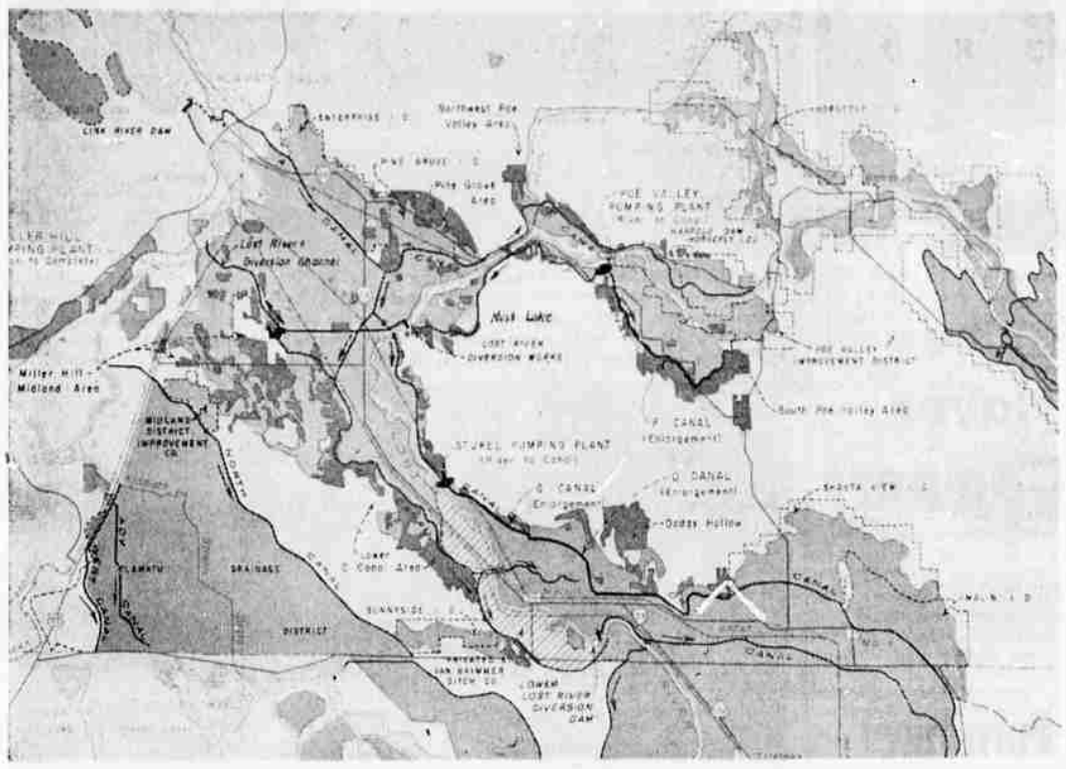
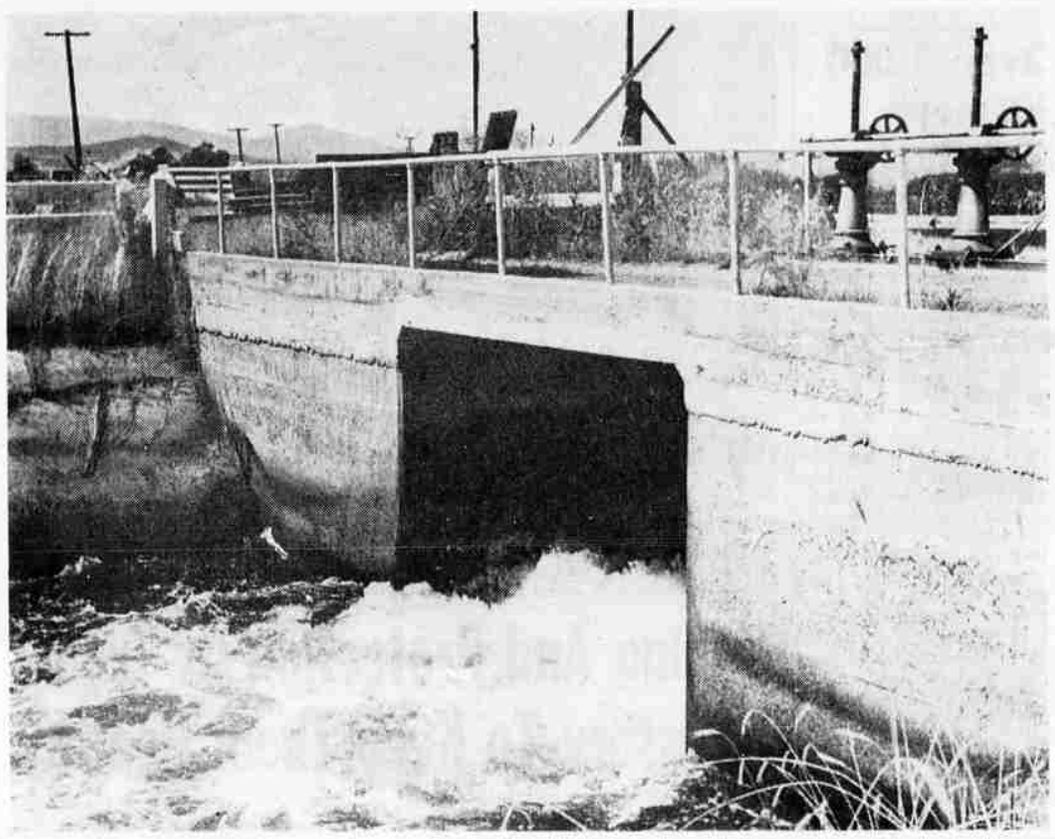
Features **Herald and News** Features

KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON, SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 1963

Water Is Life Blood Of Klamath Basin



ON THE MAP — Virtually all of the arable area in the Klamath Basin is irrigated by water from the Klamath Irrigation District or the smaller, subsidiary districts. All of the dark areas on this map are served by irrigation, leaving only mountainous terrain unwatered. KID officials say that there probably will be little or no expansion of the present irrigation system.



WATER FOR CROPS — Water tumbles out of the spillway at the head of the Klamath Irrigation Distict's "C" canal. Above the spillway is shown some of the control equipment which diverts water into this canal from the "A" canal. The spillway once housed hydroelectric generators, which have since been removed. Water from this canal serves the farmlands directly south of Klamath Falls.

New Extension District Fulfills Long Desire

By DAN WALTERS

Throughout the span of history, water has been the primary problem of the farmer.

So it was in the Biblical era when periodic droughts swept over the land, turning the toil of the farmer into dust.

When the rains came, they rushed through the fields in torrents, not satisfying the crops, but rather washing away the topsoil and leaving ugly, worthless gullies.

And so it was nearly 1,900 years later when the first farmers began breaking the soil in the Klamath Basin.

The problem was still water.

These early settlers found the Basin fertile enough, but the annual rainfall was only 12 or 13 inches and just 25 per cent of this fell during the summer growing season.

But the farmer of the late 19th century was not the tiller his ancestors were. He was learning to conquer his environment with machines and science.

And he was ready to conquer the water problem with the same tools.

His answer to the problem was irrigation. There was plenty of water available in the Klamath Basin in streams and lakes. It remained for the farmer to utilize this water in the best fashion.

The first irrigation project in the Klamath Basin probably was an individual farmer diverting a local stream into his fields.

Court records indicate water rights were obtained for irrigation as far back as 1870.

These first few efforts were soon followed by the organization of several water companies, the first of which was the Linkville Ditch Company in 1878.

This rather small firm was followed by Van Brimmer brothers' ditch in the early 1880s. Soon, the Van Brimmers were irrigating 4,000 acres of farm land.

More and larger enterprises followed as interest in irrigation during the 1890s soared. As more water became available, crops were diversified from the basic rye.

But a movement grew within the farmers themselves for a project that would serve all of the Klamath Basin with adequate water.

Water for such a project, it was realized, would have to come from Upper Klamath Lake.

The Reclamation Act of 1902 provided federal funds from the sale of public lands for reclamation projects in Western states.

The U.S. Reclamation Service made several surveys of the Klamath Basin and in 1903, the Klamath Project was recommended.

At the same time, however, private companies were expanding their services.

The situation came to a head with the organization of the Klamath Water Users Association in March, 1905, and the approval of the Klamath Project two months later by the federal government.

The plans called for water to be drawn into the main "A" canal from Upper Klamath Lake. From there, the canal passes through the city of Klamath Falls and to the southeast.

At a point adjacent to the present headquarters of the Klamath Irrigation District, the canal splits into the "B" and "C" canals, the former running to the southeast and the latter to the east.

