Land sold to city for pearl of a park

Pearl Jensen Community Park will be one of Boise's largest

By Shannon Lafferty
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After 6-year-old Norvan Jensen rode into the Treasure Valley in a Model T in 1925, he and his parents formed a rocky patch of land 10 miles dusty from Boise. Now, the Jensen family farm will be the city as one of its largest parks.

Norvan Jensen and his wife, Leona, have sold the city their 68.22-acre farm for $300,000, donating $400,000 of the property's value. The land is valued at $150,000.

"I always felt I lived in a park. We had a nice picnic table and lots of pretty trees," Jensen said.

Donating the farm as a park will preserve the land and will incorporate the family name into the city of Boise.

Norvan Jensen, his parents and his sister settled in Ada County in 1925 after spending time in Indiana and Alabama. The family made the trek across the continent in a Ford Model T, traversing rough roads.

"There were a lot of muddy roads and up and down," Jensen said. "I remember we all got out and had to push the car up one hill.""}

In Ada County, his father, Wilford Daniel Jensen, worked for other farmers in the first few years. In the 1930s, the family bought land from another farmer and later purchased additional land from the state for around $600.

"In those days, a dollar was a deal," Jensen said.

The land was originally dry fields of sagebrush and rocks.

"Everybody stayed away from it because they didn't think they could get思想 water," Jensen said.

But his brother was able to use water from a nearby canal. The family raised dairy cows and grew alfalfa, grain and other crops, visiting the city just twice a week.

"What a relief to have an electric milking machine," Norvan Jensen said. "I left with 18 cows. That would have been terrible.

Norvan Jensen has spent nearly all of his life on the farm. The couple will be able to remain in the park house for the rest of their lives.

Pearl Jensen Community Park won't be developed immediately, according to Parks and Recreation officials. A neighboring farmer is growing alfalfa on the land now.

The park site is currently outside the city limits, but in Boise's area of impact, which is land the city expects to eventually annex.

Boise Parks and Recreation typically acquires parkland before the city develops it. The city has active plans for open space parks that total 2,334 acres. Ten sites totaling 246 acres have been "greened up" or developed.

Director Jim Hall said working in advance helps the department beat the curve in acquiring land. "By doing that, we've been ahead of developers buying land," Hall said.

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