

Typhoid Problems Forced First City Water Solution

Sunday, October 8, 1967 Niagara Falls Gazette F-9

By JACK MARSH

The typhoid fever germ more than any person was responsible for the establishment of a safe water supply system in Niagara Falls.

Now the city has a modern water pumping and distribution facility with capacity almost twice its present need. The facility is one of the city's finest assets.

The history concerning creation of a municipal water system here was one marked by struggle and reversals going back to 1892 when Niagara Falls was incorporated as a city.

It took continued attempts through eight administrations before the north and south ends of the city were furnished with "a pure wholesome drinking supply."

Credit for the success of attempts is generally given to the mayor during the eighth administration, Anthony C. Douglass (1907-1910), who led a vigorous campaign from 1897 to 1909 to push through a comprehensive water works plan.

The plant now known as No. 1 filtration plant, the older of two facilities located at Buffalo Ave. and 53rd Street, was constructed in 1911-1912. Later in 1936-1937 the plant was expanded to meet the increased demand for treated water.

A PRIVATE COMPANY, the Niagara Falls Water Works Co. served south end water consumers prior to construction of the municipal water works. The north end was served by the old Suspension Bridge water plant of village days, established in 1876, with its intake in the former Hydraulic canal.

In 1892 when the two villages merged it was suggested they have a combined supply system, but Niagara Falls (southend) refused.

While the two communities did have a difference of opinion they both had one enemy, typhoid fever. The drinking water was blamed as the major cause.

Merger of the two plants into a municipal water supply system received little encouragement when it was proposed in 1893 by Mayor M. B. Butler.

A few years later, William B. Rankine, president of the Niagara Falls Water Works Co., offered to take over the municipal plant for \$207,000 and sell water to the city at the same price as the Niagara Falls Hydraulic Power and Mfg. Co., another supplier.

In an alternate proposal Mr. Rankine offered to sell his works to the city for \$308,000.

THE MAJORITY of those who voted in a city-sponsored poll indicated favor of buying the private system. The poll had no practical effect on the situation.

The question of a better municipal water supply was again raised in 1900 by Alderman Michael Maloney, who was alarmed by the increase of typhoid cases in the city. Acting

on the instructions of the Common Council, the Board of Public Works investigated the purchase of the independent company by condemnation. No action resulted.

Mayor Butler later named a commission to investigate the disease condition with the help of an outside expert. The project died out when politics plagued its administration.

By 1901 the Niagara Falls Water Works Co. was under new management and the new owner offered to purchase the city-owned plant for \$225,000. It was their hope to then supply consumers with "pure wholesome water."

Talk also revived of the city's buying out the private company after protests of the water company's proposal were voiced. Proposal for a referendum on the water question never came up for a vote during this period.

MAYOR JOHN HANCOCK was to get such a vote first to do this and in May 1904, he and the Council directed the Board of Public Works to investigate the probable cost of building a water treatment plant.

Rudolph Hering, described in news stories of the day as an eminent chemist, was hired by the city and came up with a plan to take water from the clear Canadian channel of the upper river. He said it would require little or no filtration.

The report of the Board of Public Works was submitted on June 20, 1904 and estimated the cost of a new water works to be between \$707,000 and \$968,000. The plan called for the purchase of a private water company, purchase of a new site, laying a 4,000-foot intake tunnel under the upper river, and construction of a plant equipped with two 6-million-gallon capacity pumps.

The board failed to win public support of the plan. It was defeated in a 1904 referendum by a vote of 917 to 111.

This was a severe reverse and further action was delayed for several years.

IN 1908 on the suggestion of Alderman Aldin B. Chase and Mayor Douglas a non-partisan commission started to work on a plan to establish a complete municipal water supply system.

A plan was submitted early the next year which called for a \$700,000, 15-million-gallon-a-day plant located at the site of the present water works.

Their work was made more urgent by steadily rising incidence of typhoid fever. In an editorial of those days the Gazette charged the water condition was retarding the growth of the city and discouraging strangers from settling here.

In a special referendum that year the new water works won astonishing support. The vote was 1,366 to 278. Mayor Douglass was given

full credit in a Gazette editorial for the success of the campaign.

FREQUENT CONTROVERSIES followed over the details of the proposed water works program.

