

FOUNDATIONS ON QUICKSAND.*

Meriden lies in a valley between high hills. In the valley, which is claimed by some to be the original bed of the Connecticut River, is a soil which consists of sandy loam, a little gravel and plenty of quicksand. Most of the buildings in this valley rest on the skin which is found at various depths below the surface, and here the Meriden Gas Light Company bought a 300 by 500-foot meadow lot adjoining its works on which to erect a new holder. Careful borings were made over a section 120 ft. wide by 250 ft. long to determine the thickness of the gravel, if any, and its distance below the surface. To the west of this section, and 25 feet distant, runs a shallow brook, 20 to 30 feet wide—shallow except in freshet time. About seventy-five tests were taken, and the result laid out and plotted into curves, so that the most desirable place for the site might be located. The top material was a sandy loam, evidently a silt deposited from the overflow of the brook when in past years it was not so confined; the next a good gravel, but very thin; below that a quicksand of unknown depth. At a few points the gravel was found as near as 2 feet from the surface and 2 feet thick, while at the others it was 8.5 deep and only 0.4 thick, shading off to nothing. The average depth, however, taken from the boring stations, was 5.5 ft. deep and 1.2 ft. thick. A boring of 50 feet taken in the centre of the site showed 42 feet of quicksand and still more below.

On such materials it was decided to construct the foundation and erect a steel tank-holder, to be 115 feet in diameter and 103 feet high; holding 700,000 feet of gas in three lifts. The weight of the holder to be 475 tons and the weight of the water to be 8,625 tons or a total of 9,100 tons.

As the work of excavating progressed and the gravel was exposed, there was found a clearly defined depression diagonally across the pit, as if at some time the brook had flowed that way; for logs and trunks of trees were found together with a quantity of brush. Through this depression the gravel was very thin, and in three places the quicksand was entirely exposed—the first, a space 10 by 15 feet; the second, a space 4 by 12 feet; the third, a space 3 by 15 feet.

Hardly had the whole of the loam been removed when a rain came, followed by a heavy freshet, overflowing the meadow and deluging the pit. When the water had subsided it was pumped out in 8 hours with a 4-inch centrifugal pump and a 7½ horse-power motor, though the water was ten feet deep in some places. The freshet convinced the company more than ever that in erecting a holder it would be advisable to make the top of the foundation above high-water mark, which in this case would mean a fill in some spots of 12 feet, with an average of 8 feet, and the steel tank would be 2.5 feet above the level of the meadow.

At this point a difficult problem was confronted. Meriden topographically is on high hills and in a sandy valley; good gravel is a very scarce article. Four miles away, on the line of the railroad, is a large, poor gravel bank, and two miles in another direction is a small, good bank; but with all the teams that could be procured it was not possible to haul the material as fast as it was needed; and it was expensive—one dollar per yard—delivered. It was evident that other and good material must be obtained in large quantities. On the

line of the railroad three miles away is a large trap-rock quarry. Refuse in the shape of iron-stone, soft rock and some dirt is accumulated in large quantities. It was believed this stone would mix well with the material which was on hand and could be purchased after it had been passed through the crusher to a 1½-inch size, at 60 cents per yard delivered, and in quantities up to 150 yards per day. About 50 yards of gravel and 50 yards of clean, sharp sand could also be procured each day, and as much ashes from the works as there were teams to put on it.

The question of piling was considered, and by some might seem the only wise plan under the circumstances, but after consulting the leading local builder who had worked on this quicksand for thirty years and had erected some very heavy factory buildings on it, it was thought best to put in a combination filling of the above-named materials.

The quicksand is found hard packed and not easily dug, unless water is allowed to mix freely with it. Although the excavation was in places much below the level of the brook, little water was encountered, and quite as much came from the land as from the brook side. By keeping the bare spots well drained the men could work on the quicksand with a degree of ease without sinking in very deep; the less it was disturbed, however, the better off they were. Over these bare spots it was decided to lay plank close together lengthways of the holes, and upon these 8 by 10-inch timbers, 8 inches apart, crossways of the holes. The filling between the timbers was of pieces of bricks and old retorts broken up fine, that being the best material at hand just then. One of the bare spots being narrow and long, the surface was covered with large flat stones, the smaller spaces being filled in with fire-bricks and coarse ashes.

While working at this low level a pump was run night and day; also from these quicksand spots a 4-inch tile drain was laid to a central point to facilitate drainage and keep the mass from becoming spongy while the tamping was going on and each course of filling was laid.

Until the whole surface approached a level no roller could be used, but everything put in was thoroughly rammed and sprinkled. The layers were about 3 inches thick over the whole surface. When the valleys were evened up a two-horse 4,000 lbs. roller was put on, and as the thickness became greater this roller was increased in weight to 6,500 lbs., requiring four horses. When the level of filling had been raised above the natural water level the pumping was dispensed with over night, allowing the foundation to be saturated, but it was pumped out again in the morning.

Near the centre of the foundation a loose brick well was built up, into which the water ran as the foundation was successively wetted, and from which it was pumped to the brook. There were some high knolls of gravel not over 3 feet under the surface. It was thought at first that the 5-foot concrete side wall foundation might rest on these, but further consideration convinced the company that this was not advisable, as part of the foundation would rest on natural gravel, while most of it would be on filled ground, so the whole level was raised 1 foot to allow of the same kind of cushion underneath the whole structure before the 5-foot circle was started.

* From a paper by Mr. C. A. Learned, read before the New England Association of Gas Engineers.