

HISTORY OF THE ALBINA PLAN AREA



**WINTER, 1990
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING WORKSHOP
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Planner's problem is to find ways of creating, within the urban environment, the sense of belonging. - Leo Marx

The 1990 Comprehensive Planning Workshop team would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Deborah Howe, AICP and Michael S. Harrison, AICP for their time and commitment to our project. It has been an invaluable experience and a great learning adventure.

We also would like to acknowledge the following people for their special contribution to this project:

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Albina Volunteer Fire Department 1883

PREFACE

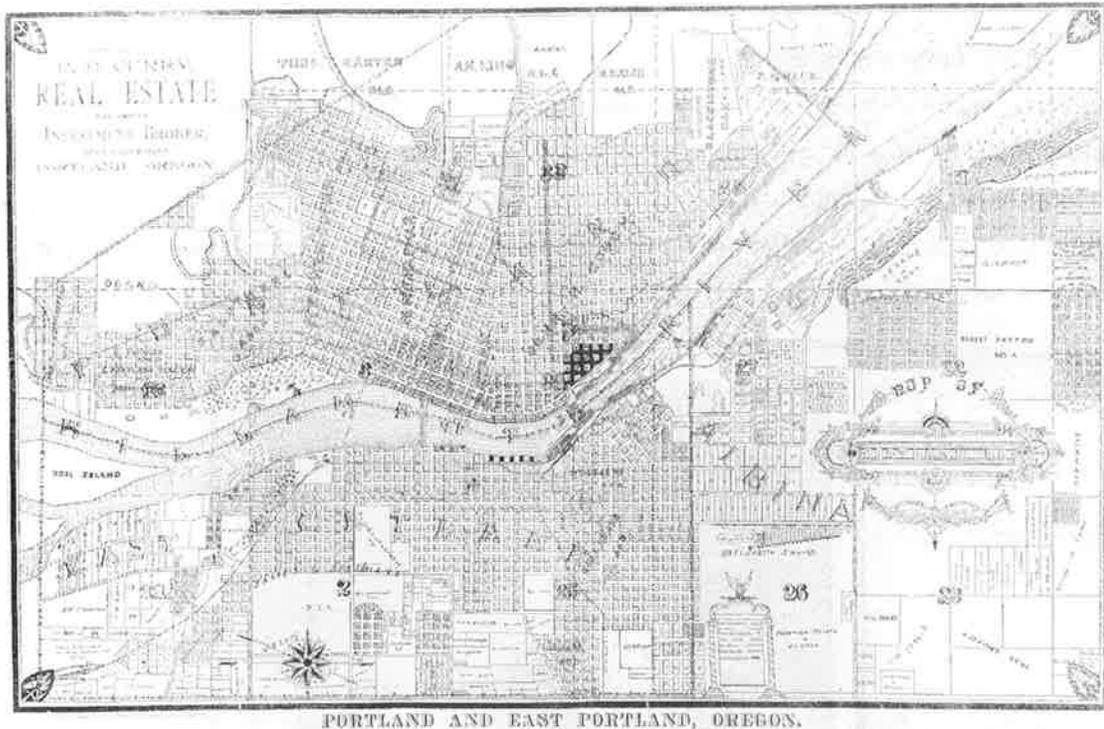
The Comprehensive Planning Workshop is the capstone of the Portland State University's Master of Urban Planning program. The workshop projects are planning studies that have a practical use long after the school term is over. Last year, the workshop focused on housing in Southeast Portland, and the previous year produced a plan for the Homestead neighborhood.

Michael Harrison, AICP, Chief Planner for the Albina Community Plan, proposed that the students in the 1990 Comprehensive Planning Workshop examine historic preservation issues that will impact the revitalization of inner North/Northeast Portland as part of the Albina Community Plan.

Originally, the workshop intended to research Albina's history as a background piece to our main research efforts. It quickly became clear to us that there was a rich, fascinating story to be told about Albina, one that we wished to develop and make accessible to more people. Therefore, we produced two documents, this history as a separate document, designed to stand alone, and a companion document which presents our findings and recommendations.

It is our feeling that preserving the past and using that past to anchor and enhance revitalization of inner North/Northeast Portland is of critical importance to the future of this area and to the City of Portland as a whole.

BEFORE INCORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ALBINA



Portland & East Portland Map - 1886 (Oregon Historical Society)

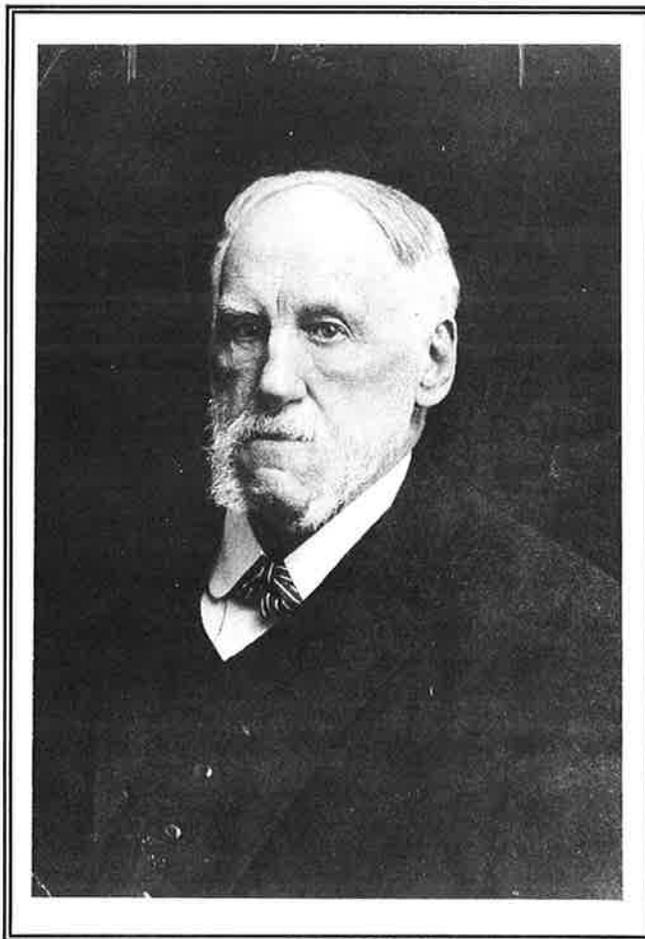
The first inhabitants of the area that came to be known as Albina were the local Indian tribes. The Albina area falls within the tribal grounds of the Clackamas tribe whose lands extended from the Willamette River east to the Cascade mountains.

Little is known about the tribes in the Albina area. We do know that most of the Indians living north of Willamette Falls were Chinookan-speaking salmon fishers and that they occupied large semi-permanent villages (Aikens, 1975). As with most Native American peoples, their way of life was destroyed by the coming of whites with their plans for expansion as well as their diseases.

Many of the original white settlers reached Albina via the Barlow Road, which ended on the east side of the Willamette River, south of Albina (Gaston, 1911). In 1840, Willamette

Valley settlers wanted to build a ship which they could sail to California and sell at Yerba Buena. A company of nine men was formed to build the ship on the east side of Swan Island. The Star of Oregon was the first ship built in Oregon. It was fifty-three feet eight inches long and measured ten feet nine inches at the beam.(Maddux, 1913).

During the early years small river barges called batteaux plied the rivers of the area (Gaston, p.201). The first ferry service across the Willamette River was begun in 1845 and consisted of a canoe with intermittent service (Maddux, 1913). Three years later, regular service was established and in 1850 a second ferry began operation. A general camp and headquarters was set up in East Portland in 1855 during a war against the Indians, which created an early center for economic activity in the area (Gaston, 1911).



George H. Williams, Mayor 1902-05 (OHS)

Downstream from the 'Albina Yards' is the site of the "bone yard", the place where steamboats out of service were moored. Two ferries operated between Albina and Portland - one from the foot of Albina Street to Union Station, and the other from Russell Street to Fifteenth Street. (Scott, 1890).

The history of Albina reflects the great economic opportunities available and exploited by early movers and shakers in Portland. Many of Portland's pioneers acquired property through the Donation Land Act of 1850. The act granted free land to settlers who would agree to live upon and cultivate their claims for four consecutive years. Every male citizen over 21 years of age who arrived in Oregon before December 1, 1850 was given 320 acres; a married couple received 640. After December 1, 1850, the allowable acreage decreased to 160 to 320 respectively. This offer of free land expired in 1855.

Albina was located on a donation land claim owned by J.L. Loring and Joseph Delay. The land was later sold to attorney William Winter Page, who in 1872 sold the land to Edwin Russell, manager of the Portland branch of the Bank of British Columbia, and George H. Williams, former senator, U.S. Attorney General, and future mayor of Portland. Today Northeast Russell Street and Williams Avenue bear their names.

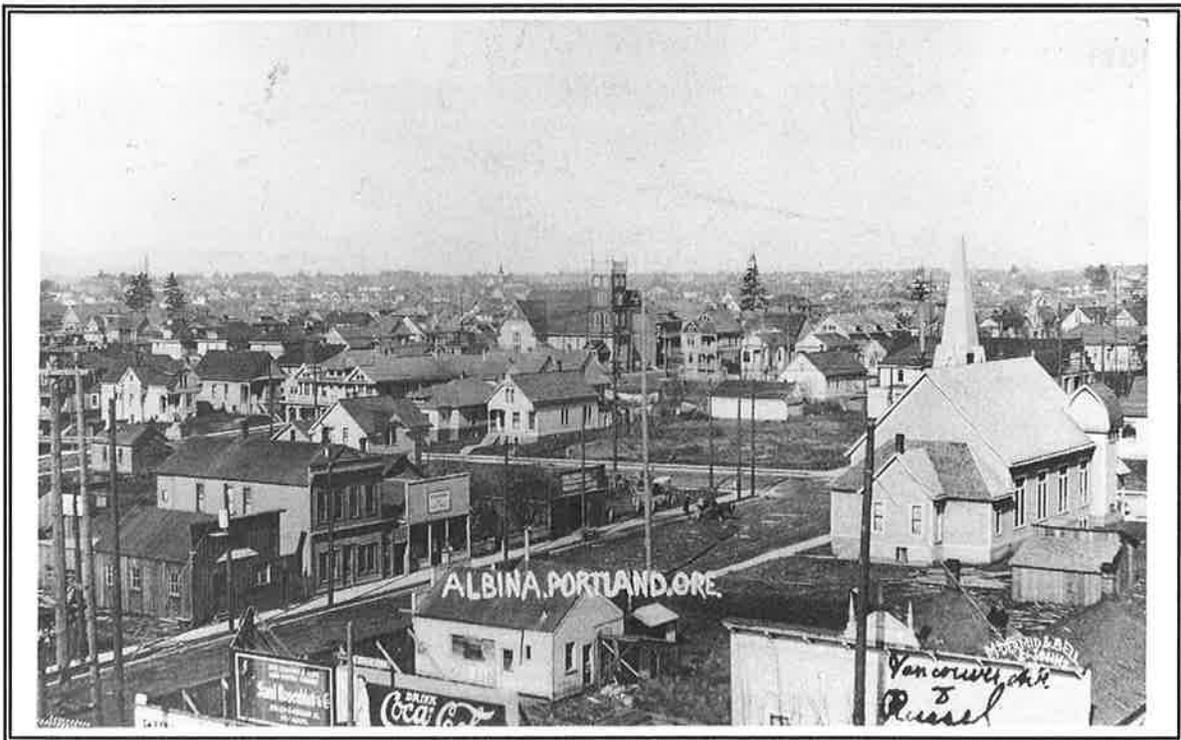
The original town site of Albina as platted in 1872 by Williams and Russell was close to the waterfront on the bend in the Willamette River. The town was named for William Page's wife and daughter, both of whom were named Albina (which the family pronounced "Al-BEAN-ah".) Russell had controlling interest in the venture but it was Williams who laid out the general dimensions of the community. In 1872 Albina was a virtual wilderness without any graded streets and with heavily forested land to the east and north (MacColl, 1976). When Russell went bankrupt and fled to San Francisco in 1874, James Montgomery and William Reid acquired the property and began developing residential sites (MacColl, 1988).