The first big municipal water treatment plant was however finished in stages during 1911 and early 1912. The Norwood Engineering Co., Chicago, the general contractors, submitted a bill of \$251,408 for the total cost of the project.

During this time running disputes continued between the city and the private water company, now the Western New York Water Co. All attempts at purchasing the private company failed because of price squabbles.

The city then decided to compete with Western New York Water by operating in the same area. In still another referendum the taxpayers voted in favor of installing a city water main at a cost of \$360,000 to serve the city's South End. For several years both the city and the company sold water in that area.

Court battles launched by the water company against the city failed to bar the city from invading the private business's territory.

IN 1927 the city finally bought out Western New York at a price of approximately \$400,000. The sale included the former No. 2 filtration plant and some 30 miles of water mains.

As demands for water increased in the years that followed, the two plants became inadequate and in 1936 and 1937 No. 1 plant was enlarged to a capacity of 32 million gallons a day. Changes also included a new \$139,953 intake tunnel located near the old one.

More recently, in the early 50s, the largest No. 1 plant expansion took place at a cost of nearly \$8 million. A new filtration plant, chemical building, pumping station, and intake tunnel extending far out into the river near the U.S.-Canadian boundary, were constructed.

That facility presently has an output of 80 million gallons a day. At the same time the old filtration plant there underwent complete modernization, and the distribution system was reinforced and expanded.

With the increased efficiency of the Buffalo Ave. complex the necessity for maintaining the No. 2 plant was almost nil. In addition the source from which No. 2 got its raw water was a channel that was considered dangerously polluted. Thus in 1953 after 77 years of service No. 2 was shut down.

Fluoridation of all city water started in 1958 in the hope that it would decrease tooth decay. Studies since that time have attributed a decline in tooth decay among Niagara Falls residents to the addition of the hydrofluoric acid as the fluoride is properly called.

