

A HISTORY
OF THE
CITY GOVERNMENT
OF
Savannah, Ga.,
FROM
1790 to 1901.

Compiled from Official Records by

THOMAS GAMBLE, Jr.,

Secretary to the Mayor,

Under Direction of the City Council,

1900.

coal which it considered adequate to carry it until the end of the war. This was exhausted by the fall of 1862, and it then resorted to wood with poor results. For a time the city was badly lighted and then came a period of no lights at all. After peace had come further difficulties were experienced by the City. The gas committee of Council in February, 1866, reported that the company had failed to execute its part of the contract. "While our houses, churches and stores are brilliantly illuminated, the streets border on Egyptian darkness." At the same time the committee deemed it inexpedient for the City to either build, lease or own gas works. A private party had recently visited the city, with ample capital and had been desirous of erecting gas works at his own expense. The committee accordingly recommended that advantage be taken to put the question of light on a more favorable and permanent basis. The old gas company then made a proposition to lease its works to the City or to annul the existing contract and make a new one. Aldermen Gue, Cunningham, Schley and Messrs. Stoddard and Hunter were appointed a committee to report on the propriety of establishing a new company. The old plant was dilapidated and inadequate. Night after night whole wards were without lights. The company claimed that the war had put the plant in bad condition and that arrangements had been made to improve it. Council's committee, however, reported in favor of a new gas plant and that steps be taken to secure a charter for a new company, the control to be vested in the City. President Willis, of the gas company, then offered to lease its plant at a reasonable price, or that the City take charge of its lamps, the company merely to supply the gas at \$3.00 per 1,000 feet. The improvement made by the old company led the City to abandon its intention of owning its own plant. The contract expired in 1868, but a new contract was not entered into at once, Council looking further into the question of a superior quality of gas. In this connection the scientific section of the Georgia Historical Society made a report on the manufacture of gas on September 14, 1870. A new contract for gas was entered into December 16, 1870, at the rate of \$53 a lamp, lit every night from dusk to daylight. In 1873 there were 560 street lamps, costing \$29,680. In January, 1874, a new contract was made for five years at \$44 a lamp.

Attention has been directed to the propositions of 1821 and 1827 to establish waterworks. On June 6, 1850, Council received a communication from C. P. Richardsons and Hiram Roberts, relative to establishing waterworks under an Act of the last Legislature. It was referred to Aldermen Screven, Turner and Walker. On September 30, \$300 was appropriated to employ an agent to visit Northern cities and examine works for introducing water and obtain general information as to their expenses and the best mode of effecting this

object. Under the next administration, Aldermen Screven, Purse and Griffin were appointed to resume consideration of the question. As a result J. O. Morse, an hydraulic engineer, made a survey for waterworks which was submitted on February 13, 1851, and Mayor Wayne was then instructed to call a meeting of the citizens to consider the question of establishing a plant. Mr. Morse reported that the Savannah river water was of remarkable purity when the earthy matter which it held in suspension was removed. "The purity of the water," said he, "is owing to the fact that the river rises in a region of primitive formation, the turbidness due to the mere mechanical admixture of clay taken up by the river in its course through the low country. This clay is very speedily given up in the form of sediment when once the water is allowed to remain for a short time unagitated. Earthy particles are readily precipitated in two days, leaving the water clearer than that of the Croton or the Schuylkill. A gallon, 44.08 grains, in a normal state contains 7.6 grains of solid matter, the greater part of which is alumina or clay, a minute trace of carbonate of lime and magnesia constituting the remainder. Of the solid matter 60 per cent. is held in suspension in an insoluble form, leaving but three grains of soluble matter in the clarified water after three days repose." Estimating thirty gallons to the individual, 480,000 gallons would be required for 16,000 inhabitants. The engineer suggested a capacity of 600,000 gallons daily.

A public meeting of the citizens endorsed the waterworks project and \$300 was paid to Morse by the Council for his preliminary survey. Dr. C. P. Richardsons, James S. Williams, Edward C. Anderson, Robert Lachlison, Hiram Roberts, Charles Wilson, and Aldermen R. D. Walker, John F. Posey, James P. Screven, Thomas M. Turner, Robert H. Griffin and Thomas Purse were appointed as a committee to consider proposals and select a plan. They reported on December 4, 1851, in favor of the plan of Worthington, Baker and Morse, as embracing the advantages of greater certainty and quantity of supply with cheapness of cost and economy in current expenses. On February 26, 1852, the committee on waterworks was authorized to engage the services of an engineer of ability and experience in the construction of the works and A. W. Craven, chief of the Croton waterworks of New York City, was engaged as consulting engineer. The waterworks committee was authorized to negotiate for the purchase of a lot of land west of the canal belonging to Messrs. Smets, Scudder and Lachlison, as a site, for \$22,000, and to make necessary contracts for the work. Mayor Arnold and Alderman Screven visited New York and closed the contract with Worthington & Morse. Bonds were issued to pay for the site. It was decided to locate the distributing reservoir in Franklin square. This reservoir remained until 1900, although its use had been abandoned long prior to that. It was then sold and removed.

