A blue-tinted portrait of Clyde Potts, an older man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie. The portrait is the background of the entire page.

You probably have never heard of him. Yet, as New Jerseyans deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and the role of public health systems, it is fitting to remember a man who managed to combine the skills of the sanitation engineer with the power of a mayor to leave a lasting legacy of public service to the Garden State.

Clyde Potts “Up-Builder”

by Arthur Mierisch

Need to Sanitize

The delivery sanitary services to communities are among the most important of the primary functions of municipal governments. It includes waste management and water purification, as well as the safe preparation, transportation, and distribution of food products, and maintaining sanitary homes and businesses. The health and very lives of people within the community depends on these services. They are essential for the economic growth of communities and the improvement of the quality-of-life of residents. Since the 19th century, civil engineers have designed, constructed, and operated sanitary systems that collect sewage and trash, and obtain "clear" water supplies with no disturbance to municipalities. They "up-build" the health of communities. The modern concepts of sanitation we take for granted in New Jersey—at least until they fail—are the products of a long and fascinating history.

The need to sanitize urban communities began in the middle of the 19th century. The population of the United States jumped from 23-million in 1850 to 76-million in 1900, an increase of over 200%. During this period, the nation's primarily agricultural economy increasingly added industrial elements. Thriving textile mills, clothing, and haberdashery factories situated along northern New Jersey's Passaic River created a demand for workers. Immigrants and rural farm laborers crowded into cities and towns. Families moved into multistoried and multi-family buildings erected on small lots. Overwhelmed municipalities were unable to provide adequate sanitary systems to remove wastes and ensure the purity of drinking water. People, inhaling dust and manure particles from unpaved streets, were overcome with coughing and sneezing attacks. After storms, undrained surface water settled in stagnant pools and became breeding grounds for insects. The air swarmed with endless clouds of flies carrying germs and diseases to the passerby. Homeowners along the Whippany and Passaic rivers complained about "foul" smells permeating the air outside of slaughterhouses, rendering, and fertilizer plants. Nonedible animal wastes from butchering and rendering plants flowed into open sewers that "drained into nearby streams and rivers."

The indigent and working poor lived in drafty overcrowded buildings without the benefits of central heating, toilet, or freshwater facilities. Typhus, typhoid, smallpox, yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis, and other debilitating sicknesses struck the underfed and overworked inhabitants. Cholera was virulent throughout the Passaic Valley. The Medical Society of New Jersey reported that the air contained "miasmatic" diseases thought to float in the air, or night mists, generated from noxious



The Passaic River Sewage System starting in Paterson flows through Fairlawn, Elmwood Park, Garfield, Clifton, South Hackensack, Passaic, Wallington, East Rutherford, Rutherford, Lyndhurst, Nutley, Belleville, North Arlington, Kearny, East Orange, and Harrison. It terminates at the Newark Waste Management plant. After processing, wastes travel in pipes under Newark Bay into the upper New York Bay.



A typical urban backyard.

**Principle Diseases and Illnesses Causes of
Death Morristown 1880 - 1900**

Air-borne

Consumption	Diphtheria
Measles	Lung Diseases
Scarlet Fever	Smallpox
Whooping Cough	

Water-borne

Diarrheal Diseases
Digestive and Intestinal Diseases
Remittent Fever
Typhoid Fever
Urinary Diseases

Other

Cancer	Heart & Circulation
Nervous Disorders	Rheumatism

An article in a 1900 issue of *Country Life in America* reported that “people in the United States are fast becoming convinced of the fact that mosquitoes are unnecessary evils.”

emanations from riding animals. During the 1880s, however, the introduction of cast iron pipes, and electrical and fuel-powered pumps increased water pressure into homes permitting toilets and bathrooms to be installed on all floors.

In 1865, Cornell University of Ithaca, New York, recognized the need to “up-build” communities. They created a Sanitary Engineering major as part of their Civil Engineering degree program. Undergraduates studied the design and construction of waste management and water purification systems, and the preparation, storage, and transportation of dairy and meat products.

In 1877, the New Jersey Legislature established the New Jersey Department of Health and the Bureau of Vital Statistics. The department published the *Annual Report of the Board of Health*. The document calculated mortality rates of the principal causes of death, grouping these into three categories: Waterborne, Airborne, and Other. The *Report* made recommendations to doctors and hospitals about the need to sanitize offices and buildings, and how to diagnose medical conditions. Municipalities now had a tool to measure the effectiveness of sanitary systems.

During the 1880s, municipalities engaged civil engineer consultants to design, supervise, and operate sanitary systems. Within a few years, a hodgepodge of independently controlled sewage and water companies operated along the Passaic River. However, political corruption and territorial differences between these companies made them unwilling or unable to provide sanitary services to municipalities during floods and droughts. By 1895, municipalities suffered high prices and poor service from the monopolistic practices of water companies. The Lehigh Valley Railroad controlled the Passaic and Acquackanock River Water Companies that supplied Jersey City and Montclair. The East Jersey Water Company, believing that they owned the upper Passaic River, charged Newark exorbitant service fees. The East Jersey Water Company and the Lehigh Valley Railroad often argued about who controlled the water supply for Jersey City and Montclair. Jersey City then sought water from the Passaic River. However, the river was polluted forcing them to obtain water from Boonton and a source on the Rockaway River. Service was not guaranteed and often intermittent from these locations. Uncontrolled disposal of refuse and noxious materials into waterways added to the public's concern.

