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Methods of discharge measurements of streams

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THRSIS

FOR THE

Degree of Bachelor of Science

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CIVIL ENGINEERING.

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SUBJECT:

"Methods of Discharge Measurements of Streams."

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R. S. WEBSTER AND W. A. LUTHER.
CLASS OF 1903.

METHODS OF DISCHARGE MEASUREMENTS

OF STREAMS.

I. The description of methods employed in gauging streams.

The method of determining the discharge of large streams is that in which the area of cross section is multiplied by the velocity per. sec. of the water passing through the section.

The velocity can be measured by the following methods:

1. By floats. 2. Current Meters. 3. Pitots tube. 4. Can be determined by use of Kutter's formula.

The method of using floats is not very accurate and is used only when circumstances do not permit the use of a current meter. This requires the sight to be on a straight reach from 100 ft. to 300 ft. long and to have a fairly uniform cross section. The flow of water should be regular and free from eddies and cross currents. The area of cross section of the upper and lower ends should be carefully determined by soundings taken at right angles to the axis of the stream. If the stream is not too wide the soundings in a crosssection can be taken most conveniently along a tagged rope or wire stretched across the channel from shore to shore. The soundings can be taken from a boat or other means. On very large rivers where tagged ropes cannot be used the boat from which the soundings are taken should be located by triangulation or stadia. The soundings should be taken at aqual distances apart, which is generally 10 ft.

There are three kinds of floats used, surface floats, double floats, and rod floats.

Surface floats are small balls or pieces of wood so colored and weighted as to be readily seen, and still be little affected by the wind. These are allowed to float with the current in different parts of the width of the stream. The time of their passage over a given distance is determined by two observers at the ends of a base on shore by stop watches; or if one watch is used, the instant of passing each section being signalled to the time keeper.

Let V - velocity of float per.sec.

t - time in passage in sec.

1 - length of the base,

Then V - 1/t

Double floats consist of two floats. A small surface float, which is lighter than water, is connected by a fine wire or chain to a large float, which is weighted so as to remain submerged and to keep the chain taut. The surface float should be of such a form as to offer but little resistance to the motion, while the lower float is large, it being the object of the combination to determine the velocity of the lower float alone.

Let v'= velocity of double float

Vo- mean surface velocity

V = velocity of lower float.

Then $V = 2 V' - V_0$

The rod float is a hollow cylindrical rod, of adjustable length, weighted to float upright with the top just visible. Its observed velocity is assumed to be an average of the velocities of all the filiments

lying between the ends of the rod.

The method of using current meter is the most convenient and by far the most accurate method for determining the velocity of streams. The mean velocity can be determined in three ways:

- 1. By making point measurements at a depth corresponding to the approximate position of the thread of mean velocity.
- 2. By deducting the mean velocity from observations from other points made in the same vertical.
 - 3. By integration method.

It has been determined by experiment that the position of the thread of mean velocity in a vertical section occurs at a depth varying from 6/10 to 2/3 of the total section measured, from the surface of the water down.

In multiple measurements the following methods are used:

- 1. Observation at top and bottom. 2. Observations at mid-depth.
- 3. Observations at various points in a vertical.
- 4. Observations of surface velocity.

In the first method the measurements are made in each vertical just below the surface, and as near the bottom of the stream as the meter will permit. The mean of these two are taken for the mean velocity. This method should only be used in streams that are shallow compared to their width.

The second method consists in making measurements at mean depth and the mean velocity is obtained by taking 95% of this. This method is not at all satisfactory as the velocity at mid-depth does not bear a constant relation to mean velocity.

The third method is to make measurements at regular intervals in a

vertical, plotting the velocity on cross section paper. The mean velocity is determined by dividing the area, inclosed by the curve, by the total depth. This is the most accurate of the four methods.

In the fourth method the measurement of surface velocities is very often the only method that can be used, as in streams where the velocity is so very great that it is impossible to lower the current meter to maintain its position at the desired depth. The mean velocity is deducted from the surface velocity by multiplying it by a factor. When the surface velocity is the maximum velocity the factor should be 0.8. If the maximum velocity occurs lower down, a factor of 0.9 to 1.0 should be used to obtain the mean velocity.

