

Boulder Dam History

Year—1933

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The first suit against the Six Companies, Inc., builders of Boulder Dam, and a construction foreman, E. J. Earls, was filed on January 6, 1933, in the Clark County District Court, alleging permanent disabilities as a result of exposure to carbon monoxide gas in the diversion tunnels, where large gasoline-powered trucks were operated.

The plaintiff in the case was M. Patrick Mahoney of Las Vegas, and his attorney was Harry Austin. Mahoney's complaint set forth that Earls "failed to warn him of the presence of poisonous gas in the tunnels," and that as a result he had suffered various ailments, including dizziness, headache, and pulmonary congestion, oedema of the brain, heart spells, degeneration of the nervous system in his arms and legs."

He sought damages totaling \$76,188 from the company. Later he lost the suit.

Two penstock tunnels leading from tunnel two out to the base of the cliff on the Nevada side of the canyon were completed at the damsite by January 17, 1933, and the pouring of concrete was to start immediately.

On January 19, 1933, it was announced that for the first time in history the Library of Congress was sending books to a community. Boulder City was to receive a library of 3,000 books, to be placed in a room in the municipal building in Boulder.

A nine-hole golf course was completed in Boulder City early in February, 1933, and provided recreation for a large group of dam workers.

Construction of 12 houses for Babcock and Wilcox officials was started in Boulder City at that time. A dormitory for company workers also was under construction.

The Review-Journal reported on February 15, 1933, that in Carson City the long fight to collect taxes in the Boulder canyon reservation by the state of Nevada was at a temporary standstill with a decision handed down by the federal court which denied the Six Companies' plea for a permanent injunction against the state from collecting levies and paved the way for an immediate collection of taxes from the citizens and corporations living and operating within the reservation.

In another action, Judge Frank Norcross granted an injunction against A. J. Stinson and other state officers from trying to enforce Nevada labor laws in the area.

Concrete work on the diversion tunnels at the dam was completed by March 8, 1933, and the lower coffer dam was nearing completion.

From Washington, D.C., came word early in March, 1933, that the 620,000 acres of land at and surrounding Boulder dam had been made into a refuge for wild life by an order signed by President

Herbert Hoover during the last hours of his administration. Beavers, muskrat and otters were the main animals to be protected along the Colorado river area.

By May, 1933, the Babcock and Wilcox company was turning out steel pipe for the dam project. The cooling system for the concrete in the dam had been completed, and estimates had been made on the grouting work required to close all cracks in the foundation and in the cement as the work progressed.

On May 13, 1933, by order of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, the name of the Colorado river project dam was changed from Hoover to Boulder.

Actual pouring of concrete on the bottom of the canyon of the Colorado river was begun on June 6, 1933.

At the same time construction camps were being established by Los Angeles Bureau of Power and Light in preparation of putting up the towers and cables to carry power from Boulder dam when it was complete.

A diamond drill worth \$2500, which had been lost in the waters of the Colorado river by a drilling crew under Walker R. Young eight years earlier, was dug up on July 3, 1933, in the silt of the damsite.

In the summer of 1933, additional suits were filed by workmen against the Six Companies, Inc., alleging disabilities because of exposure to carbon monoxide gas during the drilling of the diversion tunnels at the project.

After a long battle, an agreement had been reached on September 12, 1933, by state officials and the Six Companies, Inc., providing that the dam builders were to pay taxes to the state and Clark County for the years 1931 to 1933. The amount was set at \$180,913.77 on a basis of a valuation of \$2,556,482 to be added to the tax rolls in Clark County.

The school situation had been in doubt in Boulder City, but on September 13, 1933, the state superintendent of schools arrived to see that the schools opened, and a school board organized to carry out the operation of the educational institution there. Approval of the tax setup led to the school plans by the state.

The first Boulder City school board, named by W. W. Anderson, state superintendent of public instruction, was composed of J. R. Alexander, A. H. Ayers, and Earl Brothers.

Fabrication of 30-foot diameter steel pipe for the Boulder canyon project was started October 18, 1933, by the Babcock and Wilcox company. The pipe was to be hauled in eight-foot sections to the project for installation. The company already had fabricated a large amount of the smaller pipe for the dam, of 13-foot diameter and 8-foot diameter, and it was ready for installation.

The Boulder dam hotel was opened for business December 15, 1933.