

. . . THE . . .

# HISTORY OF YONKERS

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT, INCLUDING AN ELABORATE DESCRIPTION OF ITS ABORIGINES; A NARRATIVE OF ITS DISCOVERY, AND EARLY SETTLEMENT BY THE DUTCH AND OTHER EUROPEANS; A RECORD OF EVENTS WITHIN ITS BORDERS DURING THE PHILIPSE PERIOD OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS; ITS STIRRING SCENES AS A PART OF THE FAMOUS "NEUTRAL GROUND OF THE REVOLUTION"; ITS FARMS AND FARMERS; ITS HAMLETS; ITS GROWING VILLAGE ON THE NEPPERHAN, AND ITS DEVELOPMENT TO THE BUSY CITY OF TO-DAY; TOGETHER WITH AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF ITS SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, SOCIETIES, INDUSTRIES, BANKS, NEWS-PAPERS, ETC., ETC.; FINELY ILLUSTRATED WITH VIEWS OF ITS PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PRIVATE RESIDENCES, MANUFACTORIES, AND WITH PORTRAITS OF MANY OF ITS CITIZENS.

---

BY THE

REV. CHARLES ELMER ALLISON

*Pastor of the Dayspring Presbyterian Church; President of the Yonkers Historical and Library Association*

---

ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE YONKERS BOARD OF TRADE

---

NEW YORK:  
WILBUR B. KETCHAM  
2 COOPER UNION

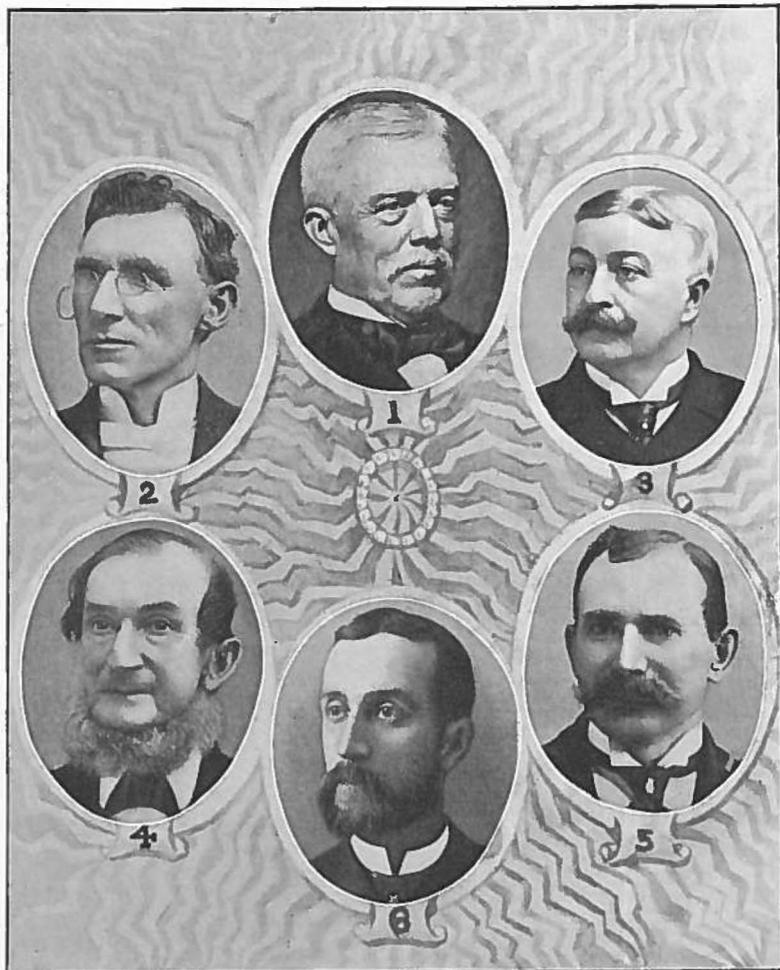
Ellis to commit a robbery. Ellis was met by arrangement about 2 A.M., at the headquarters of the gang, and as they parted at the corner of Houston and Wooster Streets, Captain Mangin and a sergeant jumped on them, and overpowering Ellis brought him to Yonkers, and from here conveyed him to Utica. Ellis was the man whom Supt. Jordan had arrested for the famous Nathan murder in New York City. He was recognized as the head of the New York crooks.