Integration method is by moving the current meter uniformly in a vertical line from the surface of the water to the bottom, and vice-versa. The velocity is integrated mechanically, and the mean velocity is computed by noting the time and the number of up and down movements made. The vertical motion of the meter must be slow enough and uniform to prevent the errors in the resultant velocities, due to the up and down motion of the meter.

Pitot's tube is an instrument for measuring the velocity of a current by the velocity head which it will produce. In its simplest form it consists of a bent glass tube, the mouth of which is submerged and is placed so as to face the current. The water then rises in the tube a distance "h" above the surface of the flowing stream, and the velocity is approximately equal to Y2gh.

The advantage of this instrument is that no time observation is

necessary. The chief disadvantage is that "h" is si small that errors are liable to be made in determining its value.

The velocity can also be computed by Kutter's formula, by measuring the slope of the surface, the cross section of the stream, and a knowledge of the roughness of the bottom and sides of the stream. The formula is as follows:

41.64-1.811+.00281

S - surface slope - h/1; h - fall in dist.1.

R - hydraulic radius

R - F/W

F - Area of cross section

W - wetted perimeter

N - ratio whose value varies from 0.009 for well planed wooden channel to 0.035 for channel with rough bottom and sides. This formula will apply to streams of all sizes. The disadvantage of this method is that it is difficult to measure the surface slope very accurately.

The most convenient way of precise measuring the discharge of small streams is by means of a weir built for that purpose, or a good masonry dam. In this the conditions are rarely the same in any two cases and no fixed rule can be laid down for all cases, but must be governed by local conditions. In this method the discharge is computed by empirical formula which vary with the kind of dam or weir, by observing the head on the wier

In the selecting of a site for a gauging station it is necessary to obtain a straight portion of the channel which has a narrow cross sec-

tion and high banks on either side which are not likely to overflow and to be free from obstruction. It is desirable to place gauge low enough so there will be no minus readings. The gauge is read every day so as to get material for computing the discharge. The most common form of gauges consist of well seasoned timber, the usual size being about 4" x 2" and high enough so the top of gauge will not be submerged during high water. These gauges are either vertical or inclined along the bank. The rods are graduated to feet and tenths, the graduation being put on so it will not wash off. A good form is to use brass tacks, or paint the gauge. The gauge should be set near the bank for convenience of the reader and also so it can be securely fastened. The gauge should be referred to some permanent bench mark on shore.

Stream measurements can be made; (1) by means of a boat which is managed by a wire stretched from shore to shore. (2) They can be taken from a bridge. (3) By means of a wire cable from which is suspended a box, large enough for two men, which is run in either direction by means of pulley wheels.

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II. Accuracy of Stream Measurements.

The chief factors controlling the accuracy of stream measurements are: lst. Errors in obtaining the cross section; 2nd. Errors in obtaining the velocity of the current; 3rd. Errors due to flunctuations of surface height during a gauging; 4th. Errors due to condition of instrument.

The errors in obtaining the cross section are not difficult to keep within limits of desirable accuracy. The chief error being in the taking of the soundings, and assuming that the bottom of the section is a straight line between points of soundings. The error in taking the distance between sounding points being extremely small where it is possible to stretch a wire or cable across the stream or where the measurements are taken from a bridge. When the cross section sounding are located by transit, sextant, or similar means, it is difficult to get all soundings in a line at right angles to the current, especially if the current is very swift, also the distance between soundings will be less accurate.

There are numerous conditions which tend to introduce errors into the determination of the velocity of the current. The current is found to vary at different depths, being slower under most circumstances, near the top and near the bottom, than at intermediate points. Likewise the velocity of the current is greater at the center than near the shore, except at bends in the channel or where there is some obstruction in the channel to deflect it.

Aside from these variations of the current, there are observed to be vertical and cross furrents, which give the water a kind of boiling effect; also causing small whirls and giving some water a relatively up

stream motion, and under certain conditions, may give, near the shore, an absolute velocity up stream.

It is also found that the forward velocity at any point is not constant, but is constantly varying, there being a kind of pulsating effect, being at times a diminution of velocity, which is followed by an increase, etc. When the current becomes moderately swift, the effect of this pulsation and of the vertical and cross current becomes very evident to the eye.

The physical features of the bottom near the section where the observations are taken, has considerable to do with the accuracy of the measurements, as an uneven bottom will cause an increase in the magnitude of the vertical currents, and any bend in the channel will cause cross currents. It is therefore desirable to locate the gauging station on a straight stretch in the river, and where the bottom is comparatively even and free from boulders, snags, and other obstructions.

