



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Twin Falls Canal Company Building

other names/site number Paul T. Smith Law Office

### 2. Location

street & number 162 Second Street West

n/a not for publication

city or town Twin Falls

n/a vicinity

state Idaho

code ID

county Twin Falls

code 083

zip code 83303

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

16 JUL 96  
Date

John R. Hill State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National

Register.  See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the

National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

8.30.96

Entered in the  
National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Property Name Twin Falls Canal Company Building

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**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>    </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>    </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE: business Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE: professional Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial Style  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation concrete  
 walls brick  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 roof asphalt  
 other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Property Name Twin Falls Canal Company Building

County and State Twin Falls County, Idaho

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1909

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1909

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

unknown

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

1	<u>1/1</u>	<u>7/07/5/9/5</u>	<u>4/7/1/4/3/9/0</u>	3	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	4	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Elizabeth Egleston

organization consultant date January 10, 1996

street & number 157 First Avenue #16 telephone 801-359-6818

city or town Salt Lake City state Utah zip code 84103

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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County and State Twin Falls County, Idaho

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The Twin Falls Canal Company building is a one-story brick structure in Twin Falls, one block south of the Main Street downtown core. Other commercial structures, accommodating both retail and office uses, are located nearby. There are no outbuildings on the property. The Canal Company has undergone few exterior alterations and maintains a high degree of integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The interior has suffered the usual modifications, such as lowered ceilings and incompatible wall surface treatments; however, many of these alterations were reversed during an extensive renovation undertaken by the current owner in 1994.

The distinguishing features of this building are its small size, the entrance, and the treatment of the wall surface. It measures 25' by 125', taking up the entire lot. The entrance is located in the northwest corner and is diagonally placed. The single door is framed by sandstone elements that include columns, an arch above the transom, and a nameplate above that proclaims "Twin Falls Canal Co. 1909" in raised letters. The walls are distinctive because of the brick corbelling, the brick piers that extend above the cornice, and the deep reveal (approximately 4") of the windows.

The foundation is concrete with a slightly canted water table. The windows are fixed, single pane, with transoms. Some of the transoms are divided by a single vertical muntin; others have small panes (approximately 2" square). On the west facade a heavy concrete sill forms a continuous horizontal line. Windows extend to the sidewalk on the north.

No historic material exists on the interior. When the current owner purchased the structure the ceiling had been lowered and the main floor was an open space with a small office and bathrooms at the rear, as well as two 11' x 12' room vaults along the east wall. During recent renovations the main floor has been divided into four offices and a conference room. The vaults, with their Mosler Safe doors dating from 1908, remain.

Two room vaults are located in the basement, but these do not have the original doors. The basement has been divided into offices; prior to the renovation it was used for storage.

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County and State Twin Falls County, Idaho

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The Twin Falls Canal Company (TFCC) building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the reclamation project known as the Twin Falls Southside Irrigation Tract. This project, involving the construction of Milner Dam and its related canal system, has provided water to more than 200,000 acres on the south side of the Snake River in south-central Idaho since the opening of the tract in 1905. The TFCC is the successor firm to the Twin Falls Land and Water Company (TFLWC), the organization formed in 1900 that provided the financial backing and leadership in building the system and opening the tract. Their efforts represented the most successful example of reclamation under the Carey Act of 1894, which was intended to foster the partnership of private investment, state supervision and local management so that large areas of arid federal land might become agriculturally productive. Since its construction in 1909 until its reuse as a law office in 1994, this building housed the Canal Company, the entity responsible for maintaining and managing the entire irrigation system. It stands as a reminder in downtown Twin Falls that the development of this community and the region is a result of the success of this organization.

For almost forty years, government officials, financiers and countless settlers dreamed of distributing water to the vast, arid Snake River Plain -- an area that stretches across Idaho encompassing about a third of the state. Southern Idaho has never had the mineral and timber resources that assured development in other parts of the state; instead it was the economic potential of the Snake River and its tributaries that intrigued travelers and settlers as early as the 1860's. Settlers and officials tried various types of organizations to harness the river, including private canal companies that local farmers created and entrepreneurial efforts such as the New York Canal Company near Boise, but regardless of whether the attempt was on a private, cooperative, public or capitalistic basis, by 1900 reclamation on a large scale continued to elude southern Idahoans.<sup>1</sup>

The technology existed to create large irrigation systems, but it required a huge financial commitment, one that was available only through private sources outside of the state. At the same time, the management and ultimate control of the public land, once reclaimed, had to occur at the local level, so that an irrigation system operated smoothly every season. Finally, impartial review by either state or federal agents was necessary to protect farmers and investors from fraud. The Carey Act of 1894 was intended to provide the necessary

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Lovin, "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain," Idaho Yesterdays, Spring, 1991.

