

A HISTORY OF GREENVILLE WATER SUPPLY FROM ITS INCEPTION TO JANUARY 1, 1981

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For 119 years after Richard Pearis made his first settlement at the falls of Reedy River, there was no public water supply in the town of Greenville. By 1887, however, Greenville had a population of about 9,000 and boasted of three hotels, public schools, two colleges, and a horse-drawn street railway which connected the terminus of the Columbia and Greenville Railroad on Augusta Street with the station of the Richmond and Danville (now Southern) Railroad on West Washington Street. The bustling growth of Greenville in 1887 spurred the entrepreneurial and civic spirit generated a need of a public water supply.

In that year, Ferguson and Miller, who were operating a general merchandising business on the northwest corner of Main and Washington Streets, installed a small pipeline and piped water from a spring on Spring Street near the corner of Court Street to a wooden tank on the roof of their store. This system did not last long as the tank burned down, along with the building that supported it; however, at best, it only supplied a few stores along Main Street. The spring I mentioned is still flowing today, and is the source of the stream that flows over the little waterfall into the rock garden at the intersection of McDaniel Avenue and Webster Street.

After having had some experience with running water, the businessmen of the town felt that a more adequate supply should be provided. Mr. Albion Avery Gates, the proprietor of the Mansion House Hotel, made a trip to Philadelphia and, after much persuasion, prevailed on the American Pipe Manufacturing Company to come to Greenville and build an adequate water system.

The system they built was known as the Paris Mountain Water Company. While building dams on Paris Mountain and installing the necessary long pipeline, they installed a pressure filter and steam pumps on Richland Creek, a short distance downstream from Summit Drive and Bennett Street. After the

dams were completed on Paris Mountain and the pipeline installed, the filter and pumps were moved to the No. 2 Reservoir on Paris Mountain. Mr. Ollie Cauble told me that he had the contract to move this equipment, which was done with ox teams, and that they were on the road a week between the two locations. No. 1 Reservoir was at an elevation that would deliver water to the city by gravity; No. 2 Reservoir was downstream from No. 1 and, therefore, the water had to be pumped. The first water delivered from Paris Mountain was in 1888.

In 1904, two more reservoirs and seven catch basins were built on Paris Mountain. The catch basins fed water into No. 3 Reservoir through a series of pipelines. Nos. 3 and 4 Reservoirs were both at an elevation that supplied water by gravity.

In 1901, a standpipe was built at Pendleton and Leach Streets with a capacity of 460,000 gallons that could store water during off-peak hours and assist the transmission lines during the peak hours of use.

In 1917, the population of Greenville was estimated at 18,000. That year saw the beginning of the United State participation in World War I as well as the beginning of sterilization of water for the City of Greenville. The consumption of water by the greater Greenville area at this time was about 1,000,000 gallons daily. The coming of Camp Sevier (a World War I training camp) and an influx of people to Greenville threw a tremendous burden on the old water company and the City Fathers decided to start negotiations for the purchase of the water system. A citizens' committee was appointed by the City Council to carry on these negotiations. This committee was composed of Colonel Ellison Adger Smyth, W. C. Cleveland, and Ed F. Woodside. The transfer of ownership took place on August 1, 1918, and the negotiating committee was continued as Commissioners of Public Works. Mr. Cleveland served on this Commission until his death twenty-nine years later. A bond issue of \$1,000,000 was sold, \$800,000 of which was paid for the Paris Mountain Water Company and the remaining \$200,000 was used in building a filter plant and pumping station on Enoree River to supplement the Paris Mountain supply.

In 1921, another standpipe was built at the intersection of

Pendleton and Leach streets with a capacity of 1,200,000 gallons to assist in the peak hour demands.

The next improvement was in 1923 when an automatic chlorinating station was built on the east end of Paris Mountain.

The following year saw the construction of eight miles of twenty-four-inch transmission main from Paris Mountain to the City. The average daily consumption was running in excess of 2,000,000 gallons.

