

## Factsheet 1: History of the Municipal Water Company (1851-1994)

### Drinking water for Amsterdam

Between 1851 and 1994, the site was used for the provision of drinking water for Amsterdam. It all started in 1851 with the formation of the Duinwater-Maatschappij (Dune-Water Company, largely financed with British capital). This ensured the construction of a cast-iron pipe (23 km long; 50 cm diameter) with which fresh water could be transported from the coastal dunes (near Leiduin/Vogelenzang) to Amsterdam. Up till then, drinking water had been brought by the Verschwatersociëteit (Fresh Water Society) from the River Vecht to the south-east of the city in water barges. The new pipe ran as far as Haarlemmerpoort, at that time the western boundary of Amsterdam. This site was used as a storage place for pipes and accessories.

In 1896, the Duinwater-Maatschappij was taken over by the City of Amsterdam and the name was changed to the Municipal Water Company. As the number of inhabitants grew (in 1896 to 470,000 people) along with the wish to supply new urban districts with modern water mains, the demand for drinking water increased dramatically. Soon after, the city council took a decision, proposed by the director Van Hasselt, to build a water reservoir with a pumping station on the site. The low reservoir (clean-water cellar) constructed was able to hold 10,000 m<sup>3</sup>; the reservoir was by Haarlemmerweg, alongside the canal, the Haarlemmertrekvaart.



The Pump Engine Building was opened in 1900. Until 1941, it used (seven) steam engines; these were then replaced by electric motors.

This pumping station ensures the distribution of drinking water to households in Amsterdam. (There were two identical pumping stations: on Amstelveenseweg and on Van Hallstraat).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to meet the growing need for drinking water in the city, three more clean-water cellars were added. In addition, over the years, buildings were added on the site such as storerooms, garage, a canteen, a workshop, meter workshop and various warehouses.



Buildings belonging to the Water Company have remained intact during construction of the residential area: the Machinepompgebouw (Pump Engine Building, 1896); The Magazijngebouw (The Warehouse, which came into use in 1909); the Windketelhuisje (that served to aerate the first clean-water cellar); The Toegangshuisje (The Entrance House, that was the entrance to the clean-water cellar). These date from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Water Tower dating from 1966 is still functioning.

### **Plans for a residential area**

Plans for a new pumping station date from the early 1980s (the old pumping station was obsolete, much still had to be done by hand). In the mid-1980s, it was decided that a new pumping station should be built. The water company preferred new construction on its own site. After extensive discussion with the local municipal officials for the Staatsliedenbuurt and Hugo de Grootbuurt, Alderman Jonker however decided to approve new construction on the adjoining site of the Was-, Schoonmaak, Bad- en Zweminrichting (Washhouse).

In this way, the site by the Van Hallstraat offered space for about 600 dwellings.

However before a decision could be taken by the Council about residential building on the location, a study was made into odour nuisance from the abattoir on Van Slingelandtstraat and from the Maggi factory and Blikemba on Haarlemmerweg. This investigation had a negative outcome (during the loading and unloading of offal, too much stench was emitted).

The working parties for business development and odour nuisance for the local community (that had for years supported residential development on the site) went along with the report and thought about measures to limit this “scent”. It was suggested that the loading and unloading bays of the abattoir could be enclosed. Local council members were invited for talks at the local community centre. According to the local paper, the Staatskrant, in 1989: the councillors allowed themselves to be persuaded that the odour nuisance should not be decisive. They also saw the need for additional housing. The city council then decided to build the new pumping station on the former Washhouse site. The decision about moving offices and warehouse facilities was delayed to a later date.

In the years that followed, it was decided that several parts of the company (local office, customer service, garage, meter exchange, meter workshop, buying and warehouses) would move to the former Dico printing factory on Transformatorweg. Other parts went to Amstelveenseweg and to the pumping station in Weesperkarspel.

In 1991, the pumping station and wind boilerhouse were put on the Amsterdam historic buildings list.

*Bron: Cor Jansma, 1995: Rode en Gouden banden; Van Hallstraat 4 sinds 1851, Gemeentewaterleidingen Amsterdam*