

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

DIVERSION DAM

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After several attempts failed to extend a high level New York Canal to its original diversion point not far below later Lucky Peak Dam, a diversion site below a narrow canyon with difficult obstacles was chosen. By 1900, a small canyon ditch fed from 200 to 300 second feet (cubic foot of water flowing past a point each second) of water into a partially developed canal system. That volume, compared with 4,500 second feet needed to develop that part of Boise Valley, scarcely began to meet irrigation needs projected for New York Canal farms. In order to secure capital investment necessary to operate such an ambitious venture, a United States Reclamation Service project was authorized. That way, costs of building a large diversion dam were covered. By 1908, a canal system was completed, and a 68 foot Diversion Dam was put into operation with a ceremony that included 3,000 farmers who came to observe their water source, February 22, 1909.

An early Reclamation Service power plant followed in May 1912. Three generators capable of delivering 1,500 kilowatts of supplemental power augmented Boise Valley's supply. That plant remained in operation for more than six decades. Since it ran only in times of exceptional demand, it did not wear out. Surviving as a rare example of a 1912 era generating plant, it was preserved as a museum exhibit and now is open for public inspection. Its capacity was increased and in years of dire water shortage, such as 1973, it operated all through that summer.

(This information has not been edited.)

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