

## Dixie Slough/Dixie Drain

In November 2017, *Treatment Plant Operator* magazine interviewed City of Boise employee Shawn Wilson about the Dixie Drain facility. Wilson described the origins of the name Dixie Drain as follows: “We have lots of agriculture and irrigation in this area. In the early 1900s, the federal government built canals and drainage areas that flow into the Boise River. The early settlers gave the name Dixie to this particular drainage area. The drain also pulls groundwater.”<sup>1</sup>

Research was conducted to shed more light on the use of the term Dixie in the Dixie Slough/Dixie Drain name. Due to restrictions created by COVID-19, research was limited to resources that were available online. *The Idaho Statesman* digital archive, available between 1864-1976 and 1999-2020, was accessed along with Idaho State Historical Society digital assets and miscellaneous internet resources. The resources accessed indicate that in addition to the Dixie Slough/Dixie Drain, there was an area of Canyon County known as Dixie Valley located in the vicinity of Caldwell. Please see below for detailed information.

### Dixie Valley:

The Dixie Valley was loosely described by *The Idaho Statesman* as being located roughly 30 miles below Boise near Caldwell.<sup>2</sup> Various *Idaho Statesman* articles associate the Dixie Valley with immigrants from Missouri, and a 1933 article noted the name Dixie was related to these settlers.<sup>3</sup> In 1954, the newspaper provided the following succinct summary of the valley: “It was established in 1864 and mostly occupied by Missourians and others sympathetic to the southern cause in the Civil war.”<sup>4</sup>

### Dixie Slough:

In 1904, *The Idaho Statesman* published an article in which a man from Idaho City, named Peter Rush, was claimed to have named the Dixie Slough located below Boise. The article described Rush as

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<sup>1</sup> Force, Jim. "Idaho Gets Bang for Its Buck With Dixie Drain Project." *Treatment Plant Operator*, November 2017. Accessed August 26, 2020.  
[https://www.tpomag.com/editorial/2017/11/bang\\_for\\_the\\_buck](https://www.tpomag.com/editorial/2017/11/bang_for_the_buck).

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press. “Gem State Lists Three Dixies But Only One Has Post Office.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, February 8, 1954: 11. *NewsBank*.  
“*Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, April 15, 1880: [3]. *NewsBank*.  
“*Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, July 10, 1875: [2]. *NewsBank*  
“Letter From the Future Capital.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, September 15, 1883: [3]. *NewsBank*.  
“Pioneer Wright Gives Incidents of Early Times.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, October 3, 1920: 2. *NewsBank*.

<sup>3</sup> Associated Press. “Gem State Lists Three Dixies But Only One Has Post Office.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, February 8, 1954: 11. *NewsBank*.  
“Cox, Anderson M. “Doctor Accepts Span of Horses, Harness and Covered Wagon as Fee: Dixie Owes Cox Family to Typhoid Epidemic.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, October 1, 1933: 16. *NewsBank*.  
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<sup>4</sup> Associated Press. “Gem State Lists Three Dixies But Only One Has Post Office.” *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, February 8, 1954: 11. *NewsBank*.

working in the cattle industry in 1863 or 1864 and stated that at some point he happened upon the camp of another cattleman who was singing the song Dixie while cooking at his campfire. Rush "...dismounted and partook of the hospitality of the happy singer, and vowed unto himself that Dixie should henceforth be the name of the slough near the waters of which the cattleman with the musical voice had made his camp." He later referred to it as the Dixie Slough in an exchange with another cattleman, and "In a few days all the stockmen in Boise valley were calling it Dixie slough, and Dixie slough it is to this day."<sup>5</sup>

The 1904 article defines the location of the Dixie Slough in very general geographic terms. It is unknown if the Dixie Slough labeled on modern day maps is the same Dixie Slough described in the 1904 article. In order to determine this, historical maps will need to be consulted.

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<sup>5</sup> "News From Idaho Towns: How Dixie Slough Was Named; Old Pioneer of the Basin Tells Interesting Story." *Idaho Statesman, The (Boise, ID)*, March 28, 1904: 4. *NewsBank*.

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