John C. Boyle (1887-1979)

By George Kramer

John Boyle was vice president, general manager, and long-time chief engineer of the California Oregon Power Company (COPCO), a privately held utility that served southern Oregon and portions of northern California. During his fifty-year career, he designed most of that region's hydroelectric projects and was principally responsible for COPCO's ground-breaking multi-dam generation facilities on the North Umpqua and Klamath rivers.

Born in 1887 in Ft. Jones, California, Boyle graduated in engineering from the University of California, Berkeley in 1910 and was immediately hired by the Siskiyou Electric Power and Light Company to work on its Klamath River facility at Fall Creek. With the formation of COPCO, he managed the company's Klamath Falls operation, and as chief engineer after 1916, he was responsible for the design of the Prospect, Oregon, generation project on the Rogue River.

In 1944, Boyle saw the potential for a multi-dam facility on the North Umpqua, a project that could be centrally controlled and, by re-use of water through a series of generation plants, highly efficient. He replicated the multi-dam idea for COPCO's Klamath Project, completed in 1962.

Boyle was named Oregon Engineer of the Year in 1951. COPCO merged with Pacific Power ten years later and the Klamath's Big Bend Dam was re-dedicated as the John C. Boyle Dam and Powerhouse, on the John C. Boyle Reservoir, on June 25, 1962. After his retirement in 1963, Boyle wrote about his efforts in *50 Years on the Klamath*, published in 1976. His book *Toketee*, about the North Umpqua Project, was published in 1977. Boyle died in 1979.

Sources

Boyle, John C. *50 Years on the Klamath*. Medford: Gandee Printing Center, 1976.

Boyle, John C. *Tokatee.* Medford, Ore.: Klocker Printery, 1977.

Dierdorff, John. *How Edison's Lamp Helped Light the West*. Portland, Ore.: Pacific Power and Light, 1971.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/boyle_john_1887_1979/