LANDMARKS

OF

RENSSELAER COUNTY

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Esek Bussey Fire company was organized as an independent company in 1888 and was admitted to the fire department June 30, 1890. The house is located on Oakwood avenue near Hoosick street.

Beman Park Hose company was organized in 1889 as an independent company and was admitted to the fire department December 29, 1890. The house is located at the corner of Eagle and Fifteenth streets.

Water Department.

A new system of water works was put in operation in Troy in February, 1880, when water was pumped into the lower Oakwood reservoir for the first time from a new station which had been established. The early development of the water supply has been described in another chapter. Up to the year 1855 the water works were not self-supporting and consequently were frequently regarded as a failure. To remedy the radically defective system of collecting the water rents, which was the prime cause for the complaint, the Legislature passed an act March 9, 1855, appointing a board of water commissioners for the city, consisting of Harvey Smith, William F. Sage, Thomas Symonds, Joseph M. Warren and Liberty Gilbert, and giving them a general supervisory and controlling power in all matters relating to the preservation and continuance of the water works of the city. The admirable system of the equalization of the water rents now prevailing is due mainly to the efforts of Alexander McCall, the first clerk of the Water Board. The law of 1855 was mainly his work. So carefully was it drawn and with so much foresight did he anticipate the future that at the present time, with very slight alteration or amendment, it answers in every respect the purposes for which it originally was framed.

The existing main running from the reservoir having been found inadequate, in 1857–58 a twenty-inch main was laid from the "Fire-dam" reservoir to the Troy & Boston (now the Fitchburg) railroad track, and thence through Eighth street to Hoosick, a distance of over 4,000 feet. Within a short time thereafter the consumption of water was about doubled. It becoming evident that the supply was to be exhausted, the Water Board secured the services of William J. McAlpine, a distinguished hydraulic engineer, who at once saw the possibilities of the little Piscawen kill and assured the commissioners that the stream could be relied upon for an average daily supply of 2,000,000 gallons.

Acting on his advice the board, in 1859–60, built a storage reservoir of about 50,000,000 gallons' capacity a few rods east of Oakwood avenue, followed by another of similar size in 1861–62 just below this and immediately east of that avenue. The first one is known as Upper Oakwood reservoir, the other as Lower Oakwood reservoir. In 1861 a large pump was erected at a station near the State dam to supply a part of the city with water from the Hudson river. In 1868 increased storage was procured by the erection of the Vanderheyden dam on the site of a small pond just below Brunswick lake. This reservoir covers twenty acres and its capacity is about 180,000,000 gallons. In 1869 iron fire plugs, with four-inch nozzles, were introduced, and soon superseded all those of the old pattern. In 1870 the dam at Upper Oakwood reservoir was raised and a well-house was erected. In the same year about seventy-five acres of the Gary lands were purchased. On the extreme northeasterly corner of this tract the high service distributing reservoir was built. By the purchase the entire control of the Piscawen kill for a long distance was secured. In 1867 many new pipes were laid and the twenty-inch main was extended on Eighth street to Federal, and thence down River and Fourth streets to Ida, where it was carried over to Third and across the stone bridge to Madison, ramifying at this point for the supply of the southern section of the city.

In 1873 a pump capable of delivering 2,000,000 gallons per day was purchased at Vergennes, Vt., and erected in the Olympus works of Orrs & Co. at the State dam. In 1877 it was decided to adopt the Hudson river as the source from which to obtain an additional supply of water, and a point about a quarter of a mile below the Waterford bridge was adopted as the site for the pumping station. The works consisted of two sets of pumping engines, each with a capacity of 6,000,000 gallons per day, with two batteries of boilers and other necessary appurtenances. The thirty-inch force main is 16,753 feet long and extends from the pumping station to Lower Oakwood reservoir. Engine No. 1 started pumping February 18, 1880, and No. 2 was ready for use July 14. During the years 1877 to 1879 over fifteen miles of pipes of various sizes were laid, in readiness for the pumping when it should begin.

March 1, 1880, water was let on the entire new system of distribution. The plan of distribution consisted of three separate systems. The low service supplied that part of the city between the river and a

plane 105 feet above tide. The water for this service was pumped into Lower Oakwood reservoir, where it ran down the channel of the Piscawen kill to the old distributing reservoir, and through the twenty- and twelve-inch distributing mains to the lower part of the city. The middle service included that portion of territory lying between a plane of 105 feet and 279 feet above tide. Its distributing main, twenty inches in diameter, starting at Upper Oakwood reservoir, ran through the lands of William H. Frear to Oakwoad avenue, and along the same and Tenth street to People's avenue, where, being reduced to sixteen inches, it extended through People's Avenue, Ninth, Federal and Eighth streets to Congress, where another reduction to twelve inches was made, which was carried up Congress street to Brunswick avenue. The high service feeds that part of the city lying between a plane of 279 and a plane of 382 feet above tide, and its reservoir is on the Piscawen kill just west of the first highway that runs north from the Hoosick road. The distributing main, also of twenty inches, crosses the fields in a southwesterly direction to the Hoosick road, then runs through the entire length of Burdett avenue, then through Tibbits avenue and Brunswick avenue to the stone bridge. There being reduced to sixteen inches it extends through Pawling avenue to Maple avenue, where a further reduction to twelve inches is made. Branching off at Maple avenue, a twelve-inch main runs through Spring avenue and Campbell highway to the Iron Works district. Piscawen kill furnished all the water for the high and middle services.

In 1883 a new distributing reservoir was constructed on the site of the old "fire dam," at an elevation of 202 feet above tide, connecting with the mains supplying the lower portion of the city. The total cost of all the improvements from 1879 to 1885 was $600,000.

The completion, in 1895, of two new boilers at the pumping station at Lansingburgh made it feasible to pump at least 10,000,000 gallons a day to Lower Oakwood. In 1896 there were in use 748 fire hydrants and 1,204 valves, and the total length of all the pipe laid was fifty-eight miles and 4,949 feet. The quantity of water metred for the year ending March 1, 1896, was 409,151,522 gallons. The total consumption for the year was 3,147,591,573 gallons, an average daily consumption of 8,599,977 gallons. The total cost of the works from 1833, when they were begun, to 1855, when the present board was organized, as near as can be ascertained was $175,000. The work from that time to March 1, 1896, cost $1,093,287.70, making the entire cost up to the latter date $1,268,287.70.