Drainage Plays Major Role in City's Progress

Made Possible Modern Algiers of Today

By JOHN E. MORRILL

Secretary-Executive Director, Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans

If 1870, when Algiers became part of New Orleans, was a turning point in the history of that West Bank community, equally as significant was the 10-year period between 1883 and 1903. It was in that 10-year span that a number of events occurred that made possible the development of New Orleans, including Algiers, into the modern and progressive community that it is today.

The first of these events took place in 1883 when the commission council adopted an ordinance creating a Drainage Advisory Board to develop a drainage plan for the city whose growth on both sides of the Mississippi River was being throttled by vast swamplands that bordered the relatively high ground along the river's banks.

Preparation of the master drainage plan by the board prompted the Legislature in 1886 to create the Drainage Commission of New Orleans to finance and construct permanent drainage public works in the city and its recently acquired territory of Algiers.

Then, in 1889, the Legislature created the Sewerage and Water Board, to establish a city-wide water treatment and distribution system and an underground sewer system separate and distinct from the newly devised storm drainage system.

**MODERN ERA**

Four years later, in 1903, the Drainage Commission and the Sewerage and Water Board were merged and the modern Sewerage and Water Board, responsible for the city's water, drainage and sewerage systems, came into being.

The groundwork was thus laid for establishing in New Orleans, for the first time in its long history, soundly engineered drainage, water treatment and distribution, and sanitary sewerage systems.

When the Drainage Advisory Board published its report in the mid-1890s, the built-up section of Algiers comprised only a fraction of what it is today.

"The territory on the right bank," the Board's report said, "designated as the Algiers section, comprises the territory between the upper (Orleans-Jefferson) parish line, the lower limit of the U.S. Reservation (the Naval Station), the Mississippi River, and rear protection levee, containing 948 acres."

Today, approximately 6,400 acres in Algiers have been developed between the Orleans-Jefferson line and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, with a lesser development having taken place in the lower coast below the waterway.

The only drainage in Algiers in the early 1900s was by three canals situated in Algiers Point along Lapeyrouse St., Vallette St., and Canal Ave., now Whitney Ave. There were no pumping stations.

The master plan of the Drainage Advisory Board called for construction of a system of gutters, branch and main drains, and branch canals leading into a main or intercepting canal situated in Canal (Whitney) Ave. The plan provided for construction of a main pumping station near the intersection of Lawrence St. and Canal Ave., from which point an outfall canal would be dredged to take the storm waters to Bayou Barataria.

The total estimated cost of the drainage system for what then comprised Algiers was $151,970, including $49,500 for lined canals, $43,720 for unlined canals, and $58,750 for the pumping station.

Construction of the pumping station, a small 150-cubic-feet-per-second facility, was begun in 1899 and with its completion in 1907, modern era of Algiers began.

3 PUMPING STATIONS

Today, Algiers has three pumping stations in operation, and a fourth nearing completion. The original pumping facility, Drainage Pumping Station No. 8, located at Whitney Ave. and Lawrence St., Drainage Station No. 9, put under construction in 1929, is situated on the Algiers Outfall Canal at West Donner Canal and has a capacity of 950 cfs. Dismantling the Algiers lower coast is Drainage Pumping Station No. 11, a 600-cfs facility on the east bank of the Intracoastal Waterway built in 1952.

Under construction on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is Drainage Pumping Station No. 13, whose capacity of 2550 cfs and cost of more than $3 million are far cries from Station No. 8, which marked the beginning of modern drainage for Algiers.

When it is completed, Algiers will have a pumping capacity 3½ times greater than what it is now in effect.

The pumping stations receive storm water from 26 miles of open and covered canals, 3.3 miles of drainage pipelines 42 inches in diameter or larger, and 89 miles of subsurface drain lines less than 42 inches in diameter.

The investment in these drainage facilities is several times larger than the $7.3 million which the Drainage Advisory Board in the 1890s estimated would be needed to establish a drainage system for all of New Orleans as it then existed.

In the early 1960s, Algiers was supplied with water produced by the old Algiers Waterworks and Electric Co. or collected in cisterns which were breeders of the deadly yellow fever mosquito. The company's facilities were acquired by the S&W in 1907 for $100,000 and these were used as the basis for a new system of waterworks and water lines.

**CAPACITY DOUBLED**

Today, the Algiers Water Plant at 1120 Elmira Ave. has a water treating capacity of 16,000,000 gallons a day—double what it was just five years ago. The water is distributed throughout Algiers through a network of water mains totaling 744,350 feet in length and ranging in size from four-inch diameter to 36 inches.

An Algiers landmark is a 4,000,000-gallon elevated water storage tank near Gen. Meyer Ave. and Carver St. which was put into service in 1963. The tank, which rises 165 feet above the ground and is 105 feet in diameter, is the largest in Louisiana and gives Algiers lower coast an additional water source. It helps maintain water pressures at safe levels.

When the Sewerage and Water Board was established, a sanitary sewerage system in Algiers was non-existent.

Today, the community is served by 590,425 feet of sewer mains ranging in size from six inches in diameter to 30 inches.

There are 11 sewer pumping stations in Algiers, including 10 automatic facilities and a large manually operated station at Diana and Pacific.

In 1968, the city's sewage treatment program, designed to eliminate the discharge of wastes into the Mississippi River, was extended to Algiers and a contract is expected to be awarded this year for construction of the Algiers Sewage Treatment Plant on the east bank of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

Cost of establishing sewage treatment facilities in Algiers, including the treatment plant, sewer outfalls, sewer force mains, and modifications to the existing sewage disposal system, is expected to amount to more than $8 million, one-third of the cost for the entire city.