The period between 1885 and 1900 included some key events in the Garden State's battles to provide clean water.

1885: The Passaic River was declared POLLUTED! In 1897, the State of New Jersey Legislature appointed the Passaic Valley

Sewage Commission (PVSC) to "address pollution concerns" along the Passaic River from Paterson to the tidal waters of Newark Bay.

1900: Smallpox infections stressed Morristown and local communities. The Morris Plains Hospital, unable to provide service issued a notice: "We are directed by the Medical Director of the Morris Plains Hospital to state that while the smallpox is prevalent in Morristown, the hospital will be quarantined against Morristown visitors."

1900: People were optimistic and pessimistic about the upcoming 20th century. On one hand, times were "good." There were wondrous inventions for all to enjoy. Perhaps, they were the first to ask: "Will wonders never cease?" Just imagine how delighted people were when driving their Model T down lighted streets and stopping to view a silent movie to the accompaniment of a piano or organ. And yet, drivers and passengers wore bandannas over their noses and mouths to avoid breathing the dust clouds that smelled like old "Dobbin" had passed just by. People concerned about their health were alarmed over the recurrence of life-threatening illnesses. They believed in the germ theory that explained how smells in the air and particles in drinking water caused devastating illnesses.

Morristown, responding to suggestions by the New Jersey Board of Health, issued ordinances to control infectious diseases. The 1900 Sanitary Code defined contagious diseases and specified procedures to protect the public's health. The front of homes where infections had occurred displayed a sign stating the name of the illness. Procedures to dispose of dead people and animals, and the requirement to keep property clear of rubbish and liquids, and anything dangerous to health were detailed.

Section III. A "contagious disease" refers to cholera, yellow fever, smallpox, diphtheria, typhus fever and scarlet fever, and any new disease of any infectious, contagious, or pestilential nature.

Section XXV. That no person shall be let into a dwelling marked with a contagious disease.

Section XXVI. That the occupant/occupants of any dwelling house, store, another building or room/rooms in therein be a person/persons sick or infected with a contagious or communicable

The *Jerseyman* reported that individuals discharged from a hospital or from a house where they have been quarantined were "entirely free from possibly communicating smallpox to others." However, they have been unable to earn a livelihood on the belief that they can transmit the disease to others.

disease shall have the front of the dwelling marked with a card or sign on which is the name of the disease in letters not less than 2 inches in height.

Section XXVII. That no person who has died of an infectious disease shall be left unburied for more than two days.

Section XXXIII. That "nuisances" shall be defined to include and embrace the placing or depositing upon any street or public place or private property any dead animal or any part of the same, or garbage or putrid meat or manure or compost (stable manure used as a fertilizer is accepted).

(1) allowing the flow from any premises from sinks drains, pipes, sewer water, upon a public place, open line or public/private property or the allowing to collect on any premises, any wastewater, dirty water, slops, stable drain filth, overflow from cesspools or privy vaults or any offensive liquid matter.

Section XLI. It shall be the duty of all owners, lessees, tenants or, occupants of all lots and land to keep the sidewalk in front free from any offensive substance, liquid or rubbish, water, or anything dangerous to health, life, or limb.

Section XLIX. That every owner, agent, lessee, tenant, or occupant of any stall, stable or apartment in which any horse or any other cattle shall be kept in which place any manure or any other solid or liquid discharge or excrement may collect or accumulate.

This was the state of affairs at the start of the new century, when Clyde Potts became interested in how civil engineering could solve civilization's sanitation problems.

Civil Engineer

Clyde W. Potts, born on November 1, 1876 in Libertyville, Ohio, received his preparatory education at a high school in Des Moines, Iowa. He graduated with honors as a Civil Engineer from Cornell University in 1901. A paternal American ancestor, Thomas Potts came from England in 1678, and settled at Burlington, New Jersey. His father, a lumber dealer served as a soldier in the Civil



Clyde Potts

Potts's 1901 Cornell University yearbook entry read: "Pootsy' ...is well-liked...and when he leaves Ithaca with his C. E. degree many including the fair of the town will bemoan his departure. He intends to practice Civil Engineering. Member of Sigma Xi and Tau Beta Pi Honorary Societies."

War. He came east to attend Cornell University and, following his graduation in 1901, found employment with the City of Philadelphia's Water Department, doing experimental work designing waste management and water purification systems. Before 1900, wastes generated in populated areas were deposited in open-air pits. Potts studied advanced techniques that processed wastes inside of treatment plants. He observed how water is purified using chemical treatments and water jets to reduce the bacteria in the fluid.

In 1903, Potts worked as a civilian engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers in Detroit, Michigan. He observed how large quantities of water and other liquids were transported over long distances using pressurized pumping systems. He also noted how 2-foot height fluctuations in tidal waters in the Great Lakes caused ships to go a ground. To help mitigate the danger, he had built a small structure positioned on a pier having two windows that displayed the water's depth using a floating indicator.

