

100th Anniversary of the “D”

President Williams, Mayor Pike, Sid and Cleo Atkin, alumni of Dixie Academy, Dixie Junior College, Dixie State College, and Dixie State University --

It is an honor be numbered in the posterity of Leo Alva Snow and to be here today among such notables in our community in celebration of this the 100th anniversary of the legendary “D”.

Leo A. Snow was born here in St. George on Sept. 5, 1881, the third child of Erastus Beman Snow and Elida Crosby, and a grandson of Apostle Erastus Snow. He attended grammar grades in the basement of the Tabernacle, began high school in the NEW Woodward School, attended Brigham Young Academy in Provo for business training, then back to St. George to complete high school at Woodward as President of the first graduating class in 1903.

He received his Bachelor's degree in Engineering from Univ. of Utah in 1908, and returned to St. George where he was appointed U.S. Deputy Surveyor and took a contract for a U.S. Public Lands Survey. Leo Snow was the first to formally survey what is now Zion National Park. His affinity for this natural wonder was like that of a father for his child, and in his report to Pres. Howard Taft he recommended that it be preserved as a national monument.

As a general Civil Engineer he was involved in many projects that improved the infrastructure and water resources of Southern Utah, including the Ivins Reservoir and irrigation system which made the previously arid Ivins Bench suitable for agriculture. A canal and siphon pump under the old Virgin River bridge brought sorely needed water into the St. George valley. He later surveyed and supervised construction of the pipeline to bring water 16 miles down to the city from Cottonwood Springs on the East face of Pine Valley, replacing the open ditch that was frequently fouled by livestock and needed constant maintenance. He designed and constructed the first sanitation system and installation of curbs and gutters for the town. The first public swimming pool in St. George was constructed just below the Sun Bowl as a WPA project in 1940 under Leo's supervision.

Over the ensuing years Leo Snow helped to fulfill the dream of Brigham Young and the mission of Erastus Snow to “Make the desert bloom like a rose.” The community of St. George and the surrounding areas of NV and AZ are indebted to him for his contributions to their well-being through provision of culinary and irrigation water resources, the building of roads, bridges and buildings, sanitation systems, and recreational facilities. His posterity has honored his legacy through exercise of the principles he silently taught - hard work, honesty, sobriety, faithfulness, education, service, integrity, and love.

From a *History of the “D”* as told by Mathew Bentley in 1962, and the Spring 2015 issue of *Dixie State University Magazine* (Note! He was a Dixie College alumnus of 1915 and later President of College).

“Students in the Class of '13 painted 1913 in large white numerals on the Sugarloaf in 1912. Not to be outdone, the students graduating in '14, covered the “3” with red paint and replaced it with a white “4”. The rivalry continued, with the year's last digit changing every few days. After the class of '13 graduated, the class of '15 took their place in the showdown, and as time went on, antics escalated until a fistfight broke out between the classes.

Resolved to end the competition, student body officers and school administrators proposed replacing a specific year on the Sugarloaf with the word “DIXIE” and constructing a large block “D” on the west Black Hill. The exact location of the “D” should be on the steep slope between the first and second ledges at a point directly in line with Tabernacle Street.”

Leo Snow was engaged to survey the location, which included not only spotting the letter on the hillside, but also laying out the border of the letter as well as determining the 100 ft. height and 75 ft. width of the monogram “D” so that it would look symmetrical when placed on the hillside slope. He single-handedly laid the outline stones. Twelve boys from the class of ’15, including Mathew Bentley, spent three weeks restoring the old road which had been used in the 1870’s to bring rock down for construction of the St. George Temple. On the morning of Feb 19, boys started gathering on the hill shortly after 8 o’clock, and soon there were almost a hundred, armed with picks, shovels, crowbars, brooms and buckets. The boys gave the new emblem a finished look with two coats of whitewash and were soon joined by the academy girls who brought lunch for a feast and short program commemorating the momentous day.

Quoting again from Mathew Bentley’s account, “Personally, I think that Mr. Snow did a good job on this occasion and as far as I know, his only pay was the “Thank you” that he received during the luncheon program and the satisfaction of knowing that he had contributed to the fine project.”

And now, 100 years later, we can say “Thank you” again to Leo A. Snow for his part in this enduring symbol of the spirit of Dixie.

By Ron Snow
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