

*growing
with
Washington...*

Washington Gas Light Company

Growing with Washington . . .



Washington Gas Light Company Main Office.

GROWING WITH WASHINGTON

The Story of Our First Hundred Years



Prepared by

ROBERT R. HERSHMAN and EDWARD T. STAFFORD



*The heritage of the past
is the seed that brings
forth the harvest of
the future.*

EDITED BY ALBERT W. ATWOOD

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Especially is the Company indebted to the Washingtoniana Division of the Public Library, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Columbia Historical Society, and the American Gas Association Library.

With the help of these and many others, this has been a pleasant and stimulating undertaking.

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Foreword

 ONE HUNDRED years ago, our city was little more than a rambling village along the Potomac. The Nation and its Capital were still young, and much land in the far west was open for settlement . . . eighteen states were yet to be admitted to the Union. And Washington, the Capital City, had no streetcars, telephones, electricity, automobiles . . . these things were hidden behind the curtain of the Future.

As this mighty Nation developed, its Capital emerged as a beautiful metropolis. And during this transition, the Washington Gas Light Company grew and progressed with the community.

During our Centennial Anniversary, we proudly present our personal story which depicts the city's drama and the part we have played in it since 1848. The story of the Company is interwoven with that of the city . . . a panorama of personalities, growth, and interesting events, from the early days to the present period.

Chapter One

A GREAT CITY IS BORN



*Rear to the sky a monument so grand
That it shall shine across this mighty land,
And while the planets in their cycles run
'T will tell the story of great Washington.*

—COL. JOHN A. JOYCE

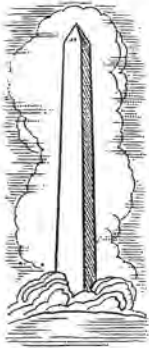
“WHAT’S PAST IS PROLOGUE.”

SHAKESPEARE



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The National Archives



1848 . . . on July Fourth the cornerstone of the Washington Monument was laid amidst elaborate ceremonies, and four days later the Washington Gas Light Company was granted its charter by Congress.

One pleasant evening a magic voice boomed over the city and spoke to the Monument.

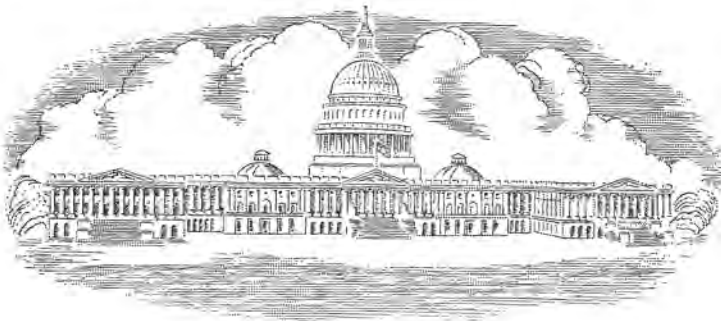
"Welcome to this great city. I am the Capitol, one of the oldest public buildings in Washington.

It is gratifying to know that at last our First President will have a beautiful monument to his memory. This reminds me also, that another long-desired project, the new gas company, has become a reality."

Monument interrupted, "I have heard the workmen speak of the gas company and its proposed new works at Tenth and Louisiana Avenue. They eagerly await the day when their homes and streets will be lighted with gas."

"That is true," remarked Capitol, "I have listened to many debates in Congress about the formation of a gas company. The original gas plant, you know, is here on the Capitol grounds."

"You have much experience and authority," said Monument, "and since we are to be neighbors, tell me the story of this city and the events which have made it so renowned."



