

TRINIDAD WATER WORKS
Trinidad
Las Animas County
Colorado

HAER CO-97
HAER CO-97

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

TRINIDAD WATER WORKS

HAER No. CO-97

- Location:** Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado
- Date of Construction:** 1897
- Engineer:** Delos A. Chappell, Chicago
- Original Owner, Use:** Trinidad Water Works Company, municipal water supply
- Current Owner, Use:** City of Trinidad, abandoned but the pump house is used as office
- Significance:** The Trinidad Water Works is one of the best preserved nineteenth-century water works in the Southwest. It contains the original 1879 pump house, force main, and reservoir.
- Description:** The original 1879 pumping plant is located by the Purgatoire River near the heart of the city. Water was taken from the gravel beds of the river by a filter gallery reported to be 2' x 3' and 300' long. Water from the gallery flowed to a pump well measuring 25' in diameter and 16' deep. Two Cope and Maxwell double-acting steam plunger pumps lifted water from the well 310' to an open reservoir located on a small mesa above the town. Originally the reservoir had a capacity of 2-million gallons and was lined with stones and concrete. Water distributed by gravity flowed from the reservoir through cast-iron pipes ranging from 4" to 12" in diameter.
- The 1879 pump house now serves as the shop for the water division of the city of Trinidad. The original pressure gauge is still in use at the pump house.
- History:** Trinidad is located at a point on the Purgatoire River near the New Mexico border where the eastern plains of Colorado are met by mountains. In the early days, Trinidad served as an important trade center.
- The Trinidad Water Works Company built the water works in 1879 at a cost of \$100,000. About 190,000 gallons of water were used in 1881 by the city of Trinidad, which at that time had a population of 4,000.

In 1889, the system was expanded. The new system used water taken from the Purgatoire River about 11 miles above town. It consisted of an open ditch leading to a new reservoir from which the water was distributed by gravity.

The city of Trinidad purchased this system on March 22, 1897. Through modernization and improvements, there have been many alterations the water works, but it is significant to note that the original pump house, force main, and reservoir have been preserved by the city.

Sources:

Baker, M.N. *The Manual of American Water Works*. New York: Engineering News Publishing Co., 1890.

Croes, J.J.R. "History and Statistics of American Water Works." *Engineering News* IX (April 15, 1882): 122.

McClure, W.N, Superintendent of Public Utilities, City Hall, Trinidad, Colorado. Interview by field team, July 22, 1971.

Ruscetti, Nick, Foreman, Water Department, Trinidad, Colorado. Interview by field team, July 22, 1971.

Taylor, Morris F. *Trinidad, Colorado Territory*. Trinidad, CO: Trinidad State Junior College, 1966.

The McGraw Waterworks Directory 1915. New York: McGraw Publishing Company, Inc., 1915.

Historians: Steve Rae and T. Lindsay Baker, July 22 and October 23, 1971

Project

Information: The Trinidad Water Works 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.