

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

THOMAS DAVIS AND THE JACOBS CANAL COMPANY, LTD.

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The Jacobs Canal began about one-and-one-half miles easterly of the original townsite of Boise in the northeastern corner of the northeast 1/4 of the northwest 1/4 of Section 24, T3N, R2E. It ran northwest to Boise and through a portion of Front Street. The ditch was constructed in 1863 by Thomas Davis. He built his headgate nearly eight feet high and four feet deep. The ditch would carry 2,000 inches of water, but at first only diverted 700 inches. Davis made enlargements on the ditch in 1864 and 1865. He originally owned 300 acres under the system but by 1900 had sold all but about seventy-five acres. He leased this remaining acreage to the Chinese, who utilized the land for raising garden produce. Since 1864, forty out of the above seventy-five acres has been under cultivation, with the remainder used for pasture. In 1864, David grew forty acres of potatoes, cabbage, onions, and a little grain. His 300-acre tract lay south of Fort Street, a little east of the Cottonwood Flume and ran west to Ninth Street and thence south to the river. He estimated that he lost fifty acres out of the 300 due to the changing of the river channel.

On May 17, Davis sold his ditch and water rights to Cyrus Jacobs. However, in this deed of transfer he had a clause inserted which guaranteed him a perpetual water right, free of charge, for his remaining lands. Cyrus Jacobs maintained ownership of the canal until 1890 when he sold out to the Boise Rapid Transit Company. This company utilized the canal water to irrigate agricultural lands and various subdivisions in Boise. In addition, they supplied water to the city for watering streets and flushing the sewers. After 1904, though, water was no longer furnished for flushing the sewers.

In 1903, the canal maintained a carrying capacity of 50 second feet and extended three miles in length with seven miles of laterals. On February 25, 1904, Judge Olden and J. L. Niday

incorporated and formed the Jacobs Canal Company, Ltd. At this time, they purchased the canal and water rights of the Boise Rapid Transit Company. The canal still originated at the same point. It followed the railroad track for about 200 feet from its diversion point, then went under the railroad track, and kept on the north side of the railroad down to Front Street. It divided at Eighth Street, one section going into the city park and Riverside additions, and the other into the Boise City Canal at the junction of Grove and Eighth streets, from whence it was carried to Thirteenth Street where it divided and went on down to near the head of the Farmers Union Canal through an old slough, after passing through the Fairview Addition.

The headgate in 1904 measured seven feet wide, twelve feet in length and five feet in depth, and was capable of admitting over 3,000 inches into the canal. Besides furnishing water to the city of Boise for various services, it also irrigated 716.35 acres. At the request of the city, the canal ran dry through Boise during the summer of 1905, as they were laying asphalt paving on the streets. In 1906, the Jacobs Canal received water rights (1 and 2) of 1,110 inches.