

THE WASHINGTON COTTON FACTORY LEGACY: A SENSE OF MISSION

One does not grow cotton north of the arctic circle, unless he has a hot house and a lot of energy to expend or waste. Nor would cotton meet the needs of denizens of the cold north; what they need is skins and pelts and furs and fish and blubber.

What one needs for growing cotton is warm weather and a long growing season, preferably a season of over 200 frost-free days. And if you live in Utah, your cotton growing options are pretty restricted. The Northern Rocky Mountain ranges produced cottonwood "trees," useful to trappers and Indians for fuel and forage for their horses during a hard snow-laden winter. The high Colorado plateau is good for grass and cattle, but will not support sub-tropical types like cotton, or grapes, or even tobacco. The Great Basin area of Utah, once flooded by the waters of Lake Bonneville, is a region too arid or too short-seasoned to grow good cotton. It has proven ideal for sheep and people, even lucerne, sugar beets, orchards, and vineyards. And at least one citizen of Utah County argued that no place could produce the quality of light wine that American Fork could. Well, you can bet Santa Clara Saint, Daniel Bonelli, was not about to let such a claim go unchallenged. His 1860 dissertation on vine culture in the Deseret Evening News is a classic.

So if one is to grow cotton in Utah (Deseret), he had better head for the South Rim of the Great Basin, across Black Rock Ridge onto the lower drainages of the Virgin River, the only region really adapted to cotton growing. It was perceived by some early settlers to be less than ideal even so. The following quotation from "Lines Inscribed to the Dixie Pioneers of 1861," written by Charles L. Walker, are suggestive of their feelings about its creation:

Now let us not faint in this land "Desolation,"
Where Lizzards, Rocks, Cactus, and Mesquitos abound;
Where Soap-root and Briars, which no one admires,
And white mineral-salt spreads over the ground.

When this earth was formed, at the time of Creation,
To get rid of waste stuff, would puzzle a squire;
So they dumped all the refuse in this Dixie station,
Then touched off volcanoes and set it on fire.

Of course, had the Mormon pioneers of 1850 been students of this area's earlier peoples, they would have known that the Indians on the lower reaches of the river, known now as Lost City near Overton, Nevada, had during their several hundred-year occupancy of the region grown "cotton," and wheat, corn and beans and squash. But those Saints could not have known that, since they learned of the region's adaptability to cotton culture by quite a different route.

Parley P. Pratt had explored here in late 1849. John D. Lee came south from Fort Harmony in 1852. Both reported on the mildness of the winter season. Here was land, and water, and a special kind of climate. No other area could match its distinctiveness in this regard. These explorations made the area known, and the thrust to get there began soon after.

Few things happen in a vacuum, especially in history. There were in fact forces at work in Territorial Utah that would lead not only to the settlement of Southern Utah, but to its particular experiment with cotton culture. Remember, the dominant political, social and economic forces in Utah in the 1850s emanated from and centered in the institution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To understand the Cotton Mission, it is helpful to understand several basic premises or perceptions held by "Mormons" and their leaders in mid-19th century Utah.

1. The earth was God's creation. Mankind merely held a temporary stewardship during his/her three score and ten years of mortality. For most pioneers that allotment of 70 years was cut short. Few, in fact, saw such longevity.

2. The Church (Kingdom of God) had been set up in the "last days" and was to roll forth that the "Kingdom of Heaven might come." These Saints' roles were to usher in the millennial reign of Jesus Christ by

their building of the Kingdom. The desert should blossom as a rose; they must lift up an ensign unto the nations; they were to become a peculiar people. This sense of mission was a compelling force for most of them.

3. Mormons and Mormon leaders wanted to be free from harrassment, from the laughing and jeerings of the world, from their sins and their impurities. They wanted isolation. They wanted self-sufficiency so that they did not have to depend upon their enemies for anything. They would be in the world, but not of it.

4. Lastly was also their belief that there would be judgments of God upon the wicked world for their unbelief, for their slaying of the prophet, their rejection of the Gospel and for their general wickedness. These judgments would come in the forms of famine, earthquakes, floods, seas heaving beyond their bounds, and wars and rumors of wars. These were signs of the time, and as a reading of Charles L. Walker's diary shows, very readable and real signs to the Saints in Dixie.

These perceptions are vital to our understanding of what made the cotton mission peculiar; if, indeed, it was. And I think it was.

