**Electricity in Nanaimo**
Transcribed by Jennifer Bolstler, Vancouver Island University – April 2, 2015

William Barraclough: [unintelligible] before the Society on Tuesday, February the 14th, 1967 in the Credit Union Hall. This slab of paper contained added information relative to the subject that came to my notice during the elapsed time. I now speak concerning the subject on tape recording.

The information concerning the subject of this article was gathered from several sources, mostly during the year 1953. I am indebted to *The Nanaimo Free Press* for permitting access to their files to search for early news items. Other valuable information was relayed to me by persons who had been employees of the electric light plants, namely Mr. William Lewis, an item selected from his early diaries; Mr. Frank Cartwright; and the late Mrs. James Cowie; Lou Lawrence; Andrew Montador; and others who had knowledge of the electrical business, and a few items of historic interest are included.

Previous to a locally promoted project to develop electricity in Nanaimo, the city council had two propositions placed before it to establish an electric power plant. At a meeting Tuesday, January 29th, 1889, a ten page article was received from the New York Electric Light Company to install electric machines to light the city streets. The proposition was turned down. This was about four years after the first production of coal gas in Nanaimo.

On Tuesday, March the 12th, 1889 a lengthy communication was read at the council meeting from Mr. R. B. McMicking, agent for the Ball Electric Lighting Company of Toronto, to placing working order in Nanaimo a 50 lamp plant capable of supplying 100 lamps for $8,875. This to include dynamos, engines, three miles of wire, insulators, poles, etc. The estimated cost of maintenance would be about $2,240 per annum. The system used would be arc lights. It was moved by Alderman Hilbert and Nightingale the communication be filed. It was stated, the city contract with the gas company had three years to run.

The Mr. McMicking mentioned was concerned with the electric company in Victoria. Mr. William Lewis was often in contact with him. The first account I have been able to discover of developing electricity in Nanaimo by a Mr. Alexander Shaw, is reported in *The Free Press* for Wednesday, January 29th, 1890. Re-quote, "We understand the machinery for electric light has been on the way for quite a number of days, and it was expected in the city long before this. Mr. Shaw imagines it has been delayed on the way by lying at one of the depots en route. A great many of the residents of this city who have engaged to have the light fitted into their dwellings will be glad when it arrives, and they will be able to have the benefit of electric light."

Again quoting from *The Free Press*, Wednesday, February the 28th, 1890: "The electric light wires have been put in nearly all the leading hotels in the city, and many of the private homes wish to make connection... [audio briefly cuts out] The work of erecting the main wire
is not so difficult to accomplish, as the work of introducing the wire into the various rooms of the hotels and dwelling houses which occupies a considerable length of time on account of the difficulty of the task. And as it is only to be hoped, the enterprising gentleman who has undertaken this extensive enterprise will heap the reward he so well deserves."

4:40

Quoting again for Thursday, March the 8th, 1890: "Electric light machinery. Mr. Alexander Shaw, proprietor of the Electric Light Works, received the boiler and remainder of the plant yesterday for the electric light. The boiler, which is a large one, was hauled from the depot by Mr. [Keddie?] this morning with six strong horses, and was rather a difficult undertaking, but he succeeded in getting to the works successfully, where a number of men have been employed today in putting it into position. The work of completing the erection of the wire, etc., will now be pushed forward as rapidly as possible."

5:28

Report for Wednesday, March the 12th, 1890: Heading: Electric Light. "Mr. A. Shaw, proprietor of the Electric Light Works, is pushing the work of erecting the wires forward to completion as rapidly as possible. There is hardly a store on Commercial Street, but what has had the wires fitted in and many private houses have also agreed to take it. In fact, the proprietor has so far met with more support than he anticipated, and it is only hoped he will continue to be successful with it as any enterprise in the city is certainly deserving of support."