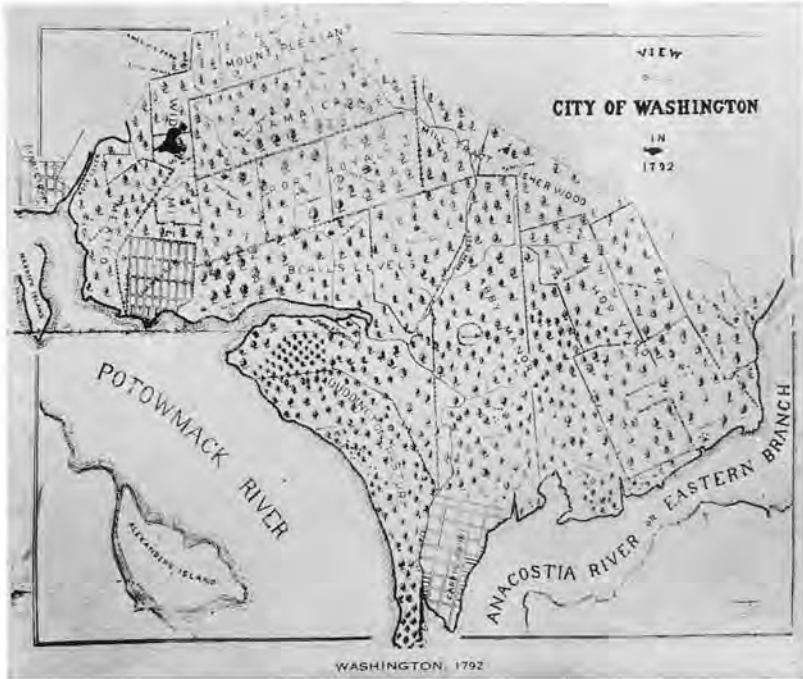
Suppose we begin with the Seventeenth Century, that era in which many Europeans were migrating to America. This great land of ours was the world's reception center for all those who desired freedom of speech and religion. When the early settlers arrived on this continent they found the Indian with his primitive methods and customs.

The Indians of Maryland and Virginia differed little from the thousands of Indians throughout the land, and their dwellings centered around local villages. The red men of this area belonged to the family of the Algonquins, and two of these tribes were the Powhatans and the Anacostians. From the latter tribe the friendly section of Anacostia derives its name.

These Indians were noted for pottery making, soapstone quarries, and sorcery. They left here indelible reminders of their existence in the naming, after tribes and chiefs, of the Potomac, Piscataway, Patuxent, Mattawoman, Pohick, and other local places.



Captain John Smith's Map from his interesting book of explorations.



One of the first renowned visitors in this region was Captain John Smith of Pocahontas fame. In 1608 he entered the majestic Potomac, penetrated the surrounding land, possibly as far as Great Falls, and established friendly relations with the Indians.

Another Englishman, Henry Fleete, visited this territory around 1632. Upon his return to England he published an account of his journeys, and his description was so vivid and enthusiastic that many people migrated to Virginia and Maryland.

If you examine the early maps of Washington you will notice that some of the present names of localities were in existence then: George Town, Mount Pleasant, Isherwood, Anacostia, and Bladensburg. The latter, the earliest settlement in this area, and originally called Garrison's Landing, was a seaport on the Eastern Branch as early as 1742.

Alexandria, another important seaport, was incorporated in 1749, and named after the Alexander family who owned most

of the land. George Town, established in 1751, was named after George II, King of Great Britain, to whom the American provinces were loyal at that time.

