

ELECTRIC LIGHTS AND TELEPHONE WERE BIG IMPROVEMENTS

Several attempts were made to bring electricity to Pine City before the Eastern Minnesota Power Company was formed in 1911.

Modern improvements first began in the village when electric lights replaced the old kerosene street lamps which the village marshal tended.

Frank McCormick, an Irishman from Duluth, had installed a steam engine and small dynamo in a building on the ~~east~~ west side of the street across from the Swanson mortuary.

There were three arc lights on the streets and the stores and a few homes were serviced. McCormick had hoped to sell the plant to the village but since it had proven unprofitable at the time they refused and it was partially dismantled.

Later, R.P. Allen purchased what remained, moved it down and ran it in connection with his mill. It was later enlarged and placed where the power plant is still located.

After purchasing the Chengwatana dam from the Munch brothers, the Eastern Minnesota Power Company was formed in 1911. At the time of its sale to the Wisconsin-Hydro Company in 1928 it was servicing more than 30 communities. This was perhaps the largest single financial transaction of the county.

The first telephones were installed in the village in 1900 by the Minnesota Mutual Company which had headquarters in North Branch. The first operator was Maggie Payne.

In 1918 the Northwestern Bell Company took over and in 1938 converted it to a more modern type service. The main office and

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exchange serving Sandstone, Hinckley and Pine City was located in Pine City, employing about 18 people.

You don't have to be too old to remember picking up the phone and hearing a voice at the other end say "Number please!"

Rarely did a small town person actually know the number of the person they were calling nor did they need it. "Central" as the operator was called, knew everybody and she was often accused of listening in on all conversations. This advantage put her in the category of knowing everything about everybody.

You could also call her to get the time of day, ^{and} her lines were jammed when the fire whistle blew, everyone wanted to know where the fire was.

Kids from town visiting their friends in the country thought it was a riot to "rubber" in when the party line rang.

The present dial system was installed in the early 60's and today most people in the rural areas enjoy private lines and farmers have telephones in the barn. Who would have predicted that 82 years ago when the first telephones in the village were installed?

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