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As a research field, Idaho offers a variety of opportunities for investigation. Some of these reflect new historical interests of new areas of interpretation. New approaches to social and cultural history join recent concern for women's history, architectural history, industrial history, environmental history, and similar fields that had been neglected in more places than Idaho. Some aspects of nineteenth century Idaho history, especially those that attracted international attention, have become more clearly understood. Even those features, however, require improved interpretation that becomes possible as additional documentation turns up and as old prejudices recede into a more distant past. Recent technological advances in copying materials make more information available, and modern equipment used to prepare books and articles for publication has helped to transform research opportunities. Subjects that scarcely could have been considered in previous eras now can be studied with relative ease. Idaho has profited enormously from such recent advantages.

Because of its strange array of disconnected geographical areas, Idaho offers diverse opportunities for historical research. Few states come anywhere near matching Idaho's forest lands--most of them because they chopped down their forests long ago, if they were large enough to have had important timber lands. Logging history offers many opportunities to examine administrative and industrial practices in a mountainous land where established sawmill systems often failed to operate effectively. Historical investigation of how commercial logging finally succeeded in developing profitable markets in distant areas remains useful in explaining Idaho's economic history. Mining technology and management has undergone still more dramatic changes: as a state that owed its initial settlement almost entirely to mining, and that became a world-class silver state--an achievement unmatched by Nevada, Colorado, and other states that had significant silver resources--Idaho offers exceptional opportunities for investigation of mining history in areas that followed their own independent course in some ways, yet exhibited standard twentieth century trends in operating procedures and technology. Much can be learned from careful investigation of mining history in many Idaho areas. Anyone undertaking such a study needs to learn how miners operate and

how they achieve success. Because of their distinctive social history that gained recognition long ago, that element of mining experience has not been overlooked. Interest in mining social history, in fact, developed far in advance of most other social history fields. Yet many other aspects of Idaho's mining history merit attention. Mining districts varied greatly in their economic experience and labor relations. Some have received a great deal of attention while others have gotten by with little notice.

Farm and ranching subjects have diverse possibilities also. Irrigation topics range from successful projects to disasters. Mormon cooperative canal systems often worked out very well, and represented a community approach with distinctive results. Many early commercial canal companies encountered severe financial and operating obstacles that led to two varieties of governmental ventures. Idaho has successful examples of both. State sponsored development, authorized under national legislation of 1894, succeeded in a manner unmatched by any other state. Federal projects came after United States Reclamation Service legislation of 1902 was enacted for other states that had experienced only failure in their efforts. Idaho had a varied exposure to federal attempts that finally led to major dams and reservoirs that helped state projects as well. Many fine publications have appeared with explanations of these irrigation projects and their new culture that they have created, but they are extensive enough that more research can produce valuable information concerning their impact. Changing features of water use for irrigation, power, fish protection, and recreation create new research designs that also involve specialized, high value crops required to make commercial farming more profitable.

Conventional farming in parts of North Idaho and changing ranching practices in forest or arid lands also have undergone major adjustments that need to be explained in Idaho's agricultural history. Industries based upon farm products range from sugar beet factories to dehydrators, while phosphate plants serve agricultural needs. Computer industries have revolutionized farm management and crop production. They naturally have generated other markets as well. All of these transitions materialize as excellent subjects for historical research.

Industrial history in Idaho reflects several conditions that control that kind of economic development. With a small concentration of consumers scattered over a wide area, large-scale Idaho industries have to rely upon remote out-of-state markets. High freight rates make many potential industrial products noncompetitive. A practically complete absence of coal and oil resources, made more serious by nondevelopment of iron mines, also thwarts most forms of heavy industry. Products that do not involve serious freight charges--such as fish-flies or computer chips--can flourish, and their development can provide good subjects for historical research.

Forest and public land administration, and ranching

enterprises conducted in relation to such governmental operations, offer good historical research opportunities. Environmental studies relative to mining, logging, and ranching enterprises are gaining increased importance.

Ethnic investigations and women's history have become important in Idaho, as well as nationally: these naturally reflect settlement patterns that departed from national trends prior to 1890, but gradually lost some of their unusual characteristics. Idaho had a decided shortage of women during early decades of settlement. In addition, provision for community property in 1867 and for women's suffrage after 1896 (after almost adopting that reform in 1871) gave Idaho's development a different complexion from most other states. Care must be exercised to take those features into account during historical investigation of women's status, particularly before 1920. Out-of-state investigators, unfamiliar with Idaho history, can blunder considerably in computing women's property holdings and similar evidence of status by their unfamiliarity with Idaho practice. Women's history has made a good deal of progress in Idaho, but many such subjects remain available for research.

Ethnic possibilities include a large important Basque population that is doing well in recording and interpreting its own tradition, an early significant Chinese segment that has received recent appropriate attention, a large Hispanic element of migrants who have settled and gained recognition for their contribution, and a considerable group of Nez Perce, Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai, and Shoshoni-Bannock descendants whose tribal councils are dealing with their ancient cultures as an advantageous inheritance. All of these peoples constitute important components of contemporary Idaho with histories that merit recognition.

In religious history, Idaho's Mormon people have a long tradition that merits thorough study. Unmatched in size ever since settlement began in 1860, this denomination has made Idaho's historic experience distinctive, and new research continues to identify Mormon contributions.

(This information has not been edited.)

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