"He told the captain he had spent a couple of days at the Getty house reconnoitring for a favorable prospect to make a haul, and had reported to the gang the folly of an attempt, as he was overhauled by men in citizens' clothes while making his observations. He declared he had no sympathy for Poxley as he had disobeyed orders. Ellis was a polished, gentlemanly individual, who dressed well and possessed a decidedly clerical appearance. While Captain Mangin was taking him handcuffed to Utica, passing through the Highlands, he feigned sickness and jumped from the train, which was

travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour. The captain had the train stopped and on going back found him with his head jammed through a picket fence. He was delivered up to the authorities at Utica without further adventure.

"The captain further discovered that the notorious Tom Scott was under arrest in Charleston on suspicion, and he was brought back and delivered at Utica. The results from the arrest of Poxley therefore were as follows: Ellis himself was committed for eighteen years; Tom Scott for eighteen years; Welsh and Bucky Malone were sent up for a term of years; and Poxley was tried for the Ludlow burglary and was sentenced to State Prison for fifteen years.

"Conroy, who had been arrested by Sergeant McLaughlin and Patrolman Redding and brought to Yonkers, at the request of the authorities in Utica, on account of his services in convicting the perpetrators of the Germond Mack burglary was not prosecuted. However, he was arrested a few months later for attempting to blow a house up at Kingston, received a life sentence and died in prison. And thus, by the clever arrest of Sergeant McLaughlin and ex-Patrolman Whelan and the skilful strategy of Captain Mangin, one of the worst gangs that ever infested New York was broken up and most of its members consigned to State's Prison."



BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS OF YONKERS.

- |                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. WILLIAM H. DOTY.                 | 3. JOHN EYLER. |
| 2. MICHAEL WALSH.                   | 4. JACOB READ. |
| 5. JOHN J. TIERNEY.                 |                |
| 6. JOSEPH LOCKWOOD, Superintendent. |                |

which reference has already been made, and to other departments, without being grateful to public-spirited citizens, who have devoted so much of their valuable time to promote public welfare. Many of those who held office, labored without compensation. The splendid system of water works is a monument to many to whose foresight and solid judgment the city owes much. President Eickemeyer alluded to this at the laying of the corner-stone of the High-Service Tower, Nodine Hall (November 13, 1891). On that occasion he made an address in which were these sentences:

"When a disastrous fire on Dock Street, on August 9, 1869, which destroyed a whole square, had proved that water works had to be erected to protect the city, the Board of Trustees of the then village

No thoughtful reader can become conversant with the history of the departments of the city, to

