# A History of ANN ARBOR

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influence of the German community, for it does not count those many sons and daughters who grew up speaking the language and valuing the culture of the Fatherland. One of them, Marie Rominger, born in Ann Arbor in 1863, would write a brief and proud history of the German community in 1925—and in German.

Considering that a majority of the population was female, a significant portion spoke German, and a large enclave were students, Ann Arbor was less than a typical midwestern town in the 1880s. Yet the desire not to lag behind other communities in practical improvements established it as being altogether ordinary. Thus in the early 1880s the city obtained electric lights, its first telephones, and finally, in 1885, a water system—put in place by a private company at a cost of only $4,000 (for hydrants) to the taxpayers.

Until 1885 townspeople had depended for their drinking water on wells and cisterns, with the latter also serving the needs of the fire department. Efforts to improve the water supply stretched back before the Civil War, inspired more often by the fear of serious fire—and occasional actual fires, like the ones that consumed the Misses Clark school on Fourth Avenue in 1865, or the city of Chicago in 1871—than by the threat of disease. All of these efforts had foundered, primarily because the taxpayers were unwilling to accept the cost. In 1868 and 1872 they voted down sizable bond issues ($100,000 and $80,000) to finance water works, despite a general feeling, particularly in 1872, that a new system was called for. But differences over whether such a system should be privately or publicly built, and where, in any case, it should draw its water from, regularly divided the community. Moreover, the very scale of the undertaking—"bigger than this city has ever yet gone into"—seemed to justify hesitation. It was one thing to float a $10,000 bond to assist the university or to pay a bounty, projects filling obvious and immediate needs; it was quite another for frugal citizens to contemplate a $100,000 issue to tinker with a water system that already worked. Ironically, complaints about water purity and adequate pressure were to bedevil the new system almost from the start.

Moral improvement also exercised many citizens, and as ever the focus of their concern was alcohol. By the early 1880s Ann Arbor was awash in temperance societies, with nine listed in 1882, including the Juvenile Temperance Union, whose object was "to take the little ones as soon as they are able to understand and enroll them in the temperance army." In Ann Arbor that army numbered in the several hundreds, if we accept the various societies' claims to have anywhere from thirty to three hundred members. And probably we should, for not only was there a sturdy temperance tradition in place, nurtured for a brief period by its own newspaper (*Prohibitionist*), but groups like the WCTU, with its expanding list of

Ann Arbor - The First Hundred Years
Stephenson, Ann Arbor COC (1927)
O.W.



ready apparent as early as 1906 that, in a few years, the old faithful horses would no longer be used and that motor equipment would take their places. As late as November, 1914, by a vote of 1,429 to 1,650 the citizens went on record as against the motorization of the Department. If that vote had carried favorably a disastrous fire which soon came would have been checked, and the loss that time would not have been nearly so great. On the afternoon of February 3, 1915, a fire broke out in the basement of Koch and Henne's furniture establishment. Within a short time the entire building was gutted, only the bare walls being left. The loss was approximately $60,000 with an insurance of $32,000; and there was an additional loss of several thousand dollars due to damage done to stock in the small stores in the rear of the furniture store. During the summer of 1899 when Mack and Koch occupied this building, another fire broke out occasioning a loss nearly as great as it was sixteen years later. Once more, in September, 1915, the question of motorizing the Department came up, the people at that time voting $15,000 for the purpose. Early in October a contract for $13,750 worth of motorized fire apparatus was let to the American La France Fire Engine Company for a combination hose and engine and a motor service truck. The $1,250 which remained from the $15,000 voted was expended in improving the fire station on East University avenue across from the Campus.

When Mr. Charles Andrews was made Chief of the Department, in 1907, he made a careful study of the equipment on hand and the needs of his department, comparing the local situation in these respects with those of other cities of the same size. He has received able advice and assistance from Henry W. McClaren, Charles Carroll, and Ralph R. Edwards, all of whom have been members of the Department for more than a quarter of a century. As a result of the chief's study he was able to make a number of worth while recommendations to the Council, several of which have met with favorable action. Nevertheless, the amount of money spent has not been much greater in any one year than it was in the year preceding, services of the department far outstripping the increasing costs. For the year ending March 31, 1919, the total cost of the Fire Department was $23,198.44; for the year ending March 31, 1924,



five years later, it was but $37,655.88. During this same period the number of fires had increased from a total of 256 to 266, though the city's population, exclusive of University students, increased from 18,000 to nearly 25,000.