By 1904, using the knowledge and experiences from such previous assignments, Potts began a career of "up-building" the health of over 200 cities and towns along the east coast of the United States and in Europe. He opened a consulting office in New York City and became a consultant for the Passaic River Sewage Commission. He coordinated the enlargement of its underground network of sewage and water pipes. The project took over five years to complete.

Over the course of this phase of his career, Clyde Potts lent his expertise to municipalities:

New Jersey

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Atlantic City | Jersey City | Ocean Grove |
| Bayonne | Kearny | Passaic |
| Belmar | Montclair | Paterson |
| Bloomfield | Morristown | Rahway |
| Bridgeton | Newark | Rockaway |
| Englewood | Newton | Washington |

Others

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Bridgeport, CT | Coney Island, NY | Wilkes Barre, PA |
| Greenwich, CT | New Bedford, NY | Athens, Greece |
| West Haven, CT | Patchogue, NY | Balkan States |
| Chicago, IL | Rockville Center, NY | |

One year after opening his New York City office, Potts, was selected by a unanimous vote of the people of Newton, New Jersey to design a "proper system for disposing of sewage." After an investigation, his design was approved and he supervised the

1891: New Jersey begins pasteurization of milk.

1922: To improve sanitary conditions, the Morristown Board of Health passed an ordinance requiring all those who dispense ice cream or soda to furnish paper cups and containers instead of the usual china or glassware. *The Jerseyman*

1915: 25% of deaths among babies were under one year old.

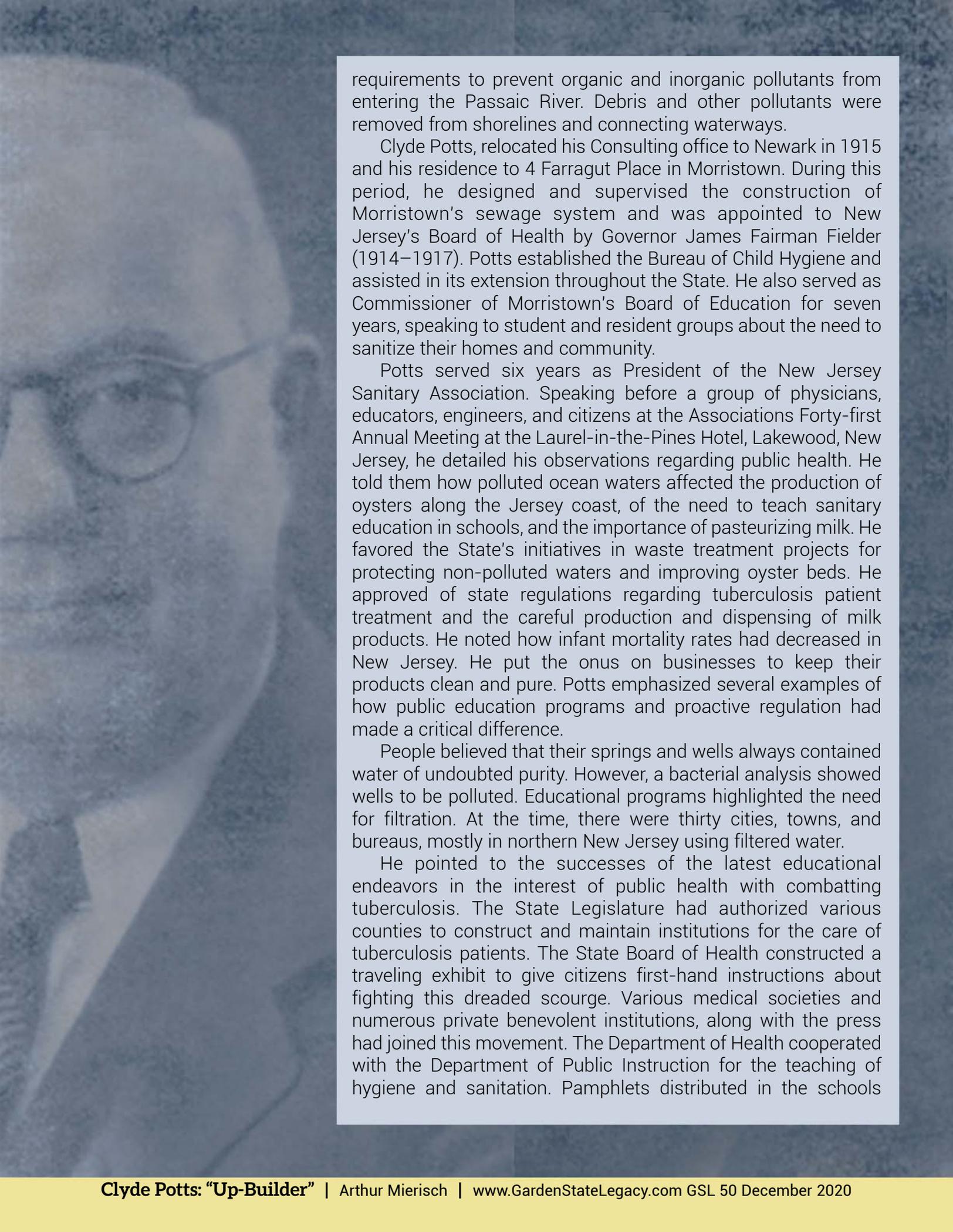
1921: The Contagious Committee of the Morristown Board of Health is authorized to distribute white ribbons with three black lines as an armband for persons suffering from whooping cough.

