

## **DOWNTOWN BRANCH PEOPLE'S CO-OP THE HISTORIC COLONIAL HOUSE**

**Constructed: 1900 (189 West Main)  
1912 (181 West Main)**

**Present Owner: Gary Nelson**

The southeast corner of Main and Second West has been a center of mercantile activity since 1858. T. and W. Taylor, owned by Thomas and William W. Taylor, was the first store on the site. The firm served as an exchange intermediary between Lehi townspeople and the huge U.S. military base at Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley.

The Taylors were eventually bought out by the Lehi Union Exchange, a firm owned by the local Mormon Church unit. Israel Evans, son of Lehi Bishop David Evans, while a missionary in Great Britain from 1853-57, visited an early co-operative mercantile at Rochdale, England.

Israel and his father became convinced that such a co-op could succeed in Lehi. Bishop Evans spearheaded the capitalization of the Lehi Union Exchange in early 1868. The Exchange, so named because people could exchange their produce for store goods, met with immediate success. So much a success that Brigham Young commented on it during an 6 April 1869 General Conference speech. The Lehi Union Exchange was the pattern on which Young based his church-wide co-operative merchandising plan (ZCMI).

By the Spring of 1869, all Lehi merchants had either been forced out of business or had sold out to the exchange, which became situated in the building vacated by T. & W. Taylor. In 1880, however, the Exchange was driven out of business by the People's Co-op. The former Exchange complex became known as *The Branch Store*.

During late 1889 the east building of the complex was demolished and a new general merchandise store built. In the spring of 1900 the original T. & W. Taylor structure on the west was demolished. A large two-story brick facility built on the site is now the west half of Colonial House

In 1904 former Co-op manager, W.E. Racker, purchased the Branch and opened Racker Mercantile. The 1889 portion of the store was demolished in 1912 and the structure that is now the eastern half of the Colonial House was constructed. In 1922 Racker Mercantile was divided into two stores under the management of Racker's sons. The east building became J.E. Racker Mercantile. Leonard Racker established the Winchester Store in the west building. Both firms went out of business in 1925. Goodwin's Golden Rule was established in the east building and Gilchrist Hardware in the west one. In 1930 Lehi's National Guard unit established an armory in the east building. From 1947-51 Ralph Johnson operated a Western Auto store there. In 1951 it became Johnson's Furniture and Hardware.

Jim and Phyllis Davis operated Davis' Market there from 1952-56. It was afterwards Larsen's AG Market. In 1961 Steve Straw merged both buildings into his Silver Dollar Market. In 1971 Greenwood Carpets & Furniture (east) and LaFeria reception center (west) were there.

In 1976 the LaFeria was sold to Kevin and Carolyn Kleinman. The reception center became the Colonial House which was purchased in 1978 by Gary and Howard Nelson. Gary is the sole proprietor today.

The west building included a dental compartment (Dr. W.L. Worlton [1930-38]; Dr. James Kenning [1948-49]; Howard Dettmar's radio repair shop [1946]). After Gilchrist Hardware moved, Wallace Banks had Banks' Appliances on the premises (1944-48). His wife Ruth, editor and publisher of the *Lehi Sun*, also established the newspaper there (1947-48). In 1948 Banks Appliance became Baker Appliance. One year later the place became Davis' Market (1949-51). Hugh and Barbara Otterson had Gateway Furniture Store there in 1953. During 1955-61 Harold and Marie Hutchings maintained Hutch's Lone Eagle Trading Post there. When Hutch's moved, both the east and west buildings were recombined into the Silver Dollar Market. In 1971 the LaFeria Reception Center was there then in 1976, the Colonial House.

The upstairs portion of the two-story 189 West Main building was primarily used for storage until the post-W.W. II years. In June of 1947, however, the Lucky 7 Barn Dance opened in the entire upstairs compartment. The area was later converted into apartments, and remains so today.

