

CENTENNIAL HISTORY
OF THE CITY OF
WASHINGTON, D.C.

WITH FULL OUTLINE

OF THE

NATURAL ADVANTAGES, ACCOUNTS OF THE INDIAN TRIBES, SELECTION OF THE SITE
FOUNDING OF THE CITY, PIONEER LIFE, MUNICIPAL, MILITARY, MERCAN-
TILE, MANUFACTURING, AND TRANSPORTATION INTERESTS, THE
PRESS, SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, SOCIETIES, PUBLIC
BUILDINGS, Etc., Etc., TO THE PRESENT TIME.

ILLUSTRATED.

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accept the decision as settling the question, but the First Comptroller of the Treasury refused to pay the account, and appealed the case to the Supreme Court of the United States. The decision of this court, rendered February 1, 1892, was to the effect that the law of June 11, 1878, repealed the army and navy limitation, and gave the commissioners full power to employ on the police force whomsoever they thought suitable to serve thereon.

The police force of the District of Columbia at the present time is as follows: One major and superintendent, William G. Moore; 2 captains, 39 lieutenants, 1 chief and property clerk, 3 clerks, 4 surgeons, 32 sergeants, 415 privates, 20 station keepers, 10 laborers, 2 messengers, 1 van driver, 1 ambulance driver, 2 assistant ambulance drivers, 13 drivers of patrol wagons, and 3 police matrons. The total annual cost of maintaining this force is about \$500,000. During the year ending in 1891, although there was in certain instances a slight increase in the number of crimes committed, as in disorderly conduct and drunkenness, yet on the whole there was a general decrease in the amount of crime. In this connection it is deemed proper to state that the police force of the city of Washington is noted for its efficiency, as well as for its orderly and gentlemanly conduct.

The ancient springs of the District of Columbia in the early day were as follows: The most important one was that on Smith's farm, at the head of North Capitol Street, above Boundary Street. It had a great flow of water. From it there were two mains—one down North Capitol Street to the Capitol grounds, which still supplies the grotto with its constant flow of water, and the other going down Pennsylvania Avenue nearly to Fifteenth Street. Then there was a spring in the City Hall lot, about fifty feet west of the building, which supplied pumps on Second Street as far as the Lafayette House, and another line of pipe went down Louisiana Avenue to Seventh Street. South of the City Hall, on C Street, between Four and a Half and Sixth streets, was another famous spring. It was on a lot owned by the corporation, and upon which the building first used for a police court stood afterward.

There was also a spring under where the Masonic Temple stands [in 1884], which was tapped by pipes running along F Street and down Ninth and Tenth streets. There was a spring in Franklin Square, and another just outside the square. The old Carroll Spring on Capitol Hill, located at the intersection of New Jersey and New York avenues, had a most copious flow, and the water was both cool and of excellent quality. The best spring in the northwestern part of

the city was on P Street, near the Georgetown bridge, which for many years supplied the Metropolitan street-car stables, in Georgetown, by a pipe under the bridge. There is a splendid spring on Virginia Avenue, between Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh streets, near the gas works.

The springs above described supplied the necessities of the inhabitants for several years, but at length they of course became inadequate. In 1831, Congress appropriated \$12,000 to bring to the Capitol the waters from one of the springs of the Tiber, rising on the farm of J. A. Smith, about a mile away. The water was conducted in iron pipes from the reservoir at the head of the stream, and supplied the marble fountain at the foot of the terrace on the west front of the Capitol, the surplus being discharged into basins, one on the east and one on the west front of the building. The one on the west contained seventy-eight thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven gallons, and that on the east one hundred and eleven thousand two hundred and forty-one gallons. In 1849, the yield of the fountain was thirty-two gallons per minute.

It was about this time that the necessity for a larger supply of water began to attract serious attention. Robert Mills, engineer and architect of the city of Washington, wrote and had published a series of able articles on the entire subject of water supply, giving a succinct history of waterworks from the most ancient times down to the then present. The rare gift of nature to the city of Washington in the form of underground springs, which rose up wherever a well was dug, and which in several instances overflowed their margins, and which, ever since the settlement of the place, had satisfied the inhabitants, was a remarkable circumstance. The founders of the city, when they laid it out, especially noticed the abundant supply of pure water in the springs of the Tiber, and in others in various parts of the city and outside thereof. After the fire which destroyed the Treasury building, and the General Post Office and Patent Office buildings, Mr. Mills, as architect of the city, recommended that a supply of water should be conducted from the basins at the Capitol to those buildings, where, being under a head of sixty feet, the water might be conducted to their top by means of hose. It was in this connection that Congress appropriated the money above mentioned to carry the suggestion into execution, and in order to benefit that portion of the city through which the pipe passed, fire plugs were stationed at proper distances, which were accessible in case of need.

