

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

MINIDOKA DAM

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SIGNIFICANCE

On the basis of a 1902 investigation by the new United States Reclamation Service, Congress authorized construction of Minidoka Dam in 1904. Construction began September 17, and took more than a year. Part of the Burley canal system required pumping, so a 16,000 KWH electric plant was installed at the dam.

Inadequate funding delayed completion of the \$5,800,000 Minidoka canal project until 1909, creating serious problems for the settlers there. Surplus power was available for public distribution, and some early experiments in space heating of houses and schools resulted from efforts to find local markets for Minidoka power. Senator George Norris of Nebraska used this experience with Minidoka power as a basis for justifying creation of the Rural Electric Administration.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Minidoka Dam, located northeast of Rupert, has not changed greatly since the time it was built in 1904-06 for a cost of \$675,000. It is of zoned earth and rock fill construction with a concrete spillway. The height of the dam is 86 feet above the stream bed, and the total length is 4,475 feet, of which 2,400 feet is the spillway. The active storage capacity is 95,180 acre feet.

The powerhouse was the earliest federal hydroelectric plant in the Pacific Northwest, completed in 1913 for a cost of \$472,000. It originally had five generating units, but two more were added in 1927 and 1940, bringing the total to the present level of seven units.

Major reclamation canals for the Minidoka project come from this diversion dam, with a total of 120,000 acres irrigated in a desert country. The reservoir backs up past Bonanza Bar to Massacre Rocks.

(This information has not been edited.)

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