



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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As I begin this column, it is October 27, exactly 170 years from the arrival of the first settlers of Fillmore.

Borrowing from journals and reports of those very people, we hear about their activities.

Winter temperatures came surprising early as the company of Saints under the leadership of Anson Call reached their destination that October 27 along the banks of Chalk Creek or Nuquin, as the Indians called it. These were the settlers of the future town who would remain and make Fillmore their home. While the calendar reported the day being still in October, temperatures dove to the 14-degree mark. Sheltering in their wagons and tents, the new settlers looked forward to the new capital of Utah with enthusiasm.

The second night camp was moved about a mile and a half up the creek. At this point, plans for the new community went into action. Their first task was to construct better homes to stay in and a fort to enclose them for safety. They were pleased to find trees from which to make lumber readily available just a short distance up the canyon. Another of their first tasks was to build a road up the canyon to haul out logs for their homes and fort. Plans were also made to build a mill about ½ mile from the fort to furnish lumber for the Statehouse.

According to Anson Call, the group “immediately commenced” building a corral for their cattle. They also built a schoolhouse quickly enough that school was held just 15 days after their arrival.

Settling near a good source of water was essential. It must have been a good water year, as “Nuquin” was described as being fourteen feet wide and a foot deep with a swift current.



Along the banks of Chalk Creek in the area that was included in the original fort.

The fort itself was built in a triangular shape with the south and west walls being lined with homes and the creek running through the center.

An interesting side note: Winters must have been harsh during that time. Parley P. Pratt led an exploring party to the Iron Mission in the Parowan/Cedar City area just the year before. On his return to Salt Lake City in January 1850 he had divided his exploring party, leaving the wagons and most of the provisions with the younger men, while he pressed on to Provo with a smaller group. John D. Lee tells that the rear party called their site Camp Creek (Chalk Creek) because “the Exploring Co. were forced to pitch their Encampment on it” for two months after becoming snowbound there.

President Brigham Young with his group of fifteen men and three boys left the Salt Lake Valley with their buggies and horses on October 22, 1851. They arrived at the site of Fillmore at the same time as the Call Party. Brigham Young explained that the purpose for their trip was to “locate our site for the seat of government”. He named the new town “Fillmore” in honor of President Millard Fillmore who had just signed the bill establishing the Utah Territory.

One of the more famous events was recorded by Doris Warner, son of Orange Warner. He told that President Young placed his cane down on the northeast corner of the public square and told Jesse W. Fox to place his compass there and begin the survey of the public square first, then survey the town into blocks of 40 rods square, containing 8 lots that were 1 ¼ acres each. The streets were 8 rods wide with a rod on each side for sidewalks. They got right to work. On October 29, Jesse Fox began his survey of the town square and surrounding blocks.

Work went quickly and by October 29, the site for the four wings of the capitol building had been surveyed in about the center of the public square. Truman O. Angell, architect and designer of the Salt Lake Temple, drew plans for a four-winged building to be constructed there.

Brigham Young and party were preparing to leave the next morning to return to Salt Lake City, so an organizational meeting was held. Anson Call was appointed judge, Indian agent, and president of the branch with T.R. King and Peter Robison as his counselors. N.W. Bartholomew was appointed bishop with Samuel P. Hoyt and Orange Warner as his counselors.

Even with all of their hard work, the early residents were not without a humorous moment from time to time. Very shortly after the settlement began, Apostle George A. Smith came to Fillmore on a return trip from “Little Salt Lake”, later known as Parowan. He asked in a meeting for people to report to him about the resources they were finding in the area. Josiah Call reported that he had seen the tracks of the black-tailed deer. President Smith jokingly asked if Call could tell the color of the deer’s tails by their tracks.

That first Sunday after Fillmore’s settlement, November 2, 1851, the entire population of the new town attended religious services at the tent of Bishop Bartholomew. They sang hymns and prayed for continued guidance for their new community.