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framework to address the needs of these interests. This legislation provided federal land to settlers in arid areas after private investors supplied the capital to build the necessary dams and canals. The investors would recoup their money by selling water rights to the settlers, and once the farmers had successfully reclaimed their land, they could apply for a deed. Although initial efforts in Idaho to apply this legislation failed, the Twin Falls project was an outstanding success because it had the necessary financial backing and knowledgeable engineers.<sup>2</sup>

Ira B. Perrine, a pre-reclamation settler who lived at the bottom of the Snake River Canyon near present-day Twin Falls, is credited with devising a rough plan for the project and generating interest in it. John Rysholt writes

According to the only existing interview with Perrine regarding how he got the idea of reclaiming the land above the Snake River Canyon, he was asked in 1895 by the Oregon Short Line Railroad to find a bridge site over the river between Lincoln and Cassia counties because the Southern Pacific Railroad was drawing all the trade from Cassia County. He explored the river and located the present site of Milner Dam as a railroad bridge. The Carey Act of 1894 having made area reclamation feasible, Perrine's plans took shape.<sup>3</sup>

Perrine filed on the Snake River, and formed the Twin Falls Land and Water Company with Stanley B. Milner, James Lowell, Albert Steunenberg, and Frank Knox as partners. Milner was a Salt Lake City resident and director of the National Bank of the Republic in Salt Lake; he had extensive mining interests in Utah and Nevada and apparently had more resources than Lowell and Steunenberg. However, his health was not good, hindering his involvement. He died in 1906, shortly after assisting with the opening of the Buhl townsite. Lowell had extensive engineering experience in irrigation, and is considered to be the "father of Idaho irrigation." Steunenberg, a prominent businessman in the Caldwell, Idaho, area, provided some of the initial financial backing to the TFLWC. Knox was a mining and banking

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lovin, writes, "...the results at Idaho's first Carey Act projects (near Marysville and American Falls) reflected adversely on the economic and technological judgment of entrepreneurs; they were no prototypes for large-scale reclamation." p.6.

<sup>3</sup> John Rosholt, "Milner Dam and Main Canal of the Twin Falls Company," *Historic American Engineering Record*, 1989, p.20.

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associate of Milner's.<sup>4</sup>

The TFLWC requested segregation of 244,025 acres on August 15, 1900, in order to make an initial survey. The company was officially incorporated on September 3, 1900, and water rights were granted by the engineer two days later. Some lots were left out of the segregation in order to allow for the establishment of townsites; these lots later became the communities of Twin Falls, Kimberly, Buhl, Filer, Hansen, and Murtaugh.<sup>5</sup>

As the legal questions were sorted out and construction plans progressed, Steunenberg and Lowell lost faith in the project and urged that the TFLWC be dissolved and the project turned over to either state or federal management. Milner and Perrine were opposed to this, but their shares in the company equaled those of Steunenberg and Lowell. When the question was put to a vote in 1902 Knox, who hold only ten shares, voted against dissolution, thereby playing a crucial part in the continuation of the company. Lowell and Steunenberg, believing that they did not have the resources to continue backing the project, withdrew from the corporation and Milner bought their shares. The withdrawal of two partners, however, meant that the TFLWC desperately needed to raise money.<sup>6</sup>

After unsuccessful attempts to interest other financiers, Perrine learned of Frank Buhl through Walter Filer, a mining associate of Milner's who was involved in the survey of the town of Milner (which no longer exists) and planning the construction camp. Buhl was a wealthy Pennsylvania businessman with substantial mining interests whose assets were estimated at \$25,000,000 in 1902. Filer managed to interest Buhl in the project while Buhl was visiting the west. Buhl's participation resulted in the company's reorganization in Salt Lake City on January 14, 1903. Once all the transactions occurred the company had four partners: Buhl, with 52.5 percent of the stock; Milner, with 37.49 percent; Filer, with 10 percent; and Knox, who continued to own only 10 shares, a total of .01 percent of the shares.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.20-23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp.24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.26.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp.28-31.

