

# HISTORY

...OF...

JERSEY CITY, N. J.

New Jersey

A RECORD OF ITS EARLY  
SETTLEMENT AND CORPORATE PROGRESS.

Sketches of the Towns and Cities that were absorbed  
in the growth of the present Municipality.

Its Business, Finance, Manufactures and Form of Gov-  
ernment, with some notice of the Men  
who built the City.

Compiled for the Evening Journal

BY ALEXANDER M<sup>C</sup>LEAN.

PRESS OF THE JERSEY CITY PRINTING COMPANY,

1895.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE ENLARGED CITY—BOUND TO HAVE A WATER SUPPLY—PLANS PROPOSED—THE SITE FOR PUMPING STATION AND RESERVOIRS CHOSEN—GREAT REJOICING OVER THE INTRODUCTION OF WATER—SUDDEN GROWTH IN POPULATION—THE VISIT BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN—AN OFFICIAL RECEPTION.



WHEN the census was taken in the summer of 1850 Jersey City had 6,856 population, and Van Vorst had 4,617. The increase by the time the new city government was organized in the spring of 1851 gave the city about 12,000 population, or nearly as much as there was in the rest of Hudson County. The city government obtained fresh vigor and extended powers. The fire department was reorganized and strengthened, a board of education was organized, and a financial department was created with a comptroller and a city collector. The records show continual work in extending and improving streets, the greatest activity being in the Van Vorst section, where large gravel hills afforded material for grading.



On July 13, 1852, the city debt was \$52,116.07; the arrears of taxes, \$17,616.62; leaving a net debt of \$34,499.45. The real estate bought for schools, engine houses and other purposes represented \$33,730 of this amount, and 159 street lamps covered almost the balance; every dollar up to that time was accounted for. The area of the city was then about nine hundred acres, and the increase of population had a growing tendency to damage the water in the public wells. In many sections there were no wells and pipes were laid to connect flowing wells with cisterns to save the carriage of water. The filled-in meadow sections could not have wells because of the salt water, and residents were compelled to buy water. This was hauled in barrels and sold by the gallon from door to door. The trouble caused by wells running dry was very serious, and there was much complaint. On October 4, 1844, John D. Ward sent a communication to the common council asking them to apply to the legislature for authority to build a city water-works. His communication was referred to a committee. The committee reported back that a company had already been chartered to supply the city with water. That was the era of special legislation, and the charter was probably a salable commodity. The company did not materialize. Mr. Ward again brought the matter before the common council on July 14, 1845, and another committee considered it until March 20, 1846, when it was relieved by order of the common council.

On May 14, 1846, a new committee was appointed. It consisted of Oliver S. Strong, Robt. Gilchrist and Peter D. Vroom. They took counsel with Andrew Clerk and Robert C. Bacot and made a thorough examination of possible sources of supply. They paid their own expenses, and could not be deterred by insinuations about a job. Several plans were proposed for obtaining a supply: artesian wells, catchment basins on the west slope of Bergen Hill, tapping Rockland Lake, taking it from the Passaic River above the falls or at Dundee Dam, or taking it from the Morris Canal on the Bloomfield level, but none of these were satisfactory. The committee favored the Passaic at Belleville, and authorized Messrs. Bacot and Clerk to prepare plans and estimates. Finally a temporary commission was appointed to provide a feasible plan. The commissioners were: Edwin A. Stevens, of Hoboken; Edward Coles, of Van Vorst; Abraham J. Van Boskerk and John Dod Ward, of Jersey City. Stevens and Ward were engineers, and all were men in whom every citizen had confidence. The commissioners employed William S. Whitwell as engineer. He had made a reputation in connection with the Boston water-works, and was highly thought of as an hydraulic engineer. He began a survey on August 26, 1851, and on December 31st a public meeting was held in the Lyceum Hall, on Grand Street, to hear his report. The council invited the town committee of Hoboken to attend the meeting. His plan was to pump the water from the Passaic River above Belleville to a settling reservoir on Schuyler's Hill, 157 feet above tide. Thence the water was to flow by gravity to a distributing

reservoir on Bergen Hill, 128 feet above the tide level. The water of the Passaic River at that time was so clear that the stones in the bottom could be seen from a boat in midstream. It was protected from the salt water tides by a rocky reef below Belleville, which kept most of the salt water from flowing up to the intake. The water was good and abundant. The estimated cost was about \$600,000.

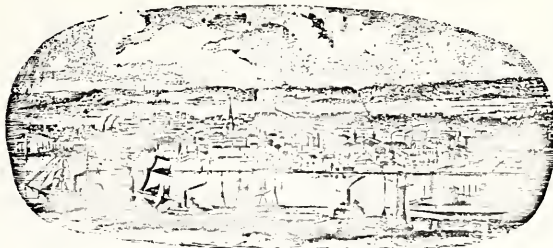
The people were satisfied with the plan, and on March 25, 1852, the legislature passed an act authorizing the work. The construction was prosecuted with vigor, and on June 30, 1854, water was turned on at the Belleville reservoir. On August 15th the service mains in the city were supplied. The plant at that



THE BERGEN HILL RESERVOIR.  

time consisted of a rising main at Belleville, with one Cornish pump, one main across the meadows and the service mains, with the two reservoirs. The total cost of the works up to the time the water was turned on was \$652,995.73. On October 3, 1854, the introduction of water was celebrated by a parade and a general holiday. The council made an appropriation of \$2,500 to defray the cost of the celebration, but Mayor Manners vetoed the resolution, and the expense was borne by the water commissioners. It was \$2,414.55.