During this same year (1924), a survey was made of the Blue Ridge Mountains in upper Greenville County to locate a new source of supply. As a result of this survey, the Table Rock Dam and reservoir was started on July 4, 1925, and a thirty-inch pipeline was run from that reservoir to No. 3 Reservoir on Paris Mountain. It was thought at that time that Greenville had all the water it would ever need, and enough pipeline capacity for a minimum of twenty years. The Table Rock Reservoir and pipeline were placed in service in 1930, and in 1939 Commissioners of Public Works began installing another thirty-inch pipeline all the way to the city and building No. 6 Reservoir about one mile south of Travelers Rest. These facilities gave us a capacity from Table Rock to the city of 17,000,000 gallons daily, by gravity. A short while after the Table Rock supply was in operation a portion of the treatment plant and pumping station site on Enoree River was sold and the balance junked.

In 1934, a treatment plant was built at the Table Rock Reservoir with complete automatic controls for sterilization and other corrective treatment. The total cost of approximately 14.5 square miles of watershed, the Table Rock Dam and first pipeline was \$2,000,000.

In 1948, the city limits were extended, changing the area of the city from five square miles to eighteen square miles. The areas added were Northgate, Overbrook and Augusta Road. None of these areas had sufficient water mains or fire protection. The Commission immediately approved bringing these areas up to standard and this was accomplished in about two years.

In 1954, the Commission built a booster station on Pumpkin-

town Road, west of Marietta that increased the capacity of the two thirty-inch pipelines from Table Rock to the city to 28,500,000 gallons daily. This project required that the pipelines across three mountains be lowered as much as fifty feet in order to change the hydraulic gradient between Table Rock and the new pumping station. The combined cost of this improvement was \$430,000.

By 1954 the demand for water indicated that another source of supply would be needed by 1960. The North Saluda River promised to be the best source available. In 1955, a team of nine real estate men were selected by the Real Estate Board of Greenville to begin appraising each piece of property on the North Saluda River drainage area above the proposed dam site. After the appraisals were completed, this same group of nine men negotiated with the property owners for acquisition of over twenty-six square miles of the watershed. Included in the property for the North Saluda project were two motels, one hotel and the homes of nearly 800 families. There are nearly 900 deeds on file in the Water System's office covering the property purchased for this one project at a total cost of approximately \$3,000,000. The dam construction was started in 1956, the treatment plant about two years later and the forty-eight-inch pipeline from the North Saluda Reservoir to Paris Mountain followed. The project cost approximately \$11,500,000 and was placed in service in January of 1961. The capacity of the North Saluda project was 24,000,000 gallons daily, by gravity alone. In 1972 the Commission installed pumps at the treating plant, increasing the daily capacity to 70,000,000 gallons. Now the total daily pumping capacity from both Table Rock and North Saluda is 97,000,000 gallons.

In 1966, it was estimated that by 1985 additional water would be needed, and I am very proud of the fact that I participated in the early negotiations with Duke Power Company to make 100,000,000 gallons per day from their Keowee Lake for Greenville County. It was estimated at that time the Keowee Project would cost \$50,000,000, but it now appears that, due to inflation, the cost is going to total approximately \$65,000,000. Bids were taken in March, 1978, for the Lake Keowee intake structure, which later cost the lives of seven men when the cofferdam

collapsed. Another cofferdam was constructed and the intake structure is now completed above the full water level and the cofferdam has been removed. The seventy-two-inch pipeline is now under construction at a cost of \$250 per foot. A filter plant will be constructed on land already purchased adjacent to the lake, and it is planned for the whole project to be completed by 1985.

In 1969, a laboratory was constructed and fully equipped at the No. 6 Reservoir, about one mile south of Travelers Rest, where approximately 115 bacteriological tests and 370 chemical analyses are run weekly.

In 1979, as a result of an inspection by the United States Corps of Engineers, the Table Rock Dam was raised approximately six feet and the spillway enlarged at a cost of approximately \$675,000. Also in 1979, the two standpipes previously at the intersection of Pendleton and Leach streets were cut down since they had long since served their purpose.

