

A STORY OF PRIVATE INITIATIVE AND LOCAL CAPITAL

Chapter XIV

PIONEERING IDEAS

**M**ODERN pioneers do not trek cross-country in covered wagons. They do not battle Indians and live on buffalo meat. Modern frontiers are found in business and science.

In 1910 a struggling utility company in northern Illinois pioneered an idea. A single electric generating station was substituted for ten scattered stations.

The experiment was successful—so successful that the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois was founded in 1911 to repeat it on a larger scale. Service was extended to an ever-widening circle of towns and villages around Chicago. Rates were lowered again and again. A "superpower network" was developed. Today 350,000 families in 319 communities receive a quality of service, both gas and electric, undreamed of 20 years ago.

Before the World War a hand-wringer that screwed on to the side of a wash-tub was considered a labor-saving appliance in most homes. So was the carpet sweeper. Women were suspicious of an electric iron someone had invented.

Here was a field for more pioneering. The Public Service Company took 400 of the new irons, demonstrated them in customers' homes. Women were quick to appreciate this new help. Electric irons became a part of good-housekeeping equipment.

As fast as other practical home appliances were introduced, the Company introduced them to its customers. Through its stores it

sponsored—is still sponsoring—dozens of time and labor-savers. It is showing homemakers new ways of doing old chores. And back of every appliance sold is a performance guarantee.

When magazines began to picture mechanical refrigerators for home use, 10 years ago, a new job of pioneering began. The Company selected what it believed to be the best of these home "cold storage plants", installed a number of them in northern Illinois kitchens.

A few of these first refrigerators did not "make good". Something went wrong inside—something that could hardly be anticipated. The Company explained the situation frankly to the buyers, provided free servicing, offered free replacement. Customers lost no money.

Today, improved refrigerators are being welcomed into thousands of homes. The air-conditioning—the "manufactured weather"—that is so popular in moving picture theaters and other public buildings—is near at hand. Company engineers are estimating possibilities, cooperating with manufacturers of equipment. Small machines that both wash and cool air are being tested. It will not be long before homes can be as comfortably cool during summer months as they are now comfortably warm in winter.

*Who knows what will be next? Modern frontiers are found in business and science. There is always pioneering to be done.*

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY  
OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

*This is the fourteenth of a series of stories chronicling the development of the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois and the service it is bringing to the area into which Chicago is growing. Copies of previous chapters will be mailed you if you will write to the Company, 72 West Adams Street, Chicago*

TWO DECADES IN THE SERVICE OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS