

CROTON WATER AND THE MANHATTAN LANDMARKS

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever considered the financial cost, sustained political will, engineering achievement, multi-disciplinary effort, and physical labor involved in bringing potable water to a simple faucet? One might be tempted to reason that, in our 21st century world, clean water is a universal commodity. However, according to the World Health Organization's Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 Report, an estimated one-sixth of the world's population - 1.1 billion people - were without access to adequate, reliable and safe water supplies.¹

Fortunately, such is not New York City's reality today. Two hundred years ago, however, the City's residents suffered grave consequences from a lack of water. Much of the published literature focuses on the four W's: when, where, why and for whom the system was built, rather than on the actual physical remains. Although these subjects are a critical part of the narrative, the disparate literature that does exist rarely brings together all the different built elements of the first and second Croton water campaigns in Manhattan – the bridges, towers, gatehouses, reservoirs, and fountains.

Let's begin with some general facts about the system itself. According to New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, it is the world's oldest continually running water supply. As a regional system, covering 2,000 square miles, water is sourced from 125 miles away via the New Croton, Catskill, and Delaware watersheds, 19 principal reservoirs, six balancing reservoirs, and three controlled lakes with a total storage capacity of 550 billion gallons.

Currently served by two water tunnels, a third sixty-mile long tunnel is under construction six hundred feet below sidewalk level. When completed, the \$6 billion public project will deliver 1.3 billion gallons of water a day to nine million people. City Tunnel 3 is one of the nation's largest and most complex public works projects ever attempted.²

EARLY WATER SUPPLIES IN MANHATTAN

In the colonial period, New York City's water supply was considerably less sophisticated. Residents fetched their own water from wells and pumps on the streets, used rain water run-off collected in private cisterns, paid for water from the privately owned Tea Water Pump or, made purchases from horse-drawn carts which circulated through the city. They also relied on the Collect Pond, whose demise illustrates New Yorker's reliance on increasingly unsafe water quite clearly.

The Collect Pond was a natural marshy basin roughly bounded by modern Franklin, Worth, Lafayette and Baxter Streets. It was a place for residents to wash laundry, fetch buckets of drinking water, and, for an increasing number of commercial interests to channel their waste products. Carcasses of horses, dogs, and cats, and even murder victims, were to be found under the water's surface. By 1800, the Collect Pond, formerly known as the Fresh Water Pond, was branded „a

¹ See http://www.who.int/docstore/water_sanitation_health/Globalassessment

² See Building Big Databank: New York Third Water Tunnel at www.pbs.org; New York Water Clock at <http://nyc.24.jrn.columbia.edu>; „Celebrating New York City's Clean Drinking Water“ at www.nyc.gov/dep; and Greenberg, [Waterworks](#), 2.

shocking hole...foul with excrement, frog-spawn, and reptiles“ by a contributor to the *Daily Advertiser*.³

Additionally, without indoor plumbing, or modern sewerage systems, effluvia was discharged into the streets, canals, and the East and Hudson Rivers. Not surprisingly, these unsanitary conditions provided the perfect breeding ground for waves of yellow fever, cholera and typhoid outbreaks, which claimed thousands of lives in the year 1798 alone.⁴ Faced with such a health crisis, New York City could not afford to avoid the water issue. Epidemic disease registered as a disruption in mercantile operations with shuttered businesses, the flight of merchants to Harlem or Greenwich, and the decimation of immigrant labor forces. Additionally, not having reliable and sufficient water was dangerous, as fires wrecked havoc by destroying precious imported and local goods, jobs, businesses, and valuable real estate, prompting costly insurance claims.

THE MANHATTAN COMPANY: CIVIC AIMS VS. FISCAL GAINS

Early in 1799, State Assemblyman Aaron Burr successfully convinced the City’s local government (Common Council) to permit the State to decide how New York’s water system would be financed. By April, thanks in part to Mr. Burr’s maneuvering, the State Senate and Assembly had passed „An Act for supplying the City of New York with pure and wholesome water.“⁵ In addition to the bill’s civic mandate, which essentially created the city’s first public utility, an unusual paragraph granted the newly incorporated Manhattan Company power to „employ all such surplus capital as may belong or accrue to the said company in the purchase of public or other stock, or in any other monied transactions not inconsistent with the constitution and laws of this state or of the United States, for the sole benefit of the said company.“⁶ Given unprecedented powers to provide both a municipal waterworks and perform banking operations, the Company’s priority was making money, rather than providing water.