The scouring of the bottom and shifting of gravel and sand are liable to cause considerable change in shape and size of channel and consequently the relation of gauge reading to discharge will be changed.

If discharge measurements are taken at times when the stream is rising or falling rapidly, there will be a considerable variance in the velocity of the water, due to the change in sectional area.

Accuracy of different methods of determining velocity of current.

The use of surface floats is not desirable except when it is impossible to use other methods, or as a rough check on some other measurements.

The difficulty with surface floats are that they are affected by the wind, and at best show only the surface velocity of the water upon which they float, this may be owing to the pulsation effect, considerably faster or slower than the average surface velocity.

Double floats are less affected by wind, and the velocity being a combination of that at the surface and at the lower float, which gives more nearly an average; like the surface float, this method is subject to errors due to pulsation.

Rod floats give more nearly an average of the velocities at all points in a vertical section, but this method is also subject to the same error as that of the double float.

There are numerous other methods for the measurements of current velocity, but all of them are subject to errors due to their manner of operation, and it has been found by experience that a current meter of revolving cups is the most convenient, and gives the most satisfactory results.

The advantages of the current meter over the other methods are very marked, not only does it give an average velocity, at a given point for a given time, thus eliminating the error that pulsation causes in other methods, but the velocity at any desired depth can be obtained; or an average for all depths may be obtained by slowly moving the meter from the top to the bottom and back a number of times. This mechanical integration may be carried still farther, by moving the meter slowly across stream while moving it up and down, so as to get the average of the whole stream. The most accurate method of making discharge measurements with meters is to take sounding at frequent intervals on the section, and at

these points obtain the velocity by means of several meters, strung vertically one above another, at intervals of from 1 to 2 ft. using the average of the velocities thus obtained.

It has been found from numerous experiments that for ordinary conditions of stream bed, etc., that the average velocity is found at very close to the points of six-tenths and three tenths the depths. For measurements of streams of less than six feet in depth, it is found to be sufficiently accurate to call the six-tenths of depth as the point of average velocity, but for streams over six feet in depth it is best to take the average of the velocity at both the six-tenths and three-tenths points.

METHODS FOLLOWED IN MEASUREMENTS ON GASCONADE, BIG PINEY, LITTLE PINEY, MERAMAC, MERAMAC SPRINGS, and DRY FORK RIVERS.

The same method was followed in all of these streams, that of obtaining the velocity with a small Price current meter operated from a boat. Before locating a guaging station, the river in the vicinity of the desired location, was carefully gone over in search of the best place for this station. It being desired, if possible, to get a point where the stream would be confined to one comparatively narrow channel, at all stages of the water, and where there was sufficient current to operate the meter at the lowest stages. It is also desirable that the channel be straight for some distance above, and the bottom be fairly regular and free from boulders, snags, and other obstructions.

After a point for the station has been selected, a gauge is put in, in such a manuer as to be able to measure the height of the surface of

the water above some datum plane at all stages of the river. The gauge is then referenced to some permanent bench mark. Next a wire is stretched across the river and tagged every ten feet.

The gauge being located, there is left to take the daily gauge heights and frequent velocity measurements, getting the stream at nearly all its stages. When sufficient data is obtained, the discharge and guage heights are plotted, using the gauge heights as ordinates and the discharges as absissas. A curve is drawn through these points and the discharges for any gauge height is taken off the curve.

The form of notes kept, rating tables, and other notes and computations are attached.

