Metropolitan Water Works Photographs
1876/95-1926

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Special Thanks

- Digitized by Boston Public Library / Digital Commonwealth

- Collection prepared, documented, and preserved by MDC/DCR Archives, MWRA Library & Record Center, and Mass. State Archives

- With contributions from Boylston and West Boylston historical societies, Beaman Public Library, and 135 volunteers!
Who We Are

• MWRA treats and delivers water to 2.3 million customers in 51 communities

• DCR manages and protects the drinking water supply watersheds

• Together, we provide an average of 200 million gallons of some of the best drinking water in the country
Original Photographs Were Well Documented

- Staff photographers visited construction sites
- Recorded each image in a field notebook
- Numbered and captioned each negative
- Printed in 2 official sets of albums with additional information in table of contents
- Annual reports provided detailed project summaries with photos, maps and diagrams
Documentation Of Original Photographs
Three Phase Collaboration 2000-2014

- Phase 1: 2000-2001
  - Gather & Re-integrate
  - Preserve
  - Store safely at Mass. State Archives

- Phase 2: 2001-2006
  - Item-level data entry

- Phase 3: Digitization on hold until 2012
  - Halted for lack of funds

....Enter BPL/DC!
By The Late 1990s, The Collection Had Been Dispersed. The First Step Was To Gather And Re-integrate It...
Dispersed Collection Gathered For Re-integration
Phase 1 And 2

- Preserved glass negatives cleaned and repackaged by 135 volunteers
- Standardized and entered original documentation into an Access database
- Stored safely in the Mass. State Archives vault, on loan until they could be digitized...
Preserved, Documented And Safely Stored
Phase 3 - Digitization Costs

2003: $211,438 to $347,929 estimates

2012: $53,184 NEDCC at $6 per image

2012: $0 BPL/DC with LSTA grant
Digitization 2012-2014

- Project was ‘scanner ready’ due to earlier work

- Glass negatives on loan to State Archives carefully transferred to BPL for storage and scanning

- Data from Access used to generate shipping lists and filenames for BPL Imaging Lab
To BPL For Scanning
Metadata Preparation

- Access database exported to flat Excel table
  
  8,864 rows x 60 columns  
  = 531,840 data elements!

- Excel used to transform metadata
  - ‘text concatenation’ function created file names, titles, notes fields
  - Place and Subject entries replaced with Getty TGN and AAT terms
  - Dates reformatted to W3C YYYY-MM-DD, ‘text to columns’ + ‘replace all’
Metadata Preparation...Favorite Excel Functions
• Once digital surrogates are complete, originals will be officially transferred to MSA for ‘deep storage’

• And surrogate digital images will be available though BPL/DC, DP-LA, and eventually Mass. State Archives digital repository

• Providing access for all sorts of audiences!
A Reminder of ‘The Good Old Days’
when Water Works were Revered
...and Civil Engineers Wore Bowler Hats
And Preservation Of Historic Architecture
(now the Waterworks Museum at 2450 Beacon St., Boston)
Steam Shovels For 4-Year-Old Mike Mulligan Fans