

# Meridian's Agricultural Heritage

## Ridenbaugh

Virtual Historic Tour

# Ridenbaugh – Construction History

- Begins at Barber Park . The water comes directly from the Boise River. Ends at Lake Lowell.
- 1877: Construction begins. William Morris completed 7 miles. Referred to as the South Boise Canal or Morris Canal.
- 1878: William Ridenbaugh inherits. Sells in 1883 due to lack of funds to continue the project.
- Several owners until 1890 when Boise City and Nampa Irrigation, Land and Lumber Company bought it and continued the project.
- 1893: Canal was complete to Nampa.

# Why is Ridenbaugh Important to Meridian

- Settlers filing for land in Meridian area could, under the Homestead Act of 1862, file for 'Desert Land' at \$.25 acre. Desert Land was "Ground that would not, without irrigation, produce any kind of crop". Claimant must have water to the land within 3 years.
- 1886: "Owing to a failure to get water from the Ridenbaugh ditch this season none of the settlers west of Gress' place (corner of Fairview & Eagle) raised anything that amounted to much.  
"Few of them have enough to keep body & soul together by shooting jackrabbits for the bounty offered by the county. " " We can scarcely comprehend how dry the valley was in the days before irrigation. With no moisture in the air, there was not even morning dew."
- After water became available, settlers poured into the area bringing sheep and cattle via the railroad . Most land was claimed by 1900. By 1902, Meridian was home to the dairy and fruit drying industries.



Above, workers use horses and primitive implements to dig ditches for the first irrigation system in the area. Clysta Gray said, "Water came to Meridian for irrigation via the Settlers' Ditch, and by way of the Ridenbaugh," both in the 1890s. The first water for irrigation was via sloughs and consisted mostly of water from the McPinnock heads, first owned by a man named Rossi. The first

