

### **Significant Dates in the Founding of the Milwaukee Water Works**

*From "A Century of Milwaukee Water" (1974) by Elmer W. Becker, superintendent of the Milwaukee Water Works, 1964-1972*

March 24, 1871 -- State Legislature passes Wisconsin Chapter 475, Local Laws of 1871, permitting Milwaukee to build the water works; the second section of Chapter 475 named the seven members of the Board of Water Commissioners. This was necessary because of borrowing limits previously placed on the City during the Civil War.

April 18, 1871 -- The Board of Water Commissioners met for the first time and construction of the water works began.

Oct. 24, 1873 – The utility began operating a temporary pump at North Avenue, drawing Milwaukee River water into the Kilbourn Reservoir on West North Avenue just west of North Humboldt Avenue.

Nov. 3, 1873 – Ten days later, the level of Milwaukee River water that had been pumped into the Kilbourn Reservoir had reached a level of 10 feet. Valves in the distribution system were gradually opened, and this untreated river water was turned into large mains throughout the city and gradually into smaller mains. The North Point Pumping Station was not operational until Sept. 14, 1874.

Sept. 14, 1874 – The entire water works system as planned was fully operational. The North Point Pumping Station began drawing water from Lake Michigan into the Kilbourn Reservoir and into the distribution system. The North Point Tower was put in service to absorb the pulsations in the water flow created by the steam-driven engines powering the pumps. The temporary pumping station at North Avenue on the Milwaukee River was abandoned.

Dec. 23, 1874 -- The water main constructed under the North Avenue bridge was first used, marking the major completion of the water works.

1875 – The placement of slightly more than three miles of pipe for the distribution system was completed.

February 1875 -- Daily consumption of water was 1,250,000 gallons.

*Note: The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) in 1908 began requiring utilities to file annual reports. Based on information filed that year, the PSC determined the "Milwaukee Municipal Water Works" began operations Nov. 3, 1873. Thanks to Teresa Weidemann-Smith, PSC Records Management Supervisor.*

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