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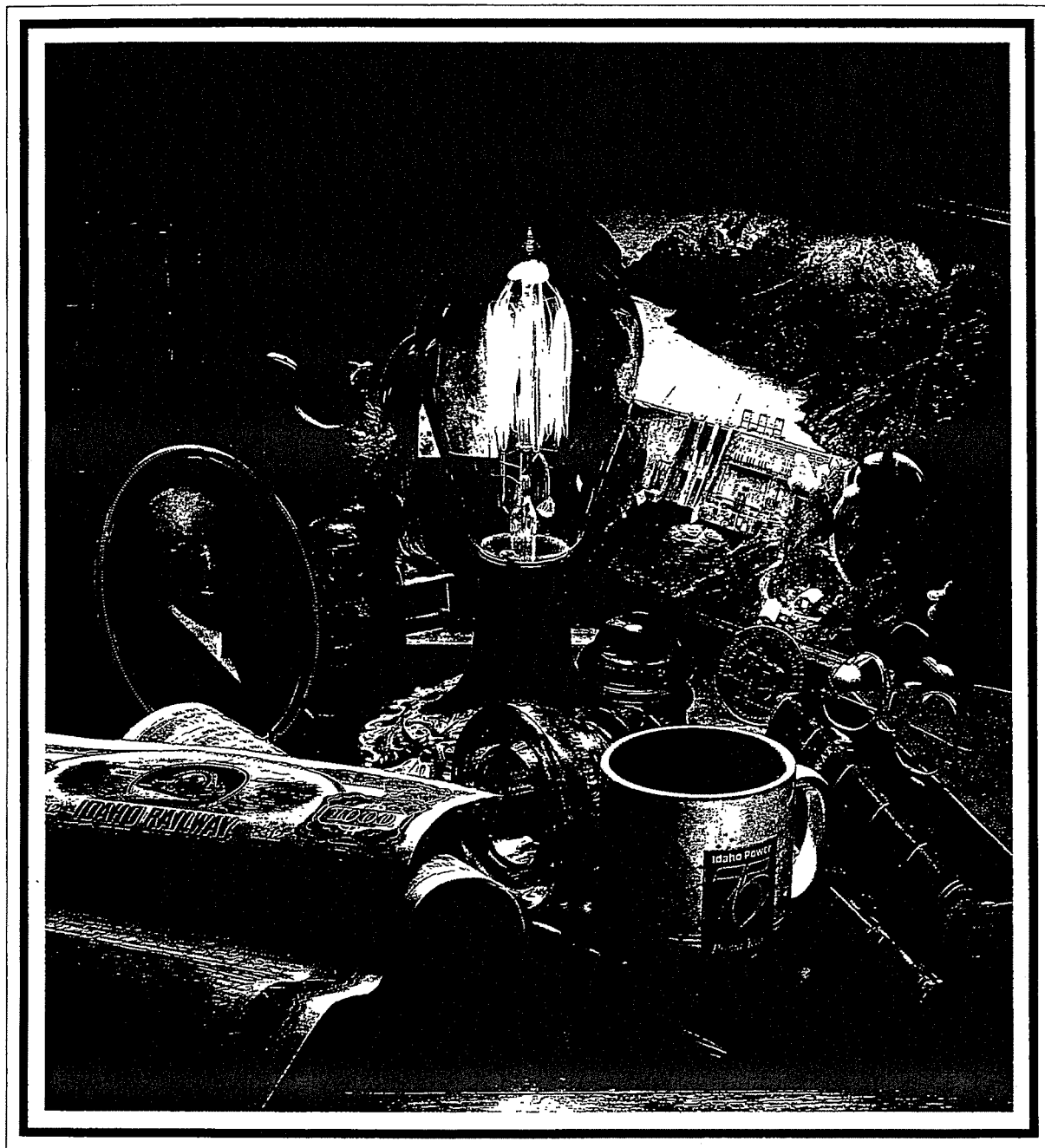
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Excerpted pages of Legacy of Light: A History
of Idaho Power Company, by Susan M. Stacy
(Idaho Power Co. 1991)

