

## Guide to the **Public Works Collection**

*The History Center in Tompkins County*  
110 North Tioga Street, Suite 204A  
Tompkins Center for History and Culture  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-273-8284  
[www.thehistorycenter.net](http://www.thehistorycenter.net)  
[archives@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:archives@thehistorycenter.net)

### **Collection Number V-15-1-6.1-2**

**See also:**

**General Photo File I 20 – Dams**

**Ithaca Water Department digital photographs – ask for assistance**

**Updated 2021**

#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Water has always played a central role in the growth of Ithaca and Tompkins County, and this collection highlights the development of local water infrastructure as well as other major public works efforts.

As in many American cities, prior to the 1840s local residents depended on wells for their water supply. In 1849 the village of Ithaca granted Henry Sage the right to install a water system as a private enterprise, and in 1853 he and other prominent citizens formed the Ithaca Light & Water Company. Its primary source of water came from a pond created from springs on the hill of Buffalo Street, with water piped down to the flats. In 1875 the company built a dam in Buttermilk gorge to expand the water supply. After a devastating typhoid epidemic in 1903, the city of Ithaca took ownership of the water system and opened the first filtration plant for the city's water supply.

As of 2021 there are eight municipal water supply and treatment facilities which serve at least portions of twelve municipalities throughout Tompkins County. By far the largest of these is the Southern Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Water Commission, also known as Bolton Point, which is owned and operated by five member-municipalities, including the town of Dryden, town of Ithaca, town of Lansing, the village of Cayuga Heights, and the village of Lansing. Others include the city of Ithaca, the village of Trumansburg, the town of Newfield, the town of Danby, the village of Dryden, and the village of Groton. Cornell University has its own water system.

This collection contains materials related to local water resources and local sewer systems. Other infrastructure highlighted include the Tompkins County Division of Solid Waste, and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee.

## CONTAINER LIST

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Folders</i>
<b>Box 1</b>	
Ithaca Water Works – Reports, legislation, water rates, history (1873 – 1960, not inclusive)	1
Board of Public Works Rules and Regulations (1913, 1960)	2
Ithaca Water Works newspaper clippings (1903)	3
Ithaca Sewer System – Reports, regulations, history (1894, 1898, 1956)	4
Ithaca Sewer System newspaper clippings (1894-1905)	5
“Ithaca’s Water Supply” – Ithaca Times (2009); Bolton Point history (2021)	6
<i>Tompkins County Comprehensive Sewerage Study</i> – 1976 (pp.1-154)	7
<i>Tompkins County Comprehensive Sewerage Study</i> – 1976 (Tables and appendices, A-K)	8
<i>Tompkins County Comprehensive Sewerage Study</i> – 1976 (Appendices L-V; Figures)	9
Southern Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Water Commission at Bolton Point – Annual Report (1976)	10
<i>County-wide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County</i> (2010)	11
<i>Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan</i> – Water Resources Chapter (2015)	12
<b>Box 2</b>	
<i>Multi-County Solid Waste Recovery Study (Cayuga, Cortland, Tioga, Tompkins) Final Report</i> (1979)	13
<i>Multi-County Solid Waste Recovery Study (Cayuga, Cortland, Tioga, Tompkins) Executive Summary of the Final Report</i> (1979)	14
Tompkins County Solid Waste Division Newsletter (1990)	15
Ithaca Shade Tree Advisory Committee information	16