

HISTORY
BOSCAWEN — WEBSTER
FIFTY YEARS

1883 — 1933

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PENACOOK AND BOSCAWEN WATER PRECINCT

For more than forty years an abundant supply of pure water has been constantly flowing into the abodes of our citizens bringing comfort and happiness. This water comes with sufficient pressure to afford protection for our homes against that dreaded enemy, fire.

The story of the establishment of our water-works system is a long one, involving a struggle that brought victory but only at a great cost.

Dr. Eli E. Graves, who had served the town so faithfully in many lines of endeavor, was first to urge the great need of an ample supply of pure water and was ably seconded by Isaac K. Gage, long an active public-spirited citizen of the town. The first tangible result of this agitation came at the Boscawen annual town meeting of March, 1889, under the leadership of Hon. John C. Pearson, when a small appropriation was made to defray the expense of making preliminary surveys.

At the June session of the New Hampshire Legislature of that year, a charter was granted to certain citizens of Boscawen and Concord under the name and title of the Boscawen and Penacook Water Works Company, with the usual rights and powers to take land under the right of eminent domain and to construct a system of water-works for fire and domestic purposes; also, to contract with the town of Boscawen, City of Concord, or any fire precinct that might be organized, any system of water-works that the corporation might construct, should such a course be deemed expedient.

This charter was approved August 14, 1889 and took effect at once. An organization was formed September 24, 1889 at a meeting called by the first-named grantees,

John C. Pearson, E. E. Graves and Isaac K. Gage. The charter was accepted and elaborate by-laws adopted. John C. Pearson was elected President, Charles H. Amsden, Vice-President, Isaac K. Gage, Secretary, and Charles M. Rolfe, Treasurer.

The corporation had now become legally equipped to go forward with the work of securing the necessary capital and the establishment of such a system of water-works as might be desirable.

With the study of conditions the undertaking appeared more formidable than was anticipated and for a time there was a lull in its prosecution.

It became apparent that the demands upon the city of Concord water system had so increased, that an additional source of supply was necessary. Surveys and analysis of Walker Pond by the City had disclosed an abundant supply of pure water was easily accessible. This led the city of Concord to introduce a bill into the legislature of 1891, giving them control of the waters of this lake. The citizens of Boscawen and Penacook, believing that the great volume of water was entirely ample to supply the wants of the surrounding territories, sought negotiation with the officers of the Concord system, offering to withdraw any charter rights already obtained, providing that Concord would furnish water for domestic purposes to the citizens of Boscawen and citizens residing north of the Contoocook river, under the same terms as to their own citizens, leaving compensation for hydrant services in abeyance to be fixed by Concord. This proposition was rejected. A hearing before a law committee of the Senate of which Hon. J. H. Dudley was chairman, sustained our contention. Concord then abandoned the bill. A proposition urged by the city of Concord was that through lack of capital, the charter rights given could not be carried out and were of no value.

The reaction to this treatment was the solidity of senti-

ment and determination to carry forward the work alone if necessary. Through various considerations it became the consensus of opinion that the matter could best be forwarded through public ownership as more satisfactory and a better basis of credit.

On the 12th day of August a petition signed by eleven legal voters of Boscawen and ten legal voters of Concord, was addressed to the Selectmen of Boscawen and Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Concord, asking the honorable board to fix by suitable bounds a village fire district or precinct. A hearing was held and the prayer of the petition granted and a meeting called. At the first meeting of the precinct held September 3, 1891, the establishment of the precinct was completed and the following officers elected: Moderator, John C. Pearson; Clerk, Isaac K. Gage; Precinct Committee or Fire Wards, Charles H. Amsden, Eli E. Graves, John C. Pearson; Treasurer, Willis G. Buxton.

Meetings rapidly followed in which the commission was authorized and instructed to supply a water system adequate to our needs; and with further instruction and power to issue and sell bonds as authorized by the Precinct in payment of said system. These instructions were most efficiently carried out by the commissioners, who freely gave of their time and wide experience, while the details were left to the local attorney who found these duties the most exacting in a long legal experience.

