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Photograph taken in the
Mann Creek area by John
Burch. Courtesy Snake
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IRRIGATION IN THE SNAKE RIVER VALLEY

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

by Leonard J. Arrington

Today two-thirds of Idaho's farmlands are located along the fertile crescent of the Snake River, with as many as thirty-five main reservoirs on the river and its tributaries, furnishing more than six million acre-feet of water for 3.6 million acres of cropland. The following article describes the ways in which irrigation came to the Snake River Valley. Its author, an economic historian, is Lemuel Redd Professor of Western History at Brigham Young University.

IT IS TEMPTING to make this an autobiographical essay. My parents rode a freight train from Oklahoma to the Twin Falls area shortly after the tract was opened in 1905. The Arringtons have been there ever since. My father raised sugarbeets, potatoes, beans, and of course wheat and alfalfa in rotation. Irrigation was a way of life with us. I well remember the many times that my father took me with him as he irrigated his land and showed me how to assure a steady flow in the corrugates—not too strong or too weak—when to cut off the water, and how to adjust the headgates. I became aware of some of the conflicts over water rights, even as a little boy. I remember one occasion when I was about seven, when my father took me to Heyburn to visit my aunt. It was a long trip in a model T Ford, and we had to stop in Burley to use the bathroom. The sign at the Burley comfort station that we visited said: "Please flush; Twin Falls needs the water!"

By the time I was in junior high I was helping my father manage the water on a sixty-acre farm not far from my home. When I was ten, my mother gave me a notebook as a

birthday present and suggested that I keep a record of what went on. I have recently reread the three entries from 1927. The first mentions Lindbergh crossing the Atlantic, the second describes the Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney heavyweight fight. The third mentions the completion of the dam that created the American Falls Reservoir. Our home was just a mile and a half from Shoshone Falls, and on Sundays we used to walk down there to marvel at the immensity of the supply of water flowing down the gorge and on to the Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. It was a thing of power and beauty. But as boys we also dreamed of what it might do for the Salmon tract and the Bruneau project.

In reading over my youthful journal, I even found a joke that mentioned water. In the summer of 1930, when I was thirteen, my father had to go to Hollister to give a talk to a church group. I went with him. According to my record, my father told the people: "All this place needs is good people and lots of water." To which someone in the congregation shouted back with glee: "That's all Hell needs!"

THE FIRST DIVERSIONS of mountain creeks for irrigation purposes in Idaho were not from the Snake River. The Spaldings diverted the Clearwater in 1836; the Mormon colony at Lemhi turned a tributary of the Lemhi into a ditch in 1855; the settlers of Franklin used the waters of Maple Creek as early as 1860; part-time miners diverted the Boise River to water crops in 1862; and the Bear Lake colonists dammed Paris Creek to irrigate in 1863. All of these canals, except that used by the Spaldings, continued to water crops in the years that followed their first use.¹

¹I must first acknowledge the immense pleasure I derived from having the opportunity, in preparing this essay, of reading once more the valuable chapters in the *History of Idaho* by Merle Wells and Sam Beal, the bicentennial history of Idaho by Ross Peterson, and the exciting doctoral dissertation of Darrell Gertsch on the Upper Snake River Project. Any merit in what I have written is due to their scholarly ploughing of the source material. See Merrill D. Beal and Merle W. Wells, *History of Idaho*, 2 volumes (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1959), esp. 1:119-191; F. Ross Peterson, *Idaho. A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1976), esp. 115-138, 188-192; and William Darrell Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project: A Historical Study of Reclamation and Regional Development, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1975). I have also profited from reading M. D. Beal, *A History of Southwestern Idaho* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1942); Kate B. Carter, editor, *Pioneer Irrigation: Upper Snake River Valley* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1955); Bill Gulick, photography by Earl Roberge, *Snake River Country* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1971); and many articles in issues of *Idaho Yesterdays*.

The first diversions from the Snake itself were, it appears, in the 1880's, when Mormon colonists in the Upper Snake River Valley put in dams, dug canals, established villages, and began to farm. In the region north of present-day Idaho Falls, the Snake had a gentle westerly slope along a broad fertile plain that could easily be watered by simply dug short canals. Beginning with a settlement at Menan by John R. Poole and associates in 1879, settlement spread during the next few years north to Rexburg and south to present-day Blackfoot. Some fifteen settlements were established during the 1880's, and the area became literally honeycombed with cooperative canal systems.