CAPITAL STOCK, \$100,000.00

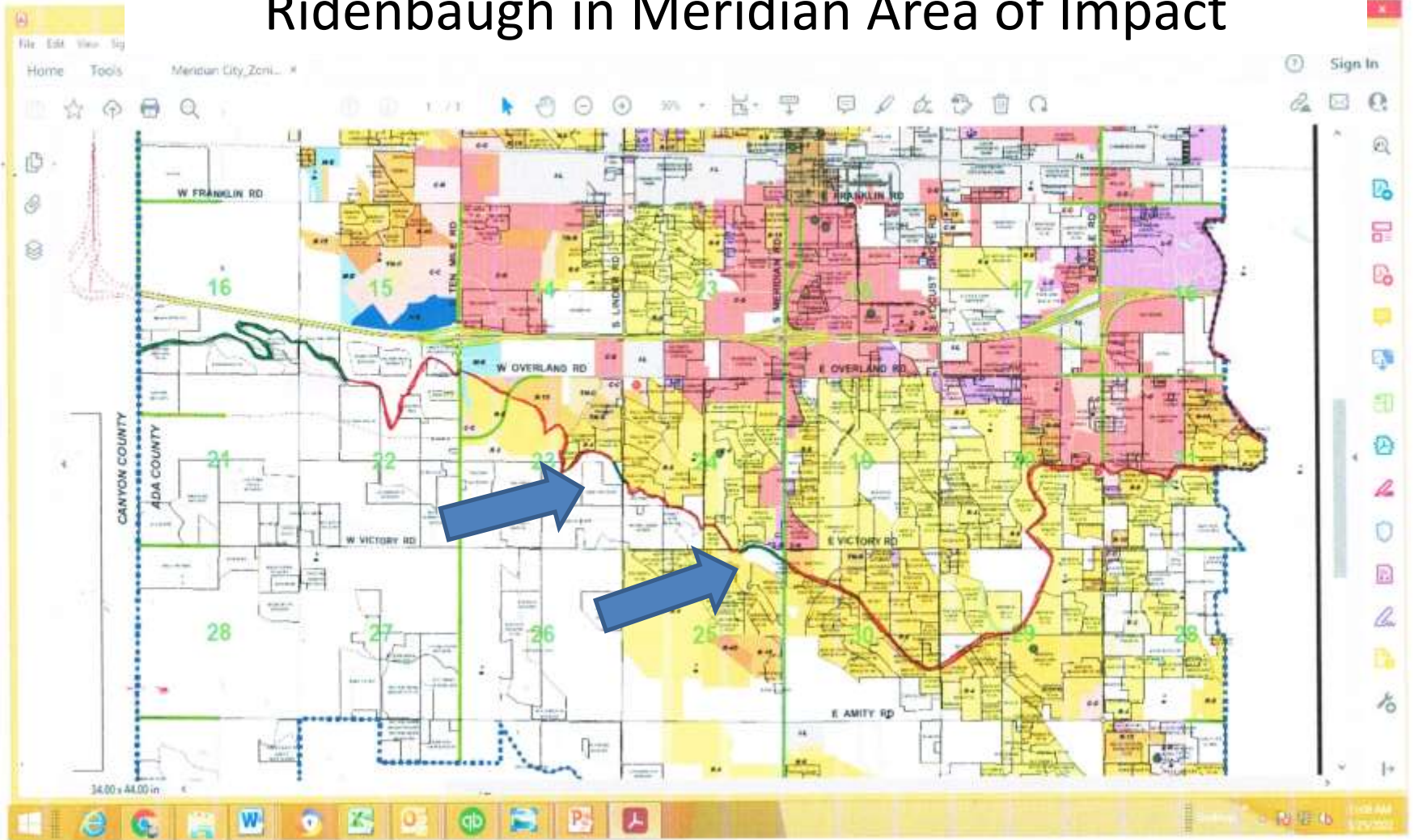
*This is to Certify*

that the Capital Stock of the Settlers' Ditch Company is as follows:

To each share of stock is attached a copy of the