Such were the origins of the Manhattan Company, precursor of the modern financial empire known as J. P. Morgan Chase. Soon after incorporation, the Company organized a water committee and in May 1799, it adopted the economical plan of sinking yet another well within the City, rather than risking the more significant financial burden of bringing water from the Bronx River.

The Manhattan Company constructed a new reservoir, on Chambers Street between Center Street and Broadway, whose façade was crowned by a figure of the sea god Oceanus, holding a vase overflowing with water, supported by four Doric columns.⁷ Despite one engineer’s recommendation that New York needed 3,000,000 gallons daily, the Company chose to the more economical route of a smaller, 132,000 gallon capacity reservoir.⁸ As water historian Gerard Koepfel states aptly, „If there wasn’t much water behind the walls, at least the reservoir was pleasing to the eye.“⁹

The restrictive access terms the Manhattan Company imposed on its water customers made it clear that share-holder profit, and not civic high-mindedness, was paramount. One anonymous water

³ The site of the former Collect Pond has been re-invented as today’s Foley Square, an isolated island of pavement opposite the Court House, that is under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department. Dedicated in 2000, the Square features a fountain titled „Triumph of the Human Spirit,“ designed by sculptor Lorenzo Pace.

⁴ There are differing reports about the concise numbers of lives lost during the 1798 cholera outbreak. Gerard Koepfel, in his book *Water for Gotham*, includes a number exceeding 2,000. Edwin Burrows and Michael Wallace, in their book *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* cite 2,086 lives lost.

⁵ For a more detailed description of Mr. Burr’s campaign to get the Act passed, see Koepfel, p. 70-101.

⁶ See *Laws of the State of New York*, 22nd Session, ch. 134, p. 816.

⁷ The same reclining Oceanus figure, sculpted by Eli Nadelman in 1929, formerly decorated the entrance to the Chase Manhattan Company’s offices at 40 Wall Street. See Henry Hope Reed Jr., *The Golden City*, p. 28.

⁸ *The Minutes of the Manhattan Company* intimate the choice of corporate frugality over civic satisfaction: the December 30, 1799 *Minutes* call for a 250,000 gallon reservoir, and the April 21, 1800 *Minutes* discuss a 100,000 reservoir.

⁹ See Koepfel p. 99.

drinker wrote: „I have no doubt that the one cause of the numerous stomach afflictions so common in this city is the impure, I may say poisonous nature of the pernicious Manhattan water which thousands of us daily and constantly use. It is true the unpalatableness of this abominable fluid prevents almost every person from using it as a beverage at the table, but you will know that all the cooking of a very large portion of this community is done through the agency of this common nuisance. Our tea and coffee are made of it, our bread is mixed with it, and our meat and vegetables are boiled with it. Our linen happily escapes the contamination of its touch, „for no two things hold more antipathy“ than soap and this vile water.“¹⁰

Over the next forty-three years, only one third of New York City, south of Pearl Street on the east side, and south of Grand Street on the west side, was ever serviced by the Manhattan Company's water system.¹¹

NEW YORK'S WATERWORKS IN CONTEXT

As a growing metropolis, New York wasn't alone when it came to abominable sanitary conditions, unpalatable and unreliable water supplies, uncontrolled sewerage, and recurrent outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. Nor was it alone when it came to agitating for improved civic commitments to address these issues. New Yorkers were certainly aware of their domestic and global neighbors' water reforms, particularly the Fairmount Works in Philadelphia (1810), the Cochituate Works in Boston (1848), and the campaigns of the Metropolitan Board of Works in London (1860's).

PRELUDE TO A TAKE OVER

Returning to Manhattan, where the water situation continued to worsen, there was a growing consensus among its residents that the Manhattan Company had violated its charter of incorporation, by providing only a portion of the City with an unreliable water supply rather than providing the entire City with a reliable water supply.¹²

Responding to a March 1829 report about the inadequacy of the Company's water supply to meet fire-fighting needs, the Common Council took matters into its own hands and ordered the construction of a new reservoir, outfitted with a 233,000 gallon tank, at the north side of 13th Street east of Fourth Avenue (now Bowery). The Council then appropriated \$1,000 in 1832 for an inquiry into providing fresh water – the report recommended that water be procured from the Croton River in Westchester County. In February 1833, the State Legislature passed „An Act for the Appointment of Commissioners in Relation to Supplying the City of New York with Pure and Wholesome Water“ and authorized the creation of a New York State Water Commission.