Legacy of Light

A History of Idaho Power Company

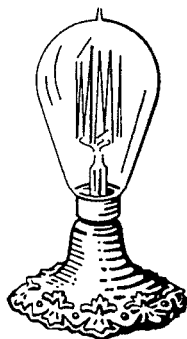


Susan M. Stacy

MAIL 91727

Legacy of Light

A History of the Idaho Power Company

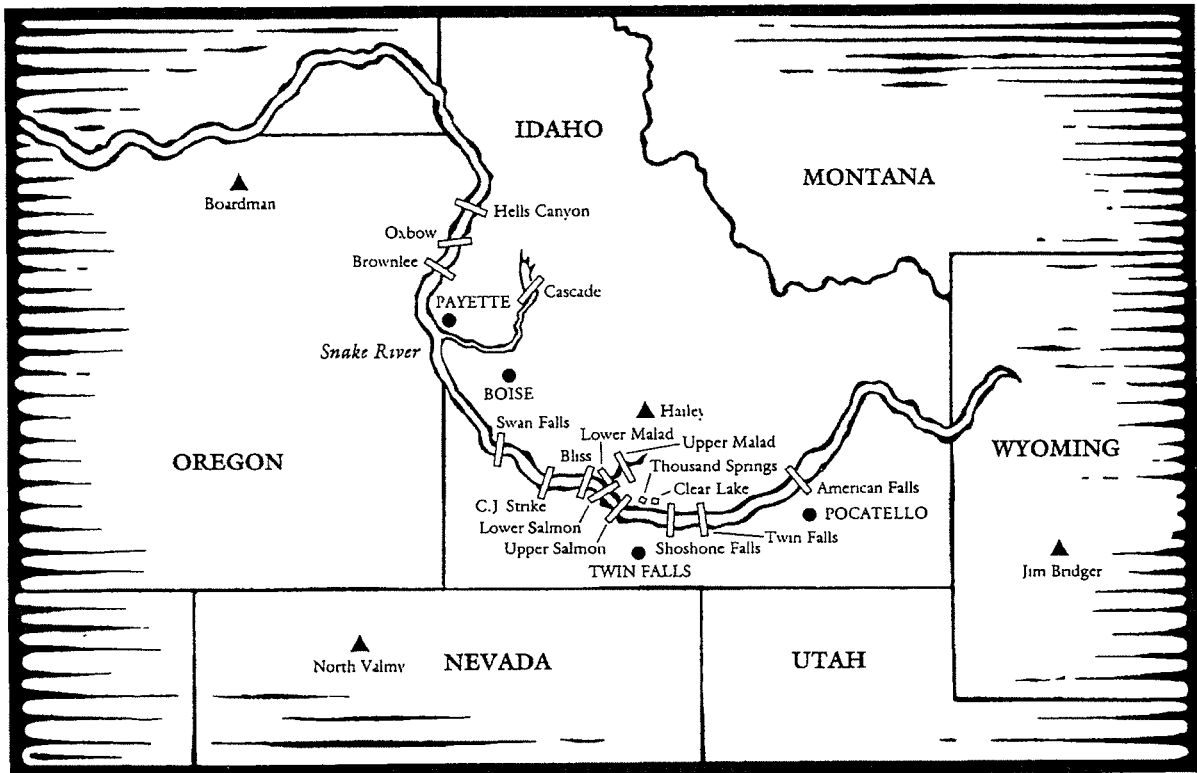


Susan M. Stacy



Boise, Idaho

Idaho Power Company's Service Territory



Lines in Service:

*Transmission, 4,668 miles; Overhead, 17,248 miles;
Underground, 1,513 miles; Total, 23,429 miles.*

