

Finding Aid to the Fargo Water Treatment Plant Photograph Collection

Fargo Water Treatment Plant (N.D.)

Fargo Water Treatment Plant photograph collection, 1911-1970s

251 photographic prints

72 lantern slides

185 film negatives ; 5 x 7 in.

20 film negatives ; 120mm

Collection number: Photo 2061

Neg 5x7P: 170-354

Neg 120mm: 0517-0533

OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to the [Fargo Water Treatment Records](#)

View images in [Digital Horizons](#).

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Deposited by the Fargo Water Treatment Plant through contract with Bear Creek Archeology, Inc., 1997 (Acc. 2538).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

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Citation: Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

HISTORY

In 1911 and 1912 the City of Fargo planned and built one of the nation's earliest municipal water softening and filtration plants to treat water pumped from the Red River of the North. The plant's genesis was marked by controversy, partly the result of city politics, but also from the rapidly

changing technology of drinking water purification. Fargo City Engineer, Frank L. Anders, designed the facility in collaboration with C. Arthur Brown and others. The plant represented one of the most significant municipal improvements the city had undertaken up to that point. Although the construction came in over budget and was completed later than planned, the pumps, filters, controls, and mains worked more or less as designed.

The historic Fargo Water Treatment Plant occupied a tract bounded by the Red River, Thirteenth Avenue South, Fifth Street South, and Fourteenth Avenue South. Originally built in rural surroundings on the outskirts of town, it became part of an extensive residential neighborhood by the late twentieth century. The plant was a complex of buildings and structures, the most prominent of which was the Filter House and the Pump House. The main buildings were well-disciplined examples of City Beautiful Classicism, and the facility resembled a picturesque park with its massive, tile-roofed buildings and manicured lawn dotted with shade trees.

Over the years other buildings were added to the plant complex to meet the needs of the City of Fargo and its growing population. In 1972 the plant was modernized and increased its capacity from twelve million gallons a day to thirty-seven million gallons a day. In 1992 Fargo proposed to construct a new water treatment plant with a capability in excess of thirty million gallons per day, at a site adjacent to the old plant complex. The project was approved and received partial federal funding. The new plant was completed in 1997 and the old plant buildings were demolished in 1998.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Fargo Water Treatment Plant Photograph Collection consists of images primarily from the period when the plant was first constructed in 1911 and 1912, although they do extend into the 1970s. Most of the images are of construction scenes of the treatment plant from initial construction to later additions; and also of the Fourth Street Dam. Images are also included that depict later additions to the facility as well as additional property, such as vehicles and water towers. The collection also includes photographs of many interior scenes of the treatment plant and the various equipment and machinery involved in its operation. These photographs are not generally identified in any detail beyond the date the image was taken. Most of the images are black and white, although some color prints are included that date from about the 1970s. Initial processing of the collection was done by the Bear Creek Archeology, Incorporated in 1995. The collection has been organized into seven series: Construction of Treatment Plant, Exterior views, Interior views, Red River of the North, People, Additional properties, and Lantern slides. The extensive collection of water treatment plant records (19 linear ft.) that were accessioned at the same time have been processed into the Institute for Regional Studies as Mss 209.

The [Construction of Treatment Plant Series](#) consists of 52 black and white prints from the initial construction of the treatment plant in 1911 and 1912. These prints cover a range of construction processes that were necessary to build the plant from laying the foundation to constructing the chimney. Also included in this series are photographs documenting the installation of the water main system in 1911 and 1912.

The [Exterior Views Series](#) includes 14 images, one of which is a color print, of the exterior of the water treatment plant and its surrounding campus. These views cover a broad period from initial construction to possibly the mid-1970s.

The [Interior Views Series](#) includes 89 photographs, seven of which are color prints, of various segments of the plant facilities including initial installation of machinery; the lobby, office, and laboratory; filter gallery, pipe gallery, high and low service pump areas, boilers, hopper room, chemical feeders, steam power plant, accelerators, mixing chamber, and some unknown locations within the plant. Most of the photographs are from the early construction phases of the plant although some do depict later scenes such as the construction of the accelerators in the 1970s.

The [Red River of the North Series](#) consists of 36 black and white photographs of the construction of the Fourth Street South Dam in 1911 and 1912; random views taken from undocumented points along the river; flooding in Fargo and Moorhead around the beginning of the century; and a flood control project circa 1960.

The [People Series](#) includes nine photographs, three of which are color prints, of mostly unidentified people associated with the water treatment plant.

The [Additional Properties Series](#) includes 51 photographs, seven of which are color prints, of other property of the facility such as vehicles, water towers, a sludge handling facility, and images of unidentified buildings (some of which may be facilities in other cities). This series also includes a separate photograph album that consists of 98 color prints. These images include scenes from waste stabilization ponds, force main, pump station, water plant expansion, and sludge building. Most of these images depict construction scenes from the 1970s.

The [Lantern Slides Series](#) consists of 72 glass lantern slides. Most of the slides are of construction plans and blueprints of the treatment plant, but 14 of the slides depict actual photographs (these are denoted by a double asterisk). The slides depicting photographs are black and white and are primarily of interior scenes from the early construction phases of the plant.

In addition to the photographic prints and slides, there are 82 5x7 in. film negatives that currently have no corresponding prints (negative numbers 269-350). These negatives are primarily of early construction scenes from 1911 and 1912 when the treatment plant and Fourth Street Dam were built. The negatives also include many interior scenes of the treatment plant and the various equipment and machinery involved in operations. One hundred and three of the 5x7 in film negatives (negative numbers 170-268 and 351-354) do have corresponding prints which are noted on both the prints and the negatives. All twenty of the 120mm film negatives have corresponding prints, which are also noted on both the prints and the negatives.

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	Exterior Views Series
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Interior Views Series

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- 6 Lobby, Office, Laboratory, and Laboratory Equipment/Incubators (8)
- 7 Filter Gallery (7)
- 8 Pipe Gallery (4)
- 9 High and Low Service Pumps (6)
- 10 Boilers, Hopper Room (7)
- 11 Chemical Feeders (9)
- 12 Steam Power Plant (7)
- 13 Construction of New Accelerators, Mixing Chamber (26)
- 14 Miscellaneous Interior Views (10)

Red River of the North Series

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- 17 Views of the Red River (17)
- 21 Flood Control Project (9)

People Series

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Additional Properties Series

- 19 Water Department Truck Fleet (2)
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Box 4 Lantern Slides Series (denotes photographic images)**

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