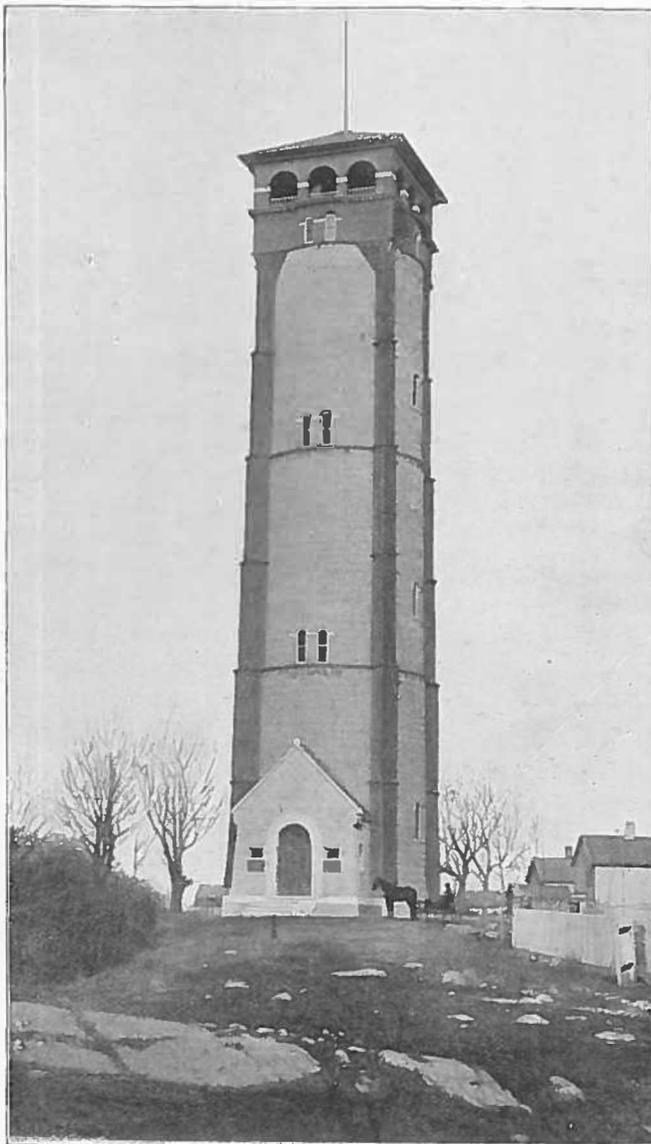
appointed a committee of citizens to act with the Trustees. This Citizens' Committee consisted of nineteen members, and I think, as their action, in co-operation with the Trustees, laid, as it were, the corner-stone of the whole works, it is well to recall their names at the laying of the corner-stone of a structure which will, in time to come, be a very important element in our admirable system of water supply.

"The names of those composing the Citizens' Committee are as follows: Thomas W. Ludlow, Dennis McGrath, Patrick White, Jacob Read, F. A. Back, John T. Waring, Timothy Ryan, G. B. Upham, Samuel Leggett, Cyrus Cleveland, Joseph Masten, Robert P. Getty, Rudolf Eickemeyer, Isaac H. Knox, George B. Skinner, Abijah Curtis, Charles R. Dusenberry, George Stewart, and Professor W. H. C. Bartlett, who was called in by the Committee as an honorary member." The report of the Committee was presented to the Common Council, December, 1872.

The Water Board was organized on March 24, 1873. Mr. M. K. Couzens, civil engineer, and W. W. Grant, also a civil engineer, recommended measures which they considered wise. In March, 1874, Mr. W. W. Wilson was appointed Chief Engineer, at a salary of \$4,000 per annum. General George S. Green became Consulting Engineer, at a salary of \$2,000 per annum, and Mr. John M. Mason, Counsel. The services of Dr. Newberry (Geologist-in-Chief of the State of Ohio, and Professor in the School of Mines in Columbia College) were procured, to make an examination of the geological structure of the Nepperhan Valley and of the Hudson Valley in the immediate vicinity of Yonkers, in order to ascertain the probability of obtaining a sufficient supply of water for the city from that source.

Mr. Wilson made an elaborate and carefully considered report of his investigations. The report was published by the Board of Water Commissioners. It records Mr. Wilson's comparisons of the Pocantico water-shed (6,500 acres drained), the Bronx water-shed (5,000 acres drained), the Nepperhan water-shed above Riggs dam (10,000 acres drained), and the Sprain brooks. His opinion was that the water of the Sprain and Grassy Sprain would not be so apt to be made impure by their valleys becoming populated, as would the other streams. He included in his report tables showing the amount of waterfall, and number of gallons of water used daily in London, Paris, Montreal, and in many American cities. He also added that if in time the need should arise of more water than the water-shed of the Sprain brooks affords, recourse could be had to the Bronx, but he demonstrated that the Sprain and Grassy Sprain would suffice for many years.