Albina School on Russell between Vancouver & Williams - 1884 (OHS)

CITY OF ALBINA - 1887 to 1891

The City of Albina was incorporated in 1887. Before its consolidation with Portland and East Portland in 1891, Albina was one of a series of independent river towns seeking prominence on the Willamette River. In 1880, the population of Albina was 143; by 1888 it was 3,000 and by 1891 it had reached nearly 6,000. Its brief history is basically that of a company town, the company being the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Co. (OR&N), which owned the extensive Albina railroad yards.



Albina from Vancouver to Russell (OHS)

Two main factors in the rapid growth of the east side were the opening of the Morrison Bridge in 1887 and the proliferation of the street railways. Improved transportation spurred speculators to promote subdivisions for the middle-class. These subdivisions were sited on high ground away from the rough, ramshackle waterfront. Housing was built in the Boise neighborhood dates from 1888 and in Woodlawn from 1889. Arbor Lodge and Piedmont were heavily promoted for housing development in the 1890's (Abbott, 1985).

In April, 1887, the Oregonian observed that Albina was growing rapidly and quoted William Killingsworth, a major residential real-estate investor in Albina: "Albina has been selected as the place to build industrial enterprises." The selection of Albina as an area ripe for industrial development was made by Portland's westside powers hand in hand with the banks, transit and utility companies, with the support of local government (MacColl, 1988).

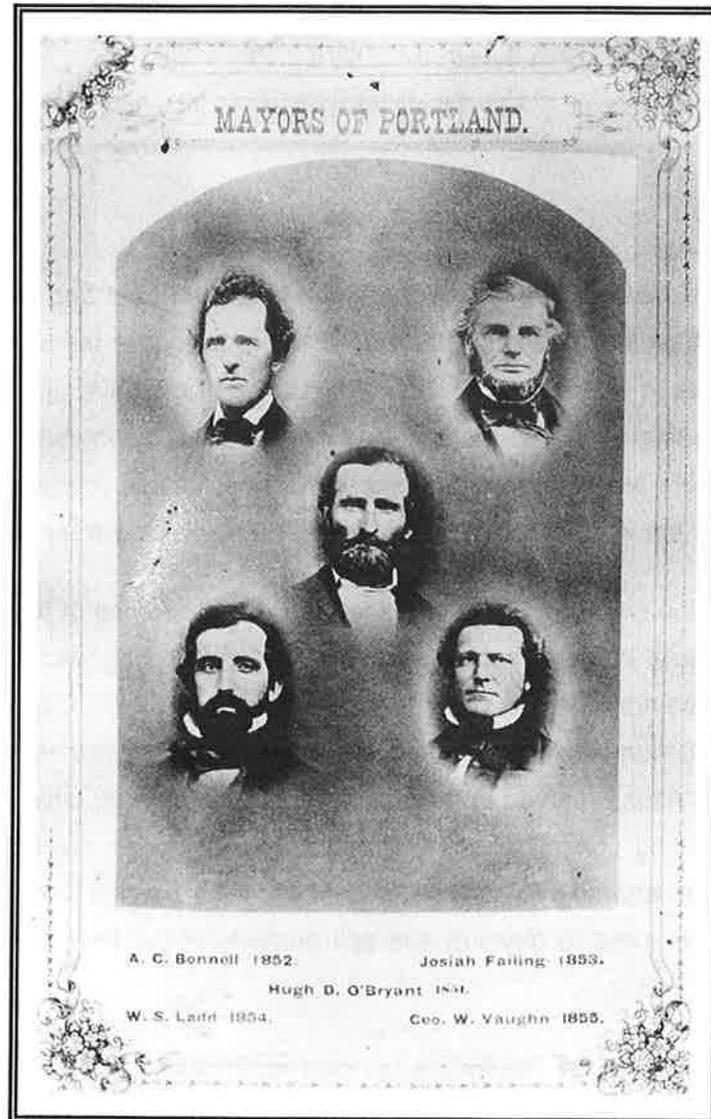
CONSOLIDATION WITH THE CITY OF PORTLAND

At the time of consolidation, Albina covered more land than East and West Portland combined: 13.5 square miles with a population density of 450 per square mile. The economic interest of property owners in Albina and St. Johns influenced legislative approval of city consolidation in 1891. Many of the property owners were downtown Portland businessmen and bankers; others were corporations like William S. Ladd's Portland Flouring Mills and the OR&N, which between them held nearly two miles of waterfront in Albina.

Annexation of Albina and East Portland placed the vast resources of these areas under the political and financial leadership of the City of Portland and its wealthy business interests. As further reinforcements in the drive for consolidation with the City of Portland, OR&N attorney Joseph Simon was state senate president in 1891, while Henry Villard, a large property owner in Albina, served in the House session that year, which was devoted primarily to promoting consolidation. The state senator whose district included the Albina-St. Johns area was attorney P. L. Willis, a partner in the Electric Land Company, which had been established in 1889 to develop and sell property in the Portsmouth district of St. Johns (MacColl, 1988).

Pressure was applied to the legislature by local realtors and westside interests in 1889 and again in 1891 to permit Albina to annex territory that was nine times greater than its original incorporation. Much of this land was still covered with forest or wetlands (MacColl, 1976). The vote for consolidation produced overwhelming approval. In Portland and Albina, the voter response was three to one in favor, in East Portland, it was six to one (MacColl, 1988). The final vote count was 10,128 for consolidation and 1,714 against.

By 1900, Albina consisted of three areas: the low-lying riverside land developed as industrial land to serve the railroads; the central commercial strip which developed along the streetcar lines; and the adjoining residential area on the hillsides to the east.



Early Portland Mayors (OHS)

Large industry and investment did find a profitable home in Albina. The OR&N invested over \$1.5 million in the construction of the Albina rail center. By 1909, five transcontinental rail lines ran through the heart of Albina and were serviced by the railyards. As many as 900 cars a day passed through a labyrinth of sidings, car shops and roundhouses. An 800-foot oceanic dock was constructed north of the OR&N shops in the 1880s. In 1883, William

S. Ladd incorporated the Portland Flouring Mills. The seven story milling operation located by the railyards and docks, became the largest in the Northwest.



Transfer Point for St. Johns Steam Train (OHS)

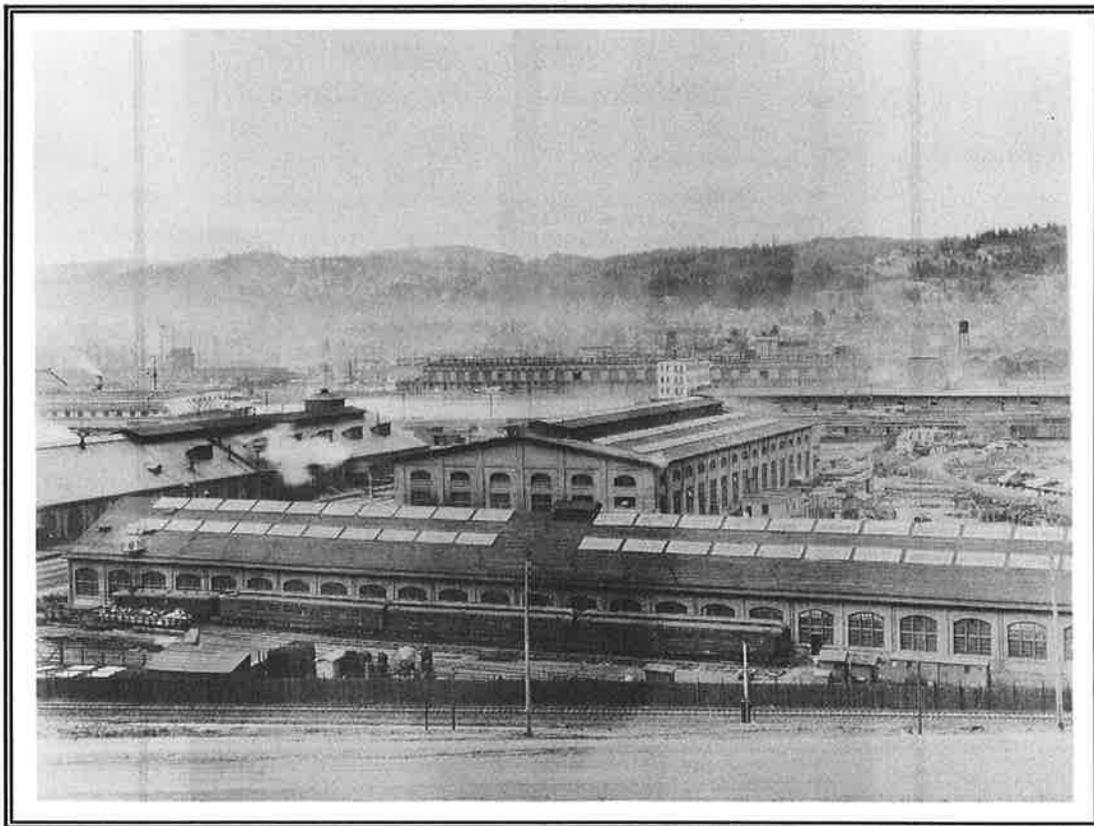
By 1891, the extension of gas, electric, and trolley services from downtown Portland into Albina gave physical evidence of westside interests in Albina (Klooster, 1987). Albina's city ordinances from 1887 to 1891 served private economic development without regard for the city's fiscal responsibility to provide public services made necessary by rapid expansion of residential and industrial areas. Charles F. Swigert's Willamette Bridge Railway Company is one example. It gained four franchises, three of them two months before consolidation. The last one, on June 30, 1891, was of 50 years duration. It constituted a carte blanche for the company: all designated routes were to be extended as the city limits themselves were extended.

In 1889, the Albina Water Company received a franchise to lay water pipes and it contracted to provide fire hydrants and cisterns. Re-incorporated as the Albina Light and Water Company in 1890, it obtained the franchise to erect electric poles and wires once the power plant was completed. Its primary purpose was to generate power for the Willamette Bridge Railway Company (MacColl, 1988). The day before consolidation with Portland, the Albina City Council approved an exclusive contract with Edgar Quackenbush's Investment Company for lighting the recently developed Piedmont District adjacent to the Portland & Vancouver Railway line (MacColl, 1988).

Starved for funds, Albina's municipal services were rudimentary at best and upon consolidation with Portland, the citizens of Portland had to take on the weight of the obligations made by the City of Albina for the benefit of private interests.