It was deemed advisable that in the prosecution of the work the Precinct avail itself of the broad and liberal charter of the Boscawen and Penacook Water-Works Company with Mr. Amsden, Mr. Graves and Mr. Pearson as construction committee, retaining full authority and responsibility invested in them as commissioners of the Precinct.

On June 4th, 1892, a contract was executed with The Michigan Pipe Company in which minute details were en-

tered, pertaining to the construction and sale of a system of water-works known as the "Improved Wyckoff Water-Pipe." The line of pipe and branches extending a little over eleven miles, varying from twelve inches internal measure for approximately five miles, two and one half miles at ten inches, then pipes at eight, six and four inches.

Forty hydrants, valves, boxes, special castings; depth of excavations and various other details provided. The contract price was sixty-five thousand dollars with a guaranty of ten years.

Samuel N. Brown, who enjoyed the confidence of all to a high degree, was appointed to inspect the work as it was being done throughout and made satisfactory reports from time to time. The work went rapidly forward and was completed before the end of the year.

The debt incurred in the purchase of the system was funded, and bonds to the amount of sixty-five thousand dollars payable in fifteen or thirty years, with interest semi-annually at the rate of four and one-half per cent annually were issued. These bonds were negotiated through the bond house of E. H. Rollins & Son, dealing being had with the late Governor Rollins.

A year later the system was extended from the main line to and including the dwelling house of the late Josiah H. Flanders, on High Street; to the house of the late John C. Morrison on Franklin road and to the dwelling house of the late Asa M. Gage.

The Precinct became involved in several law suits brought by owners of mills or mill sites situated on the streams from the outlet of Walker's Pond, for diverting the water, it was claimed, from its natural flow. The diminution of such flow may be almost negligible but as only one assessment may be had, damages for a complete loss is given, with a cost of some six thousand dollars, making the original cost of the system at approximately eighty thousand dollars.

The system proved most satisfactory, gaining in popularity as the years went by, the annual rentals increased in substantial amounts.

It was the consensus of opinion that at the expiration of fifteen years when the bonded debt could be redeemed that it should be done, reducing the rate of interest, granting a longer term with provision of annual redemption of bonds of certain amount.

Almon G. Harris, representing Boscawen in the legislature of 1905, introduced a bill that was enacted giving the Precinct authority to refund the debt of sixty-five thousand dollars. The Precinct gave the legal notice of redemption of bonds May 1, 1907. Before that date the depression of 1907 was on and any attempt to float bonds was futile. However, the Commissioners were able to hire money and the bonds paid when due. Shortly afterward the financial cloud lifted and the commissioners were able to rebond the indebtedness as desired at the rate of three and one-half per cent, being a material reduction of one per cent.

During the past forty-one years the service of the system has continued most satisfactory, now requiring greater attention and more extensive repairs than formerly. Dr. Graves continued at the head of the Board of Commissioners until his death in 1919 and was succeeded by Edson H. Mattice, who with Edmund H. Brown had been auditors of the Precinct for twenty years or more.

The Precinct has been indeed fortunate in having at its command such able and strong men as Mr. Amsden, Dr. Graves and Mr. Pearson and equally fortunate in the long service of its present able board, Mr. Gerrish, Mr. Harris and Mr. Mattice.

During the last long period the Precinct has had three treasurers, George Neller, George D. Colby and Guy D. Brockway.

As the system of wood-pipe was installed there was apprehension upon the part of not a few that a mistake had been made in not using iron, but the forty-one years of use has vindicated the judgment of the Commissioners, as it has survived the life of iron pipe or even the cement lined pipe; its initial cost being much less and the repairs made with less expense.

MODERATOR.

John C. Pearson	1891-1897
Robert L. Harris	1897-1904
Frank L. Gerrish	1904-1933
Edson H. Mattice	1933-

CLERK.

Isaac K. Gage	1891-1895
Willis G. Buxton	1895-1932
Guy D. Brockway	1932-

TREASURER.

Willis G. Buxton	1891-1905
George Neller	1905-1911
George D. Colby	1911-1920
Guy D. Brockway	1920-

AUDITORS.

