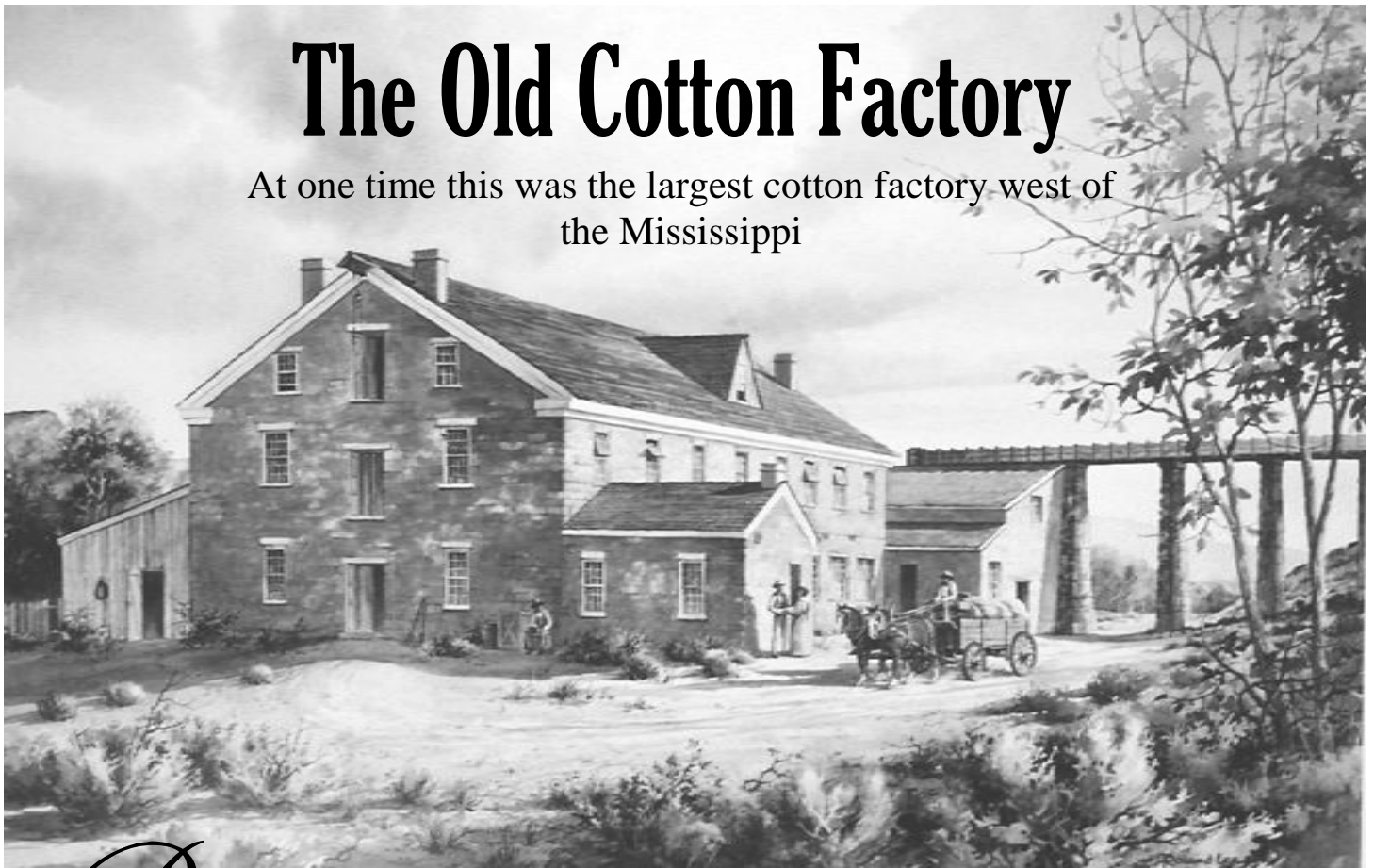


**Tour Tip:** Tour #2 passes the old Cotton Factory in Washington which looks much the same today

# The Old Cotton Factory

At one time this was the largest cotton factory west of the Mississippi



Perhaps the outstanding monument to Brigham Young's dream of self sufficiency is the Cotton Mill. He had learned early that the climate in southern Utah was favorable to the culture of cotton and had sent converts familiar with this work to southern Utah with explicit instructions to grow this plant. In spite of the alkali soil they had succeeded. The cotton had been sent east but the program was being abandoned. Because the Civil War was at hand he decided that something must be done to keep the people in the south raising cotton instead of the easier vegetables that found a ready market in the mining towns of nearby southern Nevada.

His solution was to found a factory where the people could find a market for their crops, secure employment, and produce the many articles which must be secured from the East. He was determined to make the Cotton Mission, as he called Washington County, succeed. This he felt would bring more people in, cause those who were dissatisfied to remain and stop the flow of ready cash to the outside.

It did succeed as far as Brigham Young's plans were concerned, but business-wise, it was a failure. During the Civil War and immediately after, it had a limited success. It provided the

people with many small luxuries and some necessities they previously had to do without. Its scrip served as a clearing house for the county.

The site was chosen because of the availability of water. The first floor contained material for the manufacture of various articles made from cotton. It was financed from public subscription and a generous loan from Young himself. The second floor, which was added later, was principally financed by a loan from Young. It took notice of the growing sheep industry by providing machines for the manufacture of woolen articles.

There was never large acreage of land suitable for the cultivation of cotton and it was expensive to grow. The oil and different articles necessary for the plant to run had to be imported and the mail was uncertain. They had to be paid for in cash which citizens of early Dixie did not have. All of these, as well as the coming of the railroad played a part in its eventual closing in 1907.

A number of enterprises opened and closed in its walls and then it stood empty and forlorn until Norma Cannizzaro purchased the building in 1985 and lovingly began the restoration. It is now the home to Star Nursery and a historic landmark in Washington City. 🌱

Courtesy of Washington County Historical Society