

Underground rivers

There's plenty of water for LA, if you just want to dig

By Nelda Thompson
(Second in Series)

There's lots of water down there not too deep under the surface of Northeast Los Angeles, an area once known as "the land of many springs."

Old timers tell of the old Glassell estate, "gushing with water from many wells."

Some say that there was an underground river that churned below the Hill Drive area and bore "fish without any eyes," back when the century was in its teens.

Water facts and fables frame much of the history of the area extending from the Verdugo Hills to the Los Angeles River.

Kids going to Toland Way school in the twenties were cautioned not to go near "the swamp," an oozing, muddy lake that was nothing but an unsightly hazard until three young men saw its

possibilities.

FAR-SIGHTED

The far-sighted trio included Glen Bollinger, Burton Arnds and Arthur Washburne. They knew that water was the key to progress and here was water going to waste. They figured there must be some active springs down under.

Actually there were three artesian wells, which must have been drilled some 75 years previously and were believed to be part of that Glassell estate and its many springs.

Arnds, Bollinger and Washburne scraped together \$34,000, harnessed the wells and established Sparklett's

Water Company, now distributing bottled water on a national basis.

The supply, coming from "somewhere high in the Sierras," appears to be inexhaustible, according to Clem Wachter, advertising manager for the present firm.

"If we uncapped those wells, there would be enough water to cover the whole area," says Ortha Console, company historian.

OTHER WATER COMPANIES

Other water companies tapped the springs in the Arroyo Seco, one as early as 1915, near the site of the Casa de Adobe.

Howard Sachman, another pioneer in area water, owned and operated a spring water company in the same vicinity.

That the entire community really sat on a "sea" of underground water was discovered much earlier by a couple of men by the names of Morgan and Judson who installed a pumping plant in the Arroyo Seco and piped the water to a reservoir just east of Avenue 66, where Ralph Rogers (often called the founder of Garvanza) established a water company that kept the area well supplied.

There was plenty of water to go around, but that was at a time when Garvanza housed just 15,000 easy-going settlers who shared their water with 12,000 sheep grazing on the poppy-covered hills of Northeast Los Angeles.

DRY YEAR

Along came the year when it only rained six inches and the population was growing. As if that weren't bad enough, neighboring Pasadena administered the final blow by installing its Sunshine Pumping Plant (where Brookside Park is now located). In little or no time, Garvanza's precious water was crossing the Arroyo and filling the buckets with spigots of Pasadena. It was a David-Goliath battle with Garvanza on the losing end.

Highland Park and Garvanza, suffering the pangs of thirst, had to turn in desperation to the city of Los Angeles and give up their cherished independence.

It was lack of water that caused Eagle Rock to go the same route later, just shortly after it had become a city in its own right.

There was plenty of "water down there," but not enough for the growing demands.

While in times of drought such as the state is now undergoing, it is feasible to drill productive wells, it is far from a practical solution.

Escrow officers in local banks point out that as far as is known there are no deed restrictions preventing citizens from owning outright the "water down there."

(Many deeds, however, do restrict mineral deposits under the surface of the land preventing property owners from drilling for oil.)

Well-digging and water witches could return to the scene, but it is highly unlikely.

KEY TO GROWTH

Water, or the lack of it, has been the most important factor in the growth of the city of Los Angeles.

Residents here knew that from the time of the Indians the Pueblo would go back to sand and cacti without water.

The colorful "Dons" who established the great ranches and nurtured the

fields to feed their cattle, dug tunnels through the foothills to get to water. The first orchards were made possible by piping water from the springs above the Arroyo through Beaudry Tunnel into the Annandale District and into Garvanza.

Although nothing of the tunnel remains, the soil deposited from its excavation formed the rim of Johnston's Lake near the Church of the Angels where the famous old winery made use of its water.

The search for water in the early days of this area led to uncovering many other items of interest that surprised the diggers.

A 900 foot oil well was sunk on Poppy Peak and a small coal mine was located near Annandale Road. Few know that Annandale Golf Course was once an active gold mine.

PREHISTORIC BONES

Much more recently the excavation for the expansion of Sparklett's Water unearthed the remains of priceless prehistoric animals that once used the "swamp" as a watering hole back in the days of the dinosaur.

Just an even century ago California was in the

grip of a stupefying drought which saw "the land cracked open with dryness and the carcasses of dead cattle piled high from the San Joaquin to San Diego."

It was so severe that the great ranchos could not survive and lack of water, more than any other factor, cause the demise of the "days of the dons."

At this time there was a young lad who came to the "land of promise" only to be heart sick at what he saw. With an eye to the future he prophesied:

"Whoever brings water to this country will bring the people."

