A Blast fro

Town of Pincher Creek turns on the waterworks

Early development of Pincher Creek's Pioneer water-work system

Municipal services came early with Pincher Creek's incorporation as a Town in 1906. In addition to the pioneer electrical system spoken of in last week's Living History article, our community was also fortunate to have installed a waterworks system. This is a fascinating story well worth telling.

Water source to the west for the municipal company

According to archival records, Pincher Creek's waterworks system was installed in 1906, the same year as our Town's incorporation.

The system was operated by the Municipal Water & Light Company. This was the same Town-owned commercial enterprise that looked after our early lighting system. Mr. John E. Woods was the municipal engineer who oversaw the waterworks.

The source of water for the waterworks system was the Pincher Creek itself. The intake works were located about two and one-half miles upstream, or west, from town. This system was at an

Living History

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elevation of 135 feet above the town and was therefore was adequate for a gravity system. A ten-inch pipe had been extended directly into the Creek, and this allowed for a capacity of 30,000 gallons. Although the Creek was often shallow, municipal officials expressed little concern in regards to a continued water supply.

Extensive piping system

Pincher Creek had a wide waterworks distribution system. Featured was an eight-inch supply main that ran down through the full mercantile distance of Main Street. The remaining residential areas were all serviced by four, five, and six-inch water pipes.

Those areas of town so serviced included the west end of Main Street, parts of Kettles, Schofield, and Mountain streets. On the north side, these would have included the settled areas of Bridge, Morden, Albert, and Hewetson avenues. The total length of the water piping as of 1913 was a very impressive 17,146 feet.

This, it could be claimed, was a testament to the hard municipal work of our pioneer families who saw the benefit of such a system.

The water pipes were all wood stave and wire wound for more durable ware. When the lines were laid in the streets, municipal officials ensured that they were covered with six feet of fill.

This, they claimed, ensured that the pipes never faced any problems from freezing during the often-frigid winter temperatures, particularly during the coldest months of December and January.

Modern fire hydrants

By 1913, there also were thirty hydrants of the Eclipse model in place, mostly in Pincher Creek's commercial area on Main Street. Most of the hydrants were spaced 450 to 500 feet apart but a report from a Fire Underwriters' Association as submitted to the Town Council that year strongly recommended that more hydrants be installed in that business core to the tune of being only 250 feet apart. There had been significant local and firefighting hopes that the addition of new hydrants would add to the fire fighting security of the businesses located downtown. Many of these structures were wooden ones, and local business owners saw the extra hydrants as a good thing.

On the plus side, a regular hydrant maintenance system was in place, especially during the winter. Municipal officials proudly claimed that there was little danger due to hydrant freezing during those cold snaps.

The Town paid to its Municipal Company an annual rental of twenty-five dollars for the use and maintenance of each hydrant. There was no agreement in place governing the water pressure required for each hydrant, although this would have been an issue for fire fighting concerns.

Pincher Creek's pioneer waterworks system indeed provided valuable services to the early ratepayers of our community.