1922: The Children's Christmas Celebration is postponed due to a measles epidemic. *The Jerseyman*

construction of a modern system. It included two open-air filter beds occupying two acres and each having a capacity of 150,000 gallons of fluid. Included are two "settling tanks," where solid matter sinks to the bottom, constructed of reinforced concrete 80-feet long by 40-feet wide by 8-feet deep and divided into two compartments. The tanks are emptied and drained into a small filter where the liquid and solid matter is separated. When ready, the liquid flows into the open-air beds and percolates through sand pits. The liquid is collected in tile drains at the bottom of the pits and directed to the nearby Paulin's Kill. Potts reported that "The appearance of the filtered sewage as it enters the creek is not unlike the tap water used in Newton, and it has no odor. It is clear, sparkling, and odorless. The analysis by the State Sewage Commission shows that the bacterial efficiency of the filters gives a reduction of 94 to 97 percent."

In 1908, the New Jersey State Board of Health notified summer resorts along New Jersey's coast to "cease emptying crude sewage into the waters." The town of Ocean Grove employed Clyde Potts to "properly dispose of sewage." Potts noted that the town continually drained raw sewage through two pipes, one 1,000 feet long near the beach area and the other 1,500 feet long near the pier. The sewage flowing into the ocean during the summer months of June through September approached the maximum of 1,200,000 gallons per day, compared to other months that approached 300,000 gallons per day. His solution was to build two enclosed facilities containing chambers 57-feet long by 8-feet wide by 6-feet deep. Inside, sewage is filtered to remove heavy particles and the liquid is drained into large "detention" tanks. The tanks in use during the summer months gave a detention time of 10 hours. The processed liquid is released into the ocean during the night when tides carry it further out to sea, away from the beach. An analysis performed by the State Board of Health showed an acceptable reduction in bacteria flowing from the tanks.

The Passaic River Sewage System was among his more ambitious projects, taking ten years to complete. The system included over 35 miles of underground piping that resembled a spider's web. Pipes from the city of Paterson followed the general path of the Passaic River, terminating at the City of Newark's North Bay Treatment Plant. It provided water and sewage services to 1.5-million residents in 48 municipalities within Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Union, and Passaic counties. The Newark facility processed over 300 million gallons of wastewater every day. The enlargement of the system in the 1920s made the PVSS one of the largest wastewater treatment facilities in the United States. When completed, the system complied with State



requirements to prevent organic and inorganic pollutants from entering the Passaic River. Debris and other pollutants were removed from shorelines and connecting waterways.

Clyde Potts, relocated his Consulting office to Newark in 1915 and his residence to 4 Farragut Place in Morristown. During this period, he designed and supervised the construction of Morristown's sewage system and was appointed to New Jersey's Board of Health by Governor James Fairman Fielder (1914–1917). Potts established the Bureau of Child Hygiene and assisted in its extension throughout the State. He also served as Commissioner of Morristown's Board of Education for seven years, speaking to student and resident groups about the need to sanitize their homes and community.

Potts served six years as President of the New Jersey Sanitary Association. Speaking before a group of physicians, educators, engineers, and citizens at the Association's Forty-first Annual Meeting at the Laurel-in-the-Pines Hotel, Lakewood, New Jersey, he detailed his observations regarding public health. He told them how polluted ocean waters affected the production of oysters along the Jersey coast, of the need to teach sanitary education in schools, and the importance of pasteurizing milk. He favored the State's initiatives in waste treatment projects for protecting non-polluted waters and improving oyster beds. He approved of state regulations regarding tuberculosis patient treatment and the careful production and dispensing of milk products. He noted how infant mortality rates had decreased in New Jersey. He put the onus on businesses to keep their products clean and pure. Potts emphasized several examples of how public education programs and proactive regulation had made a critical difference.

People believed that their springs and wells always contained water of undoubted purity. However, a bacterial analysis showed wells to be polluted. Educational programs highlighted the need for filtration. At the time, there were thirty cities, towns, and bureaus, mostly in northern New Jersey using filtered water.

He pointed to the successes of the latest educational endeavors in the interest of public health with combatting tuberculosis. The State Legislature had authorized various counties to construct and maintain institutions for the care of tuberculosis patients. The State Board of Health constructed a traveling exhibit to give citizens first-hand instructions about fighting this dreaded scourge. Various medical societies and numerous private benevolent institutions, along with the press had joined this movement. The Department of Health cooperated with the Department of Public Instruction for the teaching of hygiene and sanitation. Pamphlets distributed in the schools

introduced children to the need to sanitize their homes.