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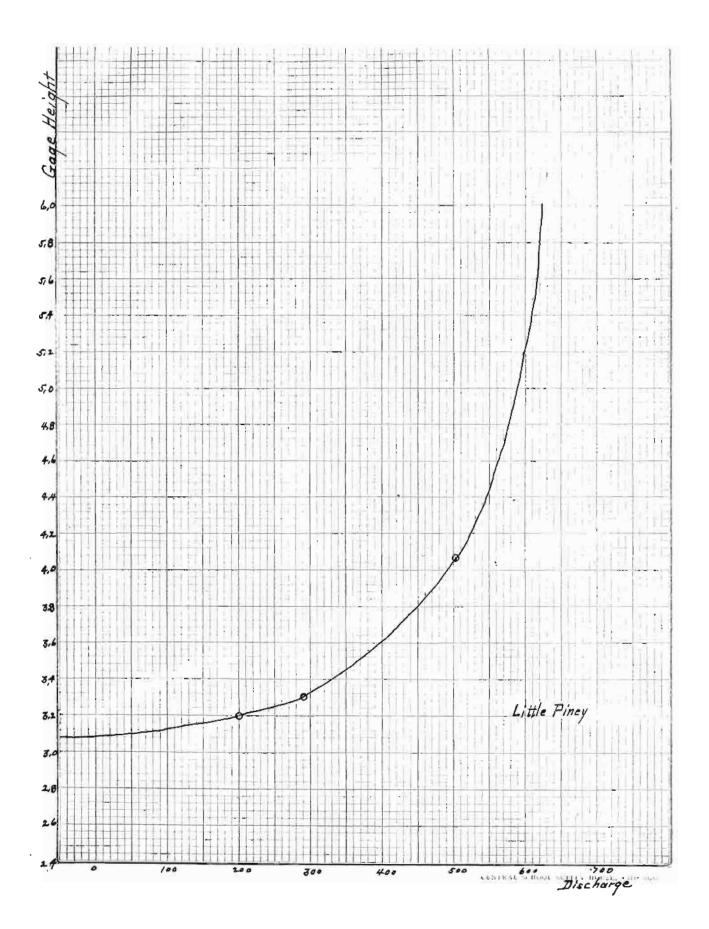
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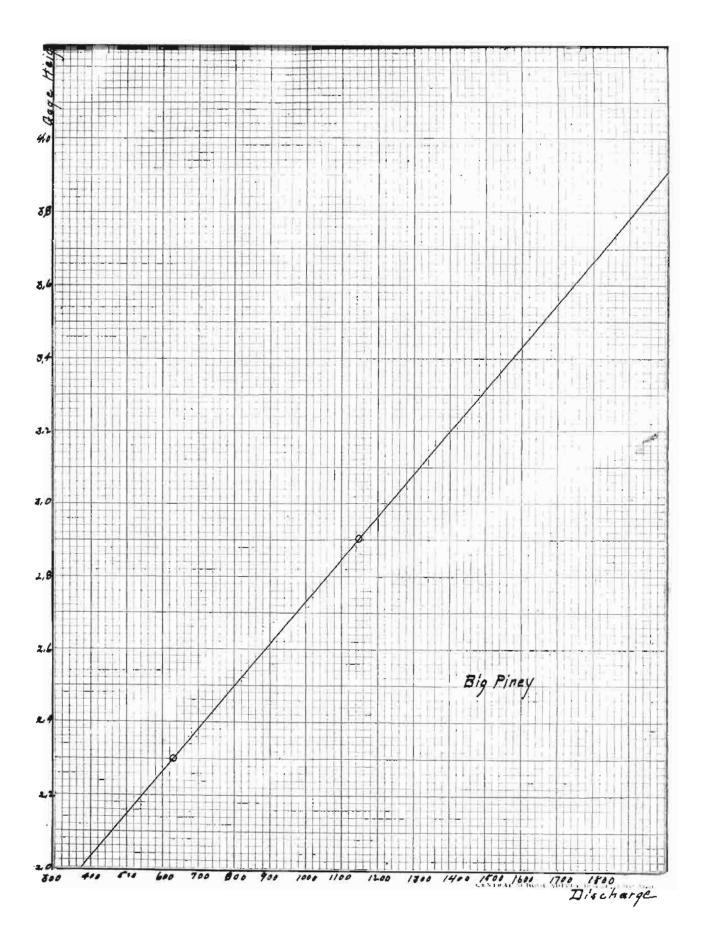
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

