

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

REPORT ON THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF
THE CITY AND COUNTY OF
PHILADELPHIA.

BY

DR. HERMAN V. AMES
AND
DR. ALBERT E. MCKINLEY.

(From Second Report of Public Archives Commission in the Annual Report of the
American Historical Association for 1901, Vol. II, pages 231-344.)

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

1902.
S. M. H. H.

The reports from the railroad companies now number 2,126, numbered and indexed, and filed in large cases. Four different indexes make these files available. Records are also kept of the applications of railroad companies for permission to lay tracks. These permits and the reports of the supervisors have been preserved in copy for ten years.

As a check upon the work of this bureau, all departments having any underground work are required to send postal card returns to the clerk of the highway supervisors, showing exactly what underground structures they find when the streets are broken. These postal returns now number many thousands and are preserved in 45 files. Part of the clerical force of the office is also sent out to note the surface features of the streets—the position of railroad tracks, culverts, man-holes, etc. The memorandum books of these inspectors are now preserved in 126 volumes, indexed in such a way that they can be used with the returns of departments and railroad companies, or in connection with the maps of the office. Some separate plans have also been kept of water pipes and gas pipes. On the whole, it may be said that the clerk of the highway supervisors and his assistants show a laudable interest in preserving the records which come under their charge. The United States officials appointed to lay the pneumatic tubes for the Philadelphia post-office found, on comparison, that the plans of the streets of Philadelphia were better kept than those of any of the other large cities which they had visited.

Bureau of water.—The subject of an improvement in the water supply of Philadelphia became a matter of discussion in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Several matters tended to awaken interest in the subject, among them the bequest of Benjamin Franklin of a sum of money for the bringing of pure water from Wissahickon Creek, and the terrible devastations of cholera in 1793 and 1798. There can be no doubt that the visitations of the plague were made the more malignant by the absolute dependence of the community upon the public pumps for the water supply. In 1801 Philadelphia was the first city in the country to secure a public water supply through the completion of its first water system. The works were under the immediate direction of a superintendent, but the councils through the "watering committee" had the control of all questions of extension and administra-

tion. By the act of consolidation in 1854 the administration was reorganized, and by the Bullitt bill, which went into force in April, 1887, the water department became a bureau of the department of public works.

In this bureau are kept plans of all the machinery and buildings under its charge. These plans go back to the construction of the Fairmount Water Works, 1812-1815. Since that date plans of all works constructed have been preserved, and are suitably arranged in steel filing cabinets. The original water works were located in Central Square, now known as Penn Square. Several drawings of the plans of these early works, executed in 1799, are in the possession of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia.

A complete record of water pipes is kept by the bureau. The distribution of water is supervised by seven "purveyors of water," each having charge of a section of the city. After councils have authorized the laying of pipes, the actual work is carried on under the supervision of the purveyor, who on the completion of the construction reports to the bureau, giving a plot of the pipes, showing size, position, and materials used. These reports of purveyors are indexed and filed. In addition, the report is entered upon cards and indexed according to the names of streets. Lastly, the new pipe is plotted upon large charts, showing all connections and fire plugs. A pressure record has also been kept for recent years, giving the hourly pressure at the seven district stations throughout the year, and the pressure upon each fire plug in the city is tested twice a year and recorded. All these records are preserved in steel filing cabinets. They are well indexed, and a general interest in the records is evinced by the bureau officials.

Some archæological value attaches to the specimens of old wooden pipe, which were used in some places up to 1880. This, the first pipe used in the city, was constructed like old-fashioned pump pipes, and laid about 1801. Recently, in placing a new high-pressure fire main, the old wooden pipes were taken out, after remaining in the ground one hundred years. The bureau has preserved a number of interesting specimens of these curious pipes.

Gas.—After considerable agitation upon the subject of the introduction of gas, provision was at last made in 1835 for the

BUREAU OF WATER.

The earliest printed matter bearing upon the subject of water is the reports of the watering committee of councils. These have been published from time to time, the first which has been found bearing the title:

Memorial of joint Committee of Select and Common Councils to the Assembly, 1798. (Philadelphia, 1798.) P. H. S.

