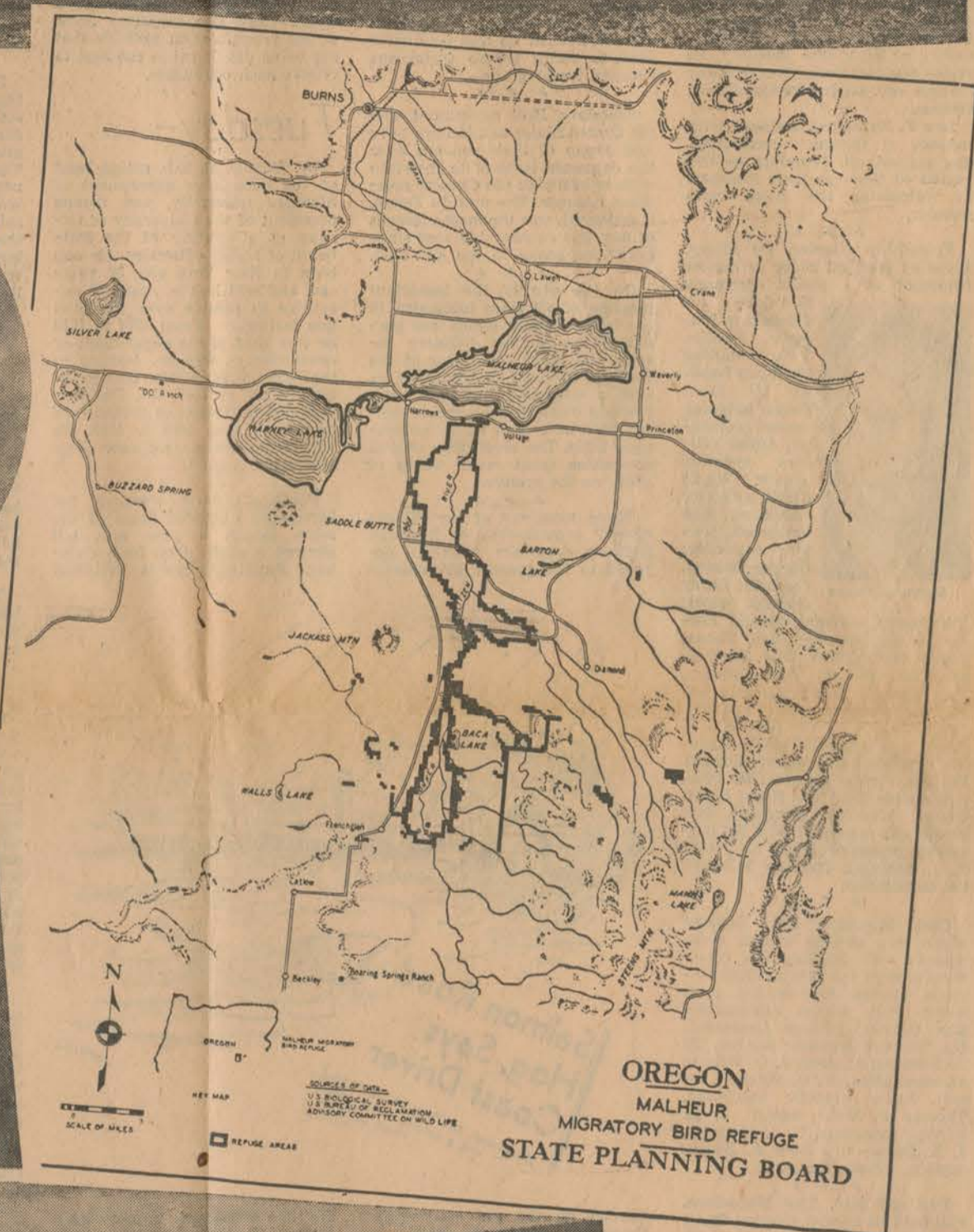


MALHEUR BEING RESTORED AS BIRD HAVEN OF WEST



Many Acres Set Aside For Fowl

500 CCC Enrollees Make Many Improvements in Two Years.

By ERNEST W. PETERSON

Malheur, capital of the waterfowl world before the coming of the white man when it was turned into a battleground—first between the Indians and the white men, and later between cattlemen and homesteaders—is rapidly being reclaimed as the bird haven of the West.

While Indians and Whites battled for possession of the great sage-covered plateau of southeastern Oregon; while cattle barons and struggling homesteaders shot it out for control of the vast grazing kingdom, the waterfowl population suffered steadily.

Water was flowing gold, coveted by the cattlemen, the homesteaders and the wild life of the area around Malheur and Harney lakes, 30 miles south of Burns. Canals and dams were built and water diverted until, finally, Harney lake was as dry as the desert and only a few inches of water remained in Malheur lake.

Birds Suffer From Diversion

Ducks, geese, pelicans, egrets, cranes and the 200 other species of waterfowl that for centuries had made this their nesting and feeding grounds, or a haven of rest on the long flights from Canada to California in the fall and on the return in the spring, either sought other locations or died in the dry tullies.

