

THE LEEDS TITHING OFFICE



This building, built in 1891-92, was the Leeds Tithing Office. The building was most likely constructed by the renowned stone masons of the era, Willard McMullin and Sons.

The settlers of Leeds were almost exclusively members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as Mormons. Tithing, a pivotal expression of Mormon religious devotion, consists of donating 10 percent of a family's income to the church.

In pioneer times, a settler's wealth was not typically interpreted in terms of cash. For tithing purposes, wealth was commonly measured in terms of produce, products, or even service. Many families paid tithing "in kind" with peaches, corn, figs, apricots, bottled meat, etc. In many communities a tithing office was established to collect, store, and redistribute the donated goods to those in need. The Leeds Tithing Office was equipped with bins and barrels for storage and a set of scales for weighing produce.

Did You Know?

Wine was used in the Mormon sacrament (communion) during the 1800s. Some of the early settlers of Leeds were winemakers and paid their tithing with wine made from locally grown grapes. This particular tithing office was said to have had several oak casks with the ability to store up to 300 gallons of wine. The winemakers of Leeds had a ready market for their product in the nearby mining community of Silver Reef.

Of the several early tithing offices built in the region, the Leeds building is the only remaining example of a stone tithing office that still stands with its original stone walls.

The in-kind tithing system was retired in the early 1900s.



Leeds men working together to harvest and juice cane. Pictured L to R: Lloyd Stirling, Ray Beal, Bob Cuff, Ensign Griffiths, and Clarence Prisbrey. Circa early 1960s.

FARMING AND RANCHING

Well into the mid-1900s, the economic base of Leeds was agriculture. With a ready market for fresh vegetables in the mining community of Silver Reef, Leeds was one of the few pioneer towns in the 1870s that grew "cash crops." Most

farmers also raised livestock as a source of income. After the decline of Silver Reef, Leeds farmers grew and sold produce to local and regional markets. These crops included cantaloupes, watermelons, strawberries, tomatoes, beet seed, cane, alfalfa, onions, radishes, apricots, cherries, and most notably, peaches. Some of the major peach-farming families of the 1900s were the Stirlings, Sullivans, Fullers, Jolleys, McMullins, Eastmans, Reeds, and Savages. Harvest season was a busy time for the entire town and was a community effort. In 2008 David and Danielle Stirling continued to farm, growing peaches and melons, and Ned and Geri Sullivan raised alfalfa.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STANDS ALONG MAIN STREET



Viv Mariger sitting in front of fruit stand.

Leeds farmers sought outside markets, but they also sold their produce locally in roadside stands along Main Street during the 1940s and 1950s when it was U.S. Highway 91. The roadside stands were typically situated near the open ditch, which provided a stream-like setting. Large trees along Main Street shaded the roadside stands, which were often operated by Leeds children or older residents.



Cooking the sorghum is Ross Savage, former mayor, president of the Leeds Domestic Water Users Association, farmer, and bishop.

SORGHUM MAKING

A very labor-intensive activity, sorghum making was a part of life in Leeds from the early 1900s until 1982. Sorghum, a kind of sugar cane, was grown

locally, and the juice was squeezed from the cane and boiled to produce a sweet syrup. Wilma Cox Beal in "Bits and Pieces" extolled the Leeds's version of Dixie Sorghum and described in detail the hard work of making sorghum. "It takes about ten gallons of raw (cane) juice to make one gallon of cooked sorghum."



Stanley Fuller with a load of brooms.

BROOM MAKING

In 1937 the Leeds Broom Cooperative Association operated a successful factory, furnishing brooms to 110 stores until World War II broke out. Adequate supplies for making the brooms

were hard to come by during the war, and the broom factory eventually closed.