A sub-committee of the Board visited different cities, in order to inspect different systems. They examined the reservoir system in Syracuse, Buffalo and Detroit, the sandpipe system in Chicago, and the system of pumping directly into the mains, as it existed in Buffalo, Dunkirk, Kalamazoo, Lockport, Peoria and Columbus. The fear was expressed by some citizens that the Sprain brooks would not supply wholesome and pure water. The services of Professor C. F. Chandler, Ph.D., M.D., an expert



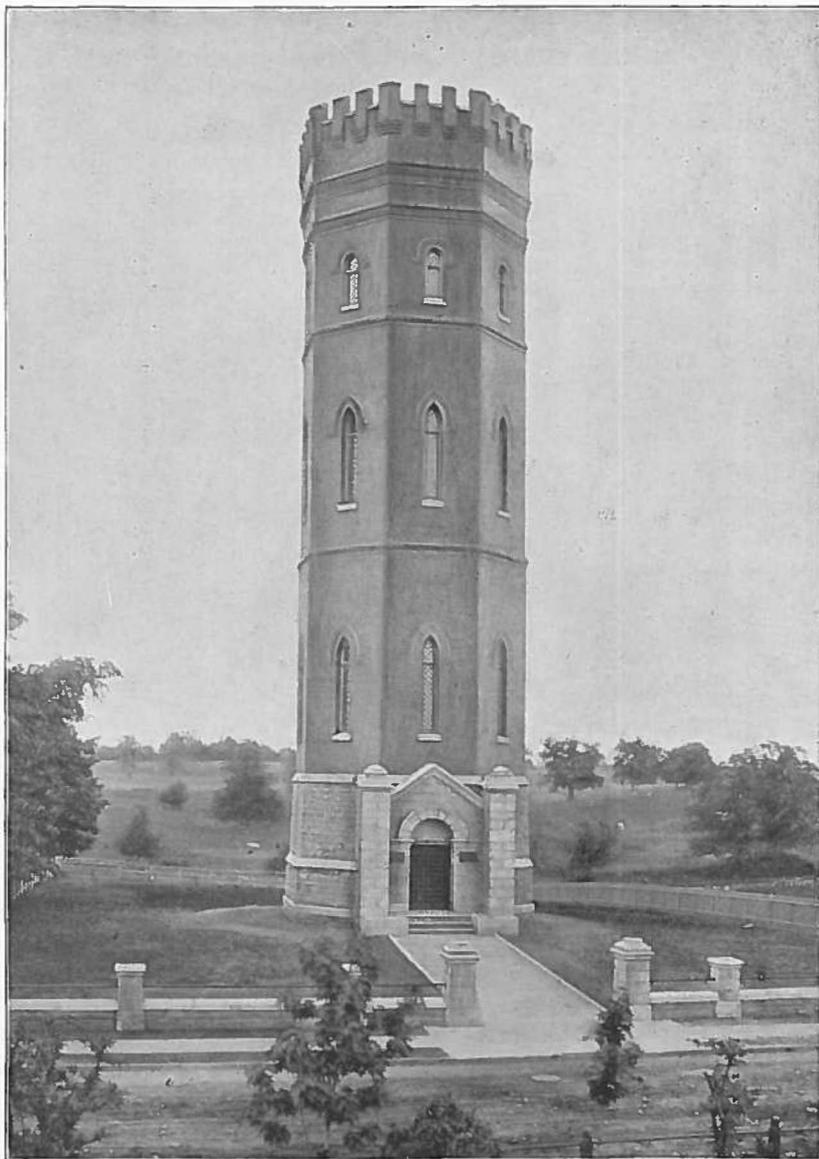
ELM STREET WATER TOWER.

pre-eminent in his profession, had been secured. An analysis which he made, based on personal examination of the Sprain waters, caused him to form a favorable opinion of the waters. Many citizens were yet apprehensive. The Board to

"make assurance doubly sure," engaged Colonel J. W. Adams, another expert, to examine their proposed plans. He also approved of them. The Consulting Engineer and others, who had given careful thought to the enterprise, were not swayed by the opposition of those who doubted the purity of the waters. Their confidence in the opinion of Professor Chandler was unshaken.

