

## HISTORY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What conditions led to the building of a new landmark at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon in 1916?

### ANSWER

In the late 1890's, the rapid growth in the Salt Lake Valley led Salt Lake City into exploring new ways of providing culinary water to its residents. A plan was developed to build a huge conduit from the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon to carry the water from Big Cottonwood Creek to the City's Thirteenth East Reservoir. It was also planned to work out water exchanges with the many irrigation companies taking water from Big Cottonwood Creek. These exchanges would be accomplished by using water from Utah Lake, delivered through the Jordan and Salt Lake Canal and the East Jordan and Salt Lake Canal to replace the water from Big Cottonwood Creek. The first of these exchanges took place in 1905. Only those Irrigation Companies who were below the Jordan and Salt Lake Canal were affected at this time.

The diversion dam at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon, and the conduit, which was built into the steep hillside in the area of today's sand and gravel pits, that was big enough for a man to walk through, was completed on February 5, 1907. It wasn't until 1924 when the City was able to acquire the rights to the East Jordan and Salt Lake Canal that those living on the higher benches were able to exchange Big Cottonwood Creek water for Jordan River water. The East Jordan and Salt Lake Canal was extended from the Ft Union area to a pump station at 2080 E and 6200 South where the water was piped to a location at about 2900 East and was then emptied into the creek. At that time all the water in Big Cottonwood Creek was diverted into the Salt Lake Conduit with the exception of the water for the Butler and the Brown and Sanford Ditches. In 1932 the Big Cottonwood Conduit was extended further south to include the water from Little Cottonwood Creek that Salt Lake City had acquired via water exchanges with those irrigation companies.

With the increased population in the valley using the canyons for recreational purposes, mining, lumber and in the summer, livestock grazing, concerns about the quality of the drinking water became an issue. In 1913 patrols began in Big Cottonwood Canyon to keep livestock away from the creek and to remove debris from the creek. In 1916 the first chlorination plant was built at the site of the diversion dam at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. This first plant that began operation in 1917, purified the water by the screening of debris and chlorination of the water. A house, was also built on the site, to house the family of the person operating the chlorination station. The house, chlorination station, and diversion dam became well known landmarks for residents in

Butler and those using the canyon. This first water treatment plant [chlorination station] operated until 1957 when it was replaced with a new modern water treatment plant. The plant was reconstructed again, in 1997, in order to bring it up to current seismic standards and replace and upgrade the electrical, mechanical, and chemical feeding equipment.

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