



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Boston Water Works Collection

NMAH.AC.1117

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2011

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Boston Water Works Collection
Date:	1895-1932
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1117
Creator:	Vogel, Robert M. Boston Water Works
Extent:	0.3 Cubic feet (5 Boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection consists of cyanotype and silver gelatin photographs, print negatives, publications, stamps, and a glass plate negative, documenting the Metropolitan Water Works during its construction.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was acquired by Curator Robert Vogel, Division of Work and Industry, National Museum of American History, 1964-1965.

Provenance

In April 1964, Harry H. Catching of Louisville Kentucky contacted the MDC Water Division asking for permission to build an operating scale model of the Chestnut Hill Leavitt Engine. During his visit to Boston to photograph the Leavitt Engine in October 1964, he was given a tour of both the High and Low Service Pumping Stations. It was on this tour that he saw dry plate negatives.

Catching notified Robert M. Vogel, Curator of Heavy Machinery for the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. On October 16, 1964, Harold J. Toole, the director of the Water Division received a letter from Vogel requesting permission of the transfer of the collection of negatives to the Smithsonian Museum of American History. In a letter dated November 4, 1964, from Toole to MDC Commissioner Robert F. Murphy, Vogel asked the Commission to loan this collection to the Smithsonian Institution. On November 5th the Commission voted in favor of the Smithsonian Institution's request of the negatives. On November 6th Toole informed Vogel that the negatives of real estate photographs pertaining to the Waschuset Reservoir and Aqueduct may not be of interest to the Institution. Soon after Vogel recommended that the entire collection be shipped to the Institution where they would go through and select and set aside negatives documenting real estate value and return them to MDC. Toole agreed to this but William J. Cooke, Superintendent of Pumping Stations, was instructed to inspect the collection for any real estate negatives and to remove them before shipment; this decision contributed to the poor condition of those plates were removed from the Institution shipment.

In early December two-thirds of the collection of dry plate negatives was transported to the Smithsonian Institution. When the Institution received the collection arrived, Vogel was

astonished at how significant and important in the collection was. In July 1965, the remainder of the dry plate negatives was shipped to the the Institution.

The original images were created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts between 1895 and 1921, and the cyanotype and silver gelatin photographs were contact-printed by the Smithsonian Institution Office of Imaging and Printing Services between 1965 and 1990. During the time this collection was loaned to the Smithsonian Institution at the request of curator Robert M. Vogel. The prints were transferred to the Archives Center in 2007 by the Division of Work and Industry.

Location of Originals

Massachusetts State Archives holds the original glass plate negatives.

Related Materials

Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Archives

Metropolitan Water Works photograph collection, 1876-1930 (bulk 1895-1921)

Series includes photographic documentation of the Boston Water Board's construction between 1890 and 1895, representing the Hopkinton Reservoir and Dam, and Sudbury Reservoir and Dam; and the photographic documentation of the Metropolitan Water Works system through three successive state agencies between 1895 and 1926.

Processing Information

Processed by William John Callahan Jr., (Intern), March, 2011; Supervised by Vanessa Bouchard Simmons, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Boston Water Works Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research use. Researchers must handle unprotected photographs with gloves.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical

In 1846, the city of Boston established the first municipal water utility in order to maintain and operate the Cochituate Water Works, known as the Boston Water Commissioners. In 1850, the Cochituate Water Board is established. In 1865, the Mystic Water Board was established. In 1875 the Cochituate Water Board and Mystic Water Board merge to create the Boston Water Board. Later in 1895, the Boston Water Board was abolished, which lead to the establishment of the Metropolitan Water Board, resulting in the transfer of maintenances and operations of the Boston Water Board to the Metropolitan Water Board as well as the Spot Pond Water Works of the towns of Melrose, Malden and Medford. The Boston Water Board then became known as the Boston Water Department. In 1901, the Metropolitan Water Board merged with the Board of Metropolitan Sewerage Commissioners to form the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board. In 1919, the Metropolitan Park Commission merges with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board to form the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC).

Source

Historical note was provided courtesy of: Sean M. Fisher, Archivist, DCR Archives, Office of Cultural Resources, Bureau of Planning and Resource Protection, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, 251 Causeway St., Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114-2119

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of four series. Series 1, Cyanotype photographs and Series 2, Cyanotype photographs contain a total 877 cyanotype photographs.

Series 3, contains 128 silver gelatin photographs, 14 print negatives.

Series 4, contains one glass plate negative, two stamps and two publications.

The material's from 1895 to 1919. The material is arranged by number.

Overall the cyanotype photographs are in good condition while some show signs of water damage. Images depict different installations of the Boston Waterworks system, views of pumping stations being installed and in operation as well as views of water mains. The first publication relates to the Metropolitan District Water supply tunnel from the Ware River to the Wachusett Reservoir and the second publication relates to the Boston Society of Civil Engineers excursion to water supply from the Metropolitan District, October 22, 1932. The stamps were used to label the cyanotype photographs with the name of the collection, date it was received, and the museum division name.

Arrangement

The Collection is organized into three series.

Series 1: Cyanotype Photographs, 1897-1919

Series 2: Silver Gelatin Photographs, 1896-1921

Series 3: Glass Plate Negative, Stamps, and Publications, 1932

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Dams -- Massachusetts
- Pumping stations
- Tunnels -- Massachusetts
- Water supply -- Massachusetts
- Water tunnels -- Massachusetts
- Water utilities -- Massachusetts
- Water-supply engineering -- Massachusetts
- Water-supply engineers -- Massachusetts
- Waterworks -- Massachusetts

Types of Materials:

- Later prints
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- 1890-1900
- Photographs -- Black-and-white photoprints -- 1900-1950

Places:

Boston (Mass.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Cyanotype Photographs (52-7599/Unidentified), 1897-1919

Box 1, Folder 1	52-308, Undated
Box 1, Folder 2	600-699
Box 1, Folder 3	1000-1099
Box 1, Folder 4	1109-1199, March 1897 - June 1897
Box 1, Folder 5	4823-4898, January 1903 - March 1903
Box 1, Folder 6	4900-4998, March 1903 - May 1903
Box 1, Folder 7	5000-5090, May 1903 - June 1903
Box 1, Folder 8	5109-5199, June 1903 - August 1903
Box 1, Folder 9	5210-5299, August 1903 - October 1903
Box 1, Folder 10	5605-5699, August 1904 - October 1904
Box 2, Folder 1	5700 - 5799, October 1904 - August 1904
Box 2, Folder 2	6200 - 6298, December 1907 - November 1908
Box 2, Folder 3	6300 - 6399, November 1908 - August 1909
Box 2, Folder 4	6700 - 6799, July 1911 - October 1911
Box 2, Folder 5	6800 - 6899, October 1911 - November 1911
Box 2, Folder 6	6900 - 6999, June 1913 - June 1914
Box 2, Folder 7	7100 - 7199, June 1915 - November 1915
Box 2, Folder 8	7200 - 7299, November 1915 - May 1916
Box 2, Folder 9	7400 - 7499, November 1917 - August 1918
Box 2, Folder 10	7500 - 7599, August 1918 - September 1919
Box 2, Folder 11	Unidentified

Box 2

Silver Gelatin Photograph Prints and Negatives of Glass Plate's, 1896-1916

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Series 2: Silver Gelatin Photographs, 1896-1921

Box 3	58-5929
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Box 4	5274-7670 and unidentified
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Series 3: Glass Plate Negative and Stamps, 1932

Box 2, Folder 13 Journal of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers No. 9 and pages, November 1932

Box 5 Stamps

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