The reservoir on Lake Avenue was built in 1873, and supply pipes were laid through the principal streets. On January 1, 1874, water was turned on and those present saw a stream thrown over the Getty House flagstaff. It was thrown from hose attached to a near hydrant. The Lake Avenue reservoir (297 feet above tide water) was at first used to store water for extinguishing fires which might break out in the thickly populated part of the city.

In 1874, no general plan for supplying the city with water for domestic purposes had been adopted. The capacity of the Lake Avenue reservoir was about 3,500,000 gallons, only about one day and a half supply for the city in 1896. After it was completed, the Grassy Sprain storage reservoir was constructed. The pumping



LAKE AVENUE WATER TOWER.

station on the Tuckahoe road was erected in 1876. The capacity of the storage reservoir is about 400,000,000 gallons. The waters of the Sprain and Grassy Sprain were joined by means of a canal and the building of a dam on the Sprain, at the height of five feet at the place of diversion—the depression of the dividing ridge between the valleys. Subsequently the high service tower on Lake Avenue was built, and some years later the high service tower on Elm Street (Nodine Hill). Each tower is 450 feet above the Hudson River. The Lake Avenue tower, to the top of the battlements, is one hundred feet above ground. From the water table to the balcony of the Elm Street tower is 129 feet, and from the water table to the peak of the roof is 150 feet. Both towers can be ascended by interior winding stairways and from both, magnificent views from the Hudson to the Sound can be had. The overflows of the two high service towers are on a level with each other, and they are supplied from one high service pumping station, which takes water out of the Lake Avenue distributing reservoir. The two high service systems are connected by pipes which lead from the northern hill down to the Nepperhan, near the bridge southwest of Oakland Cemetery, across the Nepperhan, thence up Walnut Street to

the Nodine Hill system. The high service supplies elevations to a height two hundred and eighty feet and up to four hundred and forty feet above tide, the low service supplies elevations between tide water and two hundred and eighty feet above.

After the Lake Avenue and Grassy Sprain reservoirs and the two high service towers were finished, the next work was the construction of the Fort Field reservoir (capacity about 60,000,000 gallons). That is now completed and the next work will probably be the construction of a dam to hold back the great quantity of the waters of the Sprain and Grassy Sprain which now go to waste over the present dam in seasons of plentiful rains.

For some time the city has sold water to New York (for the Twenty-fourth Ward). When Yonkers needed an additional supply during the drought of 1895, it bought water of New York (taking it from the Croton Aqueduct) and from New Rochelle (by a pipe connecting with the New Rochelle system). The Yonkers water works may also, if necessary, take water from the Pocantico system.



BOARD OF EXCISE COMMISSIONERS.

- |                            |                        |                             |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. JOSEPH MILLER.          | 2. JOSEPH M. TOMPKINS. | 3. JOHN WARNECK.            |
| 4. GABRIEL REEVS, Counsel. |                        | 5. HAROLD C. HOUSEL, Clerk. |

There are now in the city  $56\frac{7}{10}$  miles of water mains, 610 hydrants (all double nozzle), and 3,756 taps and connections. The number of meters is 3,706, and nine indicators are in use. The average daily consumption has been about 3,230,000 gallons. Every purchaser in Yonkers, in factories as well as in private residences, receives city water measured by a water meter. The consumption in some buildings is enormous. The Sugar House, for example, consumes 250,000 to 350,000 gallons per day. Citizens who desire information about the water works and matters relating to the department, find, in Manor Hall, Mr. Joseph A. Lockwood, a graduate of Union College, who is the superintendent, and the bookkeepers, Messrs. A. W. Kingsbury and Hall B. Sims. Mr. Lockwood's report for the year ending December 1, 1895, is a document of great interest to citizens who appreciate the work done by the department. It shows the cost of the works to date, and the amount expended under each account during the year:

REPORT OF MR. JOSEPH A. LOCKWOOD, SUPERINTENDENT, DECEMBER 1, 1895, TO BOARD OF  
WATER COMMISSIONERS.