Bonds were directed issued to pay for the waterworks which were to be completed by March 1, 1854. The total cost outside of the mains and land appears to have been \$122,055. Several important changes were made on the advice of Mr. Craven, increasing the capacity of the works far beyond the original intentions. On the completion of the works an ordinance was passed placing them under the care and control of five commissioners, two aldermen and three citizens. On June 1, 1854, Aldermen J. P. Screven and A. R. Lawton and Citizens William Duncan, John S. Montmollin and R. D. Arnold assumed charge in that capacity, to hold office until December, 1855, commissioners then and thereafter to be appointed for one year. Charles Van Horn was the first superintendent. Citizens quickly availed themselves of the opportunity to introduce water into their buildings and petitions were constantly made to Council for the extension of the mains. The water, though, at times was unfit for drinking and experiments in filtration were begun in 1855. At this time the commissioners in a report on the financial results said: "The value of the waterworks should not be estimated in dollars and cents only but in the security they give to property and the comfort they bestow upon the citizens." Several reports on filtering were made, the chief that of Engineer Schwaab on June 11, 1870, and on August 23, of that year, there was an interesting discussion before Council on the subject. Some illness being attributed to local impurities in the water a plan was prepared in 1872 to get water from a point a mile further up the river. Iron pipe 3 feet in diameter to the length of 6,900 feet was required, the cost of which was placed at \$57,589, with an additional expense of \$7,500 for land. The cost debarred the City from the undertaking. The necessity of increasing the pumping capacity of the works also confronted Council. The daily pumping of water had been increased from an average daily of 198,296 gallons in 1856 to 1,610,303 in 1873.

The waterworks had been in constant service for nearly twenty years. The wear and tear incident to long use and the increased demand for water, requiring an average daily supply of nearly two million gallons, had very nearly worn out the pumps. One million, five hundred thousand gallons was the maximum supply estimated in the contract made with the builders. During the summer of 1874 the consumption of water reached two million, three hundred and four thousand gallons a day. This was the full limit of the works and more than they could be relied upon to do. Only under the most favorable circumstances could the two pumps together fill the reservoir and meet a demand of this kind. The pumps had been running night and day since their erection in 1854. Superintendent R. D. Guerard brought these facts before the Aldermen. Upon the strength of his statements Council directed the water commission-

ers to enter into a new contract with Mr. Worthington for the purchase of one of his improved double cylinder duplex engines, capable of delivering three million gallons a day, and in case of necessity of fifteen per cent. additional, the City to pay for the same, after erection and completion, the sum of \$25,000 at its convenience, provided the time should not exceed twelve months thereafter, with interest on unpaid balances of 7 per cent. The new work was commenced on October 26, 1874, and the engine was running May 26, 1875. The old pump had required the consumption of 125 to 145 cords of wood a month, while the new one used but sixty cords. The old engines, etc., were also overhauled and were relied on to give an additional supply of a million gallons daily, making the total capacity of the works 4,500,000 gallons daily.

Savannah was the first city where Mr. Worthington had put up one of his engines. In a letter to Council, after the making of this second contract he expressed the belief that this would be the last contract he would make anywhere, and spoke of the pride and pleasure given to him by the reminiscences of this business association with Savannah which had no equal in his experience.

In 1876 the project for obtaining a water supply from a point in the Savannah river sufficiently distant from the city to escape the washings from the streets and sewers, the filth from the shipping and the swamp water from the canal, that flowed into the river in the immediate vicinity of the existing source of supply, had the earnest attention of Council. All were impressed with the importance of a change, but no plan could be agreed upon that seemed to promise certainty, strength and durability, and that would be sufficiently tight not to admit the water from the lowlands through which it would pass unless at an expense far in excess of the City's ability to pay in its embarrassed condition. Information came to the committee having the matter under consideration that a wooden box conduit similar to that proposed to be put down for the purpose, had been tried at Brookline, Mass., and proved an utter failure. It was accordingly unwilling to recommend a wooden box conduit. In 1879 the committee continued its investigations on this line, but without reaching any conclusion. Doubts were entertained whether a supply of water from a point higher up the river would be any purer than that already obtained, some maintaining that it would be even more objectionable owing to its contamination by the discharge of foul water from the rice fields. Mayor Wheaton in his report at the end of the year stated that from the most careful consideration of the subject and from the best information at his command he was inclined to the opinion that a system of artesian wells, sunk a sufficient depth to escape the surface impurities, would furnish the purest water obtainable and when established could be operated at a less

cost than the existing system. This is the first official mention of artesian wells for Savannah.

