NPS Form 10-900
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**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JUN 11 1986
date entered 7-10-86

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Milner Dam and the Twin Falls Main Canal

and/or common N/A

## 2. Location

street & number N/A N/A not for publication

city, town Murtaugh X vicinity of (see Verbal Boundary Description)

state Idaho code 016 county see item 10 code see item 10

## 3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ district | ___ public | ___ occupied | X agriculture | ___ museum |
| ___ building(s) | X private | X unoccupied | ___ commercial | ___ park |
| X structure (s) | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational | ___ private residence |
| ___ site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ___ entertainment | ___ religious |
| ___ object | N/A in process | ___ yes: restricted | ___ government | ___ scientific |
| | N/A being considered | X yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial | ___ transportation |
| | | ___ no | ___ military | ___ other: |

## 4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state Idaho

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. See continuation sheet

street & number N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1982 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Idaho State Historical Society

city, town Boise state Idaho

# 7. Description

| Condition | | Check one | Check one | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ excellent | ___ deteriorated | ___ unaltered | X original site | |
| X good | ___ ruins | X altered | N/A moved | date N/A |
| ___ fair | ___ unexposed | | | |

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Each dam and intervening island spillway segment was constructed separately. A south channel trench was excavated 29 feet below bedrock and sealed with concrete. Above this trench, a 35-foot horizontal plank core of overlapping two-inch boards with vertical boards spaced every two feet separated downstream rock and upstream dirtfill segments. Then a south island spillway had a steel and concrete foundation supporting 99 wooden gates, each 5" x 5" x 10' with threaded stem gears bolted into each gate casing to raise and lower them. (These gates subsequently had to be replaced.)

A second, mid-channel dam was constructed between Milner's two rock islands with another concrete trench for a base and a plank core rising above bedrock to seal a rock- and earth-fill structure.

Because the Snake River could not be diverted for construction of a north-channel concrete base, divers had to build one underwater. Then cribs were lowered by crane, with a single plank core installed November 13, 1904 to complete construction of that project.

Upon completion, Milner Dam had a trapezoidal-shaped earthfill, with these segments separated by a plank core. Since closure of its diversion tunnels March 2, 1905, Milner reservoir has not been drained, and in 1942 the tunnels were blocked off by masonry walls for security.

Alterations: replacement of washed-out rock fill a various times (commencing prior to completion of construction) did not alter Milner Dam, but in 1916 to 1918 tunnel walls were repaired with concrete and tunnel doors were replaced with concrete plugs. At that time, new wooden pilings were driven ten feet down to strengthen earth-fill segments, and a concrete cap was placed on them.

No original spillway gate piers have survived. Alternate piers were replaced during repairs in 1928, and all remaining piers were replaced in 1949, when Milner Dam was widened enough to allow vehicular traffic to cross it. A redesigned north spillway, with a four-foot-deep overflow space replacing badly deteriorated gates, was also completed by 1950. None of these changes has affected Milner Dam's significance as Idaho's primary Carey Act diversion structure.

# 8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ prehistoric | ___ archeology-prehistoric | ___ community planning | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion | |
| ___ 1400–1499 | ___ archeology-historic | ___ conservation | ___ law | ___ science | |
| ___ 1500–1599 | _X_ agriculture | ___ economics | ___ literature | ___ sculpture | |
| ___ 1600–1699 | ___ architecture | ___ education | ___ military | ___ social/ humanitarian | |
| ___ 1700–1799 | ___ art | ___ engineering | ___ music | ___ theater | |
| ___ 1800–1899 | ___ commerce | ___ exploration/settlement | ___ philosophy | ___ transportation | |
| _X_ 1900– | ___ communications | ___ industry | ___ politics/government | ___ other (specify) | |
| | | ___ invention | | | |

**Specific dates** 1902-1904 **Builder/Architect** A. J. Wiley, chief engineer

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Commenced as a large reclamation enterprise under congressional legislation of August 18, 1894 (which provided for state supervised projects funded by private irrigation companies), Milner Dam diverted Snake River water to two large tracts north and south of a deep, narrow gorge in south central Idaho. Planned originally by I. B. Perrine, who had developed a Shoshone Falls resort and a Blue Lakes farm downstream from a suitable diversion point for large north and south side canals, Milner Dam attracted large scale capital investment from Salt Lake and from Sharon, Pennsylvania. A gravity system unmatched in size and in national reclamation development, Perrine's venture contrasted remarkably with private canal company failures that led to congressional provision for federal reclamation projects after 1902. As a rare successful example of state supervised private irrigation development provided for in Senator Joseph M. Carey's reclamation statute of 1894, Milner Dam and its canal system have national significance in agricultural history. With 360,000 acres of reclaimed land, Milner Dam accounted for more than 12% of Idaho's irrigated acreage before large-scale pumping brought substantial areas of new farms in to production.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of nominated property** approximately 340 acres

**Quadrangle name** See continuation sheet **Quadrangle scale** see continuation sheet

**UTM References** See continuation sheet

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | | | |
| B | | | |
| C | | | |
| D | | | |
| E | | | |
| F | | | |
| G | | | |
| H | | | |

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

See continuation sheet.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **state** | Idaho | **code** | 016 | **county** | Twin Falls | **code** | 083 |
| **state** | Idaho | **code** | 016 | **county** | Jerome | **code** | 053 |