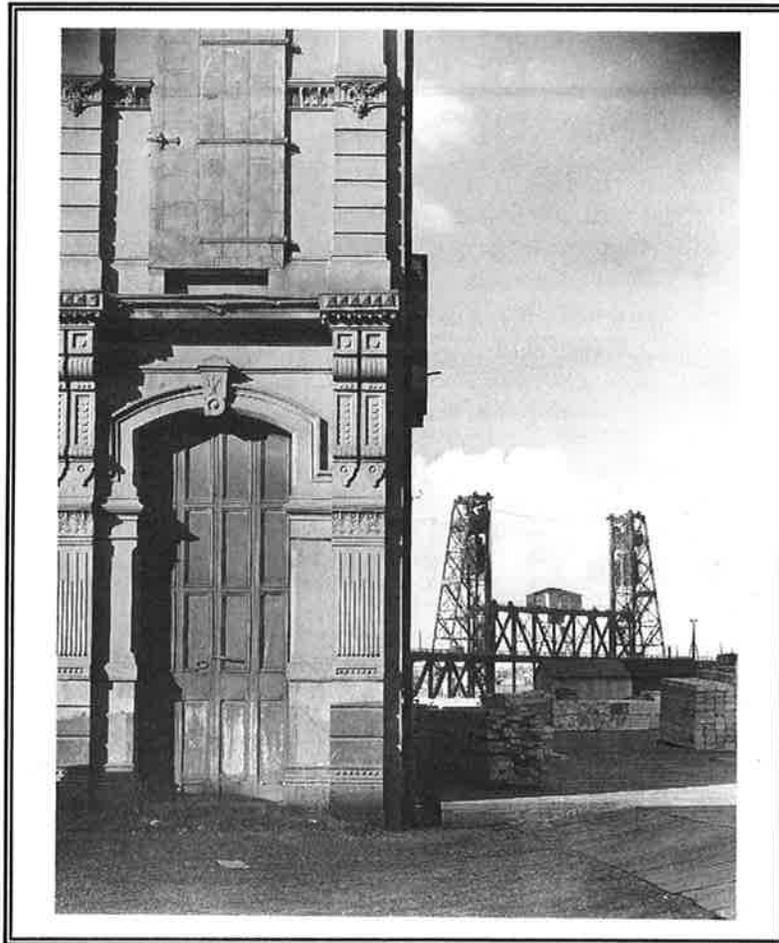
STREET CARS, TRANSPORTATION, & DEVELOPMENT

The growth, development, and decline of Albina has been closely tied to changes in the transportation system. In 1882, with the extension of the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company's (ORNC) line, from The Dalles to the banks of the Willamette River, Albina became the western terminus of what was to become the area's largest employer, the Union Pacific Railroad.



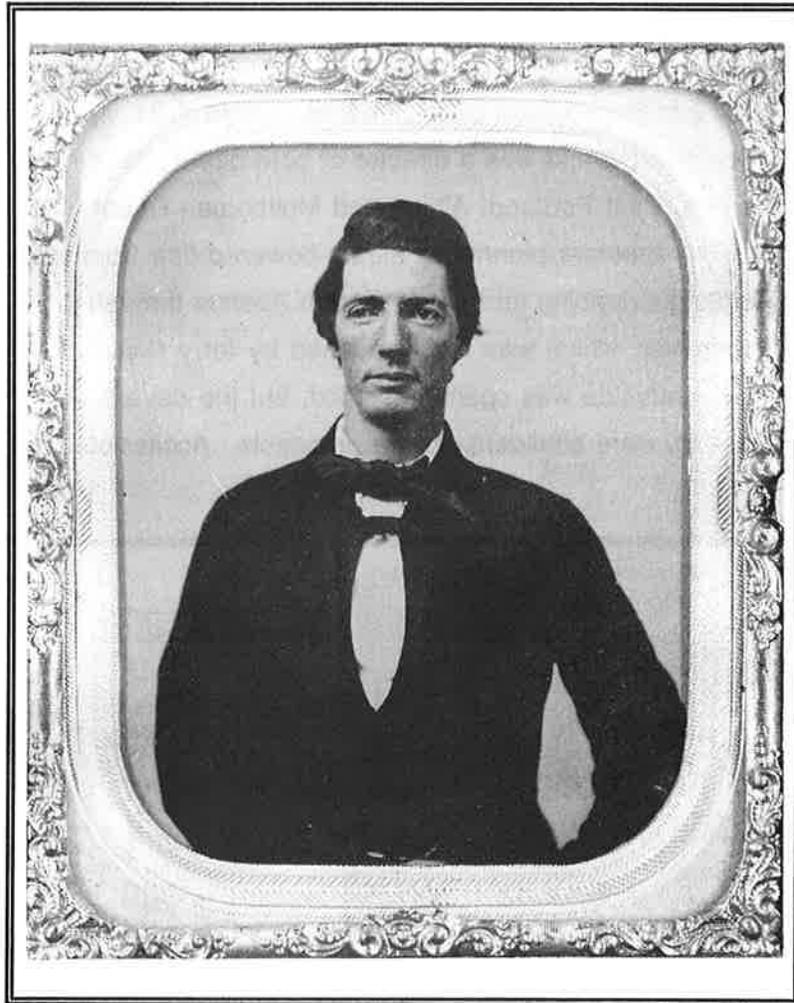
Albina Shops of Union Pacific RR (OHS)

Prior to the opening of the Morrison Bridge in 1887, ferries and small boats were the only link between Albina and Portland. With job opportunities made possible by the railroad and large tracts of undeveloped land, Albina began a period of rapid development and land speculation. Seeing the connection between transportation and increased land values, a group of bankers, who had previously formed the Oregon Land & Investment Company, used their own banks to finance the Portland & Vancouver Railway in 1888. This steam driven line ran from the dock of the Stark Street ferry on the Willamette River, through the heart of the Oregon Land & Investment Company's Albina holdings, and to the Vancouver ferry on Hayden Island. After only one week of operation, demand was such that eight runs per day were made, at a cost of \$.25 per person (Stout, 1974)



Steel Bridge-Minor White-1940 (OHS)

By 1889 the ORNC had completed the Steel Bridge and Willamette Bridge Railway (WBR) and electric street cars were running over it between Portland and Albina. This was the first of many electric street car lines to open in Oregon. When the WBR line was extended to St. Johns, it was about the same length as the present light rail line to Gresham.



David P. Thompson-1860 (OHS)

By 1890, 5,129 people lived in Albina, making it home to nearly ten percent of the region's total population. Through the 1890's and into the early 1900's the street cars were

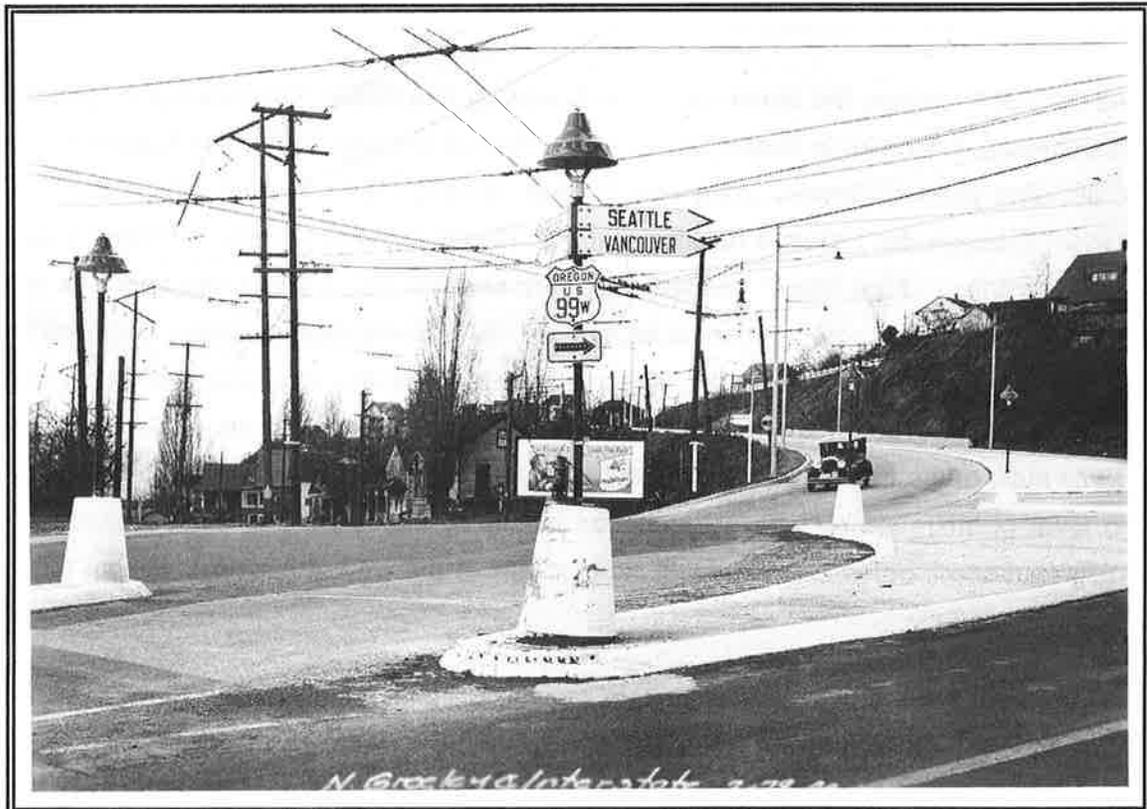
extended throughout Albina and housing developments and businesses sprang up along them. As of 1912, Portland's population had soared to over 200,000 (Rosenblum, 1972). This ten-fold increase had taken place in just 30 years, due largely to the rapid growth on the east side.

An example of the interrelation between mass transit and land speculation is the narrow-gauge Portland & Vancouver Railway which was incorporated in April 1888 by bankers Frank Dekum and Richard L. Durham, who had previously founded the Oregon Land and Investment Company. They received bank financing from their own institutions, the Commercial National and the Portland Savings banks. David P. Thompson, who was developing the Irvington tract and was a director of both banks, assisted the company in gaining franchises from East Portland, Albina and Multnomah County, despite objections from competitors. The partners planned a steam-powered line from the Stark Street Ferry landing in East Portland extending north along Union Avenue through Albina to the Columbia River opposite Vancouver, which was to be reached by ferry (MacColl, 1988). North of central Albina, the countryside was sparsely settled, but the developers who platted Woodlawn, for example, were confident of their prospects. Accessible land was saleable land.



Lombard & Greeley - 1927 (OHS)

Although over 270 miles of street car lines were available to serve this population, severe congestion developed due to the frequent openings of the drawbridges over the Willamette. As early as 1907, this led to consideration of street car tunnels under the river to relieve the congested bridges. The Portland Railway Light & Power Company (PRLPC) had consolidated most of the private rail lines into one system by 1918. In 1917, the Vancouver ferry was replaced by the Interstate Bridge, for the first time making it possible to travel between Portland and Vancouver without a transfer. The new streetcar lines and a booming economy created a second wave of residential building. During two periods of intense construction activity, 1905-13 and 1922-28, over 20,000 homes were built, mainly in the bungalow style (Abbott, 1985).