Such things do not happen without organizers, and a strong organizer of these projects was Thomas E. Ricks.² Born in southwestern Kentucky, near the Tennessee border, Ricks was one of a farming family of eight children. The Ricks family, whose members had long been Quakers, had settled in Virginia, then North Carolina, then Kentucky, and finally southern Illinois. An accident in 1844, when Thomas E. was sixteen, caused one of his legs to be much shorter than the other, thus making him a partial cripple the rest of his life. This did not stop his pioneering activity. He and his family became Mormon converts, and they assisted with the building of the Mormon community of Nauvoo, Illinois. They crossed the Great Plains in 1848; on the trip Thomas Ricks was shot three times by Indians and left to die. The family eventually helped to colonize Centerville, Farmington, and Cache Valley, Utah; participated in the exploration of southern Utah in 1849-1850; and helped to establish a colony at Las Vegas in 1856. From Las Vegas, Thomas Ricks went to the Salmon River Mission at Lemhi, Idaho, in 1858, and served as a sheriff in Logan, Utah, in the 1860's and as assessor and collector of taxes in the 1870's. He served as a contractor building the grade for the Utah Northern Railroad from Franklin, Idaho, to Butte, Montana, during the late 1870's and went on to supervise grading for the Northern Pacific Railroad in Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington in the early 1880's.

After spending five years in the Upper Snake River Valley, Thomas E. was asked by Mormon authorities to direct the burgeoning Mormon settlements there. He was the first Mormon bishop of the region and the first stake president, and he was also Idaho's official delegate to the National Irrigation Congress in the 1890's. His biggest achievement was the drive to construct the Great Feeder Dam on the Snake River during the winter of 1894-95. The dam was built during the winter by men and teams from several small companies that hauled rock and cottonwood timber from nearby canyons. By 1895 the Great Feeder system was the largest single irrigation project in the world. Built and owned by small farmers, it was a testimony to the favorable topography, the previous experience of the farmers and organizers with irrigated agriculture, and the kind of cooperation for which the Mormons were famous.

THE SECOND STAGE in Snake River irrigation history features the Magic Valley enterprise of the early years of the twentieth century. The passage of the Carey Act, the vision of a small group of private entrepreneurs, and the assistance of eastern capital made possible the irrigation of some 300,000 acres of highly productive sagebrush land in south-central Idaho. This is an area in which, John C. Fremont wrote, "does not occur... a fertile spot of ground sufficiently large to produce... pasturage enough to allow even a temporary repose to the emigrant."³

Because previous federal land laws had failed to facilitate the settlement of arid western agricultural land, Congress in 1894 passed the Carey Act as an inducement to settlement. The government would cede up to

