children to run and fetch it when she needed some.

Alice kept the girls busy cleaning and cooking as she was an excellent housekeeper. Twice a year there was a thorough house-cleaning. The coal stoves smoked the ceilings, so she had the plaster water lily designs removed. They took too much of her valuable time to clean. She made braided rugs which the girls kept mended. The rugs were taken up and hauled outside where they were dragged across the stubble of the straw which cleaned them, or sometimes they were draped over the clothesline and beaten with wire beaters. They were then stretched out and fastened down again over a mat of new straw.

The cleaning of the coal-oil lamps was a daily chore for the girls, but the job they never forgot was the dusting and polishing of the woodwork. Alice would have them stick a hairpin into the dust cloth and clean between the minutest cracks. She made a solution of linseed oil and turpentine and the little girls rubbed with woolen cloths until they could see their reflections in the woodwork. Alice never allowed the children to rough house, so the home was in excellent condition when it was sold years later.

There was a large table in the kitchen, which usually seated as many as eleven people counting Grandmother Bishop, who lived with them. The small room that Mrs. Weinel had used for a cloakroom became her bedroom. Aunts, uncles and cousins enjoyed to visit Grandmother so it was not unusual for others to be around the table. The families were always together for holidays. They were at the Smith's on Decoration Day, as the cemetery joined the upper end of the farm and the children would pick wild flowers in the creek bed and fields to take to the graves. Alice grew lilacs, peonies and snowballs.

The hayloft and barn were favorite places for the children to play the old favorites of Run Sheep Run, Kick the Can and Tippy. A missing half brick by the east window of the mill



The Old Weinel Mill

became the target for thrown rocks. They often played in the cog rooms of the mill or hunted for buried treasure. They had always heard that Mr. Weinel had some hidden money somewhere on the place and were excited one day when they found the old brass bucket in the secret compartment behind the wall – but alas, it was empty.

In 1906 the wicked east wind destroyed the mill. The west wall was caved in so it was never used again.

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*Note from M. Jean Smith Vandiver – granddaughter of Arthur Smith*

This was taken from a history of John Weinel. Aunt Ida gave much of the information regarding the Smiths. Aunt Madeline told me that she vowed never to dust again. I remember the house and barn, also the spotlessly clean outhouse and the bed of petunias between there and the house. My brother, Arthur, and I climbed the trees and ate many a handful of Bing cherries. The house was razed when Hod Saunders bought the property. The rock barn was made into a club house.