

A History of Grinnell's Public Utilities and

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Business Enterprises, Churches, Schools, Etc. Club by W. J. Nelson).

At a recent meeting of the Poweshiek Club W. J. Nelson read a paper on Grinnell which was so full of interesting reminiscences and information on Grinnell industries that The Herald takes great pleasure in printing it in full.

The paper as given is minus some of the interesting personal side lights which Mr. Nelson gave it especially as dealing with the cyclone and the big fire, but as it stands it contains much matter of more than usual interest. In it Mr. Nelson takes up the development of many of the basic activities and utilities of the community.

With this introduction, the paper follows:

GRINNELL PUBLIC UTILITIES. Lights.

The first electrical plant was established in Grinnell in the year 1887. Professor Kimball of Grinnell College was the promoter of the first electrical plant and invested all of his money in the plant. It was a small direct current plant that supplied a few customers in the business section. The first plant was located back of the Craver, Steele & Austin Header works or where the Grinnell Poultry & Egg Co., now have their building. Financial difficulties made it necessary that additional capital be secured and after the plant had been run for about a year Mr. Michael Snyder became associated with Prof Kimball as a partner. A short time afterwards Mr. Kimball disposed of his interest to Mr. B. J. Carney and the firm was known as Snyder & Carney.

In the year 1892 Mr. Walter Hammond purchased the interest of Mr. Michael Snyder and the partnership was known as Carney & Hammond. Mr. Hammond was formerly a clothing man of Grinnell, doing business in the present location occupied by the McMurray Bros. Clothing store. Mr. Carney was a lumberman, the father of Bernard Carney, his lumber plant being on the site of the plant Mr. Watland recently purchased from the Stokely Lumber Co. Mr. Hammond became manager of the electrical firm and devoted his entire time to its management.

Shortly after Mr. Hammond entered the firm they purchased the old Rhodes Barbed Wire Co. building at Third and Main and moved the plant to this location, installing a new alternating current generator which operated at 133 cycles and 1100 volts. After they had their new plant completed they entered into a contract with the city to operate arc lamps on the street corners and they installed a direct current series generator to supply the current. Shortly afterwards the series lighting was extended to the stores and offices and this required another generator and a new set of lines. In 1894 the Carney and Hammond Co. installed the steam heating system now operated in the business section of the city.

In 1902 Carney & Hammond sold the plant to the Grinnell Electric & Heating Co. The plant at that time operated from dusk to dawn. It had a capacity of 150 K. W. all told. The new Company installed some additional machinery and inaugurated 24 hour service. The 133 cycle alternating current was continued and they put in 500 volt direct current for power purposes as at that time it was thought that alternating current could not be used for power.

Our present city water was never suitable for boiler purposes and recognizing the necessity of water suitable for boiler feed the Grinnell Electric & Heating Co., with the assistance of the Spaulding Mfg. Co. promoted and installed the present soft water plant, known as Arbor Lake, the source of the supply.

In 1904 O. K. Cole purchased the stock of the Grinnell Electric & Heating Co. Mr. Cole made additions and improvements to the plant and in 1909 Mr. Cole sold the plant to Mr. Radford. The outstanding improvement during the time Mr. Radford owned the plant was the rebuilding of the steam heating system. In 1912 Mr. Radford sold the plant to the Federal Power and Light Co. of Boston. The new firm made many improvements in the electrical system. The current was changed to three phase 60 cycle and distributed at 2300 volts. The company put in additional machinery and built the transmission line to serve Brooklyn and Malcom. This line was built in 1914. During the same year a line was built to Kellogg. Several years later the line was extended to Newton to serve the Parsons Co. at that place. The company built the present plant and this plant is recognized as one of the best small plants in the state. After the new plant was completed business grew rapidly and line extensions were

made to serve Newburg, Killduff, Sully, Lynnville and Searsboro.

During the present year the plant was sold to the Iowa Southern Utilities Co., and is now being made a link in the extensive lines of this company.

One of the first acts of this company, an act that concerned the public, was to make a substantial reduction in the rates. This reduction was voluntary on the part of the company, the patrons or council having made no protest against the previous rates.

Operating from the local plant are one hundred miles of lines from town to town. The company maintains approximately 100 miles of lines in Grinnell and the several small adjacent towns for which they furnish current from the local plant.

Mr. Paul Meyers, the local manager is a pioneer in the local electrical industry. He has been connected with the local plant for a period of over 25 years continuous service.

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