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MARKING TIME

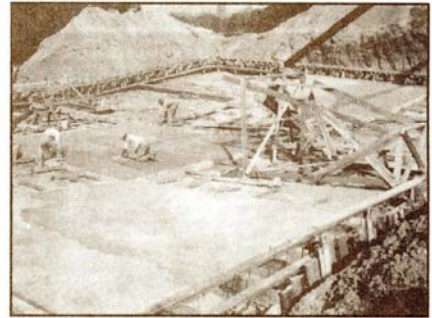
St. Elmo Reservoir

In the early 1850s, local leaders recognizing the need for a clean water supply formed the Alexandria Water Company and constructed a reservoir near Shuter's Hill. With the growth of Alexandria's suburbs in the early 1900s, the company needed another reservoir to better serve its customers in Del Ray, Potomac, Rosecrest, Mount Ida, Abingdon and other communities which were then just outside the city limits.

In the summer of 1927, workers built a concrete reservoir for the Alexandria Water Company. The new St. Elmo Reservoir, constructed on property near Mount Vernon Avenue

and West Glebe Road, would increase the company's service by enhancing water flow during peak usage times. Unlike the larger reservoir at Shuter's Hill, this new structure was enclosed and resembled a giant box.

Constructed of steel-reinforced concrete, the reservoir could hold 700,000 gallons and measured approximately 96 feet long and 72 feet wide with an average depth of just over 13 feet. The water was stored there but continuously used and refilled, preventing stagnation. Water company officials also applauded the covered or "big box" design, noting that animals and bugs would be unable to contaminate the water supply.



Courtesy Photo/Alexandria Library Special Collections

In this photograph taken July 29, 1927, workers are finishing sections of the recently poured floor slab. Eighty years after it was built, the St. Elmo Reservoir is still used by the Virginia-American Water Company.