

The author of this article lives and works on unceded territory of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

THE MUNICIPAL AUTOMOBILE CAMP 1921-1926

Jan de Leeuw

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In 1908 Henry Ford introduced the Model T and made cars affordable. In the years following that epoch-making event, Americans took to the road in great numbers, to make trips, both for business and pleasure. Boosters in the up and coming cities on the West Coast soon realized that they needed to provide accommodations for these travelling tourists and business people, because if they could keep them in the city or state for some time and give them positive memories, they might come back and buy a house or start a business. The solution that cities came up with initially were municipal automobile camps, basically campgrounds with amenities, in which people slept in their cars or in tents they brought along. These parks were run by the city, in the same way as regular city parks.

The very first municipal car park in the nation was in Ashland in 1913, but before 1920 there were already multiple car parks in the North-West. In Gresham, for example, and, more threateningly, in Washington. The city of Portland (OR) in 1920 was late to the game.

Commissioners Pay Visit to Park Site On Albina Avenue

The 15-acre tract owned by the Smith estate, directly opposite Peninsula Park, on Portland boulevard, between Albina avenue and Kerby street, will likely be leased by the city for an automobile park. Commissioners Pier, Barbur and Bigelow visited the site of the proposed automobile camping grounds Wednesday afternoon and will report the result of their inspection at the Friday session of the city council. Commissioners Pier, Barbur and Bigelow state they were very favorably impressed with the tract, gas and water connections, available swimming pool facilities and numerous other advantages appealing to them. One of the most serious objections to the location of an automobile park in the city heretofore has come from residents who objected to its proximity. The Smith estate site is isolated from residences, which further commends it to the commissioners.

[Oregon Daily Journal, November 27, 1920](#)

But there was good news in the Sunday Supplement of the Oregon Daily Journal of December 12, 1920.

Portland at Last Gets Long Delayed Park Site

PORTLAND HAS NEW SITE FOR TOURIST PARK

Work of Improving Will Begin at Once, So That Accommodations Will Be Ready for Next Summer's Thousands of Motorists Who Are Expected to Come.

By Frank A. Carlson

Portland's tourist paradise is at last a thing of reality. The land has been leased, a special fund for the improvement has been set aside by the city, plans have been made for beginning the work as soon as the weather permits. The location is at Albina and Portland boulevards.

The agreement between the city and the Clark Investment company, from which the land was leased, is to be held at \$2000 a year for the first year and \$1000 for the second year. The increase provided to take care of a possible increase in taxes as soon as the city takes over the park at the end of the first year. The city will also be responsible for the maintenance of the park, and the Clark company will be responsible for the improvement of the park.

A special fund to take care of the park project has been set aside by the city, amounting to \$1000, of which \$500 will be spent in the first year and \$500 in the second year. The fund will be used for the improvement of the park, and the Clark company will be responsible for the maintenance of the park.

The park is located at Albina and Portland boulevards, and is a beautiful site for a tourist park. The park is surrounded by trees and is a beautiful site for a tourist park. The park is surrounded by trees and is a beautiful site for a tourist park.

TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL TAKES UP NATIONAL PROGRAM

Railroads, Highways, Waterways All Represented; Report Sent Broadcast Over the Country.

New York, Dec. 11.—One of the most significant steps to organize transportation in this country was taken here today when the transportation committee of the Federal Highway council met at the Hotel Hamilton to consider ways and means whereby the various media of transportation in the United States might work in closer harmony for the ultimate solution of the country's year transportation problem.

Members of the committee called in representatives from railroads and express companies, highways, waterways, and aviation, and they discussed the various problems of transportation in this country.

The committee will be responsible for the improvement of the park, and the Clark company will be responsible for the maintenance of the park.

Save Sunshine for Motoring Use 'Indoor Days' to Overhaul

By Mike De Chon

Now that the rain and cold weather is here, with at times a suspension of snow in the air, when the roads are muddy, full of chills, and have little to interest the motorist except where protection is afforded by good hard surfaced roadways, the owner who would rather leave the car indoors than go out into the country can get at that long deferred job of tightening bolts, putting in oil, and giving the car a tune up or two, overhauling the motor, and giving all the time necessary. Then with the first bright day the car will be turned out for a jog into the country. Work on the car when the weather is bad, and save the sun for real trips.

