

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Elizabeth City Water Plant

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number North end of Wilson Street, 1100 block N/A  not for publication

city or town Elizabeth City N/A  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Pasquotank code 139 zip code 27909

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William S. P... SHPO 12-15-93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
3	5	structures
		objects
5	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
Historic and Architectural Resources of  
Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1793-1943

Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Government-public works

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Government-public works

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

stucco

roof tile

other walls-concrete

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Community Planning and Development
- Engineering

Period of Significance

1926-1943

Significant Dates

1926  
ca. 1935

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Olsen, William C.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Name of Property

Pasquotank County, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property approximately 10

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 18 | 3899120 | 4020240 |  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 | 18 | 390060 | 4019170 |

3 | 18 | 389940 | 4019020 |  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 | 18 | 389860 | 4019040 |

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Tom Butchko, Preservation Consultant

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 1, 1993

street & number Post Office Box 206 telephone (919) 335-7916

city or town Elizabeth City state NC zip code 27907-0206

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Elizabeth City, Hon. James A. Harrington, Mayor

street & number Post Office Box 347 telephone (919) 338-3981

city or town Elizabeth City state NC zip code 27907-0347

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 2

### 7. Narrative Description

The Elizabeth City Water Plant contains five contributing and five noncontributing resources situated on approximately six and seven-tenths acres of land along the city's northwest boundary. The contributing resources include the three buildings and structures that dominate the site--the Elizabeth City Water Plant Building (#1), the Circular Finished Water Reservoir (#4), and the Raw Water Reservoir (#5)--while the noncontributing resources include smaller or less noticeable resources that have been added since 1977 to modernize and expand the city's purification capacity; the latter structures are clearly secondary in visual importance to the three major contributing buildings. The terrain is essentially level and, except for a single pine tree, completely barren of trees. The property is entirely enclosed by a chain link fence.

1. Elizabeth City Water Plant Building, 1926, Contributing building, William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineer.

The focus of the Elizabeth City Water Plant complex is a large impressive Spanish Colonial Revival style building designed by William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineers, a firm in Raleigh that specialized in municipal water plants. The broad sixteen-bay, 160-foot-long south facade of the main building focuses on a projecting three-bay three-story central pavilion that is flanked on each side by identical two-story blocks. Each section of the building is sheltered by a broad hipped roof of medium pitch covered by green clay tiles with ridge caps. The roof extends with deep eaves to shelter walls sheathed with common bond brick on the first story and stucco on the upper floor. These two wall textures are divided by a simple three-course corbeled band, the upper course of cream-colored ceramic tile and the lower two of brick. The third floor of the central block is also stucco. The entire building rests on a rusticated concrete foundation.

The facade's fenestration provides a rhythm that complements the building. The central pavilion contains a double-leaf door (each leaf with a single glazed opening) surmounted by a tripartite transom with Smyrna cross muntins; this classical composition is contained within a cream-colored ceramic tile surround with flat arch accentuated by enlarged keystone and corner blocks. The elongated fifteen-pane windows consist of fixed panes held in metal muntins with functional central panels containing six-panes each; the upper floors contain tripartite window arrangements.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 3

Cream-colored ceramic tile quoins on the first story and a handsome flight of concrete steps enclosed by ramped cheek walls complete the central pavilion. The two-story wings consists of large round-arched windows--the repetition of which recalls the style's Mediterranean origins--on the first floor and rectangular eighteen-pane windows on the second floor. Each window, containing fixed panes with in metal mutins and operable eight-pane central panels, is framed by simple brick architraves, with those on the second story being the more prominent because of the stucco background; brick quoins further accent the stuccoed upper story. The rear and side elevations continue the fenestration of the facade except for the first story of the north end, which is blind. While more than half of the rear and side openings have been closed or modified, the architectural integrity of the facade remains uncompromised.

