



The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

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Near the center of Fillmore is a building which certainly represents the Face of Fillmore – The Territorial Statehouse. This time of year it has long been the scene of celebration and this January will be no exception.

January 8th will see the celebration of Utah’s statehood with a dance in the legislative hall of the territorial Statehouse Museum. This is the fourth year for this event. From 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. there will be dancing for everyone, casual dress. There will even be dance instruction for those who would like it. Promptly at 8:30 p.m. the Grande March will begin for the youth. Be sure to arrive early for this. The formal cotillion complete with dance cards for youth will be much like dances of yesteryear. Semi-formal or formal dress for the girls and appropriate dress for the boys. These activities are free and refreshments will be served.

Dancing has long been the custom in Fillmore. During the winter months many dances were held, some of them in the newly completed school house which was ready for use December 14, 1851. The school room was made of cottonwood logs with a large fireplace in one end and a dirt roof and a dirt floor. Hiram Mace was the first dance master and taught dancing to the youth. The musicians including Horace Russell, Med Stevens, William Stevens, Jacob Huntsman, Isaac Carling, Mel Bartholomew, Joseph Pugmire, Nelson Bartholomew, John King, and Gabriel Huntsman played for many social gatherings from dance to weddings. These musicians were often paid for their time in potatoes, cabbage, squash and even candles as money was scarce. Only square dances or dances which required the male to take just one arm of his partner were allowed, as such dances as “the waltz” were considered too familiar.

The Territorial Statehouse in Fillmore was built to be the capitol of the Utah Territory in the following years but has seen more time as a dance hall. Early leaders met during the day and danced in the evening. When the capital moved to Salt Lake City in 1856, the building had the largest dance floor in the area for many years.

The first waltz danced in Fillmore was a monumental occasion. Wise and Leigh Cropper, sons of George W. and Sabrina Land Cropper of Fillmore had been to Salt Lake attending the dance held in the upper room of the old statehouse. The two young men chose their partners while the floor was cleared of other dancers so all could enjoy the demonstration. The Dan Olsen Orchestra composed of his children George, Eva, Frank, Edwin, and Bertha played the “Blue Danube Waltz” and the first waltz ever danced in Millard County was expertly danced. Before the evening was over, nearly everyone had tried the new dance.