

ELECTRICITY COMES TO BRIGHTON

Brighton's first electric lighting plant was built in 1897 by Carl Conrad. He installed wiring in local homes virtually free of charge to encourage the use of electricity for lighting and operating small appliances. On all but moonlit nights, the streets of downtown Brighton were soon illuminated by arched strings of light bulbs. The Brighton Electric and Power Company provided service only from sundown to midnight, after which time the plant was shut down for the night.

The building that housed this first power plant was used in succeeding years as an activity center for clubs and community groups and also served as a local library for several years. (S. of City Hall, N. of D.&C. Store.)

According to the Detroit Edison Company, the electric plant was incorporated in 1903, under a state law that took effect that year and the name was changed to the Brighton Light and Power Company. By 1915, the Eastern Michigan Edison Company gained controlling interest in the plant through its vice president, Alfred C. Marshall. Later that year, directors of the local utility sold the plant to Eastern Michigan Edison for just under \$20,000, merging, in 1916 with Detroit Edison Co.

Turn-of-the-century Brighton also witnessed a roller skating craze, then sweeping the nation. A rink was built on E. Grand River (E. side, between Main and North Streets), a barn like structure with an excellent, hard maple floor. Having previously been lit with kerosene lamps, electricity was installed in 1910, and at that time was only used for basketball games.

Brighton's first moving pictures were shown at what was, until last year, the Rebecca Hall, 422 W. Main. Admission was .05¢; local girls played piano to accompany the films and others displayed their singing talents during intermissions and reel changes. The town's second theater (opened 4-2-19, mgr. Cliff Roberts), was built at 307 W. Main. The Rialto later became a bowling alley and was finally torn down. (Colt Park Agency is located there now.) A larger movie house (the Washington, mgr. Walter Carmack) was opened later on W. Grand River in the block north of E. St. Paul St. During the Depression years, the business received heavy competition from free movies shown outdoors on the sides of building. These free movies were sponsored by local merchants trying to get people to come downtown and trade.

In the town, schools, churches, businesses, etc., made use of this new invention at the first opportunity. It was the mid 1930s before electrical power was common in the surrounding townships. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 481
Brighton, MI 48116



GENEALOGY, etc.
3513 B Old US-23
Brighton, MI 48116