

Poudre Heritage Alliance – Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area
Heritage Culturalist Program
2017 Site Descriptions
SHF Project # 2017-M2-004
Deliverable #12

2018 Historical Sites for Field Learning / Heritage Documentation Program

- 1. Benjamin Eaton House in Windsor**
- 2. Lake Canal in Fort Collins**
- 3. Arthur Ditch (Town Ditch) in Fort Collins**
- 4. Delph Carpenter childhood home in Greeley**
- 5. White-Plumb Farm in Greeley**
- 6. Greeley Number 2 Ditch in Greeley**

Note: The Strang Cabin, which was included in the 2018 sites in the SHF grant application, has since been destroyed. We have replaced it with the Benjamin Eaton House. Also, this list may change based on accessibility to some of these sites and project feasibility, TBD.

1. Benjamin Eaton House - Windsor

- **Location:** 130 N. 5th Street, Windsor
- **History:** The Eaton House was built in 1902 by early irrigation developer and fourth Colorado Territorial Governor, Benjamin Harrison Eaton, for his ditch workers. Eaton served as a founding officer of the Union Colony. Rich with irrigation knowledge he acquired from Hispanic farmers in the San Luis Valley, Eaton brought those skills to northeastern Colorado and began building numerous irrigation ditches and canals. As a landowner, Eaton built canals and reservoirs to supply 90 land parcels of 160 acres he owned in Weld and Larimer counties. Eaton was instrumental in building numerous irrigation canals, including the Larimer County Canal No. 2 in 1873, Larimer and Weld Canal (also known as the Eaton Ditch) in 1878 and in 1879 the High Line Canal in Denver. It was Eaton's understanding of the importance of the rivers' water that led to the passing of some of Colorado's first water right laws, enabling farmers to harness the river's resources to feed their crops. We are reintroducing the Eaton House again in 2018 as part of the program because: 1) Our volunteer lead on that project from 2016 has moved out of the area; 2) The Town of Windsor is making changes to Boardwalk Park, where the house is located, and they should be finishing up a master planning analysis in March; 3) The house currently has no state or national landmark designations.



Benjamin H. Eaton House c. 2015
Source: *Chuck Fasse*

2. Lake Canal - Fort Collins

- Location: Diversion structure and headgate can be viewed from the Hickory Trail in Lee Martinez Park or from 285 Woodlawn Dr in Fort Collins, CO.
- History: The Lake Canal, also known as the Eaton and Abbott Canal, was built in 1873 to supply irrigation water to the newly established Fort Collins Agricultural Colony. In 1873, the colony hired John C. Abbott, a former member of Union Colony (and future State Auditor) and B.H. Eaton, an experienced homesteader (and future Governor of Colorado), to build their ditches. That year the two men supervised the building of the Lake Canal and Larimer County Canal #2, both of which originated upriver from Greeley's two canals. Though each of these facilities diverted less water than the Greeley #2, they had the combined capacity to divert the entire volume of the river, in years of low run-off or late in the summer, as the river's flow began to recede.

Being uppermost on the river, Fort Collins irrigators received ample water during the drought of 1874. At the same time, Greeley farmers were struggling to get any water. Greeley and Fort Collins confronted each other at the Eaton School on July 15, 1874. Greeley irrigators claimed a prior right to the water of the Poudre River, as their canals predated the upstream diversions by more than two years, while the Fort Collins irrigators wanted a water commissioner to divide the water according to the greatest need. At the July 15th meeting, no settlements were reached, but the Fort Collins group consented to lower their headgates and release more water downstream. The events of 1874 in the Poudre River Valley led the effort to create the system of water management that has since prevailed throughout the Western United States. This system, known as the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation, or "first in time, first in right," dictates that the person or irrigation company who first claimed water from a river is the first person to receive the water from the river regardless of need. Weld County irrigators lobbied to include the doctrine in the 1876 Colorado Constitution.



