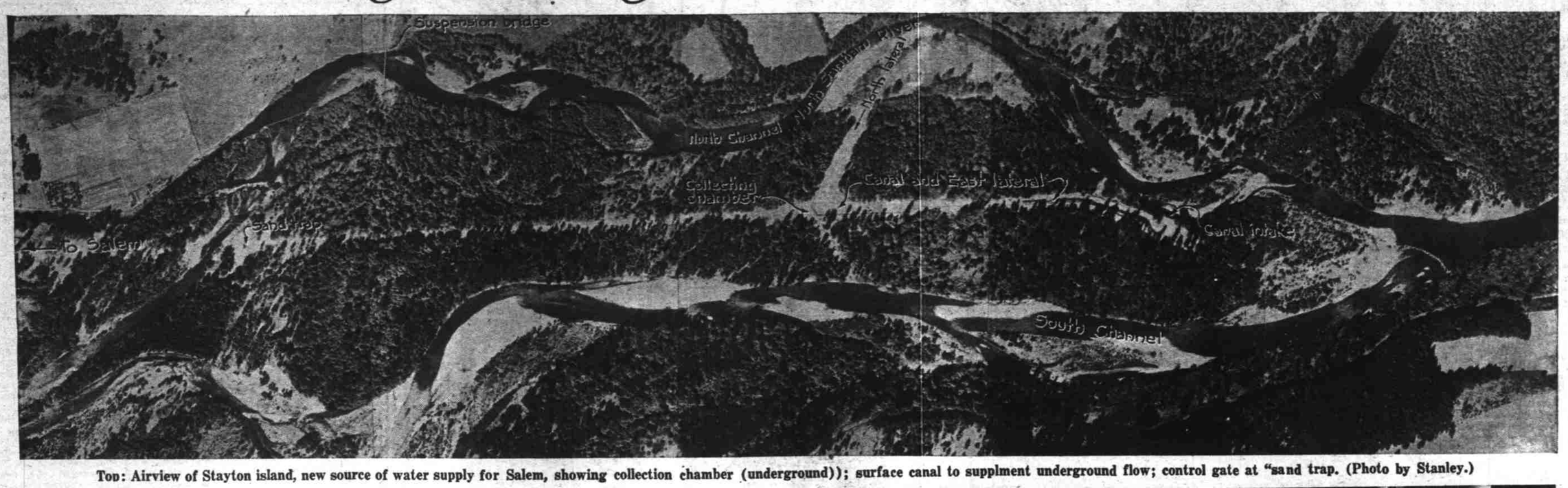
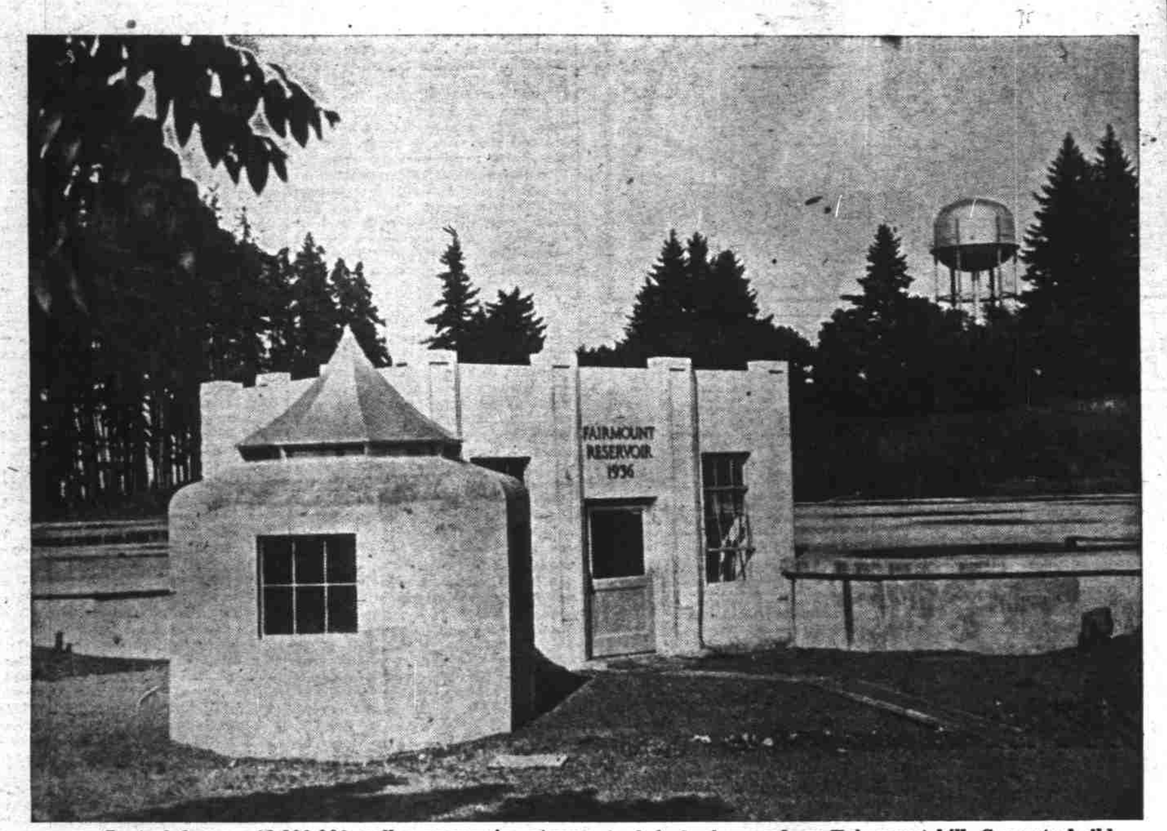
Climax of Long Campaign for Better Water to Be Saturday



