

Historical Question for January 2011

Question:

Wasatch Front hikers have always enjoyed the views in the Big Cottonwood Canyon basin that contains Lake Blanche, Lake Florence, and Lake Lillian. What is the historical connection of these lakes to Cottonwood Heights?

Answer:

Reservoirs were constructed by Brown and Sanford Irrigation Company (the main irrigation company for Butlerville) in the Lake Blanche area using a Forest Service permit in 1906. In 1913, the Forest Service granted the company a special use permit to use a strip of land surrounding Lakes Blanche, Florence, and Lillian in the Mill B South Fork area. The company's plan was to increase the storage capacity of the reservoirs constructed in 1906 by raising the dams by ten feet. In 1968, an investigation by Forest Service civil engineers found the earth-filled dams to be a critical hazard, with several cracks in the them because of unsatisfactory maintenance. In 1972, the Utah National Guard was asked by Brown and Sanford to demolish the dams on the three lakes. They declined, and Brown and Sanford Irrigation Company was left with the expensive task of breaching the dams. Ultimately, this led to the demise of Brown and Sanford.