This probably will be the case when the motorist has any other part of a motor car. There are enough things to do, and the car should be kept in good condition, and the car should be kept in good condition.

Tagless Autoist To Have Trouble After January 1

State Bureau Tells Officers to Gun for Motorists Who Can't Show Oregon Plates for 1921.

Salem, Dec. 11.—If the peace officers of Oregon perform their full duty in the enforcement of the new law requiring proper tagging of automobiles in operation in the state there promises to be a great shortage of tagless autoists in the state hereafter. The law requires that all automobiles in operation in the state hereafter must be properly tagged, and the tag must be shown to the peace officers when the car is stopped.

Fred Vogler Pays Sales For Bet on Record Last Month

Fred Vogler paid his bet to his sales service for their record month, December, when he put on a bet for his gang that the automobile industry would produce more cars in December than in any other month of the year.

Fred Vogler, a prominent automobile dealer in Portland, has paid his bet to his sales service for their record month, December, when he put on a bet for his gang that the automobile industry would produce more cars in December than in any other month of the year.

'Beauty Show' Will Be Name of Exhibition

Title Selected Is Declared Particularly Fitting to the Display of Products Which Will Be Shown at the Auditorium During the Coming Month.

The Beauty Show of the Automobile World is to be the official title of the twelfth annual automobile show to be held in the Auditorium, January 13 to 15, inclusive, according to M. O. Wilkins, manager of the 1921 show.

The show is to be held in the Auditorium, and it is to be a great success. The show is to be held in the Auditorium, and it is to be a great success.

[Oregon Sunday Journal, December 12, 1920](#)

[Oregon Sunday Journal, December 12, 1920](#)

If you look at the little map in the article you will see the car camp was going to be constructed on a 25 acre piece of land, between Ainsworth and Rosa Parks (then Portland Boulevard), and between Albina and what is now the freeway. In other words, in what we now call the Gainsborough Addition, a subdivision of modern Piedmont.

The land was leased by the City from the Ukase Investment Company, after considering various other sites. Forestry Park was considered, so was 82nd and Sandy, and a section on Alameda Hill. On this last location: *"Negotiations were opened for the lease of the property and things were about arranged when, with its characteristic honesty, the city let its intentions be known and the good people near the proposed park rebelled."* No such characteristic honesty was in play for the Albina lot. It was flat empty space, with some bushes and trees, and they did not object.

Also note that City had dealt with the Ukase Land Company before. The ULC was incorporated in 1907 by William Kanan Smith and his two sons, the same William Kanan Smith that the City had bought the 20 acres for Peninsula Park from in 1909. In the meantime father Smith had died in 1914, and W.K. Smith Jr. had taken over as president of the company.

Initially the City leased the northern half of the 12.5 acres for two years at \$ 215 per year, with a possible extension of two more years, and an option to lease the additional 12.5 acres for another \$ 215 per year.

The Portland Municipal Automobile Camp opened May 15, 1921. The City put up 300 metal signs to direct traffic to the camp, the Chamber of Commerce distributed 3000 flyers. The Camp had showers, bathrooms, laundry facilities, a car wash, and kitchen facilities with rows of gas stoves. There was a nice administrative building as well. One of the major attractions for visitors was the pool at Peninsula Park, just across the road. In fact Peninsula Park served as the green garden space for the Camp.

During the first season the Chamber of Commerce added an Information Bureau. Relentless boosterism went on, partially because of the upcoming 1925 Lewis and Clark World Fair, but also because the City and the Chamber wanted to sell houses in Portland and to lure businesses.

Bringing in Settlers

There is evidence that the automobile is to do more than any other agency toward locating new settlers in the Pacific Northwest. The way this comes about is all very simple.

Touring by motor has become a great national avocation. The touring range has rapidly widened until now it is no uncommon sight for the northwestern rancher to see a car bearing a New Jersey, or Massachusetts, or Texas license spin by his front door. In the season just closed this section has seen a continuous procession of motor parties from the Middle West, South and East.

