

DeLand Fire Sparked Establishment of Village Water Works – Part Two

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

After three fires in little more than twelve hours in February of 1893, residents knew the village needed protection only a water works system could provide. A Water Commission was quickly elected, and engineer Walter F. Randle of Syracuse was hired. The Commission directed Randle to design a system, both for fire protection and for the convenience of residents and business owners, who relied on basement cisterns fed by rain gutters or private wells for their water. The proposal would require a vote of support from property owners.



The original 1893 water tower is visible on the hill behind this house at 155 South Main Street in this early photograph, provided by Dale Davis.

By June a plan had been hatched for Fairport's municipal water supply. A site would be selected for the construction of wells within or near the village. Costs were estimated for a pumping station, a "standpipe" (water tower), fire hydrants, excavation, other equipment and engineering costs. Randle estimated the total expense would be under \$40,000. A vote was held at Shaw's Hall to decide the matter, and when the results were tallied, Fairport was one step closer to having a modern water supply system.

The firm of Burton & Crone of Honeoye Falls was hired to dig a test well on property owned by James Jennings on John Street, today's Lift Bridge Lane. Soon several wells were put in place, Jennings was bought out, and the buildings on the property, a barn, wagon shed and ice house, were sold at auction and removed. Today's location of the Fairport Municipal

Commission and Fairport Electric is directly related to the 1893 decision to dig the wells on the Jensen property.



Positioned adjacent to Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Fairport's first water tower was erected in 1893 as part of the village's first municipal water works system. The tower can be seen just above the woman on the left in this early photograph, taken near the bottom of the Summit Street hill.

The Continental Construction Company won the contract for installing the water works, including eight miles of pipe, 68 fire hydrants, and a standpipe with a capacity of 300,000 gallons. A lot was purchased from H.P. Wilbur at the top of Summit Street, chosen as the best location for the standpipe. As for workers to excavate and install the system, on September 14th of 1893, the Monroe County Mail announced that “three hundred Italians are expected Saturday and will be quartered on Parce Avenue. A car load of provisions for them has already arrived.”

The first pipes were laid on Main and Church Streets, with William Newman's new house at 11 West Church reportedly the first to connect to the system. The standpipe on Summit Street, 72 feet in height and made of iron, was constructed and painted by early November. The new system worked well, and provided gravity-induced pressure for both fire protection and property owners. The standpipe did its job for 38 years, when it was replaced by the water tower most are familiar with today.

Conclusion: The second and last water tower on Summit Street

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