TAKING ACTION: THE FIRST & SECOND CROTON CAMPAIGNS

Citing health and safety crises, the City seized control over the fate of its water supply from the Manhattan Company in February 1835. The Common Council was bolstered by overwhelming public support in its agenda to control the water system's future: an April 1835 referendum garnered a 3 to 1 majority vote for the Croton water project. The State legislature authorized \$2.5 million in bonds to fund the ambitious campaign, which sought to tap the upstate Croton River, negotiate

¹⁰ I. N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island 1498 to 1909, I: 472.

¹¹ See Church, A Short History, B-12.

¹² Church, David. A Short History of Water Supply and Waste Disposal in New York City with reference to Wall Street. Cultural Resources Survey Testing and Mitigation Phases, 60 Wall Street Site, New York City. Section X: Appendices A-F, Binder 1, B14. An 1830 Common Council special committee, chaired by Alderman Samuel Stevens, concluded that the Manhattan Company was not complying with its charter of supplying the City with „pure and wholesome water.“ In State Supreme Court, Democratic Attorney General Greene C. Bronson sued the Manhattan Company in October 1830 in an attempt to dissolve the Company's charter, arguing that the surplus capital gained from water customers and diverted to banking operations could not be applied to purposes other than water because the Company had failed to provide sufficient water in the first place. See Koepfel, Water for Gotham, p. 140.

settlements with affected landowners, build a dam, construct 41 miles of masonry-enclosed conduit, build a bridge and two reservoirs, and construct a distribution system.

By July 1835, pre-construction surveys were underway. Chief Engineer John B. Jervis was inspired by nothing less than the monumental pyramids of the ancient pharaohs. Choosing the Egyptian Revival style, Jervis hoped that his new waterworks would command a similar awe, as though they had been commissioned by Ramses himself.¹³

Soon after the first Croton Aqueduct was completed, soaring population growth, rapid development, wastage of available water, and the arrival of flush toilets significantly increased the pressure on New York City's over-extended system. The failure of supply to meet demand prompted modifications to the Old Aqueduct infrastructure before a Commission was established to build a New Aqueduct. Legislated in 1883, the New Croton Aqueduct was operational by 1890 while still under construction, serving 1.5 million people.¹⁴

THE MANHATTAN LANDMARKS THEMSELVES

Much can be learned about the Croton Aqueduct campaigns by examining the remaining works in Manhattan, documenting the demolished works, and witnessing the impact of the subterranean channel on the urban fabric at street-level. A virtual tour begins at the point of origin, where Croton water first reached Manhattan, at the island's northeastern edge, and the water's path can be detected all the way south to City Hall Park.

HIGH BRIDGE

Of necessity, the 1835 Croton Aqueduct plan anticipated carrying Westchester water across the Harlem River into Manhattan. The problem was what form the crossing should take. One engineer recommended an inverted siphon resting on a low bridge as the most cost-effective solution, a contract for which was let in 1838. The Water Commission and the Board of Aldermen, however, „preferred (the) architectural display“ of the high bridge design which offered the least obstruction to navigation on the River. Work on the low bridge was halted by a lawsuit filed by residents whose land would be affected by the construction.¹⁵ In May 1839, the State Legislature's resolution authorized one of two options: either construct a tunnel under the river, or build a high bridge. Jervis submitted drawings for the High Bridge and contracts for this design were let in August 1839.

Even before its completion, Jervis's assistant engineer Fayette B. Tower proclaimed „We are now building a work that will stand as a monument to the genius and enterprise of the age.“¹⁶ Modeled after ancient Roman aqueducts, Jervis's design was engineered to be as light and strong as possible. Consisting of 15 monumental granite arches, the bridge supported two 36“ diameter pipes laid on its deck. Until it was completed in 1848, temporary pipes supported by cofferdams carried water across the span to Manhattan. In 1860, the Common Council appropriated funding for an additional 90 ½“ diameter pipe to rest on top of the previous two, at which time the side walls were raised and the deck was modified to become a pedestrian walkway.

¹³ See Duncan, The Hidden Flow of History, p. 1.

¹⁴ The Legislature passed „An Act to provide new reservoirs, dams, and a new aqueduct, with the appurtenances thereto, for the purpose of supplying the City of New York with an increased supply of pure and wholesome water,“ (Chapter 490 of the Laws of 1883) on June 1, 1883. See Wegmann, Edward. The Water Supply of the City of New York 1658-1895. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1896, p.110.