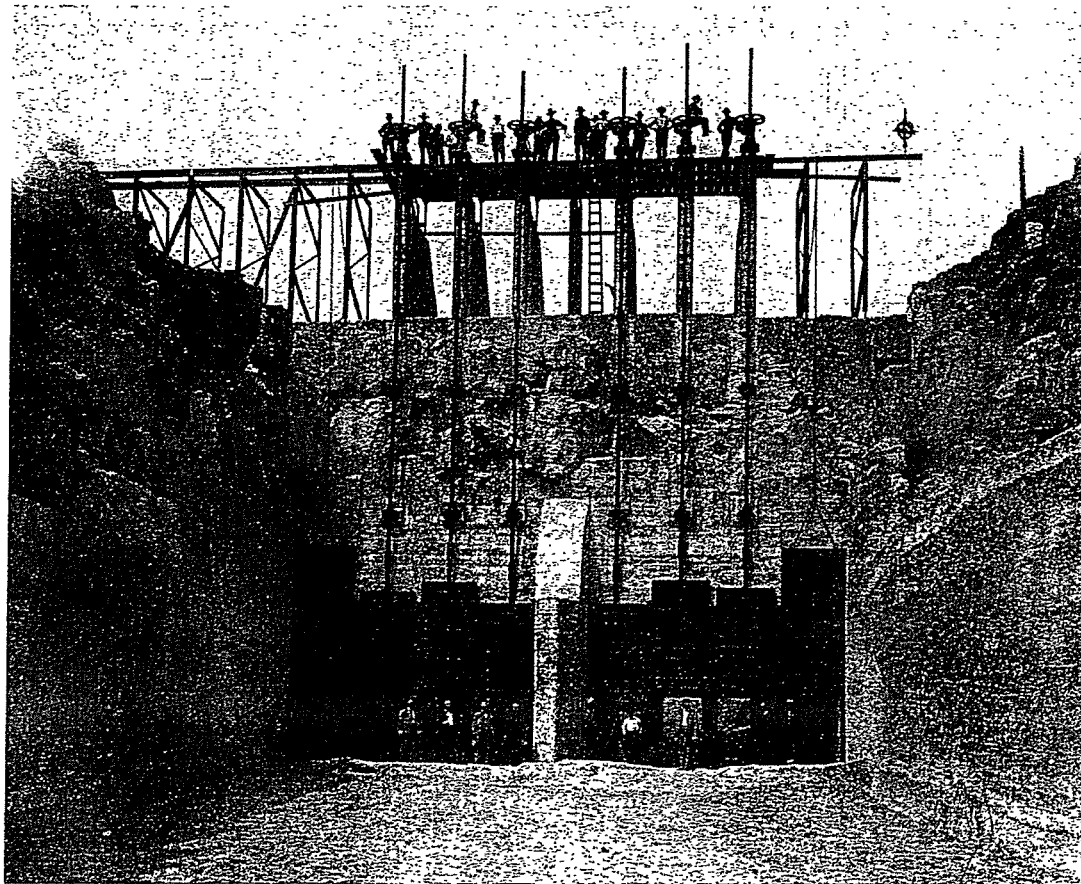
²Ricks, Thomas Edwin," in Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 volumes (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901-1936), 2:455-457; Noble Warrum, *Utah Since Statehood*, 4 volumes (Salt Lake City and Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1919-1920), 4:228-233; Special Edition of the *Fremont Journal*, May 30, 1900; Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 volumes (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892-1904), 4:156-157; David L. Crowder, *Rexburg, Idaho: The First One Hundred Years, 1883-1983* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1983), passim.

³John C. Fremont, *Report of the Exploring Expeditions to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44* (Washington, D.C., 1845), 163.

one million acres to any western state willing to undertake the reclamation of lands under the grant. Several men envisioned the successful development of south-central Idaho. There was Frank Riblett, a surveyor for Cassia County, who ran lines for possible reclamation projects; John Hansen, also a Cassia surveyor and farmer, who had a similar vision; Paul Bickel, chief engineer of the Twin Falls project; John E. Hayes, his young assistant; Stanley Milner, a Salt Lake City banker who put up the money for the initial surveys; Frank Buhl, a Pennsylvania iron and steel manufacturer, who furnished additional funds; and others. But the single personality who dominated the project was Ira B. Perrine.

A native of Indiana, Perrine had come to Idaho in 1883, when he was twenty-two. He first worked in the Wood River mines near Hailey; after many months he rode across the desert to Idaho Falls, where he bought forty dairy cows and drove them back to the mines to furnish milk, butter, and meat to the miners. During the fall of 1884, in need of winter pasture, Perrine moved his herd south to the Snake River Canyon, where he located a few miles below Shoshone Falls, in a deep alcove within the canyon walls. There he found abundant grass watered by two clear emerald lakes fed by underground springs—the Blue Lakes, as they came to be known. He planted trees and grew wheat, fruits, vegetables, and

The tunnel gates at Milner Dam, shown when the tunnel work was completed. Standing at the bottom are Mark Murtaugh, Peter Kimberly, Frank Buhl, Stanley Milner, Robert McCollum, Elizabeth Murtaugh, Walter Filer, and Ira Perrine.



berries, which he marketed in mining camps and in the various villages of Cassia County. "Being successful with irrigation at Blue Lakes," as one reporter indicated, he was "ready in 1900 to water 500,000 acres by taking water out of the Snake at a point known as 'The Cedars,'" the site of Milner Dam.⁴ Appreciative of the work of the surveyors and engineers, he took on the task of raising the money to fashion an agricultural empire.