HYDROELECTRIC FACILITIES AND NON-COINCIDENT CAPACITIES

Hells Canyon 450,000 Kw	Thousand Springs 8,000 Kw
Oxbow 220,000 Kw	Clear Lake 2,400 Kw
Brownlee 728,000 Kw	Shoshone Falls 12,500 Kw
Cascade 14,000 Kw	Twin Falls 10,000 Kw
Swan Falls 12,000 Kw	American Falls 112,420 Kw
C.J. Strike 89,000 Kw	
Bliss 80,000 Kw	
Lower Malad 15,000 Kw	
Upper Malad 9,000 Kw	
Lower Salmon 70,000 Kw	
Upper Salmon 39,000 Kw	

THERMAL FACILITIES AND CAPACITIES

Jim Bridger 693,000 Kw
North Valmy 260,650 Kw
Boardman 53,000 Kw
Hailey 50,000 Kw

● DIVISION OFFICES

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Preface and Acknowledgements

In September 1990 Mr. Jim Taney of the Idaho Power Company's public information office explained what his company was looking for in the way of a history to help mark the company's 75th anniversary in 1991. "We want something with context," he said. Idaho Power—and the American electrical utility industry in general—has undergone great change in the last twenty years or so, Taney said, and the company wanted the anniversary to be an occasion for presenting an explanation of those changes to its many publics. The story should begin at the beginning, carry on to the present, and conclude with some thoughts about the future. The intended audience for the work would be Idaho Power employees, retired employees, shareowners, the customers living within the company's service territory, and anyone else who might care to check the book out of a public library.

The intended audience sounded to me a lot like "everybody." But the prospect offered me a chance to act upon my conviction concerning history, which is that the most urgent audience for history is "everybody." Electricity is mysterious to most of us, but a basic need nevertheless. There is no reason why the institution that produces and delivers it should

be mysterious. Everyone from policy-makers within the company to the customers who read news stories about the company has a better chance of coping with the world we live in with the benefit of a little historical context.

So I jumped at the opportunity, knowing that the time for research and writing would be somewhat short for an



institution with the years and import of the Idaho Power Company, and knowing that the work couldn't be the definitive history of the company. I aimed to find out what corporate experiences within the Idaho Power territory had marked the company and made it different from all other power companies in the country. A lot of questions came to mind and I proceeded to try and find answers to them: Why are power rates so low here? Why don't we have more REA co-ops in this

part of the Snake River Valley? Why are people who move to this region from the East so surprised to find that Idahoans cook on electric ranges? Why don't we have any coal-burning power plants within the service area? Why did Idaho Power have a reputation as one of the political kingmakers in Idaho politics? How come everyone lately is saying things like, "Idaho Power is just not the same company it used to be. The old Idaho Power is gone." What is the difference between the "old Idaho Power" and the new one?

In searching for answers to those and other questions (including "What is a watt?" the complete answer to which you will not find here), I began to see the patterns and outlines of two particularly strong themes in the company's history, neither of which will surprise most Idaho Power employees.

The first has to do with what we now call "envisioning the future." Everyone does it: a family or a business operator or a public servant has some idea of how the future should look and takes steps to make it happen. In the Snake River Valley, there seems to have been a remarkable consensus about what the vision for the future ought to be. Idaho Power managers, other business leaders, state government, and

citizens generally agreed that the best future would come from the continuous expansion of an agricultural industry based on electrical and irrigation technology. There seems to have been little challenge to this "controlling vision" from other ideas, or perhaps other visions were easily vanquished. The Idaho Power Company was an integral participant and believer in that vision, and a major creator of the electrical irrigated empire that actually came into existence.

The other theme is that progress (regardless of how the company defined it) for Idaho Power has never been accomplished by the company alone. It has always needed strong friends, and this history shows that if its friends weren't already organized, the company went out and got them organized. If the company's continuous prosperity and survival is a measurement of success, it must be said that the company has done an outstanding job of choosing its partners. With the knowledge of the company's past patterns of action, an employee or a customer can watch the future and possibly discover "big picture" meaning in the daily events reported in the news.