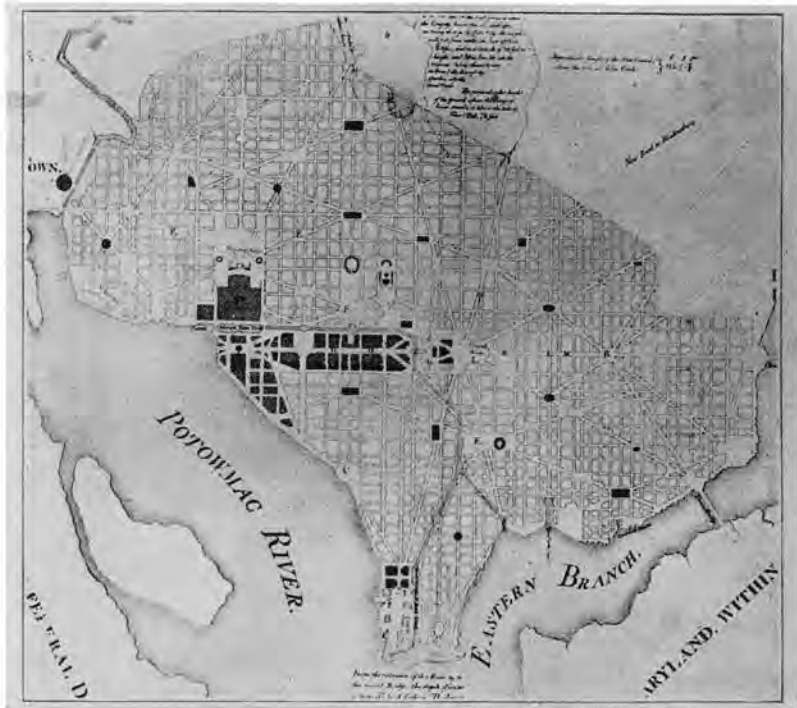
The story of 1776 and the beginning of our democratic form of government is well-known. The location of a new Capital engaged the attention of Congress for seven years. In 1790 it was decided to place the Capital on the banks of the Potomac, on a site between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and the Conococheague, the latter at Williamsport, Maryland, limiting its territory to ten miles square. Later, the Federal territory was given the name *District of Columbia*, and the city was called *Washington* in honor of the Father of our Country. The cities of Kingston, Annapolis, Burlington, Williamsburg, Germantown, Carlisle, Lancaster, York, Reading, Wright's Ferry, Alexandria, New York, Baltimore, Wilmington, and George Town, had unsuccessfully sought the honor of becoming the Nation's Capital.

President Washington was to select the site, obtain the land, and appoint commissioners to make the necessary plans. This huge task required careful consideration. Financing the project was the chief difficulty encountered as Congress had no funds for this new undertaking. Thus, Maryland and Virginia promised to jointly contribute land and one hundred and ninety-two thousand dollars.

Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French soldier, engineer, and architect, was appointed to draw the plans of the city. This man of vision devoted himself to this great work; he labored, dreamed, planned, and, sad to relate, quarreled with practically everyone. Broad avenues, spacious circles, and splendid buildings were a part of his dream, and it was he who placed the Capitol and the President's Mansion at their respective locations.

Everything seemed to be progressing well, when suddenly a number of controversial storms arose. L'Enfant startled the citizens with the news that the streets were to be one hundred and ten feet in width, and the avenues, one hundred and sixty feet. The inhabitants, who saw only dismal swampland with muddy roads, were infuriated; here was a mad Frenchman who wanted to use their land to make muddy roads wider. It was preposterous and extravagant, and they frowned upon such plans.

This and other difficulties forced Washington to dismiss Major L'Enfant and appoint Andrew Ellicott in his place. However, the new appointee made relatively few changes in L'Enfant's original plan.



L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington.

The city, with its carefully planned avenues and streets, was laid out in virgin soil. It had no primeval background or towering ambition which has sometimes marked the designing of other world capitals.

Despite many obstacles, the cornerstone of the District of Columbia was laid on April 15, 1791, at Jones Point, just below the town of Alexandria . . . thus the Nation's Capital was born! In the fall of that same year George Town College was opened, and its first student, William Gaston, was later a Congressman from North Carolina.

Prior to the advent of the government, there were two small settlements in the city: Hamburg and Carrollsburgh. The latter was located between the north bank of the Anacostia River and James Creek. This settlement in southwest Washington, founded by one of the Carrolls, contained two hundred and sixty-seven lots, and boasted a population of approximately one hundred people. Here was printed in 1795, the first Washington newspaper, *The Impartial Observer and Washington Advertiser*. Carrollsburgh gave the city its first militia and first school, and many Washington families originated in this old southwest section, the nucleus of the Federal City.

The other early settlement, Hamburg, laid out by Jacob Funk in 1771, was formerly known as Funkstown. It was located with a frontage on the Potomac, and bounded by H Street, Nineteenth and Twenty-Fourth Streets. In this small area there were a few homes and a well planned town with such street names as Market, Water, High, Walnut, and Persemon.