Lake Canal diversion, looking northwest -
upriver
Source: *Gabriele Woolever*



Lake Canal diversion, looking northeast towards
headgate
Source: *CSU Public Lands History Center*

3. **Arthur Ditch (Town Ditch) -Fort Collins**

- **Location:** Diversion structure and headgate can be viewed from within the Martin Marietta Asphalt Plant located at 1800 N. Taft Hill Rd in Fort Collins, CO.
- **History:** The Arthur Ditch, first known as the Fort Collins Irrigation Ditch, and colloquially as the Town Ditch, was built in 1869 to provide domestic and irrigation water to Fort Collins. It is one of the oldest irrigation ditches on the Poudre, holding an original priority of 32. It was named for James B. Arthur, an early Fort Collins resident, Fort Collins city councilman, Mayor of Fort Collins, and Colorado state senator. In 1887 James B. Arthur, a prominent businessman and politician in Fort Collins, together with Jay Bouton and Charles Mantz, established the Arthur Irrigation Company. James Arthur then purchased the rights to the Fort Collins Irrigation Ditch. Although it is unclear who renamed the ditch, it quickly became known as the Arthur Ditch and became the flagship of the Arthur Irrigation Company.

By the early 1900s, the ever-expanding city of Fort Collins entirely surrounded the northern half of the ditch. Between 1900 and the 1930s, citizens living along the ditch filed a series of petitions and complaints about the safety and sanitation of Arthur Ditch. Disparaged as an eyesore and a safety hazard, residents petitioned for the ditch to be relocated or covered. During the 1930s the ditch became such an issue and safety concern that the city applied for emergency funding with the Federal Emergency Administrator of Public Works to place the ditch underground in a conduit where it traversed through the city.

The City of Fort Collins and the Arthur Irrigation Company compromised with one another. The city and the company placed underground multiple portions of Arthur Ditch that traversed through Fort Collins and interfered visually or physically with development as the city continued to expand. In 1935, Fort Collins and the Arthur Irrigation Company buried the portion of the Arthur Ditch extending from Vine Street to Laurel Street—the northern half of the ditch—in a conduit using funds from the Federal Emergency Administrator of Public Works. Fort Collins continued to expand over the years, and the Arthur Ditch travelled a path that now was located in the center of the ever-growing city. Nevertheless, Arthur Irrigation Company and its successor, the Fort Collins Irrigation Company, had a legal right of way through the city of Fort Collins and that could not be changed. Additionally, the ditch continued to provide irrigation to farmers in and around Fort Collins, as well as to the city itself. (Source: CSU Public Lands History Center, Preliminary Inventory of Irrigation and Water-Related Structures in the Cache la Poudre River Corridor).



Covering the "Town Ditch" at Meldrum and Laurel, c.
1933
Source: *Fort Collins History Connection*



Covering the "Town Ditch," c. 1933
Source: *Fort Collins History Connection*



Arthur Ditch diversion structure, c. 2002
Source: *Poudre Heritage Alliance*



Arthur Ditch headgate, c. 2002
Source: *Poudre Heritage Alliance*

4. Delph Carpenter childhood home – Greeley

- Location: 130 N. 5th Street, Windsor.
- History: Daniel Carpenter was one of Greeley's Union Colonists. The home, which he built dates to 1871, and relates the story of an average pioneer. His three sons and wife joined him in 1872. The home now stands in the Centennial Village Museum in Greeley. Daniel's son, Delph E. Carpenter, is known as the "Father of Interstate River Compacts." Becoming a lawyer and establishing a practice in his hometown of Greeley, Delph Carpenter served many clients with water-related legal needs. As the attorney for the Greeley-Poudre Irrigation District, Carpenter became lead counsel in the Wyoming vs. Colorado lawsuit after the District constructed a tunnel to divert water from the Laramie River. Carpenter argued the case twice before the U.S. Supreme Court (1916 and 1918). With other lawsuits on the way, including one filed by Nebraska concerning the South Platte River, he began thinking about out-of-court solutions to the West's water conflicts. Carpenter conceived the compact idea, encouraged negotiations and then advocated for ratification by state and federal legislatures. In 1922, he helped the seven Colorado River Basin states officially establish the Colorado River Compact as the mechanism to divide the waters among the upper and lower Colorado River Basin States.



