

## **Floresville Comes From Darkness to Light**

Floresville's long felt desire to get electricity began to make progress in February, 1915 by B. J. Carrico, a consulting engineer and contractor of Fort Worth. He was the man of means and movement to put in an electric system that would be a credit to Floresville.

In April, 1915 electricity was no longer a dream. Floresville's long talked of light plant was at last to become a reality. W. T. Pitman, of Fort Worth, one of the promoters began actual operations, accompanied by John Barner, an expert electrician of Marietta, Oklahoma.

A carload of poles was soon unloaded. The front end of the Ballard building next to John W. Wood's store was rented for an office and electric supply store. Two large Muncie crude oil engines, one a 90 HP and the other a 50 HP were ordered. Work on the plant's home began. It was erected at the City Waterworks Plant and was a 30x50 structure and made of brick and hollow tile.

The Floresville Light and Power Company would be the name of the new concern. The plant's proposed size would take care of a town twice the size of Floresville at that time. It was the intention of the promoters to supply the surrounding towns and rural communities power if this endeavor proved to be a success.

June 19, 1915 at 7:30 p.m. was the date to remember. That was the date Mayor S.V. Houston consented to press the button turning the lights on in the City of Floresville. He expressed a desire to have at least three of the prettiest girls of Floresville to act as his attendants, so that he may be properly cared for, should he touch the wrong wire. So the citizens selected the young ladies by secret ballot votes.

Throwing the switch and turning on Floresville's first lights took place at the power house by Mayor Houston assisted by the three prettiest young ladies, Nora Houston, Robbie Smith and Clara Culpepper, who were the winners of the contest. A large crowd attended the celebration. A full explanation of the workings of the plant was given before the lights were turned on. It indeed was a memorable event for the City of Floresville. After the lights were on, the crowd of excited people marched to the Opera House for a delightful and appropriate program. This evening, June 19, 1915 went down in the history of Floresville for this date the old town took a step forward. R. L. Eschenburg, Sr., prominent businessman and alderman, then gave a brief talk and told of the many improvements that would be underway. It definitely had a ring of a booster to the community.

In July, 1915 the Floresville Light and Power Company took over the City Waterworks Plant and the city water was pumped from the power house. A new 40 HP Muncie oil engine was added to operate the day current and to pump most of the water.

Homes and businesses were soon wired and street lights were being installed. The promoters were very pleased with the support being accorded and the residents were equally as well pleased with the new service.

In November, 1925, Flem Spruce, Mgr. of the New Lone Star State Power Company, the new public utility plant that took over the Floresville Light and Power Company informed the public that new high power lines would be installed. These lines were the lines between Floresville & Poth and Floresville & Stockdale. In addition to these lines, Mr. Spruce stated that the company would install a new diesel engine of not less than 200 HP to take care of all the needs of Floresville, Stockdale and Poth.

In 1928, San Antonio Public Service Company purchased the assets of the power company with Flem Spruce still the manager. Then in 1942, Floresville Electric Light and Power System was formed by the Cities of Floresville, Stockdale and Poth by purchasing the assets of the San Antonio Public Service Company.

FELPS' 1942 audit shows

- 489 customers in Floresville
- 135 customers in Poth
- 178 customers in Stockdale
- **802 total customers.**

FELPS 1950 audit show

- 811 customers in Floresville
- 237 customers in Poth,
- 347 customers in Stockdale
- 1,462 customers in the rural area of the three cities,
- **2,857 total customers.**

Then in February, 2009 there were

- **13,647 FELPS customers.**

This indicates the lights are shining to a larger number of residents.

The managers of FELPS:

- 1925 - Flem Spruce
- 1951 - Robert F. Spruce until his sudden death
- 1967 - Fred R. Wauters
- 1996 - David K. McMillan to the present time.

Compiled from past Floresville Chronicle Journal articles by Viola Henke, a retired employee of Floresville Electric Light and Power System