Washington was comprised of these two small inhabited areas, and the rest was much wilderness with a few homes and farms scattered here and there. At the turn of the century the Capitol and President's Mansion were being built, a small wooden building for the Treasury Department had been completed, several modest hotels were under construction, but there were few accommodations for the Federal employees. The inhabitants, noticing this construction work, and realizing their responsibility to the arriving government, took heart and became more interested in the new city. In a short time, private dwellings appeared in scattered areas, but there remained much mud, swamp, and woods.

In 1800 the Federal Government moved from Philadelphia to its new location on the banks of the Potomac. This was no task at all, for the government personnel numbered about one hundred and twenty, and their possessions came by stage coach, while the Federal papers and supplies were shipped by water. President John Adams arrived on June 3, inspected the Federal buildings, stayed at Tunnicliff's Hotel, and shortly returned to his New England home.

Some of the people who lived here contributed much to the new town and embellished it with their personalities. There was



The Federal City in 1800.

the First Lady, Abigail Adams, who complained considerably about the terrible conditions of the President's House and the city. She wrote that here there were no bells, that lighting the house was a tax indeed, and the mirrors were too small. She also mentioned the difficulty of heating the large house. Although the city abounded with woods, she found it not easy to hire servants to cut firewood. It was she who dried the presidential laundry in the famous East Room, which at that time was an open-air chamber.

A truly great influence was Thomas Jefferson. He not only advised L'Enfant but submitted his own plans for the city, and the present arrangement of Washington's streets and avenues is due largely to his suggestions. Jefferson inaugurated the New Year's reception at the Executive Mansion with its custom of the President shaking hands with the public. One can visualize Robert Fulton of steamboat fame, who lived here at that time, standing in line to greet Mr. Jefferson.

Another personality was Dolly Madison, popular belle of Washington society, who arranged to save the famous Washington portrait when the British set fire to the city. Dolly was often criticized for wearing paint and powder, but she ignored her many critics and did just as she pleased. And in the late Twenties, Peggy O'Neale, daughter of a local innkeeper, caused a great social and political controversy when she married John Eaton, a member of Jackson's cabinet.

Among the many citizens who helped the infant city to grow and become great were the Carrolls, John Tayloe, Dr. Thornton, Thomas Peter, and Pontius Stelle. The city's famous Octagon House was built by Mr. Tayloe, and this landmark still stands near the President's House.

Washington had many distinguished visitors; among them were Washington Irving, General Lafayette, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe . . . and poet Thomas Moore, who later wrote these memorable lines about the city:

In fancy now, beneath the twilight gloom
Come, let me lead thee o'er this second Rome,
Where tribunes rule, where dusky Davi bow,
And what was Goose Creek once is Tiber now.

This fam'd metropolis, where fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Which second sighted seers e'en now adorn
With shrines unbuilt and heroes yet unborn.

In 1802 the city was incorporated, and Robert Brent was appointed the first mayor by President Jefferson. Due largely to lack of funds, the progress of the city was slow, and some years elapsed before fire and police departments were established. Sanitary conditions were bad, and some of the inhabitants cared little about the city's appearance, for they allowed their cattle, pigs, and goats to roam scot-free.

The burning of the city by the British in 1814 only temporarily retarded its growth. Even though the public buildings were destroyed, the people took renewed interest, and the rebuilding of the city commenced.

In 1820 all residents of the city were given the right to vote and elect their mayor. Prior to this, voting had been restricted



to property owners. Unaware that this was not to be a permanent privilege, the people rejoiced, and their interest and progress were stimulated. In the decade that followed, a new theatre and city hall were built, the first board of health was established, streets and roads were repaired and graded . . . and a toll was exacted on all roads which came into Washington. It was in 1821 that Columbian College, later George Washington University, was chartered by Congress.

Horse racing was very popular in the city, and Congress occasionally adjourned to attend the races. One of the city's race courses, located on Meridian Hill, staged a race in 1822 in which *Eclipse* won a five thousand dollar stake.

In July of 1828 the construction of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was begun. Six years later the second Long Bridge was opened from Washington to Virginia, and about that time a spectacular event occurred on Analostan Island—Mr. Ash ascended in a balloon.



