



# WATER EDUCATION



April 2018

**Welcome!** This is a **WaterSmart “Drop by Drop”** factsheet; the new water education program sponsored by the City of Prescott. Each month learn more about Prescott’s water resources. From history to infrastructure, together we’ll discuss Prescott water one drop at a time!

### WaterSmart Factsheet Summary:

- *Prescott, like any community, is constantly seeking to assure water supplies for the future*
- *Additional water supplies require scientific education and financial investment*



Join us at  
noon on the  
3rd Wednesday  
every month  
at the Prescott  
Public Library.

### **The City of Prescott Water Story**

Like many communities in Arizona, Prescott has a dynamic water history influenced by factors such as demand for growth and climate. Over time, the City has alternated using groundwater wells and surface water for the community. In 1940, C. E. Yount, a Prescott doctor, published Prescott’s water story, beginning in 1881! The following is a short summary of some of the highlights in Yount’s water story; the entire ten page article can be read at the Prescott Public Library.



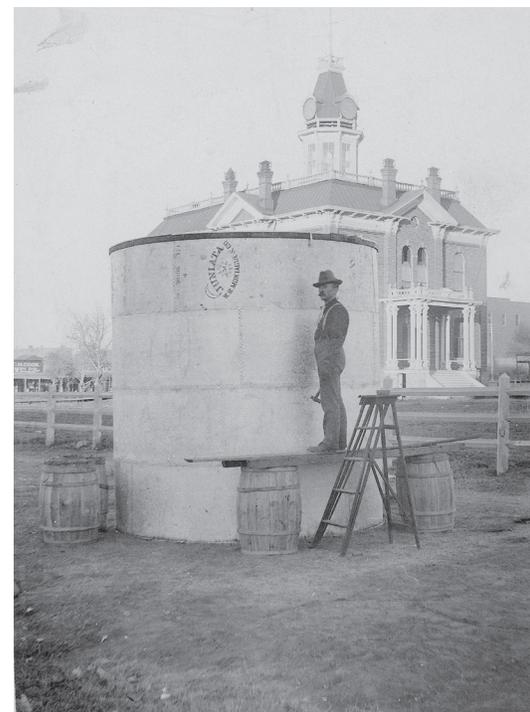
Dr. Yount, 1904

### **The First Water Supplies**

Around 1881, during the time Prescott was taking shape, water was provided by four shallow wells located on the Courthouse Plaza. However, in 1883, a dam was built on Miller Creek to capture stream flow. This water was then pumped up to a storage reservoir located on the south end of Mount Vernon Street (Palmer Hill), to supply water to town by gravity feed.

The pump, powered by cord wood, was capable of pumping 1,000,000 gallons of water DAILY up to the reservoir! Miller Creek supplied Prescott’s water until about mid-1889, when the City Council made the decision to return to groundwater.

In 1891, Goose Flat Well was installed about 100 ft. east of Granite Creek, and yielded approximately 80,000 gallons per day. This was a dry time, and, although the well was sufficient until about 1899, the community had been seeking other supplies. In about 1901, Del Rio Springs was decided upon as a new source.



Courthouse Water Tank, 1880

Moving water from Del Rio Springs to Prescott was no small feat, requiring a 19-mile pipeline on an uphill grade of 1,135 feet elevation difference and operating at 600 pounds of pressure!

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City of  
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Groom  
Creek  
Diversion

Given the distance, the pipeline was expensive to operate and maintain. In June 1907, when Thorbeck Ranch (now known as Goldwater Lake area), made a proposal to supply water to the Palmer Hill reservoir from the Bradshaw Mountains, the City agreed. This must have been a time of ample precipitation because, according to Yount, in August 1914 alone Thorbeck Ranch provided the City with over 8 million gallons of water from the Thorbeck Springs in the Bradshaws. By 1939, Upper and Lower Goldwater Lakes had been constructed and were receiving water from Banning Creek, Wolf Creek, Hassayampa Creek, and piped from Groom Creek.

This water system continued to be used from 1939-1945. In fact, Goldwater Lakes supplied 83% of Prescott's water needs through the 1930's and 1940's, although there were reoccurring water quality issues. But as the cycles often go in the Southwest, drier conditions returned, causing the City to look again for additional water resources. For example,

the 8 million gallons produced by Thorbeck Ranch in August 1914 fell to only 150,000 gallons per month in 1939.

By the mid 1940's, the U.S. Geological Survey declared that the Prescott area would be short on water in the near future; the City responded by engaging experts to assess the situation, who provided options in a 1946 report titled "Development of Water Supplies for the City of Prescott". The options included:

1. reconnect Del Rio Springs,
2. drill wells in the Little Chino Valley, or
3. obtain water from the Chino Valley Irrigation District (CVID).

This study set the stage for the resources presently in place, and identified water supplies in the Big Chino Sub-Basin. Prescott developed wells in the Little Chino Valley Sub-basin, later acquired CVID's Watson and Willow Lake Reservoirs in 1998, and in 2004, the Big Chino Water Ranch was purchased.

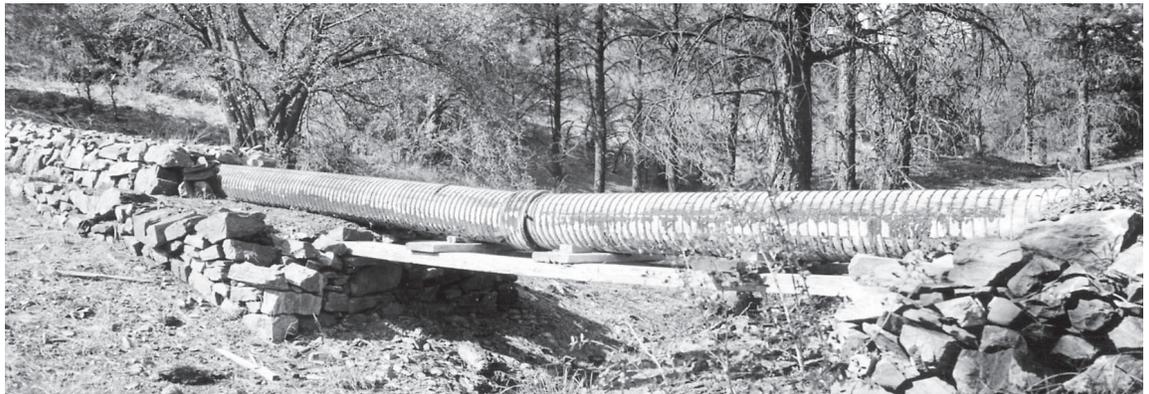
*Special thanks to Mike King  
for sharing his research and knowledge!*

**References:**

Yount, C.E. "Fight for Better Water" *Mining Courier* 15 Feb. 1947: 1-11. Print.

Leeds, Hill and Jewett, *Development of Water Supplies for City of Prescott, Arizona Consulting Engineers, 1946.* Print.

King, Mike "Early History of Prescott's Water Supply & Prescott National Forest Designation" *Sharlot Hall Days Past* 20 Oct. 2007. Online.



Water Pipeline (date unknown)

**Be WaterSmart!**

*In July 1893, a water resolution was passed that divided the city into water districts with the court house as the dividing line. The East side could only water on Tuesdays and Saturdays while the West side could only water on Sunday and Wednesdays. This was the first water conservation resolution enacted by the City of Prescott.*

*(Source: Yount, C.E. "Fight for Better Water" *Mining Courier* 15 Feb. 1947: 1-11. Print.)*

