



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

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The Face of Fillmore is ever changing and that certainly is true of the educational facilities in our town.

School was begun just 15 days after the settlers arrived on the banks of Chalk Creek. The first school day was Monday, December 10, 1851 in a school room built of cottonwood logs with a large fireplace, a dirt roof and no floor. The benches were made of split logs. Tuition was \$3 for a term of twelve weeks with 37 students attending. By the beginning of the third term more families had arrived and there was a need for another teacher. In fact, one of the teachers had 50 students in her classroom.

Several private schools were held in homes including the home of early settler, Joseph Robison who built the rock home now used as the office of a motel. A smaller school was also held in a home on 300 North, just off Main Street. There were many others in town as well.

On Christmas Day, 1854, the construction of the adobe meeting house was announced. This building was used for both church meetings and a schoolhouse. Even classes were also held there for adults, mostly women, who wanted to complete their educations. English classes were also taught for immigrants from other countries.

The first school built outside the fort was located in the little rock schoolhouse that has become an iconic figure, pictured in all of the tourism brochures. It is noted as the oldest government owned building west of the Mississippi. Construction was begun in 1867. Later on a small brick schoolhouse was built on the site where the U.S.D.A. office now stands.

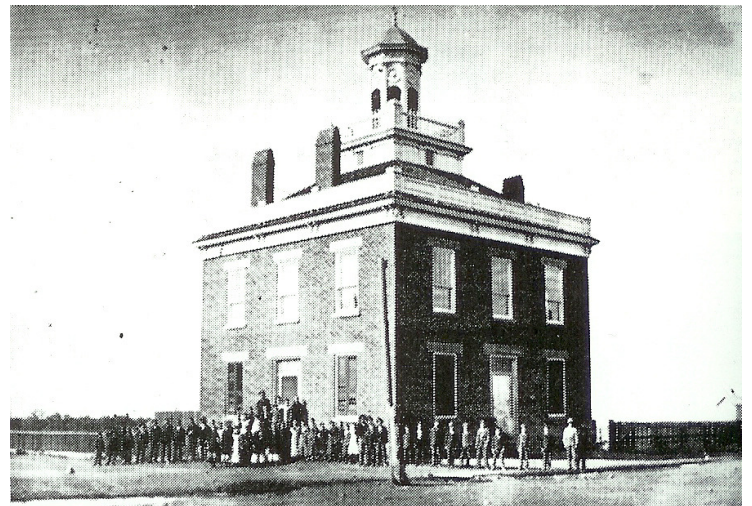
In 1881 a Presbyterian School was begun in the statehouse with 50 students, but this school lasted for only four years.

The Millard Academy was held in the old county courthouse in 1885. This was the first advanced school where students could go on beyond the high school level.

For a time the Territorial Statehouse was also used as a public school.

In 1899 the building known as the junior high was built. It was later remodeled and housed the Fillmore High School which later became Millard High School. The first graduating class from Fillmore High School was in 1907 and as Millard High; the first graduates were in 1913.

In 1931, W.A. Paxton became the school superintendent and under his administration several building projects took place. The yellow brick schoolhouse just south of the statehouse was built and used until about 1979. It is pictured here and seems to



be one of the less photographed schools in town. Years later a separate lunchroom was constructed west of the school. This building – the Pod – is still in use.

Two elementary schools were built to the east of the rock schoolhouse earlier on and served the students of the area for several years. In the early 1940's, there was a devastating fire which demolished these buildings. School classes were divided up with some grades attending in the rock schoolhouse, others in the American Legion Hall and in other locations.

During Superintendent Paxton's tenure, the junior high, the shop and gym were built across Second West from the main Millard High School building. An auditorium was also built on the campus just to the north of the main building. During school hours, the street between the two sections of the school was closed for safety reasons.

In 1979 the elementary school was moved to its present location on 500 West and in 1983 the middle school was built just east of it.

Years later the present high school building was built in the middle of Second West and Old Main and the auditorium were torn down to make way for the new gym and auditorium. Presently, a new addition including a new gym and other facilities is under construction in what was once the parking lot to the north of the auditorium.

With ever-changing construction projects over the years, those of us who want to have pictures to remember the past need to be doing some drive-by picture taking while these pictures are still possible. I personally plan to take pictures of all of the existing schools in the near future.

