THE CLAYTON/DEER PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mortarboard

All Rights To This Material Reserved By C/DPHS

ELECTRIC POWER IN DEER PARK

PETER COFFIN

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Electric power in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century was expanded away from big cities such as New York City to smaller towns. Precisely when the first electric power came to Deer Park is uncertain but by 1911 the Little Spokane Power Company was delivering electricity on a “day service” basis. In the early development of electricity two kinds of power were in competition, the direct current electricity developed by Thomas Edison, and the alternating current electricity invented by Tesla. I have been unable to determine which type of electricity was being generated by the Little Spokane Power Company and its successors but from the distances that the power lines covered I suspect that it was the alternating current electricity being generated and transmitted.

The Little Spokane Power Company had been organized and the plant built by George Nixon prior to 1911. The power plant was a water driven dynamo on the Little Spokane River about a mile south of the town of Milan. In 1911 a “new” plant was being built on the Little Spokane River by Nixon and A. F. Winkleman and when operational in the fall of that year tripled the capacity of the earlier plant. In addition to the generating plant, a power distribution line was being built to a packing house in Deer Park.

Many other Deer Park buildings were being outfitted with electrical wiring in anticipation of more electric power being available in 1911. Little Spokane Power Company advertisements for electrical supplies and installation services indicated that Olson’s new building (SW corner Main Avenue and First Street) had $15,000 worth of electrical installation and electric fixtures. The new High School (present day Deer Park City Hall) was listed as having $12,000 worth electrical work installed in it. Dr. Slater’s new building (Masonic Temple building at the NW corner of Main Avenue and First Street, now site of the present automobile lubrication center) contained over a mile of wire and $15,000 worth of electrical work.

Exposed electrical transmission wires brought with them the possibility of accidents. In one instance Deer Park phone lines being installed were drawn across electric lines and becoming charged. The charge was so strong that several horse teams that came in contact with the phone line were badly shocked.
At this time community business men saw the potential in electricity and in 1912 a group of them drew up a plan to organize a franchise to operate a new “light, power, gas and transportation company”. The plan included a gas plant, a street railway and interurban system. They decided to con-

(Continued on page 763)
centrate on first furnishing electric light and power. F. E. Parks, the Arcadia Orchards Company star salesman, was chosen to apply for the franchise in behalf of a Deer Park Light and Power Company that was to be organized. The newspaper article indicated that Mr. Parks had "considerable" experience in organizing electric light, power interurban and railroad companies in the east. With the lack of later newspaper coverage it would seem that little became of the Deer Park Light and Power Company.

THE LITTLE SPOKANE POWER COMPANY BECOMES THE LITTLE SPOKANE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY
In 1912 George Nixon sold the Little Spokane Power Company to W. H. Zinter and the name was changed to the Little Spokane Power and Light Company. Mr. Zinter began a program of improvement and expansion of the company. In 1915 he contemplated extending power lines to areas of the Arcadia Orchard east of Deer Park along the transmission line from the Milan generating plant when enough residents would sign up to justify the investment. The company was actively engaged in installing new service poles in Deer Park along with re-wiring their system.

The company had built the building at 10 East Crawford as their office prior to 1914 as it is mapped on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of that year. The building was built of Deer Park Cast Stone concrete blocks. Apparently they did not need all the space in it and rented out the east half of the building to T. A. Baughn and the space was outfitted as a model candy kitchen and store.

By late 1915 power lines had been extended into the Bear Creek area south of the Milan power plant where A. B. Owen, Bruno and Otto Kuester, Professor Gray and others had received power for their farms. Mr. Zinter said that power would be extended into Denison in early 1916. Power lines radiated away from the Milan generating plant in all directions including the Chattaroy area along with Deer Park and Denison. At this time the company owned three power sites, two were developed sites on the Little Spokane River with a third undeveloped site on Otter Creek north and east of Milan.

