

# A Piece of Star Valley History Uncovered

◆ Lorell Woolley recently discovered the signage for the Osmond's Hotel originally built in the mid-1900s.

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Many of us are descendants of the early pioneers who built the valley from the ground up. Because of this, many in the community have the unique opportunity to walk the very streets that their great-grandparents walked or to farm the land that was originally purchased by their ancestors years ago. In any case, the valley is full of rich history.

Lorell Woolley recently uncovered a bit of the valley's history, literally, when he was updating the building that sits just south and perpendicular to the post office in Thayne. Woolley says, "We were removing the old siding, and that's when we discovered it... I saw these big black letters, and I thought, 'I know what that says.' We got it uncovered, and sure enough, it said, 'Osmond's Hotel.' I knew what the building was. I grew up here, but I was surprised to see that sign still on it... a nice surprise actually."

The building, currently owned by Woolley, was originally the Osmond's Hotel, first built by Vasco and Mary Osmond in the mid-1900s. Thrilled by this new find, Woolley took out his phone, snapped a picture, and later, informed Travis Osmond, descendant of Vasco's brother Rulon, of the discovery. Osmond states, "I knew that there was an Osmond hotel in Thayne. I didn't know where it was and then I was visiting Lorell, and he told me that it was the building that was right next to the post office, and I just thought that was so cool to know that that was part of the early history of Star Valley. And then once he started pulling off the front and exposed the original Osmond's Hotel sign, I mean, that is really cool. So I called uncle Donnie and Aunt Marie, the Osmond brothers, and told them all about it and sent them pictures. They're really excited! I mean that's a neat history of the valley right there from the early settlers."

Though we don't know exactly what year the hotel was built, Ron Anderson with the Star Valley Historical Society states, "I went to the census records. In 1950, Vasco and Mary are listed as proprietors of the hotel and café, owners, enterprisers. And so we know they were up and running in 1950."

Both Mary and Vasco had grown up in the valley. Mary was the daughter of John V. and Elizabeth Moser and grew up in Bedford. Vasco was the son of George Osmond and Amelia Jacobson Osmond and grew up in Afton. The couple were married in Salt Lake City.

In the book "A Bend in the River: A History of Thayne, Wyoming," a portion written by their son Jack, states, "They were active in community affairs and owned and operated many businesses during their life. Vasco hauled mail from Afton to Bedford. ... He was a brakeman on the railroad, a shoemaker, worked as an apprentice in a drug store. Vasco ... was a Master Barber for over twenty years. During their early married years, they had a farm. Vasco worked in the Lincoln Sugar Factory, ... and Mary cooked for the workers."

"Mary was an excellent cook. She did a lot of sewing and was a beauty operator before permanents were heard of. Mary gave many, many marcel. In later years, they had a small hotel and café in Thayne."

Walking into the 1200 sq. foot building, guests would enter the check-in area, parlor, and dining area, which doubled as a café. A hallway extended through the back of the building with the four guest rooms and a bathroom lining the north side and the kitchen, family's living quarters, and personal bathroom spanning the south side.

A Bend in the River mentions a few guests that stayed at the Osmond's Hotel: "Several Wyoming Governors stayed or ate there, also John L. Lewis and the San Francisco Police Chief to name a few. The contractor who built the Dable Theater and the contractors who built the Swiss Cheese Plant and installed the equipment in the Strawberry Power Plant were among the many who stayed at their hotel and became lifelong friends."

Woolley also mentions that "there was a gentleman that was the president of the United Mine Workers Union that stayed with them. ... Some of the architects and engineers that built the famous Star Valley

Cheese Factory ... stayed with them while they were building that."

Suzanne Aullman, née Dana, lifetime resident of Lincoln County, lived across the street from the Osmond's Hotel. Her family ran and operated the Dana Grocery Store. Her younger brothers, Kirk and Burke Dana, would often deliver groceries to the Osmonds. Aullman recalls, "She used to marcel my hair. she had me come over because my hair used to be long, and she loved to do that ... the curling iron in the coal oil lamp. She used to curl my hair like that when I was little."

Of the hotel itself, Aullman adds, "Their place was immaculate. It was always clean and looked nice. They had a cute little backyard out behind. They had an old wash house where they did their laundry. ... I just remember that as a kid how it always ... looked perfect. ... They had a big parlor and a big old kitchen, and it was just a fun place to be. They were very friendly people, very helpful people."

Travis Osmond states, "I have had several people tell me ... they can remember as a kid that ... Mary would sweep the porch every morning. I mean that was just her daily routine. ... She was just an immaculate keeper. She always kept the motel clean and spotless."

Mary and Vasco ran the hotel until Vasco passed away in 1971. Mary ran the business briefly after her husband's passing but eventually sold it. She passed away in 1980. Currently the hotel is home to Continental Realty. Woolley plans to continue his renovations but will keep a photo of the original Osmond's Hotel signage inside the building.

Travis Osmond states, "That's a neat history of the valley right there from the early settlers. ... It's just really neat. I think everybody's proud of their heritage and their roots and all the pioneers that went before us." He adds, "I don't know what the future holds there but I'd sure like to be involved in some way of restoring it or keeping that heritage alive."

The Osmond's Hotel is just one jewel in an overflowing trove of our community history. May we never forget the people that walked before us and set the path for us today. And may we continue to uncover and preserve more of our valley's history.



The Osmond's Hotel front



A small building behind the Osmond's Hotel, most likely the wash house



Vasco and Mary Osmond, 1957



The back view of the Osmond's Hotel



The original door to the guest bathroom with gold lettering reading "lavatory."