



New York State Archives

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Water Supply Commission Survey Questionnaires 16828**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series consists of two questionnaires: one describing in detail the water supply and distribution for each respondent community and the other with questions about their sewage disposal systems. Water Supply Commission used these to conduct an investigation and report for the legislature. The questionnaires were distributed to cities, incorporated villages, private water companies, and towns statewide.
Creator:	New York (State). Division of Water
Title:	Water Supply Commission survey questionnaires
Quantity:	7 cubic feet
Quantity:	approximately 310 maps; 19 blueprints; 3 photographs
Inclusive Date:	1905-1906
Series:	16828
Sponsor:	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Arrangement

Series has been arranged alphabetically by municipality.

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Administrative History

Chapter 723 of the Laws of 1905 empowered the governor to appoint five citizens, subject to senate approval, who would constitute a commission to be known as the State Water Supply Commission. Under the provisions of this statute "no municipal corporation or other civil division of the state, and no board, commission or other body of or for any such municipal corporation or other civil subdivision of the state" would be allowed to acquire, take, or condemn lands for

any additional sources of water supply until it first submitted maps, profiles, and designs for review and approval by the commission.

Prior to 1905, a municipal corporation or other civil division of the State was empowered to acquire or condemn lands for sources of municipal water supply without regard to whether the plans for its requirements were equitable to other municipalities and people whose land was directly affected by the acquisition. The main purpose of the law and the subsequent gathering of statistics were to establish and administer a systematic plan for acquiring and maintaining water supplies for the State's municipalities. Until then, there was little public supervision of existing water supplies, no provision or planning for future water and sewage needs and no systematic analysis of water purity. Expanding population growth necessitated municipal control of domestic water supplies and sewage disposal statewide. Outside of large centers of population, there was little control of sewage disposal coupled with an increasing awareness of the correlation between water purity and diseases e.g. Typhoid.

The commission's powers were increased in 1907 with the passage of Chapter 569, which directed it to conduct surveys, and devise plans for the progressive development of the State's water for public use and benefit. The commission operated until Chapter 647 of the Laws of 1911 transferred its powers and duties to the newly created Conservation Commission.

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Scope and Content Note

This series consists of two questionnaires compiled by the State Water Supply Commission in accordance with Chapter 723 of the Laws of 1905. The first questionnaire describes in detail the water supply and distribution for each respondent community while, the second covers questions concerning sewage disposal systems. The statute specifically directed the Water Supply Commission to conduct an investigation and report to the legislature "the respective purity and quantity" of the state's water supply as well as "the present dispositions of sewage of each municipal corporation." In order to carry out its mandate, the commission formulated a series of questions that were distributed to forty-five cities, 438 incorporated villages, 215 private water companies, and approximately 1,000 towns statewide.

The first questionnaire contains sixty questions regarding water supply and distribution and the second questionnaire forty-two questions regarding sewage disposal systems. Detailed information pertaining to water quantity, quality, and municipal construction and operating costs as well as demographic information can be found. Some of the types of questions found in the questionnaire include: what is the source of the water supply; is the water subjected to a purification process; if so, what type of process and how much did it cost; what is the capacity of the reservoirs; what population is included in the municipality for 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1905; and what is the annual death rate from typhoid fever per 1000 inhabitants?

The commission received detailed replies from the majority of cities and larger towns and villages. In most cases, the rate of response drops in proportion to the size of the community. A

summary of the survey results is available in the "First Annual Report of the State Water Supply Commission," published in 1906.

In addition to the completed questionnaires, approximately one third of the files contain supplementary materials which include some but, not necessarily all of the following items: correspondence between municipalities or municipal water companies and the Water Supply Commission regarding completion of the questionnaires; maps, submitted along with the questionnaires, indicating the location and type of water source employed by each municipality; plans depicting sewage disposal systems; and pamphlets describing municipal rules, regulations, and rates for water usage.

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Related Information

Related Material

Series 20653 Bureau of Water Permits Application files pertaining to Public Water Supply Systems, 1905-1980 contains related records.

Series 16827 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Minutes of Division of Water Predecessor Agencies, 1902-1970 contains related records.

Related Publications

First Annual Report of the State Water Supply Commission gives specific recommendations and an extensive progress report on this project begun under the authorizing legislation. A copy is available through the New York State Library - NYSL WAT 633-1 1480510 1906/07 2nd.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Alternate Formats Available

Items Online

A small sample of survey questionnaires has been digitized and is available in State Archives Digital Collections.

[Water Supply Commission survey questionnaires, 1905-1906](#)

Administrative Information

Processing Information

This collection's description was enhanced as a part of the New York State Archives Environmental History Virtual Research Collection Project, 2004. The National Endowment for the Humanities provided funding for this project.

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Access Terms

- Water-supply engineering--New York (State)
- Sewage disposal--New York (State)
- Environmental law--New York (State)
- Water quality management--New York (State)
- Water resources development--New York (State)
- Water-supply--New York (State)
- Environmental engineering--New York (State)