THE LITTLE SPOKANE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY IS SOLD
(Continued on page 764)
In the spring of 1920 Walla Walla businessman and lawyer Mark F. Mendenhall purchased the Little Spokane Power and Light Company for a consideration near $100,000 and renamed it the Mount Spokane Power Company. It was becoming increasingly apparent that demand for electricity was outpacing the generating capacity.

The power capacity of the Deer Park electric lines was not adequate to run electric pumps that supplied city water. As evidence of this the Deer Park Lumber company had billed the city $1196 for work connecting mill electric power to these pumps. The power capacity problem caused a review visit by Washington Public Service Commissioner engineer Moore. He expressed doubt that winter power supply levels could be maintained during the summer of 1921 without considerable investment in the Milan power plant.

In response to the increasing demand dam building on the Little Spokane River south of Milan began in early 1922. The new dam was to be built about a quarter mile south of the upper generating site. The dam was designed to be constructed of concrete ten to twelve feet high and several hundred feet wide with a rock foundation. The dam would supply water to the new power plant through seven hundred feet of six-foot diameter pipe line replacing an older wooden flume that had supplied the generating turbines. The dam would impound enough water to supply the power needed by the surrounding communities. Demand for power continued to escalate. A review of Inland Empire power supply indicated that 125 farms were buying light and power from Mount Spokane Power in the Deer Park area with Washington Water Power serving another 125 in the same area. This review listed Mount Spokane Power supplying power to 30 water pumps, 14 of which were being used for irrigation along with 30 smaller motors used for various power purposes.

Plans were being drawn up to increase the plant capacity in a semi-annual statement. This addi-
(Continued from page 764)

ational hydroelectric plant was estimated to cost $44,000 when completed.\(^{16}\)

**OPERATION OF THE LITTLE SPOKANE RIVER POWER PLANT**

A spring 2013 visit to the Little Spokane River power plant site was very revealing as to how the physical plant was set up to generate hydroelectric power. Only a few concrete remnants of a diversion weir and one power plant remain. None of the dams described in the previous paragraphs remain.

From a careful exploration of the site water was apparently diverted from the main river channel about a quarter mile north of the remaining generating complex into a ditch/canal from what today is a low dam constructed of boulders. Today water flows through this canal through the remains of a concrete weir/dam that has two large circular holes cast in it to hold large pipes.

Cast concrete supports spaced 10 to 15 feet apart that held the two large pipes built to carry water are located just north of the generator structure.

The “generator house” may or may not have housed a generator. Just inside the two large holes on the north face of the structure are the rusting remains of what could have been a turbine base. However, there are two smaller holes eastward from this chamber into what contemporary pictures (Figure 8) show as a brick building. There are more foundation blocks south of the “generator house” that may have also supported another generator building.

Without knowing the precise location of the fifteen foot high dam described in the newspaper articles the actual operation of the generating facility can only be estimated. Interpreting the facility as it stands today it would appear that there was minimal water volume impounded by a dam.

![Figure 4: Downstream view of the weir/dam with the large cast holes for the pipes to carry water to the generators. The weir has been broken and water is flowing through both the holes and the eastern side of the retaining walls.](image)

It would seem that the power plant ran on day-to-day river flow and that little head was available from a large reservoir. Dry summer and fall seasons would have severely restricted the ability of the plant to generate much electricity.

**MOUNT SPOKANE POWER COMPANY SOLD**

In early 1928 complaints about the operation of Mount Spokane Power Company were voiced and a Washington Public Service Commission hearing of Deer Park citizens’ complaints was held.\(^{17}\) Newspaper articles published at this time do not list the specific complaints but the problems must have extended beyond the Mount Spokane Power (Continued on page 766)
Company as similar hearings were held in five other locations. Interestingly, no Deer Park Union newspaper article reported what the Public Service Commission conclusions or recommendations were.