On March 30, 1830, Mr. Mills addressed a letter to Hon. G. C. Verplanck, chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings, upon the

subject of supplying the city of Washington with water, the sources being, first, the Tiber, and second, Rock Creek. With reference to the Tiber, it was the nearer to the Capitol, and its waters could be brought there at the least expense; but the supply was limited, and it was not certain that its yield would be permanent. The main head springs of this creek were three in number, and from them the water flowed in quantity as follows: From No. 1, 7 gallons per minute; from No. 2, 3 gallons per minute; and from No. 3, $4\frac{1}{2}$ gallons per minute. Total flow, $14\frac{1}{2}$ gallons per minute. The expense of bringing the water from these springs to the Capitol would be \$43,710.50, exclusive of the purchase of the springs. The water of Rock Creek was looked upon by Mr. Mills very favorably as a source of supply, not only for the then present, but for the future, and the high grounds were suitable for the formation of a reservoir from which to supply the entire city; and the conduit pipes, before reaching the Capitol, would pass through the city, instead of passing through vacant territory, as in case of drawing water from the head springs of the Tiber. The entire cost of conducting the water from Rock Creek, he thought, would not exceed \$50,000.

On February 14, 1853, Brigadier-General Joseph G. Totten made a report to the Secretary of War on the subject of supplying water to the cities of Washington and Georgetown, embodying in his report that to himself of Montgomery C. Meigs, a synopsis of which is here introduced. The aqueduct from Rock Creek, complete, to the Capitol and Navy Yard, and public buildings, would cost \$1,258,863. The supply of water in winter and spring would be 26,732,300 gallons, and would run down in summer to 9,860,000 gallons. The Little Falls work, complete, would cost \$1,597,415, and the supply would be steadily 12,000,000 gallons. The Great Falls project would cost \$1,921,244, and the constant daily supply would be 36,000,000 gallons. This latter project had numerous and great advantages over every other. The work of constructing the Washington aqueduct, which was to supply the citizens of Washington and Georgetown with water, was assigned to the Engineering Department, and General Totten, with the approval of the Secretary of War, placed Captain Montgomery C. Meigs in charge.

But this work, so much needed by the two cities of Washington and Georgetown, received a backset in April, 1853, by the refusal of the Legislature of Maryland to permit the Washington aqueduct to convey the water from the Great Falls to these cities. This was a great surprise and a great disappointment. The construction of this

aqueduct was looked upon as a more important measure than the extension of the Capitol, which was then going on. There would be expended nearly a million dollars between the District of Columbia and the Great Falls, and nearly another million within the limits of the District itself. It would make the city a far more desirable place of residence, increasing the comfort and health of all the citizens, and cheapening insurance, besides increasing the safety of all the buildings, public and private, from fires. Better counsel, however, soon prevailed in the legislature, and on May 3, 1853, an act was passed consenting to the draft of water from the Potomac and its conveyance to the District of Columbia.

Preparations, therefore, went on for the beginning of work on the proposed aqueduct. November 8, 1853, was a memorable day in the history of Washington and Georgetown; for on that day work was at length commenced upon the great aqueduct that was to bring in to them the waters of the Potomac. The President of the United States and a portion of his cabinet, with the municipal authorities of Washington, went by steamboat and pack horses from Georgetown up the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal to Crommelin, near the Great Falls of the Potomac, in the vicinity of which the aqueduct commenced. The spot having been designated by a flag erected upon a pole, the President approached it, and surrounded by a large concourse of people, the exercises were opened with a prayer from Rev. Dr. Pyne, of St. John's Episcopal Church, Washington, after which Captain M. C. Meigs made a short address. President Pierce then broke ground with the spade presented to him for that purpose. Hon. Jefferson Davis followed the example of the President; Senator Douglas, of Illinois, did the same, and then John W. Maury, Mayor of Washington, W. W. Seaton, the late Mayor, and others, among them being Thomas Ritchie, Mr. Walter, and Captain William Easby, followed the same example.