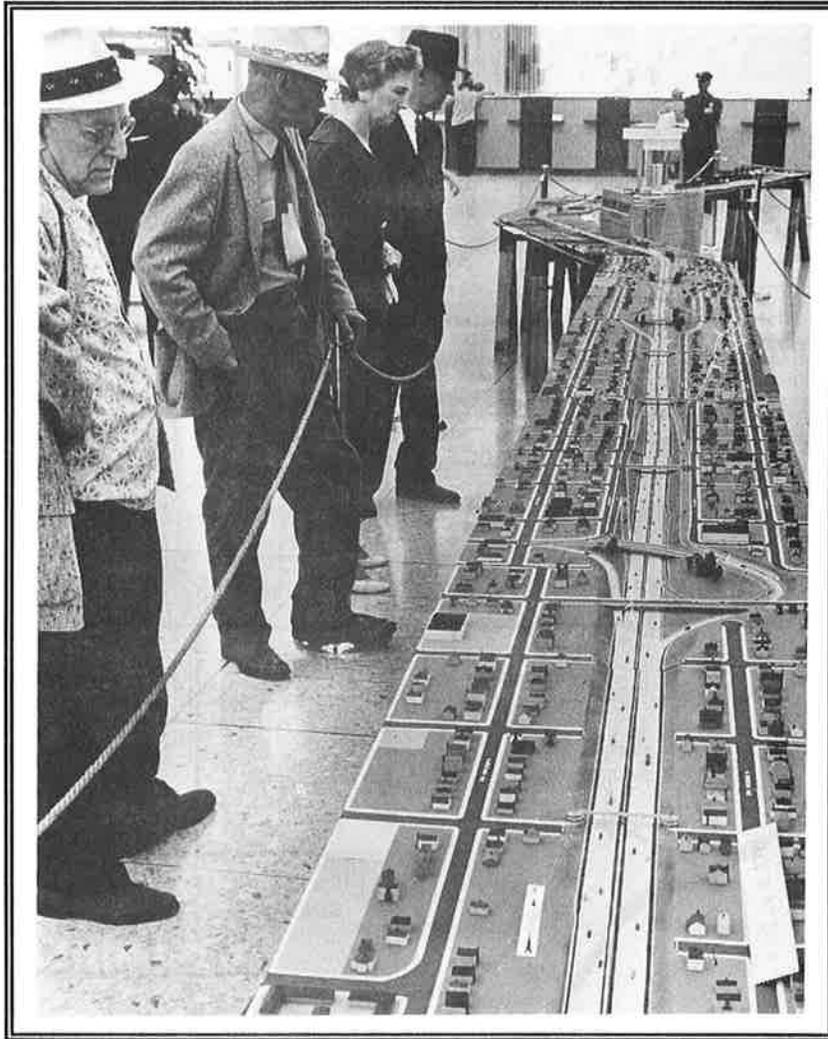
N.Greeley & Interstate - 1940 (OHS)

By WWI a commercial strip developed along Williams Ave, one of the major thoroughfares for the Willamette Bridge Railway Streetcars, and along Union Avenue. N. Rodney Street was being promoted as a desirable location for middle income families as well. Large, inexpensively constructed apartment houses were rising adjacent to the industrial areas, especially on the East side of the new Broadway Bridge near lower Albina (MacColl, 1976) where approximately 4,000 units were built (U.S. Census).

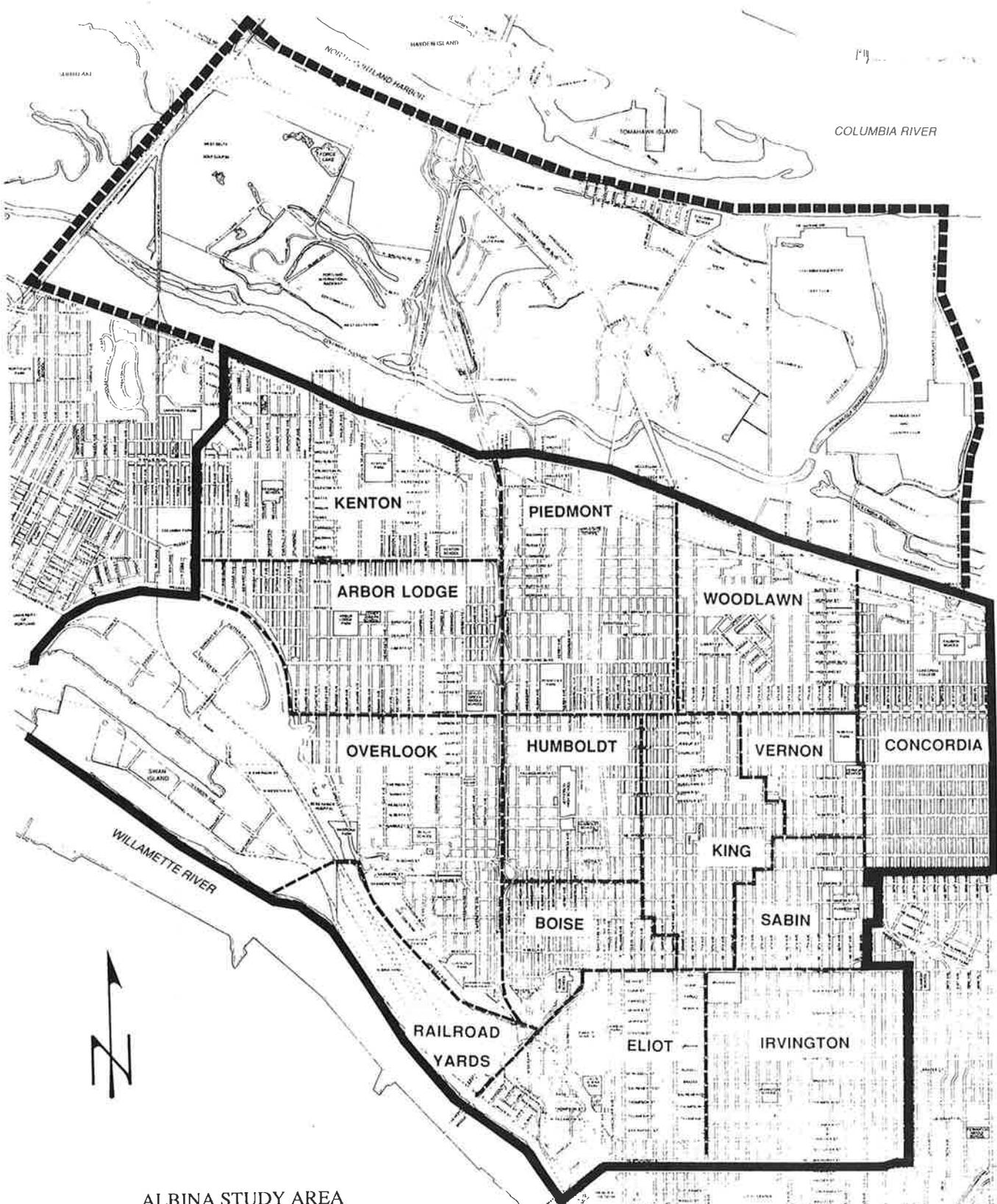
Portland created garbage dumps in Albina in the early part of the century. In the 1920's, the Greeley Avenue cutoff and areas adjacent to Alberta and Fremont were dumping sites. Nearby homes were not safe from migrating rats, bed-bugs and cockroaches (MacColl, 1979). From 1945 to 1954 a sanitary sewage interceptor line was constructed along the bluff overlooking the Willamette River. Before this time raw sewage poured directly into the river from local sewage collector lines (Environmental Services, City of Portland).

As the 1930's began, the street car era was drawing to a close. The automobile became increasingly influential in shaping the development of the city. The East Avenue Commercial Club, after years of debate, finally won the fight to have Union Avenue widened by the city in 1929. Through the 1930's a bustling auto-row developed along Union, between Alberta and Killingsworth. Fred Meyer opened a grocery store at Union and Killingsworth in 1937; by 1938 he had added a department store, and by 1940 an auto-supply store. Business boomed along Union while it served as the major route to Vancouver. However, this was a short lived situation. The creation of Interstate Avenue as the primary route to Vancouver stole away most of the traffic from Union and the travel oriented businesses soon abandoned Union in favor of Interstate Avenue. Surrounded mostly by immigrant and lower income neighborhoods, Union Avenue could support little in the way of business without this through traffic.

During the 1940's and 1950's, Interstate Avenue became lined with businesses, such as motels, which catered to the interstate traveler. However, the opening of the Minnesota Freeway (I-5), in 1964, decreased traffic on Interstate Avenue by 66% and Union Avenue by 25% (Stout, 1974). The tourist and trucking oriented businesses along Interstate Avenue have since been replaced by new businesses located closer to freeway interchanges, just as the auto-oriented Interstate Avenue stole the thunder from the old business district which grew up along the Union Avenue rail line.



Minnesota Freeway Model On Display at 1st National Bank - 1961 (OHS)



ALBINA STUDY AREA

- LEGEND:**
- ALBINA HISTORICAL PRESERVATION STUDY BOUNDARY
 - - - ALBINA COMMUNITY PLAN IMPACT AREA BOUNDARY
 - - - ALBINA NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

SCALE



6 000 FT

ALBINA NEIGHBORHOODS

The thirteen individual neighborhoods of the Albina Plan area are as diverse as the people who live there. Some of these areas have identities that go back 100 years, while others obtained their current names and boundaries with the advent of formal neighborhood associations in Portland during the 60's and '70's. The neighborhood associations have names and boundaries more often reflecting school district designations than their historic origins. Over time some names have faded and histories for neighborhoods in Albina often overlap.



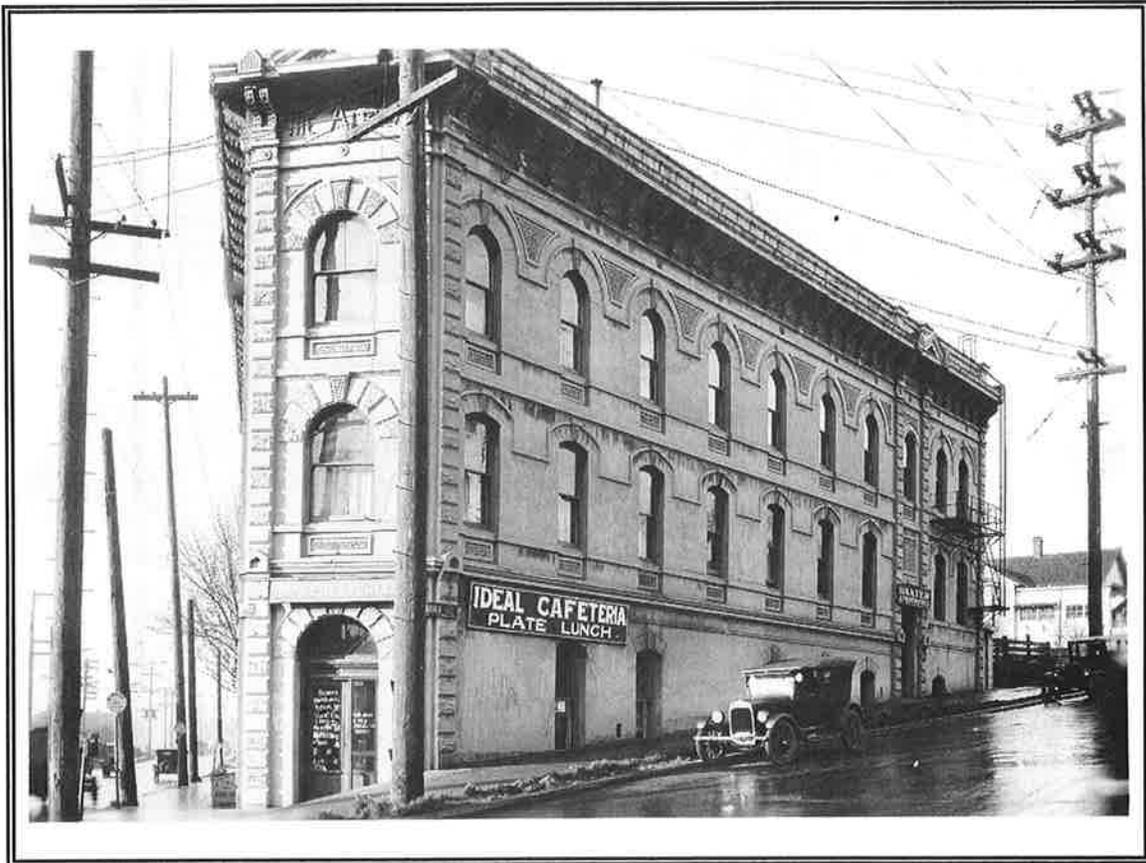
Hill Block - Built by Charles H. Hill, 1st Mayor of Albina (OHS)

The original boundaries of the City of Albina are contained in those neighborhoods closest in to downtown Portland. The present neighborhood of **Eliot** encompasses the potential historic conservation district of Lower Albina. Russell was the main street in the old city of Albina and the intersection of Russell and Williams Avenue became its center. The principle buildings of the early years were located there.