As would be expected in a municipal utility building, the interior finish is simple and straightforward. The focus in the entrance hall is a wide free-standing closed-stringer stair that rises from the center to an intermediate landing, where it turns 180-degrees at each end of the landing before continuing with short flights to the second story. It is anchored by simple paneled metal newels, with delicate square-in-section metal balusters carrying the rounded handrail. The west wing contains the pump room, which occupies four bays of the wing, with a storage room in the outer bay. The east wing contains the lower portion of five large coagulating water filters; these are best seen on the second story, consisting of five poured concrete basins measuring approximately eight-by-twelve feet.

The second story of the building contains the center of operations for the water plant. In addition to the main staircase and passages, the center pavilion is occupied by a small office (modernized with luan paneling ca. 1980) in the front and storage rooms in the rear. The second story of the west wing contains the main office, laboratory and control room, instrument room, storage, and bathroom, all of which were sided with glazed ceramic tile during an extensive 1977 rehabilitation of the entire facility. At the same time an acoustical tile suspended ceiling was added in the second story of both wings, enclosing the previous exposed trusses.

The third story of the central pavilion is entirely occupied by the Lime Storage Room, a utilitarian room with brick walls where lime is mixed with water prior to adding to the treated water. It is accessible by a corner stair rising in the south corner of the pavilion.

In 1977-1978 a one-bay seventeen-foot-wide addition was erected on the east side of the building, and a two-story four-bay wide annex was constructed forty-eight feet north. The annex, known as the Ozone Building, is where ozone is manufactured to be added to water from the Pasquotank River as an early step in the treatment process. Designed by

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 4

---

J. M. Pease, Engineers of Charlotte, the brick and stucco building successfully repeats the form, finish, materials, and character of the original design. Such an effort was made to match the two sections that, when identical clay roof tiles could not be found for the annex, some of the original tiles were removed from the back of the main building's roof for the front of the annex, with the slightly off-color new tiles being placed on the less conspicuous rear elevations. The Ozone Building is connected to the main building by a second-story catwalk enclosed by stuccoed panels. A concurrent renovation of the main building resulted in the closure of numerous windows on the rear and sides to facilitate better control of heating and air conditioning. Eight of these removed windows, four arched windows from the first floor and four rectangular windows from the second floor, were utilized in the annex. This integration of old and new is remarkable, resulting in a harmony of design that completely masks the difference in age of fifty-one years.

2. Coagulation Basin, 1926, Contributing structure, William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineer.

A large cast concrete structure attached to the rear northeast of the main Water Plant Building (#1), the Coagulation Basin is nonetheless counted as a separate resource because it is completely different in appearance and function. Approximately twelve feet tall with concrete sides and utilitarian metal railing around the top, it is original to the 1926 complex designed by William C. Olsen. It consists of a series of uncovered holding tanks with access provided by a network of walkways leading from the rear of the second story of the east wing of the main building. The function of the Coagulation Basin is to provide a location for mixing raw untreated water with the necessary chemicals--the first step in water treatment--before pumping it into the main building (#1) for filtering. In 1977-1977 J. M. Pease, Engineers of Charlotte, added a contiguous brick and concrete building for chemical storage at the northwest corner. It occupied the site of a frame garage erected in the 1930s that was demolished at an unknown date.

3. Raw Water Pump House, ca. 1935, Contributing building.

This utilitarian 32-foot by 18-foot brick building was erected ca. 1935 to pump raw water from the newly constructed Raw Water Tank (#5) to the Coagulation Basin (#2). The simple three-bay by two-bay structure has

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 5

---

large fixed windows containing eighteen panes with metal mutins, operable eight-pane sash, and modest brick soldier course lintels.

4. **Circular Finished Water Reservoir, 1926, Contributing structure,**  
William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineer.

Second in physical presence on the site only to the main building, this impressive 150-foot-diameter concrete reservoir was constructed in 1926 as the primary reservoir for finished (i.e., treated) water in Elizabeth City.