The Saga of Southern Settlement began with the founding of Parowan, Utah (1850-51). Many Saints were "called" to settle the vast regions of their newly formed Territory of Utah. Those "calls" often had multiple purposes. First of all, they were called to places of settlement where the Saints could establish themselves and provide for their economic needs. Secondly Saints laid claim to the land by squatting on and improving it. The side benefit of this was that outsiders were kept out or at least discouraged from coming in among them. Third, there was occasionally a specific economic mission such as the "Iron" Mission in Cedar City, the "Lead" Mission in Las Vegas, and of course the "Cotton Mission." And finally, there was the ever present charge to convert the Lamanites to the Gospel. Every mission was in one sense an Indian Mission.

But Southern Utah had a special charge toward the Indians also. In fact, the Southern Indian Missionary work began with John D. Lee's efforts as Indian Farmer at Fort Harmony. Later Rufus Allen was chosen as Southern Indian Mission president, followed by Jacob Hamblin in 1857. Thomas D. Brown was the first scribe, and as such Southern Utah's first historian. That record of their mission and achievements was very important. His work was followed by that of James S. Bleak, "Annals of the Southern Utah Mission," also important.

In 1854 the Indian Mission moved Jacob Hamblin and fellow missionaries onto the Santa Clara River and almost by accident launched the Cotton Mission. Angus Hardy planted seeds acquired in Parowan from Nancy Anderson. They grew into "thrifty" cotton plants, and with those reports the cotton vision became focused. The Cotton Mission was to be.

All that was needed was a road over the Black Ridge, which Peter Shirtz located at the base of Pine Valley Mountain. It was a good road except for a few hundred yards through a steep canyon. What an exception! Shirtz suggested they could "leap" over it, hence its name--Peter's Leap. When he traveled it in 1857, George A. Smith spoke of the road between Harmony and Washington as

the most desperate piece. . . that I ever traveled in my life, the whole ground being covered for miles with stones, volcanic rock, cobble heads. . . and in places deep sand.

The road to Dixie remained "tough" until the freeway was finally completed more than one hundred years later.

And people. People were needed also. That problem was addressed in 1857 by calls to send Saints south to Gunlock, and Washington under the leadership of Bishop Robert D. Covington. Many Washington settlers were Mississippi converts and familiar with cotton culture. The Covington home still stands in that community as a proud monument to its first leader.

Theirs was a modest effort in 1857, with other small settlements established along the river the next year, Harrisville and Toquerville; and in 1859 Virgin

City, Grafton and Santa Clara. An experimental farm was planted below the Clara field at Heberville in 1858. Overall the prospects appeared favorable, at least to those who expected them to be favorable. However, many who came left. In 1861 there were only 79 families here. The big move was the calling of some 300 other Saints to settle St. George in the fall of 1861.

There are several factors to note at this point. First of all, the region to be known since then as Utah's Dixie was geographically and climatologically able to support cotton culture, however marginal the process might be. And it was the only area in Utah where it could be done. The region depended absolutely on irrigation for successful crops, and when cropping expanded beyond the small springs and streams, to the tapping of the waters of the capricious Virgin River, the margin of success became ever more tenuous and unpredictable.

It should be noted also, that while the Cotton Mission was not the first mission geared to producing a specific product for the Saints as a whole--iron and lead have been noted already--it was the first based upon agricultural production. What this meant was a competition between subsistence agriculture and commercial agriculture for the very limited utilizable resources of the region. Land, water and labor could not be used twice; that is, to produce food to live on, and to produce cotton to sell. It forced a choice.

For several hundred years, the Indians had been utilizing these small streams and springs for their always primitive domestic agriculture. Fathers Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante reported on Indian agriculture late in 1776. Jed Smith saw signs of it again in 1826-1827. Subsistence agriculture was nothing new here.

But Mormon technology was only slightly more advanced. Pioneers could divert these small streams onto the land with their increasingly sophisticated laterals and ditches, and produce good crops thereby. Mormons could also use the streams for water power and did build grist mills and saw mills along them, a far cry

from the Indians mano-matate corn grinder and flint axe.

But the water resources were limited until Mormon technology and capital and labor would allow them to "capitalize" on the Virgin River water. This was a big distinction, even though the task appeared quite simple at first. (Those of us who have hiked or ridden along the river recognize how easily water could be diverted at some locations.) These Mormon pioneers dug canals, laterals and ditches, built diversion dams that forced water to flow onto the thirsty land. The result was truly miraculous. The desert began to blossom like a rose (or lucerne or corn or cane, at least). Verdant fields sprang up everywhere water could reach. The promise of stewardship seemed verified.

