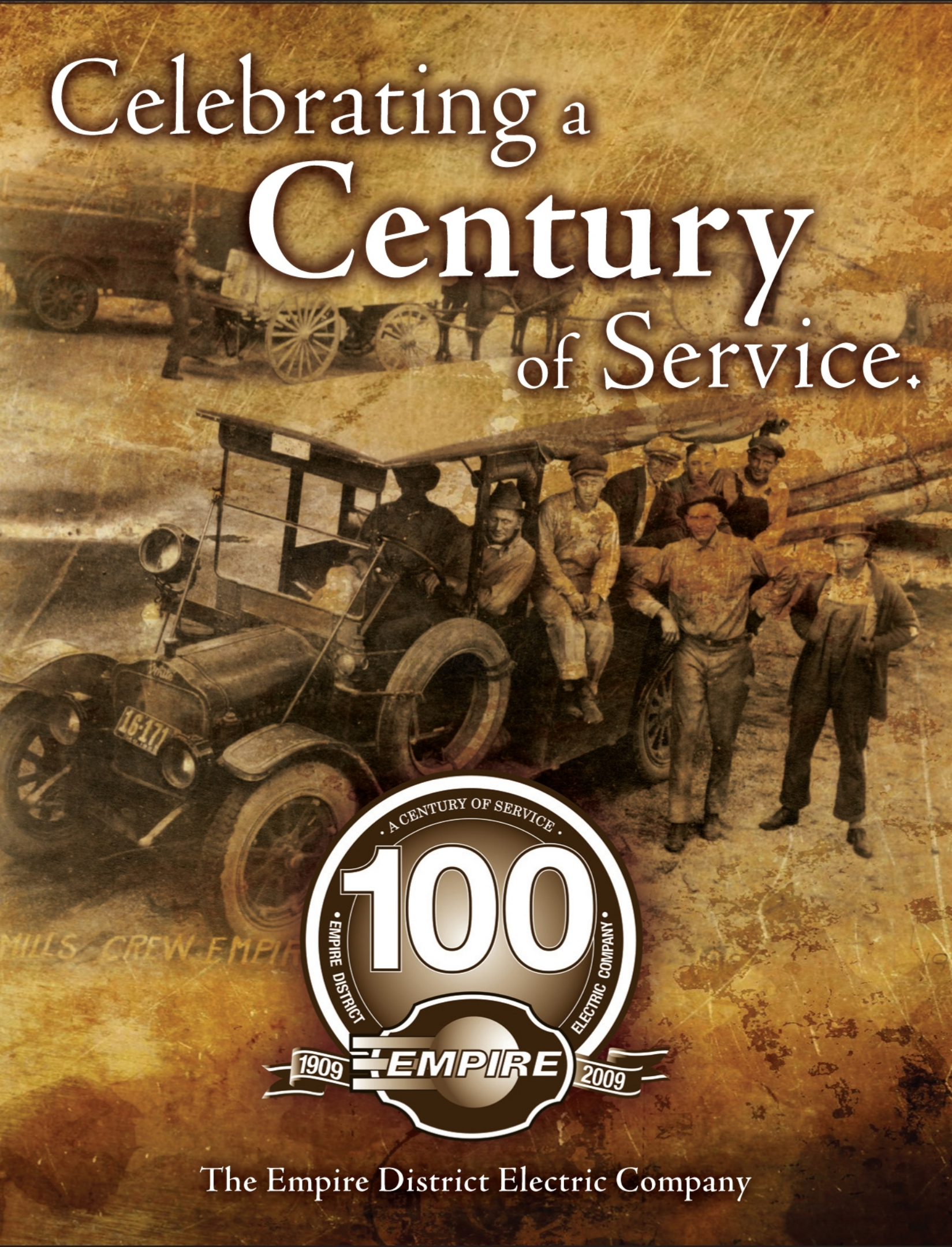
Celebrating a Century of Service.



The Empire District Electric Company

A CENTURY OF SERVICE
100
EMPIRE DISTRICT
ELECTRIC COMPANY
1909
EMPIRE
2009

ABOVE: Lee Mills' crew, Joplin, 1930s.

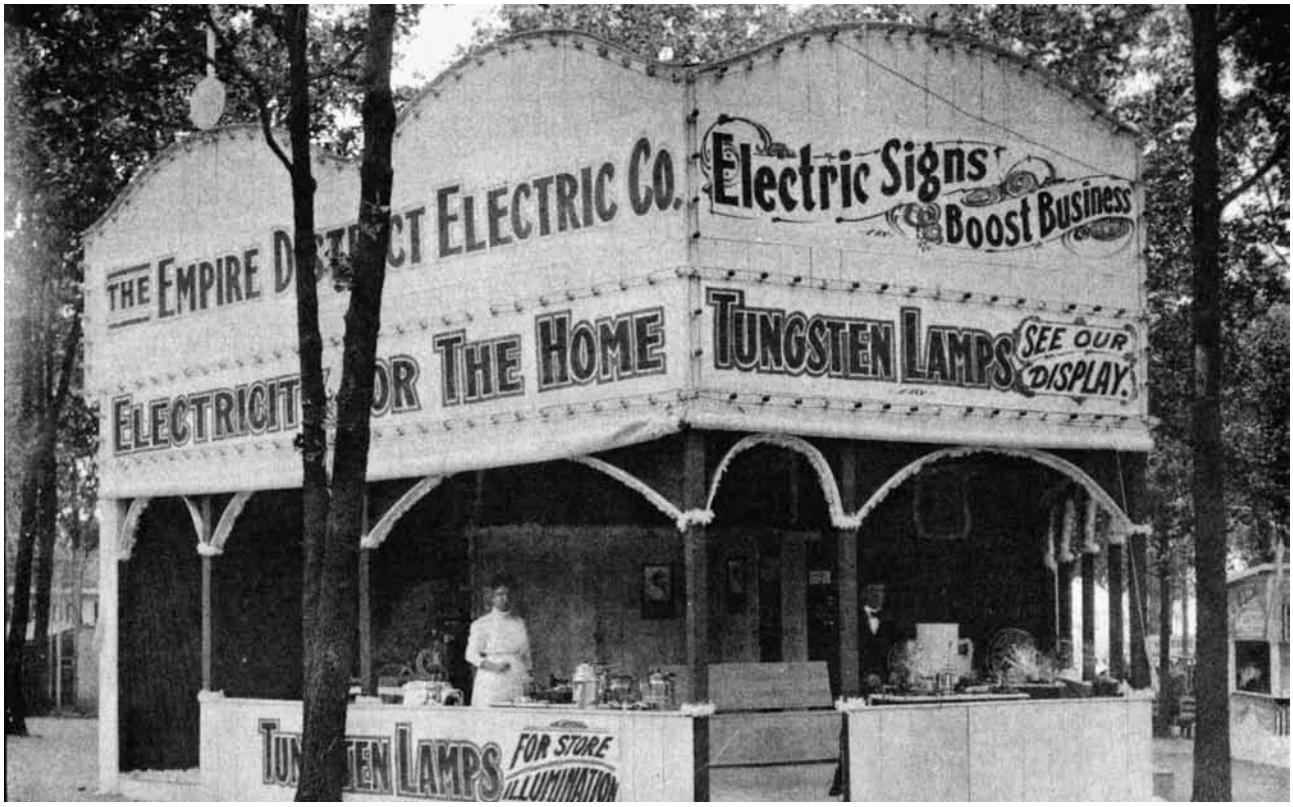
Copyright© 2009 • ISBN: 978-1-59725-231-7
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the copyright owner or the publisher.
Published by Pediment Publishing, a division of The Pediment Group, Inc. www.pediment.com Printed in Canada

Introduction

Running water and electricity are the basic tenets of a civilized society. Without the two, the progression of mankind ceases to move forward. The practical application of electricity during the early 20th Century in the United States propelled American society forward surpassing other countries in the world.

The harnessing and generation of electrical power was extremely important in this transformation. Electricity has changed our society more than we will ever truly understand. When Empire was established in 1909, electricity was still a very novel concept. Outdoor illumination was catching on, but indoor usage was still fragmented. It would take until the end of World War I before kitchens began to fill with electrical appliances. Americans only gradually adapted to this new power source and what it offered.

Empire has been a part of this time continuum we call history. Empire



ABOVE: Empire booth at the entrance to Joplin's Electric Park, 1911.

witnessed and participated in three life altering innovations: the radio, television and computer. All powered by electricity, these three inventions have permanently changed the very cultural fiber of our world.

Empire has survived two world wars and the Great Depression. In 1944 the company experienced the breakup from its parent company, the Cities Service Company, and then went on to celebrate a rebirth and independence. Through the years, they have also encountered numerous economic inflation and recessionary periods, deregulation and open market competition,

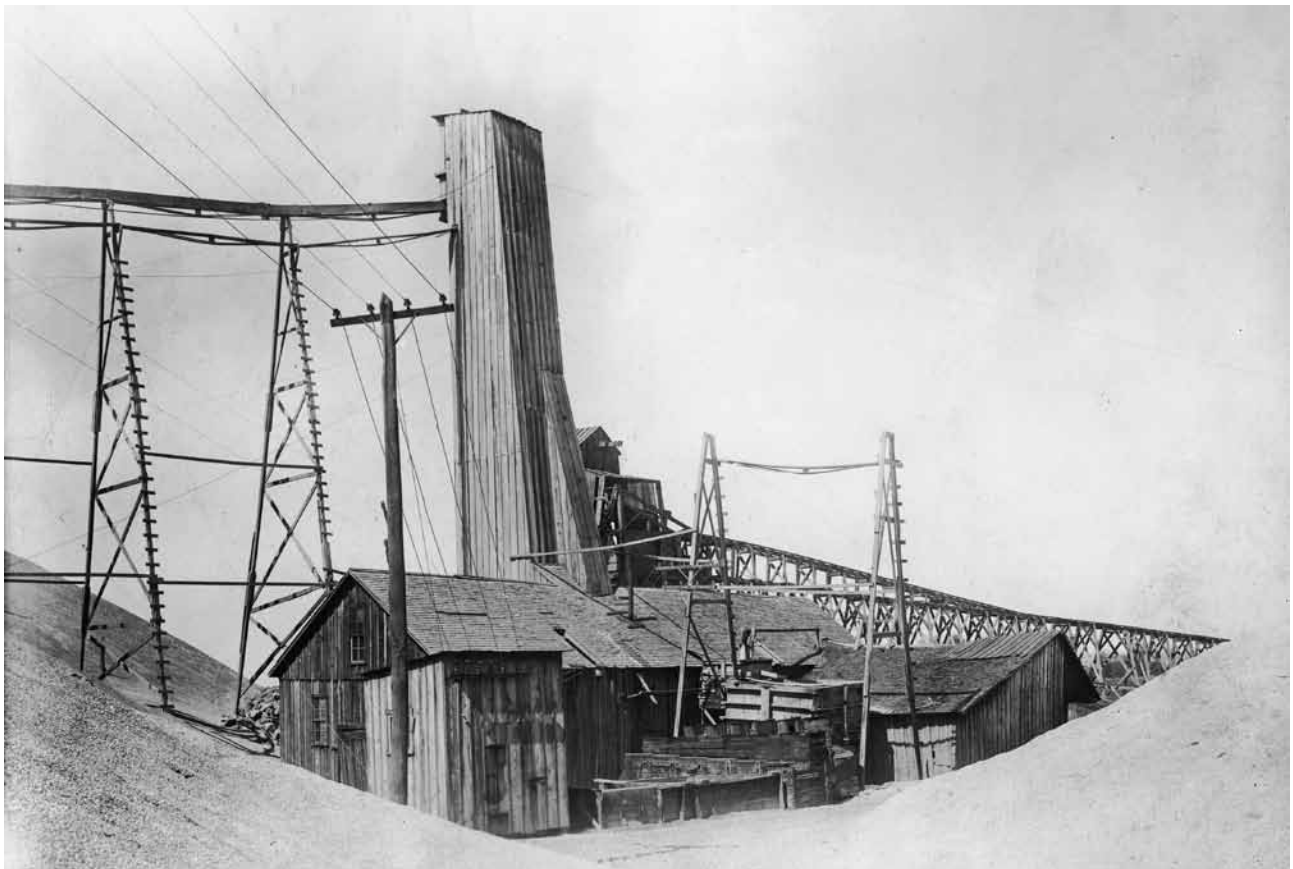
stringent regulatory regulations, a takeover that was never finalized, strong policies concerning the environment, skyrocketing production costs, rate increases, escalating federal and state taxes, and unbelievable harsh and destructive weather. Like an unrefrigerated ice cube on a hot summer day, most businesses would melt under this uncertain and volatile climate. The Empire District Electric Company prevailed — a noteworthy accomplishment which has spanned 100 years.