Chief Andrews has done a great deal during the last decade to educate the public to the danger from fire, making frequent visits to the schools, especially Ann Arbor and University High Schools, where splendid instruction has been given. Moreover, he has used his influence in having passed various ordinances for protection against fire and he has been one of the leading advocates of more dependable supply of water for the city. The fire ordinances have forced people to be more careful in the matter of fires and the extension of the water system has done much to reduce the losses after the Fire Department has been called out. Even yet the city is not protected as it should be in the southeastern part of the city and a new fire station will have to be built there before many years.

**Ann Arbor had no water supply system until 1849.** Up to that time the supply of water was drawn from wells located here and there at places of convenience. The exact places where all of these wells were put down cannot now be told, but it is certain that there was one on the south side of Court House Square; one on the corner of Main and Liberty streets; one at the corner of Huron and Fifth avenue; one on the corner of Jefferson and State streets; and one somewhere near the corner of Huron and First streets. After the two professors' houses were built on the Campus, a well was put down between them, and another well was put down on the other side of the Campus.

In the issue of June 20, 1849, the *Washtenaw Whig,* one of Ann Arbor's numerous newspapers, it was stated "that it is contemplated by the Common Council to furnish Ann Arbor with water from a spring near Daniel B. Brown's residence," on South Main street. This was afterwards done, hollow tamarack logs being used for mains. This source was wholly inadequate for the needs of the community, and as the population grew it became even more so. That same year a well ninety feet deep was sunk at the southeast corner of Maynard and Liberty streets. It was walled high with stone,

and each of the fifty families it supplied was required to pay a small yearly sum to keep it in repair and for the privilege of drawing water from it. Ten years later a company was organized, $1,000 subscribed, and plans made for drilling an artesian well, but the project was not a success. Soon after the Civil War a few men got together and made arrangements for drawing water from local springs which they delivered to private residences and stores at the rate of "fifty cents a load." In 1866 a Dr. Hale built what he called a mineral springs house here. After eight or nine years he retired as superintendent of the establishment and a Dr. Cleland took over his work. On Tuesday evening of March 16, 1869, the water works committee of the Council reported in favor of erecting a pumping station and reservoir, but the matter was not submitted to the voters until December, 1872. The proposition for accepting a loan was then voted down, 574 to 232. The reasons given for this defeat were: fear of taxation; distrust of the commissioners who had the matter in charge; personal opposition to Mayor Douglas; and an antipathy to water on general principles. In the meanwhile an "Artesian Well Company" was organized, and a contract given them by the city in the summer of 1870 which called for the drilling of a well on the west side of the Court House, about opposite the present location of Mr. George Wahr's Main Street bookstore. After a year of arduous toil the company succeeded in reaching a depth of 775 feet. At different levels various liquids had been pumped up: yellow water with a trace of petroleum; water with a strong alkaline taste, and even salty water. The cost to the city after twelve month's drilling had mounted to $3,500, and still there was no prospect of a supply of good water. The Council, therefore, ordered the work stopped. To satisfy the curious a sign was placed near the drilling which informed the public that the well was 775 feet deep. Some wag came along and wrote under the sign: "and $3,500 high!" The old well on the south side of the Court House had been closed up, but now, after a few years, it was reopened, a substantial iron pump put in and many a thirst was quenched there.