Having concrete sides that rise five feet above the ground, the structure extends approximately three below grade yielding an interior height of eight feet from floor to overflow valve. The structure was unroofed prior to World War II, at which time a low concrete dome of about eight feet in height was constructed. This is the facility which newspaper editor W. O. Saunders stated was to be the site during construction of "a big dance . . . . It is 150 feet wide, and is big enough to hold everybody who dances in this old town" (The Independent, April 22, 1927). It is still used for finished water storage and has a capacity of 1.5 million gallons.

5. **Raw Water Reservoir, ca. 1935, Contributing structure.**

The Raw Water Reservoir is a massive 165-foot by 140-foot rectangular concrete structure that rises from grade approximately sixteen feet and is recessed into the ground approximately four feet. The uncovered structure has utilitarian concrete walls punctuated with buttresses for added support. The interior depth is eighteen feet from floor to overflow valve, providing a capacity of three million gallons. It stores raw (untreated) water as it is pumped from the intake valve in the Pasquotank River at Whitehurst Street, approximately 1.2 miles north of the water plant. From here, the water is pumped to the Coagulation Basin (#2) to begin treatment.

6. **Pre-Chlorination Tank, 1977, Noncontributing structure, J. M. Pease,**  
Engineers of Charlotte.

This concrete-sided round tank, 95 feet in diameter and 20 feet tall, was added during the 1977-1978 rehabilitation of the water plant. In it raw water from the Raw Water Reservoir (#5) was mixed with chlorine prior to being pumped to the Coagulation Basin (#2). It is no longer used

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 6

---

because tests in the late 1980s showed that chlorination of the city's raw water, necessary because of its high natural tannic acid content, produced dangerous levels of Trihalomethanes (THMs), a cancer-causing agent. A different treatment process was then instituted to eliminate the production of THMs.

7. New Finished Water Tank, 1977, Noncontributing structure, J. M. Pease, Engineers of Charlotte.

The largest structure on site, this immense 360-foot long and 150-foot wide rectangular tank was built in 1977 to increase the city's capacity to store finished water. The concrete structure, rising approximately six feet above grade and extending about three feet below grade, has an interior depth of eight feet from floor to overflow valve and a capacity of three million gallons. It is covered by a slightly pitched flat roof of concrete.

8. Sludge Holding Tank, 1992, Noncontributing structure.

A circular metal tank approximately forty feet in diameter and twenty feet tall, the Sledge Holding Tank was erected in 1992 to hold 200,000 gallons of sludge, a waste-product of the treatment process. This sludge is removed from the tank four times a year and spread over agricultural lands as a low-level fertilizer.

9. Backwash Holding Tank, ca. 1983, Noncontributing structure.

This uncovered concrete tank consists of two separate ponds or basins, each containing 160,000 gallons.

10. Coagulation Basin Annex, 1977-1978, Noncontributing structure, J. M. Pease, Engineers of Charlotte.

The Coagulation Basin Annex is a concrete structure rising approximately twelve feet above grade. It is finished in a manner that is nearly identical to the Coagulation Basin (#2) to the south, and is connected to it by a pair of horizontal metal pipes approximately four feet above grade.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 2

---

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Elizabeth City Water Plant reflects the civic pride the growing municipality possessed in the 1920s when it became necessary to modernize and enlarge the local water supply and is thus eligible for listing under Criterion A. It dates from a period during which the local residents not only had unbridled ambition for the future, but increased concerns about a clean and safe source of water, a concern that was shown in major cities throughout the state. The Elizabeth City Water Plant is also eligible for listing under Criterion C because its plans were rendered by William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineers, a Raleigh engineering firm which designed water plants for cities throughout the state. It is testament to Olsen's design and engineering skills that the Elizabeth City facility is the only one of more than a dozen such facilities the firm designed and built before 1943 that is still in use. Olsen's use of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, a style which is infrequently seen in North Carolina and is even rarer in the Albemarle region, is particularly significant for it is the largest municipal building erected to date within the region. The Elizabeth City Water Plant, the style's finest example in eastern North Carolina, is a regional landmark of ambitious municipal design.