¹⁵ See Wegmann pgs. 37-40.

¹⁶ See Duncan, The Hidden Flow of History, p. 6.

On February 3, 1917, when the City's water supply was already fed by underground tunnels¹⁷ and the United States entered World War I, the Water Commission decided to shut down the aqueduct. By the 1920's, concerns were raised about the obstruction the arches posed to large vessels trying to navigate the River and, in response, the New York City Board of Plant and Structures proposed to demolish it. The public outcry over the possibility of losing the bridge was articulated in a 1923 Scientific American magazine editorial, which called the proposal "an act of vandalism without precedent in the history of our country." Fortunately, a compromise solution was brokered whereby five of the central arches were replaced with a single steel span at a cost of \$1 million.

Closed to the public since 1960, designated a New York City landmark in 1970, and still suffering from over thirty years of deferred maintenance, the Parks Department is considering plans to restore the Highbridge as part of a \$30 million rehabilitation effort.¹⁸ Today, despite the alterations made to its structure over time, the High Bridge remains the most readily visible landmark of the Croton campaigns and is the oldest remaining bridge connecting Bronx and Manhattan Boroughs.

HIGHBRIDGE WATER TOWER

Eighteen years after the High Bridge was completed, the City acquired land adjacent to the River for a reservoir and pumping station in 1866. The intention was provide a booster tower that would improve and equalize water pressure from Upper Manhattan all the way south to Murray Hill.

John Jervis, to whom the design of the tower is attributed, may have drawn inspiration from Italian campaniles. Completed in 1872, the Romanesque Revival style octagonal tower features a rough-cut stone base and shaft rising 400 feet above the River.

In 1934, the site came under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department. The reservoir was discontinued from use and converted into a swimming pool. In 1958, the pumping station was removed from the tower and the Altman Foundation installed an electronic carillon in the belfry. Designated a landmark in 1967, the tower caught fire in 1984, prompting a \$900,000 Parks-funded restoration. Despite its adapted use as a bell tower, this picturesque architectural monument continues to lend an impression of impregnability and complements the materials and architectural style commonly found in the built works of the Croton campaigns.

AQUEDUCT ROUTE SOUTH OF HIGHBRIDGE PARK

From Highbridge Tower, the aqueduct followed a southbound route, cutting diagonally across the otherwise rectilinear streetgrid, and, in keeping with the system's gravity-fed mechanics, the channel mirrors the landscape's gradient slope. The water's subsurface path is immediately recognizable to the observant pedestrian. The oddly shaped foundations on the lots adjacent to the sub-grade conduit rose to produce sharply angled facades and chamfered corners for many of these 19th century buildings precisely because their foundations could not rest on the conduit channel.

¹⁷ A tunnel located 300 feet below high water was excavated under the Harlem River as part of the 2nd Croton Campaign. See Wegmann p.117.

¹⁸ Since the late 1990's, city officials have begun to reconsider re-opening the High Bridge walkway. The Parks Department plans the following rehabilitation projects on the High Bridge: (1) a \$30 million project to repair the main span. The work would focus on peeling paint, corrosion, loose mortar and frozen expansion joints, and would be funded by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP), and other state and Federal agencies; (2) a \$6 million project to rehabilitate the existing stairways, build new bicycle ramps, and install soft floodlights on the span. The walkway ultimately would connect to the recently created Old Croton Aqueduct State Park. No construction dates have been set for these projects. Reopening the span would require a safety inspection, estimated at \$1.1 million. The last detailed inspection in 1986 showed that the bridge was safe for pedestrian travel. See www.nycroads.com

Proceeding south on Amsterdam Avenue, the water veers along a diagonal southwest path at 162nd Street towards St. Nicholas Avenue, and then turns southwest again onto Convent Avenue before returning to Amsterdam. South of Amsterdam and 106th Street, the conduit followed a southward path along Columbus Avenue until 92nd Street before reaching the Reservoir in Central Park.¹⁹

GATEHOUSES

The first Croton system was served by gatehouses at 142nd, 135th, and 119th Streets, all in the middle of 10th Avenue (current Amsterdam Avenue). During the construction of the second Croton campaign, one-story Romanesque Revival style gatehouses, built of granite, replaced these earlier structures. Today, gatehouses at West 135th, 119th and 113th Streets still punctuate the water's southbound route.²⁰ These utilitarian buildings served the necessary function of regulating water flow and providing maintenance access to the aqueduct tunnel below.

