

THE HARRISON CANAL—1890

In the first minute book of the Harrison Canal Company it is recorded that a meeting was called for the citizens of Willow Creek and Lewisville at Lewisville June 4, 1890. The chairman, Neil McMillan, announced the purpose being that of organizing a company to construct a canal heading from the upper end of the dry bed which headed from Snake River. This canal would serve the country known then as Harrison (Garfield) to North Willow Creek (Milo - Ucon.) The canal should have a terminus or division about four miles from its head so as to serve land both north and south below it and should carry 10,000 inches of water. A committee of three, Neil McMillan, Wm. Howe, and J. H. Gardner, was appointed to draw up government rules and regulations for the new canal and to present them in the next meeting which was held in Willow Creek that same month, June 1890.

Here the by-laws were accepted and the name, Harrison Canal and Irrigation Company was adopted and five directors appointed with wages at \$2.00 a day. These directors were Samuel Barrett, Neil McMillan, William Daniels, James Beddo who acted as President for the following year, and J. H. Gardner as secretary.

The next meeting July 8, 1890 the amount paid for the grading work was decided and varied from nine cents per yard in surface soil to eighteen cents for cobble. Two days later July 10th the directors met at the head of the canal, work was divided and let out to the stockholders to be done as far as the terminus and was completed by July 10, 1891. Mr. McMillan was appointed to go to Eagle Rock to have the canal recorded.

In succeeding meetings the place of terminus was changed to farther west and time, until October, allowed for the work to be completed. The shareholders were held responsible for the work and if any failed to do their share the directors or water masters were authorized to hire others, the expense being charged to the delinquent shareholder. In due cases the penalty for continued delinquency would be the loss of his water.

The Harrison Canal did not head directly out of the Snake River but headed from the Dry Bed or a natural swale which also served as a head from which the Burgess drew and others. High water filled the head to the Dry Bed with gravel and building a new head to open to the River was discussed and the canals were asked to consolidate in a company for this purpose.

The following are excerpts from the Minutes of the Harrison Canal and Irrigation Company concerning the FEEDER (Consolidated) Canal Company:

- Sept. 4, 1894.—Meeting called to order by Pres. P. J. Davis who stated the object of the meeting was to see about calling a special stockholders' meeting to state a time when work on Consolidated Canal will be commenced again.
- Sept. 22, 1894.—After a great deal of discussing whether or not we take any stock in the new canal at the head of Dry Bed a vote was taken and resulted as follows In favor of taking stock 1,111 shares. Not in favor 185 shares.
- Sept. 24, 1894.—Moved, seconded and carried that we take 10,000 in of water in new canal at head of Dry Bed.
- Oct. 6, 1894.—After some discussing as regards to taking stock in the Consolidated Canal at head of Dry Bed a vote by ballot was taken as to whether we purchase stock in said canal or not and the vote yes or no. After the ballots were counted it was found that 7,165 inches were in favor of taking stock and one blank ballot.
- Nov. 11, 1894.—Moved, seconded and carried that we allow James Beddo the same for over-seeing work on the Consolidated as he receives on Harrison Canal.
- Nov. 17, 1894.—Moved, seconded and carried that we appoint P. J. Davis as representative of the Harrison Canal to meet the other directors of Consolidated Canal at head of Dry Bed and transact such business as directors may see fit.
- Nov. 21, 1894.—Moved, seconded and carried that we have a stockholders' meeting at Leorin Schoolhouse Dec. 1, 1894 at 1 o'clock p.m. for the purpose of appointing a representative to represent the Harrison Canal in the Consolidated Canal.
- Dec. 1, 1894.—The meeting was left open for nominations for representatives for new canal the following were nominated, etc., etc. (P. J. Davis was elected.) (He was elected almost continually as this representative until his death in 1932.)
- March 9, 1895.—Moved, seconded and carried that we take one thousand inches more water in the Great Feeder Canal for seepage and waste before it gets to Harrison head gate making a total of eleven thousand (11,000) inches in all.