And for Friday, May the 30th, 1890, quote: "The lighting of the various hotels and dwellings has been considerably delayed by the non-arrival of the necessary wire and dynamos, although the order was forwarded at the beginning of the year. In consequence, the proprietors of the Electric Light Works is out of pocket between $300 and $400 per month. He received the invoice of the dynamos about two weeks ago, and the machine is supposed to be in Victoria, so that it may be expected here at any moment, when we may expect to witness the successful lighting immediately. Nearly all the large outside wires has been placed in position, and it will be an easy matter to put in the light into any dwelling where it is required."

For Tuesday, June the 24th, 1890: Heading: The Electric Light. "The dynamo arrives. Mr. Shaw expects to have it in position by Saturday, on which evening he intends to light up the city. It is to be hoped the enterprise will prove eventually successful in this city, etc. etc."

It was June the 30th when the first electric lights lit the streets of Nanaimo, at 8:00 p.m.

A short item headed, Nanaimo Electric Works for Thursday, July 3rd 1890, states: "Mr. Alexander Shaw is rapidly getting the machines in good order, and expects by the end of
the week to greatly improve the service. Change in pulleys to make revolutions increase from 800 to over 1,000, its success is assured. The editor wish Mr. Shaw every success in a profitable business."

8:02

To obtain particulars of those associated with the light company and registration date, I wrote to the registrar of company's office in Victoria, November 21st, 1966. The reply, dated November 25th, states, "Nanaimo Electric Light, Power, and Heating Company Ltd., quoting: In reply to your letter, November 21st, please be informed that the records of this office indicate that the above company was struck from the register, and dissolved on the 20th of October, 1938, pursuant to section 205 in the Companies Act. The documents have been destroyed pursuant to Public Documental Disposal Act, please remit 50 cents search fee." End of quote.

It is unfortunate that the history of so many early industries in Nanaimo is not available or difficult to obtain.

The first electric light plant was situated on the north 40 feet of lot 9, block 30, on the east side of Fraser Street, near the west end of Bastion Street wooden bridge, which was much lower than the present bridge. The site is used today as a substation by the BC Hydro Power Corporation. We are fortunate to have some good pictures of the wooden power house buildings, and the electric machines inside.

Concrete bases for the machinery are still to be seen there. The concrete was made from beach gravel. It contains clam shells and other shoreline materials. The plant was driven by steam from coal-burning boilers. Power machines consisted of two 25 [225?] kW direct current Edison bipolar dynamos of 110 volts each. The system was described as Edison three-wire distribution, and was used for commercial and street lighting.

10:00

It is noted, one of these machines was a 50 arc lamp Edison Sperry. Two boilers, three engines, pumps, and switchboard completed the works.

From a reliable source, I was advised Mr. Andrew Haslam assisted Mr. Alexander Shaw to establish the electric light plant with a loan of $15,000 during the year 1890.

The electric company did not enter into the business of domestic lighting at this time, but concentrated on street lighting. Strong competition was made with the gas company, adding a light here and there until the city council began to favour the electric system as more satisfactory.
The possibilities of electric development must have attracted the attention of the progressive men of the day. At a council meeting on Tuesday, December 6th, 1890, a communication was received from Drake and Jackson Company regarding an electric tramway. Mr. George Norris, president of the proposed tramway being present, asked for a five year extension privilege. The object of the extension was to keep a tram or other scheming companies out. It was requested that city seal be attached to the agreement between the tramway and council, and it was so ordered.

11:26

On Monday, December 22nd, 1890, Mr. Shaw's electric lights went out for about 20 minutes, just as the gas was at its weakest pressure. The city council must have begun to be interested in operating both electric and gas plants, for on Tuesday, February 2nd, 1891, a letter addressed to the city clerk was read, quote, "In reply to yours of the 20th instance, I will sell the corporation, my electric plant as it stands, for $17,000. Land and buildings, $1,000; stock of wire, lamps, shades, sockets, switches, cut-outs etc. $2,000 - a total of $20,000. Terms, half cash, balance in six months at interest of 8%. This offer is good only to March the 1st. Signed, Alexander Shaw."

