AUGUST 1990

"History"
Local Loveland, Louden Ditch Company and Personal by:

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Interviewed and edited by Ken Whitmore with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.
Interview with Ralph Benson on 5-24-90 at the District's office.

Ken: I'm Ken Whitmore and I work for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. I know there is nothing to compare to the years you were with the Louden Ditch Company. We are interviewing to put your history and knowledge on paper.

Can you start with telling your age and where you live; also, some general information about yourself.

Ralph: I was born and raised in Loveland. I was born June 2, 1903, so I'll soon be 87. I farmed part of my life and worked for the Louden Ditch for 25 years. As far as education, I started to school here in grade school and started in high school here in Loveland, then transferred to Colorado School of Agriculture in Fort Collins. I graduated from there in 1921 and started farming. I was married in 1922.

Ken: Did you marry a local girl?

Ralph: She was raised in Nebraska and moved to Fort Collins on Lemay Street. It's all in houses now, same as the farm that I had down here. There are about a thousand houses on my old farm, three churches, a school, and a couple of parks.

Ken: Did you have any children Ralph?

Ralph: We had one daughter. She moved to Littleton. She passed away in 1984. I have two grandchildren and they come up to see me every once in awhile. My wife has been in a nursing home for six years now, so I go see her everyday.

Ken: You said something a little while ago about this area having changed so much. What was the population around here in the year you were born?

Ralph: Probably between two and three thousand. At the time I went to Lincoln school. The school was where the Valley Bank is now and the school was really outside the city limits. Eisenhower was city limits at that time. It has changed quite a bit that way. I started high school the first year the present Bill Reed school opened.

Ken: The present Bill Reed? Was it called Bill Reed?

Ralph: No, Bill Reed hadn't come along. He came after that, so it was called the High School. Truscott was the superintendent of schools for a good many years at that time. That school has been added on to since then, but in the original part, the first classes were held in 1917.

Ken: I have read a lot about Loveland and its history. There is always a Benson mentioned or different Bensons that are mentioned. How far back does your relatives go in the area?

Ralph: In this area, my great grandfather came here in 1877. He homesteaded the half section just across the street from this building.
Ken: We're at Wilson and Eisenhower.

Ralph: Wilson and Eisenhower was his west boundary. It went to Taft Avenue and from Eisenhower to 22nd Street. He had several farms and was interested in irrigation. That was one of the things that brought him to Loveland. He had another farm by Trilby School on that section of land. At that time he organized the Louden Ditch. The work they did was to start at Devils Backbone. The original Sullivan Ditch started from the Weldon Bridge and went to Devils Backbone. That was organized in 1971. In 1877 they started the Louden Ditch and enlarged the old Sullivan ditch. They put a tunnel through the Devils Backbone and went from there.

Ken: Now was Sullivan the name of a Rancher?

Ralph: I don't remember which farm he had, but it was a name of a rancher between the Weldon Bridge and Devils Backbone.

Ken: You were talking about the construction of the Louden Ditch and the enlargement of the Sullivan, so if you want to continue from there that will be fine.

Ralph: The ditch went as far as Donath Lake and then there were branch ditches that were added later. North Louden went north to Fossil Creek and there is a Louden Extension that went east to about the county line. There is the Big Lateral which went east towards the sugar factory and Boyd Lake area and that took care of about 4% of the Louden water that went out the Big Lateral.

Ken: Was that due to Great Western Sugar Company being the user?

Ralph: That irrigated all the area above the Barnes Ditch. Sometimes Louden used to run water in the Barnes Ditch when it was dry and that took care of some of the farms. A pipeline from the Big Lateral irrigated some of the high areas and just east of Lake Loveland, then went clear down to back of the Dude Corral.

Ken: Was that separate?

Ralph: Each one of those were separate companies. That meant a person under the Big pipeline had assessments on the pipeline, the Big Lateral, and also the main Louden.

Ken: How big was the pipeline, do you recall?

Ralph: It was two pipelines. An original one was an 18 inch clay line. Later they put in a 15 inch steel line. The pressure in the clay line was pretty high sometimes, and it would deteriorate and blow up. The steel rusted out finally. The land that went into development didn't need pipelines anymore, so they were abandoned.

Ken: Do you know about what year that was?
Ralph: About 1960 when they abandoned the line. Kroh's Nursery was the only one that needed water and we put in a pumping plant up by the highway on 287, which pumped out of the Big Lateral up to the nursery ground.

Ken: Was that about the time when the highway was reconstructed and Lake Loveland was raised?

