

Birth: 3 Jan 1869, Elk Creek, Grayson County, Virginia
Death: 7 Oct 1958, Salem, Marion County, Oregon

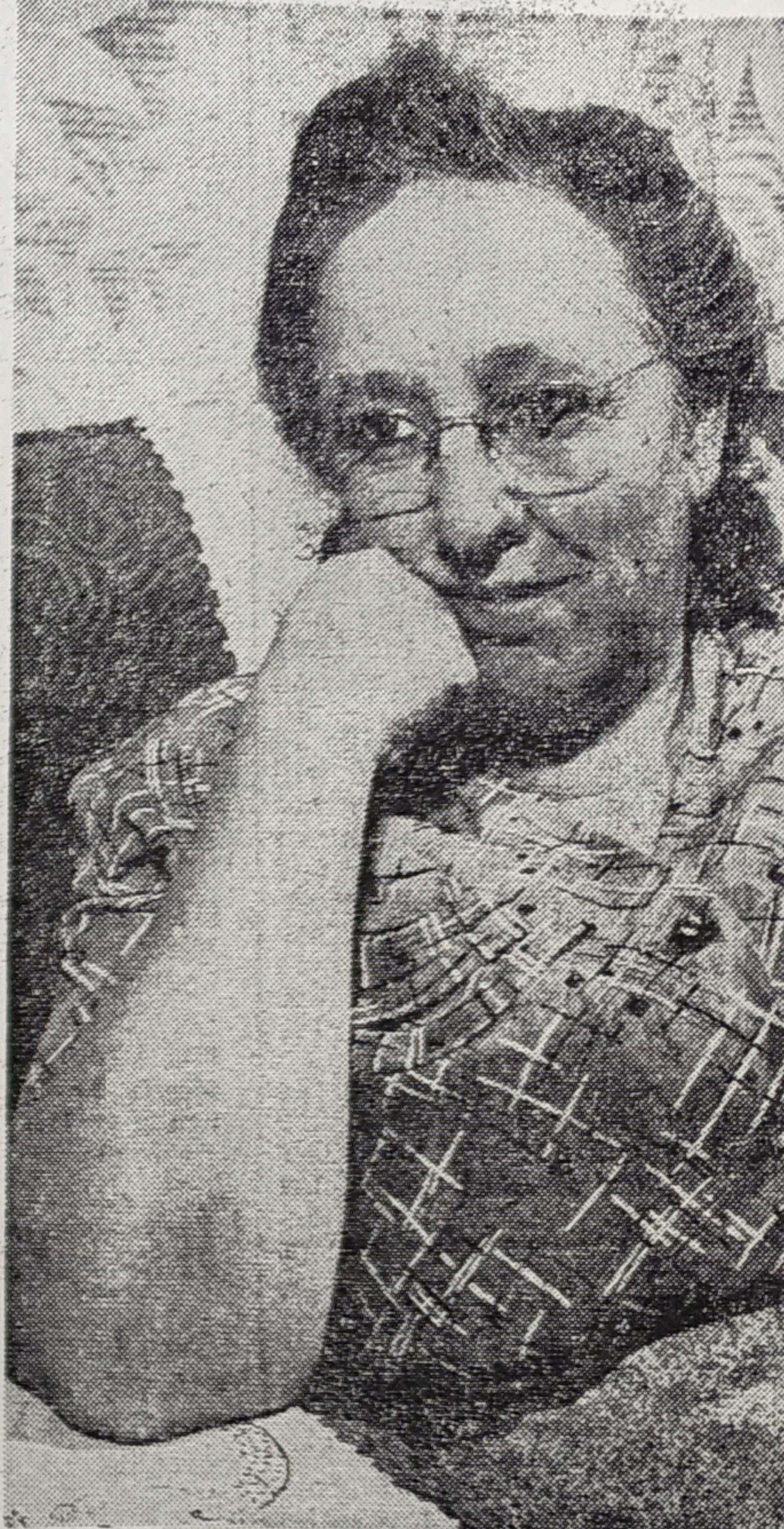
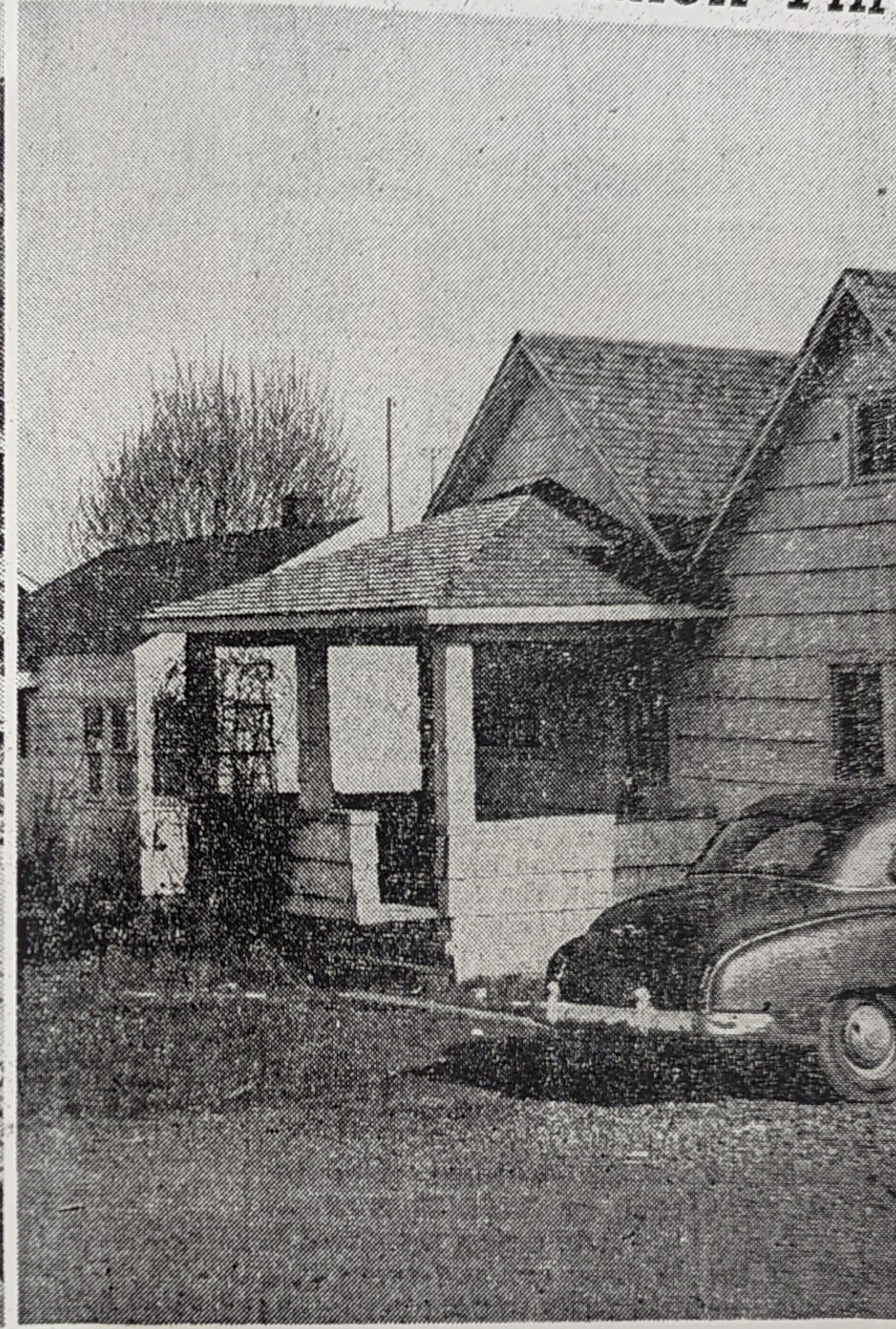
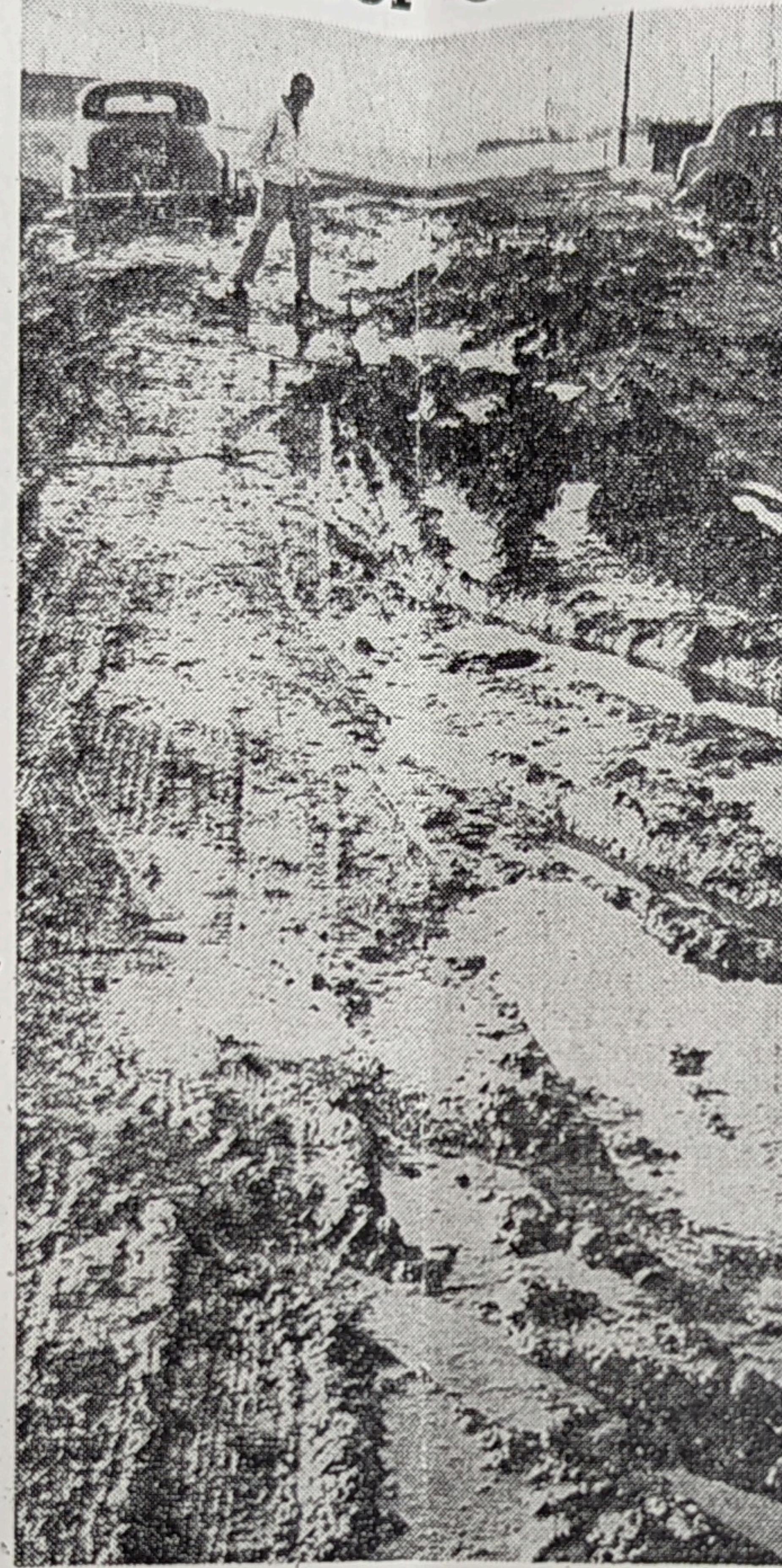
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THE OREGONIAN, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1952

