

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

BOISE VALLEY IRRIGATION DITCH COMPANY CANAL & FARMERS UNION DITCH COMPANY CANAL

Number 514

1974

The Boise Valley Irrigation Ditch Company Canal originates on the north bank of the Boise River in the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of Section 32, T4N, R2E, and runs northwesterly through Sections 29, 30, and 32 of T4N, R2E and Sections 14, 23, and 24 in T4N, R1E. This canal was constructed in the fall of 1865 and spring of 1866 by Seth Bixby, William A. C. Fite, and others. When built, 3,000 inches of water under a four-inch pressure was appropriated and diverted. On October 2, 1894, the Boise Valley Irrigation Ditch Company transferred to the Farmers Union Ditch Company, Ltd., the right to enlarge, use, and maintain the canal; but they retained their 3,000 inches of water right which the latter company was to deliver to stockholders. This was accomplished by inserting a perpetual right clause into the transfer deed. Representatives of Farmers Union had earlier, in April, 1894, filed a water notice to appropriate and divert 15,000 inches of water under a four-inch pressure for their own use.

The Farmers Union Ditch Company began the enlargement of a portion of the old ditch and construction of a new one. In the fall of 1894, they followed the old ditch for one and one-half miles. At this point, the Boise Valley Irrigation Company built a new headgate for delivery of water to their stockholder's lands. Also, at this junction, the new canal began.

A new headgate at the Boise River diversion point was started in the fall of 1894 and completed on March 23, 1895. When finished, it was 48 feet long, 24 feet wide, 20 feet in the clear, and 14 feet high. The canal at first measured ten feet in width on the bottom, sixteen feet surface width, and three feet in depth. It was later enlarged to twelve feet on the bottom and eighteen feet on the top. The original grade of twenty-four inches to the mile was later reduced to twenty inches. In the spring of 1895, water was first diverted through the completed six miles of the canal. In the spring of 1898, the canal was completed to Big Gulch, north of Star. By 1899, it was completed to its entire length of twenty-four miles.

A partial breakdown of the costs expended on construction of this canal shows: \$4,320.80 in 1894, \$6,273.31 in 1895, \$15,979.58 in 1896, and \$16,879.98 in 1897. By the completion of the canal, \$77,858.00 had been spent on its construction. The canal was built by the farmers and 500 shares of stock were issued.

In 1903, the canal maintained a capacity of 130 second feet, extended twenty-four miles in length with fifty-nine miles in laterals, and could service an estimated 10,000 acres. However, at this time, only 4,639 acres of this total were actually irrigated. In addition to this acreage, the

Boise Valley Irrigation Company ditch serviced 3,532 acres of which 2,788.88 acres were irrigated by the twenty-seven stockholders. In 1906, the Boise Valley Irrigation Ditch Company received water right (15) of 2,729 inches. The Farmers Union Ditch Company received water right (126) of 5,500 inches.