Ralph: Lake Loveland -- I don't know as if it ever changed in elevation from the time I can remember. That was about the time the development started. Kroh's had to have water and we pumped to them.

Ken: The reservoir system -- how far does that go? You've got Benson, Rist Benson, Donath, and then you delivered water to Cemetery, and what's the other reservoir?

Ralph: Originally in 1906 the Louden had Buckhorn Reservoir, which washed out in 1951. They never replaced it. Fairport Reservoir belonged to my great grandfather, A. S. Benson. It was named after a town in New York state that he lived in.

Ken: Let's designate where Fairport is in location.

Ralph: Fairport is along Highway 287 just south of Trilby Road. It's on the east side of the road.

Ken: It has another name also, right?

Ralph: I see all of the maps have it as Robert Benson, which is the name of my father. He farmed the place and looked after it for many years. I don't know how come they put that name on the map. Fairport is the legal name of it. There used to be quite a few little lakes and ponds along the Louden.

Ken: Like equalizers?

Ralph: Well, yes. The individual farmers used them for equalizers. They didn't hold much water, but they had quite a few of them.

Ken: Is Fairport still being used?

Ralph: I think it is still used. It's all developed. I don't know just what the deal is at Fairport now. It's about all into houses now.

Ken: Let's talk about another reservoir.

Ralph: Cemetery Lake has been used for a good many years and the name of it now is Silver Lake. The City has that. They pump water out to irrigate the cemetery. The City has several pumping systems and they pump on to several of their parks out of the Louden Ditch in place of using City water.

Ken: Are they under meters?
Ralph: They have quite a lot of stock in the Louden, so they just take it as a regular customer. They don't have to meter that. We measure the water into the storage of the Silver Lake.

Ken: Once it's in the reservoir it's theirs. Silver Lake or Cemetery Lake, as it is called, is because of the location. It's around the cemetery.

Ralph: It's just back of the cemetery. Those reservoirs were all built in the 1800s and they had a real good water right at one time, but they didn't designate their water rights when they were filling and they lost some of their water rights to a later date.

Ken: Let's go to another one.

Ralph: Of course Donath Lake is part of the Louden system. Originally Seven Lakes had an interest in Donath Lake. They used to run the water down there and then had a ditch to take it over into Seven Lakes.

Ken: Did they have it totally or not?

Ralph: I don't know for sure just how it was at that time. I started to work for the company in 1933, and then in 1932 they enlarged Donath Lake and took 100 percent control of it at that time. ¼ to Louden, 3/4 to Louden Extension.

Ken: This is for the record only. Seven Lakes is a private ditch company which is also incorporated with the Greeley-Loveland Company, which is completely different than the Louden Ditch Company.

Ralph: Seven Lakes Company has shares in the Louden. It represents land that they took over to build the Seven Lakes.

Ken: How big is Donath Lake?

Ralph: Donath Lake is around 1,100 acre-feet.

Ken: I just put that in there because I happen to lease the lake at this time for recreation purposes. It is a beautiful water skiing lake. It's about 60 surface acres when it's full and it's oblong which makes it ideal with trees around it. We very seldom get weathered out. It's just perfect for us. We only allow one boat at a time. It's working out very well for what we have it leased for.

Ralph: That's good. I know there was competition at one time to get that Lake.

Ken: Rist Benson Reservoir -- where is it?

Ralph: It's on Highway 34. It was on the line between Benson Farm and Rist Farm, and the thing about it, each one put in 43 acres on each half so it is divided equally that way. They used it originally for their own use. They had surplus water at that time so they organized it, put it into shares and sold it. It irrigated land right here. Later the Louden took over the whole reservoir.
Ken: Rist Benson is out by Fort Namaqua. We are sitting in the District office at Wilson and Eisenhower. It is a very small circular reservoir that sounds like it started out as a private reservoir by two farmers.

Ralph: There was a brother to this Rist who was an engineer. He engineered the thing and divided land equally between the two farms. Rist has done quite a little engineering, Rist Canyon, and up the Poudre. He owns some property around here too.

Ken: That's not a big reservoir. What is it?

Ralph: Five hundred and some acre-feet. Pretty small. Louden uses it. I dumped the water into Lake Loveland and traded with Greeley-Loveland, because we couldn't get it up into the Louden system without pumping it. We do an exchange on it.

Ken: We have gone through the ditch system and the reservoir system a little bit. How about just you personally. I know you started out as child and your dad happened to build the thing up. When did you personally go to work for Louden Ditch Company?