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Work on the Milner Dam and the canal system began in March, 1903; the contractor was Faris and Kesl, of Boise. Simply outlined, the construction of the entire system consists of Milner Dam; Murtaugh Lake, also known as Dry Creek Reservoir, a smaller earth fill dam used for flood control and regulation of the canals located nine miles downstream from the dam; the Main Line Canal that begins at Murtaugh Lake and flows approximately six miles northwest almost to the canyon and six miles southwest; and the Highline and Lowline canals that branch off from the Main Line Canal approximately eighteen miles west of the dam.<sup>8</sup> The town of Milner, near the dam site, was created to serve as a staging area for the dam construction and as a service center for the workmen and families of some of the company's foremen and partners. Milner became a thriving little community, accommodating not only those associated with the project but also the many tourists attracted to the site. Once construction of the entire project was underway the Canal Company employed over 500 men.<sup>9</sup>

Interest grew in the project as the work progressed, although the response to the first land drawing, held on July 1, 1903, was disappointing. The second opening, held on October 20, 1904, was encouraging and the response indicated that the project would be a success. The dam opened on March 1, 1905; the ceremony was held in front of the headgates of the Main Line Canal, with Murtaugh Lake in the background, when the canals were opened the following day.<sup>10</sup>

The next step involved turning over the company to the settlers. Before this occurred, the State Land Board required assurance that the entire system was in good working order. The first assessment of the condition of the dam and canals was made in 1907. Buhl was anxious to remand the corporation to the settlers but the State Land Board held firm, requiring the TFLWC to repair the dam's tunnels, replace some of the concrete of the canal piers and make any other necessary repairs before this occurred. Once this was completed, the settlers formally accepted the tract on September 15, 1909, in Boise. The actual incorporation of the Twin Falls Canal Company occurred ten days later.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.33.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp.36-41.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp.51-52.

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The Canal Company lost no time in establishing a permanent home. The front page of the Twin Falls News announced the erection of its building on October 15, 1909. The company purchased land from John M. Claar on the south corner of Second Avenue West and Second Street West, opposite a lot expected to be built for the Oddfellows Building. The newspaper, using the typical boosterish tone of this period, stated

This part of the business section is therefore apparently in line for considerable immediate improvements, and the trend in this direction suggests that the more southern and western streets will presently be carrying their share of the store and other buildings, following, as it were, the drift of residence construction and population that way.<sup>12</sup>

Actually, commercial and residential business did not move in this direction, and instead, the Canal Company remains one block removed from the Main Street commercial core. Residential development moved in the opposite direction, north and east, and the Canal Company and the few nearby buildings have always formed a buffer between Main Street and the railroad area to the west. The Canal Company building did not fulfill another prophecy stated by the paper: it remained a narrow, small building, not "a substantial affair, susceptible of enlargement." Its modest scale and dimensions have not changed, and in fact its small size gives the building its physical distinction. It served as the company's offices until it was traded for property owned by the J. J. Winterholer Company in 1993.<sup>13</sup> The owner at this writing, Paul Smith, purchased the structure early in 1994 and adapted the building for use as his law office and arbitration center. The Canal Company built new offices in 1993, and continues to manage the Twin Falls Southside Irrigation Tract. With the exception of land segregated from the tract for annexation into a municipality, the area is the same as that segregated by Ira Perrine and his partners in 1900, and the number of shares outstanding, 202,690, a share per acre, is the same number as originally issued.

The building has undergone few exterior physical changes, and with the words "Twin Falls Canal Company" spelled out above the front entrance, continues to convey its association with an organization formed to execute the first successful effort to irrigate arid lands in the west on a large scale. Although future efforts to reclaim land under the provisions of the

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<sup>12</sup> "Canal Company to Erect Home: Twin Falls News, October 15, 1909, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> "Canal Company Plans to vacate 84-year-old headquarters," Twin Falls Times News.

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Carey and Reclamation acts did not proceed as smoothly or profitably as the Southside Tract, its accomplishment drew others to engage in similar ventures that transformed the Snake River Plain into productive farmland. The Twin Falls Land and Water Company, parent of the TFCC, fulfilled the intention of the Carey Act: to employ a combination of capitalist, bureaucratic, and cooperative measures in order to foster regional economic development and create small-scale agricultural communities.

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"Canal Company to Erect Home." Twin Falls News, October 15, 1909.

"Canal Co. Plans to vacate 84-year-old headquarters." Twin Falls Times News.

Egleston, Elizabeth. Twin Falls County Reconnaissance Survey, 1989. On file at the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise, Idaho.

Fiege, Mark. A World in the Making: the History of Irrigation and the Snake River Plain. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1994.

Lovin, Hugh. "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain." Idaho Yesterdays, Spring, 1991.

Rosholt, John A. "Milner Dam and Main Canal of the Twin Falls Company." Historic American Engineering Record. National Park Service, Western Region, San Francisco, CA., 1989.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1911, 1922.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Verbal Boundary Description

Twin Falls Townsite, Lot 1, Block 117, 16-10-17

### Boundary Justification

The boundary consists of the lot on which the building stands. The building occupies the entire 25' x 125' lot.