Getting \$30,000 from Stanley Milner, Perrine incorporated the Twin Falls Land and Water Company in 1900, secured money from a Chicago bonding house, filed notice for the diversion of water on both the north and south sides of the Snake, contracted with Idaho to develop 270,000 acres under the Carey Act, and began to sell land at 25 cents an acre and water rights at \$25 per acre. The dam was completed by 1905 and water diverted into a canal 10 feet deep and 80 feet wide at the bottom and 120 feet at the top. Water was immediately made available to 60,000 acres of Magic Valley farmland. By 1905, Twin Falls had its first bank, doctor, attorney, dentist, barber, school, newspaper, restaurant, and roominghouse. In addition, new towns in the valley sprang up: Hansen, Kimberly, Filer, Buhl. The project included 240,000 acres watered by gravity flow of the Snake.

Ultimately, Perrine was able to obtain financial support from Pennsylvanians W. S. and J. S. Kuhn to complete the north-side project as well, and the project came to encompass Jerome, Hazelton, Eden, and Wendell. This project, enlarged over the years to 185,000 acres, was slower in becoming successful but nevertheless reflects Perrine's leadership and influence in building the Magic Valley empire.

The third important development along the Snake was the Minidoka Project, which was made possible by the passage of the National Reclamation Act in 1902. The first federal project in Idaho, Minidoka Dam provided water to 120,000 acres on both sides of the Snake near the Minidoka rapids, about thirty-five miles above the Milner Dam site. The canal and distributing system, completed in 1907, irrigated Heyburn, Paul, Acequia, and Rupert.

It represented the first irrigation water provided by the U.S. Reclamation Service and was the first in a whole series of projects in which the Reclamation Service emerged as a full partner with private and state interests in the development of the water resources of the Snake. The chief engineer of the Reclamation Service in charge of the project was Arthur Davis, a man of whom it was said that he was so interested in water that he had it on the brain. He later became director of the service's successor, the Bureau of Reclamation.

THE AMERICAN FALLS project is in many respects the most important Snake River project of all, because it represented a means of furnishing ample late-season water for dozens of the small cooperative companies on the Upper Snake River, the thousands of farmers under the Twin Falls and North Side canal company ditches, and the Minidoka settlers. Its success required the cooperation of federal, state, and local governments and private interests, and both corporate and individual proprietorships. It is said to have been the brainchild of Ira Perrine.

Several factors were involved in the project. Farmers had learned that the annual supply of mountain runoff is not constant but goes through periodic cycles. The year 1919 was the driest year in Idaho's history. The Twin Falls Canal Company, for example, reported on July 1 that it would be able to furnish only 30 percent of the normal supply of water. There were altercations along the river. The desperate farmers in the upper valleys of the Snake sometimes made illegal use of water at night, broke the locks on headgates, and in some cases organized vigilante committees. Farmers on the north side of the Snake in Magic Valley were unable to provide water for their livestock and poultry and were forced to haul it in just to furnish water for washing, cooking, and drinking. Such was the sympathy with their plight that the farmers on the south side, who had a prior right, voluntarily gave up water to make possible a run for the people on the north side. In doing so, they suffered a \$25

⁴O. A. Kelker, "The Story of I. B. Perrine," *Twin Falls Times-News*, June 27, 1971.

Pages A4230-37
June 8, 1954
Congressional Record

SPRING/SUMMER, 1986

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By February 14, 1924, when this picture was taken, gravel had been laid for Idaho Street in the new town of American Falls.

million crop loss, but they felt that in the interest of humanity they should do it. It became obvious to all that additional storage facilities had to be built to provide water when short supplies occurred in the future.

The accord was not simply arrived at. There would have to be agreement among some thirty water districts and forty irrigation companies along a 300-mile stretch of the river; organizations would have to be developed to promote the project (these included the Idaho Irrigation Congress and the Western States Reclamation Association, both established in 1919); eastern and southern congressmen had to be persuaded that the project was necessary and economical; a national political figure like Senator William E. Borah had to be enlisted in the cause; the entire town of American Falls had to be purchased, since its existing location would be submerged by the projected reservoir; and the federal government had to acquire 70,000 acres of land, over half of which belonged to the Bannock-Shoshone tribe on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

An editorial in the *Pocatello Tribune* for July 12, 1919, exemplifies the arguments used

to persuade reluctant eastern and southern congressmen to support the project:

Some of the erudite brethren of the South and East should consider that sagebrush will not always be the decorative portion of Western scenery. The East has forgotten its bush days, and the South its tanglewood and skunkbush. Both have rain, but neither understands irrigation nor conservation of water. They know that it will float a steamboat and is reasonably fair for baptismal purposes, but they don't comprehend canning it for crops.