The one hundred year story of The Empire District Electric Company is closely interwoven with the history of the region it serves. As the area developed, so did Empire. A century ago, the region was made up of small urban centers and many rural communities. The local economy was based on mining. Today, it covers broadly populated communities with a solid base of diverse businesses and industries.

Empire's emergence into the utility business occurred when several smaller power companies merged together. Prior to the formation of Empire, many companies simply dabbled in providing electricity as a power source. In the early years, the electric utility business was ever changing with takeovers and acquisitions were normal business practices of the day. In the end, the local communities needed an affordable, reliable energy source and Empire provided that needed service.

Empire's early days were firmly attached to the ever-growing zinc and lead mines located in Cherokee County, Kansas, and the two mining counties in Jasper County and Newton County, Missouri. If Empire was to have success, its primary job was to sell electric power to the district's zinc and lead mines. A second objective was to introduce and sell electricity to the homes and businesses of the region. When Empire became incorporated, electricity was still a relatively new concept. Area residents and businessmen needed to know more about the usage as well as the accessibility of electric power. Businesses were encouraged to look into indoor and outdoor illumination. The use of

BELOW: Childress Brothers Rabbits Foot Mine in Joplin.



outdoor electric signs offered another marketing avenue for businesses. Also an entire array of new residential appliances were becoming available. These time-saving household machines would eventually revolutionize the domestic work at home.

Eventually, Empire provided the power for the commercial, industrial and residential customers in the four-states. Empire was built on utilizing capital that was voluntarily invested by thousands of local stockholders. In return, Empire dedicated itself to providing electrical power to that vested community.

Today, electricity is imperative in our life. Recently this region's weather has been harsh and extremely destructive. It is during these difficult times we feel the true value of electricity. Once thought of as a novelty, electric power has become a necessity. The history of Empire reflects this change and further explains its growing relationship with the region over the past 100 years.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks goes to Amy Bass, Carol Sumners, Julie Maus, Pat Settle and Emily Stanley for their assistance in the editing and layout process.

Another thank you goes to Tara Clark for her efforts in reviewing and editing the manuscript.

I deeply appreciate the understanding and support I received from my wife, Belinda Belk, and the great JMC staff members Chris Wiseman, Dina Taylor and Yvonne Weeks for all their assistance. Chris Wiseman was extremely valuable in the duplication and enhancement of the historic images

Many current Empire employees, as well as an army of retired folks, have been instrumental in the creation of the book. I greatly appreciated the support I received from Bill Gipson, Brad Beecher, Gregg Knapp, Mike Palmer, Harold Colgin, Kelly Walters and Ron Gatz. I had the pleasure of interviewing a number of past and present employees. I thank the following for your time and candid remarks Katie Barton, Jeff Bertelson, Sandy Blakeley, Jeff Brown, Jeneane Chartier, Angela Cloven, Gary Clark, Harold Colgin, Vernon Corkle, Dee Lynn Davey, Milie Dickerson, Rhett Elliot, Tina Gaines, Wade Gilkey, Chad Hook, Bill Howell, Dale Jasumback, Doug Kennedy, Frank Kerr, Ryan Kerschen, Louis LaGasse, Bob Lamb, Otto Martin, Jack Mayfield, Rick McCord, Sam McGarrah, Myron McKinney, Virginia McKenzie, Larry Myers, Beverly Newman, Phil Owens, Wade Palone, Randy Penn, Shane Peterson, Jess Reed, Donna Roehling, Richard Russell, Tom Schneider, Joe Simmons, Jack Smallwood, Tom Snyder, Richard Swaim, Steven Taylor, Martha Thomas, Dave Walden, Kelly Walters, Vicki Williams and John Woods.

Lastly, I thank Brad Fenison and his creative staff at Pediment Publishing for assisting me in the publication process.

— *Brad Belk, 2009*

ABOVE: Service trucks in Joplin, 1929.

Table of Contents

The Empire District Electric Company Is Established 7

1920s 22

1930s 46

1940s 54

1950s 79

1960s 100

1970s 112

1980s 122

1990s 140

21st Century 157

About the Author 182

Bibliography 184

Index 187

BELOW: Empire Storeroom, 4th and Pennsylvania, Joplin, 1910. In the doorway are Henry Roth and Bill Pinson.

CHAPTER ONE

The Empire District Electric Company Is Established

Although electricity came to the region prior to the formation of The Empire District Electric Company, the stories of its predecessors will forever be connected to the history of Empire and the region it serves. The first public utility in Joplin was the Joplin Gas and Coke Company. It was officially incorporated by the State of Missouri on November 20, 1876. The City of Joplin in 1890 ratified City Ordinance No. 284 granting the Joplin Gas and Coke Company the right to build and operate an electric light and power plant.

According to Joel T. Livingston's book, *History of Jasper County*, the first electric light viewed by county residents occurred when the traveling Cole Circus came to Joplin in 1882. The Cole Circus "tent and grounds were illuminated with lights generated from a dynamo and apparatus carried by the show."

ABOVE: Empire line crew, circa 1910. Ed Wilson, Baron Alexander, Sid Cody (on wagon seat), Bill Chad, and A. B. Long.

The first light plant in Joplin was constructed in 1887 by William G. Sergeant and Oliver Moffet. The light plant was located at the site between Fourth and Fifth Streets and Joplin and Wall Avenues. Sergeant traveled to

Chicago to purchase twelve 2,000 candle power arc lamps from the Thompson-Houston Company. The lamps were to be used solely for street lighting. They were powered by a small engine dynamo with a locomotive type boiler.

The first street light in Joplin was placed at the corner of Fourth and Main. This one light demonstrated the power and efficiency of street lighting. Seeing the benefits of an illuminated corner, Sergeant's company was awarded a contract to light the streets in the downtown business district.

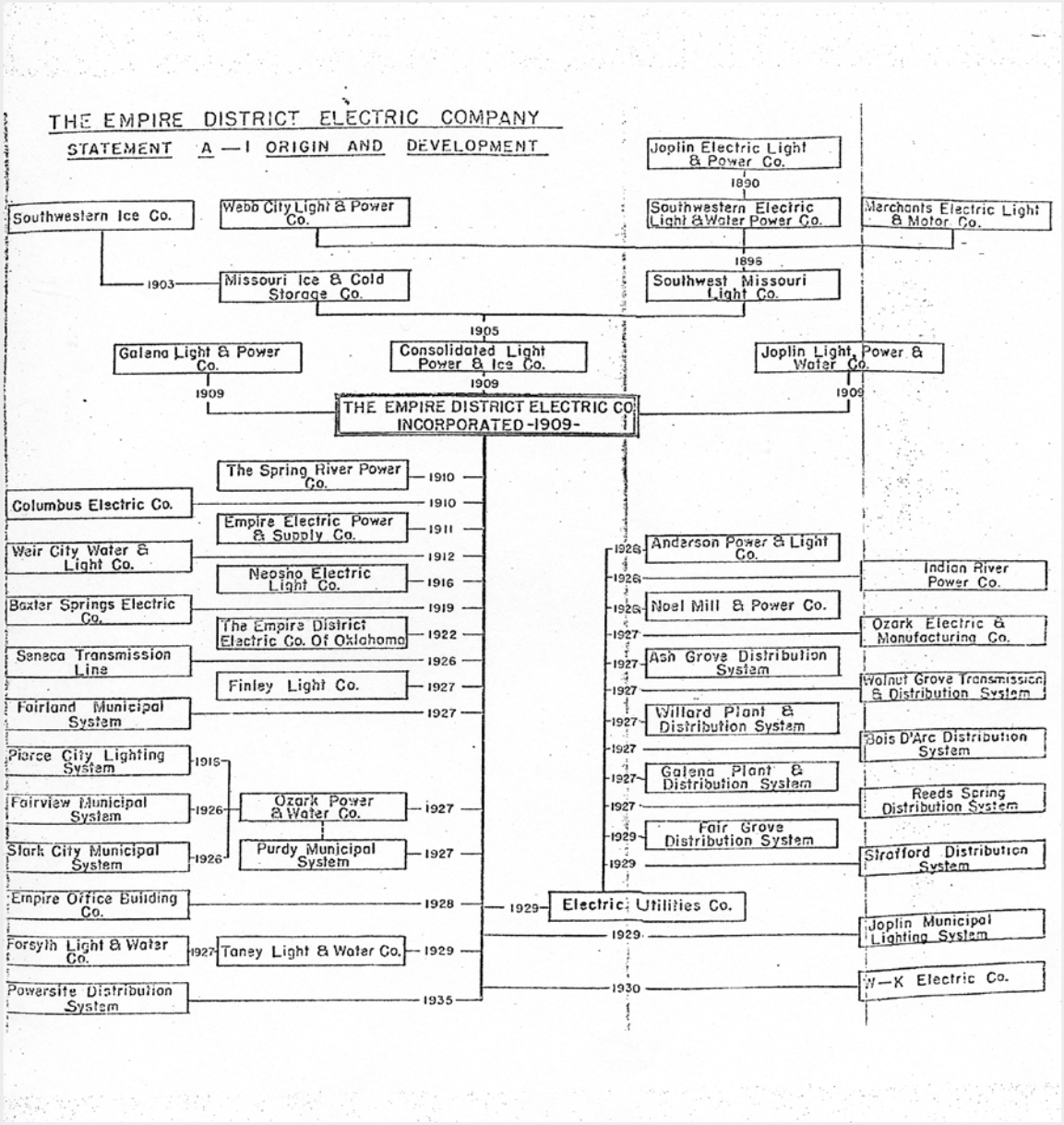
Historically, the names of Sergeant and Moffet resonated well in the Joplin community. Their fathers, John B. Sergeant and Elliot R. Moffet, helped create the City of Joplin. In 1870 they discovered a rich vein of lead near Joplin Creek. This strike brought additional miners to the area and many of them eventually settled. Three years after the Sergeant and Moffet strike, the community of Joplin was incorporated.

Sergeant and Moffet's company was named the Joplin Electric Light and Power Company. Their original power plant would later be adopted as a substation by The Empire District Electric Company. This plant was built only five years after the opening of Thomas A. Edison's famous Pearl Station in New York City, which was the first central power station in the world.

In time, Sergeant sold his interest to Moffet. Under Moffet's direction, a new hydro power plant was constructed on Shoal Creek near Grand Falls. Known as the highest natural water fall in Missouri, Grand Falls was formed millions of years ago and consists of an unusually thick outcrop of Mississippian chert.

In the beginning, a wooden dam was built. The wooden dam was replaced by a concrete one three years later by Arthur E. Stillwell. At the time, Stillwell was president of the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad Company. He assisted in creating the Southwestern Electric Light and Water company, which was incorporated on May 7, 1890. This company took over the new dam. They also acquired Moffet's interest.

BELOW: Grand Falls



To better understand the history of Empire, it is important to trace the early electrical companies that provided service in the region. This historical evolution goes beyond the turn of the century to the power companies which later merged to form The Empire District Electric Company.

The utility field was extremely volatile, with mergers and takeovers continuing as normal business practice.

Two Electric Light Companies in Joplin

The Joplin City Directory of 1891 listed only two electric light companies, the Joplin Light and Fuel Company and the Southwest Electric Light and Water Company. The Joplin Light and Fuel Company was listed with an office at 109 East 4th Street. The company controlled capital stock equaling $100,000. C. H. Malin was the president.

The Southwest Electric Light and Water Company office was located at 313 Main. The company was organized in April of 1890. E. L. Martin was president and A. E. Stillwell held the office of vice president.

David D. Hoag

Around the turn of the century, a gentleman came to the district who earned the title of "Father of The Empire District Electric Company." He was Judge David D. Hoag. Judge Hoag would give a substantial part of his life to Empire.

David D. Hoag was born on March 18, 1848, in Sherman, Connecticut. In 1873, he graduated from Yale College. From 1875 to 1881, he was Probate Judge of Ottawa County, Kansas. Then from 1886 to 1889, he selected and plotted a valuable addition to Kansas City, Kansas, and established and laid out the towns of Oakley, Colby, Sharon Springs and Winona in western Kansas on the line of the Union Pacific Railroad.

Hoag was introduced to the utility business following the turn of the century when he consolidated a number of electric light and power companies working in southwestern Missouri and southeastern Kansas. His work continued in this capacity culminating in 1909 with the incorporation of The Empire District Electric Company. Hoag would also be the second general manager of Empire.

