

TOMBSTONE WATER WORKS
Tombstone
Cochise County
Arizona

HAER AZ-88
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

TOMBSTONE WATER WORKS

HAER No. AZ-88

- Location:** Tombstone, Cochise County, Arizona
- Dates of Construction:** 1881-1882
- Builder:** Huachuca Water Company
- Original Owner, Use:** Huachuca Water Company, municipal water supply
- Present Owner, Use:** City of Tombstone, municipal water supply
- Significance:** The Tombstone Water Works system was one of the first two water works begun in the territory of Arizona and one of the earliest large projects constructed in the Southwest for a municipal water supply.
- Description:** Water from a series of springs in the mountains was collected in a reservoir (100' long, 80' wide, and 22' deep) located at the upper end of Millers Canyon between the two highest peaks of the Huachuca Mountains. This location is some 25 miles south and 1000' above the city of Tombstone. A 7"-diameter wrought-iron pipe carries water across the San Pedro Valley to Tombstone. Extreme pressure is observed in the pipe line at its crossing of the San Pedro River, 1900' below its source. The pipe line then climbs up again to the city of Tombstone where water is stored before entering the distribution system.
- The original pipe line carrying water from the Huachuca Mountains to Tombstone is still in operation, although sections of pipe have been replaced. Much of the original distribution system throughout the town is still in use.
- History:** The original source of water for the city of Tombstone was Sycamore Springs, located about 8 miles north of the city. Water was carried from the springs by wrought-iron pipe and stored in two small tanks 50' above the town. Flow from Sycamore Springs was soon found to be insufficient for supplying the municipal needs of Tombstone, which in 1881 boasted of a population of 12,000. The lack of an adequate source of water near Tombstone made necessary the construction of a 25-mile-long pipeline to

carry water from Miller's Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains to Tombstone.

The Huachuca Water Company, a private company chartered under the laws of the state of Indiana, constructed the new system at cost of \$500,000 in 1882. This is an unusually high figure for supplying water to a small city during the 1880s. The company imported the wrought-iron pipe from England to the West Coast, then it was taken by rail to Benson, Arizona, and finally the pipe was hauled by ox teams from Benson to Tombstone. Using both Apache and Anglo labor, who worked under harsh conditions, the first pipeline system had been put into service by 1882. The Huachuca Water Company continued to serve the city with water until 1946 when the city bought it. In order to serve more customers, the system was recently expanded and is supplemented by one drilled well.

Sources:

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Historians: T. Lindsay Baker and Steve Rae, August 9 and October 8, 1971

Project

Information: The Tombstone Water Works was inventoried for the Historic American Engineering Record as part of the Southwest Water Resources Project, a joint project with the Texas Tech Water Resources Center. The survey was subsequently published as *Water for the Southwest: Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites* by the American Society of Civil Engineers in September 1973.