Of the old upper commercial center, which extends into the **Boise** neighborhood, only scattered buildings remain. This centrally located retail area was bounded by Mississippi and Williams Avenue. The three and four story brick commercial structures that once lined the streets have almost all been demolished in the wake of the construction of I-5 and the Emanuel Hospital urban renewal project. The onion dome from the Hill Block now sits atop a gazebo in nearby Dawson park.

Upper Albina became one of the most fashionable residential centers of the greater Portland area. The Palmer House, on the borders of the **Boise** and **Humboldt** neighborhoods, is an elegant reminder of Albina's early identity.

The opening of the Morrison and Steel bridges and accompanying expansion of trolley lines throughout Albina was a golden opportunity for real estate developers. **Irvington, Woodlawn, and Piedmont** are three neighborhoods in the Albina plan area that were specifically developed and promoted as streetcar suburbs.



Ideal Cafeteria - SW Larrabee, Now Interstate (OHS)

The **Piedmont** neighborhood was first platted in 1889 and its excellent examples of Edwardian single family houses are little changed in character from the flowery descriptions in the Investment Company's promotional booklet, Piedmont, The Emerald, Portland's Evergreen Suburb, Devoted Exclusively to Dwellings -- A Place of Homes. E. Quackenbush, President, of the Investment Company, developed a neighborhood of large substantial homes.



Piedmont Water Tank ca 1899 (OHS)

The Investment Company invited the Portland and Vancouver RR to extend its tracks to **Piedmont** along Union and a 20 foot strip of land was deeded for this purpose. (Stahli, 1975). Streets were designed to be 60 feet wide with 15 foot alleys running north to south. All utilities were confined to the alleyways. Persons wishing to build homes in Piedmont were subject to certain conditions. Homes had to be at least 25 feet from the street and 15 feet from the lot's side boundaries. The minimum construction price was set between

\$2,500 to \$3,000 to ensure the middle class character of the neighborhood (Staehli, 1975).

By 1891, the Portland and Vancouver line on the eastern edge of the subdivision was making over thirty daily trips to **Piedmont** (Staehli, 1975) Between 1891 and 1907 each of the boundary streets were extended except Commercial. By 1909, 140 dwellings had been erected. The residents were primarily upper-middle class professionals (Staehli, 1975).

The most distinctive architectural resources of the **Piedmont** area still standing are the large houses in the potential historic conservation district. Half of this area, which is bounded by Portland Blvd. on the north, Killingsworth on the south, Commercial on the west and King Blvd on the east, lies within the boundaries of the **Humboldt and King** neighborhoods.

The **Overlook** neighborhood was also heavily promoted as a desirable residential area at the turn of the century. Both **Overlook** and **Arbor Lodge** were conveniently located on the trolley line to St. John's. The Ockley Green stop was a central stop on this route. **Overlook** has several nodes of distinctive buildings and remainders of the Finnish and Polish communities that once existed there. **Arbor Lodge** developed as a predominantly residential area and has one of the finest ensembles of post-World War I bungalows in Portland located in the Mock Crest area between Willamette Blvd and Lombard St.

Woodlawn changed rapidly from a rural farm community in the 1860's and 1870's to a streetcar suburb by the early 1890's. The Oregon Land and Investment Company purchased and platted **Woodlawn** as a subdivision in 1888. Two streetcar lines were constructed through **Woodlawn** by the Portland and Vancouver Railroad company. These became the Woodlawn and Vancouver Lines. The Woodlawn line ran north along Union to Portland Ave where it angled across the terrain to the intersection of Durham and Dekum where a trolley depot was located. The Vancouver line ran parallel to the Woodlawn line but continued on a straight course all the way to the Columbia River ferry crossings.

By 1897, **Woodlawn** was a small village with a thriving business district centered around Dekum and Durham Ave. The district included a bakery, a drug store, an ice cream parlor, a doctor's office, two meat markets, a nickelodeon, two grocery stores and a tobacco store.

Business declined during the 1920's as the area became more residential in character (Bureau of Planning, 1978).

Residential development followed the general patterns in Portland. Lots were primarily sold to individuals and small contractors who either built their own homes and a few speculative houses. These were simple, decorated Pioneer farmhouses and cottages. (Bureau of Planning, 1978) Later structures showed a variety of detail associated with Victorian styles.

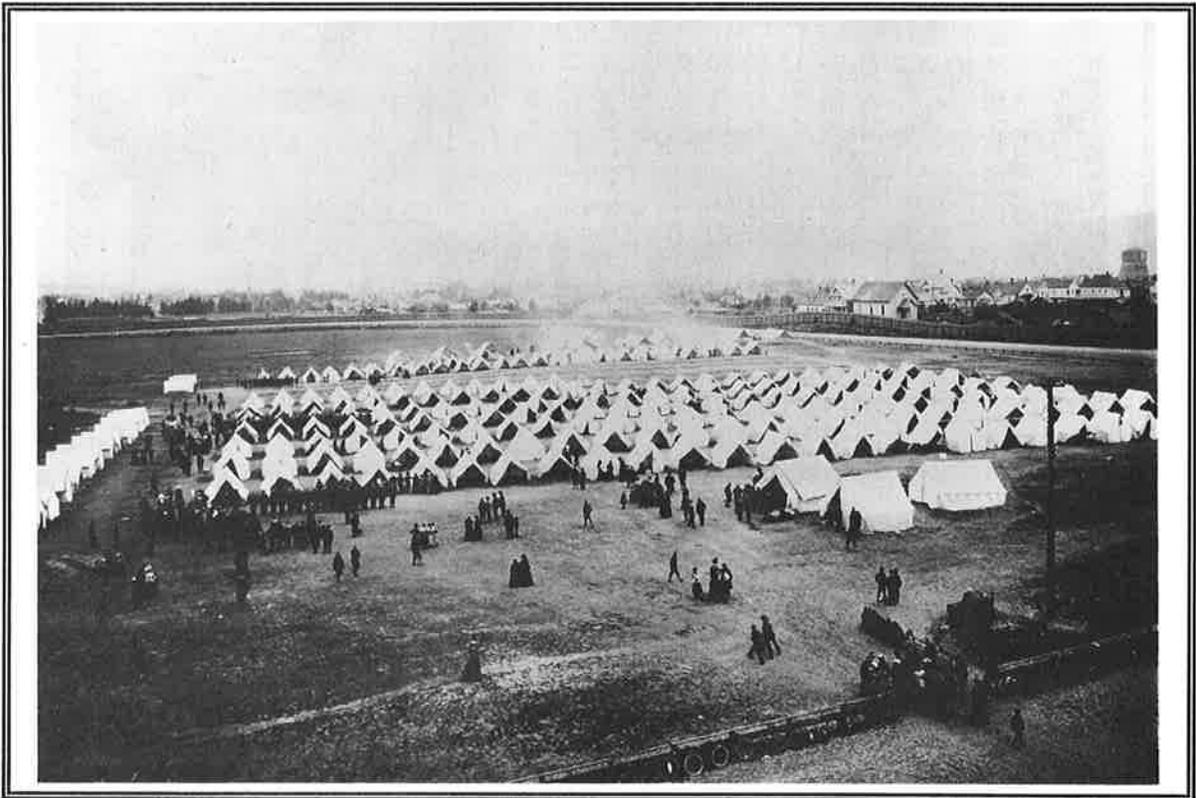
Irvington was platted in 1887 and the area developed rapidly in the twenty years following 1890, becoming a neighborhood of large middle and upper class residences. Very little remains from the period of the great homes which occupied the blocks where the Lloyd Corporation developments now stand.



OR Real Estate Company-Holladay's Addition-Grand & Multnomah-1913 (OHS)

Irvington Addition is centered around NE 7th and Hancock and Tillamook Streets. The residences which fill the blocks along these two streets from NE 7th to about NE 27th range from some very simple residences on the edge of old Albina to high Arts and Crafts style from the 1890's to the 1920's in an almost unbroken flow. In the area between **Irvington** and Albina, the blocks between Union and 7th Avenue contain largely undisturbed examples of 1890's lower income housing and late Victorian cottages.

Prior to annexation of the City of Albina to the City of Portland, the **Irvington** district contained one of Northeast Portland's major recreation centers. A racetrack on the present site of Irving Park was the scene of both horse and motor racing until just after the turn of the century. (Bureau of Planning, 1978)



OR National Guard at Irvington Race Track ca. Spanish American War (OHS)

The original **Kenton** plat changed hands many times in the 1890's and the area was sold to cover debts by the Multnomah County Sheriff to J.C. Ainsworth for \$15,000 in 1897. (Bureau of Planning, 1978). The **Kenton** area saw its greatest growth as a company town for employees of the Swift Meat Packing Company.



Spaulding, Papworth & Co. O'Shea Bros. Butchers-1890 (OHS)

At the turn of the century, the meat industry in Portland was independently operated. In 1893 Adolph Burckhardt, Thomas Papworth, Morton M. Spaulding, James and John O'Shea, and Emmanuel Masy consolidated their business to form the Union Meat company. In 1906, Swift and Company purchased the Union Meat Company. In 1908 the Swift Company formed the Kenwood Land Company, which purchased 3,400 acres along the Columbia River for a

new meat packing plant and the stockyards. That same year Kenwood platted the **Kenton** district following the common pattern for large corporations of the period to found company towns.

Swift's activities spurred further development in the area. By 1911, there were no less than 12 major manufacturing firms located near the Columbia Slough. Portland became the central livestock market in the northwest (Bureau of Planning, 1978). During this period, there were cattle drives which came up Greeley Ave from the OWR&N railroad yard (Staehli, 1975).



Union Stockyards Exchange Building- Opening Day-9/15/09 (OHS)

The opening of the Swift plant resulted in a commercial construction boom along Denver Avenue. The Kenton Hotel opened in 1910 and was intended to provide lodging and meals for

visiting cattlemen. The Kenton Bank opened in October and the Kenwood Construction Company began construction of ten new buildings which are in the heart of the potential Kenton Historic Conservation district (Bureau of Planning, 1978).

Denver Avenue, originally Derby Street, was the main street of the new community. Derby Street was also "Executive Row", containing the fashionable homes of the Swift officers. Many of these were cement block structures and by 1924 ten cement block style bungalows had been constructed in the area. Rows of smaller identical houses were arrayed on side streets of Winchel and Brandon for workers and their families (Bureau of Planning, 1978).

The Kenton Traction Company line extended north from the junction of N. Mississippi Avenue and Killingsworth to Pippin - now Lombard - and west to Derby Street then north and out to the stockyards and packing plant. The Kenton trolley route opened in 1909 and was a connecting link to the Mississippi and Williams line at Killingsworth. The commute from **Kenton** to downtown took about 30 minutes (Bureau of Planning, 1978).