But these early Saints knew little of the desert's ways. It did not rain often, but when it did, the waters ran quickly from the barren hills, made even more barren after a few years by the overgrazing of the land by pioneer livestock. Water poured into the gullies, and into the river itself. The placid Virgin became a raging whore. Sand, rocks, debris plugged water courses, diverted the river's flow, filled ditches, and scoured the river's bed of any diversion dam. What had been done through a united community effort, through incredibly hard labor and sacrifice over weeks and months was gone in an instant. These pioneers were stripped clean (maybe the term should be dirty) time and time again. Not only did they have to start over, clean the ditches, rebuild the dam, but too often they also had to replant the crops lost to the searing summer heat when the water went away.

And often they had no seed; they had little to eat, because theirs had become a commercial agriculture, not a subsistence one entirely. That is, the cotton missionaries depended on the sale of their cotton for wealth to buy or barter for the food and other substances they needed. One did not eat dried up cotton plants, or bolls or even boll weevils. It was not an issue of "guns vs butter," so often heard nowadays; it was an issue of a market crop vs subsistence. For these Saints the margin of survival was so narrow that physical disaster was

disaster indeed. Of Dixie and the Virgin River, Charles Walker wrote:

All tourists declare 'tis the Land Desolation,
And marvel how white folks can live here and thrive;
They know not we starved while at work on half rations,
'Twas grit that kept body and soul just alive.
The grub that we ate was in no way inviting,
Hard flapjacks of caneseed with boiled lucern greens;
And burnt pungent treacle in which ants were fighting,
Whilst flies buzzed by millions for lack of wire screens.

Our works on the Virgin admit of no shaming,
Oft vexed words escaped with a taint of profane,
Our living was made by continually damming,
Meantime we were hoping and praying for rain.
The rain when it came often bursted our ditches,
And dams were torn out by the mad raging flood;
Like Beavers we worked in the stream without breeches,
'Twas that or starvation in farming for food.

It is no wonder that Brigham Young recognized after his visit in 1864 that the Saints in the Cotton Mission were "starving," a fact Apostle Erastus Snow had reported to him earlier. In spite of the early production of cotton (some 74,000 pounds was shipped to eastern or California markets by 1864), the overall impact was an economic drain on these Dixie pioneers. Cotton production was not an asset.

We might wonder why our very intelligent forbears did not, in 1863-1864, simply decide that cotton production was a bust, and turn to something else instead, as they did eventually anyway. Of course, some did. Perhaps we can understand the issue better if we remind ourselves that people are motivated to do "strange" things, for very logical if improbable reasons. For example, take gold seekers. Never has there been more money discovered by the "prospectors" than is expended by them collectively in the search. Big money only comes later. Yet, the siren call of the gold fields led prospectors to California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Eureka, Park City, Alta, Mercur, Ophir, Silver Reef, the Yukon and Australia. Some individuals made nearly everyone of those "strikes" and some struck out nearly every time. Yet still they stayed. I guess we can conclude that the correlation between expectation and dividend received is rarely 100%. People simply give the "facts" a different meaning.

Now, back to the Dixie Cotton Mission and what it was for those stalwart pioneers. Before 1865, it had been mostly "bust," with no boom at all. There had been malaria, "lucerne hell," and hard times galore. Still most of the Saints "held firm." Why? Not because they expected to strike it rich sometime, somewhere, like the prospectors did; but rather because they believed God wanted them here to help build the Kingdom of God. That is what their leaders had said and that was reason enough for most of them. That was their mission, and though they accepted it, some wondered a little bit about it. As we see from Charles Walker's diary, he wondered too:

To look on the country it is a dry, parched, barren waste with here and there a green spot on the margin of the streams. Very windy, dusty, blowing nearly all the time. The water is not good and far from being palatable. And this is the country we have to live in and make it blossom as the Rose. Well its all right; we shall know how to appreciate a good country when we get to it, when the Lord has prepared the way for his People to return and build up the waste places of Zion.

