



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

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It is not an exaggeration to say that thousands of travelers each summer enjoy the Face of Fillmore. Not surprising either is the fact that 10,000 to 12,000 visitors stop to see inside the Territorial State House Museum annually, not to mention the thousands more who stop by to picnic in the cool of the park. It is not unusual to see several cars or busses parked at the state park for a brief step into Fillmore's past.

The Territorial Statehouse is also having three day youth camps during the summer months – "Building Zion Youth Camps". These help the young people gain a little insight into what the early settlers faced as they accepted the call to build the Statehouse and Utah's First Capital City, through various pioneer activities. Last year there were just a few, but this year nearly every weekend is scheduled.

Looking back in history, I found that Fillmore has been a stopping place for visitors for many years.

The first historical records of travelers to Fillmore that I read were from a completely different time of year and both in 1850. Parley P. Pratt stopped on his return trip to Salt Lake City from Southern Utah in January 1850. He divided his exploring party, leaving the wagons and most of the provisions with the younger men, while he pressed on toward Provo with a smaller party. John D. Lee explained that the rear party called the site Camp Creek because "the Exploring co were forced to pitch their Encampment on it" for two months after becoming snowbound here. Others described the same location as Chalk Creek, because of the abundant natural chalk deposit close by.

On Monday, December 30, 1850 the party bound for the Iron Mission in Cedar City traveled through the area. Near Pioneer Creek, Andrew Love broke an axle. His load was distributed among other wagons and his wagon was towed to the next camping place about six miles to the south. This was at Camp Creek, later known as Fillmore. It was extremely cold weather with the morning temperature being six degrees and finally reaching freezing at midday. There were three inches of snow on the ground. George A. Smith wrote of the problem this caused them: "At midday when the sun shines upon the snow, its effect on my eyes is almost unbearable."



The party stopped to find enough large timber to bridge Camp Creek but failed. They forded it and camped on the other side. They made camp at 4 p.m. and began burning cedar to make charcoal so that Burr Frost, the blacksmith, could mend Love's axle.

In the years that followed, as Fillmore was settled and as people moved from the protection of the fort and began businesses along Main Street, some of the prominent ones were to take care of the needs of travelers. Fillmore soon proudly boasted hotels: the Robison Hotel, the Huntsman Hotel near Chalk Creek, another Huntsman Hotel in the center of town, the George Hotel, and the Stevens Hotel. All would play host to prominent people in their day.

Before the coming of the freeway, residents will remember gas stations in many locations on Main Street as well as several cafes. One of the first motels in the state and the longest operating one is here in town. Originally, it was known as an "autel". Now many of these types of businesses are clustered at the freeway exits. Even though the Face of Fillmore has changed in that way, visitors still congregate at the center of town.

One day last week I saw three busses pull into the alley way east of the National Guard Armory. I stopped and visited with three ladies sitting by the Veterans Memorial, eating their lunch. A huge crowd was gathered for lunch under the pavilion but some preferred the warmth of the sun. These ladies, LaDawn Olsen, Margaret Beck and Vicky McCombs, were with a group from the Cache Valley Senior Citizens Center on a Barry Knight tour to Tuacahn to see both Grease and The Little Mermaid. This is an annual trip for the group which had people with it from as far away as Idaho Falls. This is the third year they have made the trek to St. George and always stop for lunch in Fillmore.



The three commented on the well-kept grounds of the capitol building as well as the court house. It was perfect timing for Klint Penney, who is in charge of the upkeep at the court house, to stop by to say hello and hear their positive comments. They said they have not seen any grounds that are so well kept and beautiful. Klint explained to us improvements that are planned and underway, such as the new lettering that was just installed on the court house high above the front entryway. New steps are also under construction. Extra geraniums were planted this season to add to the always colorful front landscaping. We were particularly interested in the beech tree by the monument, with its brilliant pink and maroon leaves.

I appreciated the comments from visitors to our community who appreciate what is being done to preserve the historic flavor of Fillmore and keep it a beautiful spot for residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

