

City's Developing Role As Major Seaport First Envisioned In 1903

New Facilities Expand Use Of Dock Here

By PHIL MASON
Times Staff Writer

Plans to build a small boat harbor and marine repair and supply facility at the Port of Anchorage, along with the near-completion of the Petroleum Dock and work on the north dock extension — all are the outgrowth of efforts since 1903 to establish Anchorage as a major seaport city.

Work is progressing rapidly on all phases of port activity, and after many years of being looked at askance the port is paying its own way.

Talk of establishing a port at Anchorage to connect with the Matanuska Valley coal fields began as early as 1903. The port became a reality in 1919 when the "ocean dock" was constructed. This served for many years as the only deep-water pier in the area. It was operated by the U.S. Army for military freight, principally petroleum products.

But port construction remained pretty much at a standstill until February, 1944, when the second session of the 78th Congress passed a resolution authorizing the secretary of war "to cause an examination or survey to be made of Cook Inlet, Alaska, with a view to improvement of navigation, providing harbor facilities for the city of Anchorage, and the development of hydroelectric power."

Although a city port commission was established in 1946 to study plans for a small boat harbor at the mouth of Ship Creek and to guide development of the port area, few changes were made until 1952, when it was finally determined that a major port at Anchorage would be economically feasible.

Two years later the people of Anchorage voted for a \$2 million bond issue for construction of a municipal port costing more than \$8 million, and plans got underway to seek federal appropriations to aid in its funding.

The City Council approved an additional \$6.8 million revenue bond issue in 1956 to be used with the previously-acquired \$2 million. In essence, the port project evolved from a nearly 100 per cent federally-financed project to an almost totally locally-financed improvement.

Disaster struck the port as building progressed in 1958, when nearly a million dollars worth of piling pipes was lost in a Cook Inlet storm. In spite of the disaster, the target date for completion of the municipal dock was set for August, 1960. The date had to be extended to sometime in 1961, however, when a carpenters' strike at the dock halted construction, a month after the pipes were lost. Although carpenters returned to work three days later, the project had lost momentum.

Henry Roloff, former assistant director of the San Diego, Calif., port, became the port director in March, 1960. His office was located in the Fourth Avenue Theater building prior to moving into regular port offices at the terminal site.

The last pour of concrete was made at the dock in September, 1960, and the port was completed in December. It was unusable until the following April because of the ice.

The first vessel to arrive and dock at the new facility was the Kev Alaska, a barge from Portland, Ore., towed in by the tug "Mary Foss."

Although the city formally decided to patronize the dock for movement of city purchases and a West Coast speed record for unloading newsprint was set there in October, 1961, the port barely had enough revenue to meet its obligation bonds.

By 1963, however, after Capt.



Aerial View Shows Anchorage's Growing Port Facility

A. E. Harned of the U.S. Coast Guard was named the new port director, common carrier service to Anchorage was approved by the Federal Maritime Commission for Northland Freight Co. and Wagner Tugboat Co. In April of that year, Alaska Freight Lines agreed to begin common carrier service through the port.

The same month the City Council approved construction funds to finance \$16,000 in capital improvements, including more than eight acres of open storage space, scales, gangways, ladders, railroad crossing and area lighting.

With an increase in traffic showing capital gains at the port, the port commission decided to recommend construction of a petroleum dock addition to the port. Standard Oil Co. of California and the Shell Oil Co. offered nearly \$200,000 to help finance the facility, to be used with the city's \$200,000.

The March, 1964 earthquake disaster proved to be beneficial for the Port of Anchorage. Although the dock received about \$3.2 million in damages, it was the only usable open port for central and southcentral Alaska.

Another boost came when Sea-Land Services, Inc., began weekly year-round service to the port. In May, 1964, work began on a \$500,000 temporary petroleum dock facility and a feasibility study was made for a permanent facility.

Because of the earthquake, the port was able to easily make a bond payment of \$184,000 without difficulty.