The old **Vanport** site is an important part of the Albina Plan area's history. The area, once occupied by the wartime housing and facilities built by Henry Kaiser, lies within the boundaries of the present **Kenton** neighborhood.

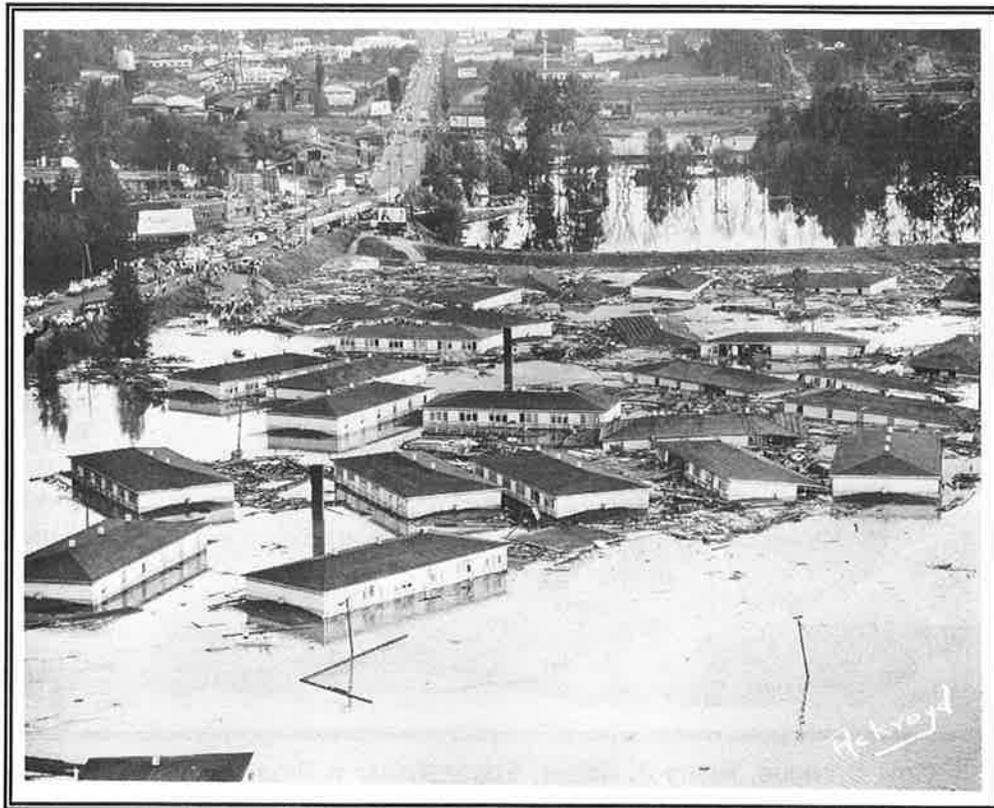
Ship building has always been an important part of Oregon's economy. With American intervention in World War II imminent, the first Liberty Ship built in the region was launched from the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation's (Kaiser) shipyards. Two months later Pearl Harbor was bombed and Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation was on its way to becoming the nation's largest producer of Liberty Ships.

Foreseeing both a labor and a housing shortage, Kaiser advertised for workers across the country and purchased 650 acres of land for the construction of worker dormitories. This area, first called Kaiserville then Vanport City, was located on low lying land diked by Denver Avenue to the East, a railroad fill to the West, and dikes along the Columbia River to the North and the Columbia Slough to the South. In the course of one year (1943) what was to become the largest wartime housing project in the United States and the second largest city in Oregon was conceived, designed, and built.



Gov. Sprague, Henry J. Kaiser, Edgar Kaiser & Pres. Franklin Roosevelt
Opening of Kaiser Shipyard-1942 (OHS)

The turnover rate in Vanport's housing ran close to 100 percent a year. 40,000 individuals were packed into 9,942 units in 703 buildings which were clustered 20 feet from each other around 181 service annexes. There were the constant coming and goings of swing, graveyard, and day shifts. Each cluster of apartments obtained heat from a central furnace with only one thermostat. The wooden heating ducts frequently caught on fire. Vanport City was plagued with rats, cockroaches, and bed bugs.



Vanport Flood - May, 1948 (OHS)

Recruiting efforts had brought together a diverse group of workers from all across the country, about 25 percent of whom were black. At the time, the National Housing Authority was one of only two government agencies which had an anti-discrimination clause so there was no explicit segregation in Vanport City. Because resentment ran high in white

neighborhoods as Portland's black population increased from 2,565 in 1940 to 15,000 by 1946, most of the new black immigrants were confined to Vanport City. Most white residents of Vanport stayed only until they could find better housing (Maben, 1987).



Vanport Refugees - May, 1948 (OHS)

As the war drew to a close, layoffs began. The first week, 3,000 lost their jobs. By July of 1945 the population of Vanport City had fallen to 26,000 as many of the war workers returned to their home towns or new job opportunities elsewhere. By May 21, 1948, only 6,000 of Vanport City's original 9,942 units were still standing. In them lived 18,700 individuals, some of whom were veteran college students or college teachers attending the Vanport Extension Center (now Portland State University). Vanport City was mainly the home of last resort for poor families who had come to Portland to work in the war industries and were left unemployed after the shipyard layoffs.

The Vanport Flood of May 30, 1948 virtually wiped out the housing and community facilities of Vanport and resolved the dilemma of Portland developers as to how to rid themselves of public housing on this valuable piece of property.

As for the residents of Vanport City, they were taken in by members of the community, churches, and organizations such as the YWCA. In the long run, however, the low income housing lost in the flood was not replaced. Many of the flood victims ended up living in the historic heart of the old city of Albina, as this was the location of much of the city's oldest housing stock and had long been the area to which blacks were steered.

The area that is now the **King** neighborhood also contained significant ethnic communities particularly the Russian-German population that was centered around the German Congregational Church and the business district at Fremont and Union. The original ethnic communities in **King** and Albina spread to the **Sabin** and **Vernon** neighborhoods with the outreach of the trolley lines.

Sabin Neighborhood was developed on the 160 acre donation land claim of Alvin Allard established in 1853. The shift from farmland to residential development can be traced through the plat and addition dates in **Sabin**: Irvington Heights - 1890; N. Lincoln (Fremont to Failing, 6th to 14th) - 1891; N. Irvington (Mason to Failing, 9th to 14th) - 1902; and Dixon Place (NE 14th to between Fremont and Prescott) - 1912.

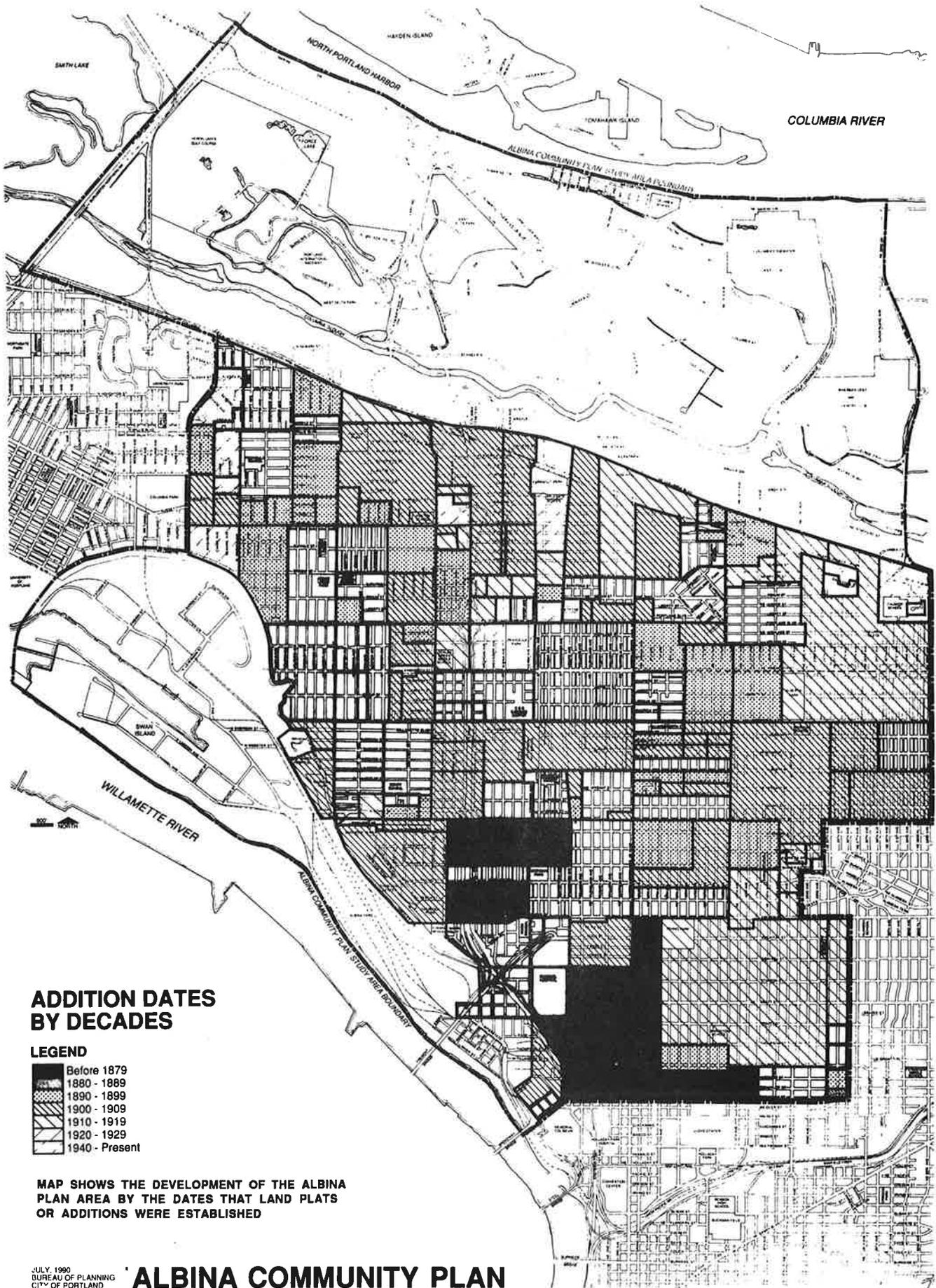
Dixon Place was a transitional area between the poor German-Russian population to the east and the wealthier area of Irvington to the south. The section of **Sabin** between 19th and 24th from Fremont to Prescott as well as just west of Sabin School were originally orchards.

Sabin has always been a mix of ethnic groups and income levels. German-Russians had established a community from NE 10th to 15th between Fremont and Prescott. These immigrants were from the area around the Volga River in Russia. The German Congregational Zion Church, a Rank II historic resource, is a remnant of this ethnic group's strong presence in the area. Many of the Volga Russians as well as the other ethnic groups of the Albina area worked at the Albina railroad yards.

In the late 50's, the population of **Sabin** became more racially mixed as residents of the predominantly black areas near the Coliseum site and Emanuel Hospital were displaced by urban renewal projects.

The growth of **Sabin** made the establishment of a public school necessary in 1919. The Dixon Place School held classes in portable classrooms until the present school building was constructed in 1928. Renamed after R.L. Sabin in 1920, this handsome brick structure is a Rank II property in the City's Historic Resources Inventory. In 1941, the school was renamed Boy's Edison High and was a school for "disruptive" boys. In 1947, it became Sabin Grade School once again.

Vernon was developed after the carlines became available. **Vernon** and **Concordia** represent transitional development between the streetcar suburbs and the availability of the automobile in the 1910's. There remains a strip of interesting commercial architecture along the old trolley car lines near NE Alberta and NE 30th.



