

JEROME WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM  
Jerome  
Yavapai County  
Arizona

HAER AZ-91  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## JEROME WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

HAER No. AZ-91

- Location:** Jerome, Yavapai County, Arizona
- Date of Construction:** ca. 1900
- Builder:** United Verde Company
- Original Use:** Mining operations and municipal water supply
- Significance:** The Jerome Water Supply System is an example of an early twentieth-century water supply system established for a mining town in an arid region. It was similar to other municipal systems in the Southwest that collected water by pipeline from springs located above town.
- Description:** The original water works system for Jerome, built about 1900, took water from a series of springs in the mountains above the town. In 1915 the furthest spring was 7 miles away. The water was conducted to the town in a pipeline made of riveted steel in the shops of the United Verde Company, the owner of the copper mining interests in the town. The pipeline led to a series of wooden tanks on the side of the mountain. Water was distributed by gravity to consumers and mining operations below.
- Very little of the ca. 1900 water supply system is extant. Original riveted-steel pipe may be seen along U.S. Highway 89 Alternative about 2 miles southwest of Jerome. The pipe is above the present road and then crosses under it to an old flume that carries the pipe across a gulch. Wooden storage tanks located above the town on the side of the mountain have been replaced by steel water tanks.
- History:** The mining operations in what would become Jerome began in earnest in 1882 when two water-jacket smelters were installed to recover copper ore from the nearby mines. The location on the northeastern slope of the Mingus Mountain was over one of the richest deposits of copper ore in the Southwest. It is not known exactly what the water supply of the town was at this time, but it is assumed to have come from the mountain springs above the town that were later used as the source for the water works. It is likely that water was hauled to the town by water wagons.

The town of Jerome was established in 1883. Once among the largest of mining towns, Jerome was Arizona's fifth largest city around the turn of the century. About 1900, the United Verde Corporation, the owners of the mines and smelting operations, built what was probably the first real water works in the town. This system secured water from up to 7 miles away from mountain springs and supplied the mining and smelting operations, along with the usual domestic needs of the community. The gravity system was comprised of riveted-steel pipes said to have been made in Jerome at the United Verde Corporation's shops. The water was held in a series of wooden reservoirs above the town on the mountainside.

This water supply system was similar to other municipal systems in the Southwest that collected water by pipeline from springs located above the town. The system was used for both municipal and mining purposes until mining operations were discontinued in 1950. It is not known when this system was abandoned or exactly what portions of it are still being used in the current system.

**Sources:**

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McMillan, John E., Agent, Phelps Dodge Corporation, Jerome, Arizona. Interview by field team, August 3, 1971.

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**Historians:** T. Lindsay Baker and Steve Rae, August 3 and October 23, 1971

**Project**

**Information:** Jerome Water Supply System was inventoried for the Historic American Engineering Record as part of the Southwest Water Resources Project, a joint project with the Texas Tech Water Resources Center. The survey was subsequently published as *Water for the Southwest: Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites* by the American Society of Civil Engineers in September 1973.