

# LEHI DRUG STORE PIONEER EXCHANGE

**Constructed: 1919**

**Address: 162 West Main**

**Present owner: Johnny Thornton**

The first building situated at 162 West Main was a two-story frame building erected in the fall of 1896 by Louis Garff. The upper part of this building was initially a lodgeroom for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (Knights of Pythias), a secret benevolent and fraternal order. The ground floor served as a drug store for many years first run by David Ellingson and then Bert Merrihew.

In September 1917 Merrihew sold the Lehi Drug Store to entrepreneur John R. Bradshaw and his pharmacist brother-in-law, Gerald R. Taylor. Initially the new corporation was known as *Bradshaw-Taylor and company*. But in 1919 when the firm traded the Merrihew Building to the Bank of Lehi in exchange for the Lehi Opera House and the Garff Building immediately west, it became known as the *Lehi Drug Company*.

The two-story Garff Building at 162 West Main was demolished and the two-story brick building still standing on the site then constructed. When completed, the ground level of the building became new quarters for the drugstore.

The second story of the completed building became the Rose Cabaret, where dancing and entertainments were held. A player piano furnished the music and on sultry summer days when the windows were open the sonorous melody of the nickelodeon drifted along Main Street. The stairway made it convenient to saunter downstairs to the drugstore for a sundae, malt or a thirst-quenching soda. In 1946 this upstairs area was converted into an apartment, which it remains today.

In 1921 Gerald Taylor's brother Stan, having completed a pharmacy correspondence course, passed the state exams and was taken into the business. On May 12, 1926, the company purchased property from the People's Co-op immediately east of the Royal Theatre and constructed State Street Drug, which Stan Taylor managed.

Both Lehi Drug Company stores had up-to-date soda fountains, a fine line of sundries which included R.C.A. radios, as well as sporting goods. Their pharmacy was stocked with Rexall products--then the world's largest distributors of drugs. State Street Drug also had a lunch counter and was the Lehi station for both Greyhound and Continental Trailways buses.

In 1927 or 1928 the Taylors bought out Bradshaw. They continued to operate the two stores jointly until 1950 when Stan assumed sole ownership of State Street Drug and Gerald became proprietor of the Lehi Drug Store. Both stores were located next door to movie theaters. Uptown boasted the Royal Theatre while downtown claimed the Utah Theatre. Abe Ekins purchased the Lehi Drug Company from his father-in-law, Gerald Taylor, in 1959. He maintained the drugstore there until 1963, when he moved a door east into a new facility which had been built on the former site of the Lehi Opera House.

Dale Ekins had spent much of his boyhood working in his father's drugstore. In 1973, the final year of his marketing management studies at BYU, young Ekins went into business for himself. A marketing survey demonstrated the need for a local store specializing in western clothing, stable gear (saddles and bridles), and veterinarian supplies. To meet that need, Ekins established Western Tack & Togs in the Lehi Drug building at 162 West Main.

Ekins moved elsewhere in 1977. For a time his place housed a martial arts studio operated by several Lehi police officers. In 1985 Johnny Thornton opened Pioneer Exchange (Ye Olde Pawn Shoppe) there. The firm, with the tongue-in-cheek moniker of "Botique la Junque," advertised "Buy--Sell--Trade--Loans," and also bail bonds. For several years the building has been vacant.

If you would like to see a ghost from the past respecting the subject of this feature, drive to the intersection of Main and Second West. Look east towards the second story of 162 West Main and you will see a still-visible advertisement for the Lehi Drug Company. "Keeley's Ice Cream--The Best by Test" still whispers from a bygone era.