Oysters harvested along the Atlantic seaboard in polluted waters were not fit for consumption. Education materials distributed to fishermen warned how oysters from the area would annihilate their industry. The education of oystermen saved the industry from extinction.

He further identified how the proper dispensing of milk “is another evidence of the effect of education.” The users of milk had been educated as to what they should receive. Every milkman in the state of New Jersey knew how wrong it is “to water his milk or to produce it under any condition that would render it liable to infection.” They were instructed on how to keep milk clean and pure. “The local Board of Health in my hometown [Morristown] has under consideration an Ordinance requiring the pasteurization of all milk sold in the town.”

People pay little attention to a sewage system when it is working properly. Wastes once emptied in the sink or toilet is forgotten as long as they cease to annoy or jeopardize the public’s health. The first sewage systems were open cesspools which had to be emptied when they were full. Modern systems using pipes to carry wastes away were becoming acceptable except when they become restricted by laws. New Jersey restricted wastes from being emptied in any waters, deeming unlawful because it was a form of water poisoning. Sewage carries intestinal bacteria, including species that produce diseases such as typhoid and dysentery when entering the bodies of persons drinking the tainted water. The New Jersey Legislature tackled poisoned waters, preventing disease and death. He concluded, “How each in his own field of endeavor could initiate and continue an educational crusade, having for its object the prolongation of life and insert to the promotion of health.”

Potts’s contributions to sanitation extended across the Hudson River as well. The Director of the City of New York’s Sanitation Department was dissatisfied with the operation of the recently-installed garbage reduction plant on Riker’s Island—offensive odors and liquids upset the neighbors. So, in 1916, he employed Clyde Potts to investigate and recommend improvements. The City proposed constructing a new plant, costing \$2.5-million to process 100 tons of garbage per day. They envisioned that if a new plant proved successful, it would “furnish a basis for establishing other plants capable of processing the garbage for the entire City.”

Potts reported that although the currently-operating plant was not as objectionable as the previous plant, “it was still capable of creating offensive odors.” In operation, garbage was brought from the city to the plant in covered wagons and stored

Abraham Rycken purchased Riker’s Island in 1664. New York City bought the island in 1884 and used it as a sanctuary for orphans targeted by racial violence. The island also served as a landfill and a processing plant for the Cities garbage.

THE POTTS BOOM HAS STARTED!

Current Mayor Bachmann says that he will not run for Mayor again. Already the name of Clyde Potts, now Morristown's School Commissioner, has been handed around until it has assumed proportions of real mayoralty timber.

1921 *The Jerseyman*

in a receiving house where it was picked over by hand to remove metal, crockery, and other large items. Every day, 28 tons of unwanted materials were removed and used as landfill on the island. Potts referred to the receiving house as "one of the best breeding places for flies and is a breeding place for diseases." The remaining garbage was carried by a closed conveyor system to a sealed reduction tank where it was cleaned and prepared for incineration. However, awful gases escape from the tank and travel into nearby communities, depending on the direction and ferocity of the wind. The tank also leaked "reddish-brown" liquid, requiring workers to wear protective clothing.

Potts advised that a new plant "cannot be operated without the emission of offensive odors and that it would be a distinct menace to the public's health to introduce such large quantities of decomposing organic matter into the neighborhood." He recommended that large scows be used to deliver trash to the docks next to the processing plant. As a result, the Department decided not to construct a new facility.

In 1932, Riker's Island opened as a jail. Convict labor built up the island using garbage delivered by barge from Manhattan. However, the trash "proved troublesome." Dogs were imported to eliminate the large rats who feasted on it. And "Gases . . . were constantly exploding through the soil covering and bursting into flames . . . in the summer the ground resembled a sea of small volcanos, all breathing smoke, and flames."

Mayor

In 1922, Potts's career came to include politics, when he was nominated by the Republican Party for mayor of Morristown. He was even endorsed by Democrats. While campaigning, he envisioned more ways to "up-build" the community. Before a large audience at a Chamber of Commerce meeting, Potts spoke about how Morristown's prosperity had stagnated after World War I ended in 1918. He cited recent census figures showing how the population growth of the town had been at a standstill since 1900. He compared the town's 11,267 residents in 1900, to the 12,000 residents in 1922—a growth rate of 6/10th of 1%, below the annual normal growth rate of 3.2% of other communities. He compared the figures to Montclair, Plainfield, Edgewood, and Bloomfield which exceeded the normal rate. Potts outlined plans to attract businesses and residents to the community. He spoke about the Lackawanna Railroad service as being the most serious impediment to growth and the need for municipal ownership of the water supply. He campaigned on a platform stressing how his administration would be run honestly. The *Jerseyman* reported a member challenging Potts's integrity.

In 1903, Clyde Potts married Jane Anne, a well-known vocalist of "marked ability." She graduated from the Ithaca Conservatory of Music. Jane passed away in 1933, leaving two daughters Jane Walker and Elizabeth Hanley. In 1941, he married Mary Field in New York City.

Potts responded, "I am represented by no click, no organization, only the people of Morristown and myself. This leaves me free to do absolutely as my conscience dictates. If there are any mistakes during the two years in which I am possibly the mayor, they will be my own."