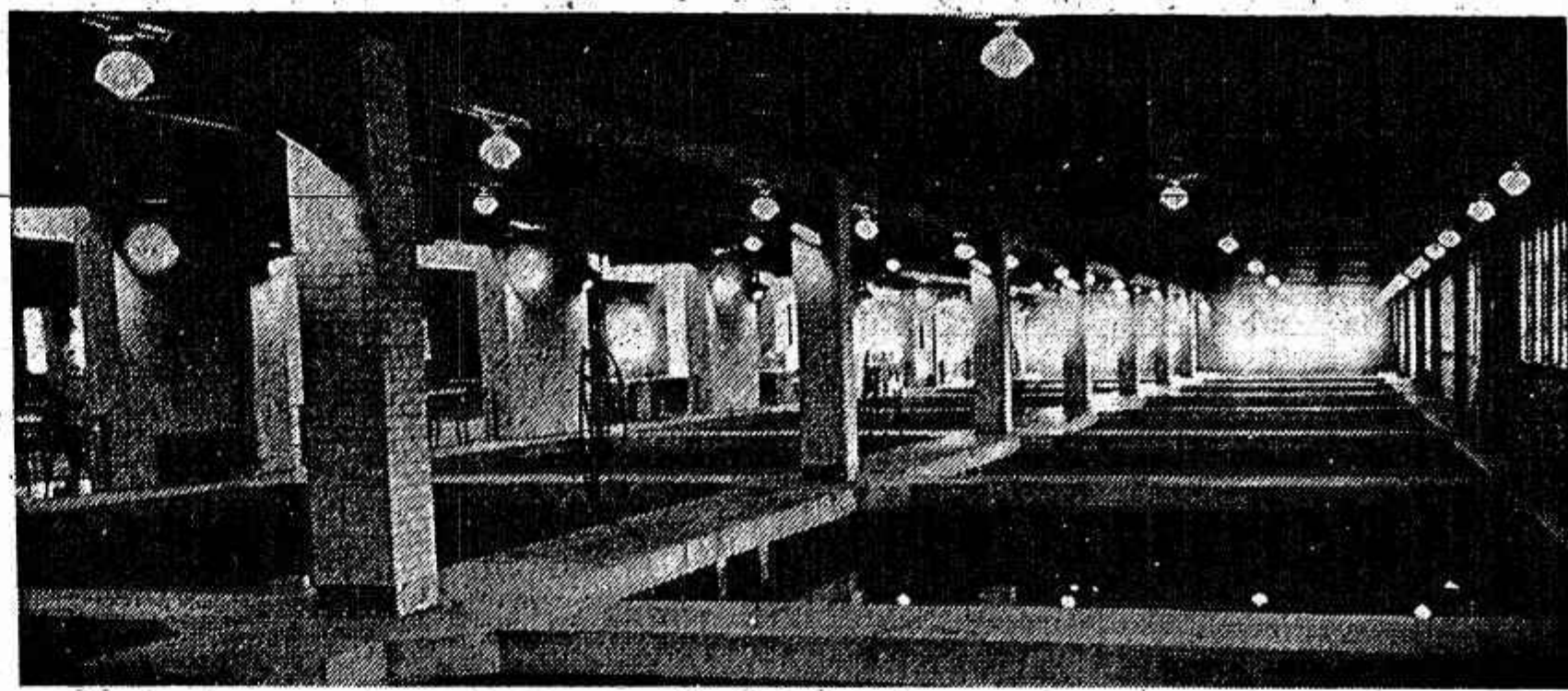
Today Niagara Falls residents

enjoy clean, fluoridated, good tasting water at the turn of a tap. What else could you buy for a nickel a ton?

Smuggler Arrested

Niagara Falls Gazette, Oct. 8, 1892—Deputy United States Marshal Weaver of Lockport has placed John Moore of Wilson under arrest on the charge of smuggling Chinamen. A man named Smith is the complainant in the case.

He alleges that Moore assisted two Chinamen who entered this country from Canada last July. Moore has given bail to appear for examination before Commissioner Proud next Tuesday.



WEIRD WONDERLAND—Looking like an eerie plant. It's got a capacity almost twice present set from a James Bond movie is the inside of city needs. one of the city's finest assets, its water filtering

GROWING TOGETHER

City of
Niagara Falls

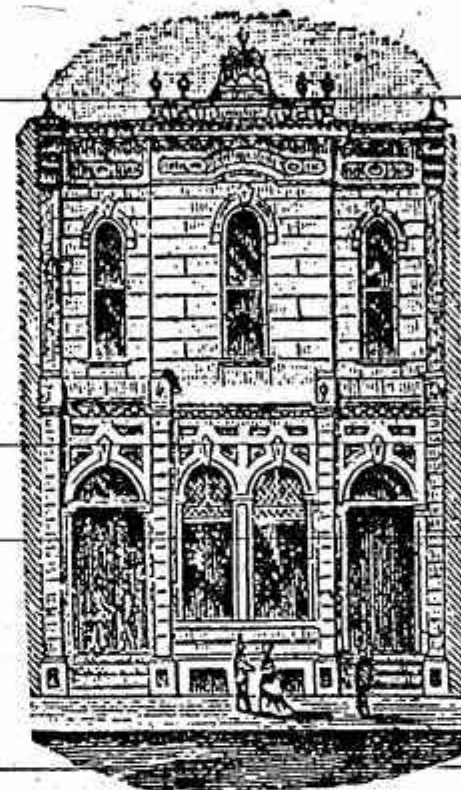
NCSB

Niagara Falls
Gazette



The municipal building shown here with Niagara's finest was located in the 200 block of Niagara Street at the time of incorporation.

The City of Niagara Falls has grown from a population of 11,000 in 1892 to nearly 100,000 today.



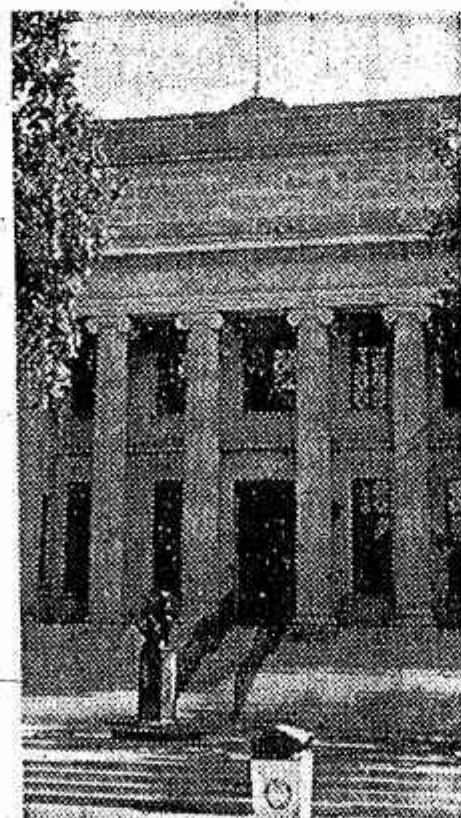
In 1892 Niagara County Savings Bank was located at 53 Main Street across from the International Hotel.