Random figures from the Portland municipal auto camp will serve to illustrate. From Massachusetts the camp registered 16 cars, from New York, 55; Maine, 2; Virginia, 6; Florida, 15; Texas, 62; Illinois, 102; Nebraska, 85. The total of registrations to October 1 was 5,700 cars.

The point of particular interest is the fact that fully 15 per cent of these tourists actually located here in the Northwest, according to estimate of the camp attaches, who talked with them. For these tourists this was the end of a quest for a new home. They had sold out in their old location and jaunted forth in the dear old family car in search of a more pleasing home. Here they found it, and here they have settled down.

Fifteen per cent of 5,700 is 855. We have reason, then, to believe that the automobile brought through this one camp 855 families as new settlers for the Northwest. It brought, of course, other hundreds of families through other points.

There is ample justification for applauding the good work of the faithful flivver and trusty touring car—and hoping that double the number will head this way next season.

[Better Fruit, January 1922, p. 16](#)

The Morning Oregonian and the Daily Oregonian had almost daily articles about the Camp, with little stories about the various interesting visitors (and their cars).

The City charged 50 cents for registration, with a maximum stay of 10 days, and “full privileges of the free gas for cooking, laundry tubs, firewood, and water”. Initially City Commissioner Pier, in charge of Parks, announced that use of the park would be free (because he feared for his safety, and wanted to “preserve himself for his wife and children”), but before the first season was over there were already proposals to charge a 25 cents day use fee in addition to the 50 cents registration fee. The next season the fee actually went to 50 cents per day -- a ten-fold increase. The average stay in 1921 was 5 days, but clearly some people used the camp for temporary housing. Complete families started to arrive in camper vehicles and driving bungalows.

LOST AND FOUND	108
REWARD—For the return of small dog lost at municipal auto camp. Yellowish brown on back, white stomach, answers to the name of Bobbie. No tail, slightly deaf. Bring to auto camp.	

At the end of the 1921 season the number of registrations was 6,518. Since the average number of people in a party was about 4 (they say), this means the Camp was visited by about 25,000 people. At the height of the season 350 cars per day was not uncommon. This was considered to be quite successful. At the end of the 1921 season the City decided to lease the southern 12.5 acres as well. Also they authorized a concession for a general store, which arrived in 1922, complete with radio service to listen for free to "news, concerts, and other forms of entertainment". But the City decided to take the Camp out of the line-item budget, and required it to be self-supporting. This is always a bad sign. Either you are not self-supporting and get terminated, or you are self-supporting and private capital will take over and start increasing its profit margins.

In 1922 the Camp registered 10,898 cars, approximately 40,000 people. But, more or less as expected, the Blue J Company made a bid to take over the Camp. Unfortunately for them, somebody had been paying attention.

C.F. Keyser, superintendent of parks, received five shares of stock in the Blue J Company, for which he paid nothing and served as a director of the company, while negotiations were pending for the acquisition by the company of the municipal auto camp, which was operated for the city under the direction of Mr. Keyser. (Morning Oregonian, 04-03-1924).

The next article shows there were many other amenities close to the camp. The C.M. Johnson grocery store was actually in the camp on the north side, opposite the end of Mississippi. On the corner of Albina and Portland Boulevard was a gas station, on land leased from Chas. Oleson, who had platted the Lahoma addition in 1920. At the end of this chapter there are four 1924 Sanborn maps that show the auto camp, together with the surrounding amenities.

AUTO CAMP IN GOOD SHAPE FOR INVASION OF TOURISTS

Grounds Attractive With Many New Features for Accommodation and Comfort of Visitors and Commodity Shops Open.

BY ADDISON BENNETT.
ONLY 155 automobiles have arrived at the municipal camp since January 1; only 25 were on the grounds yesterday morning. So it may be said that the auto season is about to arrive. By May 1, no doubt, there will be a grand rush, but everything will be ready for them; indeed all is set at the present time.

A visit to the grounds shows what has become of the "valley" which accrued in 1922. Every dollar of it has been expended in improving the grounds, principally in grading and clearing up every bit of the refuse left from last year.

The three main streets, running north and south through the grounds, have been leveled and covered with gravel, so it will take somewhat of a rain to make the going bad through the camp. And when small holes develop there is a supply of gravel convenient to fill them up. This is principally noticeable at the north end of Mississippi avenue, bordering on the Portland boulevard, in front of the Johnson store. That part of the street has always been a menace to travel; now it is well filled and graded.