The maximum daily consumption up to this year (1981) has been 65,000,000 gallons, with a maximum hourly demand of 93,000,000 gallons.

In the history of the Greenville Water System there has never been a water shortage, due no doubt to the farsighted vision of the Commissioners of Public Works and their management. In my fifty-one years' experience with the Water System it has been my observation that in every city that has water shortages, the water department is controlled by politicians. The Water System has paid its own way from the time it was purchased from the Paris Mountain Water Company, and is still doing so. It has never cost the taxpayers one red cent, except what they paid for the water they used.

Our water system is under the sole control of the Commissioners of Public Works who serve without compensation and pay their water bills the same as you and I. There are three commissioners who are elected and serve six-year staggered terms; and the Mayor and one member of the City Council serve as ex-officio members. I am proud to say that not one commissioner has ever been defeated when he ran for re-election. The present Commission is composed of Dr. Jack Parker, Chairman; Sam

R. Zimmerman, Vice Chairman; Mayor Jesse Helms and Councilman David Thomas, with the seat of the third elected commissioner remaining vacant at this time, due no doubt to the fact the elected commissioners and the political ex-officio members cannot agree on the successor to Dave Traxler, whose untimely death occurred some months ago.

It is beyond my comprehension to understand why the City Fathers think they should have a portion of the water system revenue when the indebtedness of the City is only \$1,370,000 in General Obligation Bonds, and the Water System indebtedness is \$33,385,000 in Revenue Bonds. It is my fervent hope that the next election will fill the vacant seat on the Commission with a person with the determination to protect the water bondholders' interest, especially since the Commission must issue another \$27,000,000 of Revenue Bonds to complete the Keowee Project.

For the fiscal year ending July 31, 1980, the Water System revenue was \$9,527,787.00. The ordinances under which the bonds are sold require the Commission to first pay all operating costs and necessary maintenance; secondly, to pay all bond interest; thirdly to meet all bond principal payments promptly; any remaining funds can be and are used in the construction of additional water system improvements.

You may wonder why the water rates must be increased from time to time. The laws of the State of South Carolina covering the issuance of Revenue Bonds require that the Commission must have sufficient revenue for a period of two years prior to selling additional bonds to pay all operating costs, interest and principal payments on all outstanding bonds, in addition to that on the bonds being sold.

The Water System is now serving water to Marietta, Travelers Rest, Mauldin, Simpsonville, Fountain Inn and Piedmont, with customers also in Greenville, Laurens, Pickens and Anderson Counties.

The Water System occupies four floors of the new City Hall, for which they paid during its construction. The System has a sophisticated computer system to handle the records of its almost 78,000 customers. The Maintenance Department occupies a shop and storeroom in a building on Mayberry Street,

along with a storage yard of about two acres. They have sixty-two automobiles and trucks and, of course, the necessary heavy equipment for the construction crews and maintenance crews.

I have endeavored to outline for you the major developments in the history of the growth of the Greenville Water System, but have not mentioned the hundreds of smaller improvements that have been going on throughout the ninety-three years of the water system's life. There has been very few days during the ninety-three years that some improvement was not underway. This water business is very demanding, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year, regardless of weather. Believe me, I've been there!

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The thoughtless man may almost turn to drink!
Where's the bargain hunter's clover?
Is the day of values over?
Just open up the faucet in your sink!
Out will come your RUNNING WATER
Maybe colder, maybe hotter;
All you want, and under pressure too!
At a bargain you are gazing
For the price is most amazing
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For a penny, soak or shower
For a quarter of an hour;
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For a beer you pay a dollar,
Even though you hadn't orte.
A hundred drinks of water cost three mills!
When it comes to sanitation,
RUNNING WATER'S made our nation
Hale and hearty for the little that we've spent.
And when you've got to go
It is comforting to know
That seven flushes cost you but a cent!
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Whether topsoil or the deeper?
Just buy a ton and shudder at the blow.
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Water's EIGHT TONS for a dollar!
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