Passing over the Rock Creek aqueduct, as it would have been had it been constructed, and confining ourselves to the Potomac aqueduct, we have from Captain Meigs's report the following synopsis: That while from a casual survey of the route necessary to be followed it would appear almost impossible to construct an aqueduct along the Potomac River, on account of the jagged and vertical precipices, etc., that would have to be overcome; yet upon a careful and mathematical survey, there were really but few difficulties that an engineer would not delight in overcoming; because the rocky precipices and difficult passages were really below the level which would naturally be selected

for the conduit. There were indeed necessary several tunnels, of an average length of 220 feet, and but three bridges, only one of these being large enough to make its erection an object of ambition to an engineer. The distance in a right line from the beginning of the conduit to the north end of the Georgetown aqueduct was $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and the length of the conduit 14 miles to the same point. The elevation of the water in the Potomac River opposite the fifteenth milestone on the canal, which is somewhat less than three-fourths of a mile above Collins's Great Falls House, is at low water 147 feet above high tide at Washington; and there was an average depth of water in the river of 5 feet. As the water was not high enough to allow the conduit to be constructed above the canal, it was necessary to convey the water under the canal in large iron pipes to the gate house on the opposite side, where regulating gates, worked by screws, controlled the quantity of water admitted. From this gate house the water was to be conducted in a circular brick conduit, 7 feet in diameter, afterward changed to 9 feet in diameter, because while the expense of constructing the conduit would be increased by about one-sixth, yet the capacity of the conduit would be doubled. With a slope of .792 feet to the mile, the water running at a depth of 6 feet, the 7-foot conduit would discharge 36,000,000 gallons per day, while the 9-foot conduit would discharge 67,596,000 gallons per day.

After leaving the river, there are two tunnels near the pipe chamber, one 215 feet long, the other 272 feet long. Then the line is principally in rock, but soon crossing a ravine and small brook by an arch of 24-foot span. It then passes through two tunnels, one 115 feet, the other 61 feet in length. At $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the dam, it crosses Mountain Spring Brook by an arch of 50-foot span; and thence proceeds in easy cuttings, until at the end of 7 miles it comes to the valley of the Cabin John Branch, the only serious obstacle in the way. Over this branch it was proposed to construct an aqueduct of the following description: Length, 482 feet; greatest height, 101 feet; width, 20 feet; six semi-circular arches, each of 60-foot span, resting upon piers 7 feet thick by 20 feet long at the top and varying in height, the highest being $32\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its estimated cost was \$72,400. This plan was, however, changed, as will be seen later on. Near the end of the tenth mile the line reaches the valley of Little Falls Branch, a dam across which—41 feet in height and 200 feet long—floods a little more than 50 acres of land, which makes a fine receiving reservoir of an irregular shape, 140 feet above high tide, and having a capacity of 163,000,000 gallons.

The objects proposed to be accomplished in the construction of this receiving reservoir were to furnish storage capacity and to secure a large area in which the water might have opportunity to deposit its impurities. The first object was accomplished, but the second object, after an experience of four years, from 1860 to 1864, was found to be impracticable, for the reason that four or five streams were constantly discharging into the basin, each draining a hilly country, and consequently swollen and muddied by every rain; and besides, the hillsides discharged their surface water into the reservoir. The water for the most part was shallow, the area compared with the shore line was small, and the banks were unprotected from the wash of the waves.

Just before reaching this receiving reservoir the conduit passes through a tunnel of more than one thousand two hundred feet in length, but after leaving it there is no further tunneling. Below this reservoir there is a distributing reservoir, near Drover's Rest, above Georgetown. This distributing reservoir is on the thirteenth mile from the upper end of the aqueduct.

The first appropriation made for the prosecution of this work, by Congress, was on September 30, 1850, the amount being \$500. The next appropriation was \$5,000, made April 30, 1852. This appropriation was made to enable the President of the United States to have the survey of the route made. The next appropriation was made in 1853, of \$100,000, for the purpose of beginning the work. The date of breaking ground has already been given, as has also the date of Maryland's consent to the construction of the aqueduct. Virginia, on March 3, 1854, gave her consent to the purchase of a tract of land for the Virginia abutment of the dam at Great Falls. A tract of land for this purpose, also a tract of several acres containing the quarries necessary for the construction of the dam, were purchased of Virginia, and also the lands along the line of the aqueduct in Maryland from the Great Falls to the District of Columbia.

