

## The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company

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The discovery of how to generate and distribute electricity commercially was at the core of the advances of big industrial enterprises and the new industrial age in Cleveland during the Gilded Age. This era was characterized by increased scientific research that produced steel furnaces, turbines, locomotives and giant steam engines.

In 1870 John D. Rockefeller launched the Standard Oil empire, and within the next decades Cleveland became a national leader in shipbuilding, steel and steel fabrication industries as well as the manufacturing of heavy forgings, sewing machines, heavy street railway machinery, automobiles and auto parts production. Cleveland had a strong and diversified industrial base that demanded a reliable supply of electrical power.

The first public street lighting in the United States took place at Cleveland's Public Square, April 29, 1879. These lights were based on the arc lighting technology, generated from a coil-type dynamo developed by North-east Ohio native Charles F. Brush. Competition soon developed as other companies got into the burgeoning electric business. Simultaneously, Thomas Edison, working at his Menlo Park lab, developed the incandescent light and a direct current system of distribution. This was a completely different technology from Brush's arc light. Edison had in mind to develop a new industry, not just an invention, that would duplicate the gas distributing industry (a total system) with electricity. While the two systems competed for a short time, only one technology won out after a series of vicious patent struggles.

In 1892, through a variety of mergers and licensing agreements, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, as we know it today, was formed. This was a fascinating era for the young utility. The company faced numerous challenges in perfecting the technology, discovering new applications for electricity, developing a market among skeptical customers, and building a strong, reliable corporate organization within the Cleveland business community.

The East Ohio Gas Company had quite different origins. The first gas company to operate in Cleveland was the Cleveland Gas Light & Coke Company, incorporated in 1846. Their product was manufactured gas, of course. The first use of natural gas in Ohio was in Findlay in 1870. From 1878 large numbers of gas wells were discovered, opening up the Appalachian fields that stretched from New York to Tennessee. Within five years, natural gas was serving Pittsburgh's glass and steel plants.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, oil drillers from Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company were often disappointed when, in drilling for oil, they discovered gas instead. They typically burned off the gas in hopes of finding oil. The head of Rockefeller's pipeline construction crew urged the business man to go into the gas business. As a result, some 15 companies were formed under the auspices of National Trust (a Standard Oil of New Jersey company) to build pipeline and to measure and sell natural gas. In the late summer of 1898 Hope Natural Gas Company was organized by National Trust to deliver gas to Northeastern Ohio. The East Ohio Gas Company was organized as a marketing arm of the National Trust and remained a part of the Standard Oil system until 1942.

By 1898 East Oil had 3,874 customers in such Ohio cities as Akron, Canton, New Philadelphia, and Dover. In 1903 the company extended its pipelines to Cleveland. By 1905 the number of customers had increased to 85,252, and East Ohio began its own drilling and production program. As a variety of gas companies were acquired between 1904-1912, East Ohio took shape as the corporate organization it is today. The company's early

days were similar to that of CEI with the invention of new applications and appliances, expansion, and developing a critical market.