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Priority Data Information for water right 2-35

Prepared by
Idaho Power

Water right 2-35 is used for the irrigation of lands around the former Swans Falls Village and Clubhouse and currently the lands associated with park located at the facility. Idaho Power originally claimed a priority date of 1905-04-01. The priority date was subsequently advanced to 1971-05-19 by the Idaho Department of Water Resources through the Snake River Basin Adjudication. This brief paper will establish some basis for an earlier priority date.

A Historic American Buildings Survey, Swan Falls Village (HABS No. ID-105) was written in 1992 by Susan M. Stacy, a consulting historian for Idaho Power. This report was a required prior to the deconstruction of historic buildings located at the Swan Falls site. The following excerpt is from the HABS report:

A characteristic feature of the cottages was the presence of fruit cellars. The first superintendent of the plant, Samuel Glass, had an orchard about a quarter of a mile downstream from the dam on the north side, and also raised pigs, cows, and chickens, all of which contributed to the village food supply.¹¹ Several of the cellars were removed in 1920.¹² However the fruit raising tradition revived when the crew planted a new orchard between the dam and the downstream end of the village in 1952.¹³

Beneath the surface at Swan Falls lie the pipes and conduits of the service systems. Irrigation water for the lawns, park areas, and orchards (not including the first orchard of Sam Glass) comes from the reservoir. An electric pump pumps water through the buried pipes to all of the settled areas of the village. The lift up to Cottage 521 is about 85 feet. The system is believed to have been first installed around 1920, some time after Idaho Power acquired a water right for irrigation water from the Snake River.

¹¹ Elektrikat, May 1922, p. 15

¹² "Inventory of Swan Falls Hydro-Electric Power Plant as of July 31, 1925," (Exhibit R), December 31, 1927, part of application for license to Federal Power Commission. Original located at Idaho Power Company offices, Boise at Legal Department, License Book #1, Project 503.

¹³ Monthly report. April 1952, This orchard was removed when construction began on the new power house in the late 1980's.

From these reports appears clear that irrigation and subsequent food production at the facility was an important part of life during the early days of the Swan Falls Project. The issue of providing solid evidence for establishing some date for irrigation will rely on the use of historic photographs from the Swan Falls Area.

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Figure 1 is a picture of the Swan Falls project looking northeast to southwest. The picture shows several buildings at the project along with a portion of irrigated land. The house in the lower center was first built in circa 1910. The house in the lower left appears to be the original superintendents cottage that was built prior to 1911 and later destroyed by fire in 1921¹. This places the photograph prior to 1921. The photo can be dated further back by examination of the dam from the south end of the power house to the south bank of the Snake River. This was the original wooden spillway that required annual repairs. The company began reconstruction of the spillway in 1919 replacing the wooden structure with a concrete structure that was described as "300 feet long, 14 feet high,..... The structure supported reinforced concrete piers two feet thick and provided 21 openings, each 12 feet wide."² Figure 2 is taken from the south side of the river looking from southwest to northeast. Figure 2 is a view of the new constructed spillway from a photo dated "Feb 14/20" (February 14, 1920, see Figure 3 for date and information on the back of Figure 2 photo) showing the recently constructed new spillway gates. In viewing Figure 1, it is clear that no construction has taken place and the old wooden spillway is still in place. There are no visible piers in the spillway particularly in the area just south of what is known as the lava island. Figure 4 can be dated to sometime prior to 1936 as evidenced by the lack of cottages built in 1936 and 1937 but after 1919 as evidenced by the reconstructed spillway visible in the background. In Figure 4, note the lack of "gap" at the south end of the lava island that is present in Figure 1.

The exact date of the photo in Figure 1 can not be precisely dated however it can be dated prior to 1919 as evidence by the existence of the wooden spillway (prior to reconstruction of the spillway in 1919). Figure 1 also clearly shows irrigation taking place in that area currently occupied by the park at Swan Falls.

¹ Historic American Buildings Survey, Swan Falls Village (HABS No. ID-105), Descriptive Report and Index to Photographs by Susan M. Stacy, consulting historian. Cultural Resources Report 92-9.

² Historic American Engineering Record, Swan Falls Dam. HAER No. ID-20. Completed by Susan M. Stacy, January 1991.

