

The Post



Second Section

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Ford Moynes recalls:

The Story of Lindsay Hydro

The following story dealing with the history and introduction of Gas and the birth of Electricity in Lindsay was written at the request of the Lindsay Hydro-Electric Commission. It is proposed that the story will be (as well as the history of all Hydro plants in Ontario) printed in a large book and placed in the Hydro Hall of Memory. Mimeographed or printed copies of these complete histories will be available for distribution to students or to community groups. The story of the Lindsay plant follows:

Socrates, illustrious Greek philosopher and an author, gained renown because of one simple sentence. When asked why he carried a lighted candle he replied he was searching for an honest man.

Well over a century ago residents of Lindsay used candles and coal oil lamps and lanterns. In fact people groped their way through long grass and muddy places in Lindsay when lanterns were the guiding light. In later years came the introduction of gas and electricity.

History records that in 1880 attempts were made towards providing street lighting, but it was not until the year 1890 that electricity was first introduced. Power was originally generated from fuel. On several occasions attempts were made to operate gas plants in opposition to Electric Power but they were not successful. The system at present is operated by the Hydro - Electric Power Commission of Ontario.

The story of the introduction of Gas and Electricity to Lindsay is an interesting one. Reports are to the effect that Lindsay citizens were served by a Gas Company prior to 1890. The plant was located at the south-east corner of William and Wellington Streets, the home of the Hydro-Electric Commission for many years. Residents recall watching the filling of a huge reservoir with water, over which was suspended a large object which resembled an inverted funnel. As this vessel filled with manufactured gas, it rose well above the tank of water and as the gas was used the apparatus descended.

Street lamps resembled the old gas lamps found in London, England, and on top of these iron standards was a large glass four sided lamp. The lamp lighter had a stick with which he opened a small door in the lantern and ignited the gas with a lighted taper. These standards were eventually sold to the village of Sturgeon Point, which was one of the largest summer resorts at the time and one of the first in Ontario to install electric street lights. These lights are still in operation.

A second gas plant was at one time located at the south-west corner of Kent and Sussex Streets where acetylene gas was manufactured. It long ago disappeared but one of the old time gas posts, remained on the north-west corner of the same street for some years.

This article is now in the Victoria County Museum.

The first introduction of electricity in Lindsay was by two brothers Sam and Joe Parkin, one time well-known sawmill owners. The first plant was apparently located at the north-east corner of Bond and William Streets, a corner on which also stood the Lindsay Button Factory. The Parkin Bros. were apparently the first to manufacture incan-

descent lights in Lindsay.

B. F. Reesor of Markham and his two sons Harvey and Walter introduced electricity to Lindsay when they purchased the old gas plant at William and Wellington streets. The gas company had discontinued the idea of hauling crude oil from the railway siding to the plant, the oil having been used in the manufacturing of gas.

The Reesor firm first used electricity by the use of carbon lights for street lighting purposes. Many citizens remember the days with the carbon lights on the end of long iron brackets at the top of tall poles at street corners. Children used to gather at the lights to watch the lamp lighter lower the large globes to the ground. They picked up the black carbons which had served their purpose and they were at times used for marking scribblers and books.

Following the carbon lights a deputation of the Town Council visited Buffalo N.Y. to inspect the lights described as "Magnetite street lights." Shortly afterwards these upright modern standard lights were installed on Kent Street as well as on William Street South. As time went by, the Hydro - Electric Commission went modern and installed the present over hanging lights on Kent Street and a new lighting system on Queen Street and Lindsay Street South.

As time went on B. F. Reesor passed away. The plant on William Street passed into the hands of a private firm known as the Lindsay Light Heat and Power Company. This company operated successfully for several years but apparently clashed with the town council on many occasions.

A paragraph from the obituary notice regarding the late Sam Parkin, which appeared in a local newspaper reads as follows: "The late Mr. Parkin was the first gentleman to introduce electricity to Lindsay and operated a plant from 1893 until 1901."