By August of 1928 the Mount Spokane Power Company was sold to W. B. Foshay Company of Minneapolis. It was reported that Foshay and his company paid $125,000 and stock for the Mount Spokane Power Company. The purchase included three Mount Spokane Power Company generating sites including the Little Spokane River generating site. Part of Mr. Foshay’s empire was the Public Utilities Corporation Consolidated Company of Minneapolis and New York. This company opened offices in Spokane and began operating a number of power generating facilities in the Coeur d’Alene area including Wallace, Burke, and Mullan as well as the Mount Spokane Power plant.

The Public Utilities Corporation Consolidated had been in the process of acquiring and operating small utility plants in the Pacific states in the late 1920s. The

**Figure 5:** Holes in the north side of the “generator house” to receive the water from the weir/dam. *(March 2013 Coffin photograph)*

**Figure 6:** Rusting iron frame inside the “generator house” that may be a turbine base. To the right are the large circular holes that conducted water into the structure. *(March 2013 Coffin/Luiten photograph)*
CONCLUSION

The Public Utilities Corporation Consolidated continued operation to 1935 when the reconstituted company was incorporated in Delaware as the Citizens Utilities Company. Consolidation of power companies continued through the 1940s and 1950s along with increasing controversy over what areas a public utility district could serve. I have been unable to determine the date of the decommissioning of the Little Spokane River generating plant.

FOOT NOTES


Figure 7: Holes on the east side of the “Generating House” that may have supplied water to a generator inside the brick building seen in early pictures of the site. (March 2013 Coffin photograph)

Figure 8: Undated photograph of the Little Spokane River power plant in operation. Water is flowing over the top of the concrete structure. To the left the pipes bringing water into the structure can barely be seen. In the right center of the picture are poles holding the transmission wires. To the far right is the Great Northern railroad embankment. (Zimmerer Photograph Collection)
Lynn Holcomb Memorial

Eddie Norby

Editor's note: The following was sent to Dan Berg at the Open Door Congregational Church by Eddie Nordby. Dan Berg read it at Lynn Holcomb's memorial service May 26, 2013. Eddie lived less than a block from Lynn growing up in Clayton.

Lynn was in the Class of 1963 Deer Park High School. He served 2 tours in Viet Nam.

I thought I would send a few thoughts that you could ponder on or share at Lynn Holcomb’s “gathering of remembrance” on Sunday. Wish we could be there or better yet that I could have spent some time with him before his graduation day.

Lynn (Red) and I prowled and played together for many of our early years in Clayton. My head is full of the good, bad, and ugly memories we created together in our home town. With our dogs Herky and Mikey, we would start off early in the morning for another day filled with adventure and discovery. Lynn’s uncle Homer, was the World’s Champion Rodeo Clown and Lynn’s father, Elmer, was a great rodeo clown too. When we were little kids, they tied their trained mules (Sparky Karkus and Mortimer Snerd) on long ropes in a vacant lot near my house. Lynn and I would sneak thru the grass towards them and run like #*!! when they came after us. I can still hear their thundering hooves as they chased us to the end of their ropes...what a game that was for us and the mules! Ol’ Lynn and I lived on the edge a lot in those days. Book matches were handy around his place, so we would help ourselves and build a small fire in a grove of fir trees on the East side of town and sit around acting like big shots. One day we found what was left of a big cigar on the sidewalk. Taking it to our little fire site we lit up. Thankfully, mom called me for dinner, so I left Lynn in a cloud of cigar smoke. Several minutes later he knocked on our door, white as a sheet and all sweaty. He told my mom that he was sick and she carefully placed him on our couch under a blanket. Of course, he turned down the offer to eat with us, and I kept my mouth shut. That was the same day I placed my new comb like a grill over our little fire and I can still remember using that melted thing for a long time. There were a lot of things about Lynn and myself that our mothers just pondered in their hearts and never told our dads. In those days fa-

(Continued on page 769)
thers were only two or three notches under the grim reaper.

With our upper grade school days, the Clayton brick plant closed and that became our world of wonder. We knew that place like the back of our hand. We would cross the tracks and hide, watching for Scotty the plant guard and service station owner drive over to chase us out, but he never found us, so when we saw him drive back to the station, the plant was ours! There was a small cart on a set of long tracks that sloped down into a dark tunnel that led to the kiln area. It had a horizontal pipe brake across the front. We would push that cart up to the top of the track and then ride it down into the darkness. When we thought we were right at the end of the track, we would slam the brake down and stop on a dime...fortunately we never hit the end wall.