Prior to the creation of Empire, Hoag held various board positions with the local utility companies. He was secretary and a board director of two power companies including the Joplin Light, Power and Water Company and Consolidated Light, Power and Ice Company of Galena, Kansas. He was also a board director and member of the executive committee of the Spring River Power Company. From 1899 to 1901, he served as a state legislator of Kansas. Hoag also became the first president of Joplin's Oak Hill Golf Club in 1912.

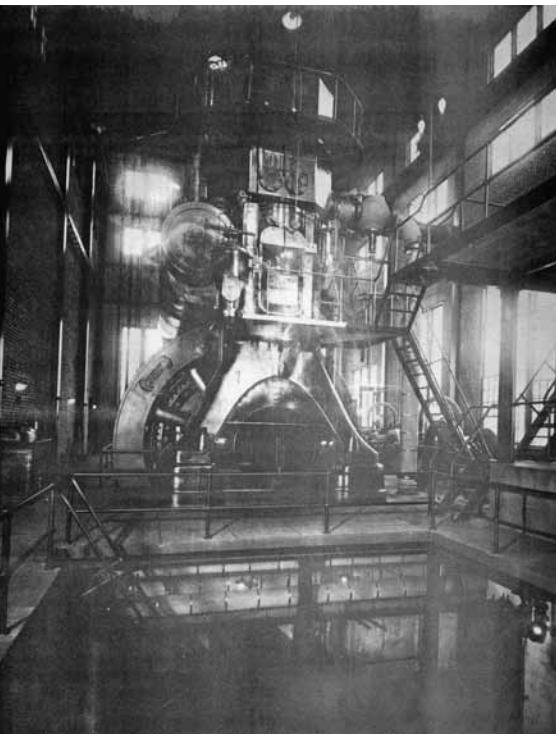
OPPOSITE TOP: Lowell Dam under construction, January 1910.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: 33,000 volt transmission line. Tower line across Spring River.

Bond Issue Passes

In 1899, the Joplin electorate voted in favor of a $30,000 bond issue to create a municipal electric light plant. The *Joplin Globe* reported that the proposition passed by a vote of 813 to 222. In June, the Joplin City Council approved a plan to purchase a site on the north side of Broadway, between Railroad and Division Avenues, for establishing the electric light plant.

The city purchased the land and a former power house for $3,500 from the Southwest Missouri Electric Railway Company and converted it into the city's power plant. The cost of constructing the plant was $30,000. James R. McDonald became the plant superintendent.



Lowell Dam

After procuring the needed funds, William G. Sergeant's desire to build a dam at the juncture of Shoal Creek and Spring River at Lowell, Kansas became reality as dirt was broken on May 9, 1904. In cooperation with Sam Brown and Jamot Brown, the Spring River Power Company was incorporated and a dam was constructed.

After formation of the Spring River Power Company, a contract was made with the Arnold Electric Power Station Company of Chicago to erect a power plant. The plan included eight water wheels and two 1,500 kilowatt generators. A young engineer named George E. Hayler came to the area and was assigned the task of designing the power plant.

In 1922 Hayler composed a letter for the company's April edition of *Hi-Voltage* magazine. He stated, "Ground was broken for the first Spring River plant at Lowell, Kansas, in May 1904. The hydroelectric plant was completed and 2,300 volt current was transmitted over the high tension line to operate motors located in the Murphy-Friel Mill at Galena, Kansas, on March 4, 1905, the day that Teddy Roosevelt was made President of the United States for the second time."

Transmission lines extended from the plant to Galena, Joplin, Webb City and Porto Rico. These were the first 33,000 volt transmission lines serving southeastern Kansas. The system served four substations with 750 kilowatts each.

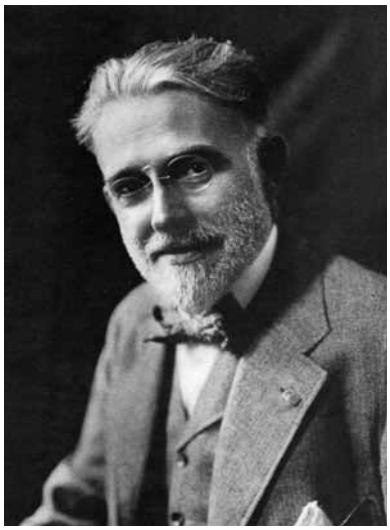
ABOVE: Old Kate, at Riverton Plant, 1907.

RIGHT: Henry L. Doherty.

BELOW: Riverton Plant housing Old Kate.

Riverton Power Plant

Additional generation was needed as the mining fields demanded more power. Plans were made to construct a power plant at Riverton, Kansas. In 1905 a 5,000 horsepower, 25 cycle, Corliss engine generator manufactured by Westinghouse was delivered to Riverton, Kansas. One interesting feature of the generating unit was its former job was furnishing electricity for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Nicknamed "Old Kate" the generator was a large vertical engine weighing over 400 tons. Old Kate was one of the last large vertical engines to be built. The generating equipment was placed into operation by 1906.



The plant at Riverton provided 2,000 kilowatts of capacity, which in time was stretched to 3,000 kilowatts. Old Kate remained steady, and under the capable hands of the maintenance engineer, Sam Gard, it frequently ran 719 out of a possible 720 hours during the calendar month.

By 1908, electric lines were extended to the mines and other industries including two street railway systems, the Joplin and Pittsburg Railway Company and the Southwest Missouri Railroad Company. There were now 42 miles of 33,000

volt transmission lines with eight substations and a total capacity of 10,000 horsepower.

At this time, the Springfield River Power Company and the Consolidated Light, Power and Ice Company were operating at full capacity. Both companies needed additional money to expand. With these particular circumstances in place, Judge David Hoag persuaded Henry L. Doherty to look into the business possibilities of the area.

Creation of The Empire District Electric Company

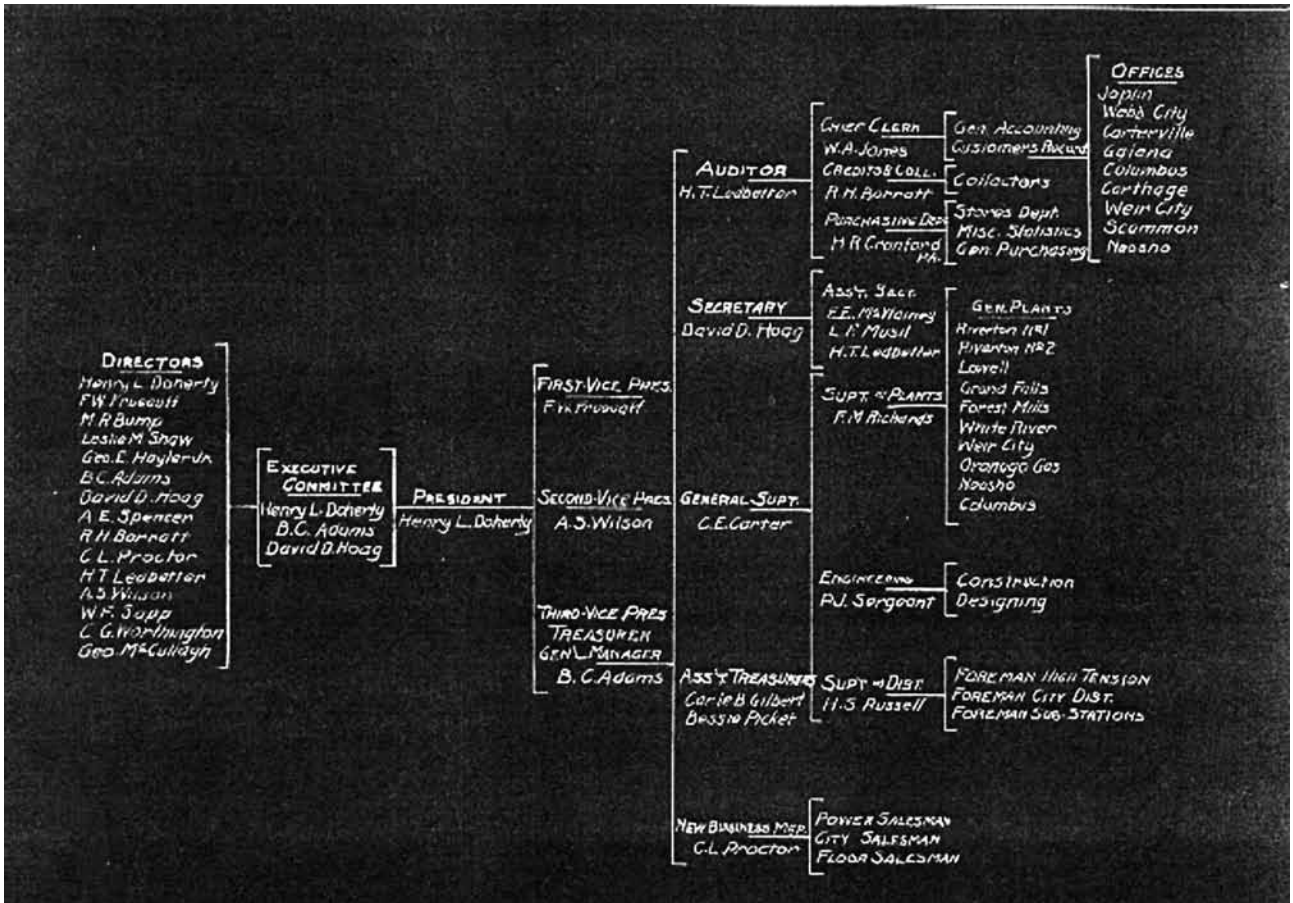
Another visionary businessman, Henry Latham Doherty, realized the value of the region and the potential customers gained from the usage of the natural gas and electricity in Kansas and Missouri. The Henry L. Doherty & Company was created in 1905 to act as a fiscal agent for numerous utility companies. Five years later, the Cities Service Company began acting as a holding company for both utility and non-utility Doherty interests. Established on September 2, 1910, the Cities Service Company was a New York based holding company deriving income from dividends generated by stock held in subsidiary corporations. Cities Service was established to acquire public utility companies, such as natural gas, electric and transportation firms, but later their interests shifted to the burgeoning petroleum industry.

Doherty acknowledged Hoag's recommendation and sent a few engineers into the district to make a thorough examination of the situation. After evaluating the information, Doherty and his associates made a decision to acquire several of the local utility companies and form a single power company. The report also speculated that the district's zinc and lead mining would continue to prosper.

In 1909, Henry L. Doherty & Company began purchasing power companies in southwest Missouri and southeast Kansas. The company acquired

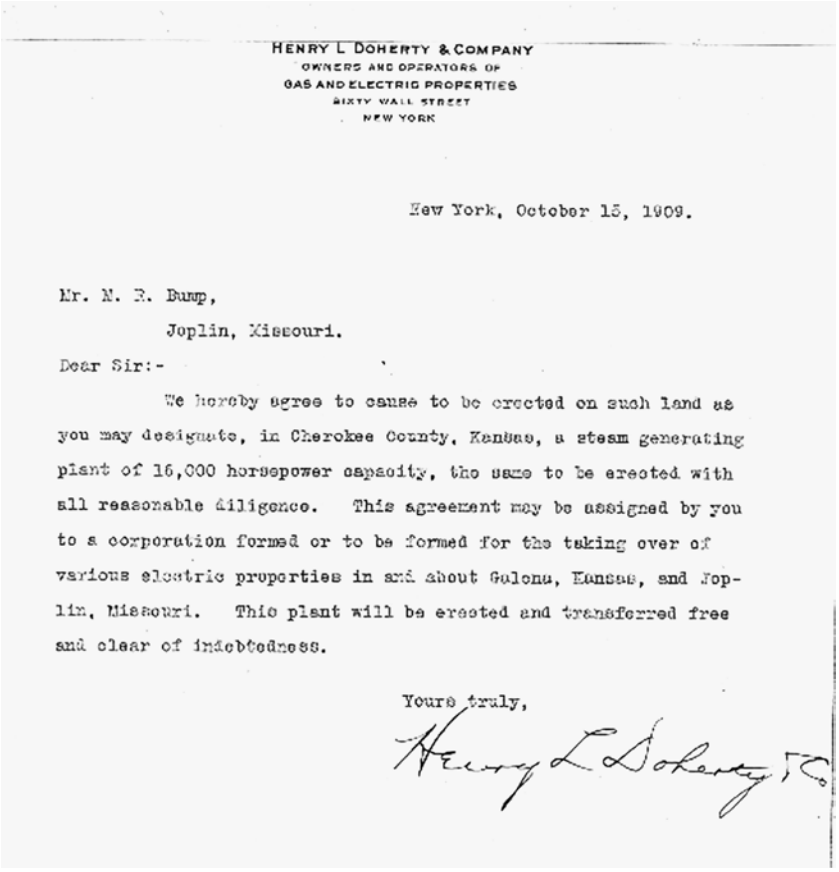
ABOVE: Milan R. Bump, 1925.

