

37-4058
37-4060

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To Files
From Donald T. Bray
Subject Flood water rights for the ranch

9 April 2006

I have been asked to note any memories or input that I can recall with regards to the flood water rights granted to the ranch. My father (Solon A. Bray) had sold the ranch to a Rudolf Tschannen-an immigrant Swiss farmer-on a long term contract basis in 1920. Hence Solon was not involved with the filing for of granting of the flood water rights. Mr Tschannen could not meet his note payments and in 1933 Dad reclaimed half the ranch and we moved back to the ranch in April 1933. I lived on the ranch until going to college in 1940 and again in 1947 and 1948 when I was discharged from the army. This was my first introduction to use of water for irrigation. The first big job of the year was to clean out the main ditches and start the flow of water. We always took out as much water as the main ditches would handle. We continued to take out as much as the ditches could handle until the water flow dropped below this amount. Thereafter we continued to take out all the water in the creek until the flow stopped or became a trickle. I presume in some years we were in the flood water allocations range.

I never did learn the details of this arrangement or how they settled on dividing up the ranch into two equal parts. Dad died in 1936 and I do not remember his discussing it or of any mention of the flood water rights. I acquired our 1/2 side in the 1980 time frame and the Tschannen 1/2 side in the 1990 time frame.

The application for flood rights does make sense though. Historically they commenced the irrigation at the earliest date possible which was normally around 1 April. The water volume in Clover Creek as it enters our place is very high (several hundred cfs) early in the spring due to rain and snow melt runoff from Davis Mountain. The flood water can occur anytime from mid February to mid April. One year we had a high run off later in the year due to a heavy rain. As soon as the snow is gone the flow falls rapidly and is down to a trickle by first to mid June.

The soil on the irrigable part of the place is very deep-up to fifty feet in places. It is also interspersed with gravel streaks. Therefore a good once over heavy irrigation will put enough moisture in the soil to last quite some time. It will give a good first crop cutting of hay and generally produces a good alfalfa seed crop. There has always been a need to irrigate as heavy as possible as early as possible. Hence the ability to use additional water in those years in which high runoff occurs is a very real help.