When the Democratic Party endorsed him, Potts ran uncontested and would serve as mayor for the next 28 years, retiring in 1940. The only break in his tenure was when he left office in 1934 for an unsuccessful run as a state senator, but was reelected in 1936. Within weeks, Mayor Potts proposed developing large tracts of land no longer used for business and housing establishments. He suggested that the vast Higgins estate situated along Hanover Avenue, which was burned and abandoned in the 1890s, be redeveloped. He recommended that the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary and Lions Clubs should advertise the advantages of locating to Morristown.

Not all Morristown homes at the time had running water. Many used hand pumps to get water from the ground and rain barrels to collect drippings from roofs. Mayor Potts considered this to be unsanitary and detrimental to the health of the community. He then criticized the Morris Aqueduct Company for providing "unclean" water and inadequate pressure that prevented firehoses from reaching above the first floor of buildings. He complained about the high price paid for water supplied to the town's hydrants. He said that the Aqueduct Company endangered the health of residents by not properly filtering the water taken from local springs and was "trying to penalize the town by charging wartime prices for its holdings." He insisted that "the water plant should be taken over as soon as possible" stating:

The water supply is uppermost in mind. The people are made to do the town service. I believe wholly in municipality control and ownership of the water supply. It is a folly to place in the hands of a few private concerned citizens such important undertakings. I believe that the water supply has been ignored for the last 35 years. I believe our failure to control the water plant has been some drawback on the growth of the town. Every fireman wants an improved system to give him equal fire protection, which is not possible while the supply of water is under the present ownership which operates only for profit.

In 1923, Morristown purchased the Morris Aqueduct

Company and changed the name to the Morristown Water Company. The system was enlarged to include additional subscribers and the cost was reduced to all customers by 15%. Work began on a dam to create a watershed and a processing plant west of Morristown near Picatinny Road and Dorothy Drive. It occupied 650 acres in Mendham and 350 joining acres in Randolph. The system supplied "clear" water to Morristown and adjacent municipalities.

In the early 1940s, the Morristown Water Company went bankrupt. Rumors spread about Morristown not being able to collect taxes from adjacent communities. The Company was taken over by the Southeast Morris County Municipal Authority. SMCMUA now services Morristown, Morris Township, Morris Plains and Hanover Township, and parts of Mendham and Harding Townships. Much of the water still comes from the Clyde Potts Watershed. The remainder is purchased from other sources.

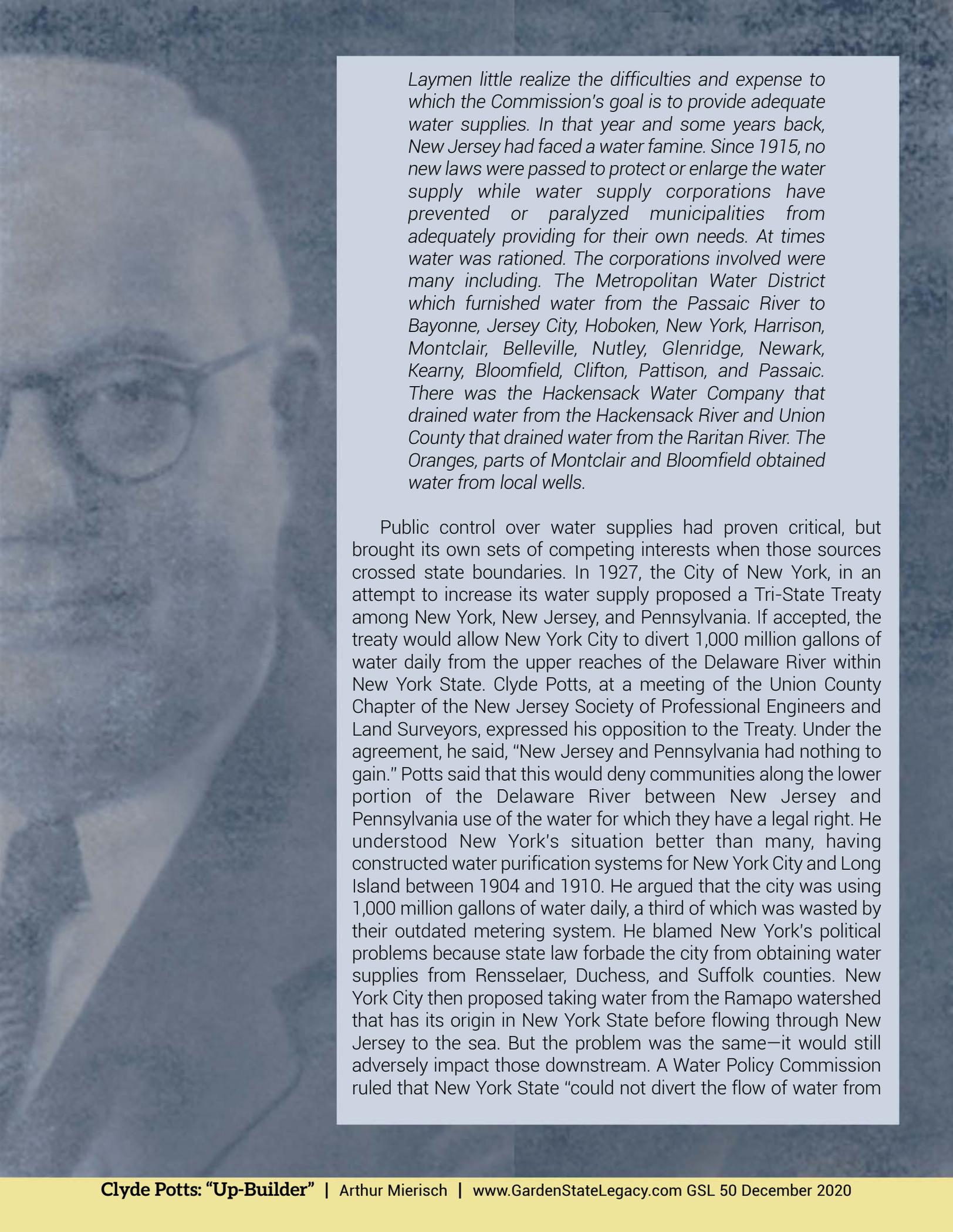
While serving as mayor, Potts continued to work on projects installing sanitary systems throughout the region, not without controversy. During completion of construction of the Trenton Sewage Disposal Plant, he was taken to court for alleged cost irregularities, but the accusations were dropped by the accuser. He told the *Jerseyman*, "It is surely an outrage in American politics when an irresponsible person can charge an official with misdoing and then when he is brought to bar to prove his charges calmly apologizes."

