

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### PIONEER-DIXIE DITCH COMPANY (AND RELATED DITCHES)

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The Pioneer-Dixie (Keller, Kelly) Ditch begins on the south bank of the Boise River near the center of the NE 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Section 20, T4N, R3W, and Sections 13, 14, 15, 23, and 24, T4N, R4W. It terminates in Section 10 of T4N, R4W. When first built in 1864 by John Anderson, James Sims, John Levanter, and others, the ditch was known as the Keller or Kelly Ditch. It later became known as the Pioneer-Dixie Ditch when landowners of the area formed the Pioneer-Dixie Ditch Company. After completion of the ditch in September of 1864, water was diverted into a slough by constructing brush dams across the river channel. The use of this method made a headgate unnecessary but after more settlers moved into the area, a headgate was built. Over 3,000 acres under the system were susceptible to irrigation. Between 1864 and 1878 about 1,000 acres received water. By 1906, an additional 1,000 acres were under cultivation and using waters from the ditch. At first 1,000 inches of water was diverted, however, after an enlargement of the system in 1869, a notice of intent to divert a greater quantity was filed.

In 1903, the Pioneer-Dixie Ditch maintained a capacity of twenty-two second feet and extended nearly ten miles in length with five miles of laterals. In 1906, the ditch received water rights (8 and 44) of 2,772 inches.

1. Young Ditch. The Young Ditch begins on the south bank of the Boise River near the SE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 16, T4N, R3W. It extends in a general westerly direction through Section 15 and terminates in Section 21, T4N, R3W. The ditch was built in January of 1887 by William C. And Benjamin F. Young. At the time of construction, the builders appropriated and diverted 1,000 inches. On March 25, 1895, they filed an additional notice claiming the right to divert 30 second feet. Benjamin Young's heirs took charge of his water rights upon his death on September 21, 1898. In 1903, the Young Ditch measured two miles in length and irrigated over 500 acres.

2. The American Canal. The American Canal begins on the south side of the Boise River near the SE corner of the SW 1/4 of Section 16, T4N, R3W, Sections 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, T4N, R4W, and terminates in Section 1 of T4N, R5W. Construction of the canal began on September 1, 1887, and was completed by December 29. The promoters and builders of the system included David L. Williams, J. R. Beck, and George Froman. On July 9, 1887, the president and secretary of the American Ditch Association, J. R. Beck and David L. Williams,

filed a notice to divert and appropriate 4,000 inches under a four-inch pressure.

The headgate for the system measured ten feet, four inches. The canal was ten feet across the bottom with a fall of one-eighth inch to the rod. A survey in 1887 revealed that 4,000 acres under the system were susceptible to irrigation. In 1888, 965 acres received water. The succeeding year brought an increase of 200 irrigated acres. By 1900, over 2,500 acres were under cultivation and receiving irrigation water under the American Canal. The association had a capital stock of \$20,000 and \$14,050 in subscribed stock. One inch of water equaled one share of stock.

In 1903, the canal maintained a capacity of 50 second feet, extended ten miles in length with sixteen miles of laterals, and irrigated over 2,000 acres. In 1906, the canal received water right (96) of 2,390 inches of water.

3. The Riverside (Methodist, Dixie, Roswell) Ditch. This ditch originates on the south bank of the Boise River near the centerline of Section 20, T4N, R3W. It extends on a general westerly course through T4N R3W, T4N R4W, T4N R5W, T5N R5W, and T4N R6W. It also runs into T21S R46E and T22S R46E in Oregon. The canal terminates in Section 18 T4N R6W.