On January 1, 1892 Niagara County Savings Bank had deposits of \$30,737 from 266 depositors. Today NCSB's deposits are over \$59 million in more than 28,000 accounts.

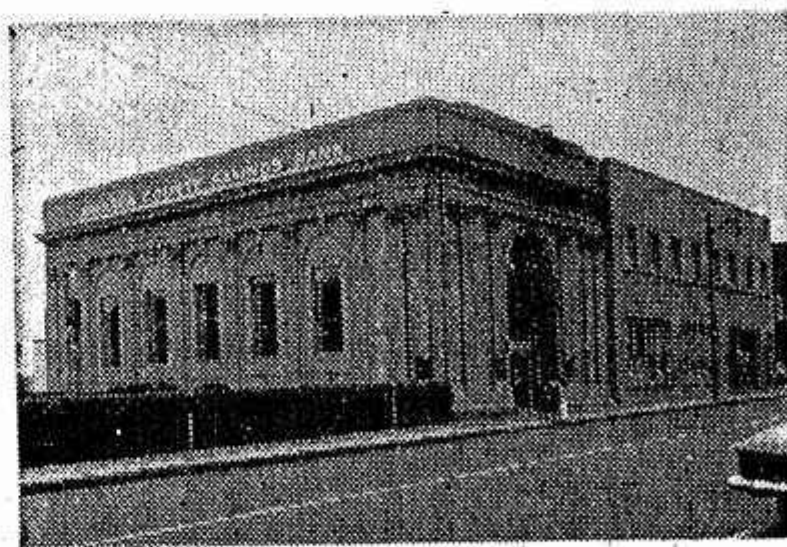


The Niagara Falls Gazette was located in the Arcade building when the first daily paper was issued on March 17, 1892.

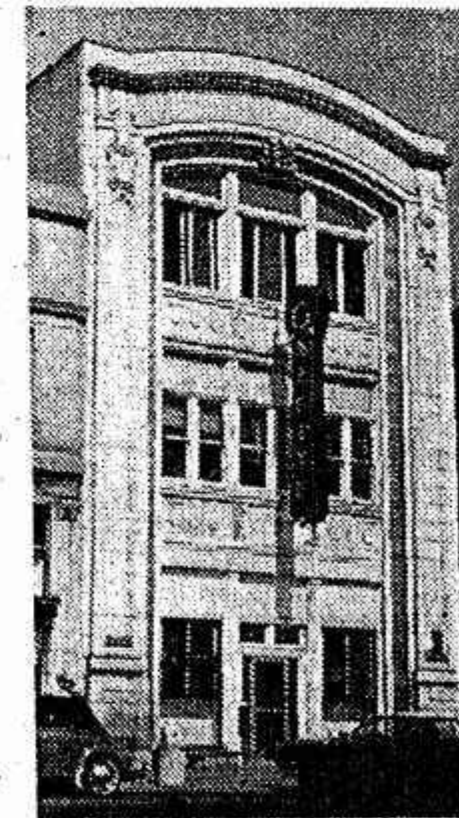
The circulation of the first daily Gazette was less than 3,000. Today circulation tops 35,000.



The imposing facade of City Hall today.