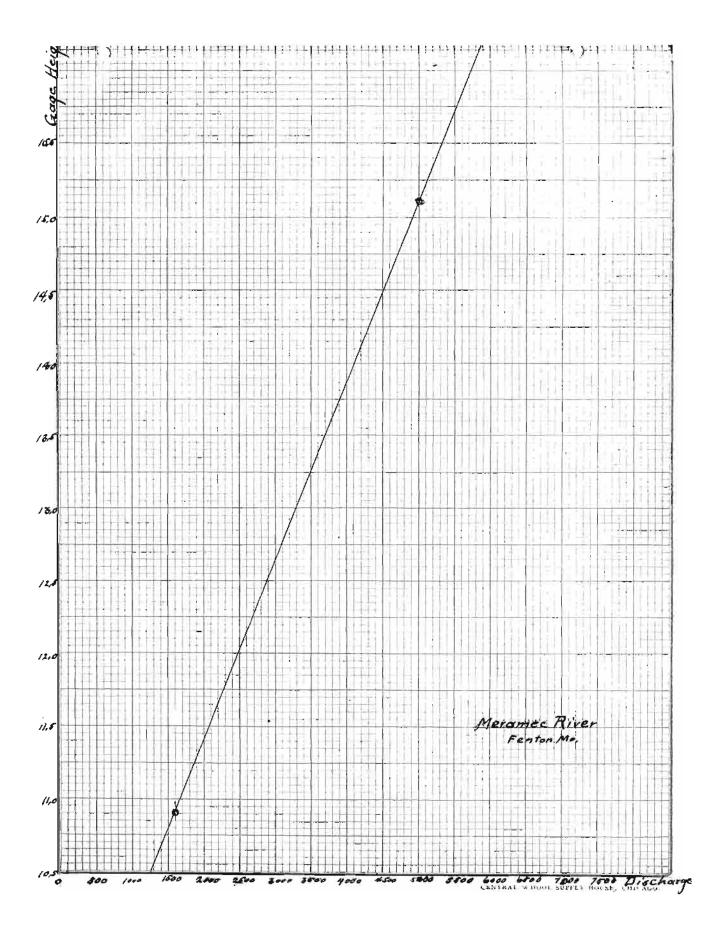
DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

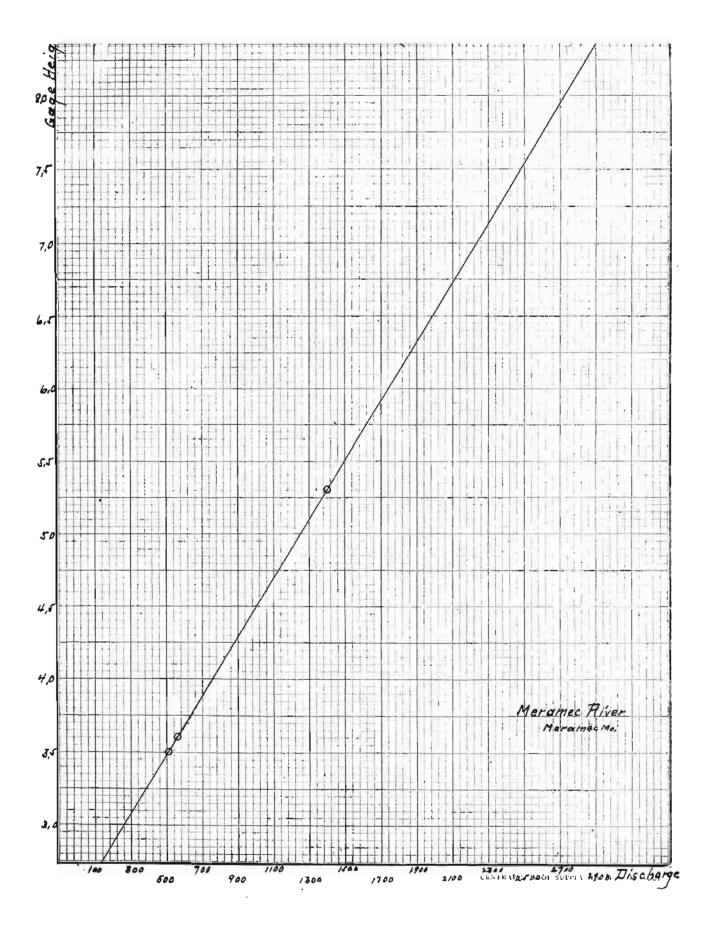
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERMENT

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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	REMAR	KS:									•						