Ralph: I went to farming on my own in 1923, and then in 1933 times got pretty tough. I understood that the Louden Ditch Company wanted a superintendent. I and a dozen others put in our application and after some time I got the job. I went to work for the Louden Ditch in February 1933. At that time the company had a ditch house up at the headgates and that's where we lived. The house is still on Glade Road, but Louden doesn't own it anymore.

Ken: Did you also farm and run the ditch company?

Ralph: My father farmed on 29th Street and then became a county commissioner, so I took over the farm in 1941.

Ken: In 1941 did you stay with the Ditch Company?

Ralph: No.

Ken: So you were the superintendent from 1933 to 1941, and then you farmed under the Louden.

Ralph: The land was under the Louden Ditch. Then in 1965 I went into the development business on my farm and got to the place where I had to get rid of the buildings, so I sold out and went into development. The Louden Ditch Company wanted me to come back and go to work for them too. That's what I did in 1965.

Ken: In '65 you went back to the Louden Ditch Company, under what capacity?

Ralph: I was superintendent at first and then I think in '68 I became Secretary-Treasurer. They wanted me to take care of that job too. It was combined. In 1972 I wanted to retire and I got another party to take the superintendent job and kept the Secretary-Treasurer job.
Ken: Who took the job as Superintendent?

Ralph: Al Muirhead took over the Superintendent job. I was Secretary-Treasurer until 1984. I was wanting to get out of it and turned that job over to Bud Stump.

Ken: Of course Gordon Dyekman is the president of the Board here at the District and was president of the Louden Ditch board.

Ralph: His father was also president of the Louden Ditch board at one time.

Ken: Now it's Jim Svedman, right?

Ralph: Yes.

Ken: Was Reuben Woefle the superintendent of the Louden Ditch Company while you were farming?

Ralph: Yes. Rueben Woefle.

Ken: He was there for quite a number of years.

Ralph: He served 25 years.

Ken: Did he take over right after you went to farming?

Ralph: Yes.

Ken: So there was only one superintendent in between when you went to farming in 1941.

Ralph: Yes.

Ken: He was a real staunch supporter of the Ditch Company and a real good superintendent, as I recall. I knew him personally.

Ralph: I have known (in my lifetime) several fellows that were superintendent.

Ken: Now, were you ever on the Board of Directors.

Ralph: No. I was never a landowner. My father was on the Board for a good many years. I rented the farm from him.

Ken: You have to be a landowner?

Ralph: You have to own stock to be that?

Ken: Didn't you own land when you started subdividing? But that was when you were working for the company.

Ralph: No. My father passed away, so I was looking after his interest. I inherited it.
Ken: At that time you were Secretary-Treasurer. There was no need to be a director. I was curious about that. Now, a big question. I would like to hear you talk in your own words, about the Colorado-Big Thompson Project -- how you found out about it and if you were involved in any of the C-BT and the planning, engineering or the building of it, or the Northern Colorado Water Association prior to 1938 or any of the above.

Ralph: Well, I was Secretary of the Big Thompson Water Users Association for 35 years. The thing I remember most about the C-BT, and the year 1934, we had a real drought and that was what really sold the C-BT deal.

Ken: 1934.

Ralph: We had a drought and everybody saw that they had to do something to get extra water and that was what got it started. My father was on the board of the Colorado Big Thompson Conservancy District. I have worked some with selling water rights for the Colorado Conservancy District and I did that in my spare time. I have done some investigation work of getting deeds corrected. I think I went as a guest when they were pouring concrete in the tunnel (Adams Tunnel). I used to go on inspections with dad and that was quite a sight. They were about half way through the tunnel when I was in there. I have followed the Conservancy District all the time.

Ken: You mentioned your father was on the Board of Directors. You don’t happen to know if he was one of the original on the Board.

Ralph: He was on the original Board.

Ken: He was one of the original Board of Directors. That was Robert C. Benson. He is probably in that picture where it has Mr. Dille and Charles Hansen. Was he instrumental in the organization prior to the Board being formed, because there was a water users organization prior to that.

Ralph: I would say probably just as president of Louden Ditch Company and he looked after water interests for his grandpa. He was interested in that. I think at that time he was also county commissioner.

Ken: How long was he a county commissioner?

Ralph: He took in two terms. He went to work for the Conservancy District. He was an appraiser. I know some of the appraisals that he worked on. Some were from the Carter Lake area for the power line from there to Fort Morgan. I guess it was work for the Bureau of Reclamation. He didn’t want to be the county commissioner so he took that job.

Ken: Very interesting. That’s something that I sure never knew. How did he like that.

Ralph: It was something he liked. He wasn’t ready to retire just yet.