But the water question would not down. It came up in 1873 and again in 1874. On August 17, of the latter year, the



Council granted the application of a private company to lay water pipes in the streets, and, October 26, after much discussion as to whether to support a privately owned or city owned system, they went on record as favoring the former. The pipes, however, were not laid, and thus the way was left open for the work of another company organized the second week in May, 1885. According to the articles of incorporation of this company the name of the organization was to be the "Ann Arbor Water Works Company," and its membership included William Birnie, Charles S. Goodhue, Alexander W. Hamilton, Thomas N. Birnie, and Alfred Birnie. This firm contracted with the Council, May 6, to build a water works for the city. Within a month the work was begun, Professor C. E. Greene of the University faculty looking after the laying of the pipes. Progress on the system was rapid, some sixteen miles of pipe being in place by the first week in November and the pumps, engine, and boilers being on the ground. On the thirtieth of that month the new Knowles pump was set going, and the next day water was pumped into the reservoir and into the mains. The first test, made December 5, was satisfactory in every way, the whole city rejoicing over the outcome of the trials. Within seven months 5,000,000 gallons were being distributed to 615 "takers." Two fine springs were discovered near Foster's Station, a mile west of the pumping plant, and from these 200,000 gallons were daily conducted through tile pipes to a catch basin, and from there it was pumped to the city. In the latter part of the summer of 1887 a new boiler was put in at the pumping station, and in December of 1888 W. T. Angell, a brother of President James B. Angell, representing the Gordon Steam Pump Company of Hamilton, Ohio, sold to the company a new pump with a daily capacity of 2,000,000 gallons.

In 1874 when the city began to consider the need for a central water supply system, the Board of Regents of the University considered a similar plant for the needs of the University. A legislative appropriation of $5,000 was secured, and the plans were carried out under the direction of Dr. Silas H. Douglas. According to these, pipes were run to a cistern near the foot of the State street hill, and other six-inch wooden and iron pipes were laid to a spring on the nearby farm of

Emanuel Mann. A tank of 40,000 gallons capacity was built near the laboratory, but before it was finished a test of the pump was made. Water was drawn from the cistern at the foot of State street hill, and though the water had to come a distance of 4,000 feet, nevertheless the pump succeeded in throwing a stream of water a distance of 126 feet.

During the summer of 1888 the old well on the south side of Court House Square was closed and sealed with masonry, after an almost continuous service of half a century. In its place was put an ornamental fountain and, as stated by the Ann Arbor *Register,* "warm, fishy water." In the summer of 1914 this fountain was removed to a site on the corner of North Main and Depot streets near the Michigan Milling Company's plant. A new fountain, called the Babcock Fountain, the gift to the city of Mr. J. J. Goodyear, was put in the place of the old one south of the Court House, and it stands there still.

As early as 1886 complaints were heard about the quality of the water supplied to the city and about the lowness of the pressure, especially during fires. These complaints became so loud in 1888 that Dr. Breakey, then city Health Officer, made an investigation of the pumping facilities and the sources of water supply. He called attention to the fact that cows switched flies in one of the streams from which the water was drawn and that all sorts of filth were emptied into it. He recommended that the streams be properly protected and that they be thoroughly cleaned. Vigorous denials were made by the company then and at every subsequent charge against them. In August, 1893, when the service of the company was being sharply attacked the water pressure in the Fire Department gauge registered a maximum of sixty pounds, but at times it went down to zero. The Water Company tried to defend itself on the ground that they constantly experienced trouble with the reservoirs and pumps. They did bestir themselves a little from time to time and made a pretense of cleaning the filth from the catch basins. A good deal of time was wasted during the next few years in discussions over the value of the Company's holdings, many believing it would be of advantage to the city to buy the property outright. In mid-summer, 1911, the Company offered their plant to the



city for a little over half a million dollars, but the city fathers thought the sum entirely too large. They countered by a decision to have the properties appraised, and at the same time decided to investigate the cost of a plant wholly new. Professor Gardner S. Williams of the University was employed for both these investigations. His report to the Council was made January 9, 1912. In this report Professor Williams gave it as his opinion that the physical properties of the Water Works Company were worth $531,934, and that the properties, business and franchise were worth all together, $600,000.

