

THE HISTORY
OF
THE ST. JOHN POWER PLANT

by
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Many of us flip a switch turning darkness into light and never even think about the source of that light. Here are a few facts from the records of St. John.

- April 21, 1909 The st. John City Council voted to accept the proposal of Burns & McDonnell to make preliminary plans, survey, and estimates for waterworks, electric light and sewerage system.
- May 27, 1909 Ordinance was passed to call election to issue \$37,500 in bonds for waterworks, and electric light plant.
- June 18, 1909 Election held. 282 votes cast. 263 for
17 against
2 blank
- Sept. 6, 1909 First National Bank of St. John bought the bonds at par. (\$37,500)
- Sept. 15, 1909 Council accepted bid of Skinner & Co., Erie, Pa., for high speed engine- \$1150 & B.R. Electric Co., Ft. Wayne, Ind., for electrical equipment- \$3200. Burns & McDonnell were paid 2% of \$4350.
- Sept. 16, 1909 Ordinance 233. City contracted with St. John Mill & Power Co. for five years to furnish and install necessary machinery, except boilers, for manufacture of electric current. St. John Mill to provide adequate room for location of the motor, generator, switchboard and other necessary machinery that may be purchased by the City of St. John, in their power plant, all to be connected up with the boilers of the St. John Mill. The St. John Mill was to keep machinery in good condition and at end of contract to turn back to City in good condition. St. John Mill to be paid 5¢ per KW for current measured at switchboard.
- April 9, 1910 First electricity was turned on in City.
- April 30, 1910 Electric and waterworks were completed and final report from engineers accepted.
- Aug. 1, 1911 City paid St. John Mill \$362.50 for electric current. and \$35.80 for street lighting. This is first time street lights were mentioned in the Council proceedings.
- Aug. : 5, 1913 R. C. Havenhill was employed as Supt. of Water & Electric.
- Jan. 21, 1914 Resolution was approved that waterworks and electric light plant be enlarged, repaired, extended and improved and Havenhill to draw specifications and estimate of cost.
- Feb. 21, 1914 Council passed motion to adopt steam system of power for waterworks and electric light plant.

- Apr. 16, 1914 Council passed Ordinance 283 to renew contract with St. John Mill & Power Co. from May 1, 1915 to May 1, 1920. Contract was the same as that of 1910 with a new section added.
"That St. John Mill agrees to turn on street lights every night at such time after sun down as is required and to turn off at midnight unless otherwise instructed by the City of St. John."
- Apr. 25, 1914 Motion passed that St. John Mill Co. be authorized to purchase and install a 11.5 hp Allis Chalmers generator at electric light plant together with friction clutch-pulley.
- Feb. 5, 1918 Council passed motion for moonlight schedule for street lights and that they be turned off at 10 o'clock every night.
- June 11, 1918 Council met with Burns & McDonnell and accepted estimates for extension and installation of a power plant for city waterworks and electric light plant.
- Mar. 18, 1919 Ballot was to be prepared to submit to voters at the city election as to whether to build a power plant or renew contract with the St. John Mill Co.
- Apr. 10, 1919 Question submitted: "Do you think advisable to issue bonds of the City in the sum of \$45,000 to improve the water and electric system by building and equipping a power plant.
Results: Yes 161 No 11
- May 16, 1919 Resolution on books that efforts to renew contract with St. John Mill had failed and contract to expire May 1, 1920.
- June 10, 1919 Special election was held to issue \$50,000 in bonds for power plant. Results: 245 votes cast. 232 for, 13 against.
- Aug. 6 1919 Bids received on building and equipment of power plant. Accepted bid of Merkle Machinery Co., \$47,800; building \$9990; equipment \$38,100; stock \$2000. (?)
- Sept. 21, 1920 City Clerk instructed to write coal company to see if 4 or 5 cars of coal could be furnished for immediate delivery.
- May 17, 1921 Milt Miller contracted to unload coal for 39¢ per ton.
- Jan. 1, 1924 Postoffice requested street lights be turned on from 6 AM to 7 AM for benefit of postal workers. Request denied.
- Jan. 20, 1925 Contract and lease with Fairbanks Morse Co. for engine and equipment for power plant. Ord. 3.56

- May 19, 1925 New Fairbanks Morse engine on line. Payments \$550.00- --- --- per-month.

- Sept. 7, 1926 City Co cil considering another oil engine.

- Sept. 21, 1926 Contract made for 120 HP engine, generator and --- --- --- other equipment and one centrifugal circulating pump to be installed at power plant; \$2000 to be paid and remainder in monthly installments.

- Feb. 2, 1927 2nd Fairbanks Morse engine installed and accepted. --- --- --- \$200.00 per month payments.

- Feb. 4, 1930 Last payment of \$3106.00 paid to Fairbanks Morse on contract for 120 HP engine.

- J e 22, 1934 Purchase of 420 HP Fairbanks Morse engine. --- --- ---

- Dec. 11, 1945 Contract for 690 HP engine -\$52,000.

- 1947 Contract with Wayne Sidman to rfo dation for 690 engine. --- --- ---

- Dec. 6, 1948 Power plant chimney (85 ft. stack) to be removed. Buried by Jim Tillery for \$100.00 or less.