Contracts were entered into for the several portions of the aqueduct with Degges & Smith, of Washington, District of Columbia, and of Baltimore, Maryland, respectively, January 23, 1854, for the delivery of from twenty-five millions to forty millions of brick along the line of the canal, at \$8.75 per thousand; May 28, 1854, with Felix Duffin, of Ohio, for the graduation and culverts, including the 1-foot culverts; May 19, 1855, with N. H. Decker, of Albany, New York, for graduation and culverts; June 16, 1855, with Patrick Crowley, for tunnels; and November 24, 1855, with Hugh L. Gallaher, of Virginia, to take up

and complete the work contracted to be done by Felix Duffin, Mr. Duffin having failed to carry out his contract.

During the fall of 1853 and the year 1854, the work was prosecuted with diligence. Connection with the Potomac River under the canal was made, and tunnels Nos. 1, 2, and 3 were commenced, about four hundred and fifty feet being pierced, and a small portion of the brick conduit built. No appropriation having been made in 1854, work was suspended until after March 4, 1855, when Congress made an appropriation of \$250,000. With this sum most of the lands in Maryland were purchased, 827 feet of tunnels pierced, 1,800 feet of conduit built, 13 culverts nearly completed, together with the embankments over them, and most of the other tunnels in Maryland begun. The crossing under the canal at the Great Falls was completed, and the canal itself restored to its full dimensions.

In 1856, the work was again suspended for want of an appropriation. March 3, 1857, an appropriation of \$1,000,000 was made, most of the lands in the District of Columbia purchased, contracts made for the great conduit, the receiving reservoir made, the arch stones at Cabin John Bridge, 12 inch pipes, and bridges Nos. 1 and 2 nearly completed, Nos. 3 and 5 commenced, 6,104 feet of conduit built, 2,034½ feet of tunnels pierced, and the Potomac dam commenced. During the winter of 1857-58 a large quantity of stone was quarried and deposited along the line of the aqueduct, and preparations made for the work of 1858. June 12, 1858, an appropriation was made of \$800,000, the remainder of the lands in the District of Columbia purchased, all the culverts completed, the conduit nearly finished, bridges Nos. 3 and 5 completed, bridge No. 4 (Cabin John) commenced, and the granite arch cut, and part of the rubble arch was built. In the spring of 1859, the Rock Creek Bridge was well advanced, the tunnels, except No. 1, finished, waste weirs Nos. 1 and 3 completed and No. 2 sufficiently so for use, the 12-inch main pipe laid, and the 30-inch pipe commenced. September 27, 1858, the receiving reservoir being finished, the sluice gate was closed. December 8, the water rose to the bottom of the conduit, and on January 3, 1859, it was introduced into the pipes supplying the cities.

In the spring of 1859, the work was again suspended for want of funds. In June, 1860, an appropriation was made of \$500,000, "to be expended according to the plans and estimates of Captain Meigs, and under his superintendence." This provision caused some official comment, President Buchanan, in a message, calling attention to the fact that if strictly construed it, in effect, took away from the President

the power of appointing officers of the army, and was therefore a usurpation of executive authority, hence unconstitutional. He, however, could not think it possible that Congress intended to encroach upon his powers, and so construed the law as he supposed Congress intended to enact it.

Upon July 17, 1860, Captain W. H. Benham was appointed chief engineer, and in December following he was succeeded by Lieutenant Morton. February 22, 1861, General M. C. Meigs again resumed charge of the aqueduct. Work on the aqueduct was resumed in the fall of 1860, under Captain Benham, who expended while in charge \$98,345.11; Lieutenant Morton expended while in charge \$55,441.40; and General Meigs in 1861 spent \$81,802.61.

Up to June 17, 1862, the total appropriations had been \$2,900,000, and the total expenditures \$2,675,832.53. February 22, 1864, S. Seymour, engineer of the aqueduct, reported that an ample supply of water for the cities of Washington and Georgetown could be obtained from the Potomac by the erection of a tight dam from the Maryland side of the Potomac to Conn's Island, which would give a height of six feet of water in the aqueduct, and yield a daily supply of 65,000,000 gallons, which was more by one-third than was used in the city of New York in 1861, when its population was over 800,000. The engineer, at the same time, estimated that the amount necessary to complete the work was \$546,433.62, making the entire cost of the aqueduct \$3,446,433.62, or, in round numbers, \$3,500,000. And upon making a comparison with twenty other large cities in this country, this would be less than half the average cost of their waterworks, and the capacity of the Washington aqueduct would be more than double the average capacity of theirs.