In October, 1964, the port commission asked for a \$2.8 million bond issue for a port expansion program. Plans included a permanent petroleum dock and the lengthening of the north end of the dry cargo dock.

The \$500,000 petroleum facility was badly damaged by ice and tide in December, and later was completely destroyed. The new permanent dock, however, was under construction the following July.

Last September the Port Commission recommended two bond issues totaling \$4,325,000 for port expansion. The bonds included the north dock extension and funds for the Sea-Land containerization crane. The bond issues were passed in October, and the crane only recently was constructed on the dock.

In December, consulting engineers Tryck, Nyman and Hayes proposed a multi-million dollar highway linking the port with the International Airport. The plan is still under discussion.

Bids were opened this month for the construction of the 605-foot north dock, with construction to begin in May and to be completed July 1, 1967.

Plans for the small boat harbor and repair facility were announced after a spurt of public interest indicated a definite need for the two improvements.

The commission now has suggested that the port be placed under borough-wide power to aid in getting monies for the two proposed small boat facilities.

With the ferry Tustumena period of rapid expansion and scheduled to make regular week-

ly stops to Anchorage this summer, along with increased use of the port by Sea-Land, the military and commercial vessels, the port is undergoing a period of rapid expansion and

success.



Huge Cranes Move Cargo Arriving At City's Waterfront

Anchorage Daily Times Tuesday, May 17, 1966

Borough Plans 'Power' Study

By MARTIN RIDENER
Times Staff Writer

A special assembly meeting next Monday could go a long way towards shaping the future destiny of the Greater Anchorage Area Borough.

The session, requested by President Dick Fischer, was called to have the assembly take a look at the entire package of new powers now under consideration to be placed before borough voters in October.

The power package includes areawide sewer and water — with a \$20 million price tag — plus fire protection, parks and recreation and assumption of the Port of Anchorage from the city.

Other suggested powers to be taken over by the borough are police protection and even telephone utility operations.

Fischer noted that the assembly might consider asking for

some of the powers on a non-areawide basis.

This was particularly true, according to Borough Chairman John Asplund, in the case of police protection, which will be discussed mainly as a possibility for the Spennard Service Area through a contractual arrangement with the City of Anchorage. Fire protection for Spennard is handled in the same manner.

Chet Hostetter and several other assemblymen rebelled Monday night at consideration of the borough taking over the port power without having a look at the entire borough development picture.

The \$16.25 million port's actual cost to the city through general obligation debt service is about \$375,000 a year. This figure is expected to increase slightly when a marine repair facility and the small boat harbor are finally built. Both have long been scheduled, but no funds have been authorized to start actual construction.

The current cost of the port to city property owners is about \$1.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Should the borough take over the general obligations of the port, the cost would be spread over a much greater tax base. The city property owner's tax bill would be cut by about 60 cents per \$1,000, and the borough tax rate would increase about 80 cents per \$1,000.

Proportionately, the area outside the city limits would be paying about 43 per cent of the \$375,000 port tab. As property values increase, the total tax rate would shrink. Also, revenue from the port is skyrocketing, charts show.

Anchorage Daily Times Tuesday, May 10, 1966

Board Pushes Port Repair Facility Plan

A sense of urgent need for a marine repair facility at the Port of Anchorage has caused the Port Commission to withdraw its request that the borough take over and operate the port.

The commission Monday came up with a scheme to get engineering and design work on the facility under way immediately.

It also called for a special election to get voter approval of \$2.8 million in bonds for the marine repair installation and \$1.2 million for a small boat harbor.

Commissioner Robert Baum said today the commission's actions "still leave the door open if the borough wants to go along with us."

"But we have to get this thing off the ground. It will mean more employment. It is in high demand by the oil and fishing industry."

The commission asked the City Council to withdraw its request for a borough take-over of the port.

It also asked that the council approve the use of revenues from the Port Industrial Park for engineering and design on the proposed marine repair facility.

A \$2.6 million bond proposal for the facility could come before city voters in August, "or earlier," Baum said.

