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Changes in the nature of crops on the Boise Project came very slowly over the years. The amount of acreage which at least had water available to it stabilized in the early 1920's and remained constant until the Black Canyon sections of the Payette Division were opened to settlement in the early 1940's, although acreage actually cropped increased gradually. In 1912, only 36,798 acres were cropped; by 1920, 100,700 were being worked, and by 1933, 156,301 acres; in 1940, 161,002; and 1945, with about 20,000 acres in the Payette Division being worked, there were 171,566 acres under cultivation.

The basic crops in the first year of any substantial farming on the project, 1911, were in order of importance: alfalfa, clover hay, grains, fruit, and potatoes. In 1913, alfalfa represented nearly one-third of the crops grown; wheat, just under one-quarter; oats, barley, and other grain and seed crops, twenty percent. There were just two acres of sugar beets in the whole project. The per-acre value of the crops on the Project was \$16.32. The greatest increase in crop acreage over the preceding year was in clover, grown mostly for seed. In 1914, 58,064 acres were cropped, with a per-acre value of \$17.80 and the same general distribution of major crops. Another 10,000 acres were added by 1915--actually, to 69,818 acres--with a value jump to \$21.87 as farmers gained more experience and the land was improved. Wheat acreage was substantially increased, and apples--the leading fruit crop for two decades--doubled in value.

Although acreage had increased by 1916 to only 72,581 acres, the per-acre value of crops had increased to \$32.07. Alfalfa was still by far the largest crop, spread over more than one-third of the acreage in the Project, and it was followed by clover hay, clover seed, corn, oats, wheat, barley, and potatoes. In 1916, as in many other years, the fruit crops were badly damaged by May frosts.

Another large jump in acreage occurred in the 1917 growing season, when 88,732 acres were under cultivation and brought in a per-acre yield of \$49.44. Alfalfa represented some forty percent of the total acreage; the fruit crop was good and so was the market for it. Alfalfa was followed in rank by wheat, potatoes, and clover, a ranking which held the next year as well. Indeed, the primary difficulty in 1918 was not the weather or the soil but the shipping facilities; markets were available for crops, but the expense of getting crops to them, and the time it took, were great. In 1919, acreage was 99,093 and per-acre value was \$63.12. Hay had been replaced in ranking by corn. The increase in crop values was accounted for chiefly by potatoes, up thirty-eight percent; alfalfa, up thirty-three percent; and clover seed, up twenty-four percent.

In 1920, the Project's area fortunes suffered the first in a series of setbacks. Although acreage went over 100,000 for the first time, per-acre value dropped to \$46.20. While apples, potatoes, and wheat kept their value (and the position of the latter two among the top crops in the valley probably prevented a much greater drop in income), clover seed value dropped fifty-three percent; alfalfa, thirty-three percent; and corn twenty-one percent. The next year the per-acre value dropped to \$40.68, due to low prices for grain, grasses, and seeds which took up ninety-two percent of the land and brought in only fifty-two percent of the crop value. But 1921 also saw the first commercial growing of lettuce on the Project, and this crop was to become a major "garden" crop over the years. One farmer made the switch from alfalfa to potatoes rather sooner than many of his colleagues, making \$705 per acre on his crop. The use of winter range was growing, and so was the dairy industry.

In 1922, the 108,500 acres under cultivation returned an average of \$36.80 each. Alfalfa was grown on 35.6 percent of the land, wheat on 25.4. The value-acreage ratio had evened out in comparison with the previous year, as grains, grasses, and seed took eighty-six percent of the land and produced seventy-four percent of the crop value. Hay prices jumped during the year from \$3 to \$10 per ton, but the potato market fell apart completely. Two shifts in cropping were notable: corn acreage increased thirty-seven percent and the acreage planted to lettuce increased nearly four times.

On approximately the same acreage in 1923, the return was \$41.07 per acre. Corn became the third largest crop on the project with nine percent of the acreage. Because of the poor potato market the preceding year, home-grown seed potatoes were used--with a resultingly poorer crop than was grown with certified seed potatoes. In addition to the growth in corn production, the dairy industry also increased--at least in part because the products of that industry could be shipped relatively economically as produce could not.