It appears to be a fact that Sam Parkin operated a dynamo and electric plant in the building north of Lindsay which has been for many years known as the Carew Box Factory. It is also understood that the Parkin electric current was used in private homes in the north end of Lindsay and that the late Mr. Parkin many years ago held a party of friends in his home at the corner of Elgin and William streets when he turned on a switch and had the house illuminated by electricity.

For many years Mr. Parkin followed his father in the lumbering business in Lindsay and he also at one time operated a

lumbering business in Millbrook.

There are residents of Lindsay today who can picture Sam Parkin in the seat of one of the largest and most modern automobiles at the time, driving down Kent Street and fingering a horn (contraption) which gave forth musical notes on a short scale. Sam Parkin, Albert Street South, is a son of the late Sam Parkin of pioneer electricity days in Lindsay.

Finally the company disposed of the franchise and business to the Seymour Power Company which was operating at Peterborough, Oshawa and other places. The town apparently had differences with this Company and the whole matter of electrical power became a controversial subject. The Seymour Company was ready to sell. One Lindsay faction wished the Town to take over the plant, the other fought hard for the absorption of the plant by the Ontario Hydro Power Commission. R. M. Beal, who was Lindsay's aggressive and progressive Mayor at the time, strongly favoured the Town owning the power plant. A bitter fight took place and the question was presented on a ballot to the people, who favoured the ownership of the Ontario Hydro Electric.

The Lindsay Daily Post played an important role in current Municipal events at the time the Council and citizens were deeply involved in electrical current and the ownership of the power situation in Lindsay. The post championed the cry that Lindsay should purchase the Fenelon Falls power plant and distribution. Editorially the Post divulged information about the then apparently unlimited power possibilities by acquiring the Cataract Village power as well as including the purchase of Elliott's Falls Dam (near Norland) and water rights. Mr. R. P. Wilson, of the Daily Post, spent considerable time, energy and money in this particular cause.

Citizens of Lindsay have been fortunate in having several dedicated members of the Hydro-Electric Commission and to these go the thanks and appreciation of citizens in general for their foresightedness in having the local plant owned and operated by the municipality. Foremost in these can be mentioned J. G. Baldwin who has served the Commission ably and well for over thirty years.

For over half a century the Secretary and Manager of the Commission has been capably performed by two gentlemen, the late Walter E. Reesor and the present manager-secretary J. H. Lightbody.

STATISTICAL RECORDS

Below will be found a detailed record of the history of the Lindsay Hydro-Electric plant.

In 1891 the 'Edison Incandescent plant introduced by A. W. Parkins and sons, started work with a capacity of 400 lights.

In 1891 the Edison General Electric Company established an arc and incandescent light company in the Town of Lindsay.

In 1893 a seven hundred light dynamo was installed by the Victoria Electric Light Company in Lindsay and a two hundred light dynamo by the Brantford Electric Light Company.

In 1894 the Victoria Electric Light Company of Lindsay moved into new, more spacious premises and added to the plant a Wheelock condensing engine, a large steam boiler, new generators etc.

In 1895 a charter was issued to the Light, Heat and Power Company of Lindsay. The capital stock of the company was \$70,000. Wm. Needler, B. F. Reesor and Thomas Sadler of Lindsay were the first directors.

In 1897 the Light, Heat and Power Company of Lindsay added to their incandescent plant a 120 kw standard single phase alternator of the Canadian General Electric Company's latest type, with a revolving iron clad armature and compounded to secure automatic regulation. The Lindsay company had at 60 kw and 30 kw machine of the same type in operation for several years past, and with the new apparatus had ample capacity to supply the incandescent lights, numbering between 6,000 and 7,000 connected to their circuits.

In 1898 Mr. J. J. Wright manager of the Toronto Electric Light Company visited Fenelon Falls for the purpose of gaining data from which to base a report regarding the practicability of the proposal for the transmission of electric energy for light and power to Lindsay.

In 1898 the contract for street lighting in the Town of Lindsay expired on May 1, and a resolution was passed in the Council authorizing the Power and Light Committee to obtain particulars as to the cost of an electric light plant to be operated by the Town.

In 1898 the Municipal Council of Lindsay granted an extension of two weeks to Messrs. Alex. Culverwell and George White-Fraser in which to complete arrangements for the carrying out of their sixteen mile power transmission scheme between Lindsay and Fenelon Falls. The promoters stated that the necessary capital had been subscribed.