Ken: How old was he at that time?
Ralph: He was born in 1881.

Ken: This would have been in the forties.

Ralph: Yes.

Ken: He must have been in his ’60s.

Ralph: Yes.

Ken: We are going to continue to talk about the C-BT, because I know you know a lot more about the C-BT than most people around here. We have talked about your father, working as an appraiser which is very interesting. I know that you were the Secretary-Treasurer and one of the questions I wanted to ask, I have done most of the field investigations for the Water District that have been transferred from farm to farm. At one time there was a farmer in the Louden that transferred some of his C-BT water or sold permanently some of his C-BT water outside of the Louden Ditch Company. Old Reuben was just madder than a banshee because if there was some farmer within that system had any extra water, there was another farmer within your system that could use it. Was there any kind of policy in the Louden Ditch Company or was it just a gentleman’s agreement? We’re talking about C-BT water now.

Ralph: I don’t know anything about that.

Ken: I know there is not much water that moves outside of the Louden Ditch Company. It stays pretty much within the system itself. It’s a pretty closed system.

Ralph: It’s mostly a river ditch. They don’t have too much storage. You can’t transfer river water very handy. It can be done, but reservoir water can be put back in the river and take it out some place else. That’s probably what somebody might have tried to transfer river water and that would be pretty hard to do.

Ken: It sounds like your family and the Louden Ditch Company have been strong supporters of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project and not only supporters, they have done their share of work.

Ralph: I think we have been interested in it from the beginning. They thought a whole lot about the work that was going on.

Ken: I know that when I was in the Operation and Maintenance Department, especially in the operational part of the Conservancy District, you would periodically come in the office and check on various things. You kept up on what we were doing. We had a real good working relationship, I do recall that.

Ralph: I always thought we had a good relationship. I never had any qualms about what we were doing and there are some things for the best that I know of that we changed. Originally Lake Estes was monitored about every hour to keep the river flow and they changed it to everyday, or on a 24 hour basis. They would take the average of one day and turn it out the next day, and that made a big saving in irrigation water.
Ken: So the diurnal fluctuation wasn’t the concern then?

Ralph: It had been before. So we made changes too once a day. It was a big help. A lot of times I used to start out at 4:00 a.m. in the morning with a good head of water, and maybe the river would go down low and I would lose part of it by 8:00 p.m. Maybe by night I was down to half the water I had that morning. The next morning I would do the same thing over again, and you can’t run an irrigation system very handy that way.

Ken: Did you ride your canal once a day or twice a day, or what?

Ralph: In those days you just couldn’t keep up with it. You would try to out guess it and get it set for the day. I had to make two and three tries at it a lot of times when the changes fluctuated so much. On this other system where it stayed for 24 hours, you’ve got use of all your water and you didn’t have to waste your water.

Ken: It made it easier on the water commissioner too.

Ralph: Yes. They were on the go all the time.

Ken: Who were the water commissioners that you worked with?

Ralph: I started with Kelly, then Krawl. Kelly, I think was interested some in milling elevator, but I know he was river commissioner when I first started. Krawl was his assistant.

Ken: Then George was on for quite a number of years. Lloyd Blewitt took over after that. Lloyd retired just a few years ago. Who’s on now.

Ralph: I don’t know. The fellow over at Greeley.

Ken: I think those are the only water commissioners that we have had -- Kelly, Krawl, Blewitt, and now the present one is an engineer from Greeley who came to work from the state department -- Don Brazelton.

Ralph: I don’t know, I have never met this new fellow.

Ken: One of the things, we have a real complicated system and I give a lot of tours to a lot of foreign students. They have a hard time with the way we do things so nonchalant by telephone with the lack of errors. We operate these huge amounts of water, which is the life blood of this whole area and it’s also millions of dollars worth of business over a telephone. It’s hard for them to understand that there is not somebody with a gun following that water down the line. Would you care to elaborate a little on how the system works with both the C-BT water the state water commissioner with these various decrees in your own words?

Ralph: I’ll admit it is a complicated system, but each ditch company has priorities and they’re numbered from 1 on up.

Ken: You have a number 1 decree on the Big Thompson River and you have a number two decree on storage. Would you explain that a little bit.
Ralph: Well, Number 1 water was a ditch that used to be out east of the sugar factory and it had about 100 feet of right. That whole area was abandoned and at that time they sold the water rights. The Louden got 7 feet of it. The main part of it went to the Hillsboro, I would say they bought 2/3 of it. Several individuals and ditch companies got some of that original 100 feet of number 1 water.