Washington and Georgetown were no exception to the rule that cities waste a vast amount of water distributed to their inhabitants by means of waterworks. In 1870, this subject began to attract attention here, General N. Michler saying that the two cities consumed about 12,000,000 gallons per day. A large portion of this amount was consumed in the Government departments, especially in the Navy Yard and at the Treasury. On Capitol Hill and other high points, the supply was not equal to the demand, because of the reckless and wasteful use of the water in the lower portions of the city. To remedy this waste, the General recommended the adoption of the meter system.

According to Colonel Casey, who had charge of the aqueduct in 1879, there had been expended in the construction and maintenance

of the waterworks, prior to June 30, 1879, by the United States, \$3,784,546.72, by the corporation of Washington, \$1,313,351.17, and by Georgetown, about \$40,000, though the precise amount spent by Georgetown could not be ascertained, because her accounts had been so poorly kept. The aggregate expenditure had been \$5,137,897.89. The total receipts had been \$1,104,956.56.

The first mention of water rents, in legislation referring to this system, was in the third section of an act of Congress entitled, "An Act to Provide for the Care and Preservation of the Works Constructed by the United States for Bringing the Potomac Water into the Cities of Washington and Georgetown, for the Supply of said Water for all Governmental Purposes, and for the Use and Benefit of the Inhabitants of said Cities." This act was passed March 3, 1859. By this act the corporations of the two cities were authorized to establish a scale of annual rates for the supply of water, apportioned to the different classes of buildings, and to the uses for dwellings, manufactories, etc., and their exposure to fire; and to alter or amend their ordinances relating to the supply of water, so as to increase or reduce the rates, and generally to enact such laws as might be necessary to secure a supply of pure and wholesome water to the inhabitants of the two cities. The corporate authorities of the two cities were also, by this act, authorized to borrow money not to exceed \$150,000 for Washington and \$50,000 for Georgetown, redeemable within ten years, out of water rents.

The next legislation of Congress on the subject of water rents was on March 3, 1863, when an act was passed, authorizing the corporation of Washington to levy and collect a water tax on all real property within the corporate limits of the city, "which binds on or touches on any avenue, street, or alley, in which a main water pipe has been laid, or hereafter may be laid, by the United States, or by the corporation of Washington." This same act also provided for the "erection, maintenance, and efficiency of fire plugs throughout the city," and authorized the corporation of Washington to "levy and collect a special annual tax on all buildings within five hundred feet of any water pipe, into which, or the premises connected therewith, the water has not been introduced, and the owner or occupiers of which do not pay any annual water rate, etc., and which tax shall not be more than \$5, nor less than \$1." The same act also provided that the water tax collected under it should be constituted a fund, to be used exclusively to defray the cost of distributing the water, etc.

Georgetown, in carrying out the provisions of this act, assessed

the property owners the full cost of laying the water pipes in that city, and thus relieved themselves of the necessity of establishing a water rent.

An ordinance of the city of Washington, passed June 2, 1859, provided for the appointment of a water registrar, and imposed upon him the duty of assessing water rates, according to the tariff established by the ordinances of the city, and of making out and presenting to the Mayor annually a full report of all his proceedings in connection with the duties of his office. It was also made the duty of the Mayor to appoint four suitable citizens of Washington, who, together with the Mayor, should constitute the water board of the city.

By a law passed July 14, 1870, the engineer of the Washington aqueduct was required to lay from the distributing reservoir to Capitol Hill an iron pipe, or main, thirty-six inches in diameter, the entire cost of which was to be borne proportionately by the corporations of Washington and Georgetown, the water rates to be increased to such an amount as might be necessary.

By 1879 the question of an increased water supply became one of great importance. The daily supply for the past six years had been as follows: In 1874, 17,554,848 gallons; in 1875, 21,000,000 gallons; in 1876, 24,177,797 gallons; in 1877, 23,252,932 gallons; in 1878, 24,885,945 gallons; in 1879, 25,947,642 gallons. When the proper deduction was made by the United States, viz., 2,626,188 gallons, there were left 23,321,454 gallons, which amount was consumed by the inhabitants of the two cities. This was an average of 155½ gallons per head for each person, while in twenty other cities of the United States the average number of gallons used by each inhabitant ranged from 25 in Providence, Rhode Island, to 119 in Chicago, the average in these twenty large cities being 58½ gallons per head, a little more than one-third as much as was used in Washington and Georgetown.

