

Pump House Fact Sheet

Why Did Cheyenne need the Pump House?

- The history of Cheyenne's public water system originates in the 1860s when water for the small but growing town was supplied by four wells.
- Water was collected by hand using ropes and buckets.
- Residents could contract for water to be delivered to their home or business by horse-drawn wagon.
- In 1870 a ditch was constructed from Crow Creek to a deep basin north of town that became known as Sloan's Lake and used this water solely for irrigation.
- In the mid 1870s the city built a pump house at 28th and Central Ave. that provided much needed pressure for buildings that were more than one story in height.
- By the early 1880s, Cheyenne residents began getting their water from a series of reservoirs created by a new dam constructed on Crow Creek northwest of town.
- The water was untreated and unfiltered, causing an unpleasant taste and odor. Citizens occasionally found their indoor pipes clogged with small fish!
- By 1890, the population of Cheyenne reached 9,000 and continued to climb to 12,000 in the next four years. The need for reliable water for the new buildings, residences, and parks continued to increase.
- Poor water quality remained unresolved until the city installed filter beds in Crow Creek around the same time the pump house at 1504 Dillon Ave. was constructed.
- The city bought the land from the Union Pacific Railroad for \$350 in October of 1891.
- The City awarded the \$5,278 contract to a builder named George East.
- It was mostly completed in July 1892.
- The pump house was known as the *City Water Works, West Side Pumping Station*.
- It was built to supplement the original pump house at 28th and Central Ave. and provided water to numerous buildings, sites, and hydrants.

1982 – 1915: Early History and Architecture of the Pump House

- The pump house is built in the *Richardsonian Romanesque* style with a masonry central core and faced on the exterior with a single layer of substantial coursed ashlar sandstone blocks with rusticated faces.
- The roof is hipped and pyramidal in shape.
- Just below the eaves, the upper walls are ornamented with wood trim work and decorative brackets.
- A single wall dormer is located on the southwest slope of the building. This was directly adjacent to the tall chimney that used to stand just outside the building. The dormer features an oculus window on the front that is lined with curved stonework. It is possible that this opening served not as a window, but as a connection of some sort between the building and the large chimney that once stood there.
- The chimney was massive. 65 feet tall and constructed of brick. It was used to vent coal ash and heat from the two boilers inside.
- The building's central core housed the water pump and pipelines.
- The southeast wing was a coal bunker and housed two boilers that generated steam pressure to power the pump.
- The Holly duplex steam pump could process 2 million gallons per day and could pressurize water to fire hydrants at 100-pounds/square inch.
- Before telephones were installed, the fire department utilized a bell system to notify the pump house to increase water pressure when a fire erupted in the city.
- During the summer months, when water was needed for irrigation, the plant operated 24 hours a day.
- The northwest wing served as a home for the plant's full-time resident engineer (during the 1900s and 1910s, this was a man by the name of Nicholas Stoll).
- A large concrete-lined basin was constructed on the west side of the building. 12 feet deep and covering a sizable area measuring 120' x 240', this open reservoir was designed to store 2.5 million gallons of water that was transported to the site by gravity from Crow Creek and reservoirs above the city.

The Decommission of the Pump House

- In 1910, Round Top Reservoir was completed four miles west of town and had the ability to store 8 million gallons of water from reservoirs located near the Laramie Mountains (North Crow, Granite Springs, and Crystal Lake).
- In 1915 the Round Top Filtration Plant was completed. From there, purified water was distributed by gravity through a 30" pipeline to the local mains under Cheyenne's streets.

- The new filtration plant and reservoir were located 400 feet higher than the city. The elevation change provided the necessary pressure and the old pump house was no longer needed on a regular basis.
- While the pump house continued to be maintained, it operated only as an auxiliary facility that could be employed when necessary to augment the city's gravity system.
- As advancements in Cheyenne's water system continued, by the early 1920s the three-decade-old pump house at 1504 Dillon was no longer needed and placed out of use.

The Decline: 1920s – Present

- In the mid 1920s the pump house entered its next stage of use when the city streets department acquired the building and surrounding grounds for the repair and storage of equipment—including street cleaning machines.
- In the 1920s the northwest residence became the home of the streets department foreman.
- The massive water storage reservoir was filled in or removed by the 1930s.
- Additional changes took place over the decades between the 1930s—70s as the facility was adapted to the needs of the streets department and then became used by the city sanitation department.
- Between the 30s and 60s a shed addition was added off of the southeastern end.
- In the 1950s, the roof of the northwest residence wing was removed and a second floor, constructed of concrete blocks, was built atop the original stone walls.
- Another addition providing truck access was built along the southwest side in the 1970s that completely covered the façade on the central core. This required that the tall chimney be removed. The surviving concrete foundations, as well as damaged eave lines provide evidence of this demolished addition.
- The tall chimney had been a geographic landmark in the city for 80 years.
- Again around the 1970s two large metal-framed shed additions on the northeast side of the building had been constructed to provide more storage and vehicular access to the building.
- The non-compatible 50s-70s modern additions have effectively diminished the architectural integrity, overall appearance, and eligibility for NRHP designation.
- The building was eventually vacated. In what year?
- By 2000, the southeast and southwest additions were removed.