According to the records the directors most active until 1900 are as follows:

James Beddo	William Daniels
J. H. Gardner	Albert White
Neal McMillan	W. T. Howe
Samuel F. Berrett	Parley J. Davis

Hansen Wade
W. D. Huffaker
George Godfrey

J. Nowlin
Nathan Groom

—Walter Chapple

The Groom Story—The seeming conflict about the time the Harrison Canal was incorporated and the decree of water allotted to the system is cleared up when it is understood that the main part of the canal was commenced in 1887 and was in process of building up to and including 1890.



Nathan Groom

In the year 1886, Harry W. Groom came to Idaho from Utah and in the spring of 1888, Nathan Groom, Jr., also arrived in that locality. The two men filed on homesteads, in what is now known as Garfield, and both men worked on the Burgess Canal thinking they were going to get water for their land. Soon they found they were working somebody else's water right. After some difficulties were straightened out several men met and organized a water company. Among them were Monte and Webb Huffaker, John and Parley Cutler, Nathan and H. W. Groom, Tom Adolph, two of the Jordan men, and several others.

In June 1890 Nathan Groom and his wife, Mary, went up to the head of the canal and started digging with a team of horses and a slip scraper. They took out the first scraper of dirt from the Harrison Canal. They stayed at the canal a week sleeping on the ground. The food supply consisted mostly of jack rabbits.

According to Percy Groom, brother of Nathan and Harry, the main part of the Canal headed in what was commonly called the Dry Bed, although at that time it carried quite a stream and would swim a horse. However, it seemed to get farther and farther removed from the main channel and while trees were cut down and anchored across the main stream to turn the water into the receding Dry Bed, it was more or less a failure.

The two branches of the main Harrison Canal were known in early days as the South Branch and the West Branch. The West

Branch covered that portion of land alongside the present county line between Jefferson and Bonneville counties. The South Branch pulled off from the main Canal in a southwesterly direction and passed through the present towns of Milo and Ucon on its way toward the river. The canals were all handmade and the men generally worked the length of time sufficient to pay for the amount of irrigation water calculated would be enough for their farms.

According to Harry W. Groom the Harrison Canal had 10,000 inches of water when consolidated. He said, "I worked right from the beginning. Sam Marler was supervisor. I worked between nine and ten months for a team of poor horses, and found when I was through I could have bought horses just as good as mine for \$20 each. No one in those days had money. There was very little money exchanged hands in the building of all those pioneer canals. The canal companies assessed their stockholders so many days' work, according to the number of shares they held, and the work was done by the pioneers. Some few worked more than enough to pay their assessments. This was paid for by the canal company or other pioneers who were unable to do their share of the work."

S. Reed Andrus Tells the Story—The Harrison Canal as at present operated is an organization incorporated under the laws of the state of Idaho; which organization is composed of stockholders, each stockholder owning so many shares of water. One share representing five miners inches. This water is individually owned but cannot be used in any other canal system.

The Harrison Canal Company was organized in the year 1890, the year in which Idaho gained statehood and was named for the incumbent president of the United States, Benjamin Harrison. The Canal Company is administered by a board of five directors whose tenure in office is alternated so that one or two directors are elected each year by the stockholders. The number of votes permitted a stockholder depends on the number of shares of water stock owned.

This large canal system as it is now constituted was, prior to Feb. 10, 1938, three separate systems with three different boards of directors, etc., and had little chance of successful financial recognition; but under the present consolidation is a large and stable recognized organization. The board of directors as now constituted direct the operation of the canal and to assist them, they employ a manager or watermaster. The present board of directors are: Walter Chapple—Milo (chairman), Lloyd Jordon, Milo, Vern Olson of Garfield, Ambrose Rounds of Garfield, R. Howard Andrus of Ucon and S. Reed Andrus of Ucon is watermaster.