Now 10 or 11 years old, we built a cave out of straw bales in the brick plant straw shack along the RR tracks. We got matches, and smoked straw stems in that straw cave plus an occasional stolen cigarette. God must have had a special angel following us around with big buckets of water! To this day I don’t know how we kept from going up in fire and smoke!

I was with Lynn: as I watched his father cut off a cigarette in a man’s mouth with a long bull snake whip.

I was with Lynn: when he picked up a rock and threw it towards a creek only to hit my mother in the head, and boy did the blood run...so did he!

I was with Lynn: on our family fishing trip when he waved a flaming marshmallow in the air to put the flame out, only to stick it to the side of my face! Another time and place Lynn offered me a sweet and wonderful sauce in a tablespoon and I swallowed it down...it was Tabasco sauce!

I was with Lynn: sitting on the back of his dad’s mule tied to a post at the Colville rodeo when a bigger smarty kid walked up and said “anyone could ride a trained mule like that”, so Elmer lifted us off and put that smirking kid up on the bare back of that mule...to this day I don’t know what Elmer did, but that mule promptly bucked the kid off! Then Elmer reached down and put us back upon the mule without saying a word.

I was with Lynn: when his dad saw us in the barn loft sitting on a stack of tarp covered boxes that just happened to be dynamite and primer caps...didn’t know a man could yell that loud or two boys move that fast! However, Elmer earlier had talked us into eating some boiled road kill porcupine at the house, so I think we were just sitting in the loft trying to keep it down.

I was with Lynn fishing Beaver creek almost daily in the summer, while avoiding the mud bogs, and snakes and catching many brookies. It was there one afternoon we ran with our worms and fishing lines flying through the air while seemingly racing for our lives from a herd of snorting, ground pawing cattle that we had belly crawled into. (We were just having fun, but they were having an off day!) Another time on the creek with our fishing poles above our heads, to avoid the tall weeds and nettles, we were startled as we looked down upon a skunk at our feet. As we looked at the little bugger and before we could turn and burn, he sent a cloud of spray right over his back and into our bug-eyed faces. We used to shinny up young twenty foot tall aspen trees until they bent over from our weight, then we would hang on till safely touching the ground, (unless they broke off). We bundled up for winter ice skating on the ponds north of the brick plant, wearing our parent’s discarded ice skates. We slid down snowy hills and pulled the sleds back up. Sometimes a country kid’s dad would tow a bunch of us behind his car or tractor on our sleds. Many of them took the corners too sharp and drug us into ditches thru water, grass, and heaven help us...fences. After one of those bruising, we got really quick at yelling corner and rolling off the sleds. Bicycles were our freedom then and we rode many country miles on our used ones with playing cards striking the spokes (sounding like a grasshopper inva-
Lynn’s first bike was a tall boy’s bike. (It might even have belonged to Lyle). He actually rode it with his right leg under the bar and his body sticking out on the left side. Just try that sometime! Our mothers let us walk to Deer Park and back carrying and dragging feed sacks containing discarded bottles to sell at Matt’s Tavern. Oh, and how we laughed at each other in our Halloween costumes; recited our pieces for church; and took turns ringing the church bell on Sundays.

I have a framed calendar from 1944 with a picture on top of two boys and one girl sitting at the end of the dock. My sister bought it for me when I said that looks just like you, me, and Lynn...to us it is priceless and to us so was Lynn Holcomb. (Life was good...Clayton embraced us...and we were friends).

This has been only a small window into our story, but let me end with the best. I was teaching an adult Sunday School class in the fireside room at the Deer Park United Church of Christ a few years ago, when Lynn Holcomb walked in and sat down. Before class was over he stood up and walked out of the room, and I wondered if he was offended. When class later dismissed I walked outside onto the porch, only to see Lynn walking up the steps with a shoe box in his hands. He said, “I noticed in class that Leo was wearing old worn out shoes, so I rode my bicycle home to give him a pair of mine.” In the box was a pair of brand new shoes! 