In the early 1980s, everything changed. Both the irrigation growth machine and the electric machine relied on the water in

the Snake River to give ever more of itself with no limits, a thing which it, of course, could not do. The Snake River Valley's consensus about the future vision began to melt, and so did Idaho Power's traditional network of strong partnerships and its traditional place in the scheme of things. But that is the story about to unfold...

The Snake River Valley has in recent years been influenced by the growth of tourism, the environmental movement, the continuing strength of agriculture, and the growth and economic diversification of its larger cities. These have all brought about different ideas about what will make a desirable future, and they aren't all mutually compatible. Here again, listening for the way various interest groups describe their ideas for the valley's future should help make politics and public life in the region particularly interesting in the next few years.

This is not the first history of Idaho Power. The present work owes a special debt to Fritz Cochrane and George Young for their production of *Hydro Era*, a history of the company up to 1976, and the essential base for beginning any history of the company. In addition, Henry Senger, Bob Sessions, Bob Brown, and many others are the

authors of scores of articles in *Electrikat*, *Current News*, the annual reports, and other company publications. They took the trouble to explore and explain the history of a technology, a project, or a decision in their articles. Largely because of this important documentation the company's past is available for interpretation now. I hope that future historians will be as fortunate in finding similar documentation of company affairs in the next 75 years.

One of the most rewarding aspects of working on this project has been an opportunity to get to know many Idaho Power people. I have needed, asked for, and received a great deal of help. It is with much gratitude that I thank them all. Idaho Power employees and retirees without exception gave me the same confidence that I assume their company gives them. Just some examples: Art Wittenberger loaned me his Oxbow photograph album with photos from 1906, Shannon Jenné gave me a perfect place to work and forgave me when I kept library materials for more than a month, Larry Wimer gave me a copy of a hard-to-find report on salmon fishing before 1900, Jim Bruce loaned me his Pioneer T-shirt, Ken Wilson loaned me his antique splice so it could be part of the front cover photograph, Nikki Balch Stilwell raided her photograph files for

special pictures and let me use her keys, Doug Sterrett located a long list of photographs at the Idaho Historical Society, Carol Stoops postponed her packing so I could review all the sales programs at her office, Sandy Gardner dropped everything in order to calculate some last-minute figures for one of the graphs in the last chapter, Daralie Yorton appeared one day with a box of old letters and records pertaining to the predecessor companies, a box full of answers to some of my questions. The full list of people I thank is much longer than just these examples and also includes all the retirees I met at social functions outside of work who told me about their careers and talked about the changes they had seen in the company.

A special thanks goes to all of the people I interviewed, both within and outside the company, in person and by telephone. I usually promised that an interview would take about two hours and then stayed four. These talks were essential and invaluable in doing the work, aside from being a great personal pleasure for me.

Since Taney's assignment required "context," my research took me to the archives of the Idaho Historical Society and Boise State University. From their special collections staffs I received the excellent support

for which they are so well known. Elizabeth Jacox, Guila Ford, and John Yandell at IHS and Alan Virta at BSU are indispensable colleagues. For their help and "extra miles" I am deeply grateful. To the many other people who searched for or loaned special photographs, my thanks.

All of the company officers and several others were invited to review the draft manuscript, and most of them did. This was a tremendous commitment of their time and a generous service to me inasmuch as their careful reading saved me from many errors, small and large. My thanks to them all. People outside the company have already asked me, "Did anyone censor your work?" I may as well answer them here. No, they didn't. After being given access to any records I asked for, I was then permitted to interpret them on my own. Not even one marginal note from any of the readers contained any censorious sentiments. I myself interpret this as one feature of the "new" Idaho Power Company, and I am very honored to have been given the opportunity to get to know it.

It is a particular pleasure to thank Jim Taney for his steady help, support, guidance, humor, encouragement, and copy editing, which is responsible for many more saves.

He was especially generous in sharing his own insight into the company, from which the work benefits greatly.

The latter stages of production involved Pete Wilson and Kelly Mitchell of Pete Wilson DesignWorks, Inc. in Boise, whose versatility, talent, and sympathy for the author were enormously appreciated. Lorrie Meyers stepped in at the last minute to help prepare the index, another save for which I am very grateful.