Let us now look at the larger picture in more detail. The American Civil War broke out in December 1860, shortly after the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. Mormons saw this conflict as a kind of divine omen, since Joseph Smith had prophesied a national struggle would occur over the issue of slavery, and it would begin with the secession of South Carolina. These four years were seen by many Mormons as the judgment of God on the wicked nation who had rejected the prophets and who had persecuted His Saints. Many even looked to the millennial reign of Jesus himself to be near at hand.

Although President Young had already begun the Cotton Mission, he was convinced because of the war that the mission needed to be reinforced and expanded; hence the call for 300 more cotton missionaries in 1861. (It should be noted parenthetically, that some who were called exercised the option of fitting out others to go in their stead. Some also exercised the option of doing nothing at all.) Mission calls were screening processes. Late that fall, new and old settlers experienced the worst flood ever known to the area, shortly after the colonists'

December arrival in St. George. It rained forty days and forty nights with Noah-like implications for many, in all parts of Utah's Dixie. At Grafton fields eroded away and caved into the swollen raging Virgin River; Jacob Hamblin nearly drowned when the bank of the Santa Clara River tumbled into the torrent. John D. Lee had two children killed when the adobe wall of Fort Harmony crashed into their bedroom. He also lost his grist mill located on the creek west of Washington town itself. There were many other losses also. Yet for most of these Dixie Saints, while the devil might rage, he would never get them.

As if those tragedies were not enough, these Saints were asked the next two years to bear their share of the burden of freighting Saints to Zion. Wagons and teams were sent from Dixie to the Missouri River, some freighting cotton going east, and returned west with the emigrating Saints. These trips took a whole season. No wonder Apostle Erastus Snow was beside himself. No wonder the Saints here nearly starved in 1863. Also remember, these were Civil War years.

Brigham Young visited the mission in the summer of 1864, which was also a season of increased Indian depredations on the Great Plains, which conflicts made Mormon emigration unusually hazardous; so much so, in fact, that some Saints emigrated through Canada, while others came in from the west coast.

It was at this time that Brigham Young again looked toward the Colorado River as a solution to several problems. It might provide a feasible, even a good emigration route into Zion. And if it could, then the settlements in the Cotton Mission would be reinforced thereby, and prospered. Actions followed quickly after the October 1864 conference. Anson Call led an exploring party from St. George to the Colorado River as far south as the Mojave Villages (Needles), and plans were made for settlements at Millersberg (Beaver Dams - Littlefield), St. Thomas and St. Joseph. The point of embarkation on the river was Calls Landing or Callsville.

Mission calls went out to expand the Cotton Mission onto the lower river in the late fall of 1864 and spring of 1865. For most Saints there was great expectation

and optimism; the Dixie Cotton Mission was seen as a kind of Savior to the Saints. Even California merchants began to ply their wares in the region. Local speculators looked to a hotel for travelers enroute to and from Salt Lake City. The optimism was to be short lived.

Perhaps mainly as a means of bolstering the leaders of the Cotton Mission and the Colorado River venture, Brigham Young stated he would himself go to the Cotton Mission and if he did, he would soon have steamboats plying the waters of the Colorado River. Well, maybe part of the way, as they later did, that is reaching up the Colorado River past Callville to the mouth of the Virgin River itself, to Daniel Bonelli's Rioville. There is no doubt that Brigham Young was himself personally a first-rate and very experienced pioneer. He had moved from Whitingham, Vermont to New York State and pioneered as a child, youth and young man eight different times; that is, he and his family actually went into virgin territory (no pun nor parallel intended) and tamed the wilderness, built log cabins, planted, harvested, etc. He had first-hand experience for his vision for pioneering. When his information was substantive, his choices were usually very astute. But his concept of the "big" picture of the world was faulted, probably because his knowledge of the world at large and the American nation was limited and very focused; namely, on the mission of the church restored and the building of the kingdom by the Saints.

President Young made many solid commitments to the Cotton Mission. The original calls, the additional Saints in 1859, 1861, and 1864-65. His next step was to build a cotton factory on Mill Creek in Washington. It was scheduled for 1865.

The large sandstone structure was begun that very year with Appleton Harmon assigned as superintendent of construction. Elijah and Elisha Averett were two prominent stone masons. They had also worked on Call's warehouse at Callville. John P. Chidester was chief carpenter. August Mackelsprang and Hyrum Walker supplied lumber from Cedar Mountain.