The Elizabeth City Water Plant's period of significance, 1926 to 1943, begins with the date of its construction and falls within the years covered by the Elizabeth City Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), "Historic and Architectural Resources of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1793-1943," particularly historic context Twentieth Century Progress: 1900 to 1943. Within this context, the subsections that most directly cover this property are those concerning physical development and expansion, and industrial and commercial development. The building is discussed in the MPDF under property type 3-Institutional Architecture, section C-Public Buildings.

Historical Background

The development and modernization of Elizabeth City's water supply lagged far behind the city's growth during the nineteenth century. During the early and middle decades of the century, an abundance of unpolluted surface water in the Pasquotank River and Poindexter, Tiber, and Knobbs creeks, the relative ease at which shallow wells could be dug, and the relative unimportance attached to hygienic water resources enabled city

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetElizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North CarolinaSection number 8 Page 3

residents to benefit from a seemingly limitless supply. However, increasing industrialization and population growth during the thirty years following the Civil War, plus a heightened awareness of the importance of safe drinking water, necessitated that the city undertake a more modern water system. The century's last decade began with the city having 3,251 residents, making it one of the ten largest cities in the state. Yet, the water supply consisted primarily of water drawn from surface wells, many of which were quite shallow because the city's low altitude (about six feet above sea level) and relatively high water table. Many private residences also had individual cisterns to collect rainwater, although a comprehensive study of these has not been done. According to the 1891 Sanborn map, the city had two municipal cisterns with a combined capacity of 13,000 gallons, with seven more cisterns planned; however, these apparently were primarily intended for fire-fighting (Cheney 1975, 1229; Sanborn maps, 1891, 1896).

The development of a residential water system in Elizabeth City began in 1895 with the operation of a private "water works" by Joseph Sanders (The Economist, September 22, 1895). In 1900 the Elizabeth City Water Company was organized by several of the leading men in town, including industrialist Charles H. Robinson, attorneys Edwin F. Aydlett and Pat H. Williams, and merchants John W. Sharber, Jerome B. Flora, W. J. Woodley, and Louis Selig, and two years later the Sanborn map noted that "arrangements are being made for water works for town" (Incorporation Book 1, p. 178; Sanborn map 1902; Butchko 1989, 167). A modern facility was built in 1903 on Pennsylvania Avenue (now North Poindexter Street) by the Elizabeth City Light, Power, and Water Company, a private corporation that appears to have been an consolidation of the Elizabeth City Water Company and the Elizabeth City Light and Power Company, the latter having been incorporated in February 1903 primarily by Baltimore investors. The company laid water and sewer lines throughout much of the city for both domestic use and fire protection. The treatment and distribution plant was constructed in close proximity to both the Pasquotank River and Knobbs Creek, the latter being the source of the plant's raw water. This private corporation remained the city's main source of water until February 1925 when its operations were turned over to the City of Elizabeth City, it having been purchased by the city the previous year. Preparations were immediately undertaken to build a larger and more modern plant, and the last structures at the Pennsylvania Avenue water plant were demolished in the 1960s (Sanborn map 1908, 1914, 1923, 1931; Incorporation Book 1, p. 284; Parker 1953, 64-65).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 4

On August 30-31, 1926 the city began acquiring lots for construction of the new Elizabeth City Water Plant; these lots were located to the west of the municipal limits in the Skinner and Gregory area that was platted in 1902 (Exhibit B). Thirty-seven lots were purchased, with an additional seven lots acquired by September 1928 (Deed Book 67, pp. 416-421, 430, 439, 484, 544; Deed Book 68, pp. 131, 209, 210; Deed Book 69, p. 547; Deed Book 70, p. 172; Deed Book 72, p. 312; Deed Book 74, p. 41; Butchko 1989, 168). This site was convenient both to Knobbs Creek, from which raw water would be taken, and to the lines of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, by which chemicals for treatment were delivered. Construction on the facility, which was expected to cost \$250,000, began in September of 1926. The design, developed by the firm of William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineers of Raleigh, and erected by Guion and Company of Gastonia, was, in the words of the leading local newspaper, to be built "in attractively ornamental fashion, the main building to be of Spanish architecture, flanked by huge concrete reservoirs and settling tanks . . . and fronted by a small park . . . [The plant] is so designed that it will take care of the needs of the city, based on reasonable estimates of growth, for a generation or more" (The Daily Advance, September 8, 1926).