At this meeting, February the 2nd, 1891, another letter was read, quote, "To Mr. S. Gough, In reply to yours of the 29th of January, inquiring the price at which the city can purchase the gasworks, I am directed by the directors to say that they may be purchased for the sum of $50 per share, that is par value. Less any dividends that may be due on the stock at the time of purchase. Signed, William K. Leighton, Secretary."

Tuesday, March the 3rd, 1891. Alderman McDonald introduced a by-law to buy the electric light works to illuminate the streets with Arc lights. At the same meeting, Alderman Dobeson introduced a by-law to buy the gasworks. Both measures passed first reading. At a special meeting, March the 8th, it was reported it would require $57,000 to bring the electric plant up to modern requirements. Several council meetings followed to discuss the matter of purchase.

At council meetings for March 17th and 24th, lengthy discussions of finances, borrowings, amendments to by-laws, money required to purchase both plants, also the waterworks system from Mr. Sturton. Mayor John Hilbert did not wish to speak on the subject, as he had an interest in the gasworks.

Council agreed to present a by-law to the voters on May the 5th, 1891, for $39,000, to by both the gas and electric plants. The result of the vote on May the 8th was gasworks: for, 93; against, 121. The electric, for, 130; against 83. Purchasing of the plants did not materialise. The total assessment for the city was, $685,655 dollars, and the total [existing?] debt was $57,000.
From the date of the referendum, May the 5th, 1891, to buy the two plants to the summer of 1892, the electric company must have met with financial reverses in operation as bankruptcy proceedings was instituted against the company.

On October 29th, 1892, auctioneer Captain S. F. Scott put the business up for auction without reserve. Conditions were subject to liens against the company, and other encumbrances amounting to $25,000. Only two bids were made. One from a New Westminster party for $20 plus encumbrances, and one from Mr. Joseph Hunter of Victoria, for $40 over encumbrances. Mr. Hunter's bid was accepted. The new company, under the management of Mr. Hunter, invested new capital in the industry to improve the plant and extend operations to domestic lighting.

16:05

I have prepared several notes concerning Mr. Hunter under added notes of this article, at the end. One and a half years later, on May the 6th, 1894, a disastrous fire wiped out the electric plant, together with several business houses. Total loss was estimated at $65,000. Reports of the fire in the Free Press run into several columns. A brief summary may be of interest.

Quoting, “The worst blaze in the history of Nanaimo. The whole city was threatened. The conflagration started in Mr. D. C. McKenzie's store. The fire started at 3:00 AM Sunday, and was not over until 6:00 AM. McKenzie's store was situated at the west end of the bridge and on the north side. Mr. W. [Jarvie?], an employee in the electric light plant, first noticed the fire, and night watchman [Trounce?] ran to have the fire bell ring the alarm. The fire made rapid in-roads to Craig's factory. A few buggies and wagons and some tools were rescued. His losses estimated at $30,000.

Mr. R. Wenborn's bicycle and machine shop was destroyed. The stock included imported bicycles, etc. worth $1,000. Mr. L. Lawrence's soda factory was, for a time, in a severe predicament. The building was on the west side of Fraser Street. The raging fire swept under the wooden Bastion Street Bridge and burned several stores on the other side. Sam Kee's laundry with a loss of $15,000 - several Chinese men were seen carrying their belongings away. [Barrett's?] Harness Shop and Mrs. George's fruit and candy shop were destroyed. Six constables were sworn in to control the crowds that milled around the fire.

The end of the wooden bridge was on much lower ground than the present bridge where some of the stores were located. Mr. C. H. Stickles, manager of the electric light plant was in Victoria that day. He returned the next evening with Mr. Joseph Hunter. In speaking to Mrs. H. L. Horne during 1966, she remembered the big fire very well, and named most of the persons who lost the business houses.
In an interview with Mr. James Cowie, December the 3rd, 1953, I gathered the following information, and note, at this time of the interview, Mr. Cowie was 81 years of age and still working at his bench in the John Cowie Machine Shop. Quoting, "I commenced working for the power company in 1891 as night-man. Wages were $60 per month, for 10-11 hours a day, and seven days a week. Previous to being on the payroll, I worked at the printing shop and spent most of my spare time at the power plant. I was fascinated by the new electric machines and [flying] belts.