Conveniences Are Numerous.

A look now at the grounds within and without—that is at the stores convenient and at the fine park to the east (Peninsula park)—shows that the surroundings are all practically ideal. The campers will find every convenience near at hand. First and foremost of supply houses in reach is the store at the north end of Mississippi avenue of C. M. Johnson, who holds the concession for inside business marts from the park commission. He erected his store early last year, and since the day he opened it has done a good business, and his prices always have been as low as in any store in the city. He has entirely remodeled his quarters, one of the most noticeable improvements being a sort of sun parlor on the south, where refreshments will be served at all hours. And on the east side he has erected a fine warehouse, which is stored full of groceries and notions. The old fixtures in the main store room have been shifted around, and there will no longer be the former crush when business is brisk.

Filling Station Attractive.

Across Portland boulevard, to the north of the park, is the domicile and headquarters of Charles Oleson, an "old settler" in the neighborhood. He owns some ten acres on the Portland boulevard, divided by Albina avenue, which he bought many years ago. His dwelling a few short years ago was the only improvement near the park. His fine dwelling was nearly opposite the entrance to the camp grounds. Last year he erected a string of one-story concrete buildings on the corner, four store rooms on Albina avenue and three on the boulevard. Then he moved his dwelling back and faced it on Albina avenue.

I have missed saying that even before the camp grounds was established Mr. Oleson put up a large garage and machineshop about 150 feet from the boulevard, on the east side of Albina avenue, and then leased a plot 100 feet square on the corner where the Standard Oil company has erected one of the finest filling stations in the city.

Shops Are Convenient.

Directly north of Johnson's store, in one of the Oleson shops, is barber shop, and a nice one. Next door east is the large bakery of Frank Terry, who has a number of delivery wagons and also a busy retail store. In the two next buildings to the east is the grocery store of M. Diamond. He bought the place last

September. Now he has the two rooms on the boulevard and the adjoining building on Albina avenue, the latter being a meat market. When Mr. Diamond bought the store it was a measly place of business; now he has as nice a grocery and delicatessen store as there is in the city.

Next to the Diamond store, on Albina avenue, is the confectionery store of A. B. Carter, whose assistant is Miss Ethel Fike. This concern sells about everything needful in the way of drugs, soft drinks, ice cream, etc. It is a nice well-kept place and seems to be doing a good business. In fact from the Johnson store in the grounds to the last mentioned there is an air of thrift and prosperity.

Management Unchanged.

The manager-general of the grounds will, as usual, be Pat Kearney. The park could not get along smoothly without Pat. And the superintendent on the grounds this year will be Miss Catherine Funk. She has from the first audited all of the accounts, kept the books, paid the help and other bills, and has visited the camp every day, her office being in the park department on Montgomery street, near Fourteenth. But by May 1 she will have an office in a corner of the rest room, and will spend her time there in keeping the accounts and looking after the details of the finances.

It makes one feel proud to see the camp and surroundings now, very proud. Some say it is the best public auto camp in the country; and then the next man comes along and says it is the worst; so you never can tell about the straight of it. Anyhow it is a fine place to camp, and surely no other camp does more to protect its campers than is done at ours. Particularly this is true when one considers the fine stores and large stocks of goods offered for sale in and adjacent, and at the very bottom prices.

SERVICE BONUS IS PAID

Oregon City Company Disburses \$25,000 to Its Employees.

OREGON CITY, Or., April 14.—(Special).—The continued service bonus, amounting in all to more than \$25,000, was distributed by the Oregon City Manufacturing company to its employees today. The bonus was established by the company in 1917, and through it employees received bonuses amounting to 2½ to 15 per cent of their total earnings for every six months' period, according to length of service.

This \$25,000 represented approximately one-half of the year's disbursement by the Oregon City mills for this purpose.

WIFE USED LYE, PLAINT

Divorce From "Mean and Vindictive" Mate Is Asked.