Ken: So what you are actually saying is that you got the first 7 cfs out of the Big Thompson River.

Ralph: Yes. Once in a while when the river gets down below 100 feet we have to prorate between all of them. That does not happened very often, but it has happened. The first storage that was built was the Lone Tree Lake and they got a number 1 storage right. Donath Lake on the Louden was the second one built so they got number 2. Boedecker Lake was the third one built and Lake Loveland was number 4. Seven Lakes is number 5, and Boyd Lake is 6. They fill in that rotation.

Ken: That goes back a long ways and that tells the priority rights. Now, these priorities have a number of acre-feet according to capacity, is that correct?

Ralph: Yes. They can fill that much on most of them to make the lake full.

Ken: One filling.

Ralph: One filling. Big T water has been a real help on the ones that are short of storage water. That’s like Louden, our storage system is quite small compared to our acreage. This C-BT water has been a life saver on storage water.

Ken: It seems to be working. It’s pretty hard to put a cut and dry rule on anything because each farm I investigate is different. We do investigate every transaction. What percentage of the Louden Ditch Company land that started back in the early days is now domestic or suburbs?

Ralph: I don’t know, a pretty big percentage. I would say maybe over 50%.

Ken: How has that changed the operation of the Louden Ditch Company?

Ralph: The City has been the beneficiary of change. They have taken the shares that were originally on the land that was annexed into the City. The City received those shares so they could use it as domestic water. I don’t exactly know how they have come about it. They had some of the water transferred so the City could use it for domestic water. It’s still in the Louden system as far as bookkeeping goes.

Ken: Could you name the officers and Director, Ditch Company Superintendent, the number of employees and anything about their maintenance.

Ralph: I’m not so sure about the Board right now. Jim Svedman was president and Bud Stump was Secretary-Treasurer. I don’t know who’se on the Board beside that. I don’t have any idea who’se superintendent of it anymore. I have not
really kept up on it. We have a board of seven stockholders and there is the president and vice president who are board members and sometimes the secretary-treasurer is and sometimes not.

Ken: Of these seven men, or women, or I better at this day and age say persons.

Ralph: I don't think there are any women on the board yet.

Ken: Are they all from the Louden Ditch Company or are they from these little laterals?

Ralph: They have to have Louden stock to run into their laterals. The lateral they might be under is extra besides the Louden stock. Then those laterals have a board of directors and they might be on both of them -- like Bud Stump who is on the Lateral board.

Ken: I guess what I'm trying to get at, is there just one board for the whole organization or is there a board for Louden and a board for extension.

Ralph: For each one of them.

Ken: Do they all meet together?

Ralph: No. They all meet separate.

Ken: Separate.

Ralph: They have their own ditch rider. Here lately they have combined ditch riders who took care of part of the main ditch and also some of the laterals. It used to be that each one had their own. When I first started in 1933, I met with four of them every morning and gave them their orders for the day. That's when we didn't have a way of communication.

Ken: Where did you meet them?

Ralph: Most generally we used to meet beyond Taft about 37th Street. That's where the big lateral comes down from the main ditch.

Ken: Was it always a pretty congenial type meeting?

Ralph: Yes. The main thing at that time, we used all the water that we could get. A lot of times I would have a little over 200 second feet and I would run it for a month. I would have to decide how many inches to the share of stock that we would issue. If there were several out of the ditch that weren't using their water, I could raise the issue per share. When they were all in I would have to clamp down with less inches per share.

Ken: Now in the information that we have, I think there are200 shareholders.

Ralph: About 225, or there was at one time.

Ken: Okay, 225 actual shareholders. That means there was that many individual users then.
Ralph: Yes.

Ken: Then you had to divide that by your 200 second feet. Then it was put into different laterals like the Big Ditch extension?

Ralph: Yes. Each one of the shareholders under each one of those laterals. I would total out so I would know how much to put into each ditch. Then it was up to the ditch rider to divide it.

Ken: Were there times when you would have direct water and reservoir water in at the same time?

Ralph: Yes. We used to run direct water probably until July 4 and from then on a lot of it had to be reservoir water. Louden Ditch Company owned some of Lake Loveland. That was part of our reservoir water.

Ken: Has the Louden Ditch Company computerized their bookkeeping system or do they still do it by hand.

Ralph: I think Bud Stump has got it all computerized. I did it all by hand. When he took over, he had a couple of boys in school and they were working on computers, so I think he put all of Louden business on the computer.

Ken: That makes sense in this day and age.

Ralph: It takes a lot of work to get it set up, but afterwards it goes pretty quick.

