

GR Press Photo

'Blockhouse' a Gift to Fish

Fish Ladder Puts Salmon On Display

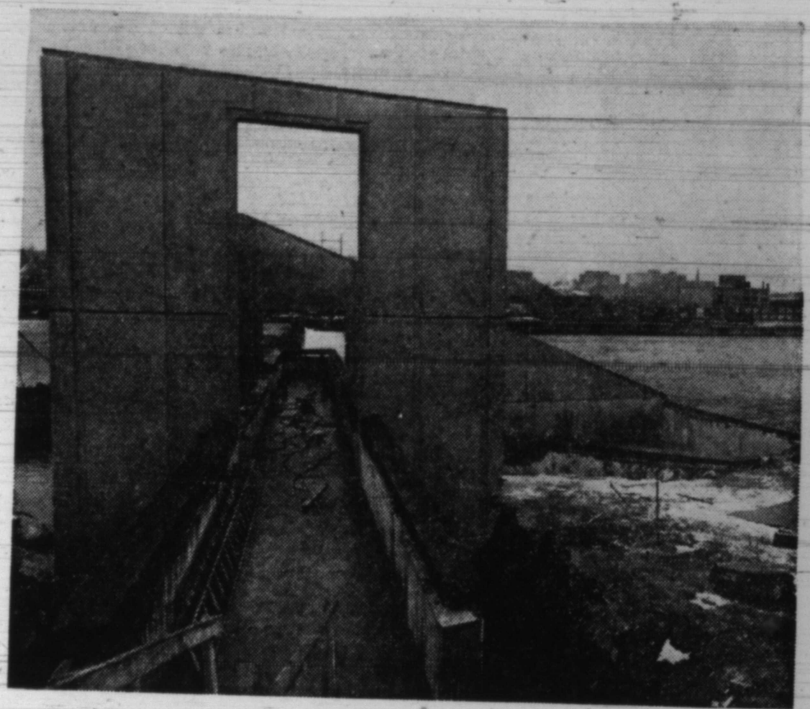
By Hank Bornheimer,

Grand River fish rung in the new year with the opening Thursday of the fish ladder at the Sixth St. Dam.

The \$240,000 structure is open to the public as well. It features a functional sculpture for the public to walk over the ladder and watch the fish leap to freedom to spawn upstream.

Visitors can gain access off Front Ave. NW, near the Grand Rapids Fire Department training tower.

Not many fish appeared Thursday for a shakedown run. But come spring, thousands of steelhead will make the big dash. The fall salmon run is the next attraction.



Walkway Permits Visitors to Watch Leaping Fish

The seven-foot difference in water levels at the dam had turned a bottleneck for about a half-million salmon and trout annually into a fish barrel for sportsmen.

Fewer than 4 per cent of the fish heading upstream cleared the dam each year. The ladder is expected to enable about 15 per cent to make it across.

A lot of area anglers complained that the ladder would kill their favorite fishing spot. Not so, said James Hickey of Triangle Associates contractors. Plenty of good fishing will remain at the dam, although a ban will be imposed within 100 feet of the ladder, he added.

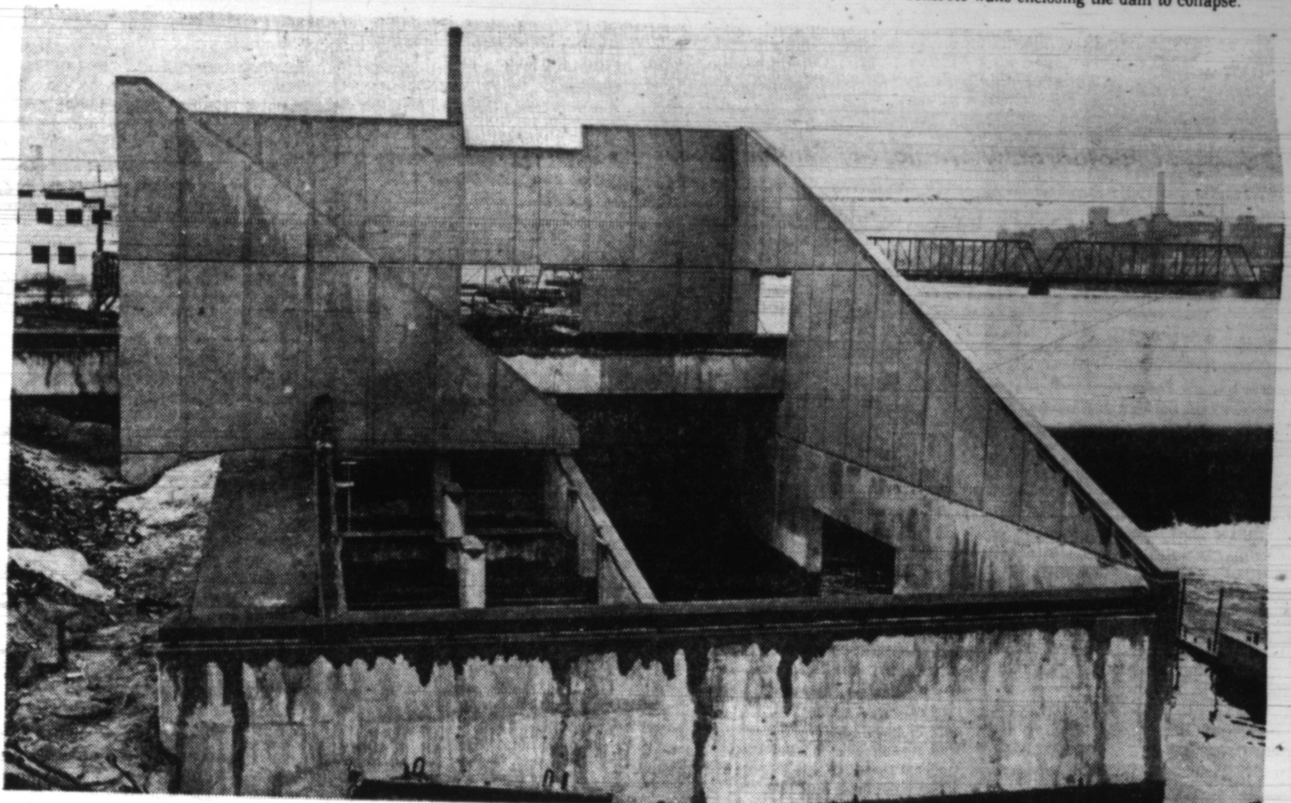
Angling in the Rogue, Thornapple and upper reaches of Grand River are bound to improve with more spawning fish upstream, he said.

The ladder breaks up the seven-foot water barrier into seven individual one-foot falls, with resting ponds between each for the fish to catch their breath.

The public can become involved in their environment from the attached sculpture, designed by local artist Joseph Kinnebrew and built for \$90,000.

The \$150,000 ladder was built with Department of Natural Resources funds, the sculpture from endowments and anonymous donations.

Bad sports and mother nature weren't cooperative at times. Vandals tore down protective fences at the sites and broke windows of construction equipment. And the unpredictable river bed and water pressure caused the concrete walls enclosing the dam to collapse.



Bypassing the Sixth St. Dam, Fish Will 'Climb' Ladder in Easy, One-Foot Stages