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An adequate supply of water and an efficient operating system for its distribution comes in this category—Klamath Falls is considered fortunate in this respect—Today's present water system is owned and operated by the Oregon Water Corporation.

By R. KENNETH EVANS

The last half-century has witnessed greater advancement in the material well-being, under the nation's system of free enterprise and in the many opportunities to enjoy life, than any period in the world's history. Keeping in close step with this progress has been the provision of public utility services which, from a small beginning, have kept constant stride with this general advancement. This development has brought to the average home, business house, industrial plant and municipalities, such as Klamath Falls, comfort not even dreamed about or anticipated by the early day pioneers who settled this region. Perhaps, one of the more important of these utility services is supplying water. Water means life or death for desert travelers. It is the one and all important commodity for the sustenance of life in any form. There is not a living thing but that would wither and die without water. Hence, this statement that an efficient water system is a vital factor in the building of a city. Today, Klamath Falls can boast of one of the most sanitary and efficient water systems in the entire Pacific Northwest region.

The majority of the municipalities in the Pacific Northwest are located in mountainous regions. Water is generally supplied from melting snow or heavy rains high in the mountains. Through the power of gravity this water takes the course of the least resistance from its source and comes to the surface in lower regions.

EARLY DAY WATER SYSTEM

The present water system in Klamath Falls is the outgrowth of a mass meeting held in the city of Linkville in 1894, when H. V. Gates submitted a proposition to the meeting to furnish fire protection for the city. A company known as Baldwin and Gates was formed and pipe lines were laid and water service supplied. However Klamath Falls was incorporated Feb. 6, 1895, a year after this mass meeting, and the name Linkville was relegated. The Klamath Falls Light and Water company began operations Nov. 1, 1895. The interests of Baldwin and Gates were absorbed by this new company and H. V. Gates became president and general manager of the Klamath Falls Light and Water company. A franchise had been granted by the city to H. V. Gates as of April 8, 1895, providing for supplying the city and its inhabitants with water for public and private purposes.

This newly formed company had acquired a small piece of land in the western part of the new city of Klamath Falls, near Link river. The original pumping plant was located on this tract. A reservoir was built at 5th and Grant Sts. by excavating from the rock and building a two-foot thick rubble wall, 61 feet in diameter and 12 feet in depth. This was known as the central reservoir and was replaced in 1926, when a larger steel tank was erected.

There are numerous hot springs located in the central parts of Klamath Falls, but in the Link river canyon are several large cold springs of artesian character which flow into Link river. The largest of these cold springs was on the property owned by E. R. Reames, who deeded the Klamath Falls Light and Water company a two-thirds right to the flow of water from this spring. Today, four deep wells, located on this property, known as the Conger Avenue pumping station, are the source of supply of water, and are capable of supplying 12-million gallons of good water per day. An engineering survey, completed May 20, 1943, states that the available well supply should be adequate to support a population of 30,000 people, if supplemented with proper storage development.

COPCO BECAME THE OWNERS
The Klamath Falls Light and Water company was purchased in April, 1911, by the Siskiyou Electric Power and Light company which was reorganized and December 15, 1911, the name was changed to the California-Oregon Power Company. The following year drilling was begun to tap and encase the water from the underground source that supplied the large spring to eliminate the possibility of surface contamination.

Three original wells were drilled with two reaching a depth of 90 feet and one a depth of 190 feet. The 190 foot well is still in use, along with three other deep wells, one going to a depth of 800 feet. All wells were drilled in hard rock formation and casings coming to the surface. The wells were all capped and connected to one another to supply the main suction line feeding the pumps. The fourth well used today was drilled in 1926 when an 800,000 gallon steel tank was erected to supplant the original reservoir.

