

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 31 1976
DATE ENTERED JUL 6 1976SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**HISTORIC *Whe* *Swan Falls Dam and Power Plant

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

T2S R1E, Section 18

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

STATE

Idaho

CODE

016

COUNTY

Ada and Owyhee counties

CODE

001 & 037

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☒ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☒ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Idaho Power Company

STREET & NUMBER

1220 W. Idaho

CITY, TOWN

Boise

VICINITY OF

STATE

Idaho

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ada County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

510 W. Jefferson

CITY, TOWN

Boise

STATE

Idaho

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

1972

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Idaho State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

610 N. Julia Davis Dr., Boise

STATE

Idaho

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Swan Falls Dam and Power Plant, originally constructed in 1900, was designed by A.J. Wiley and consisted of two dam sections, each 450' long, divided by a lava promontory. A power plant was east of the promontory and on top of the dam, on the Ada County side of the river. In 1907 a power plant was built east of the original, and in 1910 another plant was constructed west of the original. In 1911-13 the original was replaced by a more modern structure. These three poured concrete buildings still exist.

These three buildings are all two stories high with gabled roofs. The 1907 structure is four bays wide, with each bay containing a pair of double hung sash windows, 4 x 4, on both stories. Single story wings exist on both the east and west sides, and repeat the other bays. The 1910 powerhouse is three bays wide, with the two eastern bays containing a set of three double hung sash windows, 4 x 4, on both stories. The western bay contains two sets of two double hung sash windows, 4 x 4, separated by a non-derivative pilaster on both stories. The most recent building is outset upstream of the other two. It contains four bays which repeat the 1910 east bays. All three buildings' bays are demarcated by non-derivative pilasters and contain a frieze. The 1907 structure also has a band between the first and second stories. Both this band and the frieze are broken by segmental arches between the pilasters.

In 1920 and 1936 the dam was renovated and the lava promontory was removed.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION	
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE	
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE	
☐ 1600-1699	☐ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☒ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER	
☐ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION	
☒ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☒ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		☐ INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When large scale lode mining came to Silver City, scarcity of wood or coal hampered development of major Florida mountain silver properties, particularly the Trade Dollar and the Black Jack. Not too much timber grew in that rather arid section. Shortage of fuel became "a source of expense and embarrassment" during the Panic of 1893. Hydroelectric power offered a possible answer to the problem. Success of a hydroelectric transmission line from Oregon City to Portland, followed by a similar development from Niagara Falls to Buffalo, suggested an answer for the Trade Dollar and the Black Jack. Similar systems began to spring up over the country. In 1894 a Boise mining engineer, A. D. Foote, set out to locate a good Snake river power site for Silver City. He examined Thousand Springs, an area with the potential necessary for his project. But electrical engineers pointed out that none of the transmission lines ran anywhere near the hundred miles and more that separated Thousand Springs from Silver City. So the next year, Foote set out with A. J. Wiley to find a closer site. His final choice was Swan Falls, only twenty eight miles from the mines. Unable to finance such a venture, Foote finally found a mine management position in Grass Valley, California. But Wiley, a young Boise engineer starting out on an outstanding career, kept up his interest in Swan Falls power. Wiley was running a Snake river fine gold dredge at Grand View in the summer of 1898 when a local electric plant began operation in Silver City and when the Trade Dollar and Black Jack managers began to show interest in bringing in electric power from Swan Falls.

In the summer of 1898, L. B. Stiwell, electrical manager of the Niagara Falls Power Co. and Thomas T. Johnston, an hydraulic engineer noted for designing the Chicago drainage canal, came to Silver City as consultants for the mining companies. They endorsed the Foote-Wiley Swan Falls project, and in the summer of 1900, construction was authorized. A. J. Wiley designed the dam, and by December, he had most of the plant and concrete portion of the dam finished.

The original power house contained four vertical turbines produced by S. Morgan Smith Company of York, Pennsylvania, and three Westinghouse generators, which produced 300 kilowatts. In 1907, with the construction of the Boise and Interurban Railroad an additional power plant was built to supply the substations at Middleton and Pierce Park (near Boise) to operate the line. This supplied an extra 650 kilowatts and was powered by two Dayton globe vertical turbines. In 1910, with the mines on the decline, the Trade Dollar Consolidated Mining company investors formed the Swan Falls Power Company, and the second addition was constructed to the Swan Falls project. This supplied an additional 1700 kilowatts of power, and service was extended to Boise. These turbines were replaced in

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1945 with LaFell turbines, but the original Westinghouse Turbines are still in operation. In 1911 the original plant was torn down, and by 1913 the present center section was opened, supplying various irrigation projects with power.

In 1916 Idaho Power Company included Swan Falls in its consolidation. In 1918 the 1901 and 1907 equipment was replaced with General Electric generators and Wellamn, Seaman and Morgan turbines. The 1918 machinery is still in use.

This was the forst structure to obstruct the salmon run on the Snake River. A fish ladder was added, but to no avail.



- 1) Swan Falls Dam and Power Plant
- 2) T2S, R1E, Section 18
Ada and Owyhee Counties, *Idaho*
- 3) H. L. Hough
- 4) November 18, 1975
- 5) Idaho Power Company
- 6) ~~Views~~ of power plants looking west
- 7) *1 of 2*



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- 3) H. L. Hough
- 4) November 18, 1975
- 5) Idaho Power Company
- 6) View of dam, power plants and reservoir,
looking northwest
- 7) *2 of 2*