Second Long Bridge as photographed by Brady.

The population of the District in 1840 was more than forty-three thousand, quite an increase as compared to the fourteen thousand in 1800. Although the city's growth continued at a rapid pace, Washington retained the appearance of a small town. Everyone, including Congress, criticized and complained of the wretched living conditions. The streets, some few lighted by oil lamps, were either so muddy or dusty that walking was quite difficult, and riding in carriages was dangerous. Citizens preferred to stay home at night rather than walk along the unlighted and unpaved streets which were obstructed with mud holes.

It is small wonder that Washington had been dubbed *The Wilderness City*, *The Mud Hole*, *The Capital of Miserable Huts*, *City of Magnificent Distances*. . . .

The famous words "What hath God wrought?" were sent from the Supreme Court room in the Capitol to Baltimore, over the first telegraph wire, by Samuel F. B. Morse on May 24, 1844 . . . an event which attracted much attention. During the Forties America was singing *Oh! Susanna*, one of Stephen Foster's latest song hits.

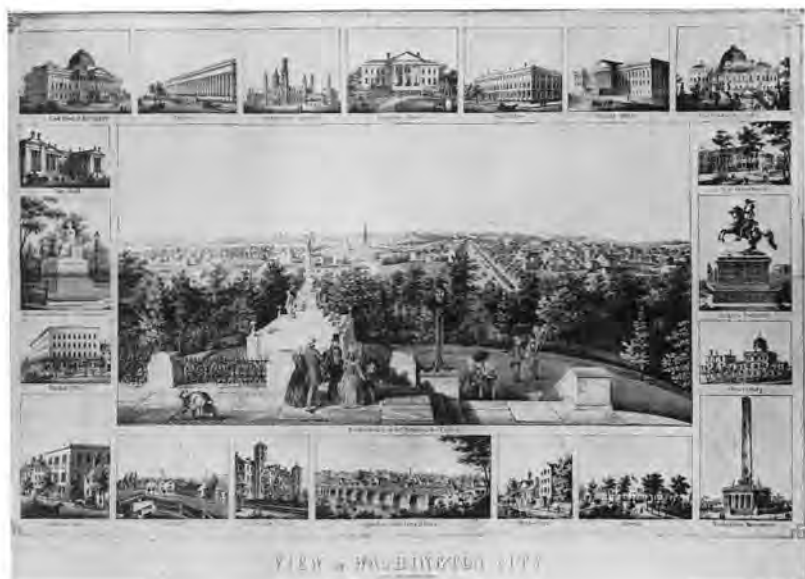
James K. Polk came to the President's Mansion in 1845. During his administration he witnessed the establishment of the Naval Academy, the Mexican War, and the retrocession of Alexandria County from the District's Ten Miles Square.

Abraham Lincoln and his family made their first appearance in the city in 1847 when he was elected a Representative from Illinois. The Lincolns stayed at the Brown Hotel and later at Mrs. Spriggs' boarding house on Capitol Hill. As Lincoln saw the city, it was rather unattractive, quite cold in winter and humid in summer. From his correspondence it is learned that the city had two popular pastimes: bowling and band concerts. The latter were held on the Capitol grounds and at the President's Mansion.

1848 . . . the year the Washington Gas Light Company was organized . . . witnessed a number of special events. Gold was discovered in California, Wisconsin was admitted to the Union, and the end of the Mexican War was proclaimed by President Polk. On July 19th Lucretia Mott addressed the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York . . . and local annals noted that Washington City had about six thousand houses.



Washington in the Thirties.



Washington around 1848.

The cornerstone of the Washington Monument was laid on July 4, 1848. Under a bright sky, and in the presence of the President and Vice President of the United States, Robert Winthrop, Speaker of the House, delivered the principal oration. Then Benjamin B. French, Grand Master of the District Masons, delivered a beautiful and appropriate address, after which he descended to the cornerstone and performed the ceremonies of laying it. The cornerstone, weighing more than twenty-four thousand pounds, was laid at the northeast corner of the foundation, and in it were placed many important documents, books, newspapers, paintings, letters, and coins. More than twenty thousand persons attended the ceremonies, among whom were Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, Mrs. Dolly Madison, and George Washington Parke Custis.