135th Street Gatehouse

This gatehouse was designed by F. S. Cook, Assistant Engineer, and built in 1887. Designated a landmark in 1981, the Department of Environmental Protection transferred jurisdictional ownership to the Department of General Services in 1991. Unoccupied since 1984, the building may be rehabilitated as a theatre by Ohlhausen DuBois Architects with funding from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. Unfortunately, there is no active construction work on-site.

119th Street Gatehouse

This gatehouse, designed by George W. Birdsall, chief engineer of the Croton Aqueduct, was completed in 1894-95. Designated a landmark in 1999, it is also not in use.

113th Street Gatehouse

The 113th Street gatehouse was acquired from the City in a 1993 auction by the Amsterdam Nursing Home, and was renovated as an Adult Day Care Center by Geddis Partnership Architects.²¹ In keeping with a restrictive covenant, much of the historic exterior features were preserved. The gatehouse does not have landmarks status.

RECEIVING AND DISTRIBUTING RESERVOIRS

York Hill Receiving Reservoir and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir in Central Park

Croton water reached two Reservoirs that would later lie within the bounds of Central Park. Situated between 79th and 86th Streets, the York Hill Reservoir consisted of a 55-acre basin capable of holding 180 million gallons when it was completed in 1842. Water first entered the Reservoir on June 27th and underground pipes fed the water south to the Murray Hill distributing reservoir.

In 1862, a second, 105-acre Reservoir called Lake Manhatta was constructed with a 1 billion gallon storage capacity. Renamed the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir, its water was distributed to the City until 1993. At its southern and northern edges, familiar one-story gatehouses can still be seen.²²

In 1925, the York Hill Reservoir was discontinued from service, and in 1940, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Robert Moses ordered the basin to be drained and in-filled to create the Great

¹⁹ The conduit at 85th Street was replaced by a new connection at 92nd Street in 1865. See Wegmann, p.77.

²⁰ A one-story Junction gatehouse at 92nd Street and Ninth Avenue no longer exists. See Wegmann, p.67.

²¹ For a lengthier discussion of the deed transfer, redevelopment pressures and subsequent alterations of the 113th Street gatehouse, see Duncan p. 12.

²² A submerged fountain in the reservoir was re-activated in August 1998, as part of the City's celebration to commemorate the initiation of Stage 1 of City Tunnel No. 3, and again on July 18, 2003, to celebrate Central Park's 150th anniversary. Initially activated in October 1917, the fountain was constructed to celebrate the completion of the Catskill water supply system's newly built reservoir – the Ashokan Reservoir, and the dedication of the City's first water tunnel. See www.nyc.gov/html/dep.

Lawn.²³ Evidence of the 1842 Reservoir's walls can still be found at the 86th Street transverse, and at the western edge of the Great Lawn, particularly near the Delacorte Theatre, where the tops of the stone walls are still partially visible.

Murray Hill Distributing Reservoir

Conduit connected the Receiving Reservoirs to the Distributing Reservoir in Murray Hill. When completed in 1842, it was an imposing monolith near the busy intersection of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. Designed by James Renwick, Jr. in the Egyptian Revival style, its 45-foot high granite walls created a vast, fortified appearance. The Reservoir consisted of two holding tanks with a capacity of 24 million gallons. While pedestrians and carriages navigated a route around the Reservoir, those interested in a view could climb a stair to the summit, and stroll the perimeter.²⁴

Discontinued from use in 1890, the Reservoir was demolished in 1899-1900 and became the site of the Beaux-Arts style New York Public Library, designed by Carrère & Hastings.. Almost a hundred years later, the Library engaged the firm of Davis Brody Bond to design an addition to provide additional public program space and administrative offices. During construction of the South Court Building, remnants of the Library's past were revealed. A corner segment of a historic wall, made from stone salvaged during the Reservoir's demolition was exposed, cleaned, and incorporated into the new design. In addition, portions of what may also be displaced stone from the Reservoir remain in the sub-terranean stacks below.

CELEBRATIONS

With fresh, reliable water no longer a pipe dream, and having already celebrated the water's arrival at the York Hill and Murray Hill reservoirs, the Common Council paid for two fountains to be built in Union Square and City Hall Parks to celebrate the arrival of Croton water. Under construction by September, the fountains became the centerpieces of the Festival of Connection ceremonies held on October 14, 1842.