ACCOUNTS.	PRIOR TO DEC. 1, 1894.	EXPENDED DEC. 1, 1894, TO DEC. 1, 1895.	TOTAL DEC. 1, 1895.
Lake Avenue Reservoir Land, . . . . .	\$27,457.77		\$27,457.77
Grassy Sprain Reservoir and Canal Land, Low Service Pumping Station, including the land for pipe line, . . . . .	84,041.04		84,041.04
Engineer's Residence Land, . . . . .	14,406.11		14,406.11
H. S. Tower, Lake Avenue Land, . . . . .	1,500.00		1,500.00
H. S. Tower, Elm Street Land, . . . . .	6,532.88		6,532.88
Fort Field Reservoir Land, . . . . .	3,147.80	45.00	3,192.80
For Diversion of Water, . . . . .	25,984.46		25,984.46
Lake Avenue Reservoir Construction, . . . . .	34,961.08		34,961.08
Pipes and Castings, . . . . .	39,339.33		39,339.33
Stop-cocks and Gates, . . . . .	334,306.36	14,616.38	348,922.74
Trenching and Pipe-laying, . . . . .	19,488.19	653.07	20,141.26
Hydrants, . . . . .	195,614.23	15,305.42	210,919.65
Grassy Sprain Reservoir Construction, . . . . .	21,282.91	1,470.51	22,753.42
Sprain Dam and Canal Construction, . . . . .	73,831.04		73,831.04
Engine House, Low Service, . . . . .	10,401.58		10,401.58
Engine House, High Service, . . . . .	33,014.09	56.52	33,070.61
Engine House Aqueduct, . . . . .	5,890.12		5,890.12
Engineer's Residence, . . . . .		302.84	302.84
Fireman's Houses, . . . . .	3,639.99		3,639.99
High Service Tower, Lake Avenue Con- struction, . . . . .	5,524.75		5,524.75
High Service Tower, Elm Street Con- struction, . . . . .	19,440.93		19,440.93
High Service Stand Pipe, Elm Street Construction, . . . . .	20,113.09		20,113.09
Shop and Store Room, . . . . .	9,152.56		9,152.56
Boat House, . . . . .	1,547.40		1,547.40
Engines, Nos. 1 and 2 Boilers L. S., . . . . .	440.00		440.00
Engines, Nos. 2 and 1 Boilers L. S., . . . . .	17,941.90		17,941.90
Engines, Nos. 1 and 1 Boiler H. S., . . . . .	32,168.01		32,168.01
Engines, Nos. 2 and 1 Boiler H. S., . . . . .	4,367.50		4,367.50
Engine and Boiler Aqueduct, . . . . .	6,778.91		6,778.91
Boilers, Low Service, . . . . .		1,768.87	1,768.87
Fort Field Reservoir Construction, . . . . .	1,425.29	2,259.38	3,684.67
Saw Mill River Valley Tests, . . . . .	159,797.80	73,992.69	233,790.49
Engineering, . . . . .		4.77	4.77
Counsel Fees, Advertising and Printing, Treasurer's Fees, and other Miscel- laneous Expenses, . . . . .	50,981.01	4,892.85	55,873.86
	32,926.68	576.84	33,503.52
	\$1,297,444.81	\$115,945.14	\$1,413,389.95

The Twenty-third Annual Report of the Board of the Water Commissioners of the City of Yonkers was presented December 1, 1895. It contains a report to the Board of Mr. William Henry Baldwin Engineer, which sets forth the following facts:

"The Fort Field distribution reservoir which was under contract with Messrs. Dougherty & Berri-gan is finished. The work was commenced in April, 1893. It was completed, and the final certificate given November 27, 1895. Some idea of the magnitude of the work may be derived from a reference to some of the material and labor set forth in the final estimate:

