

June 1906

EXCERPTS FROM THE TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees of the Augusta Water District present herewith their first report, covering the operations of the District of June 1st, 1906.

During the winter of 1902-3, typhoid fever was so prevalent in Augusta as to be almost epidemic. It was the general belief of those who gave the matter careful study and consideration, that it had its origin in the city water supply which was badly polluted by the sewerage of the City of Waterville and villages above. There were over three hundred cases of fever during the winter, and about thirty deaths.

No movement having been made looking toward a new and purer supply, on the part of the Augusta Water Company, the present trustees, on Monday the ninth day of March, 1903, after discussing the situation fully, determined to take some action, and requested Mr. Lynch to draft a bill providing for the formation of a water district, along the lines already marked out by Waterville and other places in the State.

This he did, and the bill was presented in the House of Representatives the following Thursday by Mr. Gannett.

The measure received the overwhelming support of the people, as it was generally felt that the situation was one which urgently demanded that some action be taken to give the city a supply of pure water.

The act was finally passed by the legislature and approved by the Governor, March 26, 1903.

At a special election held for the purpose on the fourth Monday of June, 1903, the Act was accepted, the number of votes in favor of its acceptance being 1416, and the number opposed 209. On June 26th following, at a special meeting of the Mayor and Board and Aldermen, three trustees were elected, namely John F. Hill, George E. Macomber and Thomas J. Lynch.

The Act of Incorporation provided that the term of office of the trustees should begin on the first Monday of August, 1903. On that day a meeting was held at the city building for the purpose of organization.

The trustees having been duly sworn to the faithful discharge of their duties, proceeded to organize by the choice of John F. Hill as President, George E. Macomber as Treasurer and Thomas J. Lynch as Clerk.

Negotiations for the purchase of the plant, property and franchises of the Augusta Water Company were at once begun. It soon became apparent that an understanding could not be reached, and no agreement upon a price for the works having been made prior to November 1st, 1903, by vote of the trustees proceedings were begun for the taking over of the property by appraisal, as provided by the act of incorporation. Upon petition to Justice Spear, Hon. Charles H. Prescott, Hon. Henry W. Mayo and Hon. Erastus W. Ryder were appointed appraisers.

On the First day of March, 1904, a hearing was begun at the County Court House. The Water District was represented by Hon. Herbert M. Heath and Anson M. Goddard, Esq., the Augusta Water Company by Hon. O.D. Baker.

The appraisers fixed a valuation of \$427,135.20 upon the property and franchises of the company. **On May 16th the amount was paid and the works became the property of the District.**

From the time of their appointment your trustees had been investigating every possible source for a new water supply. In the territory east of Kennebec River nothing of good quality was found nearer than China Lake. Every other pond and lake in that section contained an excessive quantity of vegetable matter. The distance of China Lake from the city was prohibitive. Our prospective revenues were not sufficient to warrant the construction of so long a pipe line if the water had to be pumped.

A thorough investigation of Silver Lake and ponds in that watershed was made. Careful measurement of the flow of water in Spring Brook, the probable outlet of these lakes, extending over a considerable period, showed a supply of upwards of 1,500,000 gallons daily of the purest spring water. This amount was insufficient for present requirements, to say nothing of the future. A plan was submitted by an eminent hydraulic engineer for taking the additional amount of water required from Silver Lake, but we were satisfied that this would probably reduce the flow of Spring Brook and that this whole watershed could not be relied upon to furnish the amount of water necessary. We were therefore reluctantly compelled to abandon the consideration of this source of supply, although it would have been ideal had the quantity been greater.

Lake Cobbosseecontee was apparently the only ample supply of pure water within reasonable distance of the city. Carleton Pond, eight and a half miles away was considered but it seemed doubtful if its watershed had a sufficient drainage area to supply the quantity of water required. A careful survey and estimate by our engineer, however, showed a probable average supply of two and a quarter million gallons a day, even in the year of minimum rainfall. The records of the pumping station indicated the consumption of a somewhat larger average than this, but it was possible that these records were unreliable. The pumps were somewhat out of repair, and the records of pumping stations elsewhere, which we were assured were fairly accurate, led us to believe that an average supply of two million gallons daily might be sufficient for our needs.

The quality of the water at Carleton Pond was the very best. Its elevation, at a height of 328 feet above sea level, would so greatly reduce the expense of pumping as to more than offset the cost of the long pipe line.

We therefore decided to go to Carleton Pond; but to make sure of an ample supply under all circumstances, it was deemed best to also provide for taking water from Cobbosseecontee, if this should at any time be necessary. The cost of this auxiliary supply was small when its great advantages are considered, as the pipe line necessarily passed but a short distance away.

It was not expected that the cost of pumping would be large. We hardly dared to hope that the water would flow by gravity into our reservoir and mains. It has, however, been necessary to do but little pumping, and but for the necessity of reducing the level of the pond, in order to complete the dam at the outlet and to clean up the shores, it is probable that no pumping whatever would have been required. We have apparently had the good fortune to secure a gravity system which can be operated at comparatively small expense. **Beyond any doubt, we have an abundant supply of the purest water.**

The report of the Treasurer gives in detail the financial condition of the District. To your trustees it is a very satisfactory showing. The bonds issued to provide funds to pay for the plant and make necessary improvements and extensions were sold under the most favorable conditions. A premium of \$55,262.00 was realized. It is probable that a similar issue would not sell much above par today.

Revenue from water rates for the year ending June 1st, 1906, shows an increase of \$1,000.00 over the preceding year. We may reasonably anticipate some increase of revenue each year.

The statement has been made that there was an advance in rates, as the result of the taking over of this plant by the Augusta Water District. This is not the fact. The rates in force today are those fixed by the Augusta Water Company. It is true that when the works were taken over, your trustees found that some takers were not paying full rates. The Augusta Water Company had the right to make special contracts of this character. The Augusta Water District being a municipal corporation, your trustees did not feel warranted in continuing them. All rates were accordingly made uniform. There were but a small number of these contracts. While it is not anticipated that there will be a large increase in revenues from year to year, there should be a steady gain which we hope will be sufficient to permit a reduction in the single faucet rate in the near future.

We have now an abundant supply of the purest water, instead of river water polluted by sewerage which by no process of filtering would ever have been satisfactory to our citizens.

The funds for the purchase of the works and for making necessary extensions and improvements have been secured at a rate of interest so much less than could be obtained by any private corporation that with the saving thus made a sinking fund is provided that will enable the District ultimately to own the plant. Though the city grew but slowly there will be a constant increase in the revenue, and in the years to come the property is almost sure to gain in value. In our judgment it is today worth to a private corporation more than it has cost the District. **Its value to the people who now own it is greater still.**

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN F. HILL
GEORGE E. MACOMBER } *Trustees*
THOMAS J. LYNCH