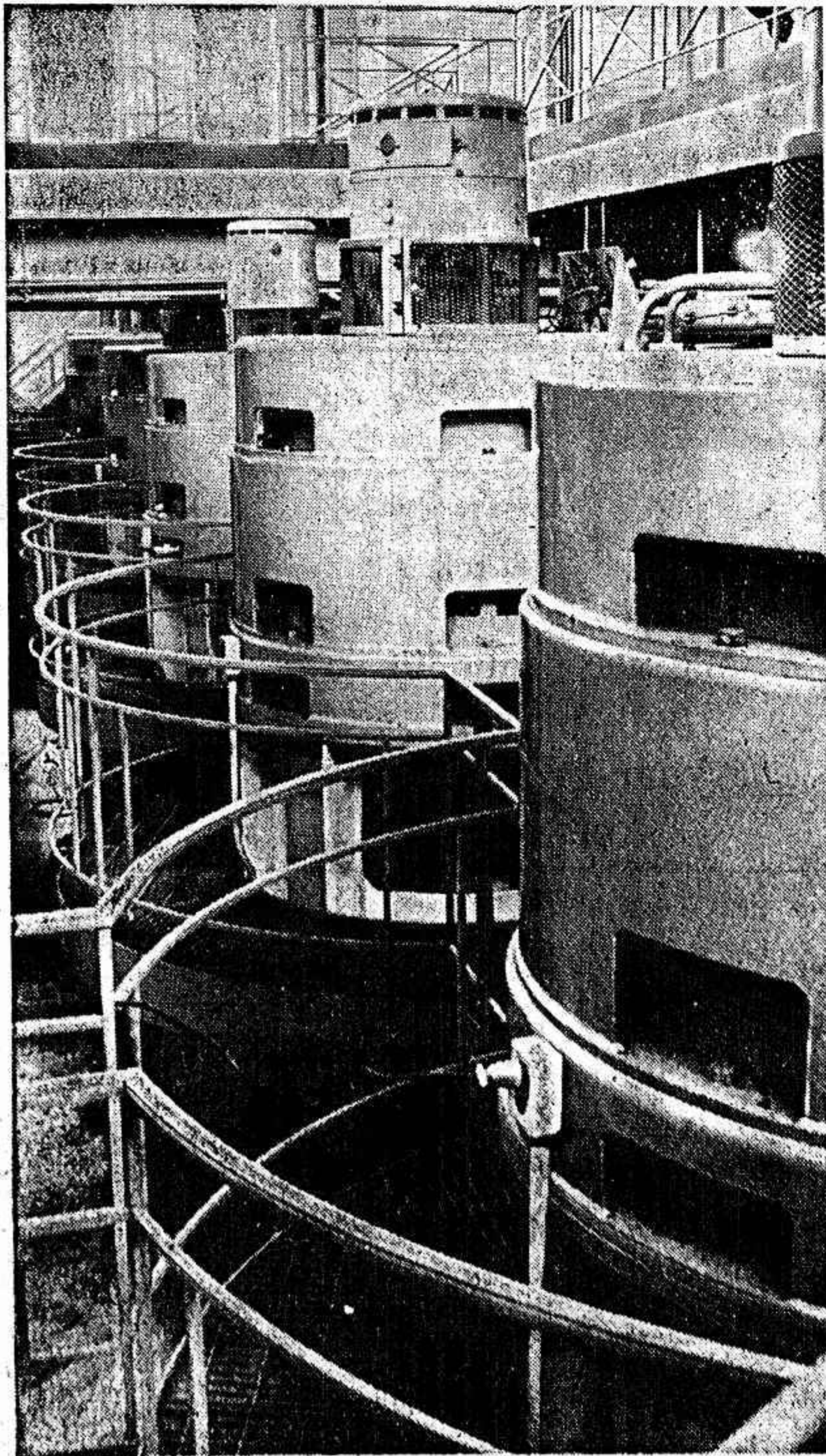
NCSB's Main Office on Third Street at Niagara.



The modern offices and plant of the Niagara Falls Gazette at 310 Niagara Street.

WE WERE A TINY TWO YEAR OLD, BACK IN 1892
AND WE HAVE GROWN UP ALONGSIDE OF OUR CITY
AND OUR NEWSPAPER, SO IT IS OUR PLEASURE
TO SALUTE THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS
AND THE NIAGARA FALLS GAZETTE
ON THE COMPLETION OF 75 YEARS OF
UNSTINTING SERVICE

NIAGARA COUNTY SAVINGS BANK



MOST MODERN — Modern automated equipment is feature of the water supply system. Facilities in Buffalo Ave. are one of

keys to city's growth potential.