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## Electric Lights

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United Power & Light Corporation Exterior, Blue Rapids, Kansas  
kansasmemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society

## ELECTRIC LIGHTS

Electrifying rural communities did not happen overnight. After nearly a decade of debate, politicking, and budgeting, Strong City and Cottonwood Falls finally joined forces to secure lighting for both towns. The saga is illustrated here through newspaper accounts. The photographs of commercial buildings in Blue Rapids and Marysville show what electrification meant for rural communities in the early Twentieth Century.

*The city council met again last night and discussed the electric light proposition, or rather the last details before consummation.*

*J. T. Butler, acting city attorney, advised the council to secure a guarantee bond of at least \$500. This, Mr. Lee did not think necessary, but he agreed to let the bond open and to accompany the franchise. After discussion that matter was settled. Mr. Lee has yet to secure back-water privileges, etc., before he can enter the execution of his part of the contract.*

*While there is no "dead sure" thing about the city getting the light yet we are as certain of having electric lights within a year as could be expected at this stage of the game. It takes time to secure such advantages and there are many matters to be settled. All will end well if all push in the right direction.*

*As was predicted last week, Strong City's business men woke up and got a hustle attached to themselves, and quickly displaced the anti-sentiment. A council meeting was held Tuesday night and not a "knocker" was present*

whose objections were not overcome. Every detail was gone over and when the council adjourned all was harmony. They meet again tonight to conclude arrangements, and undoubtedly, they will do the right thing.

One great good the co-operation of the two councils in securing the lights will result in will be the two towns. Politicians in both towns will be regulated with their fool town chaws.

*The Courant, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 11 January 1900.*

*How about the electric lights Cottonwood Falls is to have?*

*Chase County Courant, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 7 June 1900.*

*As the electric light matter is coming up for discussion again, we believe the advisability of the two towns putting in a plant should be thoroughly calculated on before franchises are granted to outsiders. We want to see electric lights.*

*The News-Courant, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 11 April 1901.*

*The city council at its meeting last Tuesday evening, gave Mr. Frawley, of Nebraska, an exclusive franchise to furnish the city with electric lights for six years, the plant to be installed inside of seven months. There is nothing said in the franchise about the price. The granting of the franchise is on the condition that Strong City adopts it also.*

*Chase County Leader, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 17 March 1904.*

*At a call meeting of the city council last Thursday evening a franchise was granted to W.G. Smith of Bolivar, MO permitting him to build and operate an electric light and power plant in Cottonwood Falls.*

*The franchise runs the statutory limit, twenty years but does not give Mr. Smith an exclusive right in this industry. Mr. Smith is superintendent*



*Skelly Gas Station Lit at Night, Marysville, Kansas  
kansasmemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society*

of the water and light plant in Bolivar and is also in business there. He thoroughly understands the lighting proposition and has gone into this matter as a business proposition and asks the city for nothing but the right to erect and operate the plant knowing well that in this progressive age that the city will meet him more than half way. It is guaranteed by the ordinance granting the franchise that the rates for 16 candle power to burn until midnight shall not exceed fifty cents and that are lights to burn until midnight shall not exceed \$6 per month and a rate of 12 ½ cents per kilowatt hour for meters. All lights are to be run on the moonlight schedule.

Mr. Smith is to begin construction by August first and before many moons thereafter Cottonwood Falls will be in the light. Mr. Smith and family will become residents of our town as soon as arrangements can be made. The outgoing city council are to be congratulated on having landed this valuable improvement for our progressive town.

The franchise carries with it the right to set poles in the streets and alleys and it is a wise guess of the editor of this paper that before many years our street car line will be a trolley and we will be connected with the nearest depot point of the Orient as soon as that road is built.

The *Courant*, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 6 April 1905.

During the meeting of the county commissioners this week, they decided to have electric lights installed in the court house. At present, lights will be placed in the offices of county Clerk, County Treasurer, the hall, court room and the dwelling rooms of the Sheriff. Others may be added later.

Chase County Leader, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 19 December 1905.

The electric street lights for the city were put up yesterday and last night the city was lit up for the first time. They give a good light and we believe they will be a great success.

Chase County Leader, (Cottonwood Falls, Kansas) 9 November 1906.



Montgomery Ward Store Lit at Night, Marysville, Kansas  
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