

# **Dam's Height Increased Because of Power Needs; Plans for Town Outlined**

**"Mom" Squires continues her narrative of incidents leading to construction of Boulder Dam.**

**BY DELPHINE SQUIRES**

When the Boulder Canyon Project Act was finally passed by the U. S. Senate on December 14, 1928, our people just naturally thought that work on the dam would actually be started early in 1929. However, we soon learned that an enterprise of such great magnitude as this, the greatest engineering structure ever conceived by the mind of man, required many months of preliminary work before the work of construction could begin.

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Also, we knew that there was no need to worry about its ultimate construction when all the various branches of the U.S. government from President Hoover on down were committed to the project and furthermore as yet no appropriation had yet been asked for its building.

In June, 1929, word came from Washington that the Department of the Interior had increased the engineering staff at the Denver office by 100 men in order to expedite the preliminary work. Again in July, 1929, Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior, issued a statement to the effect that the bids for water and power had been turned over to the Denver office of the Bureau of Reclamation where the distribution of power and water rights among the seven states of the Colorado River basin would be cared for. It was expected that the evident desire for power would result in the contracts being immediately signed. All did sign with the exception of Arizona. However, it was made plain that the dam would be built with or without Arizona's approval.

The plans for the dam had been approved and accepted by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1922, but when these applications came pouring into the Denver office it was found that the amount of power to be allocated exceeded estimates and were in excess of the amount of power to be generated. After consideration it was decided to raise the height of the proposed dam which would also increase the amount of water to be impounded. (The Dam when finally built was 764.4 feet above bed rock and impounded 26 million acre feet of water.)

The site of the dam was also changed from Boulder Canyon to Black Canyon, about twenty miles further down the river. This was done because the soundings or borings which had been made up and down the river showed that bed rock in Black Canyon was much nearer the surface than at Boulder Canyon. Despite this the name of Boulder Canyon Project remained and was never changed to Black Canyon Project. The government feared that a change of name might be confusing.

Then, there were the plans in the making for the model town where some of the 4000 men, who would be employed during the length of time the dam was under construction, could live, and, then later when the dam was completed as permanent homes for the 1000 men who would be required to carry on the work of operating the project.

These plans were not for a western frontier town but for one of simple homes with lawns and flower gardens; of schools and playgrounds; of streets lined with shade trees; with a fine administration building in a park setting; in fact everything had been thought of that were requisites for comfortable and gracious living.

At first this town was to have been built on the flat about a mile up the river from the damsite not far from the spot where Mr. Cashman had built his ferry landing on the river, but it was changed to the mesa above the damsite where it was found that the latter place was cooler and

less sultry than the site in the lower terrain.

The town was to be built on government ground and the homes and business houses were to be leased to all who desired to live there, but there were strings attached to the leases. The leases could be cancelled for misbehavior on the part of the lessee. This was intended to exile bootlegging and other violations that might interfere with the well being of the dam workers. This model town is now beautiful Boulder City.

There was also great need of a testing plant in order to see if any of the nearby materials might be used in the construction of the dam.

The old fort at the "Old Ranch" was chosen as the site for this plant. Additions were made and a carload of machinery was installed. This fort was built in 1855 by the Mormons when the mission was founded and has the honor of being the oldest building in the state of Nevada.

There was another built in 1851 and called "Mormon Station." It stood near the entrance of the Pass through the High Sierras where the wagon trains were aided in their last long effort to reach their goal—California.

This name was later changed to Genoa, but the old building was burned a few years ago and the name "oldest Building" descended to our own Las Vegas "Old Fort."

When all the testing came to an end, the old building was restored to its former state and, after a period of years, passed into the care of the "Daughters of the Utah Pioneers" and that organization keeps it in repair. It has established quite a museum of interesting historical mementoes in it.

The Union Pacific Railroad, having full confidence in the ability of the government to push the dam to completion had given the project wholehearted support from the first conception of the idea and during this time of preparation had been assembling large quantities of rails and ties to be used in the construction of the more than forty miles of trackage that would be needed to connect the dam with the mainline at Las Vegas, and have it ready when the word to begin was given.

This interest by the Union Pacific was in no measure new, inasmuch as during all the years of the Boulder Dam project controversy, that great railroad organization had always given helpful cooperation — much greater than most people were aware of.

(To be continued in succeeding installments.)