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The Granite Mill

Utah's pioneers yearned for news from the outside world. However, paper was a big problem for the fledgling Deseret News because of import costs. Sometimes the news was typeset and ready to print, but had to sit for two months waiting for paper.

In early 1854 an old sugar mill produced thick and bumpy paper made from rags. George Goddard ran a door-to-door rag drive, collecting 20,000 pounds in 10 months. Younger entrepreneurs even stole laundry drying on the line to earn extra money.

The first paper mill was begun in 1880 at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Creek. Granite blocks and bricks left over from the Salt Lake Temple were put together with mortar made of granite shavings and clay. The elaborate three-story building took 3 years to build, and cost \$150,000, which was a huge amount in those days. A 1,500 foot race (a steep water channel from the creek) powered three turbine wheels for producing paper. The water was then returned to the creek. Fifty people worked there and could produce 5 tons of paper per day. For ten years it produced first-rate paper.

Sadly it was completely gutted by a fire that started from the rag piles on April 1, 1893. By that time, the transcontinental railroad brought in affordable paper, so the Old Mill was not rebuilt, and Utah was forced from the ranks of paper-making states.

The Old Mill stood in ruins until 1927 when it was reinvented as a summer dance hall. During the 1930's it was known as "The Romantic Old Mill". Thousands danced and played in its picturesque setting. Someday this distinguished building will find new purpose.