W. O. Saunders, the editor of a rival newspaper, The Independent, was typically witty when he reported on construction progress seven months later:

When completed, the building will be as attractive as a modern school building. It sets in a four acre lot which is to be laid out with walks, and beautiful with ornamental shrubbery. And then, 'down by the water works,' [it] will be a spooning place by night, and a playground by day. . . . Mr. Ridgeway [the Superintendent] plans to hold a big dance on the floor of the reservoir next month. It is 150 feet wide, and is big enough to hold everybody who dances in this old town.

Saunders went on to enumerate the building materials required for the job, including 1,000 tons cement, 4,000 tons crushed stone, 2,000 tons sand, a quarter-million brick, and 150 tons of steel reinforcement (The Independent, April 22, 1927).

When the facility was finally put into service in October 1927, Saunders was effusive with praise, declaring that the plant's daily capacity of two million gallons was sufficient to take care of more than

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetElizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North CarolinaSection number 8 Page 5

twice the city's inhabitants and that residents were assured that "dangerous raw water" could not find its way into homes: the plant would take "red water as it comes from Knobbs Creek, purify it, extract all the dye of the juniper roots, the salt and sediment, the filth and dirt from the watershed, the carbon dioxide, the carbonic acid gas, the colon bacilli, and all else objectionable and convert it in to clear, sparkling, palatable, potable water as safe for human consumption as the raindrops (The Independent, October 14, 1927).

William C. Olsen (1888-1962) was one of the leading designers of municipal water plants in North Carolina during the early twentieth century. He began the firm of William C. Olsen, Consulting Engineers in 1920, and within the next twenty years designed water plants for many of the state's municipalities, among them Kinston, Rocky Mount, Raleigh, Fayetteville, High Point, Lexington, and Thomasville. As far as is known, the Elizabeth City facility is the only one of Olsen's water plants that is still in service (Sigmon interview, 1985). This seemingly remarkable feat of longevity is due primarily to the fact that, unlike the cities named above, each of which has at least tripled in size during the past sixty years, Elizabeth City's population has not even doubled. In 1920 the city had 8,412 residents and in 1940, near the end of the property's period of significance, the population numbered 11,564, a rather healthy increase of thirty-seven percent in twenty years. Yet, in the last fifty years, from 1940 to 1990, the population has increased to 14,292, a twenty-four percent increase since 1940 and a seventy percent increase since 1920 (Cheney 1975, 1229; 1990 Census). If editor Saunders's claim in 1927 that the water plant "is large enough to take care of more than twice as many inhabitants as the city now has" was accurate, that point has yet to be reached (The Independent, October 14, 1927).

During the early 1930s, a change was made in the source of raw water for the water plant. In an unsuccessful attempt to halt the increase in salt seepage into the water supply during the dry season (essentially the late summer and autumn), a dam was erected across Knobbs Creek. Consultations with the several state and federal agencies resulted in the construction in 1934 of a well field to supply water to the plant, this field, composed of seven wells about sixty feet deep, is located along Well Field Road approximately 2.9 miles due west of the water plant in an unincorporated section of rural Pasquotank County (Parker 1953, pp. 66-71).