Minnie F. Pitman is so mean and vindictive that on one occasion she cut a lot of holes in two of her husband's suits of clothing and then soaked them in concentrated lye, according to complaint of John M. Pitman, seeking divorce from her. The husband says that at times when he was ill in bed the wife went joyriding instead of remaining at home to care for him.

Desertion is alleged in the divorce complaint of Helen against Adam H. Krieger, another of yesterday's filings in circuit court.

[Sunday Oregonian, April 15, 1923](#)

In 1924 35,000 cars registered, with 150,000 tourist, compared to 18,000 cars with 76,000 people in 1923. Many people said they would be back for the Exposition in 1925, or that they had decided or were contemplating moving to Oregon. But again, bad developments. The city

had not provided for sufficient sanitary facilities for the growing camp, and there had been complaints by the visitors.

The city renewed its lease for another two years on December 1, 1924, now paying \$ 500 per month. That did not really leave room for improvements. Another bid was made by the Portland Auto Camp Company, but the neighbors in Piedmont and Kenton pressed the city to hold on to the lease and at the same time pass an ordinance prohibiting auto camps within city limits. A new community house with 18 gas plates and hot and cold water was finished, as was the camp theater. Somewhat mysteriously it says

There are no shower baths at this camp as yet, but campers who wish such conveniences use the shower baths located in the Peninsula Park, directly opposite the auto campgrounds. (Morning Oregonian, 04-25-1925).

What we are seeing is familiar. The city cannot keep up with the growth, the neighbors are starting to object, and private enterprise is moving in.

In 1926 the city decided not to renew the lease. There are various reasons for this. Private car camps were becoming more popular, and pretty soon there would be car camps in Piedmont, for example, on the intersection of Columbia and Union (i.e. MLK). Also, it seems clear the city bureaucracy was not able or willing to handle the increased financing and maintenance required for the park. And finally there may have been some pressure from developers, particularly their landlord, the Ukase Investment Company.

Originally the city planned to auction off "the buildings, gas plates, cook sheds, laundry trays, and other equipment. But one last failure was still to come.

.. the city discovered it's lease required it the leave the camp grounds in the same condition in which they were leased, which would mean that the city would have to dig out concrete wash racks and other property which would be expensive to move. Because it would cost more to move the buildings than the city would get for them, the buildings will be given to the Ukase Investment Company, owners of the property, which, under an ordinance effective January 1, cannot be used for an auto camp again. (Morning Oregonian, 11-24-1926).

And the Ukase Investment Company did not waste time. In 1927 the 25 acres were platted, The "small fir, cedar, vine maple, and dogwood" was removed. Early in 1928 the streets, sewers, sidewalks and curbs for a the new Gainsborough subdivision were put in. Lots will be 100 by 50 and 100 by 125 feet. The first batch were 63 lots north of Holman. Except on Albina all buildings would be single-family residential, and on Albina there was the possibility of "bungalow courts". By April 1928 there were 15 houses under construction, with five more under contract.

IDEAL FURNISHINGS AIM

MODEL HOMES TO BE MODERN
IN ALL RESPECTS.

Portland Firms Will Furnish All
Equipment for Houses Built
by The Oregonian.

When the two model homes being built by The Oregonian in Mock Crest addition, the master model home and the west coast woods model home, are thrown open formally to public inspection two weeks from today, visitors will be impressed by the taste shown in furnishing and equipment. Both homes will be completely furnished by Lipman, Wolfe & Co., and in the west coast wood model home considerable equipment is being installed by the Portland Gas & Coke company.

Lipman, Wolfe & Co. plan to equip The Oregonian master model home with furniture that will be of the highest class yet not extravagant. The latest in hangings, floor coverings and furniture will be shown, and the furnishing plan will be in harmony with the English character of the architectural design.

In The Oregonian west coast woods model home Lipman, Wolfe & Co. will place to best advantage west coast furniture. Hangings and other furnishings will be in keeping with the nature of the house, which is of the English country cottage type.

In the woods model home the Portland Gas & Coke company will place equipment of varied nature. In the kitchen will be a smoothtop gas range, equipped with automatic oven heat control. Here will also be a gas-fired refrigerator, designed to offer such flexibility of service as is available in a hotel pantry.