See you on the other side, Lynn.

All DPHS Alumni: on Saturday, July 27, 2013, after the Settlers Parade & Picnic, meet in Mix Park near the Burdette Gazebo. Sign-in with your contact info, if you wish to be contacted by other schoolmates. Also sign-in at Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society Booth in the Park. Another Option: meet at Deer Park City Hall, 316 E Crawford, from 2 to 4 p.m. Enjoy the display of DPHS Graduate photos (1913 thru 1958) and sign-in. Still another option: guided tours of the current Deer Park High School, 800 S Weber Rd. from 2 to 4 p.m.

For further information, phone Flo, aka Florene Eickmeyer Moore at 276-7070.

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society Minutes — June 8, 2013

In attendance: Mike Reiter, Roberta Reiter, Mark Wagner, Bill Sebright, Sharon Clark, Marilyn Reilly, Bob Gibson, Pete Coffin, Judy Coffin, Kay Parkin, Don Reiter, Mary Jo Reiter, Denise Morris, Ella Jenkins, Lonnie Jenkins, Sue Rehms, Lyle Holcomb, Robert Fischbach, and Mae Fischbach

Society President, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He reported: 1) He spent several sessions working with Dan Huffman and his Broadcast Production Class on producing a media presentation of the history of Deer Park High School and the surrounding area. 2) We received an email from Susan Stewart Rumble. She is looking for a home for her Grandfather’s (Ed Kelso) 100 year old pump organ. Susan said, "I do have the mirror for it. The organ is really just for looks--only one stop works.” A picture was passed around. 3) A “picture map” made by Sharon Huffman Borgford was passed around. It shows the ripple marks north of Deer Park from the Missoula Floods.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported that there is $3,523.97 in the main checking account. Checks written were $6.15 to Bill Sebright for postage and $141.19 to Sharon Clark for supplies. we had a $3.00 check imaging fee. Maintenance Web hosting account had $161.51 in funds with a $10.95 in monthly hosting fee, $238.41 web hosting fee (three (Continued on page 771)
years) and a $14.99 service charge. There was a deposit of $300.00 in the web hosting account from the main checking account this month. (Since the main checking account is above $3,000 there is no service charge from the bank).

Grace Hubal, Secretary reported by email (She's not feeling well): 1) Jason Hubal’s surgery Monday was successful. He was able to come home late the same day.

Vice President, Pete Coffin reported: 1) Cliff Meyer and Pete took a field trip to a mine on the north side of Loon Lake Mountain. Pete took pictures of the adit and the location. Cliff heard about it from Sam Gardner who told Cliff he had packed supplies into it when he was 14 years old. Several years ago the superintendent of a logging company told Cliff that he had seen it and that it was a bear den. The mine has not been mapped by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 2) An easy to use version of the Deer Park Union/Tri-County Tribune is available. It is a series of monthly .PDF files that any computer able to read a DVD disk can access. I will try to make copies for those who would like to research the newspapers for sources of Mortarboard articles. 3) President Sebright referred Pete to Don Stevens as having information about a mine on his property northwest of the intersection of Spotted Road and Oregon Road. The mine was described as the Silver Bell Mine on the front page of the March 18, 1918 Deer Park Union newspaper. A future field trip is planned. 4) Dan Huffman was sent a large file size location map from Mortarboard article “A Photographic Gallery of Rural School Houses in the Clayton-Deer Park Area” (Issue 45, January 2012) to be used as part of a 100 year school celebration at the Deer Park High School graduation ceremony this weekend. 5) Locations of both of the mines noted in this report have been forwarded to Mr. Fritz Wolff of the Washington Department of Natural Resources. 6) He will give Editor Sharon Clark a Mortarboard article draft titled “Electric Power In Deer Park”.