BELOW: The Empire District Electric corporate structure, 1909.



the controlling stock and respective plants of Consolidated Light, Power and Ice Company which operated in Carterville, Webb City and Joplin. They also secured the property of the Galena Light & Power Company and Joplin Light, Power and Water Company. By merging these companies together a new corporation was formed. It was named The Empire District Electric Company. The selected name referred to the financial support received from the New York financiers who purchased the three local utility companies.

The original Charter of The Empire District Electric Company was filed with the Charter Board of the State of Kansas on October 16, 1909. Three days later Charles E. Denton, Secretary of State of Kansas officially transcribed the Charter making the company a licensed corporation.



HENRY L. DOHERTY & COMPANY
OWNERS AND OPERATORS OF
GAS AND ELECTRIC PROPERTIES
SIXTY WALL STREET
NEW YORK

New York, October 15, 1909.

Mr. M. R. Bump,
Joplin, Missouri.

Dear Sir:-

We hereby agree to cause to be erected on such land as you may designate, in Cherokee County, Kansas, a steam generating plant of 16,000 horsepower capacity, the same to be erected with all reasonable diligence. This agreement may be assigned by you to a corporation formed or to be formed for the taking over of various electric properties in and about Galena, Kansas, and Joplin, Missouri. This plant will be erected and transferred free and clear of indebtedness.

Yours truly,

Henry L. Doherty & Co.

Continuing the merging process, Doherty and his associates purchased the majority of the stock of the Spring River Power Company, which owned the Lowell Dam and the Riverton steam plant and the Columbus Electric Company.

There were fifteen initial stockholders of the company. On October 22, 1909, the Board of Directors held their first meeting and formally elected the officers of The Empire District Electric Company. The first cabinet of officers were president, Henry L. Doherty of New York City; first vice president, Frank W. Frueauff of New York City; second vice president, Arthur E. Spencer, Sr. of Joplin; treasurer and general manager, Milan R. Bump of Joplin; and secretary, David D. Hoag of Joplin. Additional members of the board included Mark Fristoe, J. A. Orcutt and James E. Harsh.

Milan R. Bump was sent to Joplin in 1909 to help organize The Empire District Electric Company. He became the company's first general manager. Born at Rock Falls, Wisconsin, in 1881, he later graduated from the University of Wisconsin. In 1911, he left Joplin and was called to national headquarters of the Cities Service Company in New York City. Bump became chief engineer of the Cities Service Company, a position he would hold until his death. In addition, Bump was elected president of the National Electric Light Association.

From the very beginning, the corporate headquarters of The Empire District Electric Company was located in Joplin, Missouri. On October 31, 1909, *Joplin News Herald* made the first public announcement of the formation of The Empire District Electric Company. The story stated that the headquarters of the

Electric Park

A symbol of the new electric age was the construction of Electric Park. During the time of the incorporation of Empire District Electric Company, three local businessmen constructed an amusement park on ten-acres of land just west of Joplin near the mining community of Chitwood in 1909. Working with a budget of $150,000, they hired John H. Stem, a New York architect, to design the park which featured rides, sideshows, animals, musical entertainment, concession and souvenir stands. All the structures were draped in strands of electric lights. A prominent feature of the park was a tall illuminated tower.

This "Tower of Lights," dressed with over 10,000 radiating light bulbs, was one of the park's most visual night attractions. The light bulbs of the day had "carbon" filaments and their life span was brief. So it became a regular job for someone to climb the tower and change the burnt out bulbs.

Electricity also played a role in transporting patrons to the park. The majority of the Electric Park visitors arrived via the electrically powered street car. Unfortunately, Electric Park was short lived, closing in 1913. The park would later be known as Schifferdecker Park.

new corporation would be located at 414 Joplin Avenue. The site had been previously occupied by the Consolidated Light, Power and Ice Company of Joplin.

By 1910, The Empire District Electric Company had 109 miles of transmission lines, a total of 8,000 kilowatts in generating capacity and 2,364 customers. The service territory overlapped two states in a relatively small area consisting of Joplin, Webb City and Carterville on the east, Asbury on the north, and Galena, Riverton, Lowell and Columbus on the west.

ABOVE: Electric Park, circa 1912.

Expansion Continues

The newly formed Empire District Electric Company began expanding immediately because additional capacity was needed to serve the rapidly growing business, residential and mining communities of the area. A gas engine plant was built near Webb City with two 500 kilowatt generating units installed. Transmission lines were extended north to Crestline and east to serve the Carthage limestone quarries.

In less than nine months after the ground breaking ceremony in July of 1910, the first of two 12,500 kilowatt turbine units was placed on line at the Riverton Plant. Diligent workers completed the job in nine months by working literally night and day throughout the severe winter of 1909-10.

ABOVE: Outside Riverton Plant, July 1916.

OPPOSITE TOP: Powersite Dam construction..

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Students at Powersite Camp School.

Powersite Dam

In 1909, a group of St. Louis businessmen organized the Ozark Power and Water Company to build a hydro plant on White River near Forsyth, Missouri. Unable to carry out its program, the Ozark Power and Water Company was taken over by the newly formed Cities Service Company.

In 1911, the United States Congress granted approval for the construction of the Powersite Dam across the White River at Ozark Beach. When completed this manmade structure created Lake Taneycomo, which at the time was considered one of the largest impoundments of water in the United States for the production of electric power.

The construction of the dam on White River began to take shape by 1912. Although harnessing White River was a daunting task, the White River Construction Company completed the 50 foot high dam on September 1, 1913. Prior to the dam's construction, a total of 70,000 cubic yards of earth and 20,000 cubic yards of rock were excavated. The dam was constructed of reinforced concrete. Construction was accomplished by the use of two 60-horse powered gasoline boats and fourteen-ton barges.

To build the dam, a considerable workforce was needed. During the dam's construction phase, the workers' camp numbered over 1,000 laborers. Interestingly, at the time, the camp population was greater than any community in Taney County. The camp employed a teacher who schooled about 40 pupils. For nearly two years, the payroll of the camp for just the day laborers approximated $1,500 a day. Sanitary conditions were good and the camp's water supply was carefully guarded at all times.

Designed by the Ambursen Hydraulic Construction Company, the dam measured 50 feet high and 1,300 feet long. The spillway length was 600 feet.

One of the features of the construction project was the creation of a

twenty-four mile lake. This reservoir was named Lake Taney-como. In March 1913, the Branson Commercial Club came up with the name of the lake by using a combination of TANEY-COunty-MO. The United States Government stocked the lake with bass and crappie and the river's bank became a site for summer cabins and resort hotels.

The transmission system from the dam extended 150 miles on 66,000 volt lines. A series of substations transported the electricity along the line. They were located at Ozark, Springfield, Monett, Aurora, Diamond and Joplin. The principal service markets included the Springfield and the Joplin-Picher District.

The spillway of the dam had

Fact:

In 1910, Empire was granted the franchise rights of the mining community of Oronogo, Missouri. Oronogo was a typical lead and zinc mining town in the region. Officially incorporated with the state of Missouri in 1876, the adopted name of Oronogo could be phonetically spoken as "Ore or no go" meaning if they found ore they would stay, if not they would go.

a reinforced concrete deck which was supported at a 45-degree angle while buttressed with 18 foot centers resting on a core of solid limestone. On the upstream side of the deck, a cut-off wall measuring eight feet by four feet extended along the entire length of the dam. The downstream side was open and the water was allowed to fall free after passing the crest.

The power house equipment was located on three floors. The lower floor consisted of generators, governors, and exciters. The middle floor housed the transformers, switchboards and meter equipment. The third floor contained high voltage switches and the light ring arresters.

The gates were 17-foot high and nine-foot wide, which allowed two for each wheel opening.

A total of five generators were placed into operation. The plant provided a capacity of 18,500 horsepower.

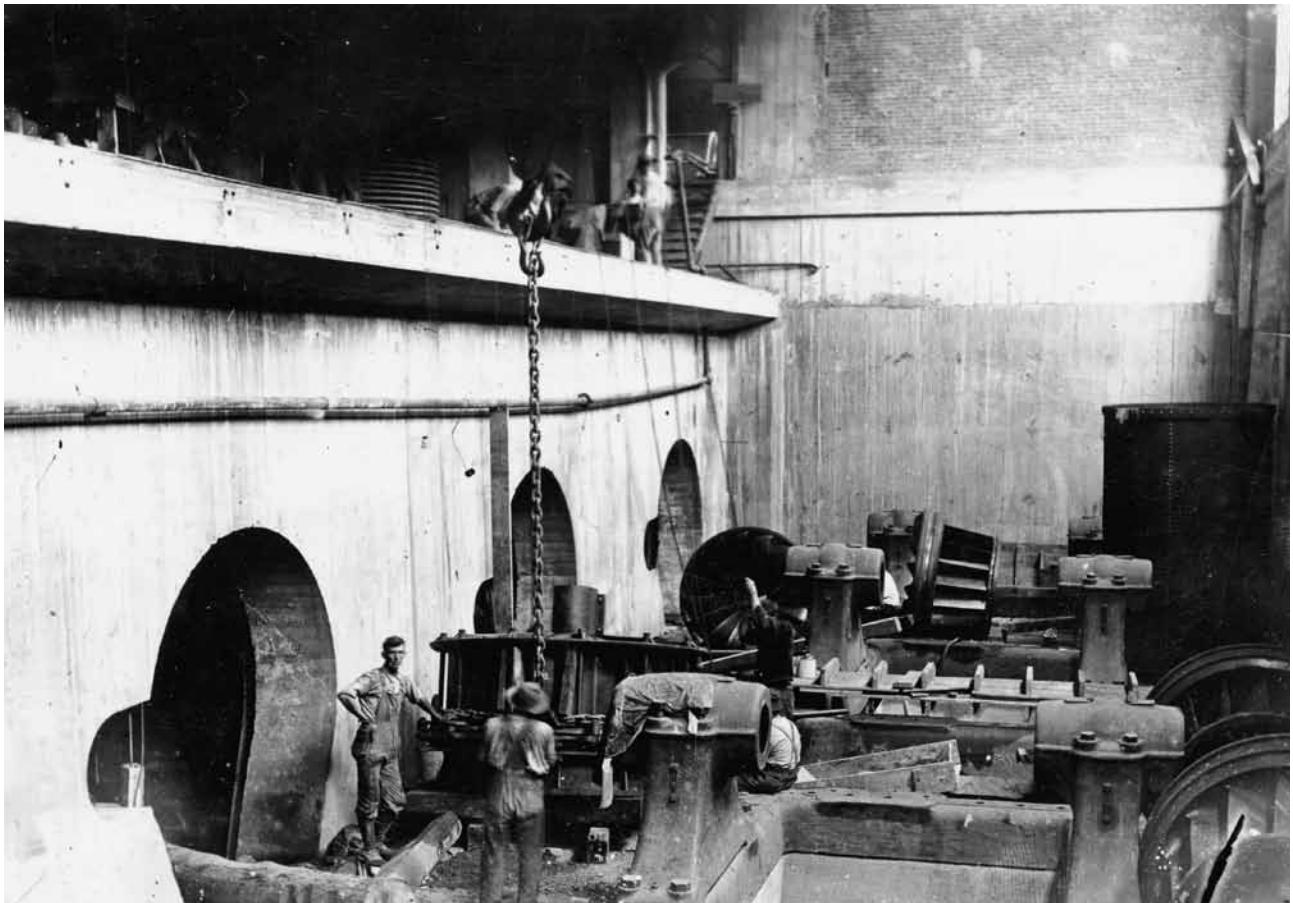
Sam E. Gard, who had previously run the Riverton plant, was transferred, becoming the first plant superintendent. He worked in that capacity from 1913 until his death in August 1931.

Riverton Plant

A 2,000 kilowatt low pressure turbine was installed at the Riverton Plant in 1913. The unit operated by using the exhaust steam from the Old Kate engine. This configuration resulted in one of the first combination engine turbo installations in the Midwest.

In 1918 a 10,000 kilowatt second-hand Allis-Chalmers unit was installed at the Riverton Plant and was followed immediately by the installation of a 12,500 kilowatt unit and a new boiler plant to supply steam. The Riverton Plant became the largest steam plant in the state of Kansas. To fuel the plant, each year over 115,000 tons of coal valued at $300,000 was consumed.

BELOW: Installation of the original turbine generators at the Powersite Dam.



