

Electricity Came to The City Back in 1891

I. H. SNYDER ERECTED ONE OF FIRST ELECTRIC PLANTS IN CEN. ILLINOIS

Local Venture Taken Over in 1931 By C I E and Gas

The history of electric service in Mount Pulaski goes back to the spring of 1891, when I. H. Snyder erected an electric plant — one of the first in central Illinois — on the site of an old mill on South Washington Street.

Snyder's enterprise was the forerunner of the Mount Pulaski Electric Light, Heat and Power Co., which came into being in 1913 and operated until the purchase March 1, 1927, by the Illinois Public Utility Co. The latter company adopted its present name, Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co., on February 13, 1931, and still provides electric service to the community.

While pioneering aspects of the Snyder electric plant won public admiration, the business itself was plagued by litigation which finally forced the owner to dispose of his holdings, according to Snyder's daughter, Mrs. Edna S. Ginther, 112 Hudson Street, Lincoln.

When the South Washington Street electric plant was erected, some of the construction materials were salvaged from the old mill on the site. Since the source of the mill's water supply was a block away, on city property, Snyder negotiated a 20-year agreement with the city to meet the water requirements of the electric plant, and a pipeline was laid from the mill to the well.

While operating the electric plant, Snyder was also supplying water to the old P. D. & E. Railroad and the Illinois Central Railroad. The water supply was not sufficient, however, and Snyder hired a company from St. Louis to increase the depth of the well. Mount Pulaski's city water well was situated across the street from the well which was supplying Snyder's water needs, and its proximity led some members of the city council to contend that Snyder was reducing the city water supply. A lawsuit resulted, the franchise was repudiated in the courts, and Snyder was forced to sell.

West and Veal New Owners

Clarence E. West's father purchased the plant and operated it with his son.

Ira Veal, president, and Clarence E. West, secretary-treasurer, were the first officers of the Mount Pulaski Electric Light, Heat and Power Co., which was chartered May 7, 1913. The annual report of the company for the year ending June 30, 1914, showed physical assets of \$63,620 and operating revenues of \$5,983.

At that time, the company was purchasing its coal — Lincoln and Springfield screenings — at a cost of \$1.50 per ton, and had 349 meters in service in Mount Pulaski and Kenney. A year later, the company had increased its meters in service to 477, and was providing service to Chestnut and Latham as well as Mount Pulaski and Kenney.

Rates Only 75c Minimum

Records show that on September 1, 1916, the monthly minimum residential rate of the Mount Pulaski Electric Light, Heat and Power Co. was 75 cents, and that the rate range was from 10 to 15 cents per kilowatt hour, depending on usage.

From a peak of \$6.60 more than 40 years ago, the cost of 50 kilowatt hours of electric service in Mount Pulaski declined to \$6.30 in 1929 and to \$3.29 in 1961. The cost of 100 kilowatt hours went from \$11.60 in 1916 to \$10.30 in 1929 and to \$4.95 in 1961.

On May 28, 1925, the Mount Pulaski Electric Light, Heat and Power Co., was serving 850 customers, including 16 rural users in Mount Pulaski, Chestnut, Kenney and Latham. The steam electric generating station then in service included an engine and

boiler room of brick construction with composition roofing. The stack, of brick construction, was 8 feet square at its base, 65 feet high, and 4 1/3 feet square at the top.

There were two Brownell and one Frost horizontal fire tube boilers, each of 150 horsepower capacity. The plant also included three steam engines belted to Westinghouse A.C. generators.

In late 1925 and early 1926, a 13,000-volt electric transmission line was built from the Lincoln generating station to Mount Pulaski. The Mount Pulaski generating station was maintained in operating condition on a standby basis until 1944, when all of the equipment was junked and the brick building sold.

In 1949, electric load increase caused the original 13,800-volt transmission line to be supplemented with a 34,500-volt line. At the same time, sub-station capacity was increased considerably. Last year, the main feeders extending east and west from Mt. Pulaski, were rebuilt to much heavier capacity, and conversion of the town distribution system from 2,400-volts to 12,500-volts was started, to be continued as conditions warrant.

Street lighting in Mount Pulaski now consists of 17 20,000-lumen mercury vapor lamps with ornamental standards, 100 center suspension or mast arm brackets with 100-watt or 200-watt lamps, and eight 60-watt alley lamps.

The Mount Pulaski district of Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co. now provides electric service to 1,925 customers, including 545 rural users, in Mount Pulaski, Chestnut, Kenney, Latham, Cornland and Lake Fork.

Clarence E. West, one of the two former owners of the Mount Pulaski Electric Light, Heat and Power Co., remained with the present company as Mount Pulaski district manager until his retirement in May, 1931.

C. E. West's son, Gordon (Red) West, now deceased, formerly was an electric service man in Mount Pulaski. C. L. (Pete) Mason, who later became line supervisor for Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co. in Rockford and is now in retirement in Tennessee, is a former Mount Pulaski electric line-man.