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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Daily mean gage height and	l discharge in	second-feet of	Meranic	River,
at Lenton	Mo.	, for 1903	Drainage area, 3600	sq. miles.
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D.A.	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Helght	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	DA
_ 1	4.6	1020	3.4	460	3.1	200			11.0	و تنو ز	4 4 4 4		1
$\overline{2}$	4.3	900	3.4	460	3.0	260			10.9	1600			2
3	4.2	860	3.4	460	3.0	260			!	1500			3
4	4,6	1020	3.3	420	2,9	220	:		10.7	i .			4
5	9.3	3340	3.2	360	29	220			10,6	1320			5
6	8,2	2820	3,2	360	3,0	260			10.5-	1250			6
7	7.6	2540	3,2	360	3.1	300			10.5	1250			7
8	7.6	2540	3,4	460	3,1	300	,		10.5	1250			8
9	6.4	1940	33	420	3,0	260			10.6	1320			9
10	5.3	1395	3.3	420	3,0	260	-			1500	 		10
11	4.9	1200	3.3	420	2.4	220			10.8	1500			11
12	4.8	1150	33	420	2,8	160			10.8	1500			12
_13	4.5	1000	6.1	1798	2.8	160			10,8	1533	!		13
14	4,3	900	5.7	1600	3,4	460			10.9	1033			14
15	4,1	800	4.8	1150	3.6	560			11.5	2570	-		15
16	3.9	700	425	1000	3,5	500			12.3	2720			16
17_	3.8	650	4.0	760			<u> </u>	·			<u> </u>		17
18	<i>3.</i> 7	570	3,9	700									18
19	3.7	590	3,7	590	-		14.6	4600					19
20	5.3	1395	5.7	1600			14.2	4220					20
21	5.9	1750	4,5	1000			14,1	4200					21
22	4.3	900	3.8	650			14,4	4420					22
23	4.5	900	3.7	590	1		13.9	4020					23
24	4.3	900	3.6	560	ļ	<u> </u>		3550	!				24
25	4.2	860	3,4	460		:	12.6	2950	٠,				25
_26	4,0	760	3.3	420	1		12.2	2650	1		<u> </u>		26
27	3.8	650	3.3	420			12.0	2500					27
28	3.6	560	3.2	360	1		11.5	2070					28
29	3,5	500	31	300	-		11.5	2070					29
30	3,5		3,/	300	1		11.3	1900			ļ		30
31	3,4	460	ii -	<u> </u>	1	•	1		!				31
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

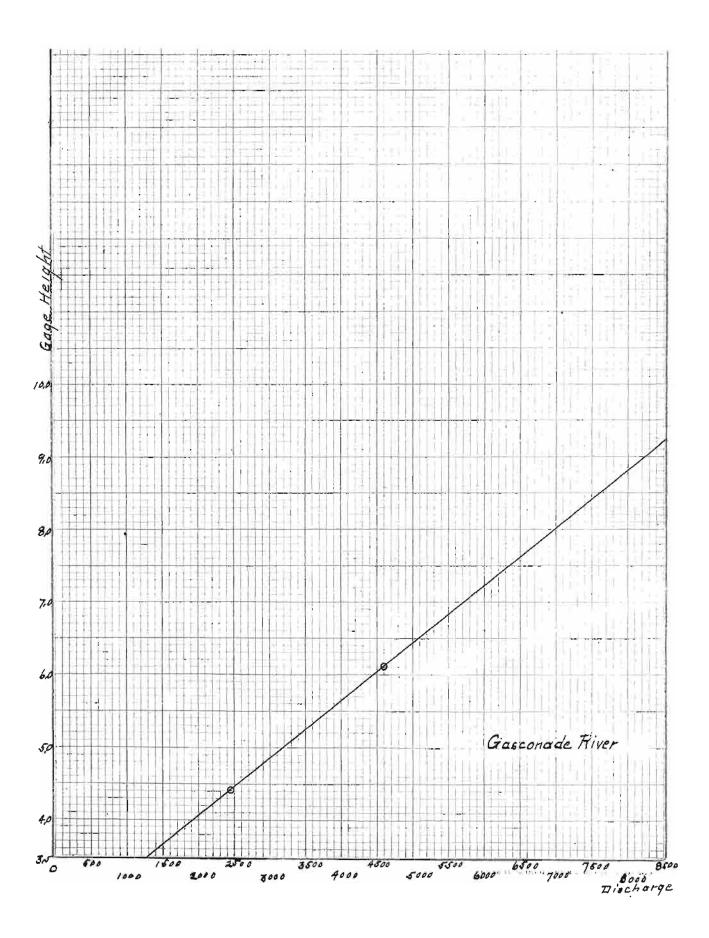
DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

