

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

HARRY WINFORD MORRISON
February 23, 1885-July 19, 1971

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Harry W. Morrison was born February 23, 1885, near Kenney, DeWitt County, Illinois. He began his career in the construction industry at age 14 as a waterboy with the Chicago firm of Bates & Rogers. He attended a business college in Dixon, Illinois, then came to Idaho in 1904 as a timekeeper for Bates & Rogers on the Minidoka Dam project. In 1906 he went to work for the U. S. Reclamation Service as supervisor on the Diversion Dam construction near Boise. It was on this project that he met Morris H. Knudsen who was providing horse teams for the canal excavation. The two men became partners in March 1912, with six teams of horses, some equipment, and \$100 in cash. Their first major job was the Three-Mile Falls Dam in Oregon in 1914.

Morrison-Knudsen Company was incorporated in 1923 with Knudsen as president and Morrison as vice-president. In 1926 they built Guernsey Dam in Wyoming, where Morrison pioneered the concept of the joint-venture--several firms joining to bid and complete a single project. In 1929 they built Deadwood Dam in Central Idaho, using for the first time bulldozers and diesel trucks instead of horses. In 1931 Morrison formed the Six Companies, Inc. to construct the mammoth Hoover Dam. The joint venture concept was also used when M-K worked on the San Francisco side of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Harry Morrison became president and general manager of M-K in 1939 when Knudsen stepped down. (The latter died in 1943.) The company began work on foreign construction with projects for the U.S. military--M-K employees were among the Americans killed or captured on Wake Island during World War II. In 1943 the company began projects in Mexico and Canada and quickly spread worldwide. Later M-K projects included Grand Coulee Dam, the St. Lawrence Seaway, railroads in Peru and Brazil, and Karadj Dam in Iran.

Morrison was president of the company until 1960 when he became chairman of the board. In January, 1968, he assumed the honorary title of founder-chairman. He had also been active in other organizations, serving as president of the Southwestern Idaho Water Conservation Project from 1940 to 1950, as a member of the Hoover Commission's Resources Study Group from 1953 to 1955, and as a trustee of Boise Junior College. He was a director of the Idaho First National Bank from 1932 to 1968, and chaired the bank's reorganization committee in 1932.

Harry Morrison married Anna Daly in December, 1914. She died October 25, 1957, and in 1959 he gave Ann Morrison Memorial Park to the city of Boise. In 1959 he married Velma V. Shannon. Morrison died July 19, 1971, in Boise.

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