Advances in water treatment technology since 1943 have resulted in several modernizations and expansions of the water treatment capacity of the Elizabeth City Water Plant. The last major expansion was undertaken in 1977-1978 by J. M. Pease, an engineering firm from Charlotte. This

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 6

---

resulted in several changes and additions to the Water Plant: a modernization of the interior of the main building (#1); the construction of the Ozone House (annex to the main building); the addition of a chemical storage building to the Coagulation Basin (#2); the building of a Coagulation Basin Annex (#10); and the addition of the large Finished Water Tank (#7).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North Carolina

Section number 9 Page 1

---

9. Major Bibliographic Sources

- Butchko, Thomas R. On The Shores Of The Pasquotank: The Architectural History of Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County, North Carolina. Elizabeth City: The Museum of the Albemarle, 1989.
- Cheney, John L., ed., North Carolina Government: 1685-1974. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975.
- Interview by consultant of William H. Sigmon of Olsen and Associates, Engineers of Raleigh, North Carolina, June 4, 1985.
- Parker, J. C. "History of Elizabeth City Water Supply," Report on Water Supply of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1953. Charlotte, North Carolina: J. N. Pease and Company, Engineers, 1953.
- Pasquotank County Incorporation Records, Register of Deeds Office, Pasquotank County Courthouse, Elizabeth City.
- Sanborn Insurance Map Company. Sanborn maps for 1885, 1891, 1896, 1902, 1908, 1914, 1923, 1931, 1958.
- The Daily Advance (Elizabeth City). "Will Begin Soon on Water Plant," September 8, 1926; "Sewer Lines To Cover Entire City Are Laid Engineer Announces," September 20, 1926; "Miles of Water Pipes Laid Here," September 28, 1926;
- The Independent (Elizabeth City). "This Big Job Contains 4,000 Tons Concrete," April 22, 1927; "Two Million Gallons of Pure Water A Day," October 14, 1927.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

*typed  
in  
original* E.C. Water Plant  
Pasquotank Co., NC

Section number 10 Page 1

---

10. Geographical Data

UTM References

5.	18	389870	4019200
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The property of the Elizabeth City Water Plant consists of the land contained within a chain link fence around the site. This property is all of tract number 8914 (15) 74-3143 as shown by the bold line on Pasquotank County Tax Map Number 121 (Exhibit C), and consists of lots number 305-350 as shown on now superseded Tax Map 37B in Block G.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Elizabeth City Water Plant was drawn to include the facility and its support structures that are enclosed within a chain link fence surrounding them. The boundary that encompasses the original lots purchased between August 1926 and September 1928 for the plant and are outlined by the bold line on the accompanying 50' = 1" scale sketch map, Exhibit A.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Elizabeth City Water Plant  
Pasquotank County, North  
Carolina

Section number 10 Page 2

---

A photocopy of the USGS map on which the nomination is plotted is included. The original, on which several nominations are plotted, has been submitted with the multiple documentations nomination, Historic and Architectural Resources of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1793-1943.

3 MILLION GAL.  
RAW WATER RESERVOIR

⑤

TRANSFORMERS  
WIRE FENCE

75,000 GAL'S  
SECONDARY  
TREATMENT  
BASIN

WIRE FENCE  
TRANSFORMERS

CITY OF ELIZABETH  
CITY WATER & LIGHT PLANT  
MAN ON DUTY ALL HOURS.  
LIGHTS: ELEC., HEAT STEAM  
POWER & RAW WATER LINE