Early Electric Appliance Advertisements

Keep Your Home Clean And Dainty at ALL Times

The Electric Vacuum Cleaner has made housecleaning a task easy to do and soon finished. The wise housewife finds it the best solution of keeping her home dainty and free from dirt at all times. Those who have investigated carefully prefer an Electric Vacuum Cleaner because it is the one vacuum cleaner that gives perfect satisfaction.

The Electric Vacuum Cleaner

You have only to see the Electric Vacuum Cleaner in action to realize its evident superiority. It draws all the dirt out of the deepest recesses of rugs, carpets, upholstery without the slightest injury to even the most delicate fabrics. The Electric Vacuum Cleaner is the most economical thing considered, the most economical thing considered, the most economical of all similar electrical c[illegible] electricity in th[illegible] cheap[illegible] electricity is not as inexpensive if

When It's 100 in the Shade

A Westinghouse Fan

brings the cooling breezes of the seashore right into your home, enabling you to enjoy weather that would otherwise be unbearable.

Don't Let the Heat

interfere with your work or pleasure. Attend to your daily duties or recreation in comfort. Have a WESTINGHOUSE Fan cool your kitchen in the morning, your living room during the afternoon and let it's refreshing currents of cooling air waft you to slumber at night.

Why drag through the balance of the summer without[illegible]

ORDER A [illegible]

To really enjoy the morning meal you should prepare it electrically right on the table.

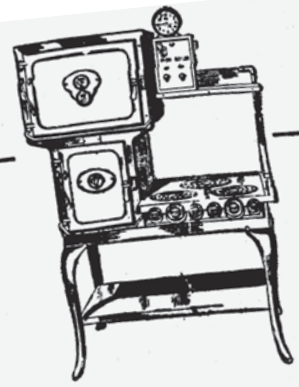
Toast—crisp and brown from the Electric Toaster; coffee, piping hot and delicious—as only the Electric Percolator can make it; bacon, eggs, chops—or what you will—are all cooked as you want them on the Electric Grill.

You Should Own An Electric Breakfast Set

Make the first meal the most tempting meal. Jaded appetites are sharpened at the first taste of an electrically cooked repast.

Try it—complete your breakfast set now. Get the fullest enjoyment from your Electrical Service.

The Empire District Electric Co.



How Many People

in Joplin will go hungry this winter because their usual method of cooking has failed when most needed? Remember your experience of last season? Almost every family was affected to a greater or less extent.

Electric Ranges

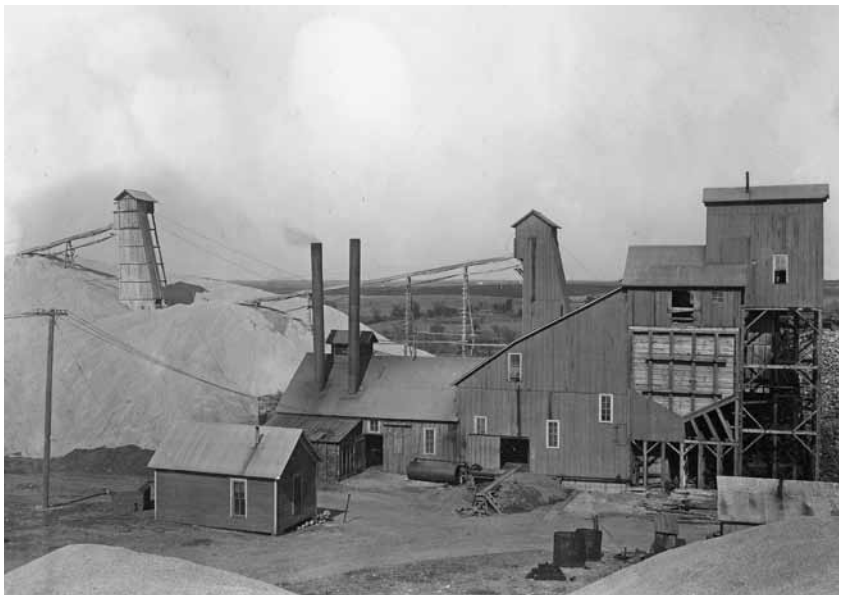
are always ready at full efficiency, regardless of wind and weather conditions. A turn of the switch gives full heat at once, without smoke, without odor, without danger. Food cooked on or in an Electric actually tastes better and goes farther, because heat control is so accurate and because it is constructed on scientifically accurate principles.

Call at our show rooms and inspect the different types of range, small, medium and large.

Empire District Electric Co.

418 Joplin Street

This range was the hot stuff



ABOVE: Endeavor Mining and Investment Company.

Empire's Transportation Department

The automotive age reached Empire as the company purchased its first motorized vehicle in 1913. The first Empire truck was purchased in 1918, a White Speed Wagon. Three years later, the first Model T Ford truck was placed into operation. A long series of vehicles followed these early acquisitions, including such vintage models of the period — Premier, Chalmers, Velie, Haynes and Overland.

Empire's Transportation Department grew to 38 gasoline-powered motor vehicles in 1921. Valued at $46,000, these service vehicles consisted of 25 Fords, 5 Dodges, 5 White trucks and a Lincoln, Studebaker and Haynes. The motorized fleet covered over 331,178 miles in 1923 at a total operating and maintenance cost of six cents per mile. Empire management made a concerted effort to reduce costs in this area. In 1921 the operating costs were running at 17 cents a mile.

George Hayler Takes General Manager's Position

In 1914, George Hayler became Judge David Hoag's successor as the local general manager of Empire.

Picher Mine Field Opens

The transmission lines of the company were extended in 1914 as the company entered into a new phase in its history. World War had begun on the continent of Europe. To fight the war, great demands were placed on the mining district for lead and zinc. Prices for zinc escalated and area mining carried on at a feverish pace.

The mining business exploded as a rich vein of zinc was discovered in Picher, Oklahoma. As Oklahoma was added to the two states of Kansas and Missouri, the mining region became known as the Tri-State Mining District. Starting out fortuitously in August 1914, an Eagle Picher prospector's drill rig, mired in mud in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, struck one of the richest bodies of lead and zinc ever discovered in the Tri-State District. According to G. K. Renner's book, *Joplin From Mining Town to Urban Center*, while Europe was embroiled in war, zinc reached a peak price of nearly $100 per ton in 1915 and lead prices jumped to $130 per ton as late as 1917.

In 1916 transmission lines were completed to serve the Eagle-Picher Company in Ottawa County. At this time, it was necessary to work through the United States War Department to get releases on generating equipment.

Joplin Signs Contract with Empire

From 1913 through 1917, Empire made numerous proposals to provide electricity to the City of Joplin as well as lease the city operations and the plant. All of Empire's proposals were rejected by city officials. Coinciding with these proposals in 1917, the City of Joplin endorsed a bond issue which earmarked $60,000 worth of improvements to upgrade the city plant. The bond proposition was rejected by the electorate. The situation escalated as the Joplin plant costs continued to increase. The Fuel Administration ruled that the operation of the city plant was an extreme waste of fuel and recommended that the plant cease operations for the duration of the war. City officials heeded their advice and closed the plant.

Finally, on September 21, 1918, Joplin city officials agreed to sign a contract with Empire. The agreement was approved by the Public Service Commission on September 25, 1918. The contract stated that Empire would sell electrical current to the City of Joplin from the city's plant switchboard at Empire's standard block rate. The average cost of the city's rate decreased to around 2.25 cents per kilowatt hour. At the end of the year, the City of Joplin's Public Utility Commission reported that the city saved $25,000 per year by entering into the agreement with Empire.

LEFT: Looking north at Fifth and Main, Joplin, Missouri.

CHAPTER TWO

1920s

As the decade began, Carroll L. Proctor took over as vice president and general manager of Empire. Proctor replaced Benjamin C. Adams. Adams was the company's fourth general manager from 1917 to 1919.

The Doherty Clubs

An important part of Empire's culture was the formation of gender clubs within the organization. It was a given that the employees were paid to work for the company, but in the 1920s social organizations sprang up within the Cities Service corporate structure providing a means to socialize after work.

BELOW: Fraternity meeting, March 22, 1922.

ABOVE: Doherty men's fraternity party, 1928.

BELOW: Doherty Girls with Christmas Baskets, 1928.

In the early 1920s a Doherty's Men's Fraternity chapter (Chapter No. 30) was established in Joplin for the male employees of Empire District Electric Company. The objectives of the association were as follows:

1. The study and promotion of the principles upon which our Country is founded.

2. The perpetuation of the business policy and philosophy of Henry L. Doherty, in an effort to make Doherty operated property and public service excel that of all contemporaries.

3. Mutual betterment of the members along social, educational and financial lines and the promotion of loyalty and kindness throughout the Doherty organization.

To become a club member, one needed to be an employee of The Empire District Electric Company, its subsidiaries or Ozark Power and Water Company and be over 21 years of age. The meetings were held on the second Tuesday of each month except during the summer months of June, July and August.

Although women were excluded from the Men's Fraternity, a women's employee group known as the Doherty Girls' Club was established in 1923. The Doherty Girls' Club mission was stated in the *Hi-Voltage* magazine, "We girls of the business world are engaged in work service and together we advance our industry, our community and its people, our state and our Nation." In addition, every April the Doherty Girls would take over the publication duties of the *Hi-Voltage* magazine.

Members of the Doherty Girls' Club orchestrated the first annual Electrical Exposition during the fall of 1926. Mothers, wives, sisters and daughters from the families of Empire employees were invited to attend. At the exposition, the ladies presented a practical demonstration covering every electrical appliance found in the home. The demonstration was creatively presented in a play format and titled "Electrical Servants." The play was written by Empire employees Cleo Woodworth and Nelia Whitford.

Empire's Appliance Showroom

Everyday, electricity was becoming more practical to use. The advantages of electricity became most apparent at home. Electrically powered household appliances were invading the residence, particularly in the kitchen. These new time-saving gadgets were handy work horses. They took a little to get used to, but once they were incorporated into the daily routines of life, there was no turning back. First came the iron, next the fan, followed by toasters, electric ranges and refrigerators.

Empire created a New Business Department to sell this new technology. By 1921, the New Business Department consisted of nine salesmen with average monthly sales of nearly $7,000. Five years later, 46 salesmen were working in the department with peak monthly sales reaching $40,000.

The 1924 holiday season was very profitable as $22,057 worth of merchandise was sold. A breakdown of the electrical appliances included: 101 electric irons, 67 toasters, 41 heating pads, 57 Hoover vacuum sweepers, 80 curling and marcel irons, 98 Christmas light sets, 34 commercial fixtures, 9 toy trains, 2 electric signs, 21 table stoves, 15 waffle irons, 13 electric room heaters, 77 portable lamps, 15 bridge lamps, 23 floor lamps, 106 bed lamps, 16 boudoir lamps, 12 washing machines, 5 radio sets, 20 gas ranges, 113 gas heaters and 2 gas water heater systems.

Addition at Powersite Dam

Work began on re-enforcing the foundation of the spillway during the fall of 1921 at the Powersite Dam. A total of thirteen thousand cubic yards of reinforced concrete were used in the construction. The work crews applied an average of 500 cubic yards of concrete per day. Most of the reinforcing was done underwater. The cement used in the construction project was shipped to Branson by train. From Branson the cement was loaded to a fleet of barrages and shipped seventeen miles down the river to the dam. Actual work of pouring the concrete began in December. In addition, 200 tons of steel were used in the construction project.