In 1898 Coverwell and White Fraser of Toronto undertook to form a company to transmit the power from Fenelon Falls to Lindsay, but were unable to make the financial arrangements necessary to the undertaking. The matter was taken up with some of the citizens of Lindsay. An electrical expert was employed to look into the subject. In the same year in 1898 the deal was consummated.

In 1898 the contract for the Lindsay Light, Heat and Power Company for lighting the streets expired and the Council considered the question of installing a municipal plant.

In 1899 the Light, Heat and Power Company of Lindsay made some extensive additions to their power plant and purchased a large 500 volt multi-power generator from the Canadian General Electric Company for the purpose of meeting the many demands for power.

In 1899 the Light Heat and Power commenced the work of construction and arranged plans for the development of about 1,200 hp. The plant was to consist of two 400 kw 3-phase generators, direct connection to turbines. The company placed an order with the Canadian General Electric Company for one 400-kw generator, together with switchboards, stepup and stepdown transformers and all the apparatus required to complete electrical installation.

Mrs. J. A. Culverwell, of Toronto, in 1899, the promoter of the Burleigh Falls, Peterborough and Lindsay Electric Power Enterprise succeeded in making financial arrangements with a prominent New York Banking house for the completion of the undertaking. The Company was called the Central Ontario Power Company. Burleigh Falls was situated 39 miles from the Town of Lindsay, in the same circuit. The development was estimated to cost less than any proportionate power development on the continent.

In 1899 the Lindsay town lighting contract was secured for ten years, and the revenue from power and light amounted to some \$15,000 per annum. The company was capitalized at \$200,000.

In 1899 a deputation from Lindsay asked the Dominion Government for permission to obtain water power from the Trent Canal for electric lighting purposes.

In 1899 B. F. Reesor, Manager of the Lindsay Light, Heat and Power Company announced that his company was negotiating with the Peterborough Light and Power Company for power to operate their plant in Lindsay.

In 1899 all arrangements for the absorption of the Fenelon Falls plant were completed.

In 1900 Lindsay decided by an overwhelming majority to purchase the waterworks system at present owned and operated by a private corporation.

In 1900 Mr. B. F. Reesor, then one of the members of the Newmarket Electric Light Company, decided to install an electric light plant in the town of Lindsay. He was given the contract for street lighting. His success induced competition and another company was formed and proceeded to exist for some years. Then with others he formed the Light, Heat and Power Company of Lindsay with a capital of \$125,000 and the competing electric and gas companies were purchased. For some time the Company had been giving consideration to transmitting power from Fenelon Falls. In the

spring of 1899 the Company purchased the water power from the Smith's estate, or more correctly speaking, secured a franchise to utilize 1,100 h. As the Township of Ops and Fenelon had granted a pole line franchise to another party this Company applied and secured from the Grand Trunk Railway permission to use their right-of-way between Lindsay and Fenelon Falls. The work on development commenced in July of that year. The dam and the falls provided a nominal head of 24 feet.

The power house occupied the site of the old Smith's saw-mill, in fact it was built up inside of the mill, the latter being torn down afterwards. The hydraulic plant already in operation consisted of the forty inch Samson turbine of the Leffel type for a generator and a twenty inch turbine of the same make for the exciter. The pair of power terminals were connected with the generator by a 7" horizontal shaft and generated together upwards of 650 hp under a head of 24 feet.

Of the two former steam stations of the Company in Lindsay one was changed to accommodate the new apparatus as a substation.

In 1900 the owners of the Burleigh Falls Power, near Peterborough, applied for incorporation with a capital stock of \$750,000, for the purpose of developing the water power and transmitting electrical energy to the town of Peterborough, Lakeview and Lindsay and surrounding district and for an electrical railway business in the vicinity.

In 1901 the council for the town of Lindsay approved of a submission to the ratepayers of the town of a bylaw authorizing the corporation to operate an municipal street-lighting plant.

In 1901 the ratepayers of Lindsay voted in favour of the town assuming control of the electric light plant.