COLL

Eugene Faces Problem of Decent Homes for Colored Families; Persecution Threat Evaporates



The Amazon creek west of Eugene, shown here, runs between diked banks just behind homes of Negro children, who have strict orders not to play near creek. Diking project has curbed flooding of creek, but causes runoff from rain to collect in fields. (Photos by Carl Vermilya)

Water stands on road surface in Negro settlement five days after last rain. Ground is not visible after a couple days of hard rain.

This is the house on Friendly street in Eugene which anonymous caller threatened to blow up if new renter, Leon Glaster, and family did not move immediately. Glasters still there.

Mrs. Effie Spencer, owner of house in which Glasters are living, refused to ask them to leave although Glaster said he was willing.



See Story on Page 1, Also
EUGENE, Feb. 9 (Special)—

Let's take a look at the Negro "settlement" on W. 11th street, beyond the Eugene city limits:

About a dozen families are living there in one or two-room shacks or trailers. The area borders Amazon creek, which drains most of the city of Eugene and a good bit of territory to the southwest. The ground is flat and is underlain by a heavy stratum of blue clay.

The corps of engineers has recently improved the Amazon by straightening and partially diking it, but one result has been that local runoff water no longer enters the creek, where the Negroes live. The water stands in large ponds until it evaporates or, days later, soaks into the clay. Many of the shacks stand over a puddle of water all winter long.

There is no domestic water supply, and the county authorities will not permit mains to be laid or wells to be dug. Shallow wells yield muddy, brackish water; deep wells, tightly cased and penetrating the clay, might give a good water supply, but they would be very expensive.

Health Conditions Cited

Two lots with a two-room shack which the Negroes wanted for a church cost them \$2000.

That is the story of the West 11th Negroes.

Somewhat better off are 12 families in the Glenwood area between Eugene and Springfield. Most are renting from Sam Lewis, an elderly white man who says he built these tiny homes, some unpainted, "in order to make a living when I'm too old to work."

He rents the houses for \$25 to \$40 a month. The better ones are painted white, have a bit of room around them and would be inconspicuous in almost any low-income neighborhood. The \$25 houses have three small rooms, are unpainted, and

would rate on a par with weathertight resort cottages.

Lewis' homes do have running water and plumbing attached to septic tanks.

But the occupants aren't too happy. There are no yards, the alleys which connect with the street are muddy, and construction of the unpainted shacks is definitely substandard.

Others Scatter Residences

Then there are about ten Negro families in Eugene who have succeeded in buying or renting homes in white neighborhoods. These families are scattered in several parts of town, and there were no repercussions—until Monday of last week.

Then a case of threatened persecution suddenly flared. Mr. and Mrs. Leon Glaster and their two children rented a home at 2785 Friendly avenue—next door to the Friendly market.

Neighbors, apparently, were not equally friendly. No sooner had they moved in than someone called their landlady, Mrs. Effie Spencer, and told her the house would be leveled to the foundation if the Negroes didn't leave.

Another man, ostensibly

bors, offered to buy up Glaster's option at a \$500 premium.

Eugene police patrolled Glaster's home for two nights. Nothing happened.