Ken: What would you say the biggest change that C-BT might have made with this whole area and the Louden Ditch Company. It is one of 120 different ditch companies, but it is very very instrumental of course in C-BT. What big change did you see brought about by the presence of the C-BT?

Ralph: I think one thing that changed was the farmers crop production. Crops like sugar beets and corn take water later and most generally the river flow is quite low at the time water is needed. The C-BT has furnished water to mature those crops. Not only that but the cities have come into it and they depend on it. It's hard to come by any other way and it's something they can depend on.

Ken: How do you feel about the cost and the price of the water and the cost of the Project?

Ralph: Well, the original contract has been pretty well filed and I don't know of anything better than the original contract and how the cost was set up.

Ken: The rental part was actually $1.50 an acre-foot unless the contract has been open ended. You're still paying $1.50 an acre-foot. There are still a few of those farms out there. Of course a $1.50 is not very much money now, but in the early days was that a lot of money?

Ralph: It was a bargain.

Ken: Even then?
Ralph: I think so because I know, Boyd Lake, for instance, used to belong to Public Service Company. They didn't really use it. They did sell water to the farmers. We paid from $5 to $7 a second foot so that would be $2.50 an acre-foot. That was a bargain because we used to use a lot of it. We used to transfer water back and forth. That makes $1.50 a pretty good bargain.

Ken: Do you feel like the C-BT has been responsible for the growth in the area?

Ralph: Yes. If it hadn't been for that, I don't know how you would take care of the development that's going on. Industries have come in and there is a source of water that is distributed around to take care of all that.

Ken: So with the C-BT water it actually helped you financially by being one of the landowners next to Loveland itself.

Ralph: Yes, you know water in this country is a scarce article for a big population.

Ken: How do you feel about the big city of Denver or Thornton coming up here and buying up water and transporting it down south?

Ralph: I think it shouldn't have been allowed. That's just the way I feel about it. A farm I used to be interested in was in that deal and they came up and wanted to buy his water. He wouldn't sell them the water but he would sell them the whole place with the water. That's what he did and I think he was smart that way, but I think the water should have stayed up here.

Ralph: Maybe they have a plan for it. There are a lot of good farms that are going to be hurt.

Ken: I just wanted to get your opinion. Do you think the farm economy had anything to do with the reason why they were sold?

Ralph: It probably was chance. The fellow that bought the place I had was ready to retire anyway and that was an out for him. He got his money back. It was a good deal for him. I don't think the economy helped. What is going to happen when they take the water off those farms, that's when it is going to show up.

Ken: The generation from us is probably the one that is going to be in trouble.

Ken: We just finished talking about following the canal and a little bit of history in the area, the Gypsum Plant, then we're going to follow the canal east. If there are any interesting things that you can think about what may have happened during construction or whatever. We are getting a little closer to Loveland by Rist Benson Reservoir which was your own property.

Ralph: We might go back to the backbone. Underneath that whole area is an underground lake and there have been some people that walked in and saw this. I never have, but I know some that have and it's just an underground lake. It's all hollow under that area. You used to be able to walk in and out of the gypsum pits that come out on the Highway 34.
Ken: Is that right. So that's all mined out underneath in there.

Ralph: It's all dissolved under there. It's full of water. We call it Red Point right there across from the Riverhouse Restaurant that was quite a deal. We had to enlarge that to get around that curve.

Ken: That's where the boards are to keep the rocks from sliding down into the highway.

Ralph: They surveyed a time or two. Back a ¼ of a mile north of there, it's only about 400 feet through that hill. The ditch makes a bend there and it's only about 400 feet from one side to another. They were going to tunnel that but they never got the job done. It would have been cheaper because there was a lot of rock on the curve.

Ken: You think it would have been cheaper to have tunneled it. They're stuck with what they have got now.

Ralph: That's going back to early history of the Louden. They hired an engineer to lay out the ditch and he surveyed it and made a preliminary survey. Then he wanted a thousand dollars to go back to cut and fill, shorten the ditch and straighten it up. They didn't have a thousand dollars so they just started in and followed the preliminary survey. They divided it up in sections and gave different ones a job working those sections, and A. S. Benson was the superintendent to coordinate the whole thing and built a ditch in a year's time.

Ken: In a year's time. This was cooperation then amongst all of the farmers or all of the water users. Did you use any special contractors?

Ralph: I don't know much about that.

Ken: Now A. S. Benson was what relative to you?

Ralph: My great grandfather. Some had a section of rock work and some of them had dirt work. They used horses and graders and slips to work with. The men got $2.00 a day for 10 hours of dirt work. Men with the team slip and wagon got $4.00 a day for 10 hours of work.