Even before this sad situation developed, "sportsmen" from throughout the west had taken heavy toll of ducks and geese, slaughtering them by the thousands year after year as the fowl flew from one lake to the other across the Narrows connecting the two bodies of water.

Bird Naturalists Face Opposition

A few men saw the writing on the wall in those days of wild life destruction, but their warnings were unheeded until, in 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Malheur lake a federal bird refuge, thereby closing it forever to the ruthless hunters. The untiring efforts of W. L. Finley, internationally known naturalist, and Dr. L. E. Hibbard of Burns, were in a marked degree responsible for the president's action. These men had worked diligently against all manner of opposition to bring this about.

Bird life, however, still faced extinction because of the drought conditions and the movement to restore the lake to its original condition went on. This only could be done through an act of congress and finally, in 1935, the federal government purchased approximately 70,000 acres and the United States biological survey, assisted by the CCC, went to work reclaiming Malheur for wild life.



Photos by Walt Sperling of Gilmore Oil Co. News Service.

Top, left—Stanley G. Jewett, left, regional biologist and J. S. Scharff, refuge superintendent, banding a duck at one of the two banding pens on the Malheur migratory bird refuge. Top, center—Mass flight of wild fowl. Top, right—Historic P Ranth headquarters now occupied by the project engineer. Persons in picture from left—J. C. Scharff, Dr. L. E. Hibbard, Julian Byrd, Zeno Dent, James McCullough. Oval—Ducks taking wing. Second row—Headquarters for Malheur refuge constructed of native stone by CCC. Administration building, right center. Bottom—Main diversion dam, built last winter under a tent. Map of project prepared by state planning board.

Two years of scientific planning and hard work have done wonders and the appreciative waterfowl are returning to their former native haunts in large numbers. Once more the young birds are thriving and growing to maturity under the watchful eyes of the biological survey.

With the wild life population increasing, it is highly unlikely that this last frontier of the "wild west" will see any more colorful characters that equal Pete French, John Devine and Bill Hanley, the three great cattle kings of southeastern Oregon.

140,000 Acres In Cattle Empire

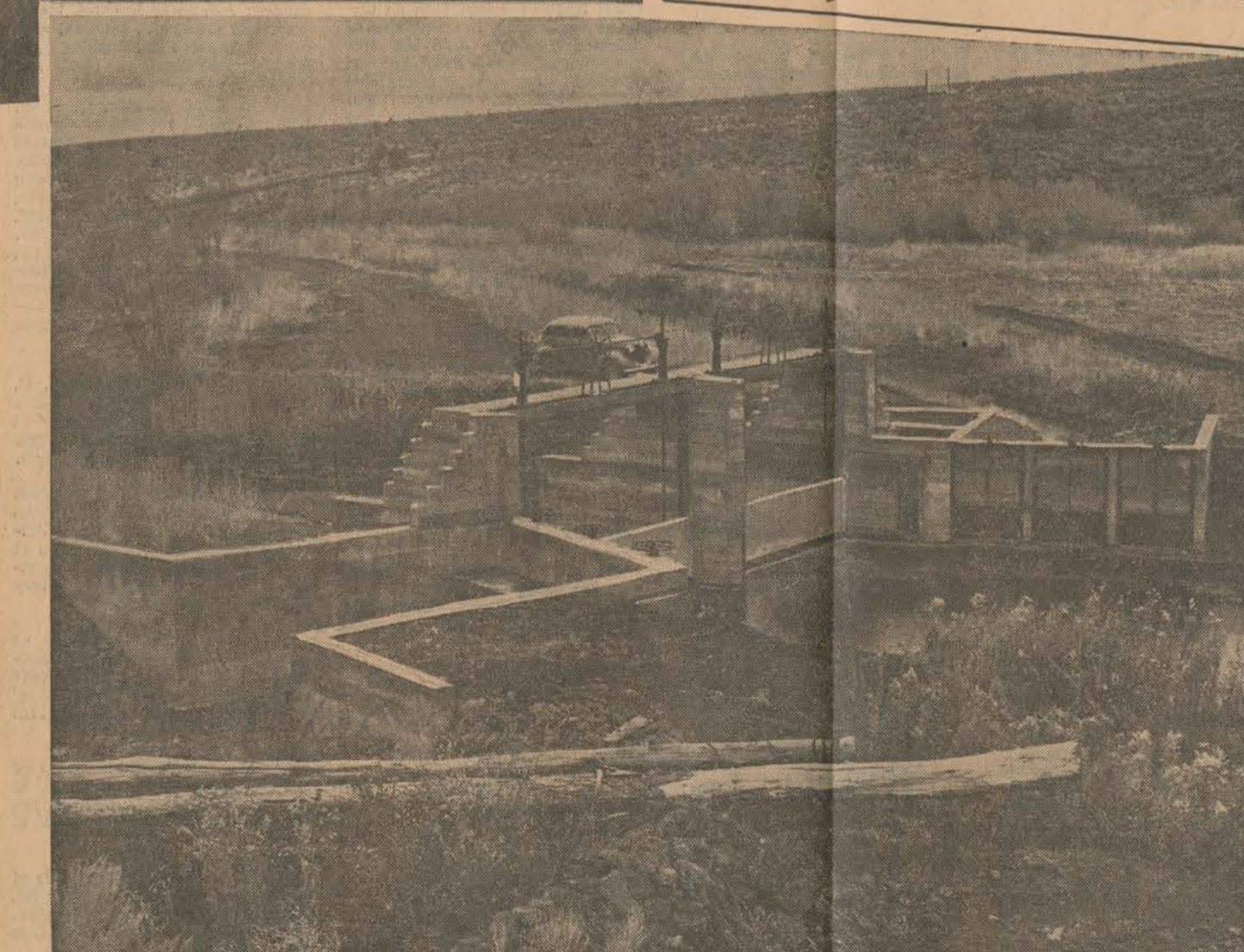
Pete French wrested, by one means or another, an empire of 140,000 acres during his career which finally came to an untimely end with a bullet fired from a rifle in the hands of an aggrieved homesteader. French's domain was known as the P Ranch. Half of that empire, that portion along the Blitzen river and around Malheur lake, now belongs to the United States and is the heart of the Malheur bird refuge. Acquisition of this land cost the government \$675,000.