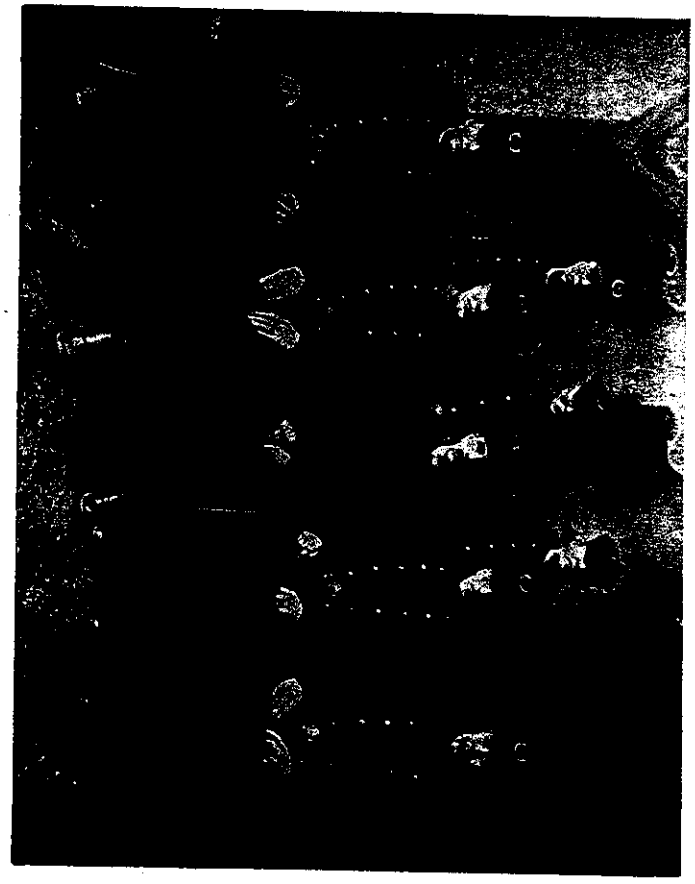
The report, printed in the *Times-News,* January 10, 1912, gave these details concerning the equipment: A distribution of forty-five and a half miles; a reservoir of 2,000,000 gallons capacity; two pumping stations with machinery of 10,000,000 gallons daily capacity; 3,630 service connections; 310 meters, 252 fire hydrants, and four stand-pipes; a water supply capable of yielding about 1,600,000 gallons daily, exclusive of that passing through the purification plant. To the mains were also connected 157 flush tanks operated by the city for the benefit of its sewer system, and four hydrants belonging to the University. Professor Williams told in detail the things necessary to make the Water Works adequate and observed that the Huron River was the only adequate water supply source for the city. When the voters, in April, expressed themselves as averse to buying the Water Works properties, new sources of supply began to be considered. In January, 1913, City Engineer Osgood reported that if five wells were used on the Steere farm they would yield 742,900 gallons daily, a splendid supplement to the supply then available. In May of that year the voters again balloted on the proposition of purchasing the local plant. Of the 1,415 votes cast 773 voted in favor of buying and 596 voted against doing so. Thus, 177 votes decided the matter and the voting of a bond issue remained. In October of that year 163 votes more than the necessary three-fifths required for issuing the bonds carried a vote in favor of a loan of $450,000 for the holdings. The controversy was at an end, but in the several years immediately preceding the attempt to solve the water problem the investigations had cost the city approximately $20,000.

Under the leadership of Dr. R. G. McKenzie, mayor, the Council chose its first Water Works Commission, composed of John Lindenschmitt and Joseph Wellman. Soon the latter resigned and his place was filled by George J. Mann. These men helped to make the preliminary arrangements for the transfer of the Water Works to the city, the formal handing over of the properties taking place in the City Hall the morning of January 31, 1914. Mayor McKenzie, Ross Granger, and Charles L. Miller, acted on behalf of the city, and Dr. A. K. Hale on behalf of the company. That night a big banquet was held in the Y. M. C. A. in celebration of the event, expressions of good will were passed and differences were forgotten.

The Water Works Commissioners soon appointed George S. Vandawarker manager of the plant. He took over his duties immediately and is still in office. After the Commission began its work and after Mr. Vandawarker entered upon his duties the management of the city's water system ran a smoother course. At that time the supplies of water were drawn from the Huron River above Barton Dam and from artesian wells on West Washington street, near Eighth street. The station at Barton Dam was called Number 1, and that on West Washington street, Number 2. In 1915 the citizens voted $8,000 for the purpose of sinking a well on the Steere farm and since that time other large sums have been voted. Construction work on the Steere farm wells was completed in July, 1919, and water began to be drawn from that source immediately, the new station being given the number 3.