Ken: Now did they compact like we know of compaction today?

Ralph: No. I don't think so. That was back in '78, a long time ago.

Ken: How many miles did they finish in that one year.

Ralph: They had it ready to operate in a year's time. In the off season they had a lot more work to do. It was 18 miles of main ditch and then there are branch ditches that were built right after that.

Ken: They didn't waste any time.

Ralph: They just kept working at it.
Ken: That's interesting. We are past the Riverhouse where the Riverhouse Restaurant is now. Now I have ridden this canal and there are places where the canal road is mighty narrow.

Ralph: I know it is.

Ken: There are houses built underneath that canal with the 200 second foot ditch up above it, but yet it has been there since 1878.

Ralph: Of course there weren't any houses then.

Ken: We follow over on the west side of Loveland. We go on up to the Golf Course which used to be an old airport.

Ralph: The airport was south of 22nd Street between that and Highway 34, and the Golf Course was a farm.

Ken: Was that part of Stump's farm?

Ralph: I call it the Honda's farm. Honda's owned it then and they owned land up at Estes Park where the north ranger station is. He raised cattle up there and brought them down on the farm.

Ken: We travel on north where we do get to the Stump farm located north of Loveland.

Ralph: Yes. That used to be the Dwinelle Farm when I was a kid. I farmed the next place north of the Stumps at one time.

Ken: Now we're getting up in here close to where the Big Lateral takes off.

Ralph: The Big Lateral takes off before you get to the Stump farm. See the Stump farm goes in here. Then I used to farm up on 57th Street and the house was down here, on Taft Avenue just north of Stump's.

Ken: Big Lateral goes to Cemetery Lake?

Ralph: Yes, and it goes out east to Boyd Lake.

Ken: Was there any kind of a story about when you put in the siphon and cut out the loop up north of Taft.

Ralph: It isn't a siphon it is a concrete lined dike that's up there. There used to be five bridges there in the bottom in about a ¼ of a mile. They put a dike in there and concrete lined it and eliminated 3 bridges.

Ken: Was it for maintenance purposes? Then we go on through here. Do you have any kind of a story from that point on over to Donath?

Ralph: North Louden takes off.

Ken: North Louden actually takes off ¼ mile west of Donath. It goes up 287.
Ralph: It goes up to Fossil Creek.

Ken: A lot of this land in here is owned by one big realtor now?

Ralph: I think it is a whole development. I don't know.

Ken: It also goes up to Robert Benson, or the official name is Fairport Reservoir. Of course there is Donath. Then on the east of Donath is the Louden extension which goes out past I-25. Now how far does that go?

Ralph: About a mile.

Ken: Just a mile past I-25. Over by Parmigan Golf Course. Jim Svedman is now president. How does he fit in with the ditch company and his farms and all?

Ralph: He still has some farm land in that area. He sold the Parmigan Golf Course. They had a pretty big farm there. There is a spillway that goes over there and then goes into the Poudre River for any flood water that might come.
The First Baptist Church of Loveland was organized Sept. 17, 1878 with twelve members, including Jane Benson my Great Great Grandmother and my Great Grandparents Aaron S. and Marion Benson and my Great Aunt Mary Benson Lewis and husband James Lewis.

My parents were Robert C. and May King Benson were married Feb. 20, 1902 at May King's parents home, the First Baptist Church at Sixth and Cleveland, where both were members was under construction at that time. They farmed the A.S.Benson farm seven miles North of Loveland where the Fairport Reservoir is. In 1907 my parents bought the Jane Benson farm on 29th Street where I have lived the most of my life.

I have attended the First Baptist Church all my life, been a member over 70 years, and served on many boards and committees from Secretary of the Sunday School to Trustee Board and the Diaconate Board.

I started school in 1909 at the Lincoln School where the Valley Bank is now, went to High School in 1917, that is now the Bill Reed School. I transferred to The Colorado School of Agriculture of the Colorado Agricultural College in 1918. In 1920 I was on the stock judging team and won two first prizes at the Denver Stock Show in 1921. In 1921 I graduated with a rank of Captain in the R.O.T.C.

My Grandparents were Perry Cleghorn Benson and Emma Redman Benson, they lived where the Village Inn is now. William Luther King and Helen Taylor King they lived at "King's Corner" at highway 402 and 287.

