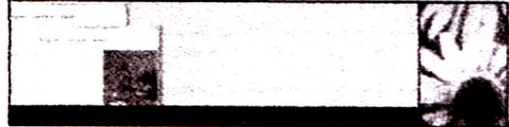


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- Life
- Sports
- Opinion
- Calendar
- Obituaries
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Life

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Quest for 'sweet water' results in book

BY TERESA WILLIAMS
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It wasn't long ago that Stayton and Salem were in heated discussions about water. But the North Santiam region and Salem have been connected – and divided – by water almost since pioneer Jason Lee arrived in Salem.

In his new book "Sweet Mountain Water," Frank Mauldin tells the story of Salem's fight to get pure drinking water and its relationship with the North Santiam River. Mauldin is passionate about water, and as Salem's public works director from 1988 to 2002, he had to be.

"Water was my profession," he said, adding that protecting the North Santiam watershed was part of his responsibility.

Until the 1930s, Salem residents drank water from the Willamette River – the same river used to dump industrial waste and the city's sanitary sewer. By 1910, people were sick of the dirty water, and they put pressure on the Salem City Council, which finally agreed to buy a private water system using the North Santiam River.

Mauldin's history begins earlier, however, with the Kalapuyans, and it follows the use of water when missionaries arrived into the 1850s and the development of businesses. It chronicles the Chinese laborers who dug the Salem Ditch from Stayton to Mill Creek with plows and shovels. It tells of legislators in Salem who demanded that spring water be supplied to them because the city water was so bad.

Between 1923 and 1930, the city applied for five separate water rights in the region - below the mouth of the Breitenbush River, on the Little North Fork, at Marion Lake, at Marion Lake Fork and on the North Santiam south of Gates.

Congress authorized the Detroit Dam System in the late 1930s, however, pre-empting some of the water rights. The city was left with few options, and citizens were complaining that getting water from the North Santiam would be too expensive, Mauldin writes.

Enter A.D. Gardner of Stayton. He offered to sell Stayton Island and an 1866 water right to Salem, which gave the city a place for water treatment and the geography to build a gravity pipeline. Despite opposition, it bought the island and the water right.

Mauldin continues with a discussion of the city's failed efforts to negotiate with the Army Corps of Engineers to build a pipeline from Stayton Island to the Detroit Dam, which had not been completed.

In 1950, the city proposed a \$300,000 bond to construct a reservoir in Turner. The city manager, J.L. Franzen, was criticized for paving the reservoir with asphalt.

Seven years later, the city built a new pipeline from Stayton to Franzen Reservoir after tense negotiations with the city of Stayton.

During the 1960s and '70s, Salem continued to acquire water rights, but things heated up in the '80s when Boise Cascade closed its pulp and paper mill in Salem. It owned a 100 cubic feet per second 1856 water right

and Salem Ditch. Salem had bought water rights from Boise Cascade in the past, and it wanted this one as well. Stayton needed more water and wanted to preserve the flows in the ditch. Santiam Water Control District was already maintaining the ditch, and Stayton Canning Co. wanted to use some of the water in its operations. A war of words ensued, state agencies and newspapers got involved. Eventually, a compromise was reached, one the author believes was unfair to Stayton.

Mauldin also treats watershed protection, and he includes a brief history of the railroads through the Santiam Canyon, creation of the national forest, building of the Detroit Dam and reservoir, the flood of 1996 and the creation of restricted areas, including the Opal Creek Wilderness Area. He also discusses the Endangered Species Act and its effects on planning for the future.

"Sweet Mountain Water" is available at Holm Collectables, as well as several Salem bookstores.

