



OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Frederick R. Holley | Circuit Rider III

Alabama, NY, the Oak Orchard Sour Springs are located near the center of the area, which is now the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, have a history dating back to the early 1800s. From the History of Alabama, and published by The Boston History Company in 1899, "Prof. Emmons remarks that "the peculiar character of these waters renders them useful in many chronic diseases especially those of the digestive organs and those of weakness and debility." Dr. James McNaughton of Albany says: "The internal arid external use of these waters I have no doubt will prove valuable in the treatment of several chronic cutaneous diseases." Dr. Robert Campbell of Pittsfield, Mass.. says: "As medical agents they must be highly beneficial for all chronic diseases of the stomach and bowels." There are numerous other testimonials from eminent physicians. A good hotel has been erected by Messrs. J. C. Colton of Lockport and Thomas W. Olcott of Albany, which is kept in a very handsome manner by Messrs. Everett & Harrington, two industrious young men, who deserve and have received a very liberal patronage." The area had nine separate springs. Each spring was found to have a different content. The area attracted tourists from near and far to witness the healing qualities of this rich mineral water. The water was also bottled and sold for medicinal purposes.

Nearby, around the year 1900, Gypsum was discovered. Phoenix Gypsum Company opened a mine shaft in the little community of Alabama, NY. This mine was in need of water. A well was drilled to provide water for the mine. Workers built houses nearby, some of which were Sears Catalogue houses, delivered to the nearby railroad, siding and assembled on site. The mine had an abundance of water so water was extended to these houses. When the mine closed in the 1940's, the water system was given to the community. A new well was drilled and connected to the system abandoning and capping the water line from the mine.

Two and a half years ago I was called by Doug Fancher, the person in charge of the system for assistance. Doug, an ex-Marine, retired from years of farm service work, took it upon himself to keep the system going. This system is one of the smallest I have worked with having only 17 service connections. The water was chlorinated and passed through a series of pressure tanks for contact time. At this time, they were experiencing a 2,000 GPD water loss. We were able to correlate and pinpoint the leak on a section of 2 in. galvanized water line. The leak was repaired and

discussions began about replacing this line. A couple of times over the next two years I was called back to help find leaks. The system needed updating badly.

Enter the S.T.A.M.P. Project, the newly proposed Science, Technology and Advanced Marketing Plant. A facility to be built that could provide 10,000 jobs. This project would require an abundant supply of potable water. During the design process, water infrastructure was engineered to provide water from two directions. Water would come from the Oakfield area and from Erie County. This new water system would pass through the small Alabama community so keeping this small system operating till the new main and services could be installed was a key issue. As of my last conversation with Doug Fancher only one service connection remained on the old system, a Church that was awaiting backflow approval to be connected.

The old system that served this community is gone. They now have new mains, new services, and the very important fire protection made much easier with the placement of fire hydrants and a good supply of water.

The STAMP project still has a long way to go. Water is on its way.

On another note, with this job I meet many new people who have become my friends. It was in the community of Orchard Park that I met Ron Henning, a distribution operator for the community. I completed leak surveys with Ron and we would always talk about hunting, fishing, and family. Ron has retired after 38 years of service to his community. My last visit there I was introduced to a person who is training to fill the position. It is good to see young people stepping up to carry on the work. Being a Water Specialist isn't for everyone. There are long hours on emergencies and time away from family keeping the water flowing. In doing this, there is a pride in knowing that we are doing our best to keep "Quality On Tap".

If I can be of any assistance,

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