The first story was completed and machinery, which was brought out of Parley's Canyon east of Salt Lake City, was put in operation by January of 1867. George Crosby and Orson Foster hauled it down. James Davidson directed its installation. Later, two additional stories were added, because of the demand, with both cotton and woolen goods being processed. By 1879, this enlarged factory was in use.

The mill (factory) used the water from the creek fed from springs north of town. The stream was stored in a reservoir on the hill west of the mill for 14 hours, which with the stream flow allowed 10 hours of operation, and at peak production, the factory could produce 500 yards of cloth per day. It employed scores of local people, who produced cotton batts, mattresses, quilts, blankets, jeans, denims, broadcloth, flannels, and gingham.

Brigham Young hired Joseph Birch to manage his mill, then sold out five years later in 1870 to the Rio Virgin Cooperative Manufacturing Company. The price was about \$44,000.

As you know, the Civil War came to an end in April 1865. It posed new problems immediately. (1) Saints could migrate through the main portions of the nation. (2) Did Zion still need the Cotton Mission? Well, few were clairvoyant enough to see the joining of the rails at Promontory Point only four years away. (3) Yet with the railroad the cotton production of the South was cheaper to the markets in Salt Lake City than were Brigham's factory goods.

In Brother Brigham's mind, there was still the need for economic self-sufficiency, and to build a "peculiar" people here in Zion. His commitment to Dixie did not diminish except for the Colorado River/lower Virgin Project. He was finally persuaded to visit St. Thomas and Junction City in February 1870. Bishop James Leithhead had looked to the construction of a barge to take the president across the Colorado River for further exploration. But when Young saw the desolation of the area (his son Joseph W. described it as an area where Joseph Asay's oxen stood around looking for a blade of grass to poke its head up, so they could eat it. Joseph was not without a sense of humor admittedly,

since he later described how eggs could be fried without a fire on a hot summer day in that country and how, if one could shade eggs, he could hatch them without the tender loving care of an old hen.) Anyhow President Young allowed the Saints to vote to disband the Muddy Mission (no, it was not a mission to make mud, though had it been it could have been quite successful). So in 1870 the Saints began preparing to leave the lower Virgin for Long Valley/Kanab areas mainly; this remember is also the year Young sold his factory.

We should note that hauling produce from the Muddy Settlements to Washington was an awesome burden—whether cotton, or salt or garden goods. The quicksand in the river which had to be crossed as many as 35 times one way, the shortage of water away from the river, the Utah Hill and climb up over the mountains, and even the Virgin Hill right near Bunkersville or Riverside today along the freeway were all major obstacles.

Once those cotton missionaries left the muddy region, no other Mormons moved in until the United Order-motivated Mormons returned to Bunkerville in 1877, and to Saint Thomas a couple of years later. As you can see, theirs was also a strong sense of mission—United Order, Cotton Mission and Polygamy--the makings of a peculiar people indeed (and would that we all were to be so "peculiar" as Dr. LeRoy Hafen and Mrs. Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks—and others, of course).

But we see President Young's commitment to the Cotton Mission's survival and success in other areas also. He moved to St. George for wintering after the telegraph arrived in 1867. That was no small concession and had a significant impact. His house still stands, you know.

He committed tithing and other funds to major community projects during the 1860s and 1870s. The Washington County Courthouse, the St. George Tabernacle, and the St. George Temple. How fortunate you are to live where these pioneer structures remain intact. Structures which reflect not only the commitment and dedication of the pioneers, but their aesthetic judgment and craftsmanship as well. Have not these things made Dixie special? I think so.

Also, in 1873, President Young instituted the United Order in Dixie; not without some rumblings and complaints, which reportedly he handled by recommending a re-baptism and rededication of these Saints. When they were baptized, it was "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and into the United Order." This was an important movement to the Cotton Mission, because it again focused attention on self sufficiency and the need for the Mission's product, cotton, nowhere else available from the Saints themselves.

Other United Order groups sent men and boys south to produce cotton for their orders--the Brigham City Order's building still stands along the Virgin River east of Washington. Their cotton was then processed through the factory or traded for factory produce or script which became an important circulating medium in the Dixie economy.

But still these were hard times, 1870-1890, and have been called the second period of the Cotton Factory. Transportation remained a major bug-a-boo. It was hard to get here from there and visa/versa. No freeway, no bridges, no tunnels, just sand, and dirt, and black rock and quicksand. Raw materials and markets remained isolated.

