

## PETEETNEET SCHOOL



The imposing Peteetneet School sits on the hill at the east end of Utah Avenue in Payson. The history of the historic building actually began in 1897. At that time, there was a question in the community whether another school should be built to replace the four one room schools that were located in the four quarters of the community. Each of these schools were filled to capacity and needed to be replaced. The plan was to construct a building large enough to house the first through the eighth grades.

Payson City officials offered the city gravel bed on the east side of town to the Payson School District as a site for a new building. Many citizens felt the location was too far out from the center of the city and it would be a hardship on the students who lived on the west side of town. The double block was signed over to the school district on April 2, 1897. There was a clause in the deed that said if the property was no longer used for a school then the title of the property would revert to Payson City. When the Nebo School District abandoned the school in 1987, the property reverted to Payson City.

After the school district accepted the site, a public meeting was called to discuss bonding to pay for the construction of the new building. Plans for the building the Victorian style building was designed by a local Utah County architect, Richard C. Watkins. He also designed the Knight

Block and the Maeser School in Provo, and the public school in Spring City. He also designed the home of C. F. (Jack Dixon) in Payson among other residences.

John E. Spencer's sawmill in Payson Canyon supplied lumber for the building. The red sandstone was quarried in Spanish Fork Canyon.

After the school was completed, it was named after the Indian Chief Peteetneet who had been very friendly and helpful to the earlier settlers of the community. The building was built at a total cost of \$22,000. The general contractor for the construction was Henry Erlandson. He was also in charge of the woodwork in the building. David P. McDowell contracted to complete the masonry and Bates and Wilde completed the bricklaying. The building was plastered by Cottrell and Pickering. John Powell completed painting of the new building. All of these individuals were Payson residents.

The new building had a large belfry but no bell was ever installed. Charlie Long, local resident, provided in his will for the purchase of a bell for the school. Mr. Long's wishes were never fulfilled for the school.

The completed building opened its doors to students in January 1902. During the first few years, the building housed students in the first through the eighth grades. A ninth grade was added in 1905.

The upper grades were gradually moved to other schools as the years passed. Beginning in 1935, a six-week summer kindergarten was added. This was later discontinued. In 1951, a



*Peteetneet Museum today*

kindergarten was started that was held during the regular school year.

A hot lunch program was inaugurated in about 1936. The simple

program was expanded over the years and the menu has been vastly improved to help meet the healthy foods required by the students.

A new wing was constructed on the north side of the original building in 1958-59. The new addition housed a large auditorium and kitchen on the main floor. The Auditorium doubled as dining area of the lunch room. The lower floor had three large rooms for other classes and a library.

In 1988, due to state and federal safety concerns, the school was abandoned by Nebo School District and the students were moved to newer schools in the city.

When the property was returned to Payson City, the city wanted to demolish the beautiful, old building and put the grounds to other uses. Larry Brown and Dr. Gordon Taylor led a group of citizens and formed People Preserving Peteetneet to save the historical building from the wrecker's ball. It was this concerned citizens group who took a stand to preserve this beautiful edifice.

During the first few years of the restoration, it was not uncommon for many members of the committee and other volunteers to work 8-16 hour days helping to restore and maintain Peteetneet. They were willing to do hard manual work to help restore the building to its original beauty. There is a video showing the restoration that is available on the internet at <http://www.peteetneetmuseum.org>.

Through the efforts of Dr. Taylor, grant monies were obtained to help with the restoration of the building. Today, Peteetneet Museum and Cultural Arts Center is operated as a nonprofit organization by People Preserving Peteetneet. All donations to the Peteetneet Museum and Cultural Arts Center are tax deductible to the individual donors.

Today, the Historic Peteetneet Museum and Cultural Arts Center represents an ongoing act of love expressed by the community to all visitors. Not only is it the restoration and preservation of a beautiful historic school building, but it is a gathering place for children and adults who want to enjoy the facility and what it has to offer. During 2014, volunteers donated almost 12,000 hours of their time to share Peteetneet with the many visitors to the facility. The museum and cultural arts center was host to over 34,000 visitors during the same year.