The Dixie Ditch Company, the originator of the canal, was formed in 1882. Its membership consisted of interested farmers, including J. B. Wright, J. M. Bowman, G. W. Grannis, R. A. Dell, M. F. Fowler, and J. M. McKean. After forming the Dixie Ditch Company, the stockholders filed notice in July of 1882, to appropriate and divert 6,000 inches of water under a four-inch pressure. In May of 1883, the Dixie Ditch Company and L. W. Stillwell became the contracting parties for construction of the canal. The contract called for the building of a canal ten miles in length. Of this total, three miles consisted of hillside work. The main portion of the canal was ready during the summer of 1883, but the canal was not completed until the spring of 1884, when work on the difficult sidehill section was finished. To divert the water, a twelve-foot-wide headgate was erected. The canal, following completion, measured eight feet on the bottom, ten feet on the top, and one foot in depth and utilized a grade of one-half-inch to the rod.

During the initial phase of construction, rich and valuable placer mines were reportedly discovered along the Dixie Slough lying parallel and adjacent to the canal. Mining lots, in twenty-acre tracts, were filed on and all thought the area would become a lively mining district. Observers reported that some of the bars should pay \$8 to \$10 per day to persons using a rocker. Apparently the mining boom never materialized, as following the initial excitement, no further references to the placers were found.

The company annually enlarged and lengthened the canal until 1891, when they sold the system and water rights to Judson Spofford and the Boise Land and Water Company. By this time, the Dixie Ditch Company had expended over \$8,000 for the building of the canal. Prior to the irrigating season of 1893, the Boise Land and Water Company enlarged and extended the ditch five miles further on the Roswell Bench. In addition, they built a new headgate and four waste gates. They then filed a notice to appropriate and divert an additional 150 second feet of water.

In the fall of 1893, the canal was sold to C. W. Sterry, C. B. Hart, and E. M. Kirkpatrick.

These men formed the Riverside Irrigation District, Ltd., as equal partners. C. W. Sterry died shortly after the founding of the company and his stock became the property of the two remaining owners. These two men, in turn, sold stock to farmers utilizing the system. One share of stock equaled ten acres and each stockholder paid 75¢ per acre for maintenance. Out of the 1,500 shares held by the company, 550 were sold. The remaining non-appurtenant share remained in the possession of Kirkpatrick and Hart. This stock was available for purchase by the settlers or utilized to meet deficiency assessments levied against the stock. The non-appurtenant stock when transferred to new settlers became appurtenant stock attached to the land and not transferable.

In 1895, the company acquired a right of way through the Young land. This made possible the construction of a new diversion point--Section 20, T4N, R3W. At this point, a new headgate was erected and the ditch extended to just below the original headgate, a distance of about two miles, where it united with the old ditch.

In 1898, further improvements took place at the diversion point. These included building a dam across the river and the addition of new headworks. An enlargement and lengthening of the canal was also begun in the fall of 1898 and completed by the spring of 1899. The improvements of 1898 and 1899 cost the company \$10,731.14. At this time, estimates revealed the headgate capable of carrying 2,500 inches of water. During the fall of 1901 and spring of 1902 the company initiated more improvements for the system. They expended \$11,273.30 on improvements for the Young Ditch, \$9,618.72 for general improvements, and about \$5,000 for deficiency assessments due to extra work caused by leaks in the canal. They also let out a contract for \$8,568 to R. W. Faris for work on the system. Faris enlarged the canal to a uniform bottom width of sixteen feet, finished the banks to six feet above the grade, set the sideslopes at 1-1/2 to 1, and leveled the ditch to a general fall of 2.65 feet per mile. The ditch, when Faris completed his contract, was capable of a five-foot depth and a carrying capacity of 358-1/2 cubic feet per second.

During this time the ditch underwent an extension from where it struck the Roswell Bench to Black Point, a distance of seventeen miles. In 1901, the company diverted 6,000 inches of water, in 1902, 7,000 inches; in 1903, 8,000 inches; and 9,500 inches in 1904.

By 1903, the canal extended thirty miles in length with forty miles of laterals, and over 15,000 acres under the system were susceptible for irrigation. Of this total, 4,000 acres received the water. By 1908 this acreage increased to 6,000 acres. In 1906, the canal received water rights (91, 124, 130, 133) of 9,500 inches.

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