Mr. Lou [Allardyce?] was electrician, and Mr. Alexander Shaw Jr. was the daytime engineer. The powerhouse was of wood construction, and this was destroyed by fire May the 6th, 1894. The fire started in McKenzie's furniture store. For the first three months of operation, the Arc machines for street lightning continued until it was sufficiently light enough in the morning to allow it to be shut down. All electrical installations and wiring for stores and homes was done by the company electrician.

A new plant was constructed on the property, leased from the coal company. It was situated along the ravine at the corner of Campbell Street, now Terminal Avenue, being on lot 7, block 4. This is the large, corrugated iron building now used as a warehouse. When extreme high tides, the water made this site almost an island. This steam plant continued to operate until 1905.

In an interview with Mr. Lou Lawrence, December 7th, 1953, I gathered this interesting information. "I arrived in Nanaimo in 1884, and I started to work for the power company August the 22nd, 1904, at the ravine location as fireman at $60 per month, and operated from evening to daylight. Equipment consisted of the two renovated 25 kW direct current dynamos, and the two renovated Arc machines saved from the fire at Fraser Street. A steam engine, horizontal-type, with 16x24 inch piston, and an 8 foot fly wheel which turned 160 revolutions per minute. Later, two small, direct current dynamos were added, also a new steam engine, which was connected to one of the Arc machines for use at peak loads. Other machines were run by belts from the shaft, driven by the big steam engine. The last two dynamos were later discarded, and a new alternating current, 1100 volt, 133 cycle, generated added.

When peak loads are going out, as on Saturday nights, we burnt Ladysmith's special washed nut coal. Four tonnes per shift, which cost $4 per tonne, together with 4 cords of good wood, at about $2.75 a cord. I remember handling that fuel. There was no extra help. At other times, the local slack coal was used. This cost about $2 per tonne, delivered.

Mr. Lou Allardyce was first engineer. Mr. Fred Byers commenced as second engineer in 1896, and was made first engineer after the death of Mr. Allardyce in 1899."
In 1904 the electric company decided to build a power plant on Millstone River, to be run by hydro power. Work commenced on February...1904. The site was surveyed by Mr. Fred [King?]. The power house was a modern, strong, brick building. Mr. A. Henderson laid the stone foundations at a cost of $740. Mr. A. Dixon built the brick building, 40x70 feet, for $995. The galvanized cupboard roof was supplied and constructed by Mr. J McLeod for $206.83. The windows were supplied by Mr. J. Haslam, for $24, and the lock by Mr. J. Sampson for $2.

Other labour on the project was paid at the rate of $2 to $3 for a ten hour day. The water power is to replace the steam operated plant used by the company. It is obtained from Millstone River at a point a 1/4 of a mile from Quarterway House, where there is a dam 150 feet long, 14 feet high, and 12 feet wide.

From this runs a ditch for 725 feet, and then a flume 2000 feet long conveys the water to a tank measuring 12 by 14 feet. From this big tank, a 30 inch pipe conducts the water 1800 feet further. Whence a 26 inch pipe, 400 feet long, carries the water to the powerhouse. The pipe, which is off the new wooden, wire bound variety, empties into a metallic receiver with three branches, each with a 14 inch gate valve. From these branches, the water strikes three Pelton wheels, each 48 inches in diameter, with two nozzles to each wheel.

The electric machinery will gradually be moved from the old building so as not to interfere with the supply of light. And when all is in order, the company will be prepared to supply power as well as lighting. A new generator is to be placed in position this fall, and with the new machine the power will be 350 kW instead of 180 at present. Another improvement is to do away with the direct current and employ on alternating machines entirely. The steam plant will be moved to the new powerhouse and kept for emergencies. Mr. William Lewis, the manager, who has kept careful supervision over the work, will have a very fine electric system under his control.

