



## The Face of Fillmore

*By Sherry Shepard*  
May 5, 2010

The Face of Fillmore would like to extend birthday congratulations to the Fillmore Library. Festivities there on Monday, April 26, marked the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the library's beginnings.

The American Legion Post 61 under the direction of Commander Arnell Jackson was the first to realize the important of having a public library in Fillmore and began the work to make that possible.

From the minutes of one of their meetings we read, "January 24, 1925. A motion was made by F.L. Stewart and carried that we appoint a committee to investigate the matter of starting a public library." The committee was made up of Mr. Stewart as the chairman with Ottis Walch and P. A. Paulsen as members. The library committee was directed to meet with the city council and make necessary arrangements to secure the Commercial Club Room in the old courthouse. This two story building stood on the northwest corner of Main Street and First South and is seen in the picture here.

After meeting with the city council, it was decided that the city would provide the room and the librarian and the American Legion would head a book drive to fill the new library. A campaign was begun to offer prize money of \$5 or \$10 to be given to the classes in the Fillmore schools, which donated the greatest number of books for the library each year.

In March, it was realized the new library needed some sort of filing system, so F.L. Stewart went to Salt Lake to learn from librarians there.

At some point in 1925, a librarian was chosen from the applicants. Mrs. David (Kate) Day became the first librarian and earned the sum of \$25 in wages.

According the city records, "On April 6, 1925, Fillmore opened a new public library with eight hundred volumes, twenty-six periodicals, and three daily newspapers."

The following year, Mrs. Vera Huntsman became both the second librarian and the city treasurer. She held both those offices until December, 1929 and earned a combined wage of \$780 per year.

On January 13, 1930, Mrs. Lottie Robison became the third librarian and in 1932, the librarian position was discontinued for a time because of lack of funds due to the Depression. Two years later Mrs. Robison was again hired as the librarian, but it was only open for two hours each evening. Mrs. Robison continued as the librarian until 1939.

The time had come to tear down the old building that had been used by the city and the county, so the book collection was taken to a temporary room until the new building was built. The new one was a WPA project and, after its completion, the books were placed in their new home. Some of the original bookcases were used while other new ones were built. All of the books were moved by the school children.

The Utah State Library Association had offered their services early on to help but because there was no library board, this was not done. Mayor Howard John appointed a library board and the Fillmore Library became one of the many libraries in the state to receive instruction and other help for the library.





The building at this point was in need of major repairs such as painting and refurbishing the floors. This was done with the help of city employee Jay Hudson and Alfred Swallow, who was the custodian. Access was made to the room downstairs, which was later used as a reading room, the location for art exhibits, and club meetings. Drapes were hung at the windows and the entire library took on a more attractive look.

The Utah State Library loaned the Fillmore library several books and other materials to add to their collection, along with tape recorders, large type books and Braille materials and tapes for the handicapped.

Once again it was time for the library to move, as it had outgrown the space it occupied. There was much discussion about building a new building, but in the end it was decided that the library and city offices would move to the building vacated by the Fillmore Hospital after the new hospital was built in 1985 -86. Renovations to the building were to be completed in October, 1986.

On July 18, 1985, the Fillmore City Council passed a motion to rename the library. It would be named the President Millard Fillmore Library in honor of President Fillmore who was president of the United States when Utah was made a territory and when this city was named after him, as well as the county.

This renaming was appropriate as President Fillmore had a great interest in books and had an extensive library of his own. He is the president responsible for establishing a library within the White House and began with a collection of 900 of the best history and literature books, which were placed in a room set aside especially for that purpose. It is still the White House Library today and has an excellent collection of books some 135 years after it began.

After the renovation of the Fillmore Library Building, the moving process began and once again the school children played an important role, forming a human chain through the block and passing library books one-by-one in a "book brigade". The students in two days helped move over 15,000 books.

The new library at its present location was opened on Monday, October 27, 1986. The following January 7, President Fillmore's birthday, a dedicatory program was attended by well over 100 people, with comments from the mayor and other dignitaries.

The President Millard Fillmore Library now contains a collection of over 25,000 items and continues to serve the people of Fillmore and surrounding communities.

A great thank you to the dedicated ladies who, over the history of the library, have served as librarians. Three have already been mentioned: Kate Day, Vera Huntsman, and Lottie Robison. They were followed by Mrs. Vilate Frampton, Mrs. Sarah Higgins and Mrs. Norna Maycock Cooms in 1939. In 1941, Mrs. Frampton and Mrs. Coons left for other employment and Daisy Rogers worked with Mrs. Higgins.

Mrs. Higgins served as librarian for 25 years. In April, 1964, Mrs. LaPreal Swallow was hired. She was succeeded by Mrs. Lona Huntsman in 1969. In 1969 Mrs. Gwen Hunter was appoint librarian with Gwen Rowley as her assistant. Ruth Corbridge was library from 1991-1996 and Tawnia Gentry from 1996-2005. Stephanie Aleman is the present librarian.

A thank you too to Mrs. Karen Whatcott for putting together a comprehension history of the library from which most of this information was taken.