The year 1926 marked an era of growth for Klamath Falls when it became a center of industrial activity because of a change in the routing of freight by the Southern Pacific railroad, effecting particularly the lumber industry and the reclaimed lands under the Klamath Basin project. Copco met the demands for improvements in the water system occasioned by this "boom." In 1928, a 400,000 gallon steel reservoir was erected in the north part of the city. In 1930 another 800,000 gallon steel reservoir was built along side the central reservoir. In 1931 a 400,000 gallon steel reservoir was erected to supply the high level portion east of the city. New equipment, extension of mains and general improvement of the system was followed by Copco including the rebuilding of the Conger Avenue pumping station in 1946, which was enlarged to increase the flow and made automatic for remote control from Copco's west side plant.

OREGON WATER CORPORATION

The entire water system was purchased July 15, 1930 by the Oregon Water Corporation which is operating similar plants in Roseburg and Oakland. Glenn Bowen is manager for the company and was identified with the California Oregon Power Company as water superintendent since 1946. Prior to that time Bowen was employed as a civil engineer by Copco since 1940. The entire crew of employees was retained by the Oregon Water Corporation and the majority of key personnel are still in the employ of the company.

Oregon Water Corporation follows the definite policy of keeping ahead of growth and expansion of Klamath Falls. Today, there are 8,775 water services connected with the system, and 8,075 are active users of the water. There are 1,202 miles of water mains and 364 fire hydrants located at strategic points throughout the city. Remote controls have been removed from the Copco west side plant, and a fully automatic use of float switches at the fifth and Grant reservoirs has been supplemented for automatic pumping.

While operating costs, for both materials and personnel, have increased in recent years along with those of all other businesses, increased use of water and employment of more efficient methods have enabled Oregon Water Corporation to serve the community with no increase in rates since 1931.

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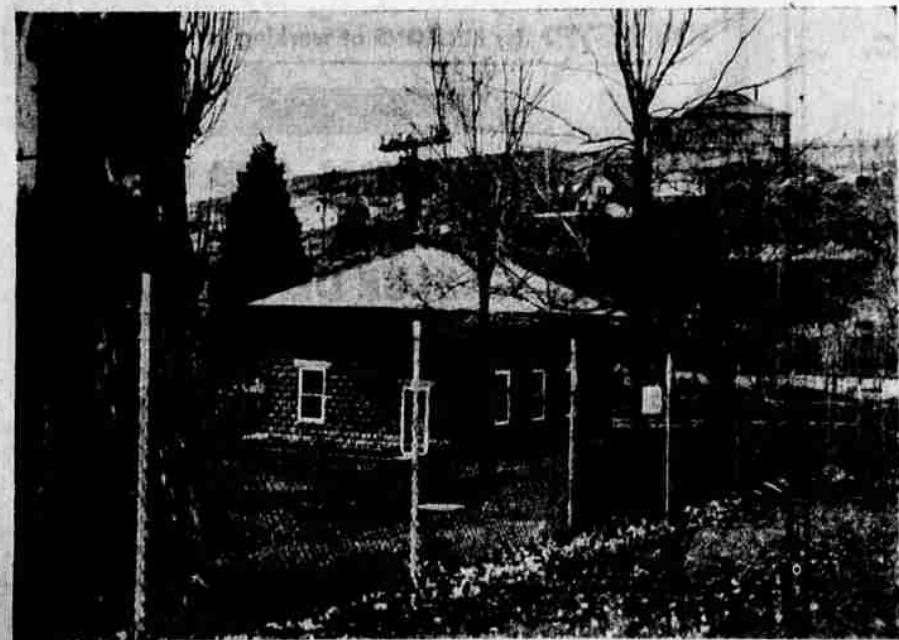
There's a saying in our business that the water is free — the charge is for transporting it to you. That is largely true. The "plant" of the Oregon Water Corporation is mostly out of sight, buried underground, but it is there serving you every minute, day and night.

Oregon Water Corporation is continually improving methods and physical equipment, and is happy to have been able to serve your water needs without any increase in cost of the service since 1931.

Oregon Water Corporation

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