I farmed with my father and in 1924 I rented the Hubbs farm on North Taft avenue, then in 1929 moved to my father's farm East of Timnath on the County Line in Weld County. In 1933 I sold out and went to work for The Louden Irrigation Company as Superintendent, in 1941 I rented the home place on 29th Street and my parents moved to town. In 1960 we started development of farm into lots and annexed to the City, in 1964 I sold out and went back to work for the Louden and retired in 1984.

I was Secretary Treasurer for the Big Thompson Water Users for 35 years.


In 1948 was elected to the Larimer County Agriculture Stabilization Committee retired in December 1964.

Member of E.F.O. Elks since 1936 served on the trustee board for 16 years.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Certificate No. 1847

To all to whom these presents shall come, GREETINGS:

Whereas, Jane Benson of Larimer County, Colorado,

has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Denver, Colorado, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said James Benson for the Tract of Land described in said Certificate,

according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 15th of April, 1860, entitled "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," and the acts supplemental thereto, for

The Tract of Land described in said Certificate shall be conveyed to the said James Benson.

According to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said Tract has been purchased by the said

Whereas, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, have given and granted, and by these presents do give and grant unto the said

and to the heirs, the said Tract above described: To Have and to Hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said

and to the heirs and assigns forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws and decisions of Courts, and also subject to the right of the proprietor of a vein or lode to extract and remove his ore therefrom, should the same be found to penetrate or intersect the premises hereby granted, as provided by law.

In Testimony Whereof, I, 

President of the United States of America,

have caused these letters to be drawn, attested, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the day of , in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and , and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and __th.

BY THE PRESIDENT: ____________ Secretary.

Recorder of the General Land Office.

Filed for Record the day of , A.D. 18__, at o'clock M.

Deputy.
### Table of Land Measurement

**LINEAR MEASURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Equivalent in Square Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 inch</td>
<td>.0833 ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.92 inches</td>
<td>1 link</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 inches</td>
<td>1 foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 feet</td>
<td>1 yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 links</td>
<td>16 1/2 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 links</td>
<td>1 rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 links</td>
<td>1 chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 1/2 feet</td>
<td>1 rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1/2 yards</td>
<td>1 rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 rods</td>
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<tr>
<td>66 feet</td>
<td>1 chain</td>
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<td>80 chains</td>
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<td>320 rods</td>
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<td>8000 links</td>
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<td>5280 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>1760 yards</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
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**SQUARE MEASURE**

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<th>Measurement</th>
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<td>1 acre</td>
<td>43,560 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 sq. ft.</td>
<td>.02 4356 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 sq. yd.</td>
<td>.10 4356 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 sq. rd.</td>
<td>.43 4356 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 sq. acr.</td>
<td>60 4356 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 sq. mi.</td>
<td>640 4356 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 sq. km</td>
<td>1 4356 sq. ft.</td>
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**LAND MEASUREMENT INFORMATION**

#### ACREAGE

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<tr>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Square Feet</th>
<th>Acre Equals Rectangle</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>217,800</td>
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<td>261,360</td>
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<td>10</td>
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**Sectional map of Township showing adjoining Sections**

**ACREAGE**

- 40 CHAINS = 160 RODS = 2640 FT.
- 20 CHAINS = 80 ACRES
- 80 RODS = 10 ACRES = 640 FT.

**Table of Land Measurement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Chains</th>
<th>Rods</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Feet</th>
<th>Yards</th>
<th>Chains</th>
<th>Rods</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Feet</th>
<th>Yards</th>
<th>Acres</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. W.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. E.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Line direction diagram**, showing typical method of describing the direction of lines in preparing legal descriptions of land parcels. Solid heavy lines N-S and E-W are cardinal directions due North South and East-West. Each Quadrant (NE Quadrant shown) equals 90° 00'00" (90 Degrees). One Degree may be written: 60 Minutes; 0°18°00"; 1° or 1'00''00"; 60 Seconds may be written: 0° 00°00''; 1" (one Minute); or 0°01'00''. Broken lines A-B and C-D are typical survey lines, showing typical bearings (directions) in each direction.

60 seconds equal one minute
60 minutes equal one degree
Louden Tour
10-31-86 B. T.
River headgate

Old measuring section
below headgate

Inlet to siphon
under Buckhorn Creek.
Old control from Buckhorn Creek near siphon inlet.

Walking north to Buckhorn Creek.

Buckhorn Creek headgate.
Diversion spillway near Buckhorn Creek.

Control gates at outlet of siphon under Buckhorn Creek.

Looking East.
Looking South.

Measuring flume below Buckhorn siphon outlet.

Inlet to Gypsum siphon.
Crude but it works.

Turn out to Rist Benson Lake.

11-1986
Large sugar beet pile S.
East of Johnstown