

Clean, Green, Machine: Philadelphia's Fairmount Water Works

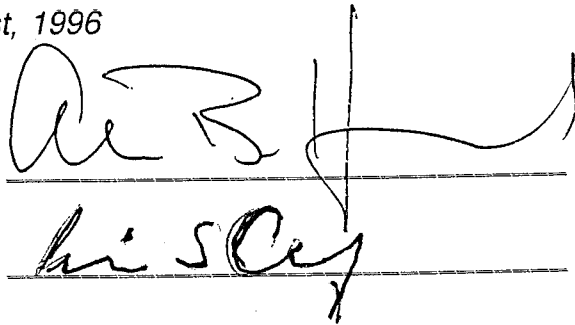
Tuomi Joshua Forrest
Scottsville, Virginia

B.A., Haverford College, 1988

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

University of Virginia
August, 1996



hiscox

ALD
masters
English
1996
.F67

Abstract

This hypertext thesis examines the Water Works as an attempt to physically and ideologically reform the Philadelphia and posits them as a touchstone for viewing later city parks, engineering expositions, and subsequent city planning movements. The introductory essay, "Once and Future City," examines these themes and informs the discussions that follow. The second two sections, "Diseased City" and "Writing the Fever" are historical and literary investigations of Philadelphia's 1793 yellow fever outbreak, a plague that damaged the city's reputation and necessitated a restoration of moral and physical order. The third section, "Nature, Technology, Architecture" explores how the mechanics of the Water Works, the buildings that housed it, and the land that surrounded it, worked in concert to create a site that offered both respite from, and redemption for, Philadelphia. The design and reception of all three components were shaped by prevailing notions of 'sublime' and 'picturesque' landscape, Greek revival architecture, and of technology. The 'technologically sublime' Works proved a success both in supplying fresh water to Philadelphia, and so became a model engineering project copied around the world. It also was a magnet for the non-specialist; the machinery fascinated an increasing number of local and international tourists, and the surrounding landscaped park provided respite from the cramped city. In the fourth section, "Tourism, Travel Writing, and New Institutions," I discuss the iconography and (re) reception of the city. The Works, along with other new institutions such as the prison and cemetery-park were popular attractions for tourists. The increasingly common genres of travel literature, and 'scenery' albums will be examined to see how the Water Works

played into Philadelphia's reputation in the 1820s-1850s. They did indeed restore order, cleanliness, and increase the fame of the city.