Managing resources also means anticipating changes in needs before they happen. In 1925, the North Jersey Department of Water Conservation forecasted that the metropolitan section of New Jersey (municipalities west of New York City located in the Passaic Valley) were near to exceeding its supply. The Department estimated that by 1950, the area would have to draw water from the Delaware River. It recommended that water should be taken from New Jersey's mountains east of the Delaware to a large reservoir south of Morristown on the upper Raritan River. At an estimated cost of \$130-million, the system would supply 750 million gallons of water per day to the area. Mayor Potts recommended that the State should finance the project and build a tunnel from the Delaware River to the reservoir. Further discussion, however, was delayed to a future date.

Potts defended the North Jersey Water Supply Commission's ability to control the water resources for the region. He recalled how in 1915, corporations exercised monopolistic control over the region, and of municipalities' inability to pass ordinances that protected the interests of their residents. The Commission, however, was able to overcome this obstacle. Potts said:



The Clyde Potts Watershed.



Laymen little realize the difficulties and expense to which the Commission's goal is to provide adequate water supplies. In that year and some years back, New Jersey had faced a water famine. Since 1915, no new laws were passed to protect or enlarge the water supply while water supply corporations have prevented or paralyzed municipalities from adequately providing for their own needs. At times water was rationed. The corporations involved were many including. The Metropolitan Water District which furnished water from the Passaic River to Bayonne, Jersey City, Hoboken, New York, Harrison, Montclair, Belleville, Nutley, Glenridge, Newark, Kearny, Bloomfield, Clifton, Pattison, and Passaic. There was the Hackensack Water Company that drained water from the Hackensack River and Union County that drained water from the Raritan River. The Oranges, parts of Montclair and Bloomfield obtained water from local wells.

Public control over water supplies had proven critical, but brought its own sets of competing interests when those sources crossed state boundaries. In 1927, the City of New York, in an attempt to increase its water supply proposed a Tri-State Treaty among New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. If accepted, the treaty would allow New York City to divert 1,000 million gallons of water daily from the upper reaches of the Delaware River within New York State. Clyde Potts, at a meeting of the Union County Chapter of the New Jersey Society of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, expressed his opposition to the Treaty. Under the agreement, he said, "New Jersey and Pennsylvania had nothing to gain." Potts said that this would deny communities along the lower portion of the Delaware River between New Jersey and Pennsylvania use of the water for which they have a legal right. He understood New York's situation better than many, having constructed water purification systems for New York City and Long Island between 1904 and 1910. He argued that the city was using 1,000 million gallons of water daily, a third of which was wasted by their outdated metering system. He blamed New York's political problems because state law forbade the city from obtaining water supplies from Rensselaer, Dutchess, and Suffolk counties. New York City then proposed taking water from the Ramapo watershed that has its origin in New York State before flowing through New Jersey to the sea. But the problem was the same—it would still adversely impact those downstream. A Water Policy Commission ruled that New York State "could not divert the flow of water from



Clyde Potts is standing third from the right under the stars during the Morristown National Historic Park dedication.

From the collections of the North Jersey History & Genealogy Center of The Morristown and Morris Township Library.



Clyde Potts is standing second from the left at the future Morristown Airport.

From the collections of the North Jersey History & Genealogy Center of The Morristown and Morris Township Library.

the lower riparian user." Neither proposal was accepted.