In more recent years, two Mount Pulaski residents, Morrell Deibert and Elmer (Dad) Meister, have played important roles in maintaining electric service to Mount Pulaski district customers. Both were employed by the company in September, 1927. Meister retired in February, 1956, and Deibert is still with the company as a service man.

Former utility company office employees in Mount Pulaski include Mrs. Frances Gunterin Waddell, of Decatur; Mrs. Lillian Ey Hutchcraft, St. Louis, Mo.; Mrs. Lucy Jane Ellis Mirshak, Niles, Ill.; Mrs. Geri Wible Zimmermann of Mount Pulaski, and Mrs. Jean Guffey Haynes of Mount Pulaski, who is now employed in the Lincoln office of Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co.

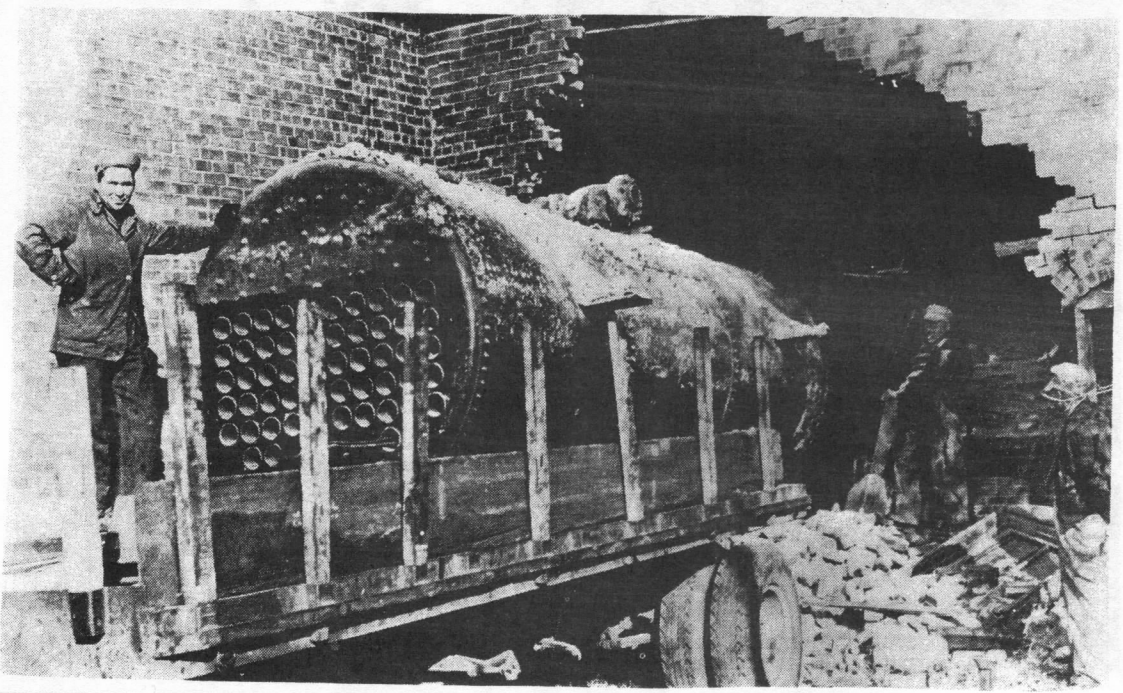
Other Mount Pulaski residents who have been identified with the electric utility business, although not in the community itself, include the late Charles H. Woods, who was superintendent of the electric plant in Lincoln for many years prior to 1929; and J. C. Goddard, who is now employed in the Lincoln meter department of Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co.

ZIM'S SUPER MARKET OPENED DEC. 13, 1956

(Dec. 13, 1956)

Zim's Super Market will hold its grand opening on Friday and Saturday of this week, at their new home on Route 121 in the northeast part of Mount Pulaski. The new business establishment

HUGE BOILER ONCE HELPED SUPPLY ELECTRICITY



Light Plant Is Dismantled

(Nov. 9, 1944)

Back in 1885 the big flour mill located in the same block as the Illinois Central station, was destroyed by fire, and the ruins remained there until 1891, when on this same site, I. H. Snyder built

an electric light plant, giving Mt. Pulaski electric light service as one of the first small cities in Illinois.

About 1898 Mr. Snyder sold the property to Ira Veal and Clarence E. West. They continued to operate the plant until Mar. 1927, when they sold out to Central Public Utilities Co., now known as the Central Illinois Electric

and Gas Co.

This company has its central plant in Lincoln and services several cities and towns in this part of Illinois. Thus the old plant was closed down and the machinery kept intact for emergency purposes. After a lapse of about 19 years, the plant is now undergoing the first part of the dismantling.

