



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
September 19, 2012

The Face of Fillmore this week takes one more look at the cemetery. Much has been said about it in the past, but recently the Fillmore City Cemetery has put Fillmore on the national map with its new distinction on the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, the cemetery is the first in the state to receive such an honor.

Being placed on the register is the work of the Fillmore Historic Preservation Commission with Marlene Whicker as its chairperson and members Carl Camp, Mary Fowler, Doug Jolley and Sara Ellen Stevens.

A great deal of the work on the project is credited to Lisa Crosland, who filled out the forms and did much of the research toward the final goal.

Located at 325 East 600 South on a 12.6 acre site, the Fillmore City Cemetery is also known by the name of The Silent City, certainly a fitting name, considering the population there. It was established in 1852, just a year after the first settlers arrived.



The two large south-central sections of the cemetery are the oldest, and are known as the Pioneer Section. There are sandstone corner markers set flush with the ground to

distinguish its borders. The oldest of the markers here are of red sandstone in an upright rectangular tablet style. There are also markers in this section that are made of granite and were probably carved by Peter Brunson, an early local stone carver. The marble for these came from the Left Hand Fork of Chalk Creek.

The flagpole section is directly west of the early section. It contains gravesites as early as World War II. All of the markers in this section are of granite set flush with the lawn.

Sections to the east and north were added later.

The cemetery was located southeast of town, not as part of the town's layout planning, but out of necessity afterward. It was located away from the town's water sources and irrigated land for health reasons.

The settlement of Fillmore began in October of 1851, just weeks after Millard County was formed from a portion of Iron County. On March 20, of the following year, Leroy King, the nineteen-month-old son of Thomas and Matilda King, died of scarlet fever. From all indications, his grave marked the beginning of the cemetery.

Pioneer burials dating back to 1853 were recorded, but earlier burials do not appear in the sexton's records. The first sexton was George Finlinson who was appointed in 1864. He was followed by Jesse Millgate who held the job for many years. Others were John Davies, Murray Davies, and Orlo Bartholomew. The current sexton is Rustin Brunson.



One of the most attractive additions to the cemetery was the planting of the pine trees around its perimeter. This was done by Oscar Anderson who planted and took care of the trees at his own expense, as well as watering them by hand.

In 1936 the WPA built a water storage reservoir and laid the water line to the cemetery that enabled the watering of the shade trees and the shrubs that were planted later, as well as the pine trees forming its border.

Many prominent members of the community and others are interred in the cemetery. Below are a few.

Josiah Call was a brother to Anson Call and one of the original settlers. He was elected sheriff in 1852 and held that office until his death in 1858. He and Samuel Brown were killed by Indians while looking for an easier route for their cattle through Leamington Canyon. Both are buried in Fillmore's cemetery.

Another prominent man, William Felshaw, helped on the carpentry work on the Kirtland, Nauvoo and Salt Lake temples. He was the superintendent of the construction on the territorial capitol building and was a member of the legislature. He also served as Fillmore's mayor in 1859. A few years earlier he was among the rescuers of the Martin Handcart Company in 1856.

Chandler Holbrook assisted Jesse Fox in the original survey of Fillmore. He served the public as a notary and surveyor and was one of the directors of Fillmore's branch of Z.C.M.I.

Elijah Holden was a member of the Mormon Battalion who settled his family in Cedar Springs north of Fillmore. He and his young helper Thomas Bailey were caught in a blizzard while returning from Nephi in September, 1858. Holden tried to carry the boy but was unable to do so for very far, so he wrapped him in his own coat and left him to go on for help. A rescue party found their frozen bodies later. Holden was renamed after him.

Captain John Gunnison was a West Point graduate and well-known as a surveyor and explorer. Even with Indian unrest, he and his small surveying party continued their work. His small group was attacked on October 24, 1853. Several men survived and went for help, returning to the massacre site to find no other survivors. The bodies of Gunnison and his guide William Potter were carried back to Fillmore where Gunnison was buried. Potter's body was taken home to his family in Manti. The rest were buried at the massacre site.

Amasa Lyman was also buried in Fillmore Cemetery. He had served as an apostle in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but had a falling out with church authorities and left the church. Before moving to Fillmore, he helped found San Bernadino, California.

Fillmore City Cemetery's designation as a National Historic Site certainly adds to the great historic value of the Face of Fillmore.

Thank You

As I write this week's column, I am reminded that today, September 12, is the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Face of Fillmore. Begun as part of the First Capitol Beautification Committee's attempt to receive grants to improve Main Street, it has become an important part of my life. My thanks to all those who have helped: Shelly Dutson for being willing to publish the articles I write, Deaun Bean for helping me get started, LuDean Day for information from the Daughters of the Pioneers, Allison Robison for sharing his great photography collection, Carl Camp and Gordon Chatland for their vast knowledge of our area, and to the many others who have offered suggestions, shared pictures and memories, and most of all been so generous with their compliments and encouragement. Thanks especially to my husband Billy for his encouragement and patience.

This sounds like good-bye, but it is not. Hopefully, it is the beginning of another five years.