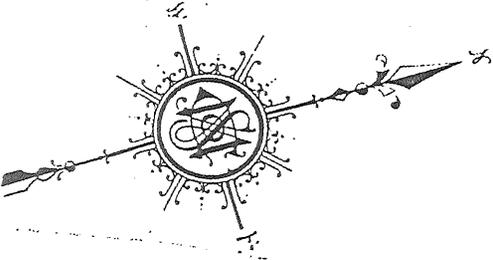
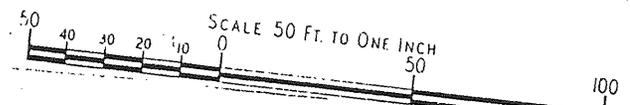
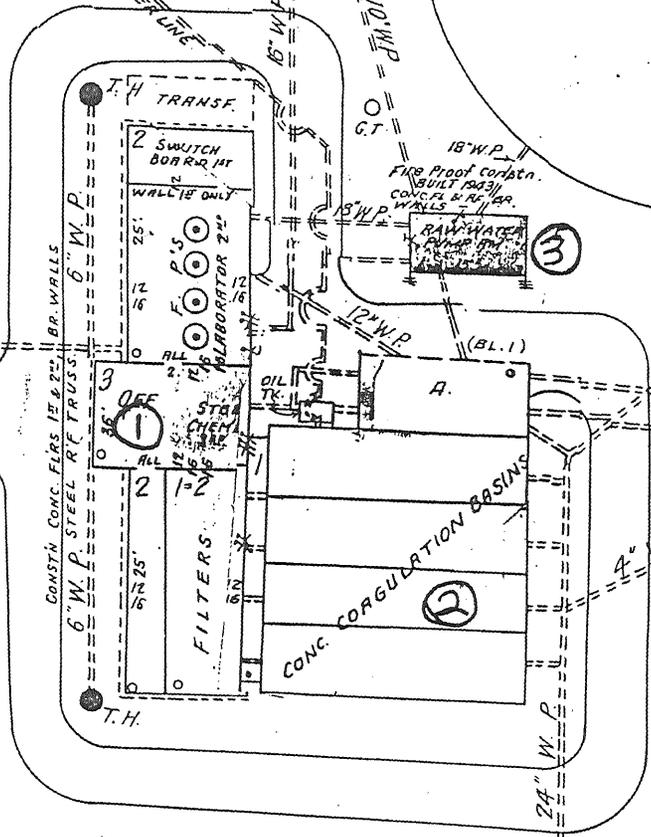
1 1/2 MILLION GAL. CONC. RESERVOIR

④

JAN. 1931  
ELIZABETH CITY  
N.C.

1962 Update  
Sanborn Map  
Showing  
Contributing  
reservoirs

Elizabeth City  
Water Plant  
Pasquotank  
County, NC





Elizabeth City neighborhood development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries based on plats filed in the Office of the Register of Deeds in the Pasquotank County Courthouse.

- |                                       |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Conrow, Bush, and Lippencott, 1881 | 17. Cobb, 1907                   |
| 2. Improvement Company, 1892          | 18. Commander, 1907              |
| 3. M. N. Sawyer, 1892                 | 19. J. L. Etheridge, 1907        |
| 4. Sawyer, Lynch, and Wright, 1892    | 20. Spellman, 1907               |
| 5. A. L. Aydlett, 1893                | 21. Laurel Park, 1908            |
| 6. M. N. Sawyer, 1895                 | 22. Highland Park, 1914 and 1923 |
| 7. Sawyer and Stevens, 1897           | 23. Lavenstein, 1916             |
| 8. Stevens and Stevens, 1899          | 24. Washington Heights, 1916     |
| 9. Euclid Heights, 1900               | 25. West End Addition, 1923      |
| 10. Dunstan and Jones, 1902           | 26. Westover, 1924               |
| 11. Riverside Land Company, 1902      | 27. Lambert, 1926                |
| 12. Skinner and Gregory, 1902         | 28. Moore Heights, 1926          |
| 13. West End, 1902                    | 29. Pine Grove, 1926             |
| 14. P. E. White, 1902                 | 30. Roanoke Park, 1926           |
| 15. Perry, 1906                       | 31. Elcinoca, 1927               |
| 16. Brooks and Parker, 1907           | 32. Weeks and Weeks, 1928        |