"83,000 cubic yards of earth excavation; 52,000 cubic yards of earth embankment; 57,000 cubic yards of masonry; 11,500 cubic yards of concrete; 8,890 square yards of paving, besides the gate-house and the pipes and valves. The time required to do the work was thirty-two months. The capacity is 60,441,449 gallons. The reservoir is in two compartments, separated by a masonry wall. . . . The bottom of the reservoir is covered with a layer of concrete, consisting of one part hydraulic cement, three parts sand and six parts broken stone. The gate-house is built of stone, selected from the excavations, lined with

brick, and all laid in Portland cement. The water from the low service pumping-station, 6,000 feet distant, is brought into the gate-house by a twenty-four inch force main, discharging into a forty-eight inch cast-iron vertical stand pipe, and conducted thence by two thirty-inch pipes passing at an angle of 45° through the core wall, the embankment and pavement, and discharging through screen chambers into the easterly and westerly compartments of the reservoir respectively. The supply to the city is taken through the screen chambers by means of thirty-inch pipes, also passing through the embankment and core walls, and also through the gate-house into the public streets, and thence to the city. All of the gates and valves for controlling the flow of water, both into and out of the reservoir, are situated in the gate-house, and are accessible at all times, as no water is admitted into the gate-house itself, but is passed through it by means of the pipes and valves.

"In addition to the inlet pipes above described, there is another twenty-four inch pipe leading from the forty-eight inch stand pipe along the dividing wall, built into the masonry, and terminating in an elbow, about the middle of the wall, supplied with a movable appliance so arranged as to discharge the water over a weir, into either the easterly or westerly compartment at will. The object is to aerate the water as it comes from the pumps. The entire work is drained by an eight-inch cast-iron mud pipe passing under the concrete bottom of the gate itself. This drain pipe is operated by valves situated in the gate-house.

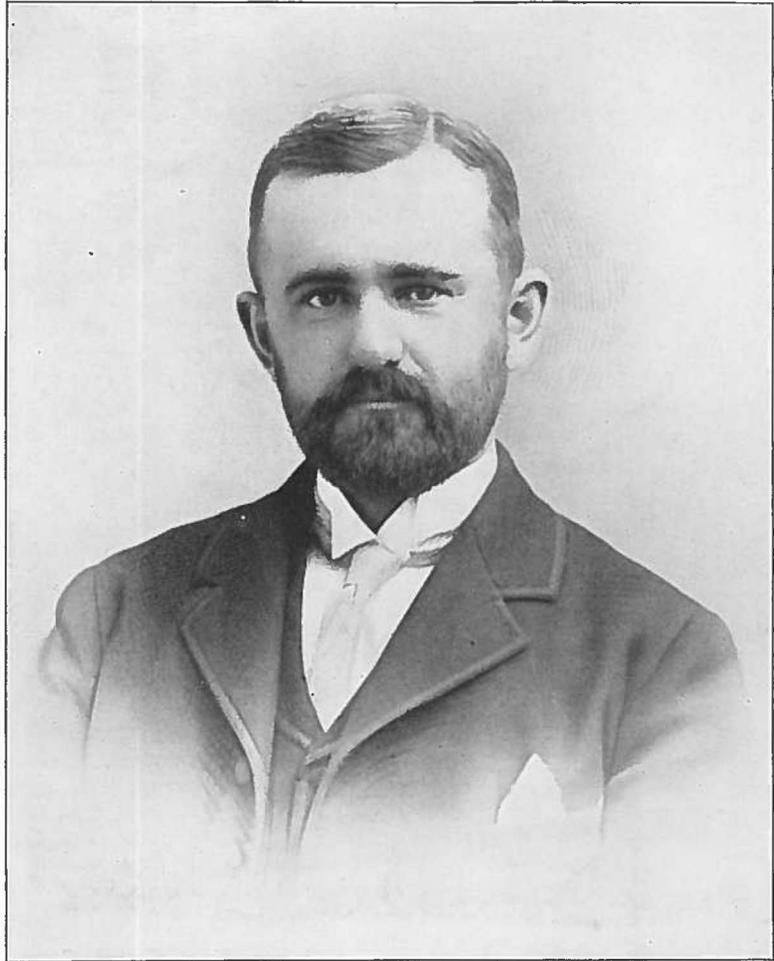
"The arrangement of gates and valves is such that water can be admitted or discharged independently from either the easterly or westerly compartments of this reservoir at will, or can be turned from the force main directly into the outlet pipe, thence to the city, without entering the reservoir at all.

