The History of Irving Water Utilities

Irving’s Early Water System

Irving was founded by two railroad surveyors who decided to establish a town along the 10-mile stretch of land they were surveying between Dallas and Fort Worth. Their survey section began at Record Crossing near downtown Dallas and ended at the location of what today is the Valley View Municipal Complex. The railroad theme of Irving’s early history located at the western terminus of the survey, is still reflected in the design of the Valley View Municipal Complex that houses Irving’s Water Utility Department.

The accessibility and abundance of good ground water, as well as the fertile sandy loam soil, drew settlers to the Irving area. Farmers and other residents dug shallow wells on their land to supply water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning, as well as for irrigation. The city’s first public water supply was established shortly after the founding of the city of Irving, when a public well was dug in the middle of the intersection of Main Street and First Street (today Irving Boulevard).

The city commission contracted with local men to keep the tank filled during daylight hours. Pipes were added to carry water to nearby businesses and houses. This simple system and private water wells made up the area’s water system until 1924.

That year the citizens of Irving, in a vote of 104 to 3, created the Dallas County Irving Fresh Water Supply District #5. The district had the authority to levy and collect taxes in order to build and operate a water distribution system in Irving. Over the next year, the district built a water plant at the northwest corner of Second and Jefferson streets. The facilities included an elevated tank, ground storage tanks, a derrick, a pump house, and deep wells.

In 1932, the City of Irving and the Water District joined together to build the city’s first municipal building adjacent to the water plant. That building, the first city hall, also housed the offices of the Water District. The building still stands today.

In 1939, the city bought the Water District’s assets and took over the water system. This marked the beginning of the City of Irving’s Water Department.
Before the water tower was constructed, the well in the middle of the intersection was operated by a hand-pump. The right side of this photo (1908) shows the well surrounded by a small fence. The pump handle is also visible.

This photo from 1930 shows a house that has a well and water storage tank in the back yard. The house was at the southwest corner of Pioneer Drive and Hawthorne Street.
In 1932, the City of Irving joined with the Dallas County Irving Fresh Water Supply District #5 in building the city's first city hall and water district office.

The City of Irving was founded in December 1903. Shortly after its founding, the first public water well was dug in the middle of the intersection of Main Street and First Street (today's Irving Boulevard.). Later a tower and holding tank were added.
Map showing the Irving water distribution system in 1924. The system provided water to those inside the Fresh Water District boundaries. Those outside the district had to pay for all material and labor needed to tap into the system plus an additional $.50 service charge per month.

During Irving’s early days, residents had to create their own water supply by digging wells and building storage tanks. Shown here are the remains of a pump from a water well that was located in the back of the Heritage House on O’Connor Road.
In 1939, the city purchased the assets of the Dallas County Irving Fresh Water Supply District #5 and established a municipal water system. The work of the Water District is recognized in this City of Irving centennial historical marker. The marker is located next to the first city hall and water office building in old downtown Irving.

Displayed is a 1936 Dallas County Irving Fresh Water Supply District #5 water bill. The water bill is for the use of 20 gallons and the amount due is $1.00.
Shown here is a copy of the first page of minutes from the first meeting of the board of the Dallas County Irving Fresh Water District No. 5 on April 23, 1924.

In 1914, the students of the Irving school system gathered around the water tower on Main St. to celebrate the school system’s growth to 500 students. During these years there was no water system at the school building. Everyday a number of students would walk from the school to the tower to fill containers for use at the school.
This 1957 aerial of downtown Irving shows the water tower behind the city hall building near the corner of Second and Jefferson streets. Main Street can be seen behind the tower.

Irving's first modern water tower stood behind the city hall building at 137 E. Second St. It was dismantled in 1967.
An Independent Water Supply

During Irving’s early decades, when the town was a small farming community, deep wells provided the municipal water supply. Beginning in the 1950s, explosive population growth created such demand for water that the local wells could no longer meet residents’ needs.

To meet the increasing demand, the City of Irving began buying water from the City of Dallas. By the 1970s, Irving was purchasing all its water from Dallas.

Anticipating Irving’s water needs, city leaders from the 1950s onward have worked to secure Irving its own water supply. To that end, the city became a co-sponsor of the Lake Chapman Water Supply Project.

After almost 50 years of planning, litigation, and construction, Lake Chapman, located on the Sulphur River about 85 miles northeast of Irving, was dedicated in 2003.

The final phase of the project was the construction of a 33-mile pipeline and booster pumping station. This project began in the summer of 2003. This series of photos shows city staff and elected officials attending the groundbreaking for the Lake Chapman Pipeline, 2001.

City council and city staff dig-in for the groundbreaking of the Lake Chapman pipeline, 2001.

Lake Chapman Pipeline before being placed underground.
How many Aggies does it take to bury a pipeline? Jaime Beard, Todd Abbott, Bob Wallace, David Ryburn, Todd Reck, Lewis Patrick, and Cliff Miller all city staff members, and in Mr. Patrick’s case a retired city staff member and current city council member, are all graduates of Texas A&M University. Gig ‘Em!

Irving’s Water Today

Today, Irving’s Valley View Municipal Complex has been open for four years. As Irving grows, new challenges arise as we continue to provide safe and reliable drinking water to a growing population of over 200,000. Irving continues towards becoming a progressive city in protecting and managing our water resources.

Valley View Municipal Complex
333 Valley View Lane
The Valley View Municipal Complex is home to the City of Irving IGS/Water Utilities, Traffic and Streets. The Complex was dedicated on September 23, 2005.

The railroad theme of Irving’s early history and the complex’s location as the western terminus of the survey is reflected in some of the public art on the complex's property.
Various pieces of public art are incorporated into the complex’s design. Pictured is some of the public art that is located on the grounds of the new civic complex.

This monumental railroad spike sundial also reflects Irving’s early history as a railroad town and the complex’s location at the western end of the survey.
These figures of children characterize Irving's rural roots and how early settlers supplied their own water.

These concrete and metal pedestals represent the railroad track along which Irving was founded. They run from the entry sign at the front of the property, through the building, and out to the back of the property.