- Je 20, 1951 1400 H.P. dual fuel engine, Fairbanks Morse, and change over to dual fuel on 600 HP, turn-key job; \$169,685.00 revenue bonds. --- --- ---

- May 20, 1952 1400 HP engine and change over to dual fuel on 600 HP engine accepted and final payment authorized. --- --- ---

- Nov. 18, 1952 200 HP engine sold, and to be removed by Je 1, 1953. --- --- ---

- Dec. 15, 1959 Interconnection contract with Kansas Power & Light was signed to purchase electric current from them.

- May 2, 1964 Bid was accepted for Cooper-Bessemer 1750 KW engine. --- --- ---

- Sept. 21, 1965 Cooper-Bessemer engine accepted.

- Feb. 25, 1964 Building addition - \$48,222.00. --- --- ---

- July 29, 1981 2412 KW, Fairbanks Morse engine purchased. --- --- ---

M. B. (Cotton) Vincent kept a couple of monkeys at the power plant for several years. The power plant, being the only place open at night, was the place for many towns people to stop by to visit. Even during the day time people took their children to see the monkeys.

St. John residents should thank the men and women who have served as mayor or council members since 1885 and their desire to make St. John a better place to live.

February 23, 1915 the Council unanimously signed and sent a Resolution to members of the Kansas Legislature and to Gov. Arthur Capper that they were opposed to Senate and House bills which would affect municipal ownership of electric utilities.

Municipal power plants are not under the jurisdiction of the Kansas Corporation Commission and the rates for sale of electric current are set by the local Governing Body.

In 1923 Pawnee Power & Light Co. proposed selling electricity to St. John but was rejected by the city. Again in 1929 the Council refused to let United Power Company to make a survey with the intent to offer to buy the St. John electric power system.

Bonds for electric improvements are issued and paid with the revenue received from the sale of electricity - NOT TAX MONEY. Transfers from the electric revenue are made each year to the General Fund of the City to help pay for street maintenance, parks, and law enforcement.

Visit the power plant anytime. The men would be glad to show you around. If you pay an electric bill you really are a part owner of that plant.

The research and information for this report has been done by Goldie Gteen, former city clerk, and if there are errors or omissions, please forgive.

Men who worked at the St. *John* Power Plant.

Apr. 6, 1920	B. W. Snyder
Aug. 4, 1920	W. S. Crissman
Oct. 5, 1920	J. D. Smith
Oct. 5, 1920	J. W. Clowers
Nov. 3, 1920	M. B. Vincent
Nov. 3, 1920	John Beitler
June 7, 1921	Joe Downey
Sept. 6, 1921	Jess Sherwood (fireman-plant)
June 5, 1923	Mitchell Carter
Aug. 7, 1923	Ralph Hall
Aug. 7, 1923	Lester Clinkenbeard
May 6, 1924	M. Peace
Feb. 7, 1928	A. M. Culbreath
Dec. 4, 1928	Geo. Fletcher
	1941
July 20, 1943	Albert Rice -until 1959
Jan. 18, 1944	J. W. Clowers to work one day a week for each of three men at power plant.
Feb. 8, 1944	Ray A. Shilt
Apr. 3, 1944	Inah B. Welch until 10-16-51
Nov. 5, 1951	Marvin Kastning
July 1, 1955	Ervin Schroder
June 1, 1956	John Cadman- until 1963
June 1, 1960	Wayne B. Fehrenbacher- until 5-9-68
Feb. 1, 1961	Samuel T. Culbreath - until 7-1-72
May 16, 1962	Earl L. Truman - until 4-5-69
Oct. 1, 1963	James Hathaway - until 8-31-66
Jan. 1, 1964	Leon Shelton - until 11 30-67
Aug. 2, 1966	Ralph fl. Jordan - until 6-15-73
Dec. 22, 1967	Arthur Schulz, Jr.- 10-2-83
July 1, 1968	Lowell Selfridge - 5-4-79
July 16, 1969	Thelbert Beitler - 5-27-75
Mar. 8, 1973	Conrad L. Waddle - 1-25-75
Dec. 1, 1973	James M. Tucker 4-15-75
May 1, 1975	Berton J. Green- 6-30-87
Oct. 8, 1975	Ivan J. Book -9-4-84 transferred to street dept. April 1983
Oct. 8, 1975	Robert D. Toot -until 9-7-77
Dec. 9, 1977	R. Dale Harter -until 11-15-81
Aug. 6, 1979	Roy Kent Blake - until 10-14-84

Mar. 1, 1983	Curtis Odle
May 12, 1983	Jeff Williamson
Dec 16, 1985	'Ken'ne'th"Thornas
Feb. 10, 1986	Mark Tompkins
Sept. 8, 1987	Dennis Gunter

M. B. (Cotton) Vincent started in 1920 at \$100.00 per month working seven days a week until 19 4 when six day week was started. He received his 40 year pin (service award) from the City on Sept. 19, 1961 and retired on June 30, 1962 at a salary of \$1920.00 per month.

Ralph Hall began work in 1923 and received a 25 year service award in 1923 and retired in May 1960.

Nov. 1, 1969 power plant employees on 40 hour week.