

FARM EMPIRE CROWNS HIS ENDEAVORS



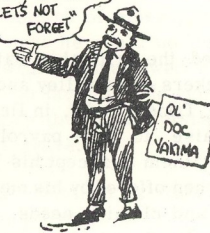
MR. GRANGER IS INDEED A REAL EMPIRE BUILDER. HE IS ONE OF THE PIONEERS IN IRRIGATION IN THE WEST.



HE EARLY SAW THE POSSIBILITIES OF WATER POWER -



WE OWE THIS MAN A DEBT OF GRATITUDE I SAY LETS NOT FORGET!



WALTER N. GRANGER and THE SUNNYSIDE CANAL

Date 1961

Sunnyside Pioneer Association (disbanded 2015)

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Although the end of the ox-team, covered wagon parade West was in sight when Walter N. Granger first glimpsed the drab and barren Yakima Valley of 1889, he was a pioneer who grew in importance.

He, more than any other one man, was responsible for the location, engineering and the building of the original Sunnyside Canal. He guided its operation through adversity, disappointment and triumph, under several ownerships, for twenty years to a notable success.

Recognized as an outstanding Irrigation Engineer of his day, liberally endowed with vision, executive ability and relentless drive, Walter N. Granger built the original ditch that led to the transformation of an arid sagebrush waste into an agricultural paradise that has blossomed into one of the most productive known.

The Sunnyside Irrigation Project has been called, 'The Laboratory of Western Irrigation', where through 'trial and error' experimentation, modern methods have been discovered and developed. It has been the proving ground that has demonstrated and established beyond doubt, the great worth of irrigation to those uninformed doubters. The phenomenal success achieved by the Sunnyside Project has sparked the building of many others, until irrigation has been accepted and has attained an important position in the nation's agricultural scene.

Granger's wasn't the first attempt at Northwest irrigation. He, himself had built a few small systems in Montana. Nor was his the first system in the Yakima Valley. A few individuals and two or three small groups had claimed water from the river North of Union Gap to make private attempts, mostly but hand ditched trickles for their gardens. On a larger patch of river bottom, a short distance below the 'Gap', several squatters had joined in digging a common ditch for their collective use. They named their ditch "The Konewock". The total acreage irrigated was insignificant but the quality and the large amount of crops grown per garden proved the rare fertility of the volcanic ash soil and the magic of irrigation.

Although not the first, Granger's project was by far the largest, most ambitious attempt at irrigation in the Northwest, possibly in the nation and as experimental development progressed, gained the earned title, "Grand-daddy of them all".

It was the land granted to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company by the United States Government for building its trans-continental road that fathered the project. The grant included all odd-numbered sections of land for twenty miles each side of the tracks, when the road was built along the south side of the river in 1884. Consequently, the Northern Pacific Company owned half of this practically worthless desert land, in a checkerboard arrangement, across the whole valley.

President Thomas F. Oakes, of the Northern Pacific, made an inspection trip over the new road in his special car. Constantly alert to find and promote new business, he spied the lush, growing gardens of the settlers along the river that seemed entirely out of place in the drab, dry surroundings. Investigation disclosed that irrigation was responsible. Both quality and yield out-distanced anything he had seen before and he was impressed.

His eyes and mind shifted to the expanse of worthless desert owned by his company and Oakes speculated on the possibility of duplicating the settlers' gardens, only on a valley-wide scale, through the wizardry of this new thing called irrigation. I'll discuss it with Walt Granger, he mused.

He knew Granger and of his Montana experiences. He recalled the added business that Granger's projects, small as they were, had added to his own. He was also aware of Granger's belief in and devotion to irrigation development, still undimmed, although he'd lost his fortune and health in the building. He'd seen Granger abandon lucrative employment to pursue his dream, that had ended in disaster to both money and health. What advice would Granger have to offer? Would his own immature scheme, if attempted prove as disappointing? He'd never be satisfied without further probing, and he sent for Granger.