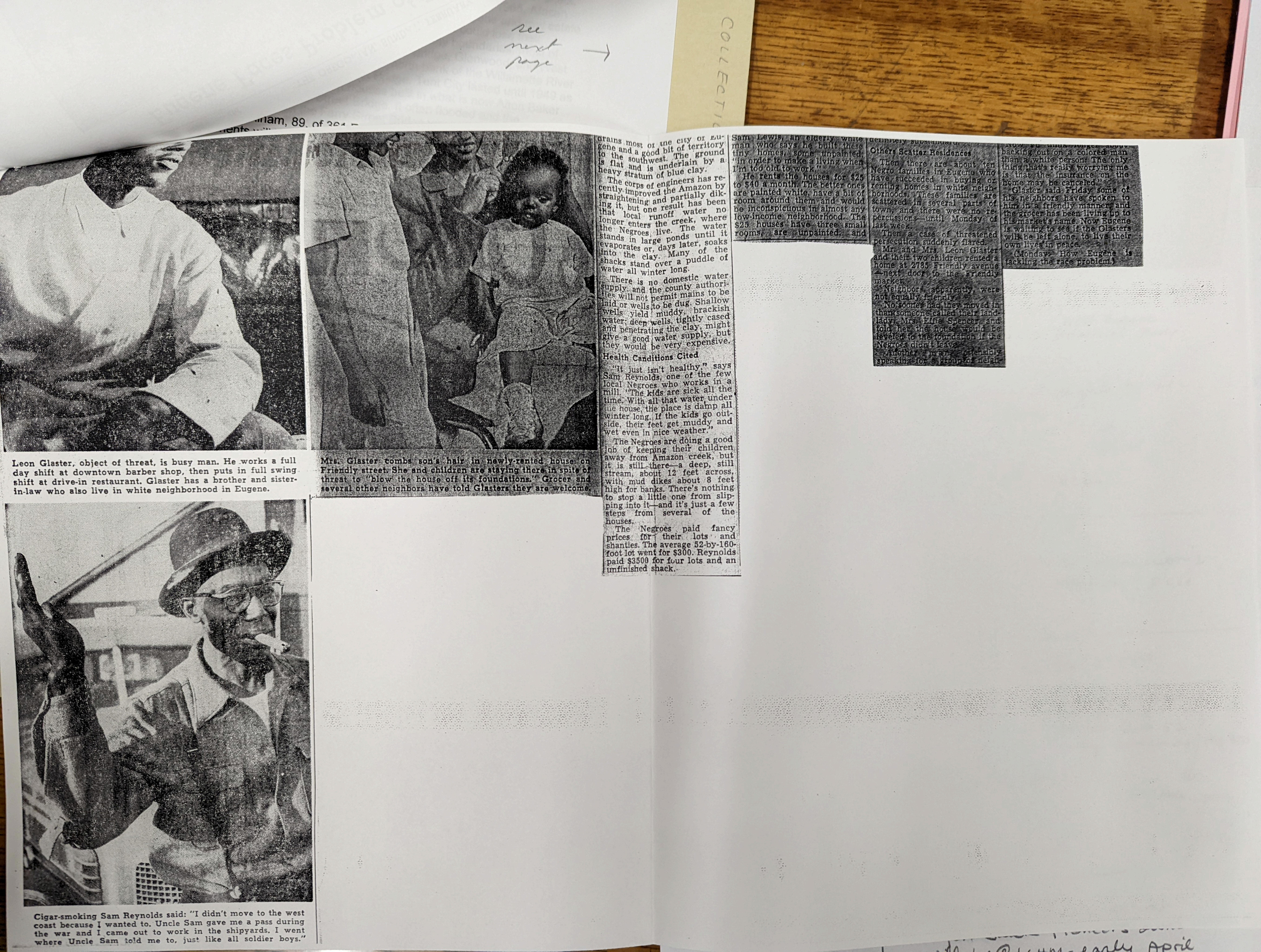
Mrs. Spencer stood firm against all the threats.

"I didn't know I felt so strongly about racial prejudice until this happened," she said. "Now I'd think longer about backing out on a colored man than a white person. The only thing that's really worrying me is that the insurance on the home may be canceled."

Glaster said Friday some of his neighbors have spoken to him in a friendly manner, and the grocer has been living up to his market's name. Now Eugene is waiting to see if the Glasters will be left alone, to live their own lives in peace.

(Monday: How Eugene is tackling the race problem.)

