

History of the Lehi Sugar Factory And the Sugar Industry in Utah

Early Efforts

From its inception, the Utah Sugar Industry was an LDS Church Enterprise. In the late 1840's the Deseret Manufacturing Company purchased a plant in Liverpool, England. The Equipment was shipped to New Orleans, then up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The heavy machinery was then transported across the plains by 44 wagons.

The factory was established at the present site of Sugarhouse Park in Salt Lake Valley. But the venture, based on open kettle technology, was unsuccessful. Instead of sugar, the process produced a thick, brown syrup, which even cattle would not eat. The Church lost more than 56,000 on the Enterprise.

The Lehi Factory

Although the Lehi Sugar Factory was the fourth successful plant in America, its history, is perhaps the most fabled. It was the first to utilize irrigation sugar beets, the first to use American-made machinery, the first to use the osmose process of reprocessing molasses, the first to build auxiliary cutting stations, and the first to have been established by a religious movement.

The Utah Sugar company filed incorporation papers on 4th Sept., 1889. After considering several sites, the company decided to build its first factory on Mulliner's mill pond in Lehi.

The bid was awarded to E.F. Dyer and Company. The first batch of sugar in the new plant was produced on 15 October 1891.

Why Lehi?

When the Utah Sugar Company made its first stock offering, the only substantial

subscription came from the Lehi mills and stock company.

\In addition to the \$88,000 stock purchase, the Lehi Group also offered the 35 acre building site on Mulliner's Mill Pond and a donation to purchase additional land. The site was admirable from a transportation standpoint since the Rio Grande Western Railroad transversed the property and the Union Pacific Line, bypassed a mile north. Other aspects of the package included perpetual water rights to the Mill Pond, eight acres of limestone quarry at Pelican Point, 1500 acres of ground for a Company Beet farm and \$1,000 worth of labor to improve the road to the factory site.

Thomas R. Cutler

The Englishman Thomas Robinson Cutler was born in 1844. He came to Lehi in 1865. He was a merchant by trade. He served as manager of the People's Coop from 1871-89.

Financially linked with a number of leading Utah Institutions, Cutler is best known as General Manager of the Utah Sugar Company from 1889-1917. He was the man responsible for the plant being constructed in Lehi.

From Beets to Sugar

After beet seeds are planted, it required much area. Crowded beets will not mature. Blacking and thinning is required to space the beets 8-10 inches apart.

Because of the difficult stoop labor involved, old times held that the sugar had to be hoed into the beets.

Once beets arrived at the factory during the fall harvest, they were weighed, stored in bed sheds north of the plants, then floated to the main building through a flume. White sugar was ultimately extracted after the beets were washed, sliced into cossetts then boiled in a massive vacuum-strike pan. From beet to sugar, the complicated processes took 36 hours.

The End

After considerable expansion, particularly in 1899-1900 and the 1914-1915, the Lehi Sugar Factory closed after the 1924 campaign.

The demise came about because of the effect of a microscopic roundworm and a white fly spread disease called "curly top." Impoverished fields brought little or no income, so farmers refused to plant beets.

From 1891-1924 the Lehi District produced 2,572,357 tons of beets from which was extracted 6,987,242 100 lb. bags of sugar. The Utah Sugar and the Utah-Idaho Company (formed in 1907) spent an estimated \$30,000 in the Lehi District on beets, labor and supplies.

A 184 foot smokestack and a 1914 built warehouse are the only structures marking the site today.