Their hours long conversation ended with Oakes' offer to option 90, 000 acres of railroad land to Granger, at \$1. 25 per acre if he would undertake its development. "I'll look it over and give you an answer", Granger told him.

It was spring, 1889. Granger was 34 years old, his fortune gone and in poor health and unemployed, when he dropped from the train at Yakima City (now Union Gap). He hired a Cayuse and obtained blankets and provisions for several days and rode through the 'Gap' into the valley, camping where night caught him.

Two days later he had reached a point north of Snipes Mountain. His canteen was empty and both he and his Cayuse were suffering from thirst. He started across the mountain toward the river he knew to be on its south. At the top his horse spied water, took the bit in his teeth and didn't stop until he was standing belly deep in the river.

With their thirst quenched and canteen refilled, exploration continued. Some distance from the river, Granger's instinct caused him to dismount and dig a miniature canal with his bare hands, into which he poured the contents of his canteen, as a test of the soil's water holding and 'puddling' qualities. Satisfied, but out of water, he returned to the river for a re-fill, for there was no telling when there would be another opportunity.

Again, climbing to the top of Snipes Mountain to travel along its crest, "for a bird's-eye view of the valley", and the territory his envisioned canal would irrigate. His thoughts, expressed afterward, were in his own words: "When we reached the lower or East end of the ridge, the vast area of the land below plainly indicated that we were in the heart of the region. As I gazed on the scene, I then and there resolved that a city should some day be built at the base of the mountain, for the site was ideal".

Granger continued his explorations for several days before returning to Yakima City and his rented Cayuse to his owner. Enthusiastic over his findings, he caught the train to North Yakima (present Yakima), and wired Oakes the acceptance of his offer of option, then sent for the favorite engineers he once employed on the Montana Projects

His next move was the organization of a company to locate, finance and build the canal system already pictured in his mind. Incorporation was completed for the Yakima Canal and Land Company on December 4, 1889, with Granger as President and Manager, James Millisch as Secretary and Albert Kleinschmidt of Helena as Treasurer, capitalized at one million dollars.

There had been earlier threats at irrigating the lower valley. The Sunnyside Irrigation Canal and Land Company had been incorporated on October 25, 1887. Its canal was to be navigable "for the transportation of freight". This scheme never got beyond the paper stage.

Engineer J. D. McIntyre had planned a ditch taking water from the Naches River to skirt the Ahtanum Valley, return to the 'Gap' and through it to carry water at a higher level than Granger's later surveys. Granger was sure the Naches alone couldn't supply sufficient water and planned his heading below the junction of the Yakima and Naches Rivers, to catch the waters of both streams. But the Konewock people already had their heading on the most feasible site. He surmounted that barrier by trading a perpetual water right for their lands in exchange for the only suitable location for his own, and he was ready to start construction.

Contractors Stobie and Mathieson began digging operations in the early spring, 1891. Walt Granger watched the first scoop of ash-like soil gouged from his ditch-to-be. His eyes scanned the drab sagebrush, blowsandy valley, uninhabited, save for jackrabbits, coyotes and rattlesnakes for as far as he could see. But his mind's eye pictured a verdant expanse of lush growing crops, a panorama of gardened homes and orchards, sprinkled with many prospering towns, because of the water his Sunnyside Canal would soon bring. It would be folly to put his vision into words. He'd been accused of being a visionary-optimist too often and on occasions, of having lost his reason. Only a scattered few saw the picture of what the Sunnyside Canal meant. He turned back to watch the digging.

No motor driven crane or shovel had yet oozed from an inventor's mind. Ditch digging was real muscle work. Lines of Cayuse teams, Indian ponies, many never before knowing harness, strained at dragging the slip-scrapers carrying but a 'shirt-tail' full of ash-fine earth. Calloused hands of brawny men held handles to guide the filling. Puffing, see-sawing Cayuses drug it out of the deepening ditch where the filler's straining back dumped the load, to become a bit of the growing canal bank. Then back in the ditch, in a continuous merry-go-round, from seven in the morning to six at night, seven days a week, with an hour's 'nooning', gritty beans and a dollar-a-day.