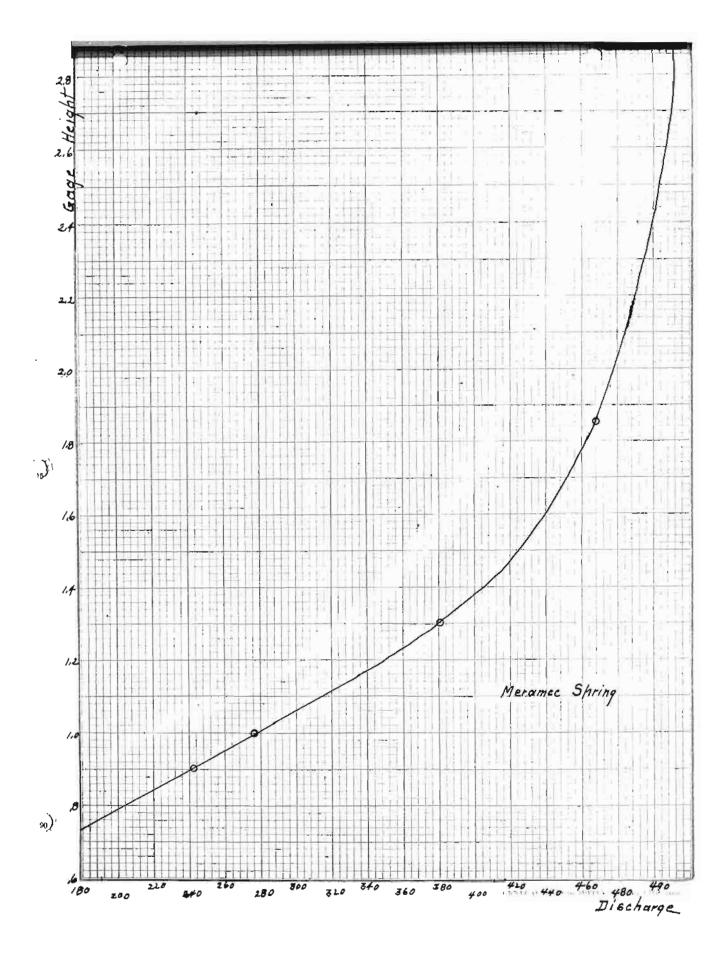
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DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DIVISION OF HYDROGRAPHY

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RUN-OFF, in inches

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

... River,

Daily mean gage height and discharge in second-feet of Sasconade

at Arlington Mo, for 1903 Brainage area, 2700 sq. miles.

Meranie c "Observer.

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, X.		JANUARY March		FEBRUARY April		MARCH MARCH		PRIL		MAY	JUNE		
DA	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	Gage Height	Discharge	
1	1,4	405	09	2.40	0.7	175			3.8	1200			
2	1.3	387	0.9	240	0.7	175			3.1	1550			
3	1.1	315	0.9	240	0.7	175			3.6	1430			
4	1.6	440	0.9	240		175				1300			
5	2.1	485	0.8	204		175	-			1300			
6	2,/	485	0.8	204	0.8	204				1700			
7	24	490	0.8		- 1	204			3.9	1800			
8	2,6	495	0.8	204		204			,	2200			
9	2.4	490	0.9	240		204				2400			
10	21	485	0.9	240	1	175			11	2300			:
11	20	475	0.9	240	0.7	175			1	2200			
12	48	465	0.9	240	0.7	175	5, /	3300	4,0				1
13	1,6	440	1,5	422	0.7	175	7.4	6200	4,0	1900			
14	1.4	405	1.5	412	0.9	240	9,4	8800	4.1	2050			
15	1.3	387	1,4	405	0.9	240	9,5	8900	4.6	2700			
16	1.2	350	1.2	350	09	240	8,0	7000	6.9				
17	11	3/5	1.1	315				5600					
18	1.1	3/5	1.1	315			6.2						
19	1.1	315	1.0	275			5.8	4200					
20	117	350	1.1	3/5				4300					:
$\overline{21}$	1.8	465	1.2	350			15.4						5
22	1.7	350	1.1	315	1		5,1	3300					2
23	1.5	422	1.0	275			4.9	3050					1
24	1,4	405	0.9	240			4.7	2800					1
25	1,2	350	0.9	240			4.5-						
26	1.2	350	0.9	240			4,3	2300					1
27	1.1	3/5	0.8	204			4,2	2200					1
28	0,9	1		204	-		. /	2050					1
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