But most of all there was the capriciousness of the Virgin River. Diversion dam after diversion dam was planted, reinforced, rebuilt, redesigned, and than all had to be done again. Karl Larson tells us that the dam in the Virgin had to be replaced three times in 1857, twice in 1858, thrice in 1859, and similarly in 1860-1861. Then of course came the big winter flood. It was all starting over again. But rocks and brush and timber were harder to find close by and the task of rebuilding continually got more difficult. These were not problems of a few years but rather problems of several decades. Disasterous floods struck Washington fields, St. George fields, and Price fields in 1883, again in 1884 and 1885--nearly 30 years since 1857.

A pile dam was begun in the fall of 1885, completed early in 1888 only to be washed out by the largest flood recorded to date on December 7, 1889. Forty years

after he was called to Dixie, Charles L. Walker wrote:

The old Virgin River hath often perplexed us
By tearing out ditches and dams by the score;
Like an insatiate gourmand, it many times vexed us
By greedily crying,--"I want more and more!"

Hard times indeed. Finally, the Virgin River was conquered 3 miles upstream when the New Rock Dam was built and completed in 1891. Oh the cost in energy expended, crops lost, in frustrations and fatigue. That alone would give one a sense of mission. And those who stayed nearly always already had it or they wouldn't have come in the first place, and they wouldn't have stayed in the second one.

But the river was only part of their problems. The mill generally was only marginal economically, even at best. There were several basic problems that had to be solved--a supply of cotton and later woolen to be processed. We have seen how uncertain that could be. Erastus Snow and Brigham Young had to continually call on the people to produce more cotton. Secondly, machinery was needed to run the factory and had to be kept in repair, no small task indeed, when parts had to come from as far away as Philadelphia.

Third, there was a need for skilled labor. Maggie Davidson, a daughter of James, is credited with teaching the young ladies of Washington the arts of lapping, spinning, carding and weaving. Wages were about \$4.00 per week. Hard times caused families to move often. Semi-skilled labor had to be retrained. But managers and dyers were hard, if not impossible, to replace.

The fourth was water power. A race 21 rods long had been built west of the factory, but in hard times, priorities for use of water and water rights were challenged, especially on the flow of a stream that was certain with crops dying when the dams washed out of the Virgin River.

Fifth was the negative attitude many Saints had about using home produced goods. For some reason "store bought" was nearly always preferred. That in itself was sufficient problem, but when Saints bought store goods, they usually had to pay cash, whereas factory goods could be purchased on credit or with

script, an important monetary medium here then.

Sixth, the absence of a cash flow was critical. The managers had to pay cash for parts, cash for skilled labor, cash for interest payments, and cash sometimes for produce. It was an impossible task, because farmers, suppliers of wool, buyers with money, bought and sold where they could get cash now, not promises, or even script and factory goods.

Finally, there was the awesome burden of debt hanging over the heads of Erastus Snow, Henry W. Miller, A. R. Whitehead, and Daniel D. McArthur, and other men of means in Dixie. Karl Larsen notes:

It would have been difficult enough for the factory to operate if it had been free of all indebtedness, but it was not free. There were its two obligations to President Young: first the mortgage of \$44,000 on the business, and second the \$10,000 note in the President's favor. The interest alone on them came to \$5,600 annually, and to raise this amount taxed all the ingenuity of the management, let alone paying off the principal. As a matter of fact, nothing except interest was ever paid to Brigham Young to the time of his death in 1877.

That burden continually bled away scarce capital from the venture.

Erastus Snow bore the brunt of this burden. To quote Larsen again:

The general oversight of the Southern Mission was his, and in addition the responsibility for building of Tabernacle and Temple. Even so, topping all this was the factory with its uncertainty of operation and the load of debt under which it staggered. Then, to make matters worse, right on the heels of this shackled indebtedness came the Panic of 1873. The whole thing was enough to drive a saint to purgatory, and we can forgive Erastus, if, in one of his darker moments, he swore the factory was a curse to the community. Brother Brigham tossed this indiscretion back at Erastus during the dedicatory services of the St. George Temple. Erastus did not deny that he had said it.

Young did not recognize the dilemma. He wanted his people to work and to be equal economically, yet he failed to credit merchandizing and trade as significant contributions to the economy. It was a major error of economics; yet the Saints struggled valiantly to prove him right.