An increased supply of water was therefore an apparent necessity, and the commissioners of the District of Columbia recommended the extension of the conduit from the distributing reservoir to a point north of the city and east of Seventh Street, and the building there of a large reservoir, to be connected by a four-foot main along New Jersey Avenue with the principal mains then maintained from the vicinity of L and G streets. The total cost of the extension of the conduit was estimated at \$554,731.41; the cost of the four-foot main was estimated at \$91,298; and the cost of completing the dam at Great Falls was estimated at \$200,000, making the total cost of these three items \$846,029.41. The commissioners also recommended

the building of an additional reservoir, which would cost \$462,512.50, making a total expenditure needed of \$1,308,541.91. General Meigs was opposed to the reservoir north of the city, because in his opinion it would be a constant menace to the lives and property of the citizens.

One of the most remarkable structures in the world is "Cabin John Bridge," erected by General Meigs over Cabin John Run, at a distance of seven miles from Washington on the line of the aqueduct, for the purpose of carrying the aqueduct over the run. It is a stone structure, 584 feet in extreme length, and 101 feet high, above the stream. The arch proper is 200 feet wide at the base, and 50 feet high, and is believed to be the largest stone arch in the world. The thickness of the bridge above the arch is $14\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and it is 20 feet wide.

Ever since the Potomac River water has been introduced into the District, there has been great interest taken by scientific men in the question as to the reasons for the impurities that at regular periods are noticeable therein, as well as by those who are compelled to use the water thus affected. In addition to its roiled and muddy appearance, there has been detected a fishy odor which is anything but pleasant. The chemist of the Engineer Department, in 1886, in referring to this odor, which is noticeable only occasionally, stated that all scientific men believed it to be due to the formation of microscopic *algæ*, such as *confervæ*, *oscillatoria*, and *protococci*; but there was no evidence, he said, to warrant the suspicion that the water would produce deleterious effects upon the health. He also explained the periodicity of the phenomenon of the muddy water by saying it was more noticeable during that portion of the year when most moisture falls, and said that the same thing was remarkable more or less in all parts of the world.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1890, a 48-inch main was constructed. It was begun in August, 1889, and so far completed by March 20, 1890, that the water was turned on, and the protracted famine of water at the Capitol building then came to an end. The meter system was introduced in 1888, and by June 30, 1890, there were 90 of them in operation, varying in size from $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch to 6 inches in diameter. The prevailing sizes, however, were 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$, and 2 inches, of which sizes there were 70 in all. The 48-inch main, in the relief it gave to the city, was a very gratifying improvement for the area supplied by the gravity system. The average quantity of water drawn daily from the gravity supply and delivered into the standpipe was in 1891

376,130 gallons, and the entire average daily amount of water used in the two cities of Georgetown and Washington at the present time is 38,000,000 gallons. In the latter part of 1891, there were 1,157 fire hydrants in service, and 287 public hydrants, the latter being largely used by the poorer people, who cannot afford to have the Potomac water introduced into their houses. There were, also, at that time (December 1, 1891), 264 public pumps in the District, the cool water supplied by which in the summer time is very acceptable to such as cannot afford the use of ice. The total number of houses in Georgetown and Washington which are supplied with Potomac water was at this same time 32,074, and the number of miscellaneous water takers was 5,174.

One of the first fires that occurred in the city of Washington was that which destroyed the building occupied by the War Department, and the one adjoining, November 8, 1800. The building in which the department was situated was owned by Joseph Hodgson, and upon the repeated petition of his widow, his legal representatives received \$6,000 for the loss thus occasioned, in accordance with an act passed by Congress, May 7, 1822. Another extensive fire occurred January 20, 1801, in the Treasury Department, which was extinguished by the citizens with water buckets; but not until after several valuable books had been destroyed. The necessity thus becoming apparent for organized protection against the ravages of fire led to the enactment of a law by the city authorities, January 10, 1803, which provided that every proprietor of a dwelling or business house should, prior to March 1 ensuing, provide at his own expense as many fire buckets of leather, containing two and a half gallons, as there were stories to his house, under a penalty of \$1 for each bucket he did not provide as required by law; and all were required to keep these buckets in a conspicuous place, and send them to fires that might break out.

On July 24, 1804, the city was divided into fire wards, and fire companies provided for. All that part of the city west of Sixteenth Street constituted the first ward; that part bounded by Sixteenth Street on the west, by G Street on the south, and by Third Street on the east, constituted the second ward; that portion south of G Street constituted the third ward, and the rest of the city the fourth ward. Under this act, one individual in each ward was appointed to call the citizens together for the purpose of organizing themselves into fire companies, one in each ward. Each company was to elect annually one of its members as a member of a board of fire directors, which board should have general charge of the extinguishing of fires. Meet-