Local Electric Plant Furnishes Kenney "Juice"

(January 23, 1914)

Friday afternoon of last week the electric "juice" from Mt. Pulaski was turned into the veins and arteries of the Kenney lighting system. For the present, the old wiring will be used just as it has been heretofore but as more settled weather comes the new company promises to rewire the town and put the street lights on a separate circuit from the commercial account and that at present the lights will be run from sundown until sunrise each night. So, until the rewiring is done, Kenney will have all night service, both street and commercial.

A few comparisons between the old system and the new may not be out of place.

The old primary circuit carried 1100 volts—the new 2200.

The old globes were 110, 112, and 115 volt lights—the new 105, 108, and 110. In order to get best lights it will be necessary for customers to change the 110 volt globes.

The old maximum price for service was 20 cents per kilowatt hour—the new 15 cents.

The company is installing a double outfit at the Mt. Pulaski plant in order to be equipped for emergencies—so that when one equipment needs temporary repairs, the other can be used to give continuous service.

As soon as the two circuits are put into service we will be supplied with electric light and power continuously throughout the 24 hours of the day and night.

J. S. Byerly will continue to be employed by the new company for the present.

—Kenney Gazette-Herald,

which was built this summer, is a mammoth building filled with much larger array of groceries and meats than had been carried in the former location uptown. Extensive vegetable and meat refrigerated open-air display cases add much to the appearance and service to be offered.

Visitors to Mount Pulaski will find the city filled with gracious hosts and hostesses. Our folks have always had a fine reputation for friendliness and this occasion will fully prove it.

Now We Understand !

We now understand why John "Jack" Gordon, manager of the Central Illinois Electric and Gas Co. division, out of Lincoln, and now vice-president of the company at Rockford, has always had a warm spot in his heart for Mount Pulaski.

Jack's grandfather, John Gordon, after completing the building of the Shellabarger Flour Mill in Decatur, moved his family to Mount Pulaski, where he built another flour mill. His father, Frank Gordon, grew up in Mount Pulaski and always spoke of the many pleasant memories he had of his boyhood here.

Storm Buggies In Demand Back In Years 1913-14

John W. Mayer & Son, the south side Vehicle and Harness dealers, say the storm buggy business still continues. They report the following recent sales:

Henry Donnan, Chestnut, two-seated closed storm rig.

Sam Hanselman, Latham, Enterprise storm buggy.

Roy Moore, Studebaker storm buggy.

Andy Rogers, Henny storm buggy.

Albert Rentmeister, Page storm buggy.

W. B. Wilkerson, Page storm buggy.

A. S. Pool, Studebaker buggy.

Joe Miller, Enterprise storm buggy.

Special prices on buggies and carriages in order to make room for spring stock.

A few extra good bargains in secondhand buggies and carriages.

Bring in your harness and have them repaired and oiled before the rush of spring work.

John W. Myers & Son.

NON-PAYING TENANT SAYS, "ROOF LEAKS"

(June 22, 1939)

Many years ago the late George Vonderlieth owned a property on South Vine Street, across the street west from the old coal shaft, the place now being occupied by James Ellenberg. For a long time Charley Loubough lived there, and he seldom paid his rent. One day he went to the wind mill factory and told Mr. Vonderlieth that the

Capt. Geo. Zeiss Headed Decatur Grenadiers

(July 25, 1957)

The Decatur Grenadiers in 1878 under the leadership of George P. Zeiss, later a Mount Pulaski resident, was elected captain, is an interesting story.

"In the beginning it was planned to have only men at least 6-ft. tall, but while Decatur had some big men, the requirement had to be lowered to 5-ft. 10-inches, to get enough men to fill the company.

"The company had some of Decatur's prominent business men, three of whom became banking leaders in the community. The company was outfitted in attractive uniforms. The officers wore swords and the men at first carried musket loading guns. Later the state provided rifles.

"On Dec. 31, 1883, The Grenadiers, or Decatur Rifles as the group was sometimes called, disbanded. The company had been part of, or associated with, the Illinois State Military, now the National Guards."

Moved to Mount Pulaski.

The above information brings to mind the fact that George P. Zeiss left Decatur in the 1880's and located in Mount Pulaski, forming a partnership with Herman S. Bekemeyer in a general merchandise business known as Zeiss and Bekemeyer. Their store building was located on the south side of the square, in the Semi-Centennial Celebration. They operated a big business, and the firm was known for miles around this part of central Illinois.

In Mount Pulaski Mr. Zeiss was called Captain Zeiss. The family lived on the block in the east part of the city now known as the Tomlinson Recreation Center. The property was beautifully landscaped, and the trees of various kinds and the many flowers always caused much favorable comment.

roof leaked so bad that if he didn't have it fixed he would have to move out. Needless to say, Mr. Vonderlieth got such a hearty laugh out of this, that he saw to it at once that the roof was properly repaired.

The old days will be revived on Friday of the Sil-Tennial with an old-fashioned balloon flight.