When the generating machines were installed and in working order, the Nanaimo Free Press, in an article dated April 27th, 1905, announced with large headlines: Turn On The Water. At this ceremony, Mr. William Lewis, manager, was quoted as saying "They were building for the future. These remarkable machines will be able to supply lots of power." end of quote.

This was only a test run on the water wheels. And quoting from a diary from 1905, "On Monday, December the 8th, moved large arc machines to new powerhouse." On May the 10th, at 4:50 p.m., "Turned water on the wheels, and run the large arc machine. Everything running good."
It took 36 days to dismantle the large steam engine at the ravine plant, and move to new powerhouse along with all other equipment and to set it up in running order. As more dwellings were added to the electric system, and more power used for business, the demand for electricity mounted. The company could not meet the requirements when the season of low water was on Millstone River, even with an auxiliary steam equipment running to capacity.

26:45

There are numerous reports of complaints on the inadequate lighting. At the city council meeting November 21st, 1908, there was a communication from the citizen's league demanding action for better service. There was also a report from the street lighting committee, presenting a rough draft of a proposed agreement with the electric company for a reduction in street lighting rates. The old rate was $111 per annum per arc light; the new rate, $70 per annum per arc light.

A lengthy discussion followed concerning the various clauses in the proposed agreement, such as candlepower of the new lights, the years to be in effect, etc. A clause stated, "More modern generating machines will be installed within two years' time." The street committee stated they had no alternative but to recommend acceptance of the proposed contract, and it was adopted by the council.

In 1907, the company decided to store water as reserve. About 200 acres in all of land and swamp area was purchased from Mr. [Dais? inaudible] Westwood and the Western Fuel Company. This is now Westwood Lake.

A dam was constructed across the outlet and listed as "Number 2 Dam". A gate valve allowed water to flow as required down a 38 inch penstock onto Jinglepot Road, and down to Millstone River in the flats. The dam is still in good condition.

In 1921 the company built a brick powerhouse in the flats called "Number 2 Powerhouse". A wooden pipe was laid to convey water from Number 2 Dam to drive a Pelton wheel of 135 horsepower, and a General Electric generator of 200 horsepower. A transmission line was built in Nanaimo. The water released was passed into Millstone River to be used again at Number 1 Plant. At Number 2 Powerhouse, a brick house was built for the operator, then Mr. Dick Alexander.

Information supplied by Mr. Andrew Montador, December 17th, 1953. Quoting, "I arrived in Nanaimo January the 2nd, 1922, to take over as chief engineer of the Nanaimo Electric Light, Heat, and Power Company, under Mr. William Lewis as manager. Number 1 Plant, situated on Millstone River, consisting of the following equipment: One 450 horsepower Pelton water wheel, with belt, connected to two General Electric generators - one 150 horsepower and one 250 horsepower; one Howden vertical compound engine, direct
connected to one 300 kVA Bruce Peebles’ generator; two 160 horsepower boilers - horizontal return tubular. At Plant Number 2: One Pelton water wheel, 135 horsepower; one General Electric generator, 200 horsepower.

30:23

In 1923, Number 2 Plant was increased from 125 kVA to 205 kVA by replacing the wheel by a larger Pelton wheel. In 1925 Number 1 Plant capacity was increased by the installation of a 500 kVA mixed-pressure Howden steam turbine, to run in conjunction with the above mentioned Howden vertical engine. In 1942, a further increase was obtained by the installation of a 500 kVA Allis-Chalmers turbine and water wheel direct connected to a CGE generator of that same capacity. This required the installation of a larger pipeline from Number 1 Dam on Millstone River to Number 1 Plant.

New wood pipe replaced wood pipe, 30 inches at dam and 32 inches at the plant, which in turn had replaced the open wooden flume from the tank and 32 inch pipeline in 1927."

