



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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After one full session of the Territorial Legislature in Fillmore in 1855, the Legislature began its sixth session once again in Fillmore but quickly adjourned and reconvened in Salt Lake City. At this time, little did anyone realize that Fillmore and the Territorial Statehouse would again play an important role in history just about one year later.

In “Milestones of Millard” we read:

“On July 24, 1857, all the Saints were celebrating the tenth anniversary of their arrival in Utah, when word reached them that an army was on its way to Utah to install Alfred Cumming as governor in place of Brigham Young, and to replace other officers with non-Mormons. The Saints were filled with consternation, for from past experiences, they expected to be driven once more from their homes into the wilderness.”

On June 28, 1858, Johnston’s Army entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Historian Bancroft describes it this way:

“Thirty-thousand...left their homes...taking with them all their movable effects. A score of men left in the City had instructions to apply the torch if it should be occupied by the troops. The outer doors were locked, and in the vacant homes were heaps of straw, shaving and wood ready for the work of destruction. As the fifth infantry approached the city, no sound was heard save the murmur of the creek...There is no sign of life...Zions is deserted!”

Times were tense during these days. Captain James C. Owens assigned men from the local militia to guard the entrance to Fillmore. Those with fast horses were stationed along the routes in and out of the area to hurriedly carry important messages. All missionaries were called home to help defend Zion. Peter Robison and Thomas King from Fillmore were among these.



Brigham Young inspecting the first issue of the Deseret News printed in Fillmore

When Johnston's Army reached Salt Lake, members of the Legislature headed south to Fillmore with the Legislature again convening in the Statehouse, abandoned by them earlier.

The staff of the Deseret News also headed south with all of their equipment. The editor, his staff and all of their families moved to Fillmore. In the basement of the Territorial Statehouse, they set up shop and printed 20 editions of the newspaper from that location.

During the summer of 1858, Fillmore was a bustling city with all of the extra new residents from Salt Lake. The "Mormon War" as it was known came to a peaceful conclusion after a few weeks of negotiation. By the end of that summer, the city people had gone home and Fillmore was back to its quiet, rural setting.