He set out to harness the rivers and build the conduits that would put Los Angeles on the water map for the next century.

WM. MULHOLLAND

The kid's name was William Mulholland and he went from ditch digger to the command post of the greatest water empire ever established in the west.

Mulholland's dream was vast and adequate in its time, but even without drought conditions, the need for an update on water conditions became apparent back in the fifties.

The critical power crisis plus the pollution of waterways is calling for new appraisals.

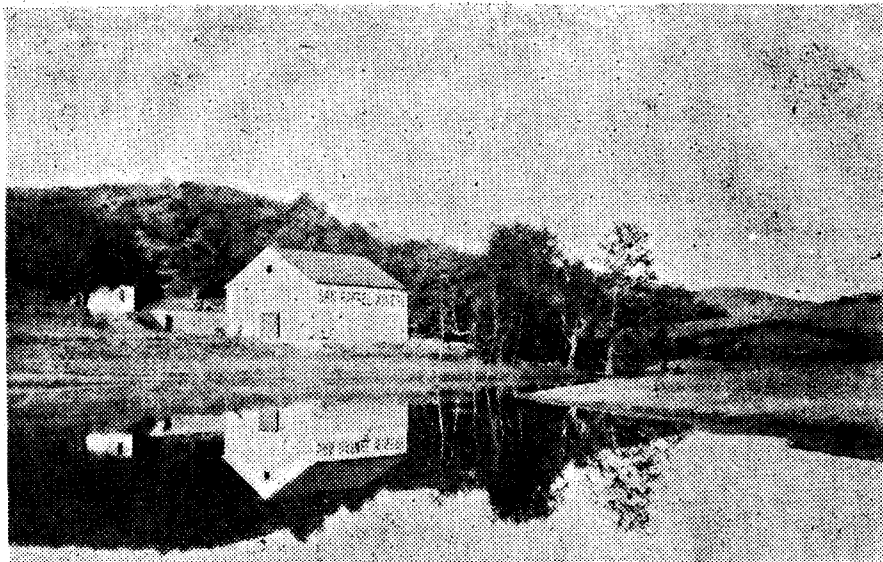
The search is on for new sources of both energy and water.

Universally, residents

look to the water that surrounds us, (covering 70 percent of the earth's surface) and asks:

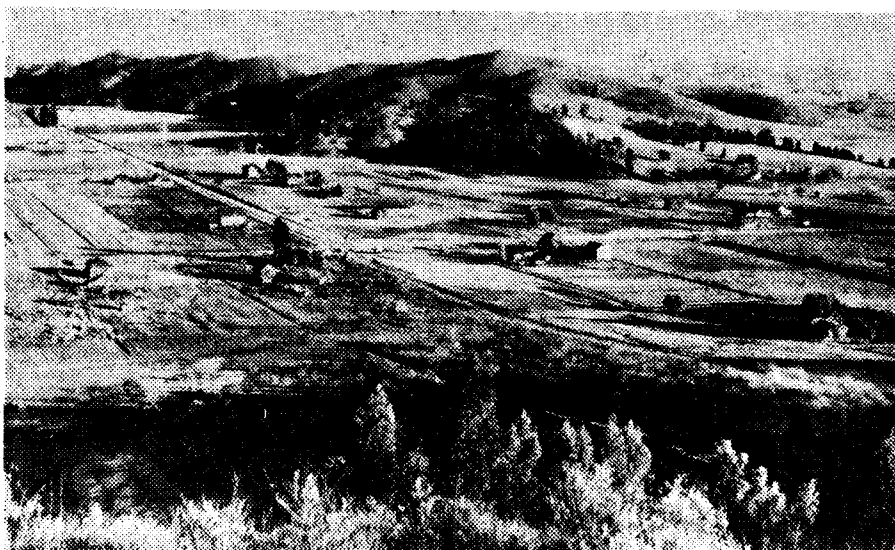
"Why not desalinization."

An idea that's time has come . . . in fact, it came a long time ago."



Underground source

Johnston's Lake. Just how and when the famous lake in the Annandale District got its start is unknown, but it is believed to be the "lake" described by early Indian tribes who settled on the banks of the Arroyo. Additional water piped in from the Beaudry tunnel, brought water from the upper Arroyo and extended the boundaries sufficiently to keep the old winery in operation.



It's spring-time

This valley, known as the land of many springs in 1906, is now the business center of the Eagle Rock community. The country road intersection in the center of the picture is now Eagle Rock Blvd, and Colorado. When the population and water demands were low, the Artesian wells and springs kept the valley green and well supplied. But increased population and competition for water during a shortage soon forced the city of Eagle Rock to forfeit its independence and become annexed to Los Angeles.