

# **LEHI SUGAR FACTORY**

**Constructed: 1890-91**

**Address: South Millpond Road**

**Present owners: Thomas Peck and Sons Trucking Company**

On 4 September 1889 the Utah Sugar Company, an LDS Church-owned corporation, was incorporated. The decision was made to construct a factory. The winning \$400,000 contract was awarded to E.H. Dyer & Co.

After visits to several areas, the choice for the future plant was Mulliner's millpond in Lehi. The cornerstone-laying ceremony, held on 26 December 1890, was conducted by LDS Church president Wilford Woodruff.

Long before the sugar factory was completed, field representatives, under the direction of George Austin, began visiting growers to convince them to plant beet seed. At that time a Lehi farmer could earn about \$20 per acre growing wheat, \$13 an acre for hay, and \$36 for an acre of potatoes. Growers were advised by Utah Sugar Company personnel that beets would be bought for \$4.50 a ton, making them worth an estimated \$45 per acre.

The plant was completed in the fall of 1891 and the first strike of sugar took place on 15 October. The success of the sugar factory had dramatic effect on Lehi's financial well-being. Between 1890 and 1896 nearly thirty new businesses came into existence. Likely no local enterprise since then, with the possible exception of General Refractories, has provided Lehi with such long-term financial rewards.

No structure in the town's history was as imposing as the main sugar factory building. The building was one hundred eighty-four feet long, eighty-four feet wide, and three stories high. The annex, which contained the boilers, boneblack house, and lime kiln, was one hundred eighty feet long and thirty-eight feet wide. The portion of the annex housing the boneblack and lime-kiln areas was three stories high. The other one hundred feet where the steam plant was located was only a single story.

North of the main building were the beet sheds, each five hundred feet long and twenty-four feet wide. The combined storage capacity of the eight sheds in 1896 was 20,000 tons. There were also four pulp silos, each one hundred eighty

by twenty-four feet and ten feet deep. So much coal was lost to spontaneous combustion when piled in the open that a water-filled coal bin two hundred fifty feet long and forty-eight feet wide was constructed.

A massive 1899-1900 building project not only physically doubled the size of the plant, but also increased its capacity to one thousand tons of beets per day. One of the most interesting features of the steam-operated factory was its twenty-two boilers, each with its own smokestack. One hundred twenty-five tons of coal were burned each twenty-four-hour period. As many as sixty carloads of coal were frequently awaiting unloading.

In 1914 when World War I broke out, the market for sugar increased dramatically. The huge fourteen-million-pound capacity warehouse, still standing on the site, was completed at this time (along with the 184-foot smokestack).

In 1925, the Lehi Sugar Factory did not open due to having insufficient numbers of beets to process. Farmers would no longer plant them because their fields were infested with nematodes (microscopic round worms), and another blight called “curly top.” This was caused by a small white fly.

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

In 1939 the Lehi factory buildings, with the exception of the warehouse, blacksmith shops, and other storage buildings, were sold to Bothweil Mining Company of Mercur. Many of the smaller buildings were moved to various locations in Lehi. Much of the brick from the main factory was used to build the Joseph Smith Memorial Building on the Brigham Young University campus as well as the Lehi First Ward chapel.

The 184-foot smokestack--the town's tallest landmark--along with the 1914-built warehouse and coal pits, are all that remain of the Lehi Sugar Factory today.