



The City of Olean's water supply in the late 1800s and early 1900s came from numerous wells that were located along the Allegheny River in the south end of town. Demand from residents, industry, and the railroad put a strain on the City's water supply and the City needed to find a larger water supply.

Water treatment was just beginning to be used at the turn of the 20th century. The first rapid sand filter was constructed in Little Falls, NJ in 1902; In 1908 Jersey City, NJ began chlorinating its water supply. The City of Olean decided in 1917 to seek permission from the State of New York to construct and use a water filtration plant with its supply being the Olean Creek. This plan was approved in the summer of 1917 and construction began on the filtration plant.

The plant was completed in 1918 (at a cost of around \$75,000) and began producing a clean, safe supply of water for the residents of Olean. At the time of completion, the water plant was considered one of the finest in the country. Early on, the public was encouraged to come and see this new facility to help assure them of their water's purity.

A quote from William Sheehan, Superintendent of the Olean Water Department in 1918:

“Water filtration is a new thing to this city and many people have been a little skeptical regarding its efficiency. A visit to the plant, however, with an explanation of the tests which we use to assure the public will, I believe, convince anyone. The water department is mighty proud of this new plant, which experts have pronounced to be one of the finest in the country. We want the public to give it a thorough ‘once over’ and be convinced that their money has been spent to a good purpose.”

(July 2, 1919, Fire and Engineering, Vol. 66, No. 1, pg 998. Accessed online through Google Books.)

The original water plant continued operations through the turn of the 21st century until giving way for a new filtration plant in 2002 after 84 years of successful operation. We continue to strive to supply the City with an affordable and safe supply of drinking water with the new filtration plant.

On this occasion, we would like to invite the public to tour our facility on Saturday, July 21st. After a proclamation ceremony by Mayor Bill Aiello at 9:30, we will be giving guided tours at the top of the hour at 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 and 1:00.