

RATON WATER WORKS
Raton
Colfax County
New Mexico

HAER NM-22
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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

RATON WATER WORKS

HAER No. NM-22

- Location:** Raton, Colfax County, New Mexico
- Dates of Construction:** 1880-1881
- Engineers:** A.A. Robinson, designing engineer
S.M. Rowe, construction engineer
- Original Owner, Use:** Santa Fe Railway Company, municipal and railroad water supply
- Current Owner, Use:** City of Raton, partially abandoned
- Significance:** The Raton Water Works, originally built by a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railway Company, was probably the first water works system begun in the territory of New Mexico. It is also of note because portions of the collection system are still in operation.
- Description:** The only portion of the system found to be in original condition is the collection system at Linwood Springs on the Bartlett Mesa. Here the springs still produce water that is collected and passed down the mesa in a 2" cast-iron pipe to the town below. There are parts of the fire-protection system in the Santa Fe Railway yards that are thought to be part of the first system.
- History:** An adequate source of water was of primary concern to the Santa Fe Railroad and domestic users at Raton, New Mexico, during the late 1800s. Raton is located at the south end of Raton Pass, which has been a principal connection between southern Colorado and northern New Mexico since pioneer days. Raton was an important stop and repair center on the Santa Fe Railroad during the late 1800s.
- The first water works for the city was built in 1881 by the Santa Fe Railway Company to furnish water to the railroad shops and for the domestic needs of the city. It was officially incorporated as the Raton Water Company on January 3, 1882. Water was collected in a concrete box from twenty springs located at the rim of Bartlett Mesa, 1,200' above the city. A 2" wrought-iron pipe carried water from the collection box 3-

$\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the city. This system supplied about 50,000 gallons of water a day to the Santa Fe Railway repair shops and some domestic water users. In 1892, the company was awarded a twenty-year franchise to supply water to Raton.

A well was also constructed on the bank of Raton Creek near its intersection with Water Street. Water was pumped through an 8" cast-iron pipe 8,000' to the reservoir north of town. This well would only be pumped when water from the springs would not meet demand.

An additional source of water was needed about ten years later. Sugarite Canyon, located northeast of the city, was chosen as a site for a storage reservoir to be known as Lake Alice. Construction was approved and completed by September 1892. Lake Alice, with a capacity of 100 acre-feet, was designed to supply a million gallons daily to the city. The lake is located 458' above the town. Two other reservoirs were built: Lake Dorothy in 1904 and Lake Maloya in 1907. In 1912, the franchise of the Raton Water Company was allowed to expire. It was succeeded by the Santa Fe Land and Improvement Company, another railway subsidiary. During its administration of the water system, Lake Maloya was enlarged in 1914 and again in 1949.

Unusual water filtration beds were planned for use at Lake Alice. Triangular-shaped trenches 10' wide and 3' deep were designed to hold sand for filtering water going to the city. These filters were to be located under the surface of the water at the foot of the dam. It is uncertain if these filter beds were ever constructed as planned.

In 1955, the Santa Fe Railway Company gave to the City of Raton all of its water system and rights except those in parts on the company's property in the Raton railway yards. Since that time the city has operated the water system.

Sources:

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

Bourne, C.B. "Historical Resume of Raton Water Supply." Typescript on file in office of City Engineer, Raton, New Mexico. Copy included in field records accompanying this documentation.

Bourne, C.B., Engineer, Raton, New Mexico. Interview by field team, July 21, 1971.

"Filter-Bed of the Water-Works at Raton, New Mexico." *Engineering News XXVII* (April 16, 1892): 374-375.

Pointers on the Southwest. Topeka, KS: Sexton Printers, 1883.

Historians: Steve Rae and T. Lindsay Baker, July 21 and October 8, 1971

Project

Information: The Raton 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.