In 1924 per-acre value plummeted again, to \$24.40. It was a very bad water year. The next year, although dollar value increased to \$35.14, total acreage cropped from 1924's 111,057 to 83,406. Only acreage planted to corn increased, and prices dropped on alfalfa, barley, and oats. In 1926, although hay and grains were the chief crops, far more diversification was noticeable: there was considerable shipping of fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and poultry. A total of 6,011 carloads were shipped out of the valley, with 2,725 of these containing livestock. The next year saw a slight increase in shipping in all crops and products.

The 1928 project history noted two new crops which since have become of substantial importance in the valley: mint and green peas. The project history also noted that the income from livestock--fed on the abundant alfalfa hay grown in the valley--was far above that for the crops on which construction repayment charges were based. Almost all the hay crop under the Project was locally consumed by that livestock; at the same time, 7,883 carloads of produce and livestock were shipped out of the valley that year. The fruit crop, the first crop grown in the valley, was beginning to decrease substantially.

1929 brought a twenty percent increase in dairy cattle in the valley. Both fruit and potatoes did well; and although carload shipments dropped overall, they increased for potatoes, celery, and butter--the latter a growing segment of the out-of-valley sales. Potatoes, seed, and dairy products remained stable the next year--the only products that did so with the beginning of

the Depression. Still, the newer vegetable crops--especially beans and peas--were increasing in acreage; and a new dairy by-product, powdered milk (both skim and buttermilk) was being used both in processed food and for cattle feed.

The real impact of the Depression was felt in 1931, when per-acre crop values dropped from \$26.34 in 1930 to \$15.34 (in 1923 the figure had been \$41.07). By 1932, per-acre value was only \$10.86. The acreage planted to alfalfa, which did not require marketing outside the valley, had climbed from 49,458 in 1928 to 62,841 in 1931; potatoes from 2,941 acres in 1928 to 4,671 in 1932, and they too had a stable market in the area. The quantity of dairy cattle, that provided the most stable out-of-valley market, was steady; the number of chickens raised on Project lands dropped from 252,305 in 1930 to 181,587 in 1932.

The improvement in the farm situation was as sudden as the decline had been. Crop value increased in 1933 to \$18.98 per acre, the price of alfalfa doubled from \$3 per ton the previous year to \$6 per ton, and alfalfa and other hay crops took up sixty-three percent of the Project's acreage. The next year, prices increased for everything except fruit, and shipments from the valley were up some seventy-five percent. Butterfat prices had increased from a range of 11 to 19 cents to a range of 25 to 29 cents; the number of dairy cows had dropped five percent because of low butterfat prices in 1933, but they were expected to increase and did. Hay was shipped out of the valley in quantity to the middle west, because of drought conditions there. Because the year was water-short, corn acreage declined fifty-five percent; but grain acreage went up twenty-one percent and wheat twenty-seven percent. Per-acre crop value increased to \$22.86, while the value of livestock in the valley jumped from under \$1,000,000 in 1933 to \$1,235,111 in 1934.

The next year (1935) there was an even more dramatic increase in livestock value--up \$1,968,127. The quantity of beef cattle more than doubled, the quantity of sheep increased nearly fifty percent. Despite the continuing problem of late-season water shortages, which had meant increasing study of new seed crops less dependent on late-summer water, crop value was relatively stable at \$25.02--just above the ten year average of \$24.73. Arrowrock Dam would be raised in the next two years some five feet, and studies were soon to begin on the feasibility of another storage dam farther upstream in the Boise River system. Both of these projects would help alleviate the water problem.

1936 was a varied year for both markets and crops, with the Project area showing more diversification into row and seed crops. The per-acre value of crops climbed to \$31.36, and the value of livestock to \$2,368,661. Thanks to the long, cold winter of 1935-1936, the hay market in the valley was excellent, and in 1937 as well, more acreage was planted to hay. The dairy industry continued to be profitable in 1937 too, with increasing markets in southern California for the two large cooperative creameries in the valley. In addition, the sugar factory in Nyssa, Oregon, was nearly completed, which would provide a local market for the increasing sugar beet crop. A second sugar factory was expected to be built in the Project area, and, in the Wilder area, the first hops fields appeared. Although only 49 acres were planted to hops, the per-acre return was \$238.78.