It was in that year, also, 1919, that meters were installed all over the city, hours for sprinkling the streets were fixed, and the pressure in the mains regulated to meet the needs of the moment. During the years from 1915 to 1920 the total amount of water pumped into the mains steadily mounted. It rose from 1,038,445.079 gallons for the year ending February 1, 1916, to 1,539,839,575 gallons for the year ending February 1, 1919. The introduction of the meters greatly reduced the quantity of water wasted, the total amount pumped for the year ending February 1, 1920, falling down to 1,169,305,000. The next year it dropped to 929,109,000 and since then it has gone slowly upward, the total pumped for the year ending February 1, 1924, being 1,069,906,000. The rapid falling off





THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IN 1908

*TOP ROW: Left to Right, Thomas J. Blackburn (colored), Michael J. Martin, Zenas Sweet.*
*BOTTOM ROW: Mathew J. Max, Thomas O'Brien, Chief Theodore Apfel, George Schantz, and Sergeant John O'Mara*

after 1919 was not entirely due to the installation of the meters; slack times in manufacturing and business came after the close of the World War and much less water was used than had been the case when local factories were running night and day. The problem of an adequate supply of water to take care of the growth of the city still remains to be solved, but what that solution will offer only the future can tell.

Though this chapter has had to do principally with the city's water supply, and with the responsibility of protecting property and lives from fire, a closing paragraph on the Police Department will not be out of place. During the last quarter of a century the number of men in this department has been multiplied by seven, and in the matter of numbers the end is not yet in sight. In 1900 there were but four men in the organization, including the Chief, whereas at present, with the introduction of the eight-hour shift, there are twenty-eight, including the Chief. In 1907 Mayor Henderson added two men as did both Mayors Walz and McKenzie. The number was increased to fifteen by Mayor Wurster and Mr. Thomas O'Brien, who had come into the department in 1907 and who was then Acting Chief, was made Chief. Mayors Lewis and Campbell added enough to bring the Department up to twenty-one, and now there is one member of the force to every one thousand of the city's population, from two to three additional men being necessary on account of the student population.

After the World War the responsibilities of the Department increased. This was due to three things: the slight increase of crime in the city; widening residence areas; and the more general use of automobiles. It became necessary to have two motorcycle police spend most of their time in riding, and, at night, to properly police the residence sections, a scout car manned by two policemen became necessary. Every night of the year this scout car holds up for investigation from five to twenty or more automobiles. The men in the Department as now constituted are of splendid quality, they are giving the city a degree of protection second to none, and their activities are such as to cause the citizens to feel an honest pride in their work.

# CHAPTER XX

# Gas and Light

ANN Arbor's first homes were lighted by the flames from the fireplace and from the feeble glow of the lard lamps. For many years lamps of this description were advertised in local stores, though today they are not remembered even by the oldest inhabitant. The idea of lighting homes by gas was much in the minds of people in the early 'fifties; but it was not until April 1, 1858 that Dr. Silas H. Douglas organized the Ann Arbor Gas Company. The organization was partially perfected in 1861, no further change coming until 1889 when the franchise was renewed for another thirty years. The original capital was but $60,000. In 1889, however, this was increased to $100,000, in 1912 to $200,000, and some time later to $500,000. Such records as are available fail to reveal the exact date when the manufacture of gas commenced, but we do know that in 1873 the cost to manufacture per thousand feet was $3.56.

About the time of the Civil War oil lamps began to be used here, both in private homes and for lighting the streets. The oil for the street lamps was purchased by the city and a man was hired to go about and light the lamps. In 1878 the number of street lights had grown until the city boasted a total of ninety-nine. That year a change came in the method of caring for the lamps. A Mr. E. Duffy was awarded a contract for $950 for which he agreed to furnish supplies and light the lamps. According to this arrangement the city hoped to save fifty-three cents per lamp each year, but the way was left open for any improvements which might come. Tuesday night, April 13, 1880, the Council awarded a contract to Charles K. Leonard and Charles Wheeler, of Ypsilanti, for substituting the Belden gas vapor lights for the oil lamps used in the city streets. These men agreed to take all the street lamps previously used for oil, put on the new attachments, furnish gasolene, light and extinguish the gas, keep