



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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Water is an integral part of life in Fillmore as in all other communities in our area. Living on the edge of a desert in the heat of summer with a drought, years in the making, has caused us to think often about the importance of water in our lives. My hat goes off to those who try to do all they can to conserve our precious water.

From the earliest days, the pioneers realized their dependence on water, not only for daily use in their homes, watering their gardens, yards, crops and animals, but also for recreation and trying to cool off during hot summer days.

It is not hard to let your imagination wander back to pioneer days without the comfort of air conditioning. Chalk Creek became the best method of cooling off on a sweltering summer day after time in the farm fields, on the statehouse construction or other strenuous work. The youth of the mid-1850's and later on, must have enjoyed a dip in the cool water. Because there was no irrigation pond at that time to hold back the water, one would assume water flowed down the creek through the old fort all year long, even though the water levels were probably very low in the late summer.

Very early on the settlers saw the need for a dam. The first one was built up the canyon just past the dugway section of the road. This is not far from the bridge over Chalk Creek near where the ATV trail begins. Interestingly, near this spot was also the site of a dance hall floor where outdoor dances were held years ago.



Log dam above Fillmore in 1903

Sometime in the 1800's a log and rock dam was constructed about 1/2 block east of the Wildlife Park for flood control. What a great swimming hole this made! This dam was eventually washed out by floods.

In the mid-1930's the CCC's built the cement dam farther east, but this was short-lived as it silted in from canyon floods not long after its construction. Residents from that era tell of people boating on the lake. The dam is still there but the access is privately owned and posted to trespassers. Before the

posting, this was a popular place for swimmers especially in the spring when the water was going over the spillway.

Swimming pools also became part of the landscape in Fillmore.

In 1916 a real swimming pool was built just northwest of what is now the Wildlife Park. The outline of the foundation of this pool is still evident but is difficult to find in the tall weeds and grass. In the April 7, 1916 issue of the Progress we read: "Fillmore to Have New Plunge" "Work was started this week on the new plunge which is being erected by Mr. Joseph S. Smith in Fillmore near his residence. "The plunge will be 30 feet wide by 50 feet long and will be made entirely of cement. The depth of the plunge will vary from 2 feet deep at its shallowest part to 7 feet deep at its deepest part and will accommodate a large number of bathers at one time. Dressing rooms will be built around the plunge and every convenience for his patrons will be furnished by Mr. Smith." This was a very reasonably priced activity with the price of admission including the rental of a swimming suit only 15 cents.

When our family moved to Fillmore forty years ago, a public swimming pool was located just south of the Territorial Statehouse Museum. Here youngsters splashed in the cold water during the summer months. Those who frequented this spot will remember that it was definitely COLD water.

In recent years, a new swimming pool was built on the west side of that same block. Here a number of water activities take place year-round: swimming lessons, lap swimming, water exercising, swim teams and public swimming. The water is warm and inviting and the pool is a very attractive building.

Those who are really serious about water activities are often seen loading up their boats or other watercraft and heading for the nearest large body of water. Water sports have become an increasingly popular way to cool off in the heat.

We joined our grandchildren recently to do just that, spending an afternoon kayaking around a pond near their home. I learned right away there was more to kayaking than paddling along and trying to stay upright. It seems that kayakers are used also as paddle boards and diving boards and oars are used for hitting the water just right to get your grandmother wet.



Kayaker Cooper Wilson with his sister Jayde in the background