Sugar beets, subsidized by both the federal government and the sugar companies, continued to be a good crop in 1938. The hay market declined; there were not enough animals to

use up all that had been planted because of previous good-market years. Although other, "soft" fruits were doing well, apple orchards continued to be pulled out. A total of 7,199 carloads of produce and products were shipped out of the area, of which 1,703 were of potatoes, and 1,069 of sugar beets. Dairy cattle were over 30,000 for the first time. Cumulative statistics published in 1938 for the heart of the Depression--1931 to 1936--showed some long-range changes in crops not totally a result of weather and Depression conditions. For example, the acreage in alfalfa, long the staple crop of the Project, dropped from 62,841 to 48,738 acres. Part of the reason, of course, was lack of profit for the crop; but in addition the new lands in the Owyhee Project and the Black Canyon Division of the Boise Project were better suited to alfalfa than the older lands of the valley. Garden crops more than doubled in acreage, from 2,171 to 5,288, and grain acreage climbed also from 32,667 to 41,070 acres.

Markets were bad and the winter was good in 1939, so hay acreage continued to drop. But cattle prices increased, and the butter market continued to be excellent. Sugar beets were planted to the maximum capacity of the Nyssa plant, and all fruit crops except apples also increased in acreage. Grain acreage dropped again, to 31,279 acres, and hops crept up a bit to seventy acres. The per-acre crop value remained very stable, at \$23.98; and over a thousand more carloads of produce--8,298--were shipped out, with potatoes and sugar beets (admittedly shipped only as far as Nyssa) the major items.

Although per-acre crop value went up only a cent in 1940, several shifts in cropping were noticeable. Grain acreage was up twenty-five percent, corn up two thirds. Seed and "specialty" crops (for example, hops) increased; and the "miscellaneous" acreage category that included these crops increased from 4,790 acres in 1938 to 14,588 in 1940. Dairy cattle were up to 35,136 head, thanks to the increasing southern California market for dairy products--which were easy to ship anyway.

The per-acre crop value jumped to \$34 in 1941, with the beginning of the wartime boom starting to be felt. In addition, the new sugar factory in Nampa was becoming a reality, and work had begun on Anderson Ranch Dam, both improving the morale of Project farmers. More small processing plants were being built in the Project area; and trucking, an especially useful way of shipping soft fruit crops, were also increasing. About 20,000 acres in the Black Canyon units of the Payette Division were opened, and the acreage in the whole Project had increased to 162,528 acres.

The impact of war shortages began to be felt much more strongly on the Project in 1942, with crop value increasing to \$54.27 per acre (with a value in Black Canyon Unit #1 of \$93.46 per acre, apparently due primarily to the high value of onion seed.) Demand for everything was high, including the newer row crops. Sugar beet acreage doubled, and a new Simplot dehydration plant in Caldwell was using 10,000 acres' worth of potatoes and onions. The steadily profitable dairy industry was having some trouble; it called for a good deal of labor, and manpower was beginning to be scarce. The industry would continue to have that problem throughout the war, as eventually would the stoop-labor crops of garden vegetables and sugar beets.

The crop value in 1943, of \$79.52 per acre, was not only nearly fifty percent above that for 1942 but seven times that of 1932. Except for the fact that potatoes overtaxed all the valley's

facilities--shipping, labor and processing, it was a good year. Potato acreage had doubled because the crop had a guaranteed price; and sugar beet acreage had been cut forty percent because of a lack of labor. A May freeze--a familiar story--had cut the fruit crop; but there were new orchards, especially of prunes, on the Project, as well as new seed and vegetable crops and hops acreage continued to increase. By 1944 hops acreage had reached 183 acres, and carload shipments from the Project area were up to 10,288. Per-acre value had remained steady, at \$78.22.

The next year saw another increase in crop value, to \$84.30 per acre. Also, in 1945, a new food-processing industry came to the valley: the Simplot dehydrating plant expanded into the freezing of vegetables, providing a new outlet to increasing vegetable crops. Sugar beet acreage almost doubled, potatoes were planted on an additional 2,000 acres, and the acreage of commercial bean crops increased fifty percent. A total of 12,085 carloads were shipped out of the area.

Although the first thirty years of the Project saw many ups and downs in crops because of markets and weather, there were a few notable trends. One, as noted before, was a drop in alfalfa as a basic crop; another was the growth of seed crops and vegetable crops. Dairy cattle increased enormously, while the number of chickens on the Project area's crops came from the growth of processing techniques and facilities, which enormously simplified the shipping problems that had always plagued the region's farmers.

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