**ADDITION DATES
BY DECADES**

LEGEND

- Before 1879
- ▨ 1880 - 1889
- ▧ 1890 - 1899
- ▩ 1900 - 1909
- ▬ 1910 - 1919
- ▮ 1920 - 1929
- ▭ 1940 - Present

MAP SHOWS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALBINA
PLAN AREA BY THE DATES THAT LAND PLATS
OR ADDITIONS WERE ESTABLISHED

ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF THE ALBINA COMMUNITY

The Albina Community has always been one with great human diversity and Albina today is no different. There are families with roots going back to the turn of the century. The past ten years has seen the arrival of new groups such as the Southeast Asian community bringing fresh currents to the cultural and ethnic mix of Albina.



Founders of the Finnish Temperance Union-1889 (OHS)

The eastside of Portland has served as a "stopover" for many ethnic groups. There was a time when you could walk up Union Avenue and hear people conversing in several foreign languages. Some of the churches and social centers these groups built still remain either converted to a new use or drawing back some of the old neighborhood residents.

The construction of the rail shops in Albina in 1885 brought large numbers of working class Irish and German immigrants to fill the semi-skilled jobs created by the rail yards. Cheap housing and shanty towns arose.(the one along Albina's railroad tracks was known as Stringtown). Within a few years Albina was to become primarily a working class community of small cheap homes (MacColl, 1976).

A group of German-Russians had begun to establish a close-knit community in Albina around 1888. Emigres from a number of Volga towns settled in Portland's eastside "Little Russia" (Scheurerman and Trafzer, 1980).



German Congregational Zion Church-NE 9th & Fremont (OHS)

"Little Russia" stretched along Union and Seventh avenues from Fremont to Shaver. Retail business abounded along these blocks. Hildermann's, Repp Bros, Hergert's, Krombeing's, Greenfell's and Bihn's all supplied groceries. Repp's, Krombeing's, and Hergertt's specialized in meats, Geist's sold shoes. Trupp repaired them. Weimer's was the hardware and furniture dealer. Mt. Zion Baptist Church at NE 9th and Fremont served this community (Klooster, 1987). The Volga Russians had largely dispersed by the end of WWII and by 1950, only about 700 persons of Volga German descent still lived in "Little Russia". (U.S. Census)



Shaver Family Home-Memorial Coliseum Site-1884 (OHS)

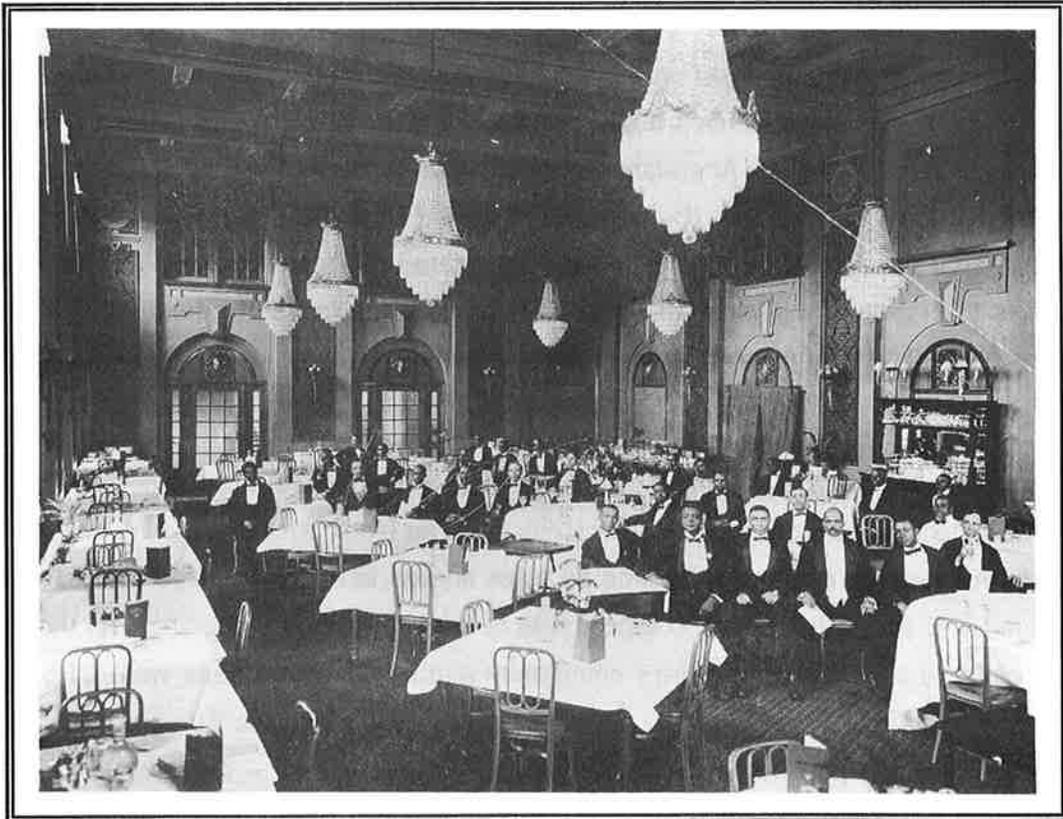
Many of Portland's 3,000 Scandinavian immigrants and their children lived in Albina with the working men near the railroads below the bluff and the middle-class families on higher

land around Williams and Union avenues. They supported a community center known as Scandinavian House on NE 7th, mutual aid societies for Danes and Swedes; and Scandinavian, Swedish, and Danish Lutheran churches.

The Polish community established St. Stanislaus Church on Interstate Avenue and still continues to support the parish and its activities. Evidence of the Southeast Asian community in Albina can be seen in the cluster of small businesses and restaurants they have established around the intersection of Albina and Killingsworth.

GROWTH OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Portland's black community has been and continues to be a vital part of the Albina area. The history of Albina's growth, decline, and its revitalization and the history of the black struggle for dignity and empowerment are intertwined to this day. The story of the black community in Portland and the Albina area is a rich one that needs to be a living resource for the future.



Interior of Portland Hotel Dining Room with Waiters Posed at Tables (OHS)

In 1890, the population of Portland included 519 blacks, less than one percent of Portland's total population. The healthy business environment of Portland at the beginning of the century influenced the migration of blacks to Portland. They were drawn by increasing job opportunities provided by the opening of the Portland Hotel (the present site of Pioneer Courthouse Square) and the expansion of the railroads (McLaglen, 1980). The Portland Hotel was completed in 1890 and seventy-five black men came from North and South Carolina as well as Georgia to work in the hotel as barbers, waiters and in other service positions. Eventually these men sent for their families to join them. They formed the elite of Portland's black community. The limited opportunities for blacks meant that jobs as waiters and railway porters were some of the best jobs available and the cosmopolitan blacks in these positions formed the nucleus of a black middle class. Some prospered enough that they were able to leave the hotel to go into business for themselves. (McLaglen, 1980)

The early black community lived on the westside adjacent to the railyards and close to the Portland Hotel. Social life focused on the churches and the black owned Golden West Hotel in the North of Burnside area. Attendance at church might be followed by Sunday dinner with the family at the Golden West (Bogle, 1990). As the Northwest triangle area became more industrialized, black families settled in widely scattered parts of the city. The move of the churches to the inner northeast area gradually brought the focus of community life and families with it. The original westside black community became one predominantly of single men.

Racial discrimination and the small size of the community created the necessity for a self-contained black system of social and business life. The black business community centered on Williams Avenue but declined over time as black access to better financed white businesses increased and as blacks moved to other parts of the city for better housing. As the final nail in the coffin, the remaining business community and its consumer base were all but destroyed by the construction of the Coliseum in the 1950's and the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project in the early 1970's.



Vanport City Vacation School-1943 (OHS)

Local political, social, spiritual and fraternal organizations formed the framework for the early black community (McLaglen, 1980). In the 1920's, there were five black churches and two missions in the Albina area. The social life of the community also centered on the fraternal lodges and their women's auxiliaries, women's clubs, the Williams Avenue YWCA and the local chapter of the NAACP. The Elks Rose City Lodge was organized with its women's auxiliary, the Dahlias Temple, in 1906. In 1913, the Colored Women's Council held its first charity ball and established a clubhouse (McLaglen, 1980). In 1916, the Knights of Pythias, Syracuse Lodge and a second Elks lodge was organized.

The Northeast Branch of the YWCA was established in a portable structure on the corner of Williams and Tillamook in 1921. Five years later work was begun on a new building on this site funded primarily by a gift of \$12,000 from a white woman active in the YWCA, Mrs. E.S. Collins. An effort was made by white citizens to deny a building permit. The protest

was taken to the city council and the city attorney denied the request, saying that the city had no right to refuse to issue a building permit simply because it was for a black organization. (McLaglen, 1980)

The majority of Portland's blacks lived in Albina by 1939 (MacColl, 1976). The 1940 census shows that the 2,000 blacks now lived in a more concentrated area with 959 living in two census tracts in inner Northeast. Even in these areas, 93% of the surrounding residents were white (Abbott, 1983).

Between 1940 and 1950, Albina's black population grew from 1,600 to 4,500 (US Census). Significant migration into Albina occurred during WWII as blacks moved to Portland to work in the Kaiser shipyards. Portland was unprepared to deal with the mass of people brought in by the war effort and in particular with the quadrupling of its black population. Overnight, the black community was transformed from a nearly invisible community into a large visible one. One side effect of this migration was the split it created in the black community. The older established community in Portland now had to interact with people with different social customs and of different social classes all in one area of the city (Millner, 1990).

As the numbers of blacks increased, so did the number of racial incidents. The People's Observer chronicled racial incidents on city buses, harassment by the police, and conflict over the segregated USO in Northeast Portland (Abbott, 1985). These events were a sharp reminder to Portland's black citizens of their oppressed condition.

Housing was at the core of the racial tensions. In 1942, white workers complained about sharing shipyard dormitories with blacks. Neighborhood groups were up in arms at every suggestion or rumor that blacks might be moving to their areas (Abbott, 1985). After the destruction of Vanport by a flood in 1948, those black workers found, that in segregated Portland, the close-in areas of Albina was virtually the only housing area open to them



Safeway Store at Broadway & Williams Picketed by
Albina Chapter of Civil Rights Congress 1950 (OHS)

Discrimination in the housing market concentrated the black population in Albina. This was accomplished through the Portland Realty Board's canon of professional "ethics". Realty Board members could be expelled if they willingly encouraged a minority family to assume residence in a white neighborhood or apartment complex. This racial exclusion policy became widely known when a copy of the text used in an evening extension course for apprentice brokers was circulated. It quoted a statement by Portland Realtor Chester A. Moores (ironically head of the Portland Housing Authority during WWII). "We were discussing at the Realty Board recently the advisability of setting up certain districts for Negroes and Orientals. We talked about the possibility of creating desirable districts which could actually cater to those groups and make life more pleasant for them. after all, they have to live too, the the same as youngsters". The transcribed dialogue noted that several brokers responded to Moores suggestion by singling out Albina for Negroes and Ladd's Addition for Orientals (MacColl, 1979).

Before the war blacks had moved into Albina and northeast Portland for a variety of reasons: the proximity of the railroad yards, a general shift of population to the east side, and the proximity of black churches and social and business institutions (McLaglen, 1980).



N. Williams & Russell St., 1962 (OHS)

The policies of the real estate establishment and the indifference of the city housing authority fostered the patterns of segregated housing which emerged during and after the war.