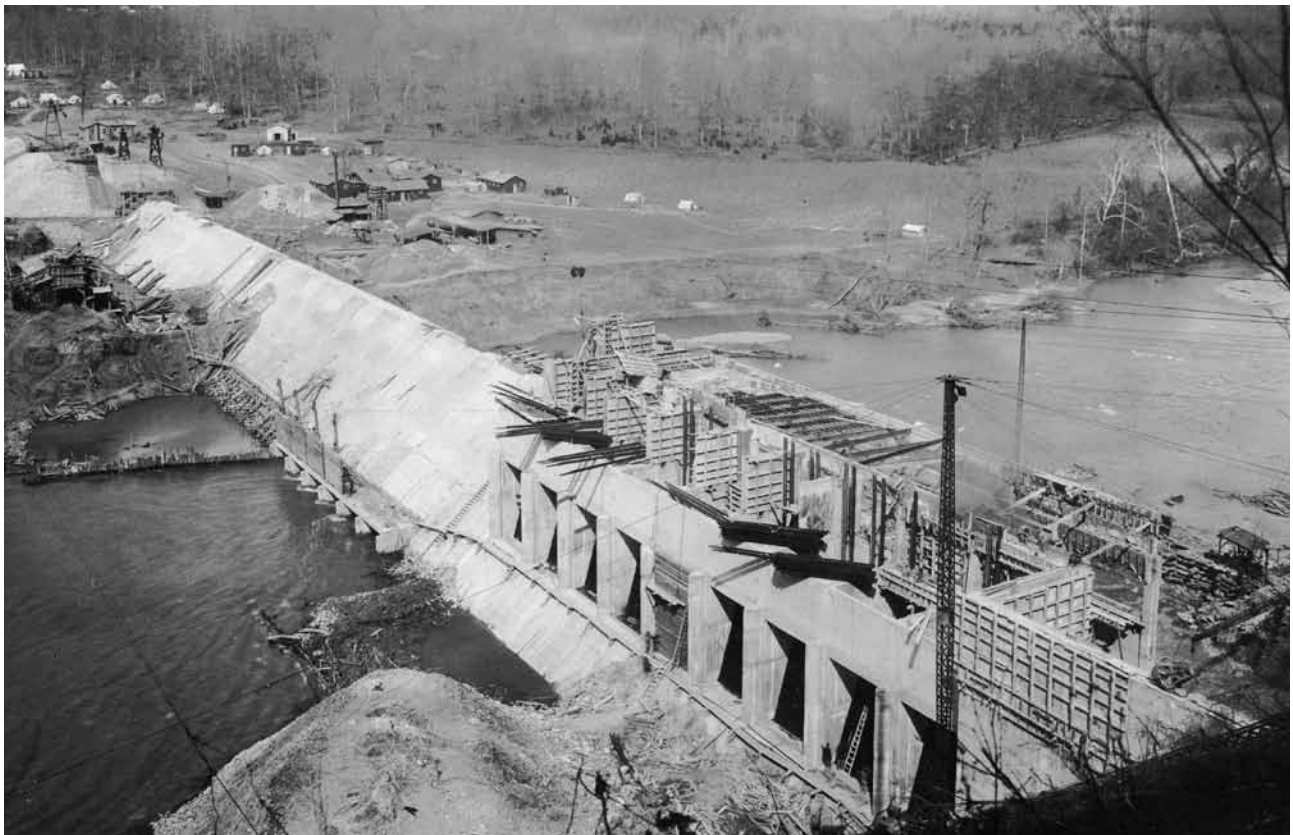
Demand for Electricity

During the 1920s, demand for electricity in the state of Missouri continued to escalate. According to statistics compiled by the United States Geological Bureau, Missouri ranked first in percentage of increase of electrical energy production since 1920. Missouri's production for 1923 showed a rapid increase of 54% over the 1920 output. The increase in production reflected the continued growth of manufacturing businesses in the state. In 1923 The Empire District Electric Company produced 181,420,500 kilowatt hours which represented 17% of Missouri's total output.

ABOVE & BELOW: Powersite Dam under construction.

OPPOSITE TOP: Sales floor in the district office, 1920s.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Appliance service trucks and employees in the 1920s.



ABOVE: Line Crew in Joplin, June 28, 1923.

BELOW: Interior of McDonalds Separation Mill, Tri-State Mining District.

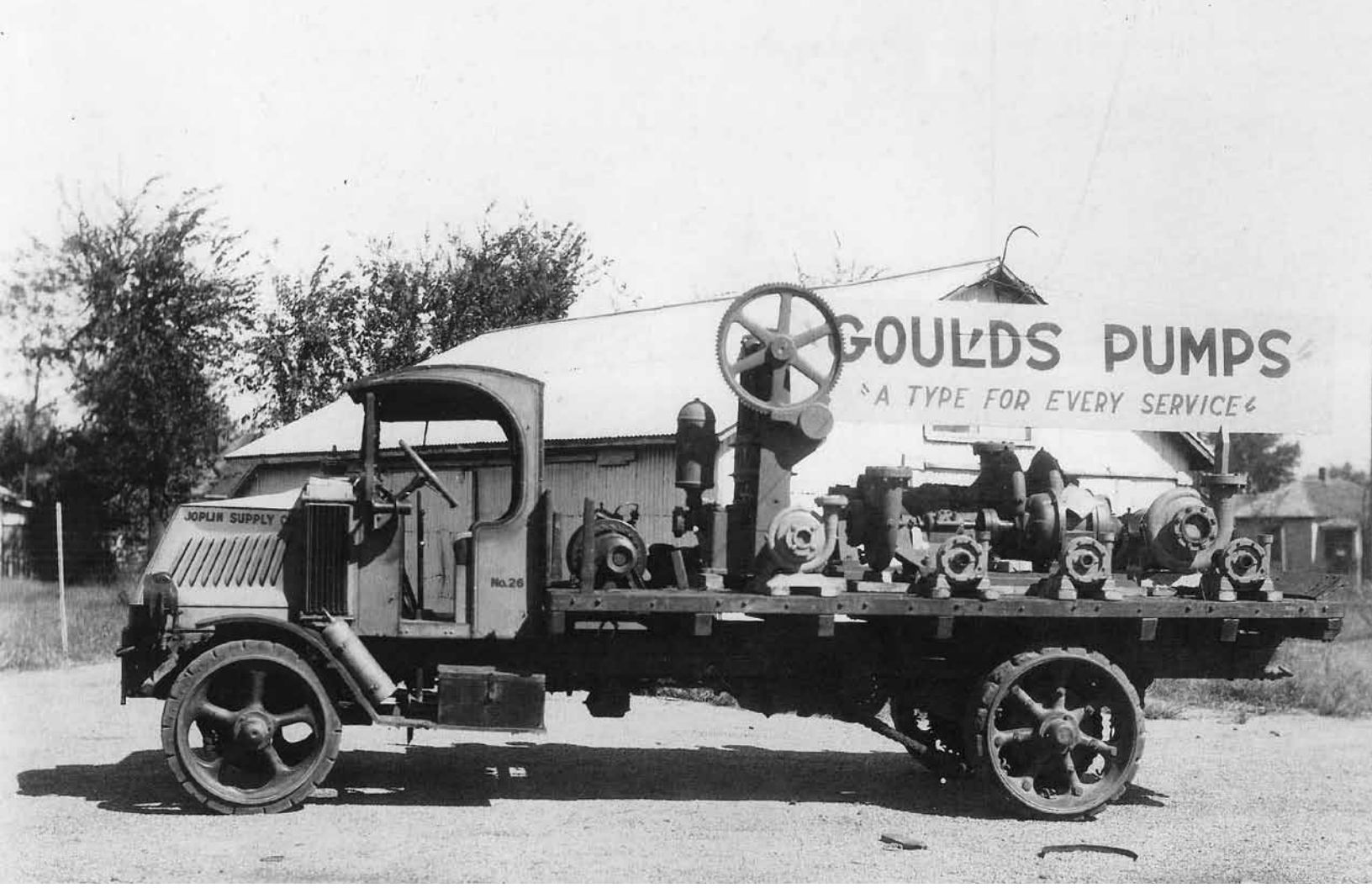
Empire Safety Program

In 1921, Empire District Electric Company patrolman Ed Thompson saved the life of fourteen- year-old Roy Blizzard by performing the Shafer Prone Pressure Resuscitation Method on him. Blizzard had received an electrical shock after coming in contact with a grounded forge. Discovering Blizzard in an unconscious state, Thompson revived him in less than three minutes. The Shafer Prone Pressure Resuscitation Method for electric shock had been adopted by the Royal Life Saving Society of the British Empire. Ironically, Roy Blizzard later worked for Empire in the communications department as a telephone operator.

Electricity in the Mines

The Eagle-Picher Lead Company at the Netta mine in Picher, Oklahoma, began operating an underground miniature electric railway ore-hauling system. The electrically powered system was a dramatic change in the production process. The implementation of the new transportation system reduced the cost of ore hauling because more cars of ore could be moved at one time.

The electric railway system consisted of three main lines of track leading to an underground hopper at the Netta mill shaft. The electric locomotive was a 15 Tom Jeffries equipped with two ten-horsepower direct current motors. It could push 30, one-ton steel cars at a time. Also during this period, the installation of a 20-passenger cage was installed to take the miners underground. The cage was enclosed in metal, allowing the miners to move safely up and down the shaft. Also the mine dirt from the underground hopper was brought to the surface by a 112 horsepower electric hoist.



ABOVE: Goulds water pumps on a Joplin Supply Company truck.

Water Pumps

One important use of electricity for municipalities was the practical application of pumping water using electrical pumps. Modern pumping equipment with an electric drive enabled area communities to solve their water supply problem without increasing their rates or resorting to a prohibitive outlay of costly equipment. The majority of the urban areas used a Pomona pump for the first lift, pumping into a reservoir, and then using centrifugal pumps for lifting the water into standpipes and mains.

Electric pumps were also used for extracting water from the underground mines. The spring rains were extremely troublesome for the local miners. By the 1920s, the electrical pump proved to be immensely helpful in removing the standing water.

Empire Territory in 1922

By 1922, Empire had installed nearly 700 miles of pole lines with 50 substations supplying electric service to 30 communities and 11,000 customers. The 60,000 kilowatts generated represented every conceivable use to which electricity could be sent. Every voltage from 110 to 66,000, 25 and 60 cycle, alternating current, direct current as well as series circuits were available.

FACT:

On Tuesday, January 10, 1922, the entire Empire system peaked at 27,600 kilowatts. The new high mark surpassed the previous peak period recorded in 1921.

Frank Frueauff Passes

Frank W. Frueauff, vice president of the Cities Service Company and first vice president of Empire, died suddenly at his home in New York City on July 31, 1922. He began his career as a meter reader.

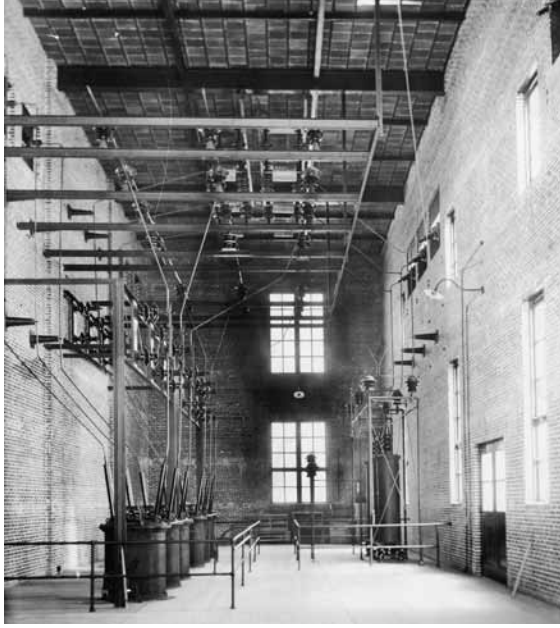
In 1905, Doherty and Frueauff formed the partnership known as Henry L. Doherty & Company. Doherty contributed to the mechanical and engineering side, while Frueauff excelled in public relations and promotions. They set up corporate headquarters in New York City. Prior to his death, Frueauff served on numerous corporate boards throughout the United States.

Selling Empire Stock

Empire employees were encouraged to purchase and sell Empire stock. A customer ownership campaign for selling Empire District Electric Company preferred stock was launched in October 1922. The New York City based Cities Service corporate management team wanted 100% employee participation as stockholders. Empire's service territory was divided into districts

BELOW: Empire baseball team at Miner's Park, 1923.

with quotas for each district based on the number of Empire customers served. Every employee was eligible for a place on the district team. Employee sales commissions were offered and 75 cents was earned with each new name, plus an additional 25 cents for each share sold from the winning district team. Gold watches were awarded to employees selling the most shares.



Generation Plants

In 1923, Empire operated six generating stations, two hydroelectric, one steam and three gas engine driven. The combined generating capacity of the six stations was more than 63,000 horsepower.