Smaller canals bring the water to the farmers themselves.

The first water from the project was delivered on May 16, 1907.

The Klamath Irrigation District was organized in 1917 to begin eventual takeover of the system in Klamath County from the federal government.

Formed by local farmers, the district took over the responsibility of paying back the government for the canal system within the main part of the county, along with several other small districts.

In 1928, the system was brought up to date with the construction of drainage canals and in 1950 the Miller Hill and Adams pumping stations were built.

These stations are used for moving water uphill.

By 1955, the Klamath Irrigation District had paid back enough of its debt to the government to take over actual operation of the system.

The last major expansion of the system began with the organization of the Klamath Basin Improvement District on July 18, 1961.

This was the result of a condiesult of a condition that had been in existence for a number of years. Certain farmers had not had a guaranteed water supply and had been able to buy water from the KID only when it was available.

The KBID entered into a contract with the federal government in April, 1962, for a loan of $934,000 under the Small Reclamation Projects Act. It was the first such loan under the act in Oregon and the money was used for the expansion of existing canals and pumping stations and the building of three new pumping plants.

This project was completed this year and was dedicated only a few weeks ago. Actual operation of Klamath Extension Proj-

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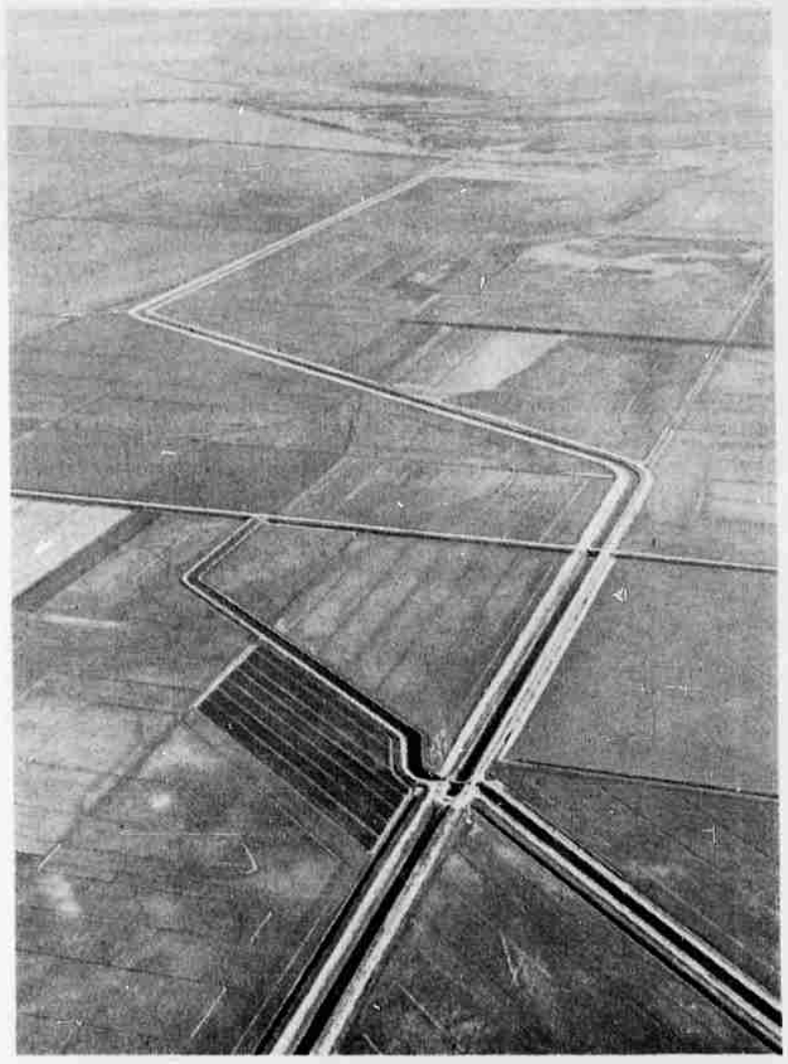
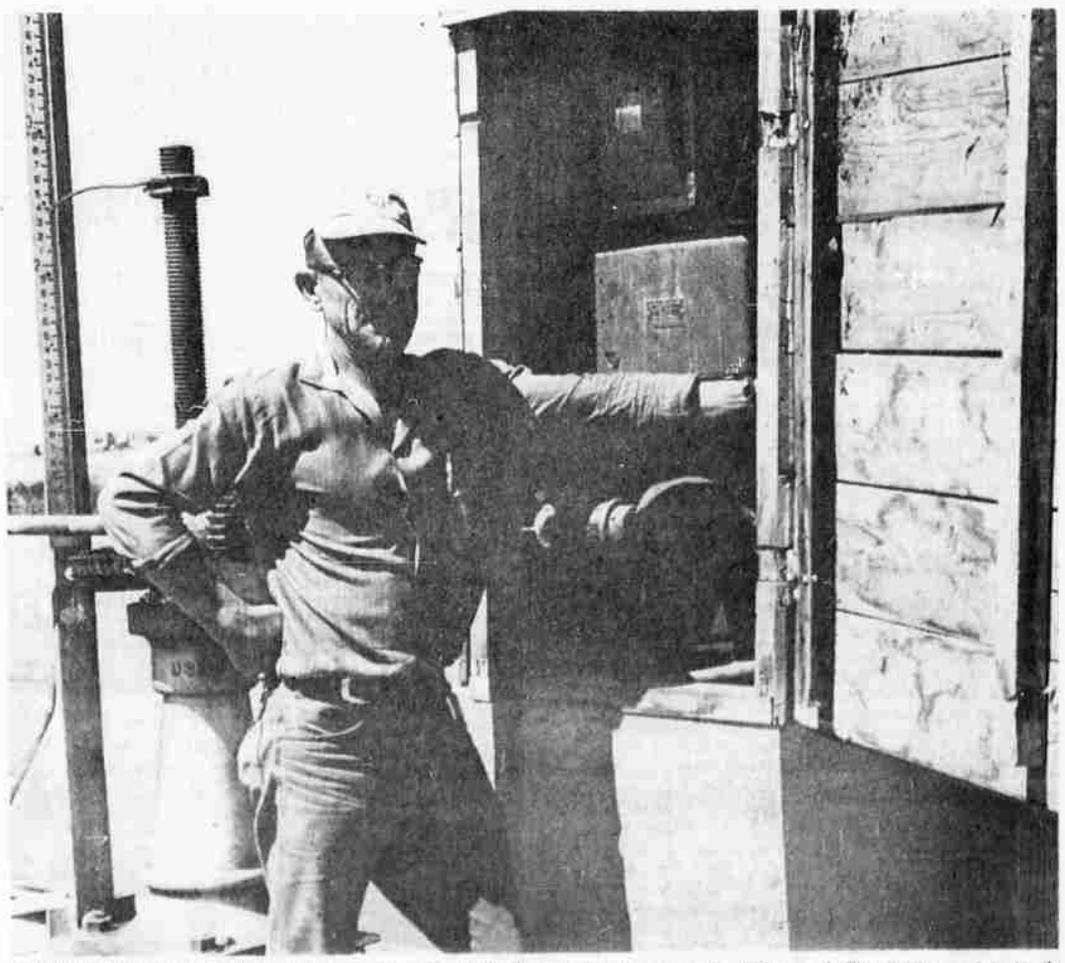


MAN-MADE RIVER — A canal zig-zags through geometric patterns of fields, bringing water to farmers in the Klamath Basin. Smaller canals cut into the main artery at intervals. Water for all of the canals in the Klamath Irrigation System comes from the Upper Klamath Lake.

MEN WHO RUN KID — Secretary John L. Stewart, left, and manager Ray L. Roberts are the two men who keep the Klamath Irrigation District operating. Stewart has been with the KID since 1945 and Roberts has been with the district since 1936. The secretary takes care of the business and personnel matters, while Roberts is concerned with the actual operation of the canals and pumps which make up the KID.



MAN AT THE CONTROLS — Watermaster John E. Wallin is one of the two men who control the flow of water through the complex system of canals and pumps that comprises the Klamath Irrigation District. Here, he is shown at the controls of the gates which regulate water at the head of the "B" canal. The "A" canal is in the background. Wallin moves the water around each day in accordance with the water orders from the nearly 1,000 farmers who are served by the district.

WHERE IT ALL COMES FROM — Arrow points to the intake where water is drawn from the southern end of Upper Klamath Lake into "A" canal and thence into the whole system of canals that distributes water throughout the Klamath Basin. Currently, about 300,000-acre feet of water is drawn out of the lake annually for the Klamath Irrigation District.