The possession of 90, 000 acres of optioned land made Granger a frequenter of the North Yakima Land Office and a close friend of Registrar, J. H. Thomas, who often took him to his home for supper and an evening of companionship. Thomas had a daughter who had recently graduated from Annie Wright's Seminary in Tacoma. Soon Granger's visits grew more frequent and the subject of those evening conversations shifted from land and irrigation to totally unrelated matters, with Daughter. A romance was born. It bloomed and flourished to a climax, when on June 2, 1891, Miss Maud Thomas changed her name to Mrs. Walter N. Granger.

Granger had been rushing the completion of a combination office and dwelling, in the sagebrush, where the town of Zillah now stands. The newlyweds moved there, barely in time to welcome the arrival of the canal building which reached that point in March, 1892. Two epoch making events had marked the year before, Granger's marriage and the start of the canal. Now, there would be another.

President Oakes, his wife and their eighteen year old daughter, stopped their special train opposite the headgates on March 26, 1892. Walt Granger met them with a two-seated wagon, ferried the Yakima River and drove them to the canal's intake. A crowd of officials, political figures and hopefuls stood ankle deep in dust, awaiting Oakes' arrival and the ceremonies to follow. Granger, Oakes and Paul Schulze, each spoke briefly, Miss Dora Allen broke a bottle of champagne over the headgates and Schulze opened them, sending the first water into Granger's Sunnyside Canal, on a life-giving mission that was to surpass even Granger's most optimistic dreams. The thirsty ash-soil of the ditch drank deeply, with a bubbling whisper of gratitude and hope.

Granger re-loaded his prominent guests and drove them down the canal to his new office-home, perched alone in the sagebrush, where dinner awaited. Those who had attended the christening followed, enveloped in dust stirred by the hooves and wheels of their own conveyances.

"What's to be the name of the town you'll be starting here?', Oakes asked, as dinner was served. "It has none, as yet, " Granger replied. "I've considered several but with your permission, I'd like to name it "Zillah", honoring your charming daughter. "

And so it was, that a spot in the raw sagebrush desert, with one new building, was given an identity.

Financing had reached a critical point. Suave, Paul Schulze suggested the formation of a new company, including the strong Northern Pacific to take over the assets of Granger's and continue construction. He asked Granger what share he would expect. "Half, " Granger answered, but in the end he was forced to accept one-third, paid for with his optioned land. The new company was named, "The Northern Pacific, Yakima and Kittitas Irrigation Company", who then handled payroll and expense accounts from St. Paul.

By the end of the next year the canal was built to a point near what would be Sunnyside. Granger formed a townsite company, platted section 25 and proceeded to carry out his vow, made from the crest of Snipes Mountain five years earlier, "that a city should someday be built at the base of the mountain, for the site was ideal. "

Then the ruinous Panic of 1893 struck. The railroad company, with troubles of its own, informed Granger it could no longer finance any part of his project and wished to withdraw and turned its stock over to Granger. He accepted and instituted a unique plan of his own to continue.

He explained the critical situation to merchants and bankers of the valley and outlined his plan of issuing Time Checks, in lieu of the cash he couldn't raise, to meet payroll and supply bills. He asked them to accept his Time Checks at face value when offered by his men in payment of their food and clothing needs. Granger, in turn, would accept them in payment for any land his company owned. The merchants and Bankers, seeing no alternative, agreed to go along with his plan.

Granger was to operate under his money-less system for eighteen months, until merchants and banks found their tills choked with Time Checks whose only value was as payment for raw sagebrush land that nobody seemed to want. Their enthusiasm for accepting more Checks waned and the workers, no longer able to spend their Time Checks for the necessities of life, stormed Granger's office, threatening violence. In the end, many Time check holders became unintentional land buyers, their only 'out'.