In the mid-1960's Albina was plagued with racial tension. On July 30, 1967, the Albina community experienced two days of racial violence when some 200 blacks, angry about their living conditions in deteriorating Albina, vandalized, looted and fire bombed several

businesses located on Union Avenue between NE Fremont and NE Beech Street. Two local pastors, Reverend Wendell Wallace and Reverend O.B. Williams, were asked to go to Irving Park to calm down some 80 youth who were throwing bottles and rocks at passing white motorists (Oregonian, July 31,1967).

The center of Portland's black community had moved more than a mile north from its center at Union and Broadway in 1940 to Union and Skidmore in 1980. This process started with the land clearance for the Memorial Coliseum in the 1950's and continued with the construction of the I-5 highway in the 1960's and the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project in the 1970's in the historic heart of Albina south of Fremont and west of 18th.

By 1980, 63,000 people lived in the Albina area. Over 20,000 blacks now lived in the area representing 30% of the area's population (US Census) The resulting density of population in old housing stock, along with the destruction of the heart of the commercial district and surrounding neighborhood by urban renewal projects of the late 60's and early 70's are important factors in the legacy of the deterioration of Albina.

PLANNING FOR ALBINA

After the war, the inner North/Northeast area of Portland experienced the suburban expansion and white flight as did many American cities. A series of federally funded efforts were directed at the inner city areas to deal with the problems of "blight". Clearance of blighted areas often resulted in destroying down at the heels but viable neighborhood areas and displacing its residents with large scale developers and institutional uses the primary beneficiaries. The current planning process of the Bureau of Planning for Albina must be connected to the last 40 years worth of federal and local interventions.

The Federal Urban Renewal Program has its origins in the Housing Act of 1949. Title 1 of this act made federal assistance available to cities for urban redevelopment by providing federal dollars for land clearance, assembly, and sale of land to private developers or public housing authorities. Portland's first urban renewal project was the South Auditorium complex. This set in motion the mechanisms for further urban renewal projects in particular the creation and designation of the Portland Development Commission as the city's urban renewal agency.

In 1959, the city hired a planning consultant to study Portland neighborhoods and determine their levels of blight. Irvington was one of three neighborhoods studied. It was chosen primarily to assess the impact of Lloyd Center on the residential area and concluded that Irvington was an aging but still desirable place to live. It proposed measures to mitigate the increase in neighborhood traffic from the Lloyd Center and code enforcement to curb the illegal conversion of single-family houses to apartments.

The first official urban renewal project that occurred within the Albina Community boundaries was the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Plan which focused on rehabilitation and conservation of the aging inner city neighborhood. PDC organized the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee in late 1960 and published the survey and planning application for the Improvement Plan in July, 1961. PDC made rehabilitation assistance available for homeowners and cleared several dozen dilapidated houses for new construction. In 1962 a more extensive study was done in Albina. The Housing Authority proposed to

construct a 58-unit public housing project in the vicinity of the Knott Street Community Center. There were two boundaries for the Central Albina Plan study area: the entire area from Killingsworth Street to the Banfield and between Interstate Ave to NE 16th Ave.



Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project (OHS)

The study concluded that the area was in an advanced state of "urban blight" and recommended clearance and redevelopment as the best solution. An area of 33 blocks between Fremont, Skidmore, Vancouver and Mississippi was designated for intensive upgrading by PDC. PDC made rehabilitation assistance available and cleared several dozen rundown buildings for new construction and tore out two blocks of housing in the middle of the Boise neighborhood to build Unthank Park (Abbott, 1983).

In 1967, unhappy with the city's treatment of the heart of Albina, south of Fremont, more than a thousand Albina residents petitioned the city council to extend the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project southward. In 1968, PDC modified the boundaries of the initial improvement project by adding approximately 33 acres. The extension area included the area from Skidmore to Blandena and between Vancouver and Albina. It was felt that a larger target area would better serve the goals of rehabilitation.

The Model Cities Program was initiated in 1966 to deal in a coordinated, targeted way with the problems of urban blight, poverty, and attendant social ills. Model Cities was a demonstration project aimed at providing innovative services and service delivery. Eight neighborhoods were designated as part of its efforts at rehabilitation and public improvements: Boise, Humboldt, Eliot, Irvington, King, Sabin, Vernon, and Woodlawn. Portland's model cities funding of 15 million was approved in November 1967 by HUD. The plans done in the early 60's wrote off the entire Eliot neighborhood south of Fremont and west of Union for commercial and institutional reuse. By 1971, the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Model Cities District stated that "since that time, there has been a shift in residents' attitudes...Many people particularly the elderly, want to remain. Rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Eliot neighborhood for residential purposes is consistent with a broad community goal of improving the variety and quantity of housing opportunities in the central Portland area" (Abbott, 1983)

The neighborhood suffered additional damage in the early 1970's from the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project which the PDC carefully reserved from the Model Cities planning process despite bitter neighborhood opposition (Abbott, 1983)

Citizens in the renewal area organized to make sure that their concerns about renewal and relocation were heard and that adequate funding was provided for relocating those whose homes would be eliminated in the renewal process.

The greatest legacy of the Model Cities era was the development of leadership in the community and the beginnings of citizen participation through neighborhood associations. The neighborhood development program resulted in plans for Woodlawn, Irvington, King/Vernon/Sabin, Boise/Humboldt, and Eliot. In 1973, neighborhood policy plans were completed and presented to the mayor. These plans were never formally approved by the

City Council. One reason for this was that federal cutbacks in aid to cities and social programs made implementation at the local level almost impossible without diverting large amounts of city funds.



Groundbreaking for Unthank Park-1967 (OHS)

Another planning effort that impacted the Albina area is the Union Avenue Redevelopment Plan. For 30 years, politicians have discussed what to do about Union, now Martin Luther King Blvd.; many businesses withered and died after the expansion of Interstate Avenue and the construction of I-5. Five city administrations have studied the situation each forming its own plan to revitalize the street. In August 1972, each neighborhood association in the Model Cities area adopted transportation polices which set Union Ave as the highest priority for transportation improvements. In 1973, the draft of the Model Cities Comprehensive

Plan indicated that a specific program should be developed to improve Union Avenue physically, socially and economically.

In December of 1973, the City of Portland and the Model Cities Planning Board agreed to launch the Union Avenue Redevelopment Program. The goals of the program were to create new economic opportunities for local businesses, enhance the physical appearance of the street and provide housing opportunities in the surrounding neighborhoods.

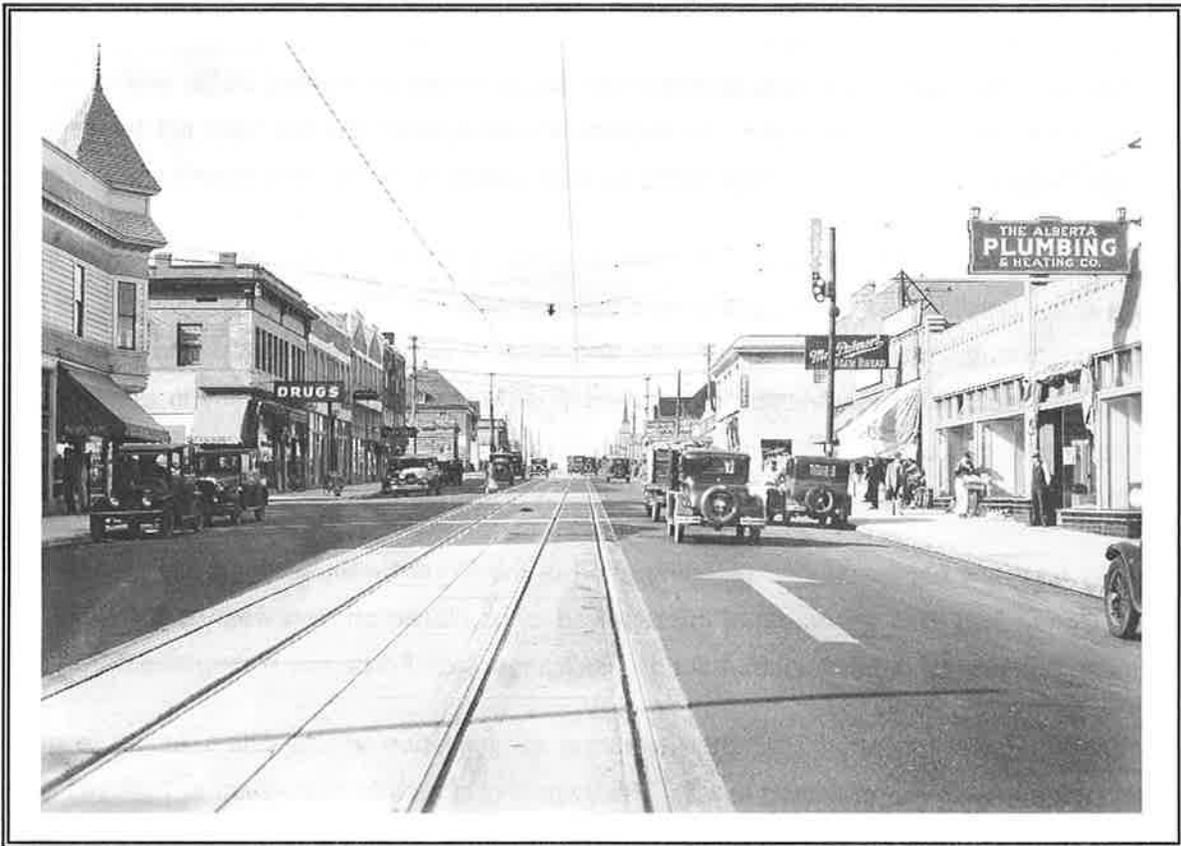
One of the results of this planning process was the construction of median strip with landscaping on Union Avenue. Prior to the construction of the median strip Union Avenue had a volume of 17,700 Average Daily Trips and it was projected that by 1990 the volume would reach at least 26,000 ADT. In terms of accident rates, Union was the worst street in the City and the lack of pull-outs at major bus stops further congested traffic and interrupted a smooth flow of traffic. In addition, Union Avenue did not have left turn signals at major intersections, thus forcing traffic to use adjoining residential streets.

The re-engineered street, designed to alleviate these problems, does carry over to 30,000 cars a day, provides left turn signals, and bus pull-outs. However, the public improvements eliminated on-street parking and made it difficult for to stop and patronize local businesses. The construction of the median strip is perceived by many in the Albina community as one of the factors hindering revitalization of Union Avenue's business district and the surrounding area.

The City has now begun another planning effort in the North/Northeast area of Portland. The Albina Community Plan arises out of the renewed focus placed on Northeast by the N/NE Business Boosters and the Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force and Management Panel.

Neighborhood Revitalization attempted to target rehabilitation efforts within Albina to get the maximum value out of limited funds. The awarding of a Nehemiah grant to Portland gave a boost to this plan and will rehabilitate or build 200 houses in the next few years.

A group of Albina citizens dissatisfied with the level of citizen participation in the plan for neighborhood revitalization came together in the Spring of 1989 to form the N/NE Economic Development Task Force. The Task Force in a short period of time put together a report detailing policy areas and objectives for Albina. These areas and objectives were used as the basis of the Bureau of Planning's Albina Community Plan Process Document. Hopefully, a comprehensive planning process rooted in the wisdom of Albina citizens, drawing on the lessons of Albina's history, and dealing comprehensively with the interactions of social, economic and physical factors will help in realizing the great potential of Albina.



Union & Alberta ca. 1930 (OHS)

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Interviews

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Katherine Hall Bogle - Writer

Al Jamison, Assistant to Commissioner Bogle, Former Head of Model Cities Program

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