

# Boulder Dam History

## Year—1932

By FLORENCE LEE JONES

Work at Boulder Dam was progressing rapidly in many directions as the year 1932 began. There was competition between crews for the greatest output of work, and it was reported that "Driving a total of 256 feet of tunnel and excavating over 16,000 cubic yards of rock during the 24-hour period ending midnight, January 20, Six Companies Inc., tunnel crews beat their best previous record by nine feet."

The crew in charge of T. C. Hargroves was credited with the greatest amount of progress, having completed 612 feet in 20 days.

"Superintendents and foremen who are breaking records daily in drilling and muck-moving are: Woody Williams, Floyd Huntington, Leigh Cairns, T. C. Hargroves, Paul Guinn, Tom Regan, and Jack Lamey."

Tunnel number three on the Arizona side of the river was the first one to be completed to the scheduled 56 feet of maximum width. Crews completed the bore by January 31, 1932, and the pouring of concrete was to be started immediately, as the great concrete mixing plant was almost ready for operation.

On February 5, 1932, the Review - Journal printed this statement by Walker R. Young, construction engineer for the bureau of reclamation: "The government wants all the people connected with the construction of Hoover (Boulder) Dam to live in comfortable, sanitary fashion commensurate with a federal project of the nature of this one," adding that it would be necessary for those living in temporary quarters outside

Boulder City to move.

A flood on the Virgin river and the upper Colorado forced closing of tunnel work at the project for a few days in mid-February, 1932.

Employment by Six Companies Inc., had reached a total of 3,006 with 647 hired during the month of January, officials reported.

Six Companies had sought the return of \$10,663 as a gas tax refund from the state, claiming that the gasoline had not been used on the state highways. The refund was denied, pending a decision from the courts.

"The driving of huge tunnels 56 feet in diameter without the placing of a single stick of timber for support of the ceiling is one of the most striking features of this dam construction work." That was the comment of Arthur P. Davis, former director of the reclamation service for the government, then with the Metropolitan Water District, on his first visit to the project on February 25, 1932, after construction had started.

On March 7, 1932, in Washington, United States Senator Tasker L. Oddie of Nevada took issue with Dr. Elwood Mead, commissioner of reclamation, when the latter described Boulder City as merely a temporary construction camp. Sen. Oddie predicted that Boulder City would become the center of very intensive industrial activities.

The first birthday of Boulder City was observed on March 11, 1932, and the Review - Journal had a special section showing progress on the project to date. It was reported that the government had spent more than one million dollars on the city to date, in-

cluding water, sewer, streets, electric distribution system, landscaping, administration building, municipal building, government dormitory, residences, and government garage.

The Six Companies then had 2633 employes on the payroll, with 1300 employed on the tunnels. The intake tower work was just started, the gravel plant and lower mixing plant were in operation, and many phases of the project were making rapid progress. The government was getting ready to advertise for bids for the construction of a school building in Boulder City.

A research team had been assigned to come during the summer to make a study of heat prostration. Businesses had been established on land leased from the government, the Masons were seeking a charter, and the American Legion was the biggest organization in Boulder City.

The postoffice was termed "the fastest growing in the country." Three churches had been established, the Community, the Catholic and the Episcopal, and plans were being made by the LDS church to locate there. Tourist business to the area was booming.

A tradition was born in Boulder City on Easter Sunday, March 27, 1932, when sunrise services were held on a rugged hill outside of Boulder City under direction of Parson "Tom" Stevenson of the Community church. The name then was given to the place where the cross was erected as Sunrise Hill. Motion pictures of the project were taken from plane and from ground level on March 28, 1932, to be shown all over the world.

By April, 1932, the Six Companies were preparing to build the coffer dams so the Colorado river water could be diverted into the tunnels around the damsite.

On April 28, 1932, the Review-Journal reported that three federal judges had given a decision that "the danger from monoxide gas in the diversion tunnels on the Boulder dam project no longer exists," and upheld the injunction sought by Six Companies, Inc., to prevent the state of Nevada from enforcing mining laws on the project.

On May 10, 1932, mining operations on digging tunnels were complete and 700 miners had been laid off. Concrete workers were lining the four diversion tunnels. The payroll dropped to 1,919 as compared with the former peak of 2,306. Penstock tunneling still was to be done later. Work then was going forward on the spillways.

The Colorado river was at flood stage on May 17, 1932, with an estimated 90,000 second feet swirling in Black canyon. However, dam work was proceeding on schedule.

Murl Emery announced he was ready to place his new airplane-propellered boat on the Colorado river as soon as the flood subsided. He expected to carry parties up the river and later on the lake.

Plans were announced in June, 1932, for Six Companies to erect five cableways across the canyon, some to be 2500 feet in length, for use in moving men and materials to the project work.

Nearly half of the men employed on the dam at the time were war veterans, a survey showed.

There were then 44 business licenses in Boulder City.

The Babcock and Wilcox companies of Barbertown, Ohio, presented the low bid of \$9,270,000 for installation of steel pipe at the Boulder dam. It was planned that a plant would be built near Observation Point, where the flat steel would be rolled and process-

ed to be hauled to the damsite. A million dollar freight bill was included in the bid. Formal award of the contract was made July 9, 1932.

