

LUCIEN LUCIUS NUNN – POWER PIONEER

“[Grace Dam] is the greatest development of hydraulic power between the Mississippi and California rivers. It is said to be the greatest, with the exception of Niagara Falls, in the world.”

– Salt Lake Herald, June 15, 1908.

Between 1883 and 1927 western states led the nation in the development of hydroelectric power.

Grace hydroelectric dam and power plant were built during that age of development.

Lucien Lucius Nunn, regarded by many as the “father of the electric power industry in the Intermountain West” was the mastermind behind the Grace development.

POWERING THE WEST

An entrepreneur, lawyer, and businessman, Nunn built the Grace Power Plant as part of an empire of hydroelectric projects in Utah and Idaho. Between the early 1890s and the 1910s, Nunn operated twenty hydroelectric plants in Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Montana.

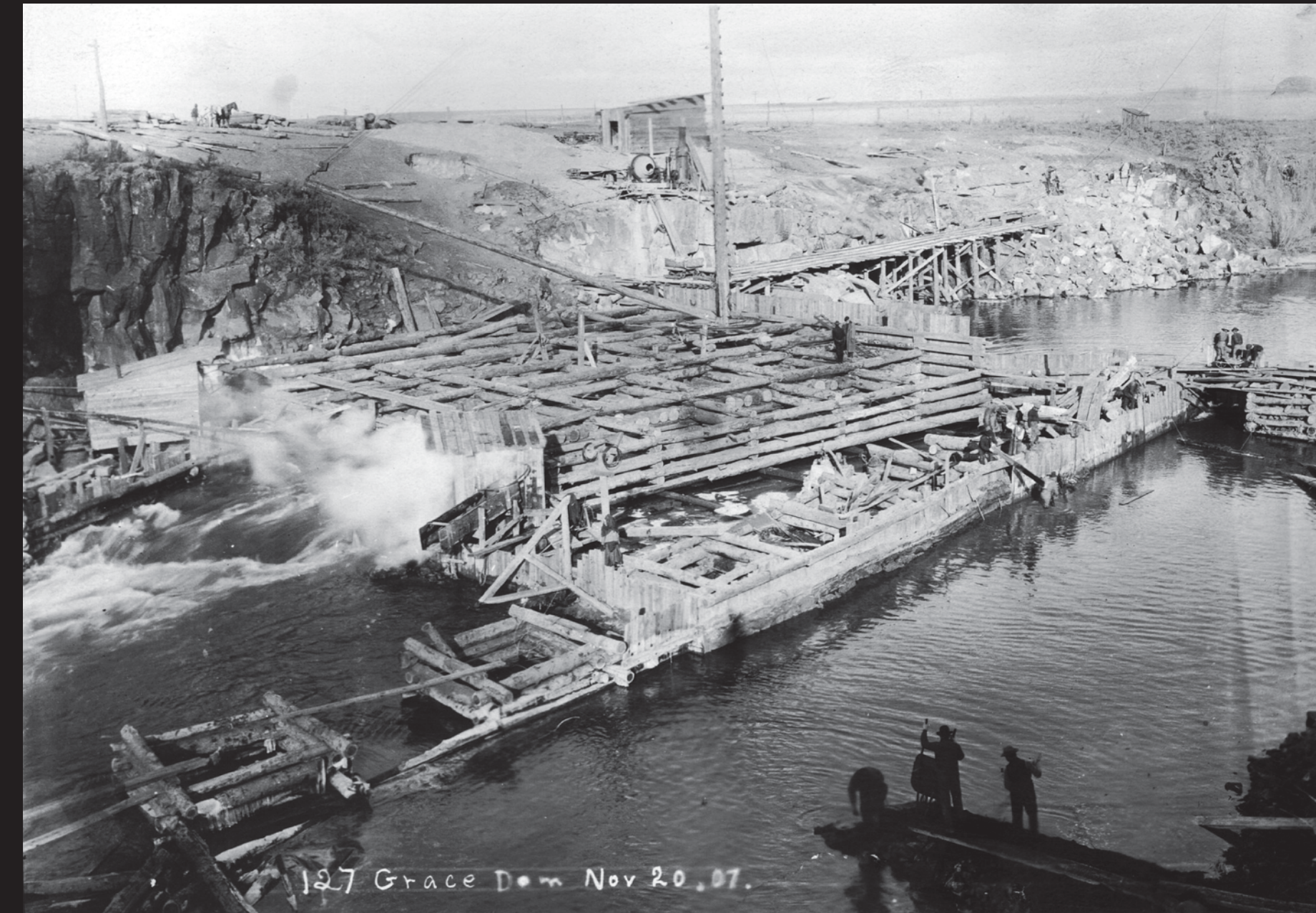
Before he moved to Utah and Idaho Nunn operated gold mines in Colorado. Steam power was used to operate machinery and smelters necessary for processing gold. In 1890, with financial backing from electricity mogul George Westinghouse, Nunn used hydropower technology developed by his brother Paul to generate power at the Gold King Mine, on the San Miguel River in Colorado. Hydropower cost less than steam power and revolutionized the electrical industry.



View of Bear River Canyon circa 1907. (Image courtesy PacifiCorp).



Lucien Lucius Nunn, circa 1890. Image courtesy Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.



Construction crew building Grace Dam, November, 1907. (Image courtesy PacifiCorp).

potential dam sites for power plants. Nunn built numerous plants in Utah and then moved north into Idaho seeking new locations.

In April 1906 surveyors for Nunn’s company arrived in Grace where the Bear River had great hydroelectric potential. The Grace hydroelectric power plant was completed in 1908 and began transmitting power to Salt Lake City.

When completed the 11,000 kilowatt plant was one of the first power plants in the area and later integrated into one of the first power grids in the Intermountain West.



The completed Grace project included the powerhouse, dam, flowline, and surge tank. (Image courtesy PacifiCorp).

STEPPING STONES TO IDAHO

His successful production of power in Colorado was a stepping stone for Nunn’s involvement in the commercial development of hydroelectricity to produce power for the mining industry.

Nunn’s interest shifted from mining to the long-distance transmission of hydroelectric power for commercial use. He sent agents to Utah to search for