

Jordan River Pumping Station

By Richard Van Wagoner

I recently visited the old Gardner Mill in West Jordan which has been beautifully restored. Archibald's restaurant and a country store share the mill now. While Archibald Gardner, the millwright who built the historic structure, never lived in Lehi, his son, James H. Gardner, who came to town in 1891 to boil the first batch of sugar at the Lehi Sugar Factory, was one of the town's most productive citizens.

In addition to being Lehi's mayor during construction of the Memorial Building, Gardner served as Utah County Commissioner, a member of the Utah Sugar Factory, and General Manager of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. When the Gardner home was completed at 187 East Third North in 1896 it was dedicated by Gardner's personal friend, LDS Church president Wilford Woodruff. This home, fondly called the "Rose and Green Villa" by family members, is the 1990 home of Devere Oliver.

Although the Lehi sugar factory, where Gardner was superintendent for many years, was demolished decades ago, the Board of Can President Jordan Pumping Station, which he masterminded, is still an important element in managing Utah Lake water.

"The Pumps" as most of us call the station at the headwaters of the Jordan River, had its beginnings at the turn of the century. From 1900 to 1901, a period of extreme drought, the river shrank to twenty-five percent of its normal flow. The drought was so severe that hundreds of people moved from the Salt Lake Valley to wetter climates.

For many year, Archibald Gardner, who had developed many canals along with his mills, had preached to his son James that Utah Lake water, much of which was lost in evaporation, could be recovered by merely

pumping it into the Jordan River where it would flow to Salt Lake County. Young Gardner, then superintendent of the Lehi Sugar factory, presented the pumping idea in mass meetings held in a host of Salt Lake Valley communities. His efforts were successful in converting Angus M. Cannon, president of one of these Salt Lake County canal companies.

During a 26 March, 1902 joint meeting of the Salt Lake City Council and the Board of Canal Presidents, the body which regulates irrigation matters in the Salt Lake Valley, Cannon presented the idea of a large pumping station at the mouth of the Jordan near Saratoga. After careful consideration the group voted to proceed with construction of such a plant. A \$47,000 bid for the plant and four one-hundred horsepower pumps was awarded to superintendent Gardner and his chief engineer at the sugar factory, M. W. Ingalls.

Gardner's interest in the project was not happenchance. According to the account, the Utah Sugar Company allowed him to "take some side-lines which worked more or less for the interest of the company". The water shortage in Salt Lake County, which depended extensively on Jordan River water for irrigation, was posing severe problems with the sugar beet crop. The Lehi sugar Factory needed those Salt Lake Valley beets in order to maintain operations.

Construction in the Pumps began on 21 June 1902. By 19 August, four forty-eight-inch centrifugal pumps, each capable of delivering four hundred cubic feet of water per second (approximately three thousand gallons), had been installed. Gardner and Ingall's contract contained a specific deadline for completion of the plant. But Gardner was confident that even if the plant did not come in on schedule the canal companies would not make them "dig into our own pockets to pay the debt". Ingalls bet a new hat that they would.

Shortly before the completion date, a strike at the Byron-Jackson

Pump Company in California resulted in the project being completed twenty days behind schedule. The contractors appealed to the Board of Canal companies pleading that the delay was no fault of their own. All of the companies, excepting the Utah-Salt Lake Canal Company, were willing to grant the request. Ultimately the two men were paid \$10.00. Ingall, who had lost the bet, used his half to buy Gardner a new hat.

During the summer of 1903, the pumps were so successful in increasing the Jordan's flow that a considerable amount of new land was opened for farming in the Salt Lake Valley. In 1905, another pump was added and in 1907 two more were installed. Six years later a sixty-inch pump, with sixteen hundred gallons per second capacity, was brought on line. When all eight units were in full operation the plant was delivering seven hundred million gallons of water every twenty-four hours. At the time it was considered to be the largest pumping plant in the world. In 1920, a \$185,000 construction project doubled the plant's capability.

Pumping water is an expensive proposition. When Utah Lake is above its compromise point the pumps are usually turned off and gravity flow fills the river channel. During 1985-86, as part of a \$12,000,000 Utah Lake/Jordan River Flood Management Project, new flood gates southwest of the pumps were installed, improving gravity flow.

Take a drive out to the pumps some time. If you make arrangement the caretaker will give you a tour of the area. An interesting aspect of the buildings and equipment is that they are maintained with military precision. While the facility benefits Salt Lake interests, we can be proud of the area's history which is part of our local color.