The matter of the right to vote of residents of Boulder City,

within the government reservation, had been resolved by July, 1932, when District Attorney Harley A. Harmon and County Clerk William L. Scott said voting pre-

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cincts would be established there at the next election.

It was claimed that Boulder City led the world in refrigeration provisions for living quarters, including all dormitories and 93 per cent of the homes having such facilities.

Construction of cofferdams was started at the damsite on August 24, 1932, and it was estimated that eight months would be required to complete this phase of diverting the Colorado river around the damsite.

On November 14, 1932, the Colorado river was diverted from its river bed into the tunnels around the damsite, marking a big step in the progress of the dam construction. It was predicted that by Christmas the coffer dams would be completed and excavations for the dam foundations would be under way.

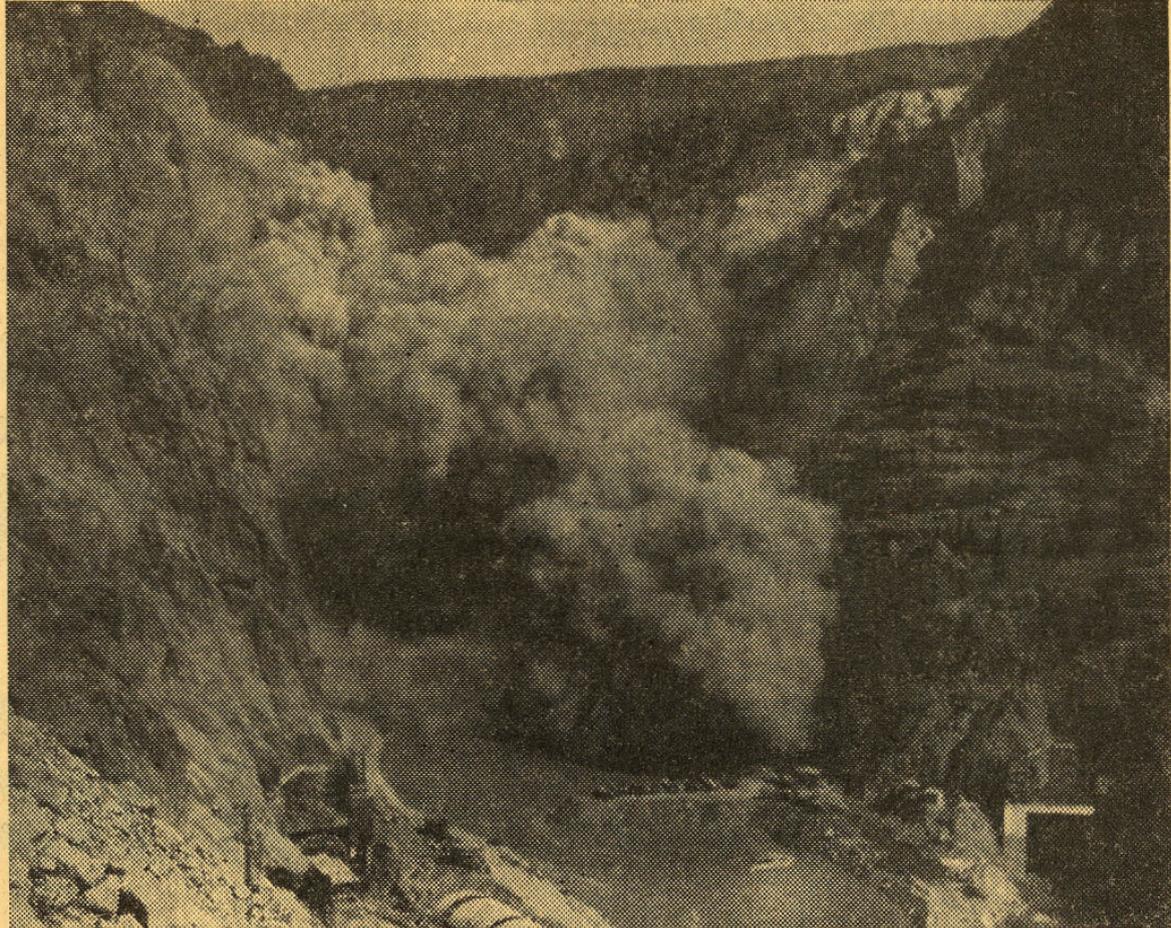
President Herbert Hoover and party, arrived to visit the project on that occasion. He had just been defeated for reelection by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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## WAR WARNING

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL. March 27, 1935 — From Washington, D. C., Senator Key Pittman of Nevada has warned that "The United States cannot presume that peaceful conditions always will exist in the world."

As chairman of the senate foreign relations committee, Senator Pittman said, "There are jingoists in every country, who actuated either by political ambition or expediency, longing for power, or by unjustifiable fear, are constantly crying 'war.' Those who have duties to perform cannot afford to be affected by such jingoism."



**COYOTE** — Work was well under way on Boulder Dam when this picture of a big blast, known to workmen as a coyote, was set off. Tunnels were being bored, and cofferdam work had been started for the diversion of the Colorado River.