The N. P. was swept into the hands of a receiver. Creditors of Granger's N. P. Y. K. I. Co. applied to the Federal Court for a receivership, but Walter N. Granger, the strong, guiding hand in irrigation development, was retained as manager, in spite of the fact that it wiped out to the last penny, his financial interest. An Eastern concern that held a mortgage on the Sunnyside townsite, foreclosed. Settlers, who had any place to go, left.

Paul Schulze, the opportunist, came forward with a newly organized corporation to take advantage of a forced sale. The Washington Irrigation Co. was formed, with R. H. Denny, D. P. Robinson and O. F. Paxton named as incorporators. Stockholder, E. F. Blaine became the attorney for the company.

Flagrant irregularities uncovered by the probing receivers pointed an accusing finger at Schulze as the appropriator of upward of one half million dollars of other people's money. When he saw that he could no longer hide the source of the wealth that allowed him to live and entertain so lavishly, he removed himself from the scene with a loaded pistol and escaped to a suicide's grave.

Granger was retained as manager under the new Washington Irrigation Co. , and with fresh funds, extended its canal from its panic-caused end near Sunnyside, to a point near Prosser. It created additional demands for water already showing signs of scarcity. Seeing Granger's success, other projects the length of the river sprang up and more claims for water were filed than the river supplied, above the Sunnyside Canal's heading, as most of them were seriously affecting its flow.

Storage reservoirs had been a part of Granger's plan from the beginning, where melting winter snows could be held for use during the period of irrigation's greatest need. Earlier, he had purchased land and prepared hewn timbers for a dam across Lake Cle Elum's outlet, to be ready when the need arose. When he applied to the State for permission to build the dam, the Legislature, under pressure from conflicting interests, turned him down with the excuse that, "there was a law against interfering with stream flow. " Odd, thought Granger, no law had stopped a dozen or so diverting stream flow before it reaches our heading or E. F. Benson's power plant at Prosser Falls, who at times had been left with only a trickle.

A new canal reached into the river for its supply, a short distance upstream from Granger's heading. At the first sign of low water the next summer, a diversion dam appeared there to starve his Sunnyside Canal. "Authorities claim it's illegal to obstruct stream flow, " Granger reasoned, "so there should be nothing wrong in removing it. " He sent men with dynamite and by morning, water again filled his canal.

Another water claimant asked no permission to build a storage dam but moved in on Granger's land at the foot of Lake Cle Elum and with Granger's timbers, built a dam with no regulating gates. When river-flow dropped alarmingly and farmers began crying over withering crops, Benson sued.

"The no stream obstruction should apply to everyone, " Granger claimed, and sent his Engineer, R. K. Tiffany, with a powder crew who described his experience later. "The explosion produced geysers, blew boulders and debris skyward, leaving a 20 foot gap in the dam. It landed four powder men in jail and socked me with a \$500 fine. " The choking crops were saved and Benson's power plant whirred again.



Dynamited crib dam at the foot of Lake Cle Elum. It had been built by opposing interests with Granger's timbers on, Granger's land. He had been denied the privilege to thus store water years earlier. When the illegal stream obstruction stopped water flow for his canal, Granger sent Engineer Tiffany and a powder crew to remove the structure. The crew went to jail and Tiffany was assessed a \$500 fine, but once again water flowed in the Sunnyside Canal.

Bureau of Reclamation photo.