For a convenient understanding of the canal we can describe it in three divisions, namely, the main canal extending from the great feeder South and West along the Jefferson and Bonneville County

line for seven miles. The main Harrison Canal is the first canal to head or draw water of Ririe. At a point seven miles South and West of where the main Harrison Canal heads along the two county lines, the canal divides into two different branches; one branch being called the West branch, as it continues to run directly West along the Jefferson and Bonneville county line, emptying into the Burgess Canal at a point West of the Lewisville highway about one mile. The other or South branch as it is known, continues from the point of diversion South and West through central Milo, just North of the village of Ucon and then on South and West into Sage Creek and emptying into Snake River at the Upper Idaho Falls power plant.

The main canal has (19) nineteen head gates, the West branch has (26) twenty-six head gates and the South branch has (37) thirty-seven head gates, making a total of (82) eighty-two head gates on the entire system. The amount of water through each gate varies from 50 to 2,800 inches; there being from one to a dozen stockholders to each gate. The total number of stockholders is approximately 168.

The Harrison Canal is approximately twenty-six miles long. According to a survey in 1948 was irrigating 13,000 acres of land. It has an accumulated total of 566.90 second feet of decreed water dating from 1880 to 1916.

It has storage rights in Jackson Lake of 5,000 acre feet. In American Falls Lake it has a permanent right of 11,994 acre feet and 6,084 acre feet of additional lease. The Canal Company has made arrangements for rights of storage in the Palisade Lake, now under construction.

The Harrison Canal is a man-made canal. It was constructed under slow, tiring and hazardous circumstances, measured against present day facilities. It was dug into a channel of the river called the Dry Bed, because the channel usually dried up during the low water or summer months. Later this channel, the Dry Bed, was dug out, improved and large feeder headgates were installed at the river proper and the stream has since been known as the Great Feeder. This was a great asset to the Harrison and other canals along the channel of the dry bed or great feeder.

The old horse and tongue scraper with tired walking workmen was the force behind or responsible for the never ending stream of increasing income annually produced by the water flowing through our canal. Although we with our modern machinery have enlarged on their efforts, it is they to whom the credit is largely due. It is purported that the Harrison Canal was routed by the natural eye without instrumental survey. It was not completed in one operation, but was lengthened as time permitted and land required water.—*S. Reed Andrus*

THE HARRISON CANAL AND IRRIGATION COMPANY

June 11, 1880 Decree

In July, 1890, settlers east and south of Rigby, in both the Jefferson and Bonneville counties, appropriated 11,000 inches of water from the Dry Bed and began construction of canals and laterals. The company was incorporated August 8, 1892, with all members of the company becoming stockholders. All the rights, titles, and privileges held by the company were thus transferred to the new organization. At the time of the construction of The Great Feeder Canal in 1895, the Harrison was enlarged to carry an additional 5,500 inches made necessary due to the number of new farms under irrigation. Today this system carries water to 13,000 acres.

The Harrison is the second canal in order to head in Jefferson County from The Great Feeder. Percy Groom, Jefferson County's veteran attorney who celebrated his 80th anniversary the spring of 1954, related his experiences while working on the Harrison: "Sitting around the campfire during the evening was some joy. Tales and stories were passed to and fro, and at times medleys of song would commence, maybe with 'Two Little Girls in Blue' and if a mouth organ was available we would have 'Turkey in the Straw' to billow out across the expanse of sagebrush.

"Should you wonder how we got along for water while working on the canal; if too far to drive the horses to water, we hauled it in forty gallon barrels, and the horses and men drank from the same fountain of life. At night we made an improvised tent by propping the neck-yoke up, and then spread a wagon cover over to bed down along with the prickly pears and the mosquitoes. Sometimes we found our bedding quite wet when too much rain came in upon us.

Our sagebrush fires gave warmth and cooked our bacon and eggs, fried potatoes and our pot of coffee. Our bread was made in a round heavy iron pot called by numerous names; the batter was placed in the pot, the lid placed thereon, and then buried in the sagebrush fire. When baked it was palatable but terribly hard."

Another living Rigby pioneer is H. Mark Bramwell, who, when just a boy, worked with his father Alfred A. Bramwell on the Harrison. He said that so many hundred feet were measured off and each man assigned to do his measured bit.—*Norma Morris*