A person's aerobics classmates should not be overlooked as part of a writer's support network. They provide a soft background noise of unconditional acceptance in both hard and easy times. Thanks, you all. And to my husband Ralph, to whom I became at times a Missing Person while working on this project, I give my most heartfelt thanks for his care, forbearance, and thoughtfulness.



pumped more than 200 feet. The people of Minidoka County honored him with a monument commemorating his accomplishments after he died in an automobile accident in 1955 in Salt Lake City.¹⁰

Pressure sprinkling, a more efficient way to distribute water than most of the gravity flow systems, added an additional electrical load. After the war, light-weight aluminum sprinkler pipe became available. A farmer could easily move it from one part of a field to another. Sprinklers didn't require flat ground and could be set up on rolling hills not previously irrigable by gravity ditches. Potato crops in particular came in at higher and more uniform quality because of the sprinkler systems' greater control over soil moisture during different parts of the growing season.¹¹

Many farmers and whole projects, like the King Hill project, switched from gravity systems to pressure systems.

The increase in electrical use on farms suddenly went exponential, a marked departure from previous patterns of gradual and steady growth. Idaho Power celebrated the revolution and encouraged more. It wrote in one of its promotional pamphlets, "It remains for the people of Idaho and the nation to do everything possible to encourage men of vision who will continue the expansion of irrigation pumping..."¹²

The pamphlet's reference to the nation was to the role of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in managing the Desert Land Entry Act and other legislation aimed at transforming desert into farmland. A second land rush followed the Rupert rush. Developers realized that if a pump could draw water 400 feet from a lava bed, a larger pump could lift it directly from the Snake River 500, 600, or even 700 feet up to lands that no Idaho scheme had yet managed to irrigate.



Left: C.J. Strike Dam in 1965. At the right, some water is diverted for irrigation; at far right operators' village.

Above: Dedication ceremony in June 1952 for C.J. Strike Dam. Left to Right: Mrs. C.J. Strike; Bishop Emerson Pugmire; Dr. Wallace Bond, speaker; Fred McCormick; Harry Morrison.

Desert Land entries had not been a particularly booming business for the BLM for several decades. But between 1947 and 1973, over 1,440 Desert Land entries were patented, bringing nearly 318,000 acres into production. One group of enterprises which started in the early 1960s and took water directly from the Snake River via high-lift pumps would help consume some of the power produced at the great dams yet to be erected in Hells Canyon.



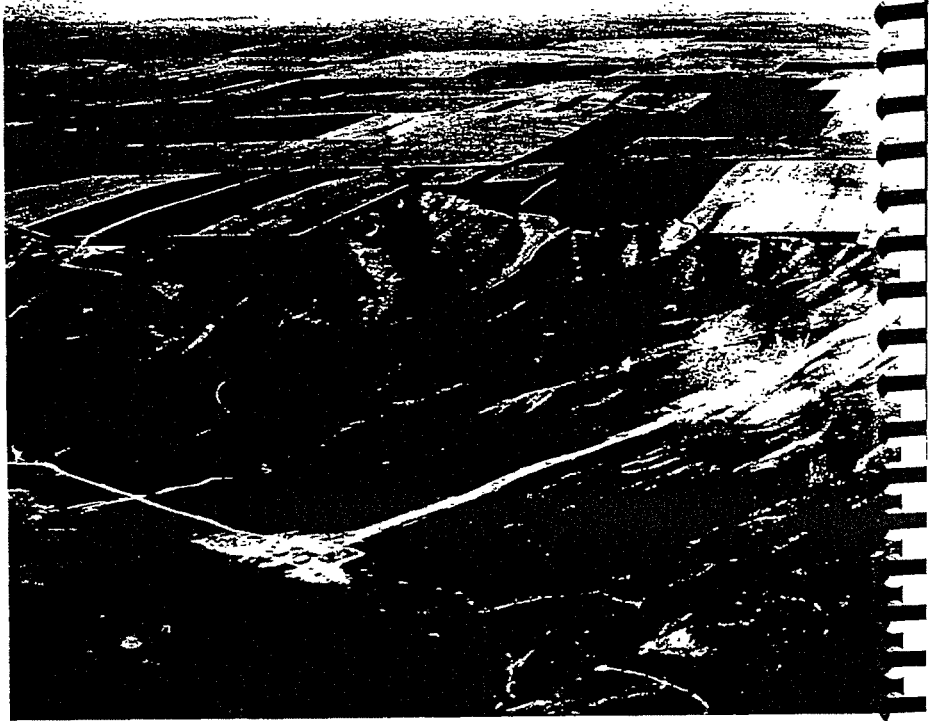
Pressure sprinkling was an improvement over gravity flow systems. Farm operators continued to convert throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.