*Elizabeth City Water Plat  
Pasquotank County, NC*

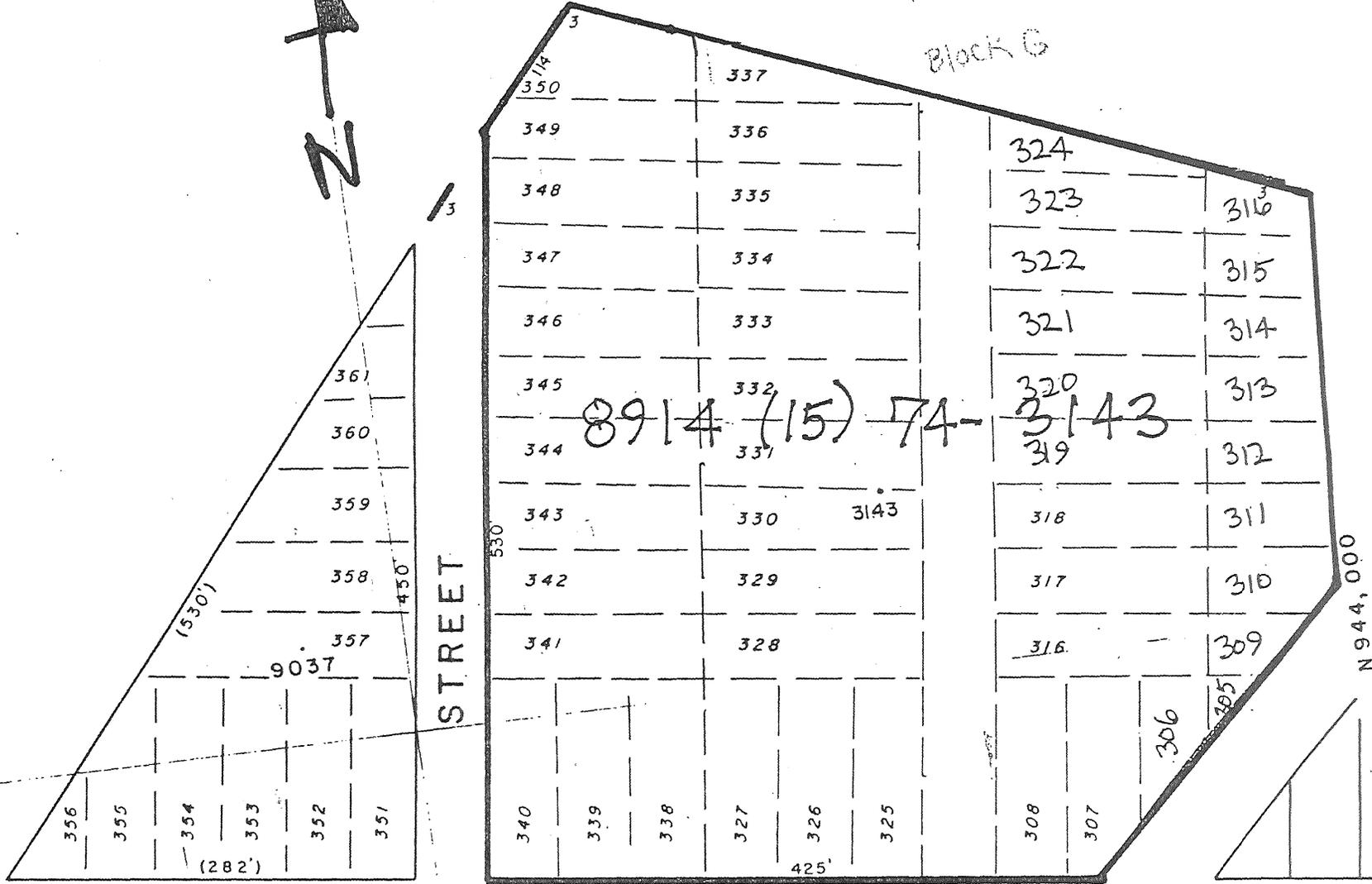
ELIZABETH CITY WATER PLANT  
 Pasquotank County, North Carolina

1 inch = @ 100 feet  
 Pasquotank Tax Map 121

4



Block G



WARD STREET

WILSON STREET

WILSON STREET

50'	50'	50'	50'	100'
228	227	226	220	218
6799	7749		8748	219
150	150		150	

50'			150'	
206	205	204	198	96
2130			197	