When the home is opened visitors will also find that a gas-fired hot water storage system has been installed. This system automatically keeps a supply of hot water available at all hours of the day. In the basement will also be an Easy washer, a Snow White gas-fired dryer and a gas-fired Simplex ironer.

PARK MADE HOMES TRACT

OLD AUTO LOCATION TO BE
DEVELOPED AT ONCE.

Henderson-Bankus Co., Inc., Handle Property Well Located to
Serve Residents.

The old Portland municipal auto park, bounded on the north by Portland boulevard, on the east by Peninsula park, on the south by Almsworth avenue and extending west to within 100 feet of Minnesota avenue, has been platted, and will be placed on the market as soon as street improvements can be effected, it was announced yesterday.

The property is owned by the Ukase Investment company, of which W. K. Smith Jr. is president. The company has placed the work of

developing and selling the property with the Henderson-Bankus company, Inc. Elmer Bankus, president of the company, announced that Meekley has been engaged as general representative. Meekley will be in construction immediately on his account of several homes in the subdivision. The tract is now private and public schools.

The property consists of 24 lots heavily wooded with small fir, cedar, vine maple and wood. The lots will be 50 by 125 and 50 by 125 feet. All property is restricted to residential purposes and homes built in the district must be under the \$3000 class. The property on Almsworth avenue is in one bungalow court.

All street improvements will be installed immediately. These will include sewers, sidewalks, curbs, gutters and paved streets. These improvements, it was announced, probably will be completed this week. In order to expedite all improvements will be installed under special permit. They will not be bonded, but will be paid in assessments for the purchase of the lots.

The addition will have in all 63 lots north of Holmes street, incidentally, will be across east from Minnesota avenue. Peninsula park.

An unusual feature of the subdivision is that it will be served by the Mississippi car line, which gives access to the industrial district north Portland as well as to the downtown business district.

Mr. Bankus said yesterday that the company expects to move promptly all of the lots in the first unit. The activity of the spring season. The subdivision is the first announced in Portland this year.

JANTZEN STARTS BUILDING

Warehouse to Add 2500 Square Feet to Storage Space.

A new unit of the Jantzen Knitting mills warehouse at Eighth and East Gilman streets next to the company's main building is under construction last week. The addition will add 2500 square feet to the storage facilities of the knitting concern. It is to be of steel and concrete construction. Specifications call for completion within 30 days.

"When unusual business demands arose which required additional storage space immediately, I practically gave up any idea of building this spring, as it has taken three months or more to build structures in the past," C. J. Jantzen, secretary of the concern, said yesterday. "We decided to go ahead when the Hansen-Hammond company agreed to have the contract a 30-day delivery. The new warehouse unit is being built in anticipation of a brisk spring and summer business."

Beaverton Growers to Meet

Growers of vegetables, small fruits and berries in the vicinity of Beaverton will meet at 1:30 P. M. Wednesday in the lodge hall at Beaverton to hear about a canning project. Representatives of the marketing department of the Portland Chamber of Commerce will be present. Some men, as well as growers, have been invited.



[1921. City of Portland \(OR\) Archives, A 2001-045.16](#)



[City of Portland \(OR\) Archives. A2001-045.1162](#)