Top: Airview of Stayton island, new source of water supply for Salem, showing collection chamber (underground)); surface canal to supplment underground flow; control gate at "sand trap. (Photo by Stanley.)



Control house; 10,000,000 gallon reservoir; storage tank in background, on Fairmount hill. Concrete building in foreground is overflow chamber. (Statesman staff photo.)

Clear, pure water; 16,000,000 gallons of it every day; shown pouring through overflow house during period of flushing out pipeline. (Statesman staff photo.)

Algae Play Important Role In Starting Agitation Here

Dissatisfaction With Supply Nine Years Ago Seen as Start of Movement; Municipal Ownership First Step Toward Improvement Program

On Saturday, October 30, water from Stayton island in the North Santiam river will be turned into Salem's water mains. This will mark the successful conclusion of nine years of effort for better water for Salem.

"Algae" in 1928 and a snowstorm in 1929-1930 set in motion the train of events which brought about municipal ownership, purchase of the privately owned plant in 1935, construction of new reservoir and tank, location of a new source of supply and building of a gravity pipeline from Stayton.

"Algae" Outbreak Gives Water Bad Name

Salem's water history is long. The Salem Water company, owned by the Wallace and Park interests, had supplied the city for several decades, drawing water from intakes on Minto island, fed by the Willamette river. In 1927 the Oregon-Washington Water Service company, a subsidiary of Federal Water Service company, acquired the local system.

Hardly had they gotten established when in the late summer of 1928 Salem water went bad. It went very, very bad. It was discolored and foul. Some blamed algae from the river in the tail-end of summer. Another theory was that the foreign matter came from incrustation in the pipes.

Others said the main supply line running under Willamette slough had sprung a leak, so the pumps were sucking slough water which was contaminated by the logs boomed there for the paper mill and by the waste liquors from the miller. The latter theory is the one which was finally accepted in informed quarters.

The water company officials got frantically busy. They made improvements in their supply line and the bad condition was remedied. The incident gave Salem a reputation for foul water. Legislators demanded special spring water when they met here. So the company tried to locate other sources. They drilled two wells in north Salem to augment supply. Their final decision was to continue using the river source and to install a filter on their property at Trade and Liberty streets.

Frozen Meters Cause of Revolt

Things were placid on the Salem waterfront then until the winter in the early months of 1930 when heavy snows fell and meter boxes were frozen. The company, unable to read meters, made out bills on the average for preceding months, with the belief that errors would be eliminated when the next readings were made. Consumers, seeing their water bills higher than they should be in winter months, raised a protest. This touched the spark of municipal ownership. By initiative petition a charter amendment authorizing acquisition of the water plant and approving a bond issue of $1,500,000 was submitted at the election in May, 1930, and it was approved by a large majority. P. M. Gregory was elected mayor on a public ownership platform.

The city council then employed Baar and Cunningham, Portland engineers, to make a valuation of the local plant. The company discussed selling, but resisted proceedings in court. At one time, in the spring of 1931, negotiations advanced for purchase of the plant at $1,100,000, but were later abandoned in favor of condemnation. Later the court ruled that the amendment was not valid, and that made further proceedings under it futile.

Engineers Report On Possible Sources

Meantime Baar and Cunningham had investigated possible sources of supply. In a report to the city they reviewed three possible sources: the Willamette river, wells, and the Little North Fork of the North Santiam. They rejected wells as being undependable and costly to operate. For use of the river they recommended an intake above the city and filter on top of Fairmount hill. On the gravity line they picked a source of 35 miles from Salem, above Little North Fork.

The city council submitted a new charter amendment, calling for a bond issue of $2,500,000, and allowing voters to express their preference as to supply source. The plea for the Little North Fork was made that it would be "mountain water." Opposition feared the size of the bond issue and condemned the proposed source as inadequate in quantity and subject to contamination. In the election held December 15, 1931, the charter amendment carried and the voters expressed preference for the Little North Fork source.