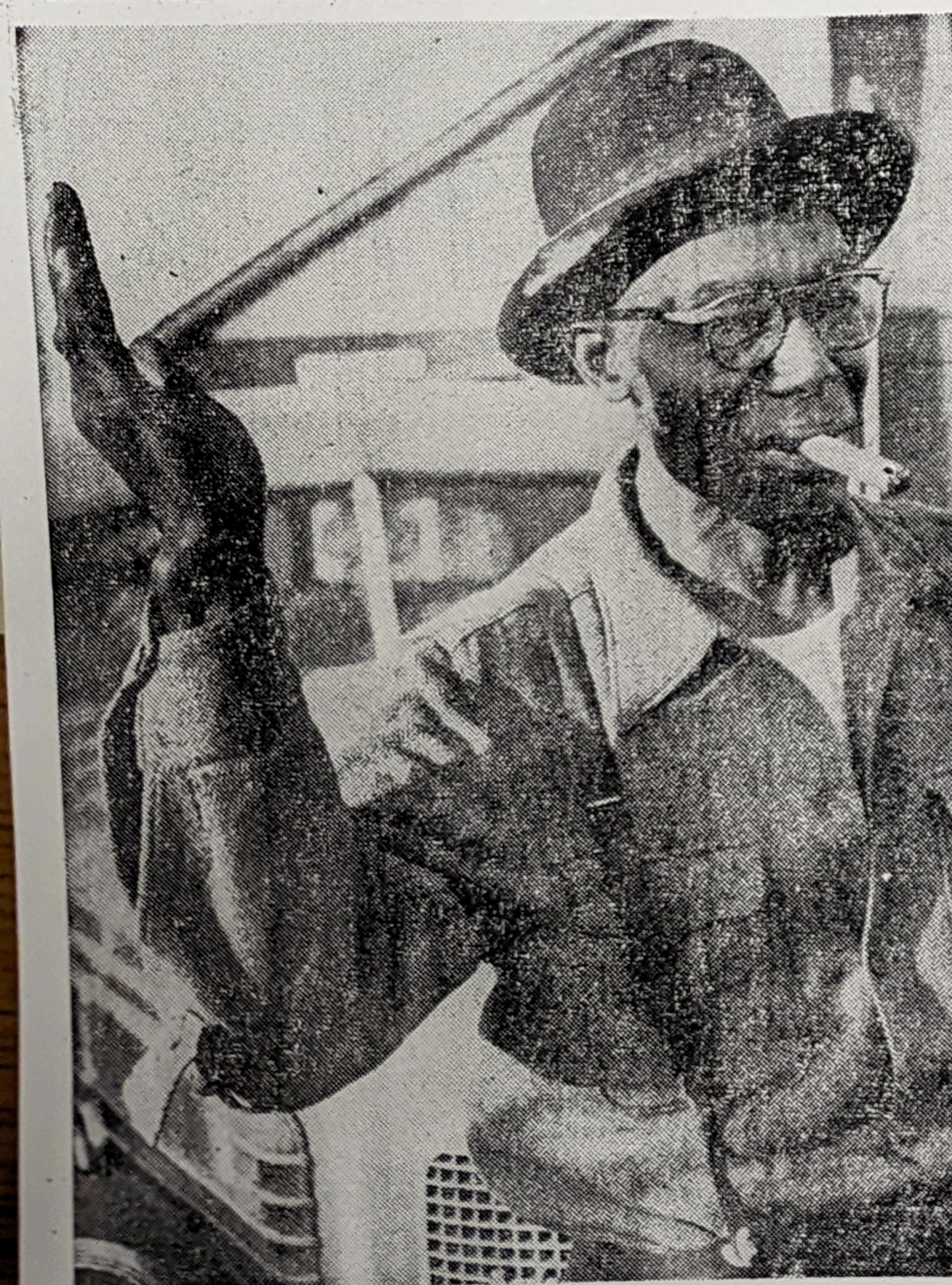
Black in early Oregon



Leon Glaster, object of threat, is busy man. He works a full day shift at downtown barber shop, then puts in full swing shift at drive-in restaurant. Glaster has a brother and sister-in-law who also live in white neighborhood in Eugene.

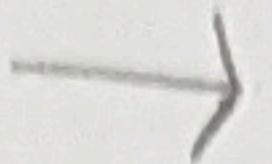


Mrs. Glaster combs son's hair in newly-rented house on Friendly street. She and children are staying there in spite of threat to "blow the house off its foundations." Grocer and several other neighbors have told Glasters they are welcome.



Cigar-smoking Sam Reynolds said: "I didn't move to the west coast because I wanted to. Uncle Sam gave me a pass during the war and I came out to work in the shipyards. I went where Uncle Sam told me to, just like all soldier boys."

see
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COLLECTIVE

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"It just isn't healthy," says Sam Reynolds, one of the few local Negroes who works in a mill. "The kids are sick all the time. With all that water under the house, the place is damp all winter long. If the kids go outside, their feet get muddy and wet even in nice weather."

The Negroes are doing a good job of keeping their children away from Amazon creek, but it is still there—a deep, still stream, about 12 feet across, with mud banks about 8 feet high for banks. There's nothing to stop a little one from slipping into it—and it's just a few steps from several of the houses.

The Negroes paid fancy prices for their lots and shanties. The average 52-by-160-foot lot went for \$300. Reynolds paid \$3500 for four lots and an unfinished shack.

Sam Lewis, an elderly white man, who says he built these tiny homes, some unpainted, "in order to make a living when I'm too old to work."

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