



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
November 20, 2019

As we have all enjoyed the beautiful display of American flags on the grounds of the Millard County Courthouse and the Territorial Statehouse, we continue to remember those who have served our country. Another great location for these kinds of remembrances is at the Fillmore City Cemetery.

Not long ago the entrance to the cemetery was changed from the old traditional one to a larger one with a circular paved area where several flags are displayed with of our national flag standing in a place of prominence. The five other flags are those of the branches of the military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

A close look at the history of the cemetery says much about the way our forefathers laid it out.

It was the practice at the time to locate cemeteries on dry hillsides outside of towns and away from water sources and irrigated fields. This was a public health issue. The worry was that those who died of communicable diseases might contaminate the water sources for the town and cause additional problems.

The plots in the cemetery were laid out in a grid much like city blocks although smaller in size. This was called the Plat of Zion and was given by Brigham Young for communities to follow.

Another reason the cemetery was placed away from town was to allow for future growth. As the capital of the Utah Territory, there were plans in place for much growth in the city.

The earliest recorded burials in the cemetery date back to 1853, but earlier burials were not recorded in the city records.



The entrance to the Fillmore City Cemetery today

Fillmore was settled beginning on October 28, 1851. On March 20, 1852 Leroy King, the year and half old son of Thomas and Matilda King, died of scarlet fever. Family histories show that his grave was the beginning of the cemetery in its present location.

The first sexton or caretaker of the cemetery was George Finlinson, who was an immigrant from England. He was appointed in 1864. Since that time, there have been a long list of sextons including our present one, Rustin Brunson.

One of the most attractive items in the cemetery are the large stately pine trees surrounding the original section of cemetery. These early trees were planted by Oscar Anderson. He raised pine trees from tiny saplings in an arbor behind his home on the south end of Main Street. When the trees were large enough to transplant, he went to the city council and asked permission to plant them around the cemetery. He was told there was no money for planting and watering. He explained this was not about the money, but an act of service to the community that he would like to do. His sons Harold and Grant helped him water the small trees by hand until a watering system was installed in the cemetery.

With the newer addition, pine trees were planted years ago along the boundary line and have grown large in the past years, creating the same looking perimeter around the entire cemetery.

A walk around the Fillmore Cemetery is like taking a step into the past and a great history lesson for families to enjoy together.



The old entrance to the Fillmore City Cemetery