Corporation's By-laws, and regulations as to the same.

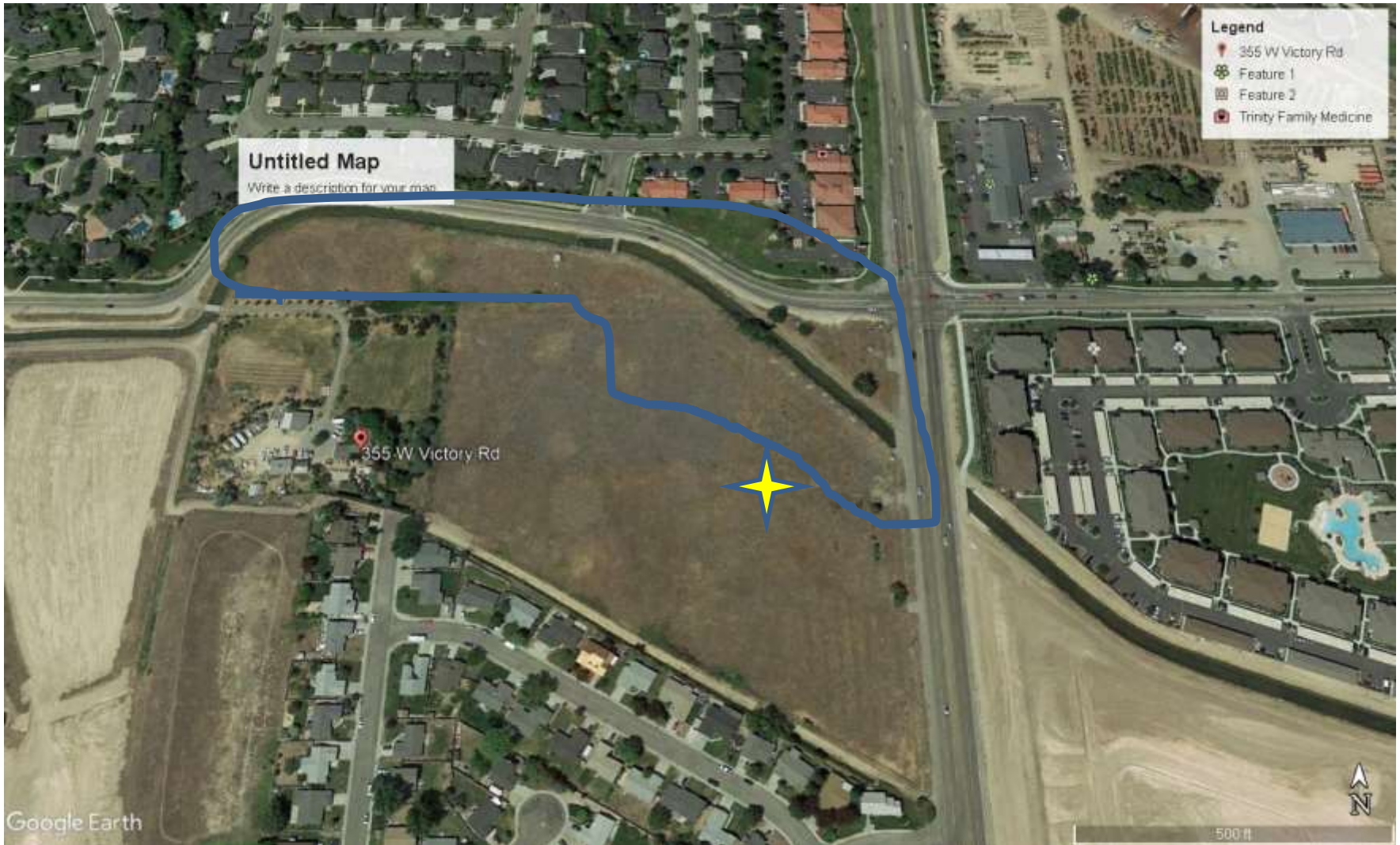
The stock rights attached to this certificate shall be placed in the hands of the holder of the same (or his assigns.)