Lyman K. Hall	1891-1898	1899-1900
Charles C. Shaw		1891-1906
George Neller		1896-1897
Edmund H. Brown		1897-1922
Edson H. Mattice		1899-1919
Charles H. Sanders		1897-1899
Charles H. Duguid		1919-1921
Harry S. Harris		1922-1923
Fred B. Holt		1922-1924
William H. G. Mann		1923-
William G. Chamberlin		1924-

COMMISSIONERS.

Charles H. Amsden	1891-1897	
Eli E. Graves	1891-1897	1899-1921
John C. Pearson		1891-1894
Charles H. Sanders		1894-1897
Samuel N. Brown		1897-1899
Robert L. Harris		1897-1901
George L. Neller		1897-1905
Almon G. Harris		1901-
Willis G. Buxton		1905-1906
Frank L. Gerrish		1906-
Edson H. Mattice	1921-1932	1933-
William B. Ranney		1932-1933

Copy of the
Record of Establishment of Penacook and
Boscawen Water Precinct

*To the Selectmen of the Town of Boscawen, and Mayor,
and Board of Aldermen of the City of Concord:*

We the undersigned ten or more legal voters of the Town of Boscawen and ten or more legal voters of the City of Concord, inhabitants of the Village of Penacook, situate in said town of Boscawen and City of Concord, respectfully request your honorable boards to fix by suitable boundaries a Village Fire District or Precinct embracing the following described territory to wit: Beginning at the southeast corner bound of the town of Boscawen; thence westerly by the south line of said town to the town line between Boscawen and Webster; thence northerly by said Webster and Boscawen town line to the highway leading from Boscawen Plains and to the dwelling house of William B. Burpee; thence easterly by said highway to the west line of the Ephraim Plummer farm; thence northerly and easterly by said west and north line of said farm to the before named

highway; thence easterly by said highway to the west line of the Hervey Atkinson timber lot; thence northerly and easterly by said west line and west line of the Arey farm, so called, to the southeast corner of land of J. E. Rines; thence westerly and northerly by the south and west lines of said land to the highway leading from Boscawen Plains to Corser Hill; thence easterly by said highway to the highway leading from said highway by Enoch Gibson farm to the River Road, so called; thence by said highway to the west line of land formerly owned by Francis L. French; thence northerly and easterly by the west and north line of said French land to the Merrimack River; thence southerly by said River to the point began at. Also that part of School District No. 20 in Ward 1, City of Concord lying and situated north of the Contoocook River, or such other territory as may seem to you best and convenient and to notify a meeting of the legal voters residing in said district in Precinct under and in accordance with the Statute law of the State of New Hampshire. Dated at Penacook, N. H., the 12th day of August, 1891.

Willis G. Buxton
 George Neller
 E. E. Graves
 Isaac K. Gage
 John C. Pearson
 John S. Boutelle
 Luther Gage
 George A. Morse
 Charles J. Ellsworth
 Charles M. Rolfe
 Anson C. Alexander

Charles H. Amsden
 Edmund H. Brown
 James H. French
 Charles H. Sanders
 Stewart I. Brown
 W. H. Allen
 R. E. Gale
 S. N. Brown
 David A. Brown
 H. F. Brown

Upon the foregoing petition, the undersigned Selectmen of the town of Boscawen, Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Concord, in joint meeting assembled August 18, 1891 to consider said petitions, hereby fix a Village Fire District including said Village of Penacook, to

be known as the Penacook and Boscawen Water Precinct bounded as follows to wit: Beginning at the southeast corner bounds of the Town of Boscawen.

Then followed the exact description of the established Precinct as contained in the foregoing petition.

Given our hands this 18th day of August, 1891.

Lyman K. Hall,	}	Selectmen of Boscawen.
George W. Fisher,		

H. W. Clapp, Mayor.

John B. Dodge,	}	Board of Aldermen of Concord.
John O. Neill,		
E. B. Woodworth,		
W. J. Fernald,		
G. B. Johnson,		
Frank P. Quimby,		
George H. Mills,		
J. H. Sanders,	}	
J. K. Kennedy.		

Recorded in Town of Boscawen records August 20, 1891,
Attest: C. E. Chadwick, Town Clerk. Recorded in the
City of Concord records August 24, 1931. Vol. 3, Fol.
18, Attest: J. A. Cochran, City Clerk.