The factory directors tried selling for cash and buying with script, still with marginal success. The factory probably had its best years during the late 1870s and early 1880s when Silver Reef was flourishing. But again the floods of

the 1880s were devastating. Erastus Snow died in 1888.

Finally in 1890, Thomas Judd, an important Southern Utah merchant known best as a member of the firm of Woolley, Lund and Judd, leased the factory and operated it profitably for a few years. He reduced the value of the stock to about 65 cents on the dollar and did pay dividends to stockholders. By 1898, the factory was idle again. A few brief attempts at reactivation followed until 1910, when some of the machinery was sold. Then, in 1914, the rest was scrapped-- seems there was a war coming on. Since that time, a life time of over three score and ten years, the building has survived as a warehouse, and even a haunted Halloween house, mainly on the merits of its original builder's building. Too bad this 118 year-old structure has not been discovered by someone with the resources, the vision, and a sense of mission comparable to that of those who built so well so long ago.

In conclusion, several observations seem relevant. The Cotton Factory, by itself is less important than the Cotton Mission to the image of Dixie held by those who stayed and survived and finally prospered here. But the factory became the symbol of that mission. It was a tangible quality. Here the fruits of the Cotton Mission were garnered for processing and marketing. Here the people came, and exchanged goods, and scripts and ideas and testimonies. Here the struggles to survive became focused. The floods, the malaria, the drought and famine--all were elements of the Cotton Mission, at least they were for those "faithful" who remained true to their calling. The mission was a weeding process. Only the more faithful came in the first place; only the most faithful remained.

The factory had additional economic functions. Factory goods were easier to come by and usually superior to home-spun and homemade. This was indeed a step up for busy, burdened housewives. There was some economic dividends for employees, stockholders, producers and merchants--some of the time. And there was always the promise, the hope for prosperity, if only the Saints would answer

the continuous call--produce more cotton, buy more stock in the factory, reject the enticements of outside merchants, and the lure of store-bought goods.

There were some social aspects where young people gained skills, some economic stature and met and mingled and married. Always, the factory was the symbol of the Cotton Mission.

But it was also a burden, a millstone about the neck for some, even. The cost of producing cotton ranged from \$3.50 to \$1.00 while the Civil War was on. In 1864 New York and California markets paid \$1.90 and \$1.40 respectively. But cotton production was marginal; so was the manufacturing of it. Poor roads, poor transportation, long distances for special supplies--like dyes, machinery and oil to run it with, all worked against its profitability. It was suggested that castor beans grown in Dixie might meet their oil needs (a healthy idea, if my mother was right).

Beyond these factors, the mill drained the people's capital from them. Bad years, floods, all devoured their limited savings. And they would try again, and fail again. Even Silver Reef years, and Thomas Judd's operation were of limited success. When Gentiles had money to spend, they would buy grapes, and wine, raisins and garden produce, and that is where the Saints would sell. The factory was an indirect market for them at best. These other markets were immediate and more responsive, and often offered "cash" for produce received.

And while Brigham Young did invest in the factory, his investment bled away from Dixie dollars in interest. Erastus Snow made money on his grist mill located downstream a few yards. He did not prosper from the cotton factory. In these senses, the factory, and the Cotton Mission, retarded the development of Dixie. There were better places to spend the dollars, the saved capital, that could be gleaned from among the Saints. In fact, those other projects were continually subsidizing the Cotton Mission. Projects such as regular and subsistence farming, livestock, merchandising, mining, and government services were all also contributing

to the future of Dixie, and economically much more than did the cotton factory.

But nothing did more to make Dixie the Dixie we know than the Cotton Mission and its still standing symbol, the Cotton Factory, unless it was its historians who have written about these remarkable pioneers. Thanks to their records-- Thomas D. Brown, James G. Bleak, John D. Lee, Charles Lowell Walker and others-- we find historians writing good histories that make the past known to us, that tell us how much we owe to our Dixie pioneers. Historians such as Nels Anderson, H. Lorenzo Reid, A. K. Hafen, the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Glenn A. Snow, Andrew Karl Larsen, Mr. Dixie himself, and the incomparable Juanita Brooks. Who else has been so well written about? A peculiar people indeed, with a sense of mission and a great heritage from the 19th century. Hopefully, it will still have its impact in the twenty-first.

Melvin T. Smith
February 23-24, 1983

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Glenn Snow has also provided a wealth of original material to researchers from the Snow collection held by him.