

Historical Marker - S719 - Monroe Avenue Water Filtration Plant/The Beginning of Water Fluoridation (Marker ID#:S719)



Front - Title/Description

Monroe Avenue Water Filtration Plant

During the late nineteenth century, Grand Rapids residents relied on private companies to provide purified drinking water. As the city grew, so did the need for clean water. In 1900 a city-owned facility was proposed, but plans were thwarted by a bribery and conspiracy scandal involving city officials. Ten years later, however, citizens approved a bond to build this facility, which was designed by Rudolph Hering and George Fuller of New York. The plant was expanded in 1924, and a pipeline to Lake Michigan was added in 1938. A final expansion occurred in 1957, but the plant ceased operation in 1961. At its peak, this facility could treat sixty million gallons of water per day.

Significant Date:

Industry and Invention (1875-1915)

Registry Year: 2009 ***Erected Date:*** 2010

Marker Location

Address: 1430 Monroe Ave.

City: Grand Rapids

State: MI ***ZipCode:*** 49505

County: Kent

Township: Walker

Lat: 42.98925139 / ***Long:*** -85.67044258

Web URL:

Back - Title/Description

The Beginning of Water Fluoridation

On January 25, 1945, Grand Rapids became the first city in the world to add fluoride to its public water supply. The city, along with the U.S. Public Health Service, the Michigan Department of Health, and the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, began a ten-year study to determine the effectiveness of fluoride in the prevention of tooth decay. The city was chosen as a test site because of its large population of school-age children; its closeness to Lake Michigan, which is mostly free of natural fluoride; and its proximity to Muskegon, which served as the control city. By 1955 the study had shown a sixty-five percent reduction in tooth decay and led to the adoption of fluoridation as an accepted public health measure.