31:37

Mr. Frank Cartwright supplied this account: "I came to Nanaimo as a young boy in 1894. Served four years as an apprentice at Dobson's Nanaimo Foundry as machinist; worked as machinist at the powder works from 1911 to 1918, then took up the study of steam engineering and generating electricity. Commenced working for Nanaimo-Duncan Utilities in 1926 as chief engineer at the Millstone power plant, to replace Mr. Andrew Montador, who had been promoted to supervise the distribution system. We worked three shifts of eight hours, with an engineer and fireman each shift.

"In 1926, the electrical output was made up of, at Number 1 Plant, 300 kW by steam vertical engine; 500 kW by steam turbine, 400 kW by Pelton water wheel, and 200 kW by Pelton water wheel at Number 2 Jinglepot Plant - a total of 1,400 kW. In 1947, when I left the plant for duties as supervisor of power line system, the output was 6,000 kW. When I retired in 1958, the peak load was about 250,000 kW's.

"The power plant was very efficient to supply the power demand, except when low water was in effect on Millstone River, then we had problems. I remember one dry fall season when there was not enough water to run the water wheels until three days before Christmas."

The following was related to me by Mr. William Lewis at his home, 60 Dawes Street, November 28th, 1953. Quoting, "I arrived at Nanaimo October 12th, 1875, about midnight. It was very dark. There were no lights about. After working for some years at various occupations, I had the good fortune to know Mr. James Alan Ward Bell, who was the accountant for the electric company. Mr. Bell introduced me to Mr. Joseph Hunter, manager
of the electric works when I was engaged as collector, April 1897, at $70 per month. The
office at this time was situated at the ravine plant. Mr. Bell instructed me how to post up the
accounts in the big, detailed register. Mr. Bell was appointed manager later. Mr. Hunter
resided most of the time in Victoria. Mechanics pay at the plant was $65 per month, firemen
$60. The arc light men who attended the street lights had $80 per month, and he was the
highest paid man.

" Slack coal for the boilers cost 80 cents per long tonne of 2,240 pounds at the mine, or
$1.35 per tonne delivered. There were only 40 retail meters on the system; the rate was 20
cents per kilowatt-hour. For residences without meters, only 16 candlepower lamps were
allowed at the rate of $1 for one light, $2 for two lights, $2.50 for three lights, and $3 per
month for four lights. It was considered a real good show to have four lights burning. And
remember, these were only 16 candlepower lights."

"The hospital paid a flat rate of $14 per month, when they could paid the account. Mr.
Hunter was most considerate for the hospital, and I have only the kindest remembrances of
his conducting the affairs of the electric company. To be collector in those days was not an
easy task. I would set out to call on the customers for payment and very often they did not
have the money, not even a silver dollar. Money used in those days in Nanaimo was mostly
gold and silver coin; paper money was just beginning to be in general use. When I met the
boat to receive money from the purser, or to ship money to Victoria, it was nearly all gold
and silver."

"Previous to 1900, clear cedar poles cost three cents per lineal foot with a nine inch top.
Around 1900, the cost rose to 15 cents per lineal foot for number one poles. During this
period, it cost about $10 to buy and set in the ground a 40 foot pole."

"I became manager of the company in 1903 and secretary manager in 1910, having one
share in the company, retiring in 1931. The office was moved from ravine plant to the
Johnston Blocks, 215 Commercial Street, in 1905. Rent was $20 per month. Moved again
to Wallace Street in 1913, and again to the Windsor Building in 1918."

The original plant had a capacity of 100 horsepower to serve 218 customers. In 1898, street
lighting was the arc-type current. Distribution lines extended to the approximate site of the
present Shell Oil Company warehouse; then it was the provincial jail site on Stewart Avenue
and Townsite Road, on the north/south to the Columbus Hotel, west of the site of the
present hospital, that's on Kennedy Street, and around the business section of Nanaimo.

1895, February 1st: agreement between Nanaimo Electric Works and Nanaimo Hospital,
signed by Mr. Donald Smith, honourable secretary for Nanaimo Hospital, with seal attached,
and J. A. W. Bell, manager on behalf of the Nanaimo Electric Light Works. Agreement
states, "For incandescent lights, as now installed for $14 per month, expiring January 31st, 1896."

