

Heber C. Austin (1855-1947) a Founder of Lincoln Community and Sugar Plant

Heber C. Austin emigrated to Lehi, Utah, as a 13-year-old boy with his family from Studham, Bedfordshire, England, in 1868. After serving an LDS mission to England, marrying and working in the Lehi beet sugar industry, he was sent with his brother Mark to direct the newly-formed Lincoln factory in 1903. In December, Mark was transferred to the plant at Sugar City, and Heber became manager at Lincoln.

Heber's daughter Myrtle later recorded: "The move from Lehi to Lincoln, the raw little Idaho factory village, was to mother traumatic. She loved the amenities of civilized living. She missed Lehi's tree-shaded sidewalks bordered with small, clear streams, its fruit trees, its lawns, its flowers. She missed the books, the dances, the "home dramatic" plays that her father had inaugurated and directed during his lifetime. She found in the little windy factory village one muddy road extending one mile from the store to the cemetery, no sidewalks, no trees, no flowers." In response Heber saw to it that the company built sidewalks, and planted lawns and trees.

"How Father made time to do all these things to make Mother happier is a mystery, for his work as agricultural superintendent was strenuous. His job was to persuade the Idaho farmers to raise sugar beets, to make them familiar with the hand labor necessary to produce a successful crop, and to provide them with laborers to do the hand labor." He also had to plan irrigation projects. He taught and worked diligently, and treated employees with loyalty and fairness.

Heber helped the workers feel comfortable in Lincoln. Myrtle remembered her delight on one Fourth of July, when "the Japanese laborers imported from Japan beautiful day-time fireworks. Instead of a display of fire, beautiful paper flowers, small paper fans, and parasols and paper fish, all exquisitely colored, floated through the air to be seized by eager children."

Not only was he factory superintendent but also bishop of the new Lincoln LDS Ward, and then stake president. He led out in establishing the Idaho Falls L. D. S. Hospital, and helped erect protestant church buildings and the Hotel Bonneville. "An uncommon common man," he was a civic and business leader after retiring from the sugar company in 1926.

Lincoln Sugar Plant (1903-1978)

Tuesday, April 14, 1903, was an exciting day for the Upper Snake River Valley. On that ceremonious day the cornerstone was laid for the first sugar factory in Idaho, at Lincoln, about five miles northeast of Idaho Falls.

Businesses were closed for the patriotic ceremonies, which began with a 20-gun salute and flag raising at 9 a.m. Trains from Utah and Idaho arrived to the sound of a ten-gun salute. People could remain for a grand basket picnic and Grand Free Ball in the company's new barn.

Music by the Iona Brass Band opened the program at 2 p.m. Joe Morley led the L.D.S. Choir of Idaho Falls to sing "America." Church President Joseph F. Smith, president of the Utah Sugar Company, officially laid the cornerstone, which contained letters from Idaho Governor John T. Morrison and Senator William E. Borah, and other historical items.

The *Idaho Register* of 24 April 1903 reported: "First Sugar Factory Established in Idaho. The Corner Stone of the Great Enterprise Which Means Millions to the State of Idaho Is Laid with Imposing Ceremonies – Witnessed by Over 5000 People. Appropriate Remarks Made by

President Joseph F. Smith; General Manager; Thomas R. Cutler; John Henry Smith, W. S. McCormick and Anthony H. Lund of Salt Lake City; James E. Steele, Alvin T. Shane, J. Ed Smith and H. W. Kiefer of Bingham County.

“Tuesday, April 14 records an event in the history of Idaho, the magnitude of which can scarcely be estimated. The laying of the corner stone of the great beet sugar factory near Idaho Falls... a day of music and gaiety, speech making and hurraing; but in reality it means the ushering in of an industry which enriches the country.”

When the new industry came to Idaho Falls in 1903, Mormon settlers joined with others to invite, promote, and welcome it. Working closely with the Utah Sugar Company, the Idaho Sugar Company was formed, then the two merged to form Utah-Idaho Sugar.

For 75 years the industry prospered, providing an important source of local income and community leadership. William J. O’Bryant, manager from 1947 to 1957, served as Idaho Falls L.D.S. Stake president, then was elected mayor of Idaho Falls, 1959-1964.

Monument commemorating the Lincoln Sugar Plant

Eagle Rock Chapter of Sons of Utah Pioneers produced a fitting memorial at its site. The monument, a restored steam engine and plaque, was dedicated in two phases: by Dr. H. Allen Luke, 16 Aug. 2001, and by chapter historian Harold Forbush, May 8, 2002, when the sign was installed. The engine, painted red, white, and blue like the U&I logo, was operated by Arave for onlookers to see how it had powered a pump at the factory. The large sign reads:

This 1902 Steam Engine powered a CO2 pump during the 75 operational years (1903-1978) of the Lincoln Sugar Factory.

This Steam Engine was restored to pay tribute to the Sugar Beet Industry Worker of yesteryear.

The Lincoln Sugar Factory construction contract was let to Dyer and Company of Cleveland, Ohio in March 1903. The cornerstone was laid on April 14 in a ceremony attended by 4500 persons. The factory was completed in early October. It was designed for a capacity of 600 tons per day (which more than doubled over the years). The first campaign had many new problems but still managed to produce 73,304 bags of sugar, some of which were used in the International Exposition at St. Louis, Missouri. The Red, White and Blue logo on the sugar sack became a standard household sight.

Let us remember the farmers, factory workers and company managers that provided us with this wonderful heritage.

The individuals instrumental in making this Monument possible are:

Gil Murdock – Purchasing the Engine – Donating it for this purpose

Brad Kapple – Evans Grain – Providing the Site

Robert Beck – R. E. Beck Construction, Restoration and Equipment

Alvin Arave – Engineering and Restoration of the Steam Engine

Doyle Beck – BECO Construction – Materials and Equipment – Site Restoration

Heber Andrus – Andrus Trucking – Transportation

Dave Sommers – Brickwork

General Mills – Supporting Services – Power and Utilities

Eagle Rock Chapter – Sons of Utah Pioneers