This was followed by a second report in the next year, and the building of waterworks for bringing water from the Schuylkill was entered upon. The joint committee of the two branches of councils had charge of the construction of the works, and their reports from 1799 onward for many years give an interesting history of the task of "watering the city." The Pennsylvania Historical Society has a complete set of the annual reports of the water committee from 1798 to 1854. The present bureau of water has the original reports from 1823 onward, including the annual reports of the watering committee of councils, the reports of the department for supplying the city with water, and the reports of the present bureau of water. The bureau has also a collection of type-written copies, recently made, of the volumes of printed reports belonging to the period from 1798 to 1822. A number of special reports were also published from time to time, some, if not all, of which will be found in the library of the Historical Society. Those found there are for the years 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821, 1823, 1824, 1830, 1832, 1833, 1840, 1841, 1843. The collection of the Philadelphia Library is apparently not complete, the reports for the years 1828 and 1829, 1837, 1840 to 1842 being lacking. The titles of the early reports are as follows:

- Report of joint Committee of Select and Common Councils on the subject of bringing water to the city, 1798. [Philadelphia, 1798.] P. H. S.
Ph. L.
- View of the Practicability and Means of Supplying the City of Philadelphia with wholesome water, in a letter to John Miller, esq., from B. Henry Latrobe, Engineer, Dec. 29, 1798. Printed by order of the corporation of Philadelphia, 1799, pp. 20. Ph. L.
- Report to Councils on the progress and state of the Water Works, Nov. 24, 1799. [Philadelphia, 1799.] Ph. L.
- Report of Joint Committee of Councils on subject of watering. [Philadelphia, 1799.] P. H. S.
- Report of joint Committee of Councils, 1801. P. H. S.
- Report of joint Committee of Councils, 1802. P. H. S.

- Report of Committee of Common Council, 1802. P. H. S.
 Report of Watering Committee to Select and Common Councils, 1803. P. H. S.

Two other interesting reports in the Philadelphia Library are:

- Report of Watering Committee relative to the Schuylkill Navigation Co. Philadelphia, 1832. Ph. L.
 Report of Watering Committee relative to Columbia and Philadelphia R. R. Philadelphia, 1830. Ph. L.

After 1854, the chief engineer of the water department made annual reports; these have been printed for each year, and will be found, from 1855 to 1887, in the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

In addition to the annual reports of the department and its chief engineer, the following printed matter has also been found:

- History of the Works and the Annual Report for 1860. Ph. L.
 Report on Fire Plugs, by Henry P. M. Birkenbine, Chief Engineer. Philadelphia, 1865. Ph. L.
 Report on the Water Supply of the City. Philadelphia, 1875. Ph. L.
 Department for supplying the city with water. Wm. H. McFadden, Chief Engineer. An alphabetical list of the streets upon which iron water pipes have been laid, from 1819 to Dec. 31, 1876. Philadelphia, 1877.
 Topographic map of Philadelphia, showing water mains and street grades, to accompany Report of Philadelphia Water Department, 1876. Wm. H. McFadden, Chief Engineer. Philadelphia, 1877. Ph. L.
 Report to Hon. Samuel H. Ashbridge, Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, on the extension and improvement of the water supply of the city of Philadelphia, by Rudolph Horing, Joseph M. Wilson, Samuel M. Gray, Commissioners. Philadelphia, 1899. L. L.

HIGHWAYS AND SURVEYS.

Annual reports on highways and surveys have been made and published in the mayor's messages since 1857. The following documents were also found:

- Report of Franklin Institute on test made of paving; published by order of City Councils. Philadelphia, 1843. Ph. L.
 Report of Committee on Public Highways. Philadelphia, 1848. Ph. L.
 Report on Drainage and Sewage. Philadelphia, 1853. Ph. L.
 Committee to investigate certain allegations of mismanagement in the Highway Department. Philadelphia, 1882. Ph. L.
 "History of the Pennsylvania Avenue Subway and Tunnel," by E. C. Quarles, City of Philadelphia, 1899. Giving descriptions and many fine photogravures of the work. Ph. L.