Shirley Clark

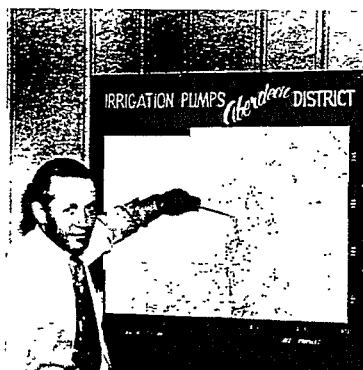
Projects popped up all along the rim of the Snake River below Milner Dam, some on land long before homesteaded, as at Dry Lakes south of Nampa, others on newly patented land. Names like Bell Rapids, Sailor Creek, Billy Rio Ranch, Cottonwood Canal, and Black Mesa all attested to another round of resource development made possible by the inexpensive hydropower of the Idaho Power Company. Bell Rapids alone, a project involving 25,000 acres on the southern rim, required 50,835 horsepower for a 625-foot lift. The fertility of the soil and good prices for potato crops meant that the initial investment for the projects could readily be paid off within a few years.¹³

Idaho Power scrambled to keep up with it all. The intense post-war decade of activity had demanded another wave of recruitment to cope with the company's expansion and to replace the staff that didn't return after the war. Once more a generation of young and energetic men and women who would eventually rise to positions of leadership and management joined the company. Women would have a slower rise than the men, but one woman, Shirley Clark, hired in 1945 as a stenographer/secretary, would become the first woman on the management team as section supervisor of stock records. In 1976 as the company's assistant





A high-lift pump on the south side of the Snake River. At the top of the canyon the water flows into a canal.



A typical office wall decoration in the 1950s and 1960s around Idaho Power.

treasurer, she became a corporate officer, another first for Idaho Power women.¹⁴ Among the men, this cohort would include two who would ultimately head the company, James Bruce and Robert O'Connor, and several vice presidents.

The six new post-war dams, all built for the company by the Morrison-Knudsen Company, added a total of 267,300 kilowatts in new capacity to a system that had only 105,000 in 1945 at the end of the war. During the same period, its average load had grown from 62,000 kilowatts to 210,000 in 1952. The percentage increase in kilowatt-hour use per customer was greater than that of any other utility in the United States.¹⁵ The price per kilowatt-hour for domestic customers dropped below two

cents, substantially below the national average.

Once again technological change imported into Idaho made a tremendous impact on the fortunes of the Idaho Power Company and its territory. The big pumps committed southern Idaho one more time to agriculture as its key to growth and prosperity. They moved the region to an unsurpassed level of land, water, and electrical consumption. And they strengthened the political and social bonds among the farmers, the state government, the banks, the press, and the power company. These were the forces that now allied themselves in a great struggle to win control over the hydroelectric potential of Hells Canyon.

The Second Coffin Award Nomination

In 1950 Idaho Power was one of the five nominees for a second Coffin Award, still one of the highest electrical industry honors. The recognition was for community relations of the highest order, based on the coordination of rural and urban development, far-sighted engineering planning and system operations, maximum service with lowest possible rates—"all in the face of obstacles plus competition from federal agencies."

*Current News
April 1950*
