

History of the Meeves Irrigation System

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This document portrays our understanding of the history of the Meeves water system from its origin in the late 1860's to present. We collected the information from public records and conversations with multiple sources, in particular Ace Chatburn. We also thank Steve Sweet, Darrell Leatham, Barbara Little and John Porter for providing their recollections of the system and of important historical events. We encourage readers who have additional information about the history of the Meeves system to contact us.

The Meeves irrigation system originally provided water to 155 acres of land located in the south half of the southeast quarter of Section 14 and the north half of the northeast quarter of Section 23, T3N, R2E, BM. Nelson M. Armstrong originally homesteaded the area on July 15, 1871, 4 years subsequent to the first Government Land Office survey in 1867 (Armstrong, 1871; Fig 1). Armstrong sold the land, the ditch, and all water rights to James Mullany in 1883, but repurchased it from Mullany in 1885 (Armstrong to Mullany, 1883; Mullany to Armstrong, 1885). Armstrong sold the land, ditch, and water rights to Hiram Coble in 1888 (Armstrong to Coble, 1888). Coble transferred the deed to the land and the ditch to Anna Mary Coble, John Dearing, and Albert Smoot in 1891 (Coble to Coble, 1891). Stephen Cass foreclosed on the property in 1897 and took ownership from the Ada County Sheriff (Sheriff to Cass, 1897). Cass died in 1900 and his widow sold the property to Peter Meves (Cass to Vass, 1900; Vass to Meves, 1900). The spelling of Meves is in question; current usage generally spells it as Meeves, though all deed transactions refer to him as Meves. We retain the current spelling of Meeves when referring to the ditch and laterals, but as Meves when referring to recorded documents. (Figure 1)

What is now called the Meeves Ditch was already in use supplying water covered by a right from 1867. The 1906 Stewart Decree, Paragraphs 974-981, 4362-4365, 1559, awarded Peter Meves a right of 1.8 cfs. The ditch originally diverted water from the Boise River where the Spring Meadow subdivision now lies (Fig. 2). When the Ada County Drainage District No. 3's Watson Drain (aka Drain B-1) was constructed, probably in the 1920's, the Drain crossed the path of the uppermost original Meeves Ditch. At this time the section of the Meeves Ditch upstream of the Watson Drain was abandoned and water diverted from the Watson Drain. The new Meeves diversion point was approximately 170 feet south of where the drain reached the Boise River, which was approximately 300 feet southeast of the present-day Chronic Dam (Fig. 2, Plate 1). Figure 2 shows where the two ditches cross based on a 1938 air photo. A wooden structure near where the drain emptied into the river is still present and can be seen where the Greenbelt path crosses the former drain (Plates 2 and 3). This structure dates to before development of the nearby River Run subdivision and almost certainly diverted Watson Drain water to the Meeves ditch. The Meeves Ditch ran west from the

Watson Drain along the north side of what is now Pennsylvania Lane and continued west along the north side of what is now Pennsylvania St. (Fig. 2, Plate 4). Around 1945 a flood established a new channel that crossed the Watson drain upstream of the diversion structure and prevented its further use. The Meeves ditch was moved to the south and a control structure, consisting of sticks and rocks now diverted water from the Watson Drain. (Figure 2) (Plate 4)

The ditch split near present day ParkCenter Boulevard (Fig 1). Lateral #1 continued west along the north side of Pennsylvania St. and terminated at the Ada County Drain- age District No. 3 Drain B. Lateral #1 irrigated the lands between Pennsylvania St. and the Mill Ditch. The upper part of lateral #1 is still in use.

The main ditch travelled north from the lateral #1 diversion, crossed the Rossi Mill Ditch in a culvert and then just north of the Mill Ditch, gave lateral #2 to the north (Fig 1). The main ditch flowed northwesterly from the lateral #2 diversion to near the intersection of present day Myers Street and Parkway Drive, where lateral #3 went south along what is now Myers Street for approximately 200 feet, and then turned west carrying water along the border between what is now Nelsons River Parkway and H.G. Myers Country Acres I subdivisions (Fig 1). Irrigation from lateral #3 drained south into the Mill ditch and west into Drain B. This lateral was in use as recently as the 1960's and linear depressions are still visible along the former course near the terminus at Drain B. The main ditch continued along where Parkway Drive now lies and carried water across the Drain B in an open flume to continue north to irrigate the northwest part of the original Meeves farm (Fig. 1). A concrete foundation of the flume across the Drain B is still present on the south side of the drain (Plate 5). We do not know when this section was abandoned, but it likely occurred during or before Nelson's River Parkway Subdivision developed in the 1960's as the course of the lateral lies beneath those residences. (Plate 5)

