

The HISTORY  
*of the*  
City of Fredericksburg  
Virginia

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**Common Council thereof,**  
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Publication, consisting of the following  
Councilmen : H. B. LANE, WM. E.  
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S. J. QUINN, Historian

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be erected, and land owners declined to rent to the city, for spreading a tent or for erecting a temporary hospital.

In this condition of things the economy of having an almshouse, in which to keep the poor, entered very largely into the discussion, and the result was the farm and residence of Mr. Frank Beckwith, on the hill about half a mile west of the town, was purchased for seventeen hundred dollars. The small pox patient, to the great delight of the citizens in the lower end of town, was at once sent to that place and the excitement subsided.

The following year the residence on the farm was greatly enlarged and a commodious department for the colored poor was built, under the direction of the Committee on Poor of the Common Council, consisting of Messrs. S. J. Quinn, E. D. Cole and M. B. Rowe, and the dependent poor of the town were sent to "Mount Nebo," which was the name given to the place, because of its commanding position and the splendid view of the town and surrounding country from that point.

Since the poor have been kept at the almshouse they are better provided for and are better satisfied, besides they are more comfortable than under the former system, and the expense of maintaining them has been reduced fully one-half. Mr. Albert Hooton, who was overseer of the poor of the town prior to the erection of the almshouse, was the first superintendent of the institution. Mr. Hooton died on the 23rd of November, 1897, and Mr. John Wesley Ball was elected to the vacancy and is now serving. Mr. A. Mason Garner is chairman of the committee of the Council having the almshouse in charge, and while it is conducted on economical principles, the poor are well provided for, in both food and clothing.

#### WATER WORKS.

For more than one hundred years after the charter by the House of Burgesses the town was without water works of any description. About the year 1832 a private company constructed the Poplar Springs Water Works, which distributed through the principal streets of the town the elegant water from Poplar springs, located on the Plank road, half a mile west of the city. About ten years

afterwards the Smith spring was added, which increased the supply. But notwithstanding the addition of the Smith spring the supply was very inadequate; yet for more than half a century these springs, together with street pumps, furnished the only supply the town had. The works were constructed by a Northern contractor, whose name is not remembered, and are yet operated. Since the Civil war these works were under the superintendency of Captain Joseph W. Sener, until his death, in 1889, since which time Mr. Robert Lee Stoffregen has been superintendent.

The inadequacy of the water supply for domestic and manufacturing purposes, and the great necessity for fire protection, were subjects for the consideration of the Common Council for many years, without definite action. On several occasions committees were instructed to have surveys and estimates made for a system of water works, which were done and recommendations had been made by some of the committees that works should be constructed, but the Council in each case had failed to act upon them. As a case of small pox contributed to the erection of a long-needed almshouse, so a fire, that threatened the town with destruction, showing the authorities how helpless they were when confronted by flames, contributed to the construction of water works.

The fire occurred in rear of George E. Chancellor's store in 1883, at the corner of Charles and Commerce streets, now conducted by M. S. Chancellor, and while it was confined to the premises and did but little damage, it threatened to be a serious conflagration. There was no fire department in town and no water to supply an engine, if one was sent from Richmond. This aroused the authorities and the people generally, whose property was constantly threatened with destruction, and at the next meeting of the Council a plan was adopted for "an abundant supply of water for all purposes, including fire protection," which was submitted to a vote of the citizens for their approval or disapproval.

The plan submitted was adopted at the ballot-box by a large majority, and a special committee of the Council was appointed to carry out the will of the people, thus expressed, and construct the works, consisting of Messrs. S. J. Quinn, James S. Knox, Charles

E. Hunter, Terence McCracken and Wm. E. Bradley. After arranging the necessary preliminaries the committee contracted with Colonel Wm. W. Taylor, of Philadelphia, who constructed the works and turned them over to the committee in the latter part of February, 1885, at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars, Mr. Benjamin Bowering having been appointed by the committee to superintend the laying of pipe, setting of the pump, etc.

The introduction of water into the buildings, the extension of water mains, the changing of the old for newly-patented fire hydrants, and the erection of additional fire hydrants since the works have been in possession of the town, together with additional pumps and steam engine and boiler, have increased the cost of the works to about fifty thousand dollars. At present there are about eighteen miles of pipe, ranging in size from eight inches to one inch, and seventy-two fire hydrants. These hydrants are so located that they protect from fire all the property of the town.

The reservoir pressure is from fifty to fifty-six pounds to the square inch, according to draught, which is sufficient to throw streams of water over any of our ordinary buildings. The pressure, by the use of the pump, can be raised to one hundred pounds to the square inch.

The water is taken from the Rappahannock river, which is known to furnish the softest and purest of water, the analysis showing that it is free from any foreign substance, and the reservoirs are so well arranged that the citizens are seldom served with water that is the least discolored. The works are under the control of a committee of the Common Council and a superintendent. Since their construction they have been under the superintendency of Captain S. J. Quinn, and they are in good condition and a paying investment to the city, at a comparative small cost to the consumers. The present water committee consists of Josiah P. Rowe, H. B. Lane and A. M. Garner.

#### THE OLD GAS WORKS.

The old gas works of the town were constructed by a private company in 1843-44, at a cost, it is said, of about forty thousand