Carpenter home at the Centennial Village Museum
Source: *City of Greeley Museums*



Delph Carpenter at his desk.
Source: *CSU Water Resources Archive*

5. White Plumb Farm - Greeley

- Location: 955 39th Ave, Greeley, CO.
- History: The property was settled in 1881 by Civil War Veteran Charles White as a turn of the century tree claim. The farm began as a 160-acre tree claim in the 1880s, filed by Col. Charles A. White, a Civil War veteran from New York who arrived in 1871. An extension of the Greeley-Loveland Irrigation Ditch, called the Grapevine Lateral, was designed and built by Charles White and D.H. Barber in 1903. The 100-year-old flood irrigation system is still used weekly in the summer to water the gardens and lawns. The farm house, the first frame house built in Greeley, was designed by architect and Greeley native, Bessie Smith. The house has been in the same family for more than a century. Emily White, daughter of Charles and Caroline White, was living here with her husband Augustus Plumb, when Charles White died in 1922. Augustus Plumb was the son of Ovid Plumb, who attended the first meeting held by Nathan Meeker on December 23, 1869 to recruit settlers for the Union Colony. One of the wealthiest colonists, Mr. Plumb arrived in Greeley on May 9, 1870, with \$20,000 in cash and a large personal library of scientific and literary works. He had told Meeker that he could only go west “with the certainty of good schools in a short time.”

Charles Ovid Plumb (son of Augustus and Emily) and his wife Isabella took over the farm in 1923 and gradually purchased it from his grandparents' heirs, becoming sole owners in 1945. In 1963, Charles Ovid and Isabella Plumb deeded 2.5 acres of the original tree claim, farmhouse, and out buildings to the City of Greeley for historical, cultural, and museum use after their deaths. The farm was designated a Colorado Centennial Farm in 1986, and placed on the State Historical Register in 1996, and the National Register in 2005. The farm is now a City of Greeley Museum, open primarily for school-age programs. (Sources: City of Greeley Museums, greeleyhistory.org, The Greeley Tribune)



White-Plumb Farmhouse, front and side views
Sources: L: City of Greeley Museums, R: Waymarking.com

6. Greeley #2 Ditch - Greeley

- Location: The headgate is located at approximately 5731 Three Bell Parkway in Timnath, CO which is about one mile east of I-25 and two miles south of Timnath. It diverts water from the north side of the Poudre River and carries it eastward for 26 miles.
- History: Although Union Colony planned four ditches, only two were built. Greeley #2 was the second ditch constructed. When completed, it was larger and more ambitious than any other project along the river. The project began in late 1870 and was finished in the spring of 1871. All members of Union Colony contributed to pay for the ditch and were expected to assist in its maintenance and operation costs. Greeley #2's first season of operation was disappointing and many farmers lost much of their crop for lack of water. In late 1871, the canal was enlarged and altered in an attempt to improve water delivery and prevent another poor harvest. In 1871-1872, a diversion dam was built to help divert the necessary water. The enlargements and the dam were expensive projects for the Union Colony, but 1872 proved to be an excellent year for agriculture and the farmers of the colony enjoyed an abundant harvest.

Seeing Union Colony's success, the Fort Collins Agricultural Colony began construction of their ditches in 1873. By 1874, the ditches of both colonies were in full operation. But 1874 was incredibly hot and dry, and the river's flow was low. There was not enough water to serve the Greeley #2 and all the other demands being made on the river. As the lifeblood of Union Colony, the Greeley #2 became the focus of an angry confrontation at the Eaton Schoolhouse on July 15, 1874. A long awaited rain defused the conflict, but the issue of prior appropriation (first in time, first in right) was openly proposed as a means of resolution.

The Greeley #2 was enlarged twice following the dry year of 1874, which proved expensive and the cost of maintaining the canal continued to rise. In 1878, the ditch and its water rights were sold to the farmers who used it. The farmers incorporated as the New Cache la Poudre Irrigating Company which still controls the Greeley #2 Ditch today.

(Sources: Preliminary Inventory of Irrigation and Water-Related Structures in the Cache la Poudre River Corridor, City of Greeley Museums, greeleyhistory.org)



Greeley Number 2 Ditch
Source: *Poudre Heritage Alliance*