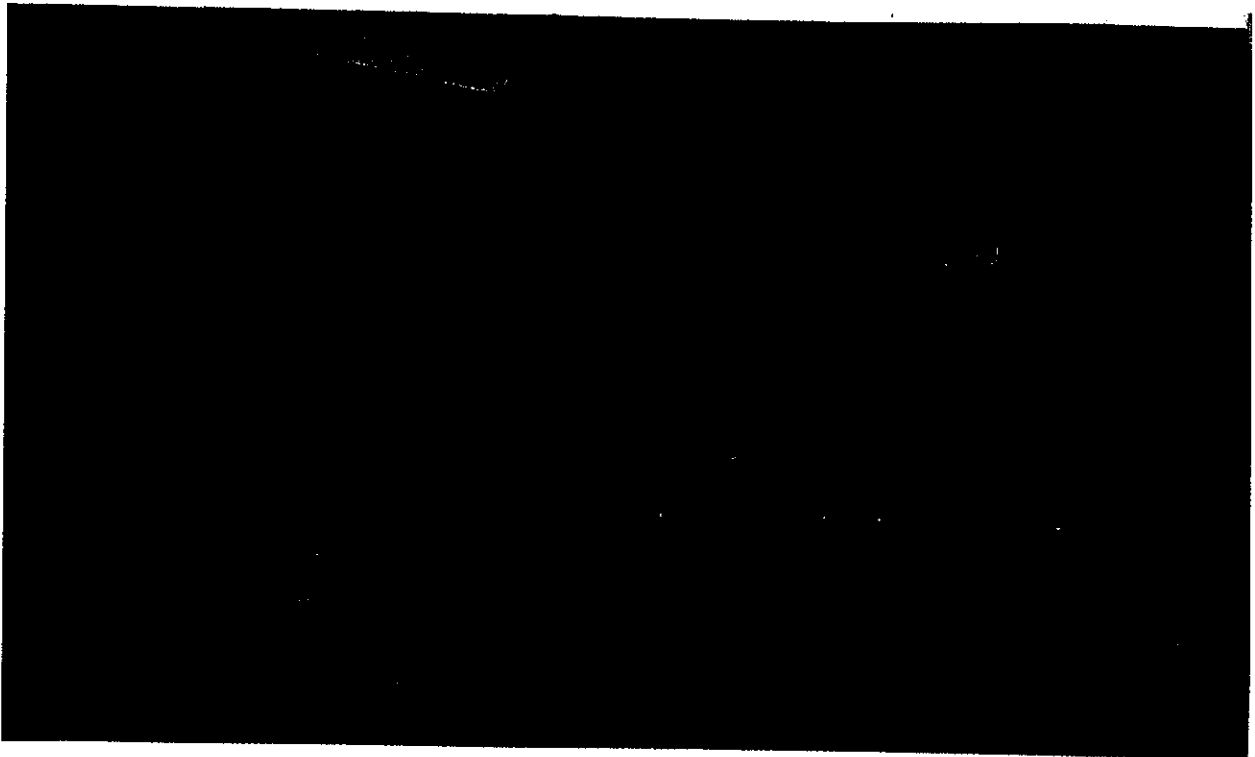


Figure 1: Showing irrigated land and dated to prior to 1919.

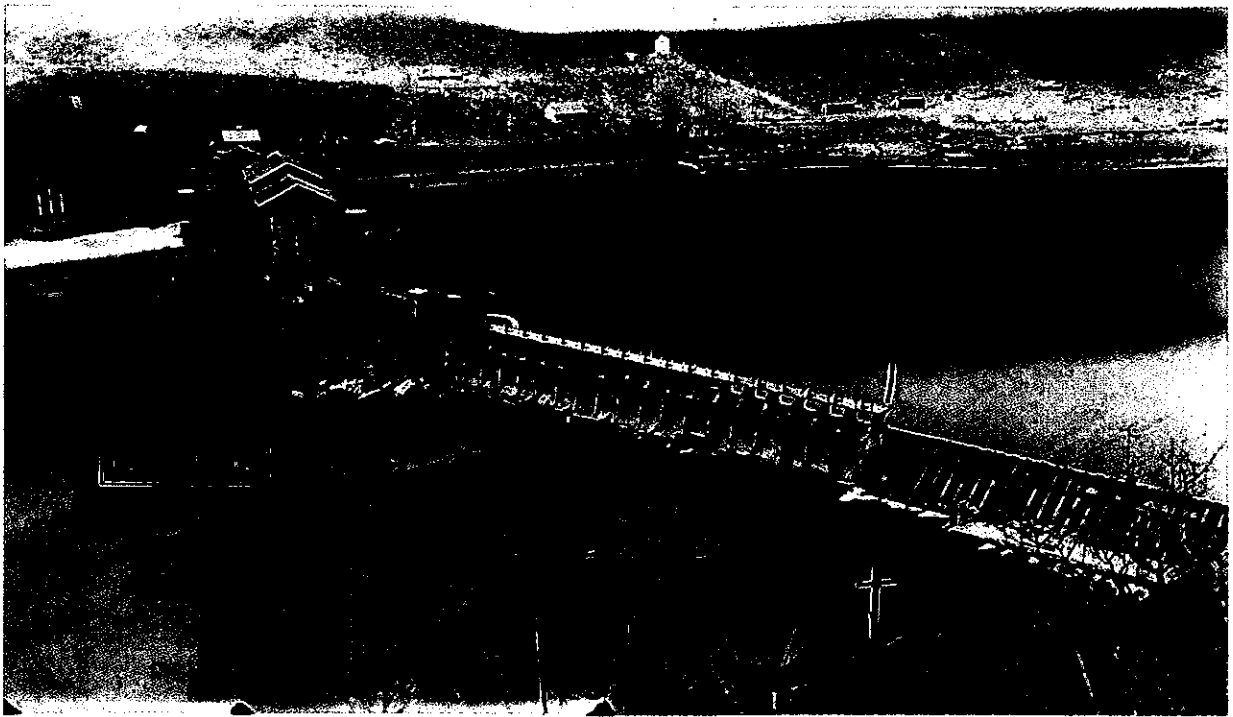


Figure 2: Newly constructed spillway and dated to February 14, 1920.

Swan Falls Feb. 14/20
Ginnar's Gate structure and
timber floorboards.

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Figure 3: Information contained on the back of photograph in Figure 2.



Figure 4. Photo is dated sometime after 1920 showing new spillway.