

## 49. NPIC CHRONICLE VI - Coming of Age

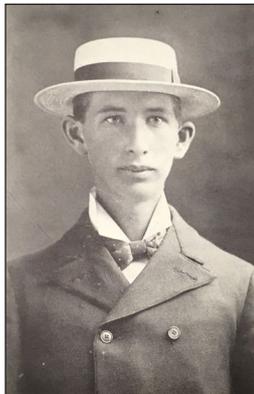
After the Halligan Dam project, the record leaves the impression that the Company, despite its achievements, was in over its head.

An independent consulting report dated April 12, 1912, prepared at the private request of several concerned stockholders, refers to the risk exposure of the stockholders and security holders occasioned by a board of directors that had neither experience in corporate management nor knowledge of engineering.

As one result of the report, NPIC merged with the Mountain Supply Ditch Company<sup>1</sup> in 1912 to form a mutual ditch company, a non-profit enterprise, owned by the water users – a meaningful unification among stake holders as we might say today.

In 1914, NPIC finally bypassed the ‘train wreck’ that was the flume system in the canyon (Chapters 44 & 45) by constructing a mile-long tunnel (opposite) through the canyon wall to deliver water to the Livermore Main. A neighboring rancher and engineer, Jimmy Andrews, was the chief engineer and surveyor for the tunnel project (Chapter 25).

**Ed Munroe.** In 1919, Ed Munroe (1879-1971)<sup>2</sup>, was elected to the NPIC Board. In 1922, a week of round-the-clock frantic hand work alongside the NPIC Superintendent – a super-human effort that saved the Fossil Creek Reservoir<sup>3</sup> spillway from washing out – earned him a reputation. In 1923 he became the president of NPIC and guided the Company for the next thirty years. During his first dozen years, the expansion of Halligan with the promised assistance of the Bureau of Reclamation to its originally



intended height of one-hundred twenty feet was an ever-present, but unrealized, objective.

In the 1930s, Mr. Munroe embraced the vision that was to become the Colorado-Big Thompson (CBT) Project, increasing NPIC’s indebtedness to more than \$600,000 in the process. It was NPIC’s involvement in CBT that, more than any other thing, propelled NPIC to the first rank of all the Poudre Valley irrigation systems.<sup>4</sup> Ed Munroe, with his determined vision (exercised in the depth of the Great Depression even while he was distracted as his property and fortune were being obliterated), must be considered the father of the modern NPIC. He was known as *Mr. North Poudre*.

But still Halligan remained unchanged at seventy feet in height...

**Harlan Seaworth.** The old Board had become conservative in reaction to the trauma of the Great Depression together with the triumph of the CBT Project coming on line. After WWII (as in 1912), irrigators and stockholders were agitating for new management (my father was a ringleader among the agitators).

Harlan Seaworth (1918-2002), a young farmer from Wellington, became the President of NPIC in 1953 and set about to modernize and rehabilitate the system after the tribulations of the Depression. Prior to Harlan’s era, much of NPIC’s distribution system was accessible only by foot or horseback. Harlan worked to build roads along the ditch banks and acquire the machinery to construct them. Management of the system became markedly more efficient.

In 1970, Park Creek Reservoir (Chapter 41, number 14. on map), originally proposed in 1905, was constructed straddling the boundary between the



Roberts and Munroe Ranches – actually a de facto modest expansion of Halligan Reservoir.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 70s and early 80s, a system of five flood control dams were built in the upper Boxelder Creek drainage to protect the NPIC system from flash flood damage, particularly siltation – a big improvement.

In 1958, The City of Fort Collins began to acquire NPIC shares. Some time later the City also traded water rights to NPIC for the Michigan Ditch and Joe Wright Reservoir near Cameron Pass, thus relieving NPIC of an operating headache.

In 1985 Harlan Seaworth declared his intention to retire and asked me if I would run for a seat on the Board with his support (but, I’m getting ahead of the story – more later)...

*Thanks to John Mattingly for his kind assistance with this chapter.*

<sup>1</sup> The Mountain Supply Ditch Company owned the Michigan Ditch, which delivered water from the Michigan River in the North Platte watershed across Cameron Pass to Joe Wright Reservoir on a tributary of the Poudre River in the South Platte watershed.

<sup>2</sup> Suffering from The Consumption (Tuberculosis), a tall and gangly nineteen-year-old Ed Munroe arrived from Quebec in 1898 (see picture) in hopes of a cure. The climate agreed with him as he started at the very bottom and worked his way up the hard way from a \$15/month farm hand to farmer and prosperous lamb feeder, only to lose almost everything in the Great Depression. He clawed his way back – older, but wiser and very conservative. Ref: *Documentary and Life of Edward F. Munroe*, Gladys Munroe, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> The Fossil Creek dam, originally built in 1902, is visible to the west of I-25 just north of the Windsor exit.

<sup>4</sup> NPIC subscribed for 40,000 Units of CBT, making it the largest participant in the project.

<sup>5</sup> The Roberts family had been chronically litigious over the years, especially when it came to NPIC. Park Creek Reservoir added fuel to the fire. In the 1960s, I remember Evan Roberts ranting to my father during their frequent Sunday visits about the progress of his lawsuit against NPIC over the construction of Park Creek Reservoir.