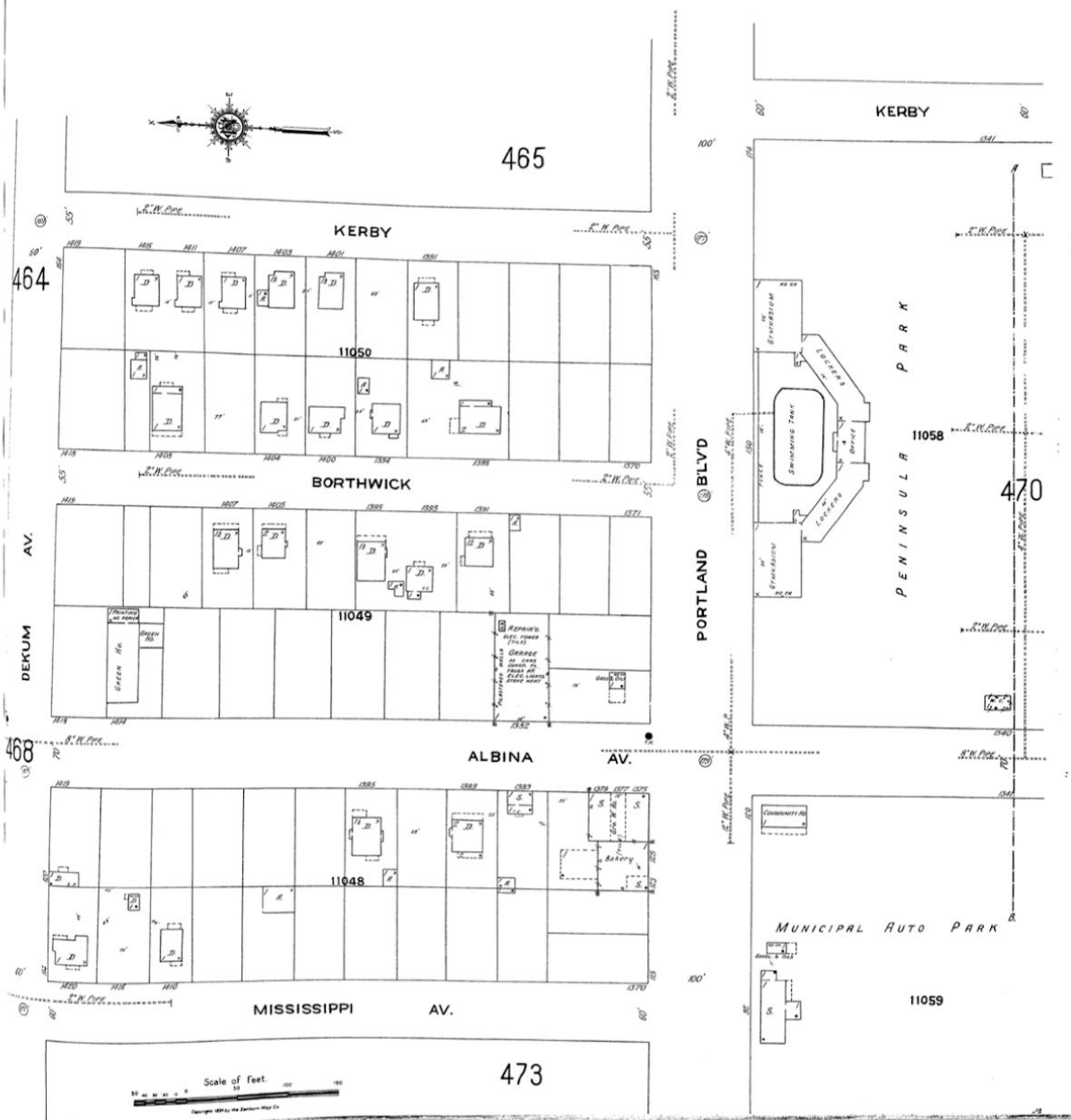
[1925. City of Portland \(OR\) Archives, A2001-045.841](#)