During the term of Douglas McKay as mayor, Baar and Cunningham made a new valuation, but the water company rejected the tender made by the council on the basis of the valuation. Direct negotiations failed and the city prepared to condemn. Finally, with hope of PWA assistance, arbitrators were appointed to evaluate the plant. This broke down when the city withdrew, the arbitrators having failed to complete their task in the time allotted.

Kuhn Buys Plant By Negotiation

The depression had made it impossible to float municipal bonds at reasonable rates of interest, but reviving markets made it possible for the city to negotiate with assurance its bonds could be sold. Finally in the summer of 1935, on the eve of beginning the condemnation suit, Mayor Kuhn concluded an agreement for direct purchase of the plant for $1,000,000. This was ratified by the city council and the city took possession of the property August 1, 1935. Operation of the plant was put in the hands of the elected water commission: Edward Rostein, chairman, I. M. Doughton, William Gahlsdorf, E. B. Gabriel, J. M. Rickman.

The commission elected Cuyler Van Patten manager and hired Stevens and Koon, Portland, as consulting engineers for planning the rehabilitation of the property.

Island Is Chosen as Supply Source

The battle over the supply source continued. To satisfy those who insisted that wells were the best source the commission drilled holes at various places at points southwest and southeast of Salem, without satisfactory results. Final decision was made by the city administration, the mayor, the city council and the water commission, to go to the main stream of the North Santiam at Stayton. A. D. Gardner of Stayton advised the commission to draw its water from Stayton island. Pits dug in the gravel on the island showed a large flow of good water. The engineers recommended its use.

In 1936 a large portion of the island was bought, and right-of-

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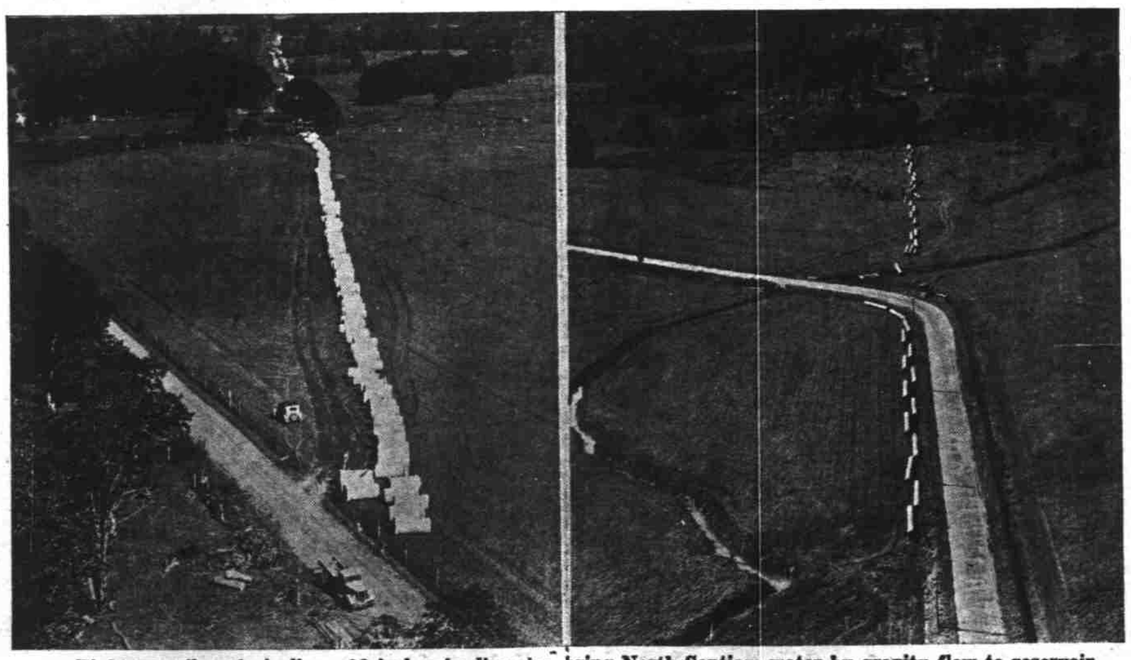

Eighteen miles of pipelines, 36 inches in diameter bring North Santiam water by gravity flow to reservoir and distributing system in Salem. Left, concrete pipe laid out along route of pipeline in construction period. The pipe was manufactured in Salem. Right, steel pipe laid out southeast of Salem. Steel sections were laid in ditch, welded, then tested to make sure there were no leaks. (Air photos by Arany, Salem Flying Service.)

Much More Work Needed to Perfect Water System; Extension of Mains, Replacement of Small Ones Planned

Salem will be using a greatly improved but definitely not a completed water system when Santiam water is turned into the mains next Saturday, Waterworks Manager Cuyler VanPatten commented yesterday.