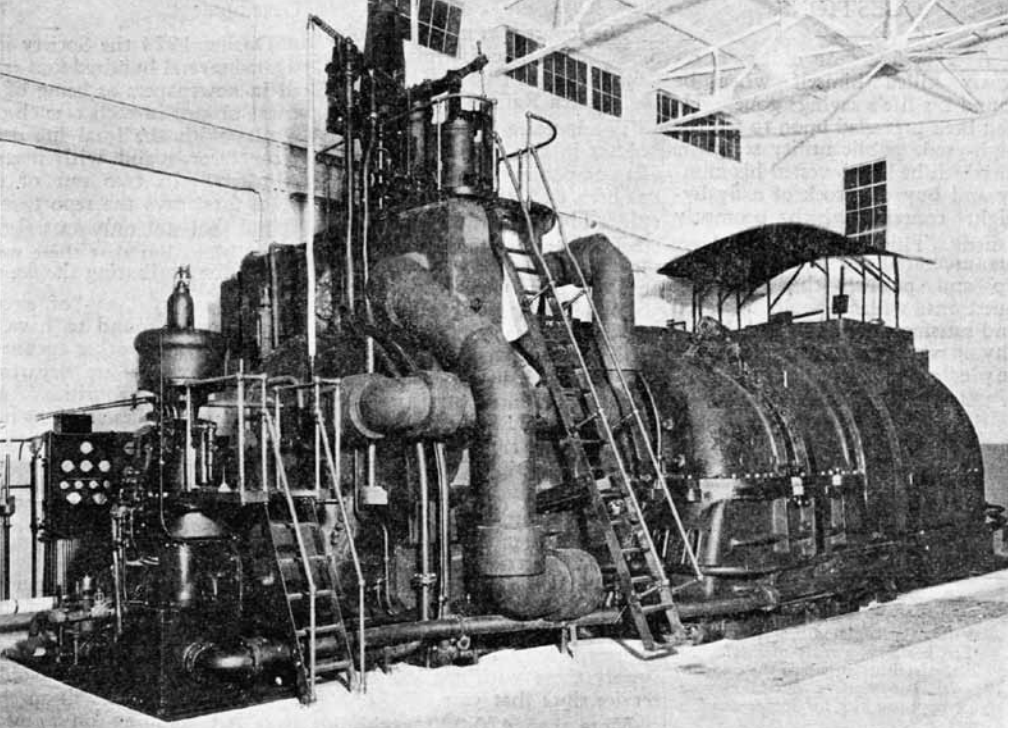
The main generating plants were situated near flowing water. Spring River supplied the Riverton plant with an abundant supply of water for boiler and condenser purposes. The Riverton power plant was the largest in the state of Kansas. The hydroelectric plants were located at Lowell, Kansas, and at Grand Falls, Missouri. The plant at Lowell was located at the junction of Spring River and Shoal Creek. The generating equipment consisted of two 1,500 kilowatt generators. The station at Grand Falls was situated on Shoal Creek with a capacity of 800 kilowatts.

TOP: Interior of West Seventh Street Substation, Joplin, 1920s

ABOVE: 7th Street Substation, Joplin.

The gas engine plants were located at Columbus, Kansas; Neosho and Webb City, Missouri. The Columbus and Neosho plants generated 100 kilowatts. The Webb City station had two 500 kilowatt units.

Empire also sold and purchased power. Even as early as the 1920s, Empire sold and purchased electric power from The Ozark Power and Water Company.



Weather Bureau Station Established

During the spring of 1923, the United States Department of Agriculture Weather Bureau established Empire District Electric Company as the region's official Weather Bureau station. The station was fully equipped with a recording thermometer, barometer, rain gauge and humidity hygrometer. Having the knowledge of the weather was valuable information for operating the hydroelectric plants. Paul J. Sergeant was in charge of Empire's Weather Bureau.

ABOVE: Largest turbine in Kansas at Riverton Plant.

BELOW: Empire's first auto.

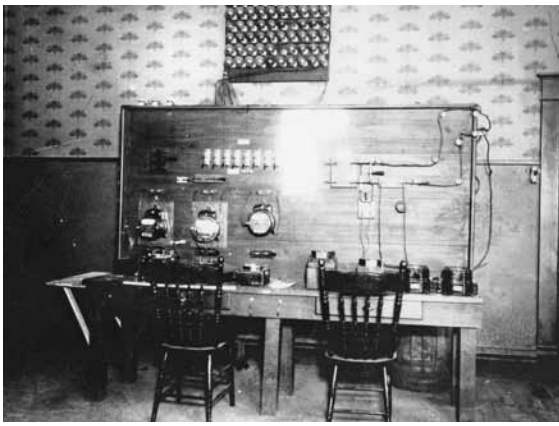
Largest Turbine in Kansas

A major investment for the company occurred in 1925 when the largest turbine in Kansas was installed at the Riverton Plant. A new 27,000 horsepower Westinghouse steam driven turbo-generator was purchased. The enhancement project took 18 months to install. An 80 foot addition was added to the main building to accommodate the new equipment. The turbine weighed nearly one million pounds, was 52 feet long, 21 feet wide and 11 feet high. It operated at 190 pounds of steam pressure, 6,900 volts, 25 cycle, 3 phase and was rated at 25,000 kilowatts. A Wheeler double-suction centrifugal pump was designed to deliver 40,000 gallons of water per minute. The condenser was equipped with 5,760 tubes which placed end to end would cover a distance of almost 22 miles. The total equipment cost was over $800,000.

1925 Review

The year of 1925 proved to be one of the company's most successful years. The New Business Department, under the supervision of George Barnett, closed with a record of $300,240 in new appliance sales. This amount was 37% over the previous year. Empire gained 1,957 new customers and employee payroll amounted to $644,540. In addition, a total of $612,736 was reinvested in new equipment, line and pole extensions.

According to a news report from the *Columbus Advocate* newspaper, public utilities were the largest tax contributors to the county treasurer's office. During the last six months of 1925, total tax payments by public utilities amounted to $131,875.36. Empire led the way by paying the largest single amount with $41,928.21.



ABOVE: Early Meter Shop, 1920s.

BELOW: Ozark Playgrounds Association headquarters at Sixth Street and Joplin Avenue.

New Traffic Signals in Joplin

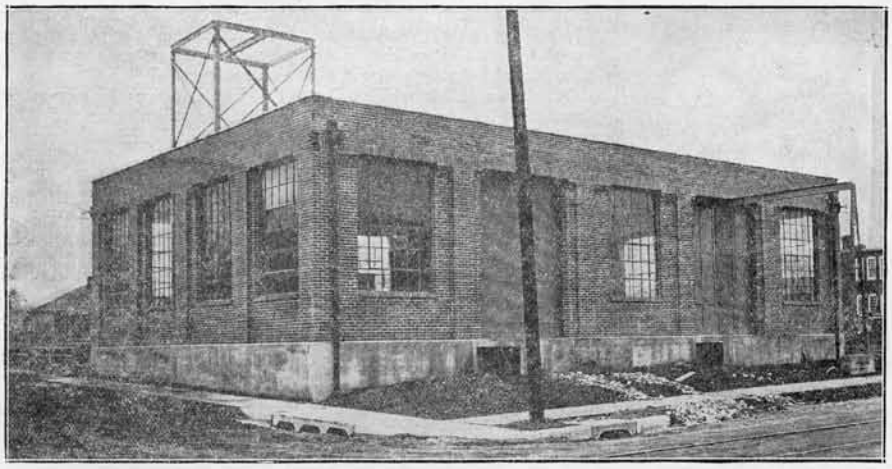
The City of Joplin paid Empire $7,000 to install new traffic signals on Main Street at the intersections from Third Street to Seventh Street. They were the first blinking red, yellow and green lights installed in the city.

Corporate Building Site Selected

General manager James Harsh announced that an architect had been commissioned to design a four-story new corporate building at the corner of Sixth and Joplin Streets. The site had been previously occupied by the Ozark Playgrounds Association. The Ozark Playgrounds Association promoted

The Empire Builder
THE EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC COMPANY
VOL. 3 MARCH, 1927 NO. 8

Sturdy Brick Building Will House Transformers; Is Second Unit in Proposed Warehouse Group



New warehouse recently completed at the northeast corner of Fourth and Division Streets is the second unit of what eventually will be a central warehouse group. The building is a one-story brick structure of unusually substantial design. The floor is of reinforced concrete, eight inches thick and capable of withstanding a load of 800 pounds per square foot. Sashes are of steel and doors are of the steel curtain design. The dimensions are 50 by 70 feet. The exterior of the building is lighted at the four corners. The roof is flat, of a tar and gravel composition, and is supported by steel beams. A dock for unloading from a railroad spur is on the north or rear side Two unloading docks for trucks are on the front side. The new unit, built at a cost of approximately $20,000, will be used largely for the storage of transformers. Carload shipments will be accommodated. The stock now in the warehouse at Fourth and Railroad streets and part of the stock in the East Fifteenth street storeroom, will be transferred to the new building. A monorail crane will provide for handling the transformers and a steel tower will provide for removing the heavy transformer core out of the shell for repairs. The Company owns the entire square block on which the building stands. Ground nearby is utilized for pole storage. Plans were drawn by P. J. Sergeant and the W. R. McCormick Construction Company had the contract.

tourism for southwestern Missouri and northwestern Arkansas. Founded in 1919, the association began when 60 area towns, representing seven Missouri counties and six Arkansas counties, were formed into an association. The Ozark Playgrounds tourist center resembled a log cabin structure.

New Storehouse Constructed

A new $25,000 storehouse was built in 1926. Located at Fourth Street and Division Avenue, the two-story, concrete and brick structure doubled the storage capacity. In addition, a Frisco line switch track was brought into the storage yard for easy unloading and loading of electrical supplies. This site would continue to play an important role as a central warehouse for the company.

1927 Territory

By 1927, the Empire customer territory consisted of the communities of Joplin, Webb City, Carterville, Carthage, Neosho, Seneca, Carl Junction, Asbury, Waco, Duenweg, and Oronogo in Missouri; Galena, Riverton, Baxter Springs, Treece, Columbus, Crestline, Weir City, Scammon, Mineral, and Corona in Kansas; and Picher, Commerce, Cardin, Hockerville, North Miami and Quapaw in Oklahoma. Furthermore, Empire sold electrical current wholesale to Kansas Gas & Electric Company, Ozark Power & Water Company, Electric Utilities Company, Northeastern Oklahoma Railroad, Southwest Missouri Railroad and Joplin & Pittsburg Railway.

Electric Trolleys

Empire played an important role in the local interurban railway systems. Prior to the trolley system, three railroad lines that included the Missouri Pacific and Santa Fe, Frisco and Kansas City Southern, connected the cities and major towns of the area with passenger service several times a day. However, the daily price of fares was mostly prohibitive for the working class miners of

the Tri-State District, and yet there was a tremendous need to link these mining communities together with a public transportation network. By 1920 the three trolley lines of the Southwest Missouri Railroad, Northeast Oklahoma Railroad and the Joplin & Pittsburg Railway were well established providing affordable, reliable transportation between the three states of Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

The Southwest Missouri line was one of the busiest electric interurban systems around. Alfred H. Rogers established the line in 1893. It survived more than four and one-half decades of changing transportation trends. During the early twenties, the Southwest Missouri Railroad maintained half-hour stops on all its interurban and suburban routes. More frequent service was offered on inner-city lines.

The interurbans brought the district's mining communities closer together. Joplin prospered most as all the rail lines led to Joplin, and it became the commercial center of the district. During the early years, the mining industry and the electric trolley companies were Empire's two largest clients.

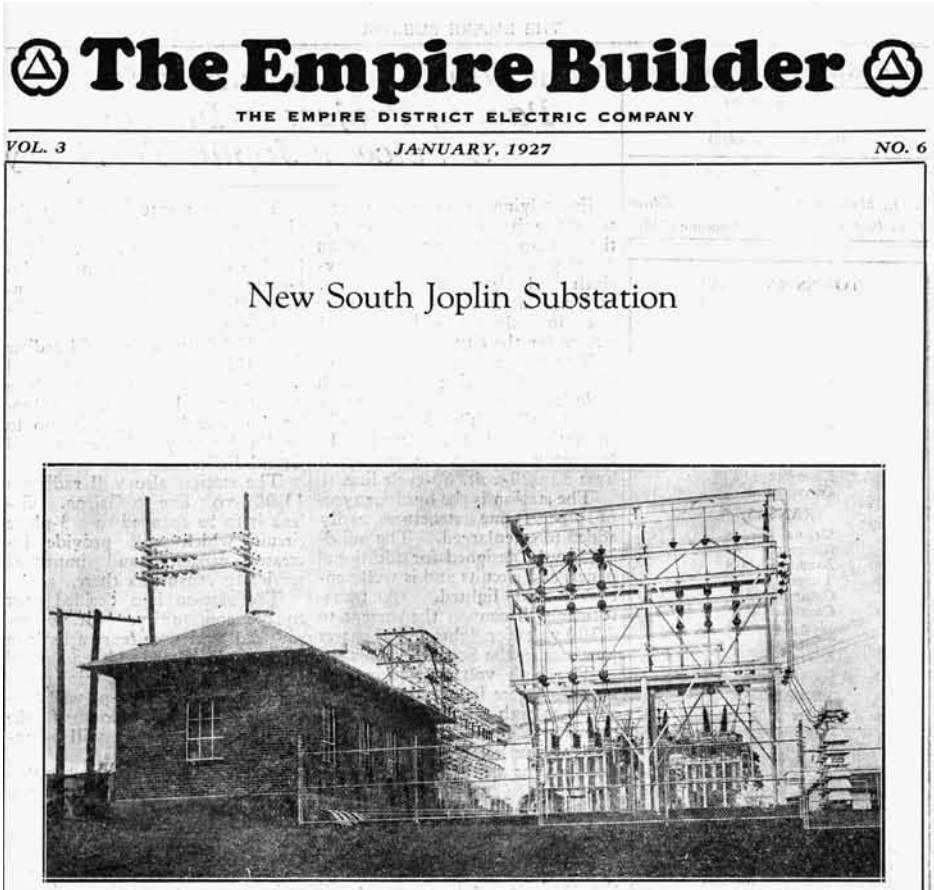
New Substation in Operation

OPPOSITE: District office, late 1920s.