By an ordinance adopted February 18, 1880, the control of the waterworks, which had been vested since their construction, in a commission, was transferred to Council and by it placed under the charge of a Committee on Waterworks. By this time the consumption was fully up to the capacity of the works and \$20,000 was placed in the budget for the year 1881 for the purchase of additional pumping machinery. The State Board of Health and other competent authorities had declared that the source from which the city was supplied with water had its purity impaired. On March 2, 1881, a communication from the Georgia Medical Society was read, stating that weekly reports showed that in the last fifteen years great changes had taken place in the prevailing types of disease. Since the inauguration of the drainage system the malarial element had very much diminished and from the time of the adoption of the present system of sewers with house connections the class of filth diseases had been on the increase. In this connection it was pointed out that water was one of the best disinfectants and purifiers known and should be supplied in sufficient quantity and with sufficient pressure to cleanse the water closets and drainage pipes. As the facts showed that the supply of water was not sufficient to serve its full purpose at any inconsiderable distance from the reservoir, and as this insufficiency was a source of great danger to the public health, the Medical Society recommended a full examination of the subject by Council. Council, as its predecessors for three years had done, took into consideration the establishment of new waterworks further up the river. It was decided to buy a new pumping engine, of the capacity of five million gallons daily, to erect a standpipe of sufficient height to ensure the pressure necessary to distribute a full supply of water in all parts of the city, and in view of the many serious objections to the situation of the existing works it was decided to abandon the water basins then in use and locate new works on the McLeod mill property, recently purchased for \$4,600 and located two miles above the city. It was determined to locate the engine there and lay a 24-inch iron pipe from thence to Franklin square, and when these were completed to remove the engine built in 1876 to the new works. A contract was entered into with Mr. Henry Worthington (the third made with this firm) for the new pumping engine to be placed in position by May 1, 1882, and with the Gloucester Iron Works for the pipe. It was estimated that the cost of the mains, the building and the new pumping engine would amount to \$80,000, of which \$20,000 was available, having been provided for in the tax levy for 1882. The building of the standpipe was deferred until 1883 in order to avoid placing the entire burden on the taxpayer in one year.

The removal of the works was successfully accomplished in 1882. The old works, built in 1852-54, just west of and adjoining the Ogeechee canal, near Canal street, were abandoned and the new works, now known as the old works, constructed on the site two miles up the river. The auxiliary engine bought in 1876 was removed there and the new Worthington engine erected, with a capacity of five million gallons daily. An engine house, 53 by 53 feet, 20 feet from floor to ceiling, with a cellar 6 feet in the clear, and a boiler house 43 by 73 feet, with a brick chimney stack 20 by 20 feet at the base and 100 feet high, were built. The water was drawn through a cast iron suction pipe, three feet in diameter, from a well 15 by 15 feet, sunk inside the wharf line to a depth of 10 feet below mean low water, fitted with screens and gates and covered with a substantial building. A cast iron main 24 inches in diameter conveyed the water to the water tower in Franklin square. The new pump was started on September 20. The tract on which the second waterworks were located, the McLeod mill site, contained seventy-eight acres, with a frontage of 642 feet on the river, and cost the city \$4,660. The total cost of all improvements, not including land, was about \$180,000. These works continued in use until the establishment of the present waterworks on Gwinnett street in 1892 and are now retained as a reserve works.

The City's active interest and co-operation in the building of new railroads and extension of the old ones continued. In 1851 an ordinance was passed authorizing and directing the Mayor to subscribe for 1,000 shares, at \$100, of the stock of the Southwestern Railroad, to be used exclusively in building and constructing twenty-one miles of road from Fort Valley to the eastern terminus of the Muscogee Railroad, and to authorize the issuing of bonds of the City to pay the subscription. In 1852 the City was appealed to to subscribe to a branch road from Columbus to Opelika, and on May 6 Council decided to subscribe \$100,000 payable in twenty year bonds, provided the citizens of Savannah in town meeting endorsed its doing so. It was not until April 3, 1854, that an ordinance was passed to issue \$100,000 of bonds to cover this subscription.

In the summer of 1852 a railroad was also projected to connect Savannah with the southern and southwestern counties of the State and with Mobile Bay and the Mississippi river, to promote the interests of the State and city. Council regarded this with favor and on August 12 announced that it would cheerfully co-operate in accomplishing it when authorized to do so by the citizens. On October 21 the City was requested to provide funds for the instrumental survey and location of the route of the proposed railroad to Albany and to subscribe to \$500,000 of the capital stock of the company. Council made the subscription with the usual provision that it was subject to the endorsement of the citizens in town meeting. Coun-