The introduction of water made a general sewer plan necessary, and this work was placed under the control of the water commission. The sewers previously constructed were utilized, and the old plan of draining from the high central ground, both east and west, was continued. An extensive plan was adopted by which Mill Creek and the Creek of the Woods, on the Hoboken boundary, were to be connected by a tidal canal. The engineer's estimate of the cost of the canal was \$75,000, with \$100,000 for right of way. This plan was urged for a number of years and modified in various ways. George H. Bailey proposed that the flow of water in the main from Bergen Hill should be utilized to operate a pump in passing down the hillside. This pump would raise 2,000,000 gallons of salt water from the canal ten feet and give a head that could be used to flush the sewers. This would have reduced the pressure in the city, but it would still have had the force of over eighty feet of head. Another plan was to buy a right of way, including the creek, of 300 feet in width, extending from Mill Creek in Communipaw to the river at the foot of the Weehawken bluff. This space was to be used for



THE CITY IN 1855. (From an old picture.)

a canal and a tree-shaded driveway, with paths something on the plan of Central Park, in New York. R. C. Bacot proposed a more economic plan, by which automatic gates would close at the turn of the tide and force the six feet of rise to escape through the sewers.

The canal was never built. The location of the creeks is

now a matter of guesswork. Instead of utilizing this natural advantage the creeks have been filled up and the sewers of the lower portion of the city are a source of annoyance and expense. Some time they will have to be entirely reconstructed at an enormous cost.

The completion of the water-works marked another epoch in the life of the city. By the

spring of 1855, but little more than half a year later, the population had advanced to 21,715, or about 100 per cent. in five years. About this time the Long Dock Improvement Company was organized to construct a terminal for the Erie Railway Company, and a large force of men were employed in building piers at the foot of Pavonia Avenue and north of it. Another large force were busy at the same time in constructing a tunnel through Bergen Hill for the railway. The work dragged on account of lack of funds, and the unpaid tunnel laborers created trouble by riots which required military force to suppress, but the enterprise was not abandoned. In 1861 the tunnel was completed and the piers were ready for business. The Pavonia ferry was started on May 1, 1861, with three boats, the Niagara, Onalaska and Onala. The completion of this large undertaking gave the Erie Railway an independent terminal, and its trains were no longer run over the New Jersey Railroad from West End. The New Jersey Company's business had increased to such an extent that it required all the terminal facilities it owned in Jersey City. The opening of the tunnel was speedily followed by the abandonment of the Piermont terminns, and the removal of the Erie's repair shops from the river town to the meadows near the eastern end of the tunnel. This made a large addition to the city's population, and was the most important local event of the year. The census of 1860 showed a population of 29,226. The demand for dwellings kept the artisans busy, and almost every street resounded with busy saws and hammers. The hard times of 1857 caused a great deal of suffering in the city, and the relief of the poor was one of the most serious items of expense. In 1860 the city was financially comfortable, and the erection of a new city hall and a police station with a bell tower bore evidence of the fact. Street improvements had been carried on in a desultory manner during the hard times, but the work was prosecuted more vigorously after 1860.



MONTGOMERY STREET WEST FROM HUDSON, 1857.

The exciting presidential election of 1860 had filled the streets with marching men, and the excitement of the campaign had scarcely died away when the attitude of the South began to absorb attention. As the winter of 1860 melted into the spring of 1861 the tone of the South began to indicate trouble, but no one in Jersey City believed that the trouble would assume the proportions to which it developed. When it was known that President Lincoln would pass through Jersey City on his way to be inaugurated, a citizens' meeting was called to devise means of honoring the nation's executive. The common council also held a special meeting to do honor to the President. The ferry company prepared the John P. Jackson, its newest boat, to make a special trip. It was prettily decorated with flags and started for New York at 8 A. M. on Thursday, Feb. 21, 1861. On board was Mayor Cornelius Van Vorst and Atty.-Gen. Dayton, representing Gov. Olden; the senatorial committee, consisting of Senators Jonathan Cook, Samuel Westcott and Wm. F. Brown; the assembly committee, consisting of Socrates Tuttle, James Wheeler, T. F. Randolph, John G. Schenck and David Mulford; the common council committee, consisting of President A. A. Hardenbergh and Aldermen Warner, Decker, McBride and Romar; the citizens' committee, consisting of S. A. Hopkins, A. O. Zabriskie, Ephraim Marsh, D. S. Gregory, Magnus Traphagen, and a number of aldermen, citizens and ladies. When the Presidential party was received on board the boat a speech of welcome was made by A. A. Hardenbergh. The boat was not heated and the cabins were cold. Honest Old Abe towered above the heads of all and was introduced to all. He was in good humor and produced a good impression on all who were on board. As the boat neared the Jersey City slip the Hudson County Artillery fired a salute of thirty-four guns from the Paterson pier, and the Cnnard steamers, that were docked at the foot of Grand Street, joined in the salute, making quite a cannonade for half an hour. In the railroad depot a carpeted flat car had