By 1927, Empire's new substation was completed in Joplin at 26th Street and Pearl Avenue. The new substation was part of a $250,000 building expansion project which also included a new frequency changer at Grand Falls.

The new substation transformer converted the electrical current to 2,300 volts for lighting and power. Construction on the substation began in the fall. The high-voltage station was a new departure in outdoor stations by offering disconnecting switches on all entries and by-pass switches for all line-breakers. The by-pass switches made it possible to cut out all oil circuit breakers, allowing inspections and repairs to occur without interrupting customer service.

Another new feature was in the construction of the conduit for low-voltage circuits. The circuits were laid inside the conduit trench and supported outside by a steel structure, thus making them easily accessible for changes, repairs or additional conduits.



The Empire Builder

THE EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC COMPANY

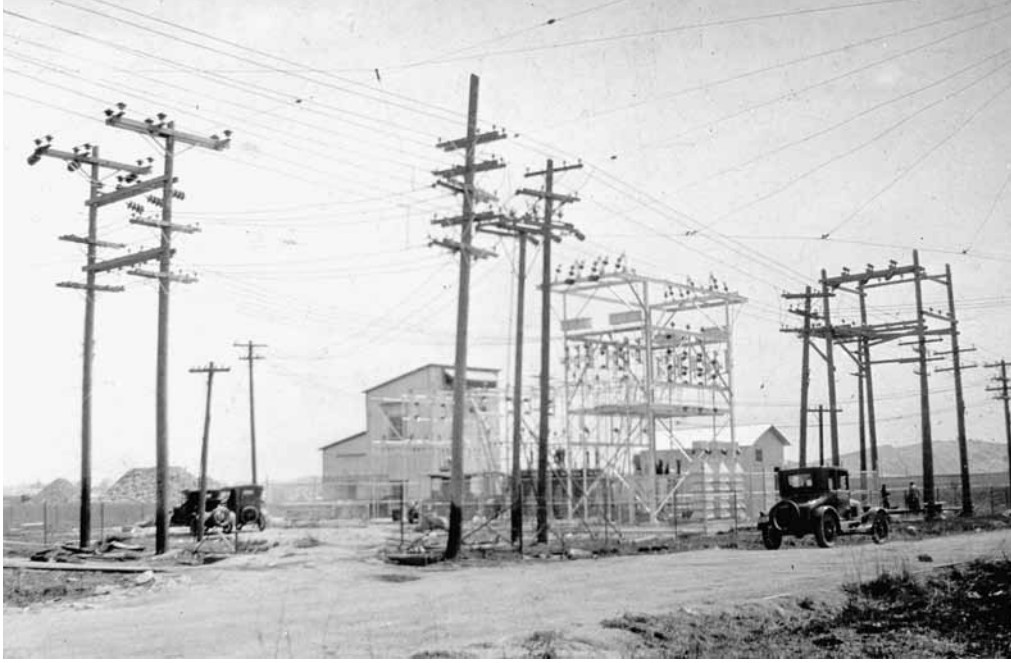
VOL. 3 JANUARY, 1927 NO. 6

New South Joplin Substation

New outdoor substation of modern design recently completed by Empire District crews at Twenty-sixth and Pearl Streets, Joplin. Work was begun on the structure the latter part of September and rushed to completion in record time despite weather handicaps. Twelve large substation of the above type and designed by company engineers, were built by Company crews during 1926. This unit is a part of the $250,000 building project which includes also a frequency changer at Grand Falls. The two units are connected by a 33,000 volt, 60-cycle high tension line. Completion of the projects will further improve service in Joplin and immediate territory and also in Galena. The station site offers excellent opportunity for beautification and work along this line will be undertaken at an early date.

Cost of Electricity

The *Empire Builder* published some national figures on the cost of electricity in the July 1926 issue. Statistics stated that the average consumption for electric homes in the United States was 365 kilowatt hours. The average cost was $27.89 per year, which broke down to around $2.32 per month.

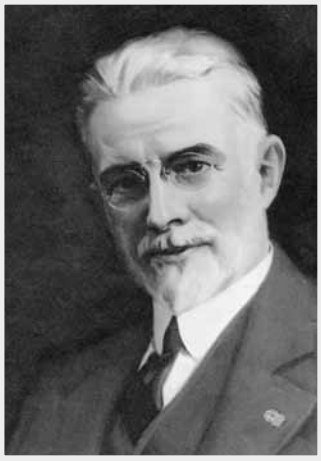


ABOVE: Substation in 1926

Employee Payroll Reaches $750,000

By 1926, employee payroll had reached $750,000. During the year, Empire added 2,182 new customers which brought the total to 19,858. In order to run the generating plants, 120,000 tons of coal was needed. Empire sold more than 177,000,000 kilowatt hours of electricity, which was an increase of 21% over 1925, and the company paid more than $190,000 in dividends to customer shareholders of the district.

Profile of Henry L. Doherty, President of Cities Service Company



Henry Latham Doherty was born on May 15, 1870, in Columbus, Ohio. At the age of twelve he began his career in the utility business as an office boy for the Columbus Gas Company. By the age of twenty, he had worked his way up the ladder to become manager of the Columbus Gas Company.

At the age of 35, he created his own company – Henry L. Doherty & Company. The year was 1905 and his company was engaged in the reorganization, management and financing of public utility concerns. Doherty's interests became so great that he created a separate holding company to handle its interests - the Cities Service Company.

Judge David Hoag described Doherty as a supreme negotiator, "The negotiations leading up to and the final consummation of the sale (of Empire) were characteristic of the man. He made an exhaustive study of the conditions of the district from an engineering, geological and business standpoint and reached his conclusions as to its possibilities for future growth and development."

Electric Signs

Exterior electrical signs were coming of age by the late 1920s. Charley Wells, the Commercial Lighting Engineer for Empire, helped spread the message. Wells was a graduate of the General Electric Company's nationally known lighting school at Nela Park in Cleveland, Ohio. During his tenure, Wells was responsible for placing new electrically lit signs in Joplin for the Hippodrome, Electric and Orpheum theaters, the Joplin Globe, R&S Chevrolet, Bradley's Department Store, Joplin Furniture Company, Rex Billiard Parlor, and the First Presbyterian Church. Wells also planned the illumination system for both the interior and exterior of Empire's new corporate office building at 6th Street and Joplin Avenue.

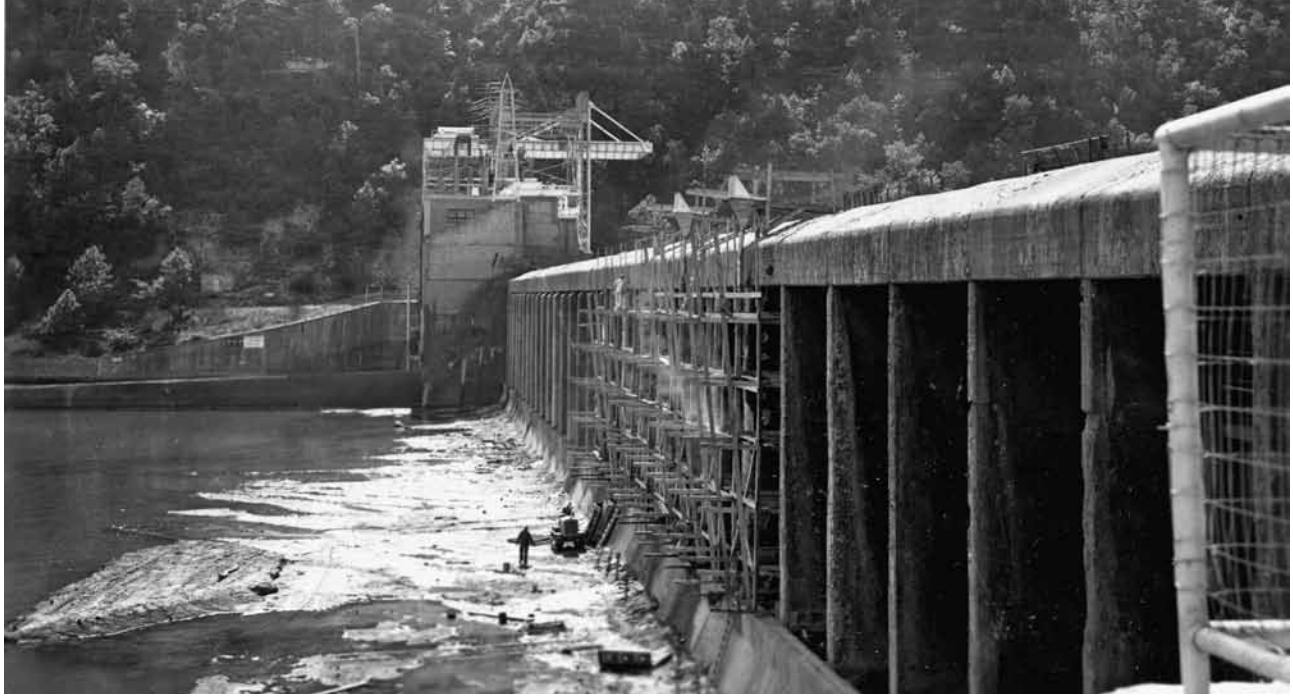
Empire Buys Ozark Power and Water Company

Empire purchased Ozark Power and Water Company in 1927. According to the terms of the sale, Empire purchased Ozark Power and Water Company for $1,129,568 in cash, while assuming all unsecured indebtedness amounting to $2,670,000 in bonds and an exchange at par value of $500,000 in preferred stock. The entire package totaled $4,836,146.08.

The Ozark Power and Water Company territory encompassed six counties (Greene, Lawrence, Newton, Taney, Christian and Stone) and included the hydroelectric plant at Ozark Beach on White River. The hydroelectric plant, with a generating capacity of 18,500 horsepower, increased the total Empire generating capacity to 125,000 horsepower From the acquisition, Empire's territory expanded and the company added the Ozark Beach dam and the Powersite generating plant to the system.

TOP: Electric sign in the 1920s

ABOVE: Charley Wells, 1929.



ABOVE: Ozark Beach Dam.

BELOW: Cities Service emblem.

Empire and KG&E Interconnect

The Empire District Electric Company and the Kansas Gas & Electric Company (KG & E) followed the national trends when plans were made to interconnect the two companies' transmission lines. The desired result of linking the two systems would be that Empire would receive temporarily increased capacity needed for its plant at Riverton, and that both companies could provide assistance in case of a severe emergency. Upon completion of this project, a chain of interconnected electric transmission lines extending from a point north of Wichita, Kansas to south of Springfield, Missouri would be linked. A new frequency changer and turbine room would be added to the Riverton plant to convert the KG & E 60-cycle and Empire 25-cycle systems.

ABOVE: Corporate office, 1929.

New Corporate Headquarters Opens

The finishing touches were made at the new Joplin corporate home in August 1927. During the tremendous growth period of the early 1920s, it became evident that a new corporate office building was needed. Empire officials selected the Joplin architectural firm of Smith & VanPelt. They were a successful firm which had previously designed two notable structures in Joplin the Y. M. C. A. facility and Joplin Supply building. The Blazer-Vollmer Construction Company of Wichita, Kansas became the general contractor for the construction project.

The new four-story building sat prominently on the southwest corner of Sixth Street and Joplin Avenue. The dimensions of the reinforced concrete building were 50 feet by 115 feet. The cost of the building was $200,000. Ironically, that was the same amount of gross sales in 1909 when Henry L. Doherty purchased and created The Empire District Electric Company.

Architect Burrill VanPelt chose to adopt a Byzantine-Romanesque architectural style characterized by a theme of incorporating interlaced relief arches. The exterior walls were made of a light buff-colored, matte-faced brick manufactured in Oskaloosa, Missouri. Locally quarried Carthage white limestone trimmed the facade and was bedded in stainless Portland cement mortar.

The cut stone entablature over the main entrance was embellished with characteristic corbelled Byzantine arches. An ornamental keystone, dis-