

THE VILLAGE OF CARTHAGE CONTINUES

By Ernie Prievio,
Water Supt. Village of Carthage

In the last issue of Aquafacts, you read the writings of my mother on the history of Carthage, as far as 1907. I will attempt to bring you up to date from 1908 to the present. Not much has changed with the water system, except for a new chlorination facility being constructed farther away from the village, to satisfy the requirements of chlorine contact time.

In 1991, the villages of Carthage and West Carthage were put on notice by the NYS Department of Health to begin preliminary design of filtration facilities for their respective water supplies. Each village began the process by securing the services of an engineering firm. In the following year, each village was given a recommendation, which was to construct two separate filtration facilities. This didn't sit well with some residents of either village, so they formed a committee themselves to further investigate the problem and solution. Although the two communities were separate in identity and government; they shared in the operation of a wastewater pollution control facility and district wide central school system. It seemed to many residents that our leaders failed to investigate the possibility of one filtration facility for both villages, a more economical solution for a community of 7,000 residents.

The newly formed Political Action Committee pressured each village to work as a single unit. The issue of water, separate or united, became the topic of discussion at every public gathering for many months to follow, and after a great deal of pressure, the two village boards agreed to work as one. They continued with the services of two engineering firms who presented a wide variety of proposals, from drilling new wells to utilizing the Black River once again. Advocates for two separate systems were not silent during this time, adding additional pressure to the decision making efforts of the two governments. The one thing that became quite obvious throughout this time was that very few residents were in favor of abandoning either water supply for water from the Black River. Both water systems had served their communities well throughout the years, and at one time in the 1980's, Carthage supplied water to both village's when the West Carthage supply became contaminated due to heavy rains and run off from a nearby farm field.

In 1994, after exhausting months of research, the two villages signed an intermunicipal agreement to construct a slow sand filtration facility using the Belfort water supply and to continue to maintain the Pleasant Lake supply as an emergency back up supply. Many factors weighed in favor of this system, including the quality, quantity and the fact that the village owned 2000 acres of pristine forest encompassing the water recharge area of the headwaters of the Indian River. Our fore fathers blessed us with their knowledge of watershed protection at a time when the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains was viewed by many as a source of

timber to supply lumber for housing and our local paper mills. They on the other hand, not only developed a water system second to none, they protected it as well.

In 1997, a new slow sand filtration facility was completed, and once again, the Belfort water system was serving the residents of Carthage and West Carthage. Coming full circle and doing exactly what it was designed to do nearly one hundred years ago. The original 12-inch cast iron pipe that delivers the water via gravity to the filter plant was cleaned in 1998 and new air valves were installed to release the air from the pipe at every high point along the way. During this cleaning process, the line became plugged and no water was able to flow into the filter plant. We initiated our back up plan and operated the Pleasant Lake supply for the next 6 days while we located and removed the plug. At no time were we without water for our customers. Over the next three years the village had the three water towers repainted. These towers were constructed in the 1920's and hold a total of 1,275,000 gallons of water. Each village has expanded water services to areas outside the village corporation and into the towns, supplying an additional 25,000 gallons of water a day to residents and the Carthage Central School and new Elementary School.

A forester was hired in 1995 to develop a 20 year management plan for harvesting timber on the 2000 acres of watershed lands, with the main objective being source water protection. The revenue we receive from the timber sales is used strictly for the water system.

In 1997, we assisted our local High School Science class in securing a \$10,000.00 grant to aid the students with studying our water supply and how the timber management plan affects the quality and quantity of the water supply. We believe we have already documented results of improved pH levels in our raw water and have also seen increased water yields as well.

A system wide leak detection program was initiated, with assistance from NYRWA by both village crews and with great results. We have reduced our unaccounted for water loss by 20%, reducing the amount of water we treat by 130,000 gallons per day.

This is our history, and I consider myself very fortunate to be the caretaker for this wonderful resource. It is my desire and motivation to leave to the next generation a water supply equal to what our fore fathers envisioned. I have the luxury of being surrounded by co-workers and Village Board members that have the same desire. The New York Rural Water Association has been the nucleus for all that we have accomplished since becoming a member and I could not imagine being where we are today without them. 💧