

# Rochester in History

WITH PORTRAITS

*and*

## Our Part in the World War



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## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE WATERWORKS

**W**ITH the development of Rochester the need for an adequate water supply for drinking and to curb fires became apparent. As early as 1835 the legislature incorporated the Rochester Waterworks Company. For drinking purposes the early residents relied on their wells and hopes were entertained that the new company would provide a supply for fire protection. Nothing came of it and for nearly 40 years the city had to rely on the Erie canal and the river for its water supply. This water was conducted through iron pipes to reservoirs in the different sections of the city but this method did not prove satisfactory.

In 1852 another company was chartered which in the course of 20 years laid about 70 miles of pipe connecting the city with three small lakes to the southward. The work was not done in a satisfactory manner. Litigation and foreclosure by the city followed and in 1872 the legislature empowered the city to build and operate its own waterworks system. Five commissioners were appointed who formulated a plan to bring the water from Hemlock lake, 28 miles to the southward to the city for drinking water. For fire protection it was planned to supply water from the river by direct pressure, the Holley system, as it is called, by which the water from the river is forced through the pipes at a pressure from pumps in a central station, sufficient to be adequate for all ordinary fire purposes.

The Hemlock system was ready for use in two years and tests and frequent use has demonstrated that it is adequate to all needs. 28 miles of conduit were built from Hemlock lake, reservoirs in the town of Rush and at Highland Park and 58 miles of distribution pipes. In January, 1876, this system of portable water supply was ready for use. The growth of the city has necessitated a large increase in the distribution pipes and an additional reservoir has been built at Cobbs Hill. To assure an adequate supply of water Canadice lake, near Hemlock lake, has been linked up with the system and the surveyors from the office of the city engineer are reported to be in possession of the data needed in case this supply ever becomes inadequate, whereby Conesus lake can be added to the source of the city's water supply.

In recent years a private company has been supplying Lake Ontario water, carefully filtered and pure to some of the districts surrounding the city. Annexation has made some of this section a part of the city, but its water supply remains unchanged. The city's water bureau is a part of the department of public works and its administration is such that water is supplied to the householder at its cost to the city.