Lateral #2 flowed to the north and then westerly along the south bank of an early Loggers Creek channel to irrigate pastureland in the north central part of the original Armstrong patent (Fig. 1). Prior to 1938, before the construction of Lucky Peak Dam and perhaps during a 35,500 cfs event in 1896, a major flood on the Boise River moved the course of Loggers Creek further to the west and south, isolating a chunk of the land served by this Meeves lateral (Fig. 3 and Fig 5). The property owner dug a ditch out of the north side of the new Loggers Creek to irrigate the isolated land (Fig. 3 and Fig 5), and this new ditch became known as Meeves II. The original Meeves Ditch and remaining laterals became known as Meeves I. (Figure 3)

H. G. Myers purchased the Meeves ranch in 1917 (Meves to Myers, 1917). He had a jersey dairy for many years with a house and barn located at the end of Myers St. These and other outbuildings are visible in the air photos in Fig's 3 and 5. Myers subdivided the land into HG Myers Country Acres I and HG Myers Country Acres II. Charles and Barbara Little bought the lots east of Myers St. and north of the Mill Ditch (Lots 6, 7, and 8 of #1 and 1 & 2 of #2) in about 1960, and continued operating a smaller dairy farm which was supplied by the Meeves ditches. They later switched to beef cattle.

Charles Little applied for transfer #305 in 1968, which was approved and recognized his right to use the Meeves II ditch. The Little's continued operation of the farm until the early to mid 1970's, when portions were sold for development.

The air photo in Figure 5 was taken in 1938 and shows that the original Meeves system remained largely intact except for the 1896(?) flood rerouting of Loggers Creek and the consequent changes to the Meeves Ditch. Many changes, primarily abandonments, have taken place in the post-World War 2 years. (Figure 5)

Loren and Marva Stricklin bought lot 10 of Sub #1 and built a house at 220 Provident Drive in 1960. They had trouble with water in the crawl space under the house and re- requested that lateral #3 north of their house be closed. The lateral was cut off at Myers St., eliminating irrigation on both sides of Provident west of Myers Street.

People began settling along the north side of Schmeizer Lane in the 1960's and needed water. A woman, probably Evelyn Stewart, convinced people there to join the South Boise Water Company, which provided water from the tail water of the Meeves II ditch where it exited the Little property (Figure 3).

In the late 1970's River Run developed. Peter O'Neill, the developer, re-routed the upper portion of Meeves II. The ditch was piped from a headgate on Creekside Lane across the future ParkCenter Boulevard to the Little land on the north side of Loggers Creek (Fig 4). The Meeves II ditch remains in use today and provides irrigation water to lands north of Schmeizer Lane. (Figure 4)

The remaining Meeves I ditch continued in use during this time, but keeping the ditch flowing with adequate water was a chore as the users aged. Russell Reininger and Barbara Little did most of the work for several years. River Run Development Co. decided to develop the Spring Meadow subdivision on land over which the Meeves I ran. Piping the long ditch would have been prohibitively expensive so River Run proposed an agreement whereby Meeves water would be delivered by South Boise Water Company's Mill Ditch. The Developer would put a pump at the Mill Ditch near ParkCenter Boulevard, the same location where the original Meeves ditch split. The developer bought shares in South Boise Water for the Meeves I members. Two of the members balked at the deal until River Run agreed to pay the assessments for the new South Boise shares in perpetuity, rather than for 20 years.

This arrangement worked well initially. Over time Barbara Little sold much of her land, but not her shares in South Boise Water Co. Development cut off flow to the north from the pump to Barbara's remaining land, and leaks and squabbles made use of the flow along Pennsylvania Avenue difficult. In 2011, the Meeves Association and South Boise Water Co. agreed that the Meeves Association would turn over its water rights to South Boise and in exchange South Boise would allow the Meeves members to pump from Loggers Creek and the Mill Ditch to adjacent lands that were covered by

the Meeves right. The SBWC assessments for the current Meeves lands would be recognized as paid in perpetuity. The Meeves Association kept the pump and the maintenance account, but soon abandoned much of the ditch along Pennsylvania St.

Figure 4 shows what the Meeves system looked like in 1987, the base date for the Snake River Basin Adjudication. The system as shown in this figure remains intact though development has reduced the acreage serviced. Figure 5 is a composite of information shown in the other figures. Amongst other features, this figure shows how the flood in 1896 (?) relocated the Loggers Creek channel from its 1867 position. Portions of both Meeves I and II ditches remain in use.

References

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