"The entire property purchased for this reservoir consists of about fifteen and four-tenths acres, of which nearly two acres from the easterly side have been appropriated for a building site, and a dwelling-house will be erected thereon for the use of the keeper. The dwelling will be constructed of stone taken from the premises, and will conform in general appearance to the surroundings.

"The water surface, when the two compartments of the reservoir are full, will contain nine and three-tenths acres, and the area inclosed within the limits of the slope amounts to nine and seven-tenths acres. The exterior slopes of all embankments have been covered with soil, the grounds not occupied by the reservoir have been regulated and graded and paved,

gutters have been so placed as to lead all surface water away and discharge it outside the premises. The street front along the Palmer Road and also the exterior property lines have been inclosed with stone walls so that the entire property presents a neat and substantial appearance.

"As to the general supply of water for the requirements of the city, the recent period of dry weather, extending over several years, has directed attention to the matter of securing an additional supply. The attention of the engineer has been carefully given to it, and examination has been made of the records of the amount of water furnished by the rain-fall, together with the amount used for the requirements of the city, and also the amount of water which has run to waste over the dam at the Grassy Sprain reservoir, with a view of determining whether an additional supply of water could be derived from this water-shed. This investigation, when compared with the records made for a period of twenty-five years by the Croton Aqueduct Department brings to light the fact that the rain-fall during



SAMUEL L. COOPER.

the past six years has been unusually small, but, notwithstanding this fact, the amount of water which has gone to waste over the dam during this period of six years has been somewhat more than the entire



JOHN G. PEENE.

consumption of the city during that time. The capacity of the Grassy Sprain reservoir is about 400,000,000 gallons, while the amount of water which went to waste over the dam between December 1, 1894, and April 5, 1895, was 900,000,000 gallons, or about double the capacity of the reservoir. These facts show beyond a question of doubt that if the reservoir had been of sufficient size to hold back a reasonable portion of the water which went to waste in the spring-time and save it for use later in the season, there would have been no such scarcity of water as we have been experiencing during the past summer. The question has often been raised whether there is water enough in the stream to fill such a reservoir if it was built. Considering the question in the light of the above statement that enough water has gone to waste over the dam in the driest season on record, to have filled our present reservoir nearly twice over, there seems to be no doubt whatever that such additional storage reservoir as you have contemplated in the proposed enlargement of the Grassy Sprain reservoir, could be most easily filled and made available for use. Your engineer, therefore, most earnestly recommends that you take immediate action to build the proposed enlargement of the Grassy Sprain reservoir, which you have had in contemplation several years."

The site in the old days was a quarry and swamp, and no less than eight hundred cords of wood were cut from the land on which the basins now rest. The gate-house is a solid and substantial looking structure and there is a stone sill over twelve feet in length taken from the property. The enormous carriage blocks are also of home manufacture. The three tablets above the door of the gate-house bear the following inscriptions:

BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS.

RUDOLF EICKEMEYER, President.  
 JACOB READ, Treasurer.  
 JOHN J. TIERNEY.  
 MICHAEL WALSH.  
 JOHN EYLERS.

YONKERS WATER WORKS.  
 FORTFIELD RESERVOIR.

WILLIAM H. BALDWIN, Engineer.  
 EDWIN A. QUICK & SON, Architects.  
 JOS. A. LOCKWOOD, Superintendent.  
 DOUGHERTY & BERRIGAN, Contractors.