# Ridenbaugh in Meridian Area of Impact



Only remaining natural sections of Ridenbaugh

# Section to Include in Historical Tour

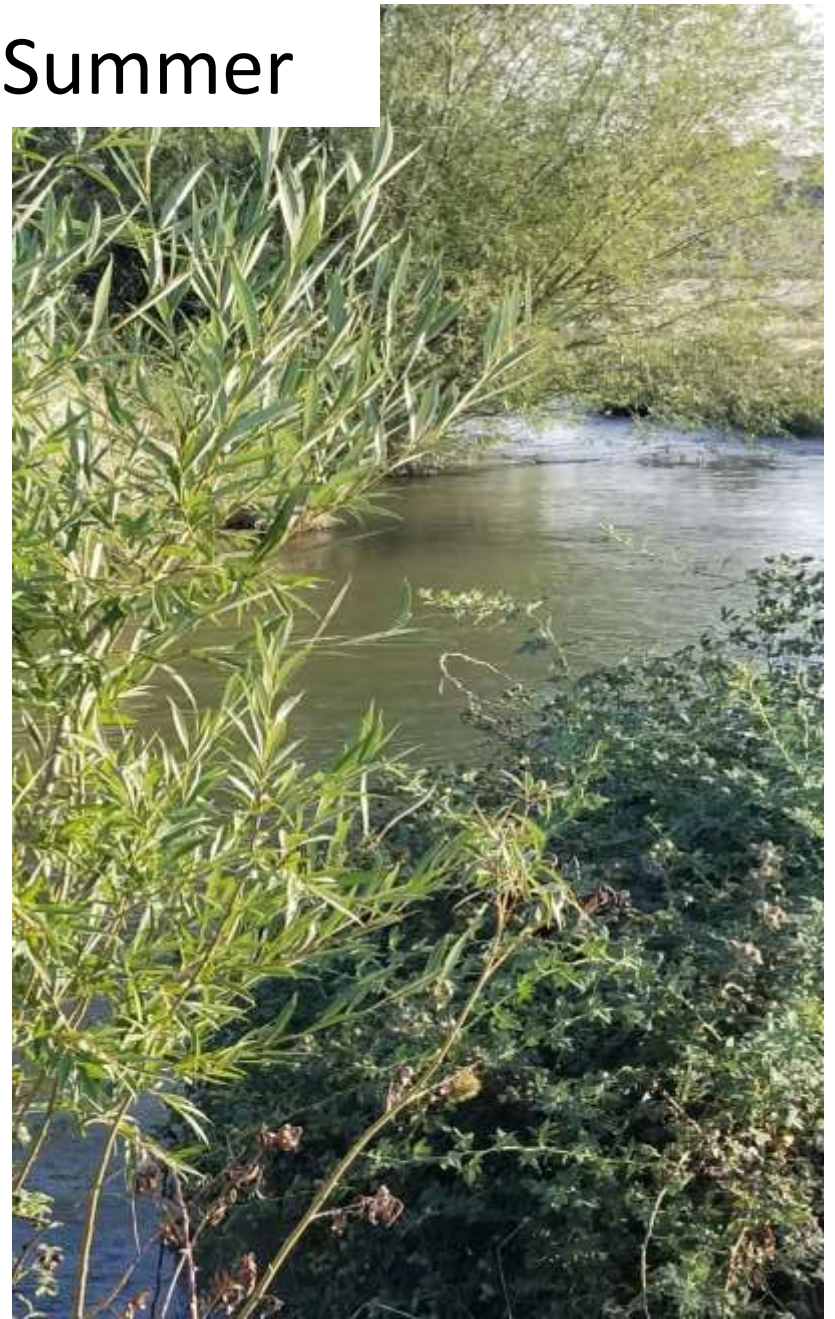


From Idaho Historic Sites Inventory  
Meridian Area of Impact  
O.Haga / Doris Frost Farmstead #01-19811



Original Ridenbaugh – Natural State

# Ridenbaugh Last Summer



# Why Include in Historical Tour

- Ridenbaugh is one of the most important, if not the most important, part of Meridian's agricultural heritage.
- Unique section of Ridenbaugh remains as originally constructed.
- This is the only natural section still visible to people walking or driving.
- Used as a 'stop over' area for migrating and nesting birds. Large number of birds use riparian area. eBird documented over 43 species in the area. *See Golden Eagle Audubon Society letter that follows.*
- Goal for adding to Historical Tour is to make citizens aware and appreciative of the area and to hopefully preserve it as amenity if the land is developed. *Meridian Comprehensive Plan 4.6 "It is essential to find a balance that protects and preserves Meridian's natural resources, agricultural heritage and open spaces....."*





To Whom It May Concern,

The Golden Eagle Audubon Society is southwest Idaho's chapter of the Audubon Society. We are dedicated to building an understanding, appreciation, and respect for the natural world in order to conserve and restore natural ecosystems for birds and other wildlife. Our 1,200+ members, the vast majority of whom live and birdwatch in Ada County, are very interested in activities that preserve and enhance bird habitat as well provide local opportunities to observe birds close to home.

Recently, our members and partners informed Chapter leadership about the unique opportunity to provide habitat and birding opportunities in an area of the county where such features are rare: the currently undeveloped 18.5 acre tract at the southwest corner of Meridian and Victory Roads. We are aware that several plans to develop this property for residential housing have not been successful due to safe access, infrastructure and fiscal issues. Due to the positioning of the Ridenbaugh Canal as well as its functional and historic significance, it seems these issues are not likely to change.

Moreover, this property may prove to have a much higher value to Meridian City residents if left as open space and zoned or designated as a public asset nature sanctuary. A quick survey of the surrounding areas reveals there are no similarly designated places for many miles in every direction. Decision makers are urged to consider the value open space and naturally functioning parcels provide to citizens – both nearby residents and County taxpayers. Again, our quick map survey reveals recent residential development adjacent to the property and the potential for even more development. These new residents would greatly benefit from nearby open space – a place where they can find serenity and a small slice of nature. Recent studies in urban planning and social science overwhelmingly support such places as critical to mental health and social cohesion of residents living in developing areas.

These 18.5 acres, formerly an alfalfa field, have sat untouched since at least 2003. The property changed hands at least 3 times as multiple developers have attempted to convert it to residential housing. Although currently zoned as RUT (Rural Urban Transition), it is clear residential development is not likely to work there.

A review of ebird.org indicates that 43 bird species have been observed on this property *even though it is currently not being maintained as bird habitat*. Imagine what appropriate zoning and proper care and maintenance would do for bird diversity there! Now extend that imagination to include the sounds of bird song in the springtime as Moms leisurely push strollers down paths, school children (from the 3-4 schools within walking distance) picnic in an amenity-rich outdoor classroom, and teams of nearby residents work to restore native plants that benefit butterflies, birds and other wildlife as well the residents themselves.

This property is primed for such use having extensive water rights, an Idaho Power easement (think partners with mitigation funds) and the historic Ridenbaugh Canal that ties together nature and society and could be an anchor for cultural and natural connectivity with educational signs that speak to these connections and to the foresight of community planners who made the bold move to reserve this property.

Golden Eagle Audubon Society's 1,200+ members would support this concept and we implore you to as well. We have a 40 year track record of working with local leaders to conserve space for people and nature and support wholly these uses for this property.

Sincerely,

Liz Urban  
President, Golden Eagle Audubon Society

Ridenbaugh in Concrete

