

# THE SARAH ANN AND WILLIAM STIRLING HOME

*GIVEN A FORTUNE FOR AVERTING MISFORTUNE*



In 1872 William Stirling saved the Christy Mill in Silver Reef, circa 1880.

## DID YOU KNOW?

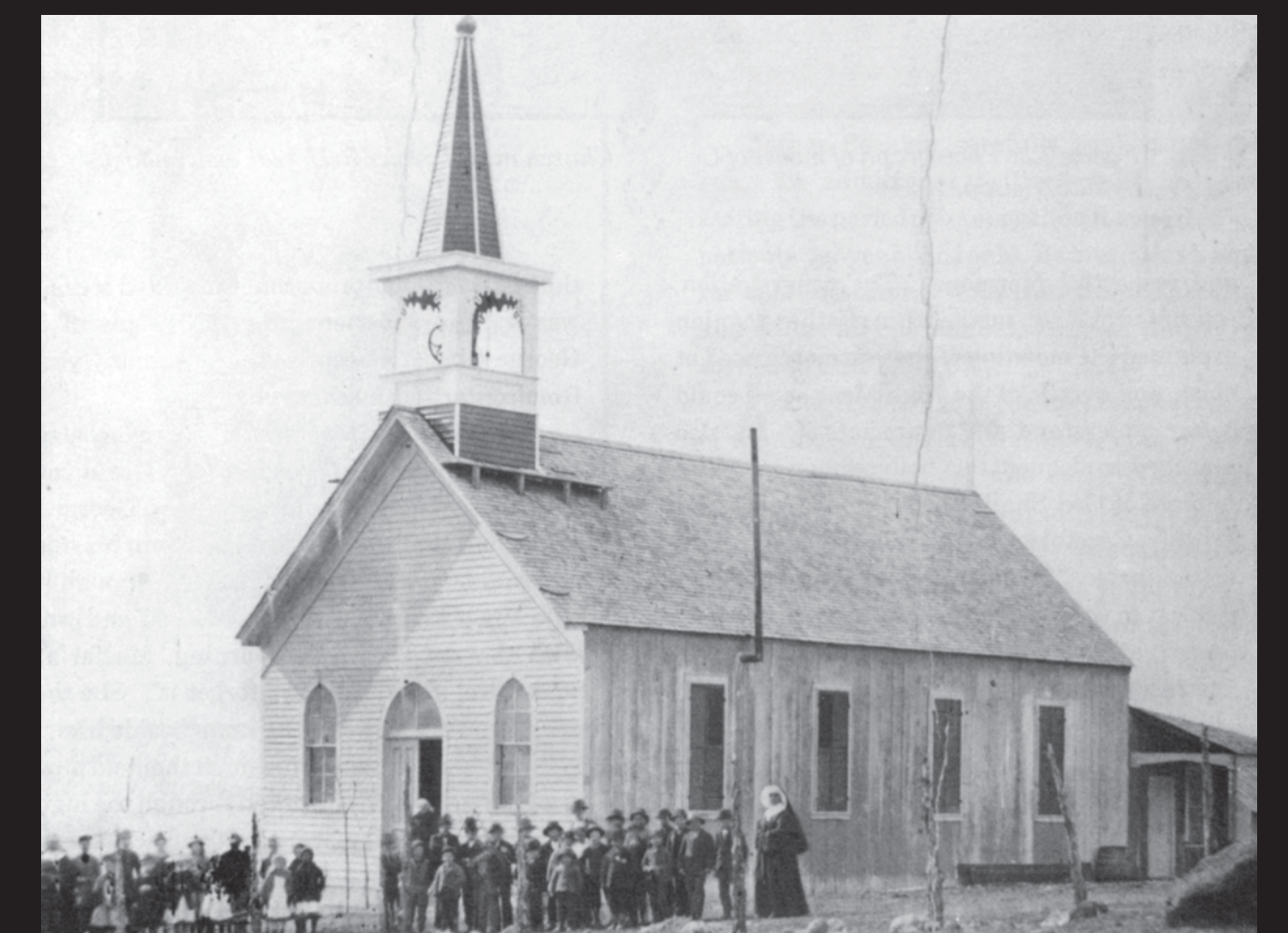
The stone benches and five stone monuments along Main Street, displaying additional historic information, are built of stones from an early pioneer house built by Alma Angell in 1868. The house was located on Main Street north of here. The original house was small, simple, and built of rock with a dirt cellar. Over time, the different owners made additions, and it eventually became a two-story rock home with a beautiful banister leading up the interior steps.

In its heyday, the rock house was the home of William D. Sullivan until his death in 1946. Bill and Lillian (Sullivan) Stratton owned the house during the latter half of the 1900s, and the home was referred to as the Stratton Home. Vacant for many years, the home was torn down in 2005. Local citizens recovered the stones with historical preservation and signage in mind.

**W**illiam Stirling, a prominent and early settler of Leeds, came into what seemed, for the times, a fortune. Stirling, a farmer and winemaker, was also the chief executive officer for the Leeds Water Company. In 1872, on a cold winter day while riding his horse through Silver Reef, he observed that the Christy Mill, a five-stamp silver ore processing mill, was overheating as a result of the routine water supply freezing solid. An explosion was inevitable. He moved swiftly into action, opening head gates which directed water from the Leeds ditch system to cool the overheating mill. A disaster was averted. The owners of the Christy Mill demonstrated their gratitude to Stirling by placing him on the payroll with a handsome salary for a year with no expectation that he work for the wage. Stirling used the wage to build this two-story brick home.

The Stirling home was built in 1876 by Samuel Worthen and Sons at a cost of about \$5,000. The house exemplifies well the “Dixie Dormer” upper floor windows, which were a popular architectural design of the day. Eldon Stirling, grandson of Sarah Ann and William Stirling, lived in the home during the latter part of the twentieth century. He updated the woodwork on the porch and balconies in the early 1980s, hand turning on a lathe all the balusters for the railings.

William Stirling played an important role in the history of early Leeds and the short existence of Silver Reef (1875 to 1889). After the silver boom declined, Stirling realized that many of the empty wooden buildings still standing in Silver Reef could be “mined.” In 1895 he purchased and moved the vacant St. John’s Catholic Church of Silver Reef to Leeds. He converted the building into the Leeds Social Hall or “Old Stirling Hall.” Plays, variety shows, dances, and many festive activities took place in the building. People came from a wide area to enjoy the performances. The building, which was located on Main Street, no longer stands today.



St. John’s Catholic Church in Silver Reef, circa 1880. William Stirling moved the church to Leeds in 1895 and converted it to a social hall.



Interior of Old Stirling Hall, 1909 or 1910.