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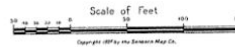
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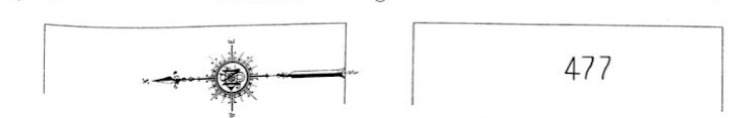
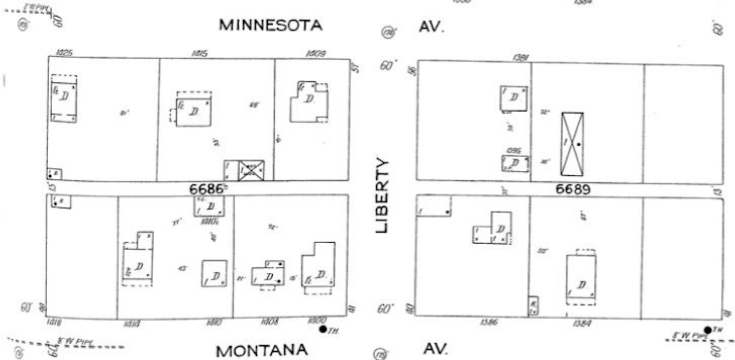
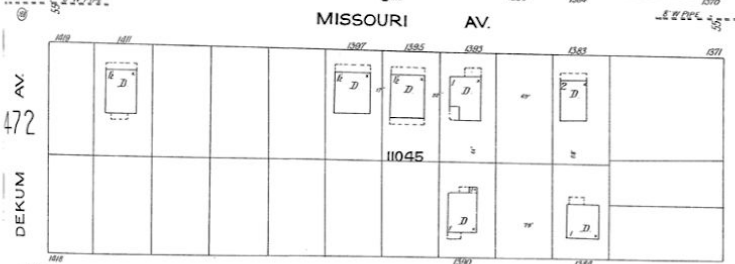
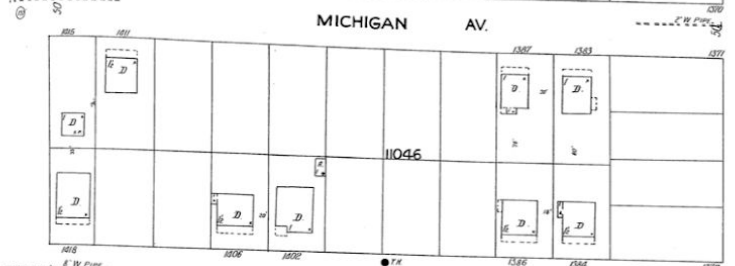
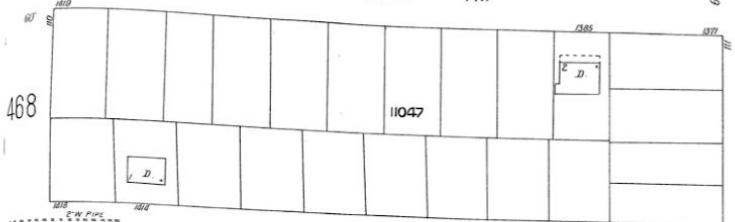
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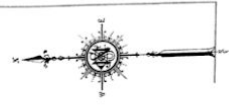
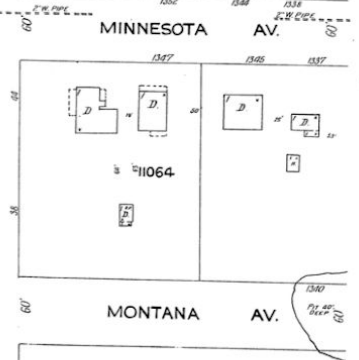
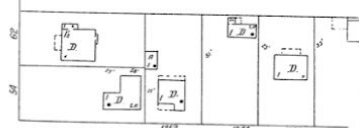
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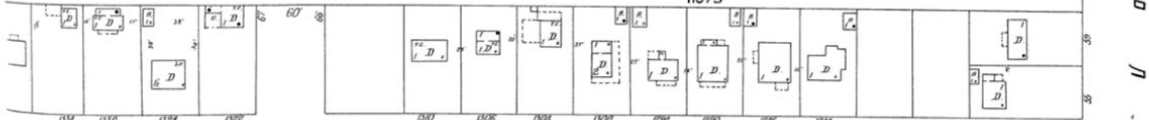
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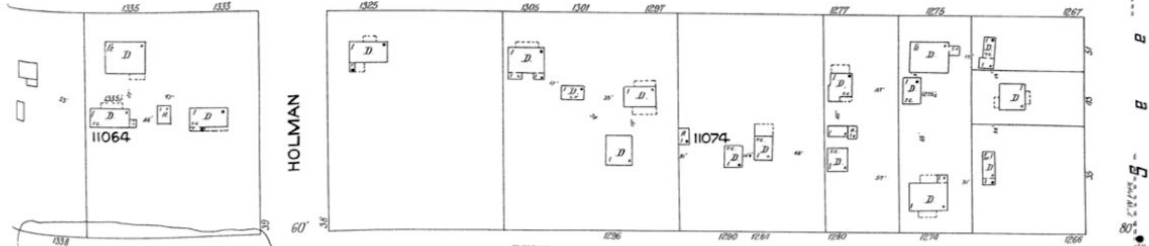


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