Despite the collapse of farm prices after World War I, despite the obstinacy of Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall, despite the opposition of important absentee landowners and certain business interests, the project was assured in November, 1924. A contract to construct the large dam was let and in 1925 its cornerstone was laid. For two years an average of 400 men worked around-the-clock shifts. The gates of the dam were lowered into place in October, 1926, and the reservoir was filled to its maximum capacity of 1.7 million acre-feet on July 1, 1927. The date was important enough to a ten-year-old boy on a farm near Twin Falls to record in his diary as one of the great events in the history of his world. With the backwater of

the reservoir extending up the Snake twenty-five miles, the project provided directly for the reclamation of 115,000 additional acres of public land to the north and west of the Minidoka project—what is known as the Gooding division—and provided supplemental water for over one million acres above and below the facility.

Other dams primarily for storage and control of irrigation water have been built on the Snake and its tributaries since the completion of the American Falls project. Palisades Dam, a few miles west of the Idaho-Wyoming border, was finished in 1959. Various other projects connected with tributaries of the Snake include the Arrowrock, Anderson Ranch, and Boise Diversion dams on the Boise River; the Dworshak on the North Fork of the Clearwater; and the Teton on the Teton River.

ONE OF THE most interesting developments in irrigation of the Snake River plain is the use of underground waters that probably have their original source in the Snake. The explanation of this development lies in the story of Julion Clawson, who operated out of Rupert during the years immediately following World War II. A great-grandson of Brigham Young, "Duke" Clawson served in the navy during World War I; operated a building and loan company; and invested in a sheep ranch at Nounan, in Bear Lake Valley. In 1946 he purchased a large tract of sagebrush land in Minidoka and Lincoln counties, north of Rupert. He intended to begin a dry-farming operation there but soon discovered nine culinary wells on the property, which had been abandoned thirty years earlier by German immigrants who had come from eastern Washington and the Dakotas to homestead the land. He studied geological reports indicating that there were enormous lakes of water under the vast lava plain of the Snake. "They thought I was after oil when I bought drilling equipment here from Oklahoma," he told friends. "They thought I was crazy. They were even more convinced of it when they learned I was drilling for water."⁵

Clawson found abundant water in the three deep twenty-inch wells he had drilled by the summer of 1947. He arranged with Idaho

Power Company for electricity from Minidoka Dam to supply the needs of large, specially ordered pumps to water more than 3,800 acres of wheat, potatoes, and beans in 1948. His irrigation layout was engineered so as to prevent erosion and undue loss of water through evaporation.

The first year of his deep-well irrigation was successful. The Portneuf silt loam of the area, with the addition of proper fertilizer and water, seemed ideal for the production of potatoes and sugar beets. And seventy days of uninterrupted pumping brought no drop in the water table. Local farmers were quick to catch on, and it was not long before some 30,000 acres of private land in the vicinity were under pump-based irrigation. The Bureau of Reclamation also drilled test wells on land adjacent to Clawson's property, which had long ago been set aside for irrigation but had never been provided the promised water. The bureau confirmed Clawson's contention that the entire area had a fine supply of underground water. During the 1950's more than 60,000 acres of land in the area, administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, were opened for homesteading.

This was the effective beginning of pump-based irrigation in the Snake River Valley, which has spread as far down the river as Nyssa, Oregon, and it constitutes one of the most significant postwar changes in Idaho agriculture. Hundreds of thousands of acres of good farmland were opened up in the years that followed. While there had been pump-based irrigation elsewhere, particularly in the Imperial Valley in California, it was Clawson's success that generated the action which has done so much to bolster Idaho's agriculture. He had concentrated on deep wells, but the Snake River itself also became an important source of water as enterprisers pumped its water to plateaus high above the river. Clawson's willingness to think big and his fearlessness in going heavily into debt to take advantage of

⁵*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 3, 1948. Further information on the life and agricultural efforts of Julion Clawson is in clippings from the *Minidoka County News*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, and other newspapers collected by Clawson's secretary, Anona Kunz Clawson, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City; and oral history interviews with Irwin Clawson, Yale Holland, and Rodney Hansen, by Richard L. Jensen, James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

the best available technology in pumps and sprinkling systems made it possible for him to take the lead in setting a pattern of change that was soon followed by many smaller farmers in the Snake River country.