On the appointed day, a 100-gun salute heralded a 50-foot plume of water emerging for the first time from the City Hall Park Fountain. The festivities included a parade from Bowling Green to Union Square, accompanied by an Ode commissioned for the occasion. Diarist Philip Hone wrote: „Nothing is talked of or thought of in New York but Croton water. Fountains, aqueducts, hydrants and hose attract our attention and impede our progress through the streets... Water! Water! Is the universal note which is sounded through every part of the city, and infuses joy and exultation into the masses!“

Today, neither the original City Hall Park nor Union Square Park fountains remain. The Jacob Wrey Mould Fountain, which was relocated to City Hall Park, was initially part of an 1870-redesign campaign.²⁵ Featuring a granite basin with semi-circular pools on each side and a central cascade, it was recently restored and re-dedicated by Mayor Giuliani in October 1999.

²³ One source notes that displaced material from the demolition of buildings on the future site of Rockefeller Center, as well as stone from the excavation of the site, were used to fill in the York Hill Reservoir. See www.centralparknyc.org/virtualpark

²⁴ Festivities to celebrate the arrival of water to the Murray Hill reservoir occurred in the morning of July 4, 1842, and featured a 45-canon salute. That day, 25,000 New Yorkers visited the reservoir, each receiving a glass of ice-chilled Croton water. See Koeppel p. 275-276.

²⁵ The Jacob Wrey Mould Fountain was relocated from City Hall Park in 1920 and transported to the Crotona Park in the Bronx. The Crane Fountain, featuring Frederick MacMonnies sculpture Civic Virtue was erected in City Hall Park before being relocated to Queens Borough Hall in 1941. The Crane Fountain was in turn displaced by the Delacorte Fountain, designed by M. Paul Freidberg and Partners, in the 1970's. See New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission [African Burial Ground and The Commons Historic District Designation Report](#), February 1993, pgs. 25 and 31.

CONCLUSIONS

Over twenty years after the first campaign's completion, a third fountain was erected in Central Park's Bethesda Terrace to celebrate the arrival of Croton water. Following a pyramidal, tripartite composition, Emma Stebbins' centerpiece was the Angel of the Waters, an eight-foot high neoclassical winged bronze angel, cast in Munich and inspired by the Gospel of John.²⁶ Carrying a lily in one hand (symbol of purity) and extending her other hand to bless the waters below, the Angel is supported by four four-foot statues personifying Temperance, Purity, Health and Peace.

Although the Bethesda Fountain communicated an overtly religious message, there is no question that the arrival of fresh water in New York City in the 19th century was miraculous, even in a secular way. Bostonian Lydia Child wrote „Oh, who that has not been shut up in the great prison-cell of a city, and made to drink of its brackish springs, can estimate the blessings of the Croton Aqueduct? Clean, sweet, abundant water!“²⁷

For those involved in the Aqueduct's construction, the epic achievement of bringing water to Manhattan overshadowed all others. Assistant engineer Fayette B. Tower wrote in his Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct, „It is unnecessary to speak further of the objects which are calculated to interest the visitor to this part of the country: we would only invite the stranger who visits the City of New York to go forth and visit her noble Aqueduct; when he has become acquainted with the magnitude and grandeur of its construction, then he may turn aside for prospects to admire and incidents to interest.“

The unifying message of the remaining landmarks in the Croton Aqueduct system today is permanence, utilitarianism, and strength. The Egyptian and Romanesque Revival styles communicated the values of practicality and pragmatism of these municipal works to 19th century residents. The celebratory fountains commissioned by the City reminded New Yorkers to rejoice in the Croton's precious supply. Today, water is still a precious resource in New York City. With its large population, dense development, complex infrastructure, and changing civic agendas, water conservation and long-range sustainability are priorities in New York. Despite their nullified presence in the current water system, where they have in some cases been covered over, demolished, or converted to other uses, the built elements of the Croton campaigns continue to remind us of civic commitment and achievement on a grand scale. For these landmarks to continue to speak to us, as well as future generations, it is necessary that the City's water heritage be recognized, celebrated, and preserved. Thank you.

²⁶ Gospel of St. John, Chapter 5, Verses 2-4: „Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool, called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of sick, blind, lame, and crippled.“ The water of the scriptural Bethesda pool was commonly known for its restorative powers.

²⁷ Koeppe p. X.

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