Print Editor, Sharon Clark: 1) The June 2013 Mortarboard #62 was distributed. Articles include: 1) Brayton Hopkins family 2) Otho Andrew Peters 3) More Clayton Terra Cotta Comes Home

Website Director, Penny Hutten reported by email (She has a book signing at the Spokane Valley Costco.): 1) She is still looking for someone to take over the webmaster job. She will let us know when she finds someone. 2) She just added the May and June Mortarboard publications to the Website. http://www.cdphs.org/mortarboard-newsletters.html 3) The Spokane Westerner’s speaker this month is Sue Walker, talking about "The Honor Flight". If you would like to go it is June 20th. You can give me a call to schedule your reservations or see the website. http://www.westernersspokane.org/

Lyle Holcomb brought pictures of his brother Lynn who died earlier this year of cancer. A Lynn Holcomb Memorial written by Ed Nordby will be in the next Mortarboard.

Robert and Mae Fischbach brought a 1922 picture of the Castleman Packing Company Crew of the Arcadia Orchards. They also brought an unspecified group of women in front of a brick building. We will work on identifying the women and the building that are supposed to be in the Clayton area.

Bob Gibson talked about the paper he is writing on the Deer Park JCs in the 1950's. Floodlights were purchased for Perrins Field. Bob Gibson remembers cleaning the floodlights. Dick Wagner, Chick Schultz and Red Thompson from the Citizens utilities put the lights up. The JCs sponsored a softball league. A purple delivery truck was purchased to sell hot dogs and candy. Other projects were putting up a fence at the elementary school.

There was another discussion about "Deer Park's first cemetery." Mike Reiter had found some information contradicting what Peter Coffin had
written in an earlier Mortarboard. As the discussion stands Peter's information is still correct.

We are still trying to get the word out about the 100-year DPHS reunion July 27. There are several parts to the 100-year reunion: 1) Get "togethers" at the reunion section of Mix Park. 2) DPHS Antlers available at the CDPHS booth. 3) A get together at City Council Room at City Hall where many class pictures are. 4) Guided group tours of the "new" DPHS. 5) Make sure to sign up at Betty Burdette's table near the Gazebo.

Next meeting: Saturday, July 13, 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 AM.

The meeting minutes submitted by Mark Wagner, acting secretary.

(Continued from page 771)

Editorial Policy Regarding Correcting Errors and/or Omissions

Information published here is compiled from many sources, including personal memories. It is often difficult or impossible to verify such recollections through outside documentation. Our editorial policy toward the veracity of personal recollections tends toward the casual — since little harm is normally done by such errors. But our editorial process also invites public review and input regarding the accuracy of the information we publish, and when such review either suggests or reveals errors or items open to dispute our “Letters” department will act as a forum allowing the airing of such disagreements in an effort to ascertain the truth and correct any probable or demonstrated errors. We also believe it’s important that such disagreements be recorded, even if they can’t be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

We encourage everyone to submit any arguments as to fact to the editor in writing — since the written form reduces the chance of further misunderstandings. As is standard policy, all letters will be edited for spelling, word usage, clarity, and — if necessary — contents. If advisable, the editor will confer directly with the letter writers to insure that everyone’s comments and corrections are submitted in a literate, polite, and compelling manner — as best suits the editorial image of this Society’s publications.

Society Want Ads

WANTED: Information and photos regarding the history of the Brickyard/Ramble In Tavern

WANTED: Any stories and photos of your family’s history in connection with their occupations and settlement in the Clayton/Deer Park Area

WANTED: Any stories and photos from Williams Valley #452 and Gardenspot Grange78 Contact: Ann Fackenthall, WVG

Society Contacts

C/DPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA  99110

Bill Sebright, president — (sebrightba@gmail.com) 276-2693

Peter Coffin, vice president — (pcoff@q.com)

Sharon Clark, editor — (sharonclark@centurytel.net)

Grace Hubal, secretary — (hubals@msn.com)

Visit our New Web Site: cdphs.org