# 11. Form Prepared By

**name/title** Merle W. Wells, State Historic Preservation Officer

**organization** Idaho State Historical Society **date** February 3, 1986

**street & number** 610 North Julia Davis Drive **telephone** (208) 334-3356

**city or town** Boise **state** Idaho 83702-7695

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

**The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:**

X national ___ state ___ local

**As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.**

**State Historic Preservation Officer signature** Merle Wells

**title** State Historic Preservation Officer **date** 2 June 1986

**For NPS use only**

**I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register**

Entered in the National Register **date** 7-10-86

**Keeper of the National Register**

**Attest:** **date**

**Chief of Registration**

ITEM 4. OWNERS OF PROPERTY:

Northside Canal Company
921 North Lincoln
Jerome, Idaho 83338

American Falls Reservoir District No. 2
1035 North Lincoln
Jerome, Idaho 83338

Twin Falls Canal Company
Box 326
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

ITEM 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Twin Falls County Courthouse
425 Shoshone Street North
Twin Falls, Idaho 83303

Jerome County Courthouse
Lincoln Street
Jerome, Idaho 83338

Type: rockfill and earth fill

Dimensions

Height: 38 feet

Crest length: (3 sections with 2 intervening rock islands)

South channel: 462 feet
Middle channel: 404 feet
North channel: 280 feet

Crest elevation: 4,138 feet

Spillway elevation: 4,134 feet

Upstream slope: horizontal/vertical 4:1

Spillways (north island) 290 feet - completed 1909
(south island) 487 feet wide and 99 feet long

When Perrine posted a Snake River water claim for 3000 second feet at Milner, June 25, 1900, he had financial subscriptions of a thousand dollars each from J. H. Lowell and A. K. Steunenberg of Caldwell and Stanley B. Milner of Salt Lake. He also had strong support from Governor Frank Steunenberg, who obtained State Land Board approval for an initial 248,667-acre project, October 12, 1900, and who served as selecting agent for negotiation with Interior Department land office staff. Litigation and Senator George L. Shoup's 1898 congressional proposal to reserve Snake River gorge and Shoshone Falls for a National Park delayed their project until 1902, when Lowell and Steunenberg withdrew to work on a Reclamation Service Boise project. By that time, A. J. Wiley and Walter G. Filer had done some preliminary engineering, and Filer managed to interest two of his old mining associates from Sharon--Frank H. Buhl and Peter L. Kimberly--in providing more than a million dollar capital investment. Milner continued to support Perrine's project, for which construction started within a few months after all of Perrine's major investors came out to examine it, November 24, 1902.

Modern construction methods were employed where possible. Milner Dam was designed as three rock and earth fill structures with a concrete core to block channels going past two bare lava rock islands above Snake River gorge. A temporary dam of cribs and rock fill fed a 100 second foot canal for a 200-kilowatt direct current generator that provided four electric cranes with power. Commencing with a 462-foot south channel dam, Milner's builders went on to construct a 404-foot middle dam, and aided by two diversion tunnels, a more difficult 280 foot north channel barrier built from June to November, 1904. Two large spillways (one with 99 gates) were provided, along with canal headgates on both river banks. When completed on November 15, 1904 Milner Dam raised Snake River 38 feet to flow into major canals that had been dug over a two year period. A town at Milner, large enough to accomodate 300 canal diggers and their teams of horses as well as dam construction crews, had served as an operating base. Milner townsite later was abandoned, but a notable group of north and south side cities and towns grew up to serve a large farming region made possible by construction of Milner Dam and its canals.

M. D. Beal, History of Idaho (1959), 2:136-162.

H. J. Kingsbury, Backing the Tide (1949), 191 pp.

Howard J. Moon, History of the Twin Falls Canal Company (1985), 137 pp.

O. L. Waller, Report on Milner Dam and Canal System (1907, 1912).

Quadrangle names:

| | Quadrangle scale: |
|---|---|
| Milner | 7.5 minute |
| Milner Butte | 7.5 minute |
| Murtaugh | 7.5 minute |

UTM References:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. | 745730/4712400 | J. | 736180/4707980 |
| B. | 745800/4712070 | K. | 735330/4705560 |
| C. | 745690/4712070 | L. | 735190/4705540 |
| D. | 745700/4711920 | M. | 735140/4706570 |
| E. | 745410/4711920 | N. | 735990/4708080 |
| F. | 745040/4711700 | O. | 742160/4711740 |
| G. | 743370/4711720 | P. | 743520/4712090 |
| H. | 741720/4711180 | Q. | 745260/4711990 |
| I. | 739480/4709460 | R. | 745250/4712360 |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

The nomination includes the Milner Dam and the Twin Falls Main Canal, including the walls and banks of the canal and the property on which they stand in:

T10S, R21E

Section 29: NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 and the S 1/2 of the S 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of the NE 1/4

Section 28: SW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 and the W 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4

T10S, R21E

Section 29: S 1/2

Section 30: S 1/2

T10S, R20E

Section 25: S 1/2 of the SE 1/4

Section 36: NW 1/4

Section 35: SE 1/4 of the NE 1/4 and the N 1/2 of the SE 1/4 and the SW 1/4

T11S, R20E

Section 2: N 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4

Section 3: N 1/2 of the NE 1/4 and the NW 1/4 and the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4

Section 4: S 1/2

Section 5: S 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of the NE 1/4

Section 8: NE 1/4 and the W 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 and the E 1/2 of the SW 1/4

Section 17: N 1/2