"It will take at least five years to bring the distribution system up to the standard set by the plans we now have," VanPatten explained.

These plans, worked out by Stevens & Koon, engineers, late in 1935, provide for extensions of mains and for replacement of small old ones with larger pipe to such an extent that water pressure for both domestic use and for fire protection will be adequate throughout the city.

The 12th street cross-town main now being laid will improve the pressure situation but will not solve it for all districts, Manager VanPatten pointed out. There are numerous dead ends to be eliminated by laying mains to provide circulating loops and much small pipe to be replaced.

To "Pay as They Go"

The reason the distribution system improvements will not be concentrated into a brief space of time is that it is the water commission's intention not to sell any more water bonds, to keep its bonded debt to the present $2,200,000, or $300,000 below the maximum authorized by the people.

The manager believes the water department will produce at least $25,000 annually in surplus revenues to be used in purchasing materials and carrying on the improvement program. At that rate, the system can be completed in approximately five years, he believes.

"Our aim is to provide good water service to all patrons and to get a better rating from the fire underwriters," VanPatten said in conclusion.

Amount Voted Not all Spent

$300,000 Bonds not Sold; About Half of Cost in Original Purchase

The question, "How much has Salem's municipal water system cost"? can not be answered to the dollar until a final tabulation and inter-adjustment of the accounts of the city recorder and the water department are made, a few weeks from now, but it is virtually certain that the bonded debt against the system will be held to $2,200,000, the amount of bonds already sold. That means that $300,000 worth of the $2,500,000 in bonds authorized by the people in 1931 may never be used.

Additional costs that will pile up from year to year for five years at least, as the distribution system is steadily improved, will be met from earnings of the system, under the water commission's present plans.

First cost of the system was approximately $1,055,000, including the $1,010,509 paid to the Oregon-Washington Water Service company for the system, excess supplies and work done by agreement for the city; and preliminary engineering investigations and legal services.

Work both already completed and now under way will use up the last of the remaining $1,145,000 of the $2,200,000 proceeds from bonds sold.

Reservoir Is Built

Pending the final accounting for bond funds utilized since the city bought the water system August 1, 1935, the city's expenditures may be itemized roughly as follows:

Fairmount reservoir, capacity 10,000,000 gallons, including drain line to Willamette slough, contract and city construction, $145,000.

Fairmount hill high level tank, capacity 100,000 gallons, including supply line, pumps and drain line, $12,500.

Eighteen-inch main connecting new reservoir to end of main laid by old company to old reservoir but never connected to it, and including miscellaneous early purchases of valves and fittings, $16,850.

Stayton island source of supply, including purchase of island lands, road right of way to island, and construction of permanent suspension foot bridge over North Santiam river, sand trap-control house, underground infiltration galleries, above-ground extra-supply canal from which filters into underground lines; land clearing and laying of 4100 feet of 42-inch wood pipe on island, $110,000.

Steel pipeline from Stayton east city limits to Stayton island, $40,000.

Chlorinators, cost not including chlorinator housing and installation, Masonic park, Stayton, $2916.

Pipeline Big Item

Salem-Stayton gravity pipeline, approximately 19½ miles of steel and 6 miles of concrete, contract cost, $645,901.

Pipeline right of way, approximately $17,500.

Engineering, consisting of $6,400 for surveying system, planning how it should be revamped and designing reservoir; $6000 spent by city council for source of supply investigations, and $36,500 for pipeline and Stayton island development engineering, total $48,900.

Cast iron pipe for 12th street trunk main, Rural avenue to north city limits, and other large sizes along with valves and fire hydrants for other improvements to distribution system, $100,000.

Miscellaneous force account operations such as building valves, pipeline structures and other appurtenances, estimated at $6000.

When the final payment to the American Concrete & Steel Pipe company of Tacoma, Wash. is made early next month, the water bond fund will have been exhausted. A small deficit, as to this fund, will be met out of water department surplus earnings and future construction work financed from this source.

Two Pioneer Girls Are Engaged to Marshfield Men, Friends Informed

PIONEER—An item of interest to the Pioneer folks is the engagement of two of the girls to two young men from Marshfield. The girls are Edna Harris daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Harris, to "Happy" Porter and Leona Berger to Monty Carter.

Roy Cooper accompanied Romney Robinson of Dallas on a hunting trip to Gold Beach in Curry county.

800 Present at Stayton Catholic Church Dinner

STAYTON—Eight hundred attended the dinner conducted by Stayton Catholic church in the gymnasium of the St. Mary's school. Rev. George Sniderhorn, general chairman, reported $1100 as the net revenue for the celebration. This is the largest festival in history.

The proceeds are to be used on the new sisters' home now under construction