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FACE OF FILLMORE

By Sherry Shepard



The First Thanksgiving

My interest in Fillmore and its early settlers has led me to reading about them on the internet. I type in the name of an early resident and find that an abundance of information magically appears on my screen. Recently, I had been talking to one of the Bartholomew family members, so I typed in Noah Bartholomew and found some great reading.

On one site I actually found an account of the first Thanksgiving in Fillmore. This had been written in 1955 by someone named Emma and retyped by Mike Melville in 1999. I phoned Mike's brother John and had a great conversation about his family. It is not surprising that the Bartholomew family and the Melville family were connected by marriage early on. I asked if I could share Emma's story, which he believes to be Emma Day, John's great grandmother.

In November of 1852, just a year after the first settlers arrived in Fillmore, the first Thanksgiving celebration was held.

Emma Day describes the day: "The day's dawn was fair and frosty, over

the eastern mountains a few pink-flushed clouds floated above Mt. Catherine and Pioneer Peak, seeming an omen of a good day. Smoke, spiraled straight into the air above each tent, shanty, and log cabin. There was unusual activity in the fort as men went about whistling at their daily task of caring for the cattle and horses. About eleven o'clock both men and women began leaving their homes carrying various kettles, pans and other cooking utensils and making their way to the meeting house. The men made tables of planks set up on barrels, and few seats were made the same way. The smell of food began to drift out to the curious groups of children who ran back and forth either helping or hindering their elders.

"When food was piled high on the tables everyone was told to stand and clasp hands and bow heads while Bishop Noah Bartholomew gave a prayer of thanks for the bounteous harvest, and the safe arrival of the new families who had recently arrived. Among them the Melville's and other families. The warmth of the welcome, the good hot vegeta-

bles, meat, and all the sweets that only those dear pioneer women knew how to make out of practically nothing, made them forget the hardships of their life and their long journey across the plains.

"They all joined in singing hymns of praise, and even the Indians standing under a nearby cottonwood tree, shyly joined in the happy spirit of the occasion."

The Indians were not accustomed the style of eating their hosts used, so a special area was set up for them so they could eat together and feel more comfortable.

Chief Kanosh was given his food served in a large wooden bowl. He surprised everyone using his knife and spoon almost as well as the whites.

Only the Chief and his brother Arapene were clothed in the dress of the white settlers. Almost the first gift Brigham Young had given Chief Kanosh were trousers of bread cloth and a homespun shirt, which he wore with pride under his bright blanket.

In the afternoon there were games, wrestling and races. Here again the Indians joined in the fun and even excelled in some of the sports.

One of the last events of the day was a wrestling match between Orange Warner and a young buck who was chosen by the Indians.

"Orange had a friendly, winning grin, with crinkling at the corners of his mouth stretched sideways. When he grinned, as he did when he shook hands with his opponent, he used his whole face. It went well with his tousled sandy hair and lanky six feet or more of height: dressed in grey homespun trousers, shirt, and rough frontier boots.

The wrestling pair strained and tugged for long as the crowd was interested. The contest was well matched. Warner had size and strength, which was met with catlike swiftness, with each side cheering when the man was on top.

Bishop Noah Bartholomew and Chief Kanosh finally shook hands and told the wrestlers to stop as it was time for the settlers to start their chores. The day closed with prayer and the grateful feeling that the whites and Indians were friends."