A letter from Victoria, dated August the 17th, 1904, addressed to Mr. Samuel Gough, city clerk. We only quoting in part here: "I have your letter of the 13th instance. Your council feel inclined to go into the matter of acquiring the Light Works subject to the approval of the rate payers. The contract with the city did not expire until August the 1st, 1905 when negotiations could then be considered. Signed, Joseph Hunter."

39:32

Here follow several selected items from the diaries of Mr. William Lewis, and newspaper clippings that are of interest.

1904 - "Street lighting committee recommended that two 16 candlepower lights be installed near the E&N Station on Fitzwilliam Street."

February 11th - "Violent storm toppled power and telephone poles. Wires all crossed up. City in darkness. Reports of telephones bursting into flames up the walls. Several accounts of citizens complaining about rates charged for electricity and water shortage."

Thursday, November 3rd, 1904 - "This is the first day for a time that there is enough water to run the hydro machines."

Quoting from the Nanaimo Free Press, for April 27th, 1905. Large headlines announced - "Turn on the water. Power plant at the new electric station almost ready"

This quoted in part of a long article - "Tomorrow for the first time water will be turned on at the new power station of the Nanaimo Electric Light, Power and Heating on the banks of the Millstone River. That does not mean that the works are ready for operations yet, because although the water power plant is in position, none of the electric light machinery has been moved from the present station.

"The turning on of the water is to see that everything in connection with that portion of the improvements is in perfect condition. Though there does not seem to be any doubt on that end, as everything has been built in most substantial manner, the water works is to replace the steam now used by the company.

"The water wheels are set on solid concrete foundations. The two fly wheels, eight feet in diameter, and with 22-inch facings, were furnished by the Albion Iron Works, Vancouver, but all other castings were produced from Nanaimo Foundry, which has done excellent work in this respect."
"Another improvement is to do away with the direct current and employ the alternating machines. The steam plant will be moved to the new powerhouse and kept for emergencies."

42:06

A few more items culled from some of the early diaries:

1905, May the 8th: "Moved the large arc machine to the new powerhouse."

May the 10th - "arc machine running good. Turned by the water wheel."

Monday, July the 17th - "Three and a half inches of water going over the dam. 11 inches of water in flume. 1,200 lights and large arc lights being served."

Tuesday, August the 9th, 1905, an item states "Six horses pulled the 14 by 66 foot boiler from the ravine plant to new powerhouse in three hours."

Monday, August the 22nd - "At 2:40 p.m. steam let into engine which turned over for first time. 36 days taking down and re-setting up engine".

January 31st, 1907 - "Here is an account of a copy with the City of Nanaimo for street lighting: 51 street lights for 31 nights at 31 cents, $490; five incandescent lights of 16 candlepower at $1, $5; one incandescent light of 32 candlepower at $1.50, $1.50. Total $494.61, less rebate of lights out, $13.76, balance $482.85".

44:03

1908, Sunday, May 31st, at 7:30 p.m., Mr. Lewis went to Chinatown for inspection. Lead wires of one house were down on account of Chinamen tearing down a building. Live wires on the street. Saturday night they were arrested.

In 1917, the first three phase motor, five horsepower, was constructed by Ben Griffiths - who is still employed as a line foreman with the B.C. Power Commission - to run the press for the Nanaimo Daily Herald. All machinery at Nanaimo Free Press was gas operated until 1918 when a conversion to electricity was made.

Transportation for line men, meter readers, etc. was by bicycle or on foot, with teamsters being hired to haul the poles and line materials. The first truck, a one-ton Model T, was purchased in 1927.
Former employees of Nanaimo Electric Light and Power Company, retired but still living in Nanaimo, include: William Lewis, Joe Piper, Mary Freeman, Louis Lawrence, and Dick Alexander.

An item dated May 15th, 1919: "While Mr. William Lewis and Mr. Matt Armstrong were inspecting Number 1 Dam on Millstone River, owing to higher water, they were washed over the falls. They managed to get ashore lower down the river, but both suffered bruises."