"The facility will be self-supporting, so all of this money will be paid back," he said.

Although construction would not begin until the spring of 1967, the commission would like to call for bids this fall, Baum said.

A fall bid-call would probably get better bids, he said, and it would allow the manufacturer of a special marine lift time to assemble it for use in the facility, he said.

Baum estimated the repair facility would be completed by mid-summer of 1967. He pointed out that some \$318,000 was spent on repairs to vessels operating in Cook Inlet last year.

The commissioner also noted that the Corps of Engineers is "eager to get started" on the small boat harbor.

The commission plans to ask for the total cost of the project in bonds and furnish it to the corps so it can get started, he said.

When federal money for the project is approved, the corps would turn it over to the city, Baum said. Final cost of the small boat harbor would be \$400,000 each to the city, state and federal governments, he said.

Borough Chairman John Asplund commented today that the Port Commission's withdrawal of the take-over offer will "give us an opportunity to discuss the matter with the city-borough merger study group on a leisurely basis."

Borough Assembly President Richard Fischer said he was pleased with the Port Commission action.

Anchorage Daily Times Friday, May 27, 1966

Kodiak Eyes Marine Lift

Anchorage Council To Study Facility

The president of a ship-building firm is scheduled to propose tonight construction of a 1,000-ton capacity marine lift at Kodiak.

Tony Martinovich, president of Martinovich Shipbuilding, which operates the drydock facility at Kodiak, will discuss the project with the Kodiak city council, according to Mayor Peter Deveau.

"We've set aside a 15-acre tract at Gibson Cove, which is adjacent to Kodiak, for anyone who wants to build a marine lift. We don't need a drydock because we've already got one. Martinovich is the operator. He has two small lifts, a 75-ton and a 350-ton one."

"We are thinking in terms of a 1,000-ton lift. That's big enough to handle at least 90 per cent of the ships around Alaska... anything up to a 150 to 175-footer," said Deveau.

He said the lift must have a capability of transferring ships by rail to the drydock quickly. "We want everyone to know that when their ship is in trouble they can come to Kodiak and get out of the water immediately," he said.

Deveau said Martinovich has built over 300 vessels, many of which are now working in Alaskan waters.

The Anchorage City Council Thursday approved the use of up to \$15,000 for a feasibility study on building a marine repair facility at the port here.

Port Director A. E. Harned set out a tight time table for the facility which calls for voter approval of needed bonds Aug. 2, and the start of construction next March.

The size of vessels to be handled by the lift part of the facility is still under consideration, he said.

"I favor one that will handle 750 tons," he said, "but others favor a 1,500 ton lift, which could handle tugs, barges, and everything else except state ferries and Coast Guard ships."

Anchorage Daily News, Tuesday, May 2, 1966

Marine Repair Facility Bond Election Eyed

A proposal calling for a special bond election August 2 to finance construction of a \$2.6 million marine repair facility was outlined last night to the Anchorage Port Commission.

The proposal now goes to the Anchorage City Council which will meet in special session Thursday to consider other proposed bonding.

The August 2 election is part of a schedule prepared by the port's consulting engineering firm of Lounsbury, Sleavin and Kelly. It proposes that bids for the facility be called by mid-November with the start of construction scheduled for March or April of next year.

COMMISSIONER Virgil Deane questioned whether the feasibility of such a marine repair facility had been established.

He asked that the port staff provide additional figures to back up the proposed facility, which would be located in the port area. Additional feasibility also would be developed in a requested engineering study, the commission was told.

An early election could reduce construction time by as much as one season, Lounsbury told the commission.

Anchorage Daily News, Wednesday, May 4, 1966



33 TONS OF METAL swing through the air as boom is hoisted into place on Sea-Land's giant crane at the Port of Anchorage municipal terminal yesterday. A giant derrick barge, capable of lifting up to 250 tons, was brought into Anchorage for the job. View of the operation is from the deck of the Elsie Foss, a small tug that stood by while the work was being done. (Daily News photo)