Mayor Potts's interests in public affairs went beyond water and sanitation. That same year, it was Potts who conceived the idea of establishing in Morristown a National Historical Park on land occupied by General Washington's Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. In 1929, he appointed Lloyd W. Smith to head a committee to look into saving land in Jockey Hollow from development. In 1930, when the property was found too expensive for the town to purchase, Smith spent \$250,000 of his own money buying 1,300 acres southwest of the town. He then announced that he would donate part of the land to any government that would preserve the old campground. Mayor Potts established a Town Committee to create a National Park out of the land belonging to Smith and additional land owned by Morristown in Jockey Hollow, and land occupied by Fort Nonsense. Mayor Potts included the Ford Mansion and Washington's Headquarters as part of the park. Smith became a trustee of the Washington Association and contributed the historic collections of the Mansion to the Park.

In 1933, President Herbert Hoover signed the bill creating the Morristown National Historical Park. The legislation named Mayor Potts and Lloyd Smith to "hereafter act as a Board of Advisors in the maintenance of the said Park." On July 4, 1933, an estimated 10,000 people celebrated on the lawn of the Ford Mansion. It was a wonderful day for Morristown—the biggest event since the Revolutionary War itself. There was a parade, basketball game, a dance, buglers, dignitaries speaking, a release of pigeons, and even a nationwide broadcast on radio WOR. Mayor Potts, assisted by his daughter Jane, welcomed the national and local audiences proclaiming, "The people of Morristown again welcome the representatives of our common country into our community. It was 155 years ago that our forebears extended a welcome just as cordial and just as sincere to General Washington and his Continental Army."

Potts also worked for several years to establish an airport for Morristown. In 1942, after he had retired from office, construction began. The airport opened briefly for public inspection, but by 1943 was closed and turned over to the federal government for use as a military base during the Second World War. In 1953, the airport became a regional airport to service industries, businesses, commercial charters, and individual pilots.

Legacy

By the 1930s, Morristown's mortality rates dramatically declined in part from Clyde Potts's contributions to sanitary systems and public health, and advances made by medical care

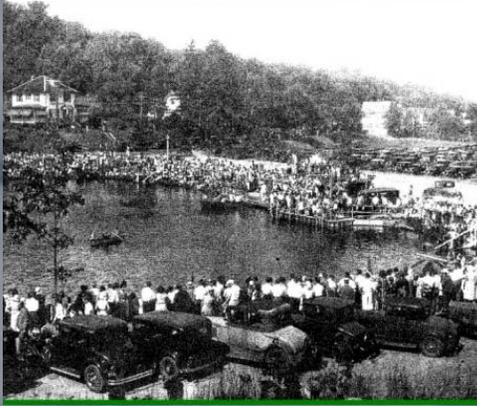
professionals. While the incidences of waterborne and airborne diseases declined, however, socialization type illnesses increased in densely populated urban areas.

Jane Potts, Clyde Potts's daughter, was also beloved by Morristown. She often assisted her father when they presided at public events, much to the enjoyment of attending residents. The *Jerseyman* reported the Potts's every move. Page two of the newspaper always featured descriptions of events they hosted and their travels to Detroit and Ithaca to visit family and friends. In 1922, the *Jerseyman* had reported on a dedication ceremony "befitting the inauguration of a President," held at Morristown new High School's Memorial Field. "Miss Jane Potts, the attractive 16-year-old daughter of Clyde Potts, the man whose untiring efforts made football here possible, broke a bottle of water [this was during Prohibition] on the field following her short, simple speech of dedication."

Clyde Potts's devotion to the "up-building" of the public's health won him the adoration and respect of not just Morristown's residents, but the entire State of New Jersey. In 1941, A. Harry Moore, Governor of New Jersey, commended Clyde Potts for his accomplishments by writing, "You have given freely of your time, advice, and ability, in order to ensure the welfare of the people, and I hope that the things for which we have both labored will come to pass in the near future."

Within a few years after graduating from college as a civil engineer, Clyde Potts had quickly become known as an "expert" sanitary engineer. He devoted his career to the construction of what today would be mega-million-dollar projects that uplifted the health of municipalities. He performed his work at a time when the country suffered the ravages of infectious diseases and managed to help save countless lives in the places he worked. Potts was always modest, but he felt a sense of awe for the wonderful systems he and other engineers had created. He summed up his vocation as "The art of directing the great sources of power in nature for use and convenience of man and in the up-building of mankind."

Potts brought that same engineer's ethic to his work as mayor. By improving the sanitation of Morristown, he helped make it a place people wanted to live and work. He approved the construction of Spring Lake at Burnham Park, which provided exciting aquatic events throughout the year. It became a focal point of the community attracting spectators from miles around. In a sign of the town's vitality, a Newark bus company soon lobbied to provide transportation into Morristown. Such progress rested on a foundation of making sure people had access to basic sanitation through his affiliation with State and local health



Spring Lake at Burnham Park, c.1930

agencies. Potts saw an advantage in bringing his engineer's perspective into the political arena, asserting "Engineers who enter politics are engaged in a great humanitarian profession," adding the supplication, "May God give us the wisdom to realize what the engineering profession means to civilization."

Clyde Potts passed away May 19, 1950, leaving behind many accomplishments above and below ground that testify to his dedication and abilities as an engineer and mayor. He was an extraordinary person, beloved by all who knew him and those that experienced his "up-building" of communities.



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