

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

SETTLERS CANAL (LEMP CANAL)

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The Settlers Canal begins on the south side of the Boise River at a point on the head of the Government Hay Reservation in Section 9, T3N, R2E. The original locators of this canal and water right were Christian R. Purdum, Adolphus Purdum, and William H. Smith. They made their filing on October 17, 1884, and claimed 50,000 inches of water under a four-inch pressure. The irrigation water applied for was to be utilized in watering of lands in T3N, R2E; T4N, R2E; T4N, R1E; T4N, R1W; T4N, R2W; T3N, R1W; T3N, R2W; and T3N, R1E. Settlers of the area began construction of the canal in the fall of 1884.

However, according to one observer, the farmers showed more interest in religious activities than in work. William H. Smith, one of the original promoters, was a Methodist minister who joined the Seventh Day Adventist church in 1885. Apparently this church enjoyed great popularity in its appeal to the farmers at that time. With the farmers spending so much time on church activities, no work to speak of was done on the canal. In 1887, John Lemp, a Boise businessman, became interested in the proposed water system and took over the job of seeing it through to completion. Lemp started work on the canal in 1887 and by 1891, water was flowing through the canal. In 1899, the canal was seven miles long with some laterals measuring seven miles. It had a top width of eighteen feet, a grade of two feet per mile, and an average flow of 95 second feet. By 1900 about 5,400 acres were irrigated.

The farmers under the canal organized an irrigation district in 1896 with a view toward acquiring and enlarging the water system. Purchase of the canal was accomplished in September, 1901, when John Lemp sold to the Settlers Canal Company, Ltd. Lemp by this time had expended over \$100,000 on the construction of the canal and its laterals.

The new company enlarged and extended the canal in the winter of 1901 and the spring of 1902 at a cost of about \$45,000. In 1902, the canal carried 15,000 inches of water. A further enlargement in 1903 and 1904 the canal was cleaned out to a width of sixteen feet through to the cut at the Belfry School which was about seven miles from the division point. In 1904, the company installed a concrete headgate and in 1905 further cleaned out the canal. By 1905, the canal measured twenty miles in length with 95-1/2 miles of laterals. Over 32,000 acres lay under the system as covered by original notice of location. Out of this total, 7,000 acres were irrigated in 1902, close to 11,000 in 1903, a little over 13,000 acres in 1904, and 14,072 acres in 1905. In 1903, the shareholders of the company had 5,722 acres under irrigation. In addition, 8,350 acres were watered on a rental basis, with 8,617-1/2 inches of water delivered to these lands. Each share of stock in the company equaled 1/2 inch of water. In 1906, the canal received water rights (92, 122) of 8,625 inches.

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