

TUSCOLA'S UTILITIES

The development of the public utilities seemed to be part of a wave of civic improvement that swept Tuscola in the early 1890's. The story of Tuscola's first utilities is a complex one. At one time light, water, heat, electricity and telephone services were all available from the same source. Subsequently, some services were discontinued. Others changed hands. Still others were involved in consolidations so that now Tuscola is served by separate concerns where in the early days, one provided all.

Water – Water in large quantities has been an essential need in Tuscola ever since 1890, when it became apparent that the individual wells would no longer do. In 1892, a deep well was sunk on Illinois Central right-of-way, south of the depot, but it was never very productive.

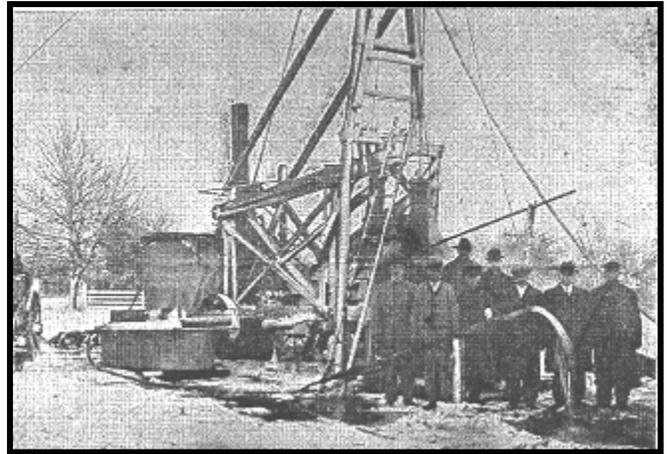
CIPS bought the electric and water utility in 1902. Water mains were laid after having sunk a new well. However, there were a number of town wells around and the water business did not thrive. A typhoid epidemic in 1916, which was blamed on the much prized water from a well in the Mulligan livery stable, gave much impetus to the movement to solve the community water problems.

Water remained a troublesome and controversial problem until 1929, when wells in the east part of town proved to be sufficiently productive and a storage tower was erected on North Parke street. CIPS sold the water utility to Illinois Municipal Water Company in 1943. Illinois Cities Water Company acquired the property in 1947. The name was changed to Eastern Illinois Water Company in 1963. The company acquired the USI water utility in 1955 and operated it under the name of Industrial Water Supply. Some of Tuscola's water came from this supply.

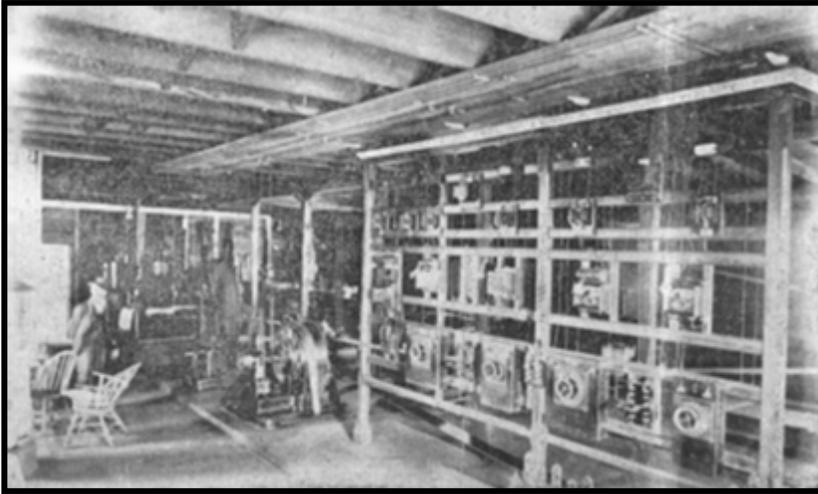
Today the City of Tuscola purchases potable water from Illinois American Water company. The city's water system features an elevated storage capacity of 750,000 gallons.

Electricity – Tuscola Electric Light and Power Company was formed in 1890 with the following officers: J. W. Orr, president; Rice Ervin, vice president; Charles Cross, treasurer; F. M. Friend, secretary and business manager. A \$20,000 plant was installed March 19, 1891 in a building at the corner of Wilson and Washington Streets. Power was by Hamilton-Corliss engine and the Thomas Houston system could supply current for 2,000 lamps.

In 1902, the plant was enlarged and moved to a new building on North Parke Street. On May 12, 1902, John H. Culver of Decatur, who had acquired considerable stock in the company, became the sole owner. The plant was moved because of availability of water for steam generation at the new location.

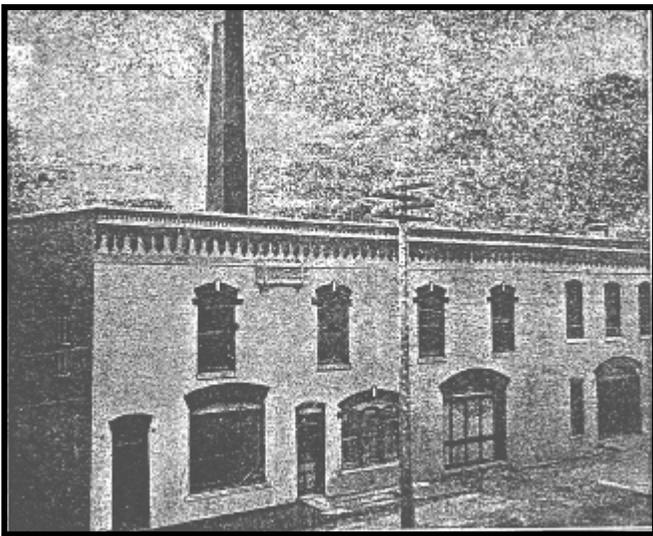


The first successful utility well in Tuscola was drilled in 1916. The well was drilled at the time of the typhoid epidemic, when a shallow well in the Mulligan livery stable was found to be the cause. The well was drilled by J. O. Hackett. The well was located on Wilson Street and the water treatment plant was later located there. In the early days before mains were laid, water was hauled around town on a tank wagon. The first water pumps were not automatic and the water frequently overflowed, making for rather a muddy area.



(Left) Electric light plant in 1895.

(Bottom) CIPS building was built at 206 N. Parke Street in 1902. The picture on the left was how it originally looked and on the right how it looked in 1964. The smoke stack was taken down in 1928, but emergency motors were provided in case of an interruption of service. Motors were taken out in 1952.



A well had been sunk to a depth of 3,017 feet. This well produced 50 gallons per minute, but in later years, its production sank to a negligible amount. At the beginning of the 1900's the company had available plenty of water, electricity and waste steam. Steam lines were laid along the two downtown alleys to supply heat to the buildings.

Later CIPS found that service from a transmission line from Mattoon would be more economical and the local plant was put on standby. The company discontinued heat service and retired the plant.

Today Ameren CIPS offers Tuscola reliable and economical energy to meet the needs of area residents and businesses.

In 1984, A. B. Sawyer" recalled very well when the "electric light" plant was built – it belonged to a Mr. Grat Ervin, and was started up at dusk and shut down at daylight. The generator was driven by a steam engine through a long leather drive belt with a large fly-wheel, which extended into a pit below ground level. After a heavy rain, water filled the pit and the plant had to be shut down – a frequent occurrence for other reasons also." *(The Tuscola Review, April 17, 1984, article by Lynnita Aldridge Brown).*

Telephone – After purchasing the electric company in 1902, John H. Culver later added the Douglas County Telephone Company to his holdings. This company was managed by John Hamilton.

In 1910, this company was merged with the Tuscola Telephone Company, operated by J. S. Campbell. Mr. Campbell had established the first rural telephone system in the county at Murdock in 1887. He acquired the Tuscola system in 1906.

The Douglas County Telephone Company, a Bell affiliate later became Illinois Commercial Telephone Company. In 1950, this concern was bought by General Telephone Company. The Douglas County Telephone Company was located in the Star Store building until 1937 when the exchange was moved into a building at 109 E. Sale Street. Dial telephone was introduced in Tuscola in mid 1960's ending the need for operators. A new, modern building was constructed next door and the old one was razed. Today Verizon serves the Tuscola area with infrastructure which provides communications technology by combining advanced telecommunications networks with a fully digital state of the art switching system and a network that includes T-1 services, fiber optic cable, equal access for competing carriers and Smartcall features. In addition, Verizon, AT&T and Consolidated communication all have points of presence within 25 miles.



NUMBER PLEASE....

Telephone operators working to connect phone calls. Standing center of photo is Bernice "Pee Wee" Cunningham.

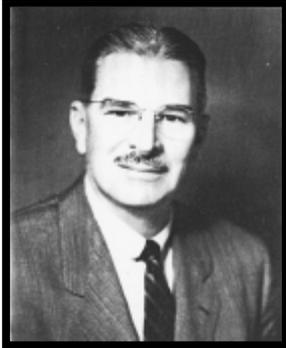
Photo courtesy Pettitt Photo Studio

Gas – Citizens Gas Company was founded by Michael J. Sullivan of Kansas City, Missouri on September 9, 1938. Gaslines were first laid in Tuscola in 1938. Natural gas was supplied to Citizens Gas Company by Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Company, Texas Illinois Natural Gas Pipeline Company and Trunkline Gas Company. From their interstate lines, Citizen's lines distributed gas to Tuscola, Chrisman, Newman, Villa Grove, Arthur, Atwood, Lovington, Bement, Arcola and Hammond. Their offices were located on west South Central Avenue. They were bought out and the name changed to CILCO (Central Illinois Light Company). A few years ago they were purchased by Ameren. They supply efficient and dependable natural gas services and products. The utility purchases gas through 5 pipelines and approximately 35 gas suppliers. Along with its affiliated companies, AmerenCILCO can provide



Laying gas pipeline in the fifties

customers with a wide range of products and services to ensure safe and reliable service, as well as convenience. Recently their offices were moved to a newer building on South Washington Street.



**President
Citizens Gas Company
J. B. Hancock**



**General Manager
Citizens Gas Company
Roy A. Toomey**



**Secretary - Treasurer
Citizens Gas Company
R. R. McCumber**



**Executive Secretary to Mr.
Hancock
Irma West**



**CILCO building on west South Central
Avenue**



**Roger Long
Maintenance
Superintendent**



**Bill Fleming
Industrial Relations**



**Jackie Skuta
Secretary**



CILCO Employees 1970

Front row - Carl Connor, Richard Jones, Kenny Vestal, Bill Prowell, Claude Dunn, Cleo Underwood and Wes Duncan.

Second row - Jim Weber, Charles Kohlbecker, Bill West, Amos Albritton, Jack Stickel, Roger Long, Bob Wilson, Jim Pierce, Duane Dunn, Dave Lohr and Jack Timmons.