Most of the items in the early diaries of the hydro plant are chiefly concerned with weather reports and water flow on Millstone River.

In 1954, Mr. Charles Nash of the B.C. Power Corporation, Nanaimo office, presented Nanaimo Historical Society with a comprehensive account of the changes in management of electrical system, and the tremendous progress made to develop more power for this part of Vancouver Island from 1926 to 1945. The four-page report is included in this history. Briefly stated, changes in management operation taken from the report: "In 1926, the International Utilities purchased the holdings of the Nanaimo Electric Light, Heat, and Power Company and immediately following this, a sale was negotiated to this same utility by the municipal system in Duncan. In 1934, the Canadian Utilities disposed of their interest to a company called Nanaimo-Duncan Utilities. In 1940, a new hydro unit was installed at Nanaimo. In 1945, the British Columbia Commission took over."

Mr. Nash also presented the Historical Society with a large register of customer accounts of the Electric Company, covering the period September 1898 to October 1904. Records previous to 1898 are not available at present. In showing the register to Mr. William Lewis, he recognized his handwriting on posting the accounts, for those days in parts of the register. Some very interesting items concerning pioneer names and business houses, and the amount of electric currents used and other particulars, are shown in this register.

As shown, the Bank of Halifax is listed on the first page for September 1898, for incandescent current, $6.70; [work?]: $6.50; the meter ren.: 25 cents; total, $13.45. The account stops in December 1900. The following month, January 1901, the Royal Bank account is posted. The Bank of Halifax may have been a customer for electric current previous to 1898.

The Bank of British Columbia first commenced business in Nanaimo in a log cottage on Front Street, previous to 1888. On September 12th, 1888, the bank let a contract to build a two-storied brick bank building at number 55 Front Street, close by the log building. On November 7th the building was completed. The bank moved in the new premises, December 15th, 1888. On January the 4th, 1891, the bank opened a savings department. There is an account in the register for December 1898, for electric current: $10.00; and
lamps, $1.00. The Bank of British Columbia account for electricity ends in December 1900. The Bank of Commerce first account for electric current was posted for January 1901.

In December, 1898, the YMCA and the Nanaimo Opera House were both listed as electrical users. There are 21 hotels listed as having electric current: 14 to the year 1899, and the rest in the following years. I will name them here: There was Nanaimo, Newcastle, Britannia, The Grand, Wilson, Central, Commercial, Oriental, Balmoral, Provincial, The Windsor, Crescent, Palace, Globe, Old Flag, Temperance, Identical, Vendome, Queens, Eagles, and Dew Drop.

There were 30 listings for Chinese houses and businesses. Here are added notes of historic interest:

Mr. Joseph Hunter, who bought the electric plant in October 1892, was a civil engineer. In 1877, Mr. Hunter official reported discovering the Pine River Pass. He made the railway survey from Howe Sound to Lillooet. He acted for the Dominion Government in marking the boundary between Canada and Alaska on the Stikine [Stickeen] River. He laid out the E&N Railway and was its first superintendent. Mr. Hunter died at Victoria in 1935, age 93.

An item concerning Mr. James Alan Ward Bell, mentioned earlier as secretary who introduced Mr. William Lewis to Mr. Joseph Hunter, was the first European baby born on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, September 13th, 1873. This item is taken from the Sunday Sun Magazine, for November 27th, 1954. His brother John was witness to the hospital agreement for electric current contract February the 1st, 1895. Mr. James Alan Ward Bell wrote considerable poetry.

As part of this article are two sets of light and power rates of earlier times; unfortunately no dates are given. Also, the original agreement with the hospital on light rates, dated February the 1st, 1895, and pictures of different views connected with the electric industry.

Quoting from a letter dated June the 3rd, 1926, to Mr. William Lewis from Mr. Joseph Hunter. Quoting in part: "I ever found a trusted and devoted friend and business associate of sterling honour and integrity."

This is William Barraclough speaking.
[End of tape]