WE HAVE KNOWN for a long time that extensive and complicated irrigation systems depend on an advanced sense of community. The mutual dependencies of all those involved are so crucial that the system will not function unless there is an overriding presiding authority—as in the case of the Mormon settlers in the Upper Snake River Valley—or a predisposed willingness to cooperate—as among the

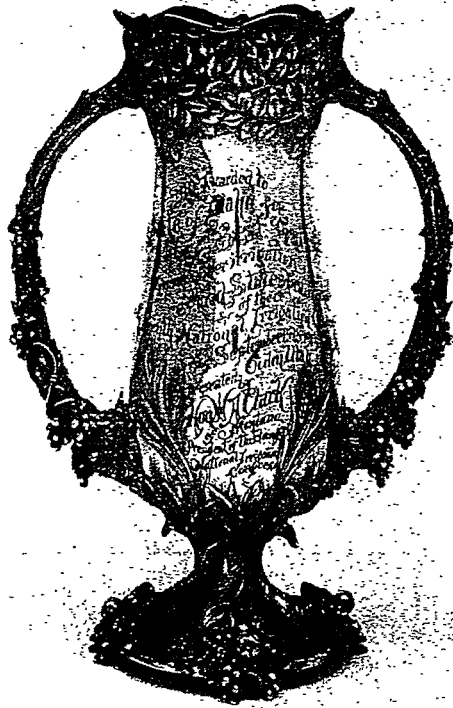
settlers along the river who acknowledged that their own desires must be balanced by the needs of others to achieve desirable and necessary ends. While there are exceptions, the history of the Snake River Basin provides many examples of this willingness to subordinate immediate personal and group interests to those of the larger community. The generosity of the Twin Falls Canal settlers in relinquishing some of their water in 1919 to the residents of the north side is one illustration. Another is the willingness of the upper-valley users in 1924 to help those lower downstream, on the north side, during a subsequent drought.

Perhaps the most arresting example of the sense of community is the behavior of the region's residents after the disastrous failure of the Teton Dam in 1976.⁶ On June 5, 1976, the

⁶See Bruce D. Blumell, "The Latter-day Saint Response to the Teton, Idaho Flood, 1976," *Task Papers in LDS History*, Number 16 (Salt Lake City: Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976); F. Ross Peterson, *The Teton Dam Disaster: Tragedy or Triumph* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Faculty Association, 1982).

Teton Dam, three days after its collapse. Photo by Boyd Norton.





An ornate silver cup was awarded to Idaho at the 1905 National Irrigation Congress.

dam broke, releasing eighty billion gallons of water. A tidal wave fifteen feet high, running faster than a horse, quickly expanded to a width of four miles and headed down the general direction of the Teton River until it joined the Snake. At that point the wave rushed pell-mell down that unruly river toward the American Falls Reservoir, eighty-five miles from the shattered dam. As it progressed, the speeding torrent created a traveling lake eight miles across and twenty miles long. The communities of Wilford, Sugar City, Salem, and Hibbard were carried away; about two-thirds of Rexburg, a city of about ten thousand, was washed away; and considerable portions of Annis, Menan, Roberts, Firth, and Blackfoot were flooded. The crushing force of the water knocked out

irrigation-canal headgates everywhere along the river, filled canals well beyond their capacity, and spread out over the countryside. The rampaging river damaged or destroyed two hundred fifty businesses, thirty-five hundred farm buildings, and about four thousand homes. Total property loss was estimated at approximately \$500 million. Fifteen thousand head of livestock were killed and fourteen thousand people left homeless.

Less than three hours after flood reports reached regional centers, truckloads of supplies were leaving Mormon welfare headquarters in Salt Lake City; contractors from Idaho Falls and Pocatello were moving heavy equipment into the area; and officials both of voluntary organizations like the Red Cross and of federal and state agencies were arriving on the scene to direct a massive relief effort. Local and regional church and civic leaders met with representatives of volunteer and government agencies the evening of the disaster and every evening for several weeks thereafter. Their coordinated efforts assured enough food, housing, clothing, medical supplies, and other assistance for the fourteen thousand left homeless and for the cleaning and repairing of salvageable homes left in the wake of the flood. Ricks College, standing on a hill in Rexburg, was in spring recess; untouched by the disaster, it was able to serve an average of thirty thousand meals per day and house several thousand people.

