

DIGGERS FIND WOODEN MAINS DECADES OLD

History of City to Furnish Itself with Good Water Brought to Light

In work preparatory to laying the proposed subway under East Henrietta Road to connect Iola Sanatorium with the new County Home, excavators have found old wooden mains laid decades ago to carry water to Rochester. These old pipes look like barrels about 18 inches in diameter. They had been constructed at an expense provided for by bonds, but they were never used, and "thereby hangs a tale." These mains had been laid by the one-time Rochester Water Works company, but the pipes leaked so that they never brought the water to the city.

In his "Semi-Centennial History of Rochester," William F. Peck devotes pages to the account of this epoch in the city's water supply and to the origin of the Board of Water Commissioners.

Intake at Smithtown

The intake for the water intended to flow to Rochester was from what then was Smithtown, now North Bloomfield. There, on the borders of Monroe and Livingston Counties, the water was taken from Honeyoye Creek. The first company was incorporated by the State Legislature in 1835. Nothing was accomplished, and another company with the same name was incorporated in 1852. Matters were not brought to a head and, in 1871 Rochester citizens began to believe "that a supply of water would not be obtained by a private company, such as would be pure in quality, abundant in quantity and, in other important respects, satisfactory to the city," Peck writes.

Application to the Legislature was made by the city for permission to provide a water supply at its own expense. As a result, in 1872 the mayor was given permission to appoint five persons to constitute "a board of water commissioners." Mayor A. Carter Wilder appointed as the first commissioners, Roswell Hart, Edward M. Smith, William H. Bowman, Charles C. Morse and Gilman H. Perkins.

This is the second time, at least, that the city or county while making excavations has hit upon these old mains.

Useful in West

Although it seems strange in such new communities as those of the Far West wooden mains are used there more or less, and with good results. This is true of water supplies through mountainous regions. Irwin E. Matthews, superintendent of water works, says, "There the course is sometimes so uneven that no such material as steel or cast iron would serve so well, Mr. Matthews explains.