President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Federal Reclamation Act into law in 1902, that created the U. S. R. S., empowered to construct irrigation projects with funds obtained from the Western lands and timber and looked favorably upon the Yakima Valley because of the unequaled storage facilities available and plenty of land requiring only water to make it highly productive. But as Granger had painfully discovered, there were more claims than water and to make it worse, no laws to control water allocation. It was plain, that unless some means could be found to put an end to the battling between users

over insufficient supplies, irrigation was doomed. The crucial situation was brought to the attention of the Governor who appointed a Water Code Commission, with Harold Preston, an able Seattle attorney of wide experience as Chairman. Its membership, including Granger, most naturally and W. B. Bridgman, then Mayor of Sunnyside, all served without compensation.

Die-hard opposition to the Water Code, the Commission wrote, blocked its passage on its first presentation but it became a law later, as originally written. The Washington Irrigation Company offered to sell its Sunnyside Canal to the Government and to gain detailed information for negotiations, E. F. Blaine covered the entire project by canoe in the canal and on horseback, to its farthest reaches before going to Washington where the sale was consummated and the Secretary of the Interior affixed his signature to a document that made the transaction official in 1905.

The Reclamation Service proceeded with the construction of reservoirs in the mountains and enlarged the canal to far greater capacity then extended and improved the entire system. Walt Granger was retained as operations engineer but an outside man was brought in to direct new construction. He, with the approval of some superiors, had some fantastic ideas of their own about land settlement but with little knowledge of farming, straightaway limited land ownership to forty acres and but twenty if he, in his wisdom declared it 'fruit land', contending that without such restrictions, the project would fall into the hands of large operators who would become wealthy through irrigation supplied by the Government.

Landowners and businessmen alike were furious. The arbitrary restrictions dammed influx of settlers. Who would invest or settle in a project that limited land-holdings? When irate citizens could get no action through their Congressmen, and other authorities were deaf to pleas for removing the stifling edicts, they again turned to their understanding friend, Walter N. Granger and persuaded him to go to Washington. Granger went direct to the higher authorities, and with his background and abundant experience, showed them the folly of the unwise restrictions and returned successful, as he had met and mastered the many crises all the way from the beginning of his Sunnyside Canal. The man who wanted to control the number of acres an individual could own, was removed. Walter N. Granger continued as manager until his resignation on March 1, 1910.

Truly, the Sunnyside Project had been the guinea pig, the laboratory where irrigation means and methods and management policies have been developed. Many men have played important roles in its phenomenal success that has turned a desert into one of the richest agricultural counties in the nation. But it was Walter N. Granger who envisioned its potential greatness, engineered its development and guided it from birth through a turbulent early life to ultimate success and finally saved it.

E. F. Blaine, after years of intimate association with him that revealed his caliber and character said, "Walter N. Granger knew more than any other man, about the Sunnyside Project and its problems. And more than any other one man, HE was responsible for its success.

Today many thousands of people enjoy lovely homes and prosperity because there is a Sunnyside Canal. Many millions of dollars in wealth spring annually from what was once a barren waste because of the water it brings and because there was once a man who saw beyond the drab, sagebrush desert, the miracle irrigation could perform ... a man endowed with the mental equipment, the engineering ability and an unquenchable urge to bring it and possessed of the indomitable drive to carry it through to success.

It is entirely fitting that a FOUNTAIN, bringing water to thirsty throats, be dedicated to Walter N. Granger in this year of 1961. It is emblematic of the water he brought to a thirsty land.

It is proper that the Sunnyside Pioneer Association sponsor its dedication. Wasn't it Walter N. Granger who pioneered the pioneers of the valley?

It seems so entirely RIGHT that his fountain stand, "at the base of the mountain, " where on another June day, Walter N. Granger from its crest first looked on the spot and vowed that, "Someday a city should be built there for the site was ideal."

(Until Granger started his Sunnyside Canal, crop production was. . . . NOTHING. By 1958, the Sunnyside Project averaged \$199. 20 per acre and by 1960, the grand total of Yakima Valley production through irrigation reached a staggering \$1, 221, 896, 560. 00 not including the unrecorded millions produced prior to 1907. It is still growing It all began with an IDEA, WATER, and WALTER N. GRANGER.)