In the days that followed, like the flocks of seagulls that rescued the pioneers of the Salt Lake Valley from an invasion of crickets in 1848, hundreds of yellow busses entered the valley every day bringing men and women from towns in Idaho, and from Utah and Wyoming as well, to help with the cleanup. About three thousand volunteers came each day, contributing more than half a million hours of donated labor over the next three months. Within a month, the afflicted communities were so far recovered, at least in spirit, that they held a special July the Fourth "Thank You, America, Day" in Rexburg. "We just wanted everyone to know we are proud to be Americans and proud of our heritage," said the chairman of the parade.

Less than four years later, visitors to the region, hearing about the catastrophe, asked: "What flood?" Four thousand new homes had been erected. The businesses were all rebuilt. No visitor would suppose the Snake River valley had ever been anything but a network of prosperous, progressive communities. The population of the region today is greater than before.

Throughout the tragedy and suffering, observers noted a prevalence of the Idaho spirit—a confidence that things would turn out all right. One of those afflicted, whose sense of humor remained intact, commented: "We weren't flooded; we were just over-irrigated." The inundated valley enjoyed powerful support from the agencies of Idaho churches, the Red Cross, the federal government, and—most important—the farmers and businessmen up and down the line. As one person said: "They literally lifted us out of the mud and set us on our feet again. Without everybody's help we never would have made it."

I hope that we maintain the same sense of community as we face the future problems of the Snake River Basin. Local interests understandably want reclamation of additional lands—the Bruneau project, for example. Municipalities and new industries create a demand for additional water uses. Environmental groups are concerned for the preservation of wild-animal sanctuaries, feed ranges, and spawning grounds, and for the preservation of the spectacular canyons still remaining on the Snake.

It would be improper for me to try to impose a particular point of view on this story. But I am an Idahoan born and bred, who still holds title to a highly productive sixty-acre farm and who wishes only the best for the new and old residents of his native state. I have tried to keep in mind the reasons why our early settlers saw the need to replace the old doctrine of riparian rights, which had long

characterized eastern and midwestern use, with the indigenous doctrine of prior appropriation, which all felt was better adapted to regions of limited rainfall like the Snake River Basin. That doctrine, it seems to me, has guaranteed to the owners, over the years, a definite quantity of water and at the same time has permitted them to sell or transfer that use when owners are not injured. Despite growing criticism of some decisions, Idahoans have remained basically loyal to the appropriation right because it provides the security that is desirable in a property right, and because it has the kind of flexibility that allows for change in economic use, permitting expanding cities to acquire augmented sources of water supply and encouraging recreational enthusiasts to claim that their use is also beneficial. As Robert Dunbar contended in his recent study, *Forging New Rights in Western Waters*: "The appropriation right is not a static institution.... it continues to be shaped by Western needs and pressures."¹ That seems a fair and sound judgment. I hope we will not surrender the doctrine of prior appropriation but work at adapting it to future needs.

Our homegrown poet Vardis Fisher celebrated Idaho's agricultural pioneers who have brought honor to the state and to land we love. Although the poem was written about his father, it also describes many surveyors, engineers, farmers, and financiers who have helped to redeem the waste lands of the Snake River Basin:

Time built a pioneer and set him down
Upon the grayest waste of Idaho.
He clubbed the desert and made it grow
In broad and undulating fields of brown.

He laid his might upon it, stripped its frown
Of drought and thistles; till by sweat and glow
He left the aged and barren hills aglow
With color—and its flame was his renown...

[He] poured his great dream into golden wheat;
Until his gnarled and calloused hands had wrought
A deep and quiet holiness of work.²

May all of us, in deep and quiet holiness, work toward a society that is compassionate, productive, and mutually respectful and beneficial.

¹Robert G. Dunbar, *Forging New Rights in Western Waters* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 217.

²Reprinted in Dorys C. Grover, *A Solitary Voice: Vardis Fisher* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1973), 52-53.