This vast area of Malheur Mi-

gratory Waterfowl Refuge is operated from the Sod House headquarters consisting of native stone buildings of early pioneer architecture with modern interiors which include an administration building, superintendent's home, buildings to house his personnel, garage, repair shops, barn and corrals. John Scharff, who grew up in the cattle business and later entered the forestry service, is superintendent of this huge operation.

Diversion Dam Built Under Tent

A few of the outstanding improvements on the refuge include miles of new roads, fences and marking boundaries, not to mention thousands of cubic yards of levees, dikes and jetties, telephone lines, pipe and tile lines. A large concrete diversion dam built last winter under a tent controls the flow of water from the Blitzen river to reservoirs and ponds. This great work has been accomplished by 500 CCC workers located in three different camps on the project. All improvements have been accomplished within the past two years, according to Scharff, with four more years required to complete the development of the refuge.



Immediately following introductions at the headquarters, the scout party, which included Dr. L. E. Hibbard, Julian Byrd, editor and publisher of the Burns Times-Herald, James McCullough, Plymouth dealer of Burns, and Walter Sperling of the Gilmore Oil Company, was taken by Superintendant Scharff to the banding pens where birds are lured into these wire enclosures for the purpose of tagging with an aluminum band on the leg as an identification.

Scharff stated that 5647 birds had already been banded and they expect to increase this number to 10,000 before the end of the year. After the birds are banded, they

are liberated. At this point, Scharff informed the party that in one instance a report disclosed that a duck banded and liberated at the refuge had been shot in the lower Sacramento valley within 36 hours after it had been released. Reports on banded birds have been received from as far north as Point Barrow, Alaska,

and as far south as Old Mexico. Malheur, a super-refuge of the nation is of vital importance as a resting, nesting and breeding area for migratory waterfowl using the Pacific flyway, particularly to sportsmen of the California area. Birds reared here in the spring make their first flight southward in time for fall shooting and the

state is certain to benefit materially from this conservation activity. The refuge is an ideal home for all manner of wild fowl and also for deer, antelope, sage-hens, quail, beaver and muskrats.

Superintendent Scharff named only a few species of the many breeds of waterfowl to be found at the Malheur haven which include swans, Canadian geese, sand hill cranes, snow geese, mallard ducks, pintails, Bluewing Teal, Green Wing Teal, Gadwalls, Baldpates, Spoon Bills, Canvasbacks, Ruddy Redheads, Egrets, Curlews, Blue Herons, Phalaropes, Willets, Sandpipers and Jacksnipes.

Refuge Reached By Two Highways

Malheur Migratory Waterfowl refuge is located in the central part of Harney county, 30 miles south of Burns in southeastern Oregon and is reached either by the Central Oregon highway running east and west across the state, or the Three Flags highway from Mexico to British Columbia. The reserve consists of an inland plateau surrounded by mountains and volcanic table lands.

From Klamath Falls, the Gilmore-Plymouth Motorcade party traveled eastward to Lakeview through mountainous country or spotted second growth Ponderosa pine reaching an elevation of 5504 feet at Quartz Mountain pass, the highest point on the entire Oregon State Highway system. In this locality the mountains show an intermittent mature growth of the same species of timber.

Beyond Lakeview the highway stretches northward receding to the valley level of 4150 feet elevation through desert, sagebrush and grazing lands and on to the town of Burns, definitely the last frontier of the great West. A good secondary highway through sage and meadow lands lead the scout party over Wright's Point to the headquarters of the Malheur Migratory Waterfowl refuge.