

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

MIDDLETON MILL DITCH COMPANY CANAL

Number 505

1974

The Middleton Mill Ditch Company canal begins on the north bank of the Boise River in T4N, R1W, Section 13. It runs a general westerly course through Middleton and five miles beyond for a total distance of about twenty-seven miles. Throughout its course, the canal utilizes natural sloughs when practicable. The canal services a strip of land twelve miles long and about two miles wide. This land lies north of the Boise River and south of the canal.

The first four miles of the canal were built in 1864 by M. V. Palmer, F. O. Palmer, David Allison, and Alex Allison. These men diverted 1,000 inches of water through the canal. In 1871, the canal and water rights were acquired by J. C. Isaac, H. P. Isaac, and J. M. Steavenson. This crew enlarged and extended the canal fourteen miles from the mill slough to Middleton that year and they diverted 8,000 inches of water under a four-inch pressure through the canal. At this time, 6,000 acres were irrigated by the canal. They further extended the canal one mile in 1872, one-and-one-half miles in 1878, and four miles in 1885.

The extensions built below and west of Middleton were known as the Canyon Hill extensions and covered 2,000 acres.

Around 1877, S. S. Foote and a Mr. Packard bought the Middleton Mill and Ditch. By 1884, Foote was the sole owner. On April 27, 1889, the Middleton Mill Ditch Company was organized and stock distributed to the land owners in proportion to water utilized--one share of stock equaling 1/500 part of water. In 1889, the company books revealed there were 4,341 acres under irrigation. However, according to the company's secretary at that time, an additional 2,700 acres were irrigated without the owners of these lands paying any fees. Consequently in 1889, over 7,000 acres were watered from the canal. With incorporation of the company in 1889, the mill at Middleton was shut down and the 8,000 inches diverted was utilized entirely for irrigation. In 1903, the State Engineer listed the canal's capacity at 282 second feet with thirty-three miles of lateral ditches. In 1906, the canal received water rights (3, 53, and 120) of 3,175 inches.