

IDAHO SINCE STATEHOOD, 1890-1965

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In the seventy-five years since admission to the Union, the State of Idaho underwent a striking transformation. Population increased some eight or nine times, and many thousands of acres of land that were desert in 1890 became productive farms. A good railway system (for practical purposes, the one that still existed in 1965) served the new state in 1890, but other than that, transportation routes were limited to some wagon roads and pack trails. Telegraph lines connected Idaho to the rest of the world, and telephones were coming into use. Radio, television, automobiles, and airplanes--only imagined in 1890--still awaited inventors. Idaho was a land of great promise in 1890, yet for the most part that promise was only beginning to be realized.

Idaho already had undergone very rapid growth during the 1880-1890 decade which saw the end of the frontier period for the United States as a whole. Farming, mining, lumbering, and stock raising were all well under way. These were responsible for Idaho's continued expansion during the years of statehood. Although mining in Idaho went back to gold discoveries in 1860, thirty years of gold and silver production had not begun to exhaust the new state's mineral possibilities. Enormous new lead-silver lodes in the Coeur d'Alene region were beginning to supplement similar production of the Wood River mines; by far the greatest part of Idaho's mining wealth came to the surface after 1890. With the new trend toward greater capital investment and the large labor force required for this kind of mining, a series of painful mine-labor wars broke out in the Coeur d'Alene region from 1892 to 1899. These attracted national concern, as did their unfortunate sequel--the assassination of former Governor Frank Steunenberg six years later.

Farming, which also went back to 1860, likewise was gaining in importance as more and longer canals began to water extensive tracts of land. Great new enterprises--particularly the major Twin Falls area projects authorized under the Carey Act of 1894--grew up early in the twentieth century. Important dams and reservoirs made possible by the Reclamation Act of 1902, followed over the years: Arrowrock (1915), American Falls (1927), Deadwood (1929), Cascade (1948), Anderson Ranch (1950), and Palisades (1958). With this expansion came the founding and development of major new cities and communities to add to those which had gotten their start during earlier mining and railroad days.

Commercial lumbering grew out of the operations of early local sawmills and became important in the early years of the twentieth century. As part of the national pattern of logging and marketing, Idaho's forest development depended upon railroad transportation and upon the rate at which saw timber was cut in other parts of the country. Operators from the western Great Lakes states began to move into North Idaho in 1900; within a few years logging stood next to farming in economic importance in Idaho. Lumber mills and similar processing plants began to make more efficient use of Idaho's forest resources; with pulp and other waste product plants

contributing to the state's economy.