This same year Charles Burton invented the baby carriage . . . and death called a famous merchant, John Jacob Astor. Living in Washington were many famous personalities who engraved their names in the hearts and minds of America: Daniel Webster, Sam Houston, Roger Taney, Stephen Douglas. . .

Newspaper advertising in 1848 is interestingly reflected in the pages of the *National Intelligencer*—

JOSEPH BOULANGER,

American and French Restaurateur,

G street, near the War Department, 1st Ward, Washington,
Will have an open table on the 4th of July, besides his private rooms, for strangers and citizens, who may honor him with their patronage. There will be an abundance of all that the markets can afford, from 10 A. M. till night, on moderate terms.
June 3—3t

EXCURSION TO MOUNT VERNON,

On Tuesday afternoon, July 4th.



The commodious steamer COLUMBIA, to enable many hundreds of strangers who may come to witness the ceremonies attending the laying of the corner-stone of the Washington Monument to obtain a view of Mount Vernon, where the Father of his Country resided, and his remains are entombed, will leave Riley's wharf at 3 o'clock P. M. on an excursion down the river as far as that place, and return in time for the display of fireworks in the evening.

Fare, 50 cents each person. Cold cuts will be furnished on board to those who may desire them, at 25 cents each person.
July 1—

GEO. GUYTHER, Captain.

CLOSING STORES.—A number of Grocery and Dry-good Merchants of Washington, having in view the health and recreation of our clerks, do hereby agree to close our stores every evening (Saturday excepted) at 7 o'clock precisely, commencing from this day out until September 1st, 1848. In order that all might close at the same time, our porter, Nicholas Warner, will ring his bell at 7 o'clock every evening.
July 10—3t

EXTRAORDINARY NOTICE.—To the lovers of good Mutton, my customers, and the public in general.—I shall expose for sale, at my stall in the old Centre Market-house, on Saturday, December 30, (where I hope my customers and the public generally will call and examine for themselves,) a small lot of the finest SOUTHDOWN MUTTON ever offered in this city; and for the exceeding fine quality of the number they are styled by connoisseurs as *nonpareil*. They were raised, grazed, and fattened by that prince of farmers, Thomas E. Berry, Esq., of Prince George's county, Maryland, who may defy competition.

dec 22—3t

PHILIP OTTERBACK.

Chapter Two

AND GAS COMES TO WASHINGTON



But what am I?

*An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.*

—ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

L'ENFANT IS BURIED IN THE
GROUNDS OF THE LEE MANSION
OVERLOOKING WASHINGTON.



© Horydczak

Lee Mansion in Arlington



THE residents of Washington used candles and oil for illumination from the very beginning of the city's existence. In 1802 the Seventh Congress enacted laws and appropriated one hundred dollars for lighting the important avenues and streets with oil.

Experiments with gas were made in this city as early as 1804, when Benjamin Henfry illuminated the chambers and passages of a house on Pennsylvania Avenue and the lamp in front of the house. He also had an exhibition of gas lighting in Richmond, Virginia . . . *price, One Dollar—to admit a lady and gentleman twice.*

The dimly-lighted streets of Washington caused many complaints, and as early as 1816 it was proposed to form a local company to introduce gas lighting, the new mode which had been used in London for several years. This project failed due to the narrow circumstances of the citizens; had it materialized, it would have resulted in the formation of the first gas company in America. There were, however, a few places in the city lighted by gas, produced from wood or coal in an apparatus on the premises.

In 1817 the *National Intelligencer*, one of Washington's early newspapers, printed the following advertisement:

*At Davis' Ball Room
Which will be brilliantly illuminated
WITH GASS LIGHTS
on Saturday evening, January 25th.
The Members of Congress and the Public are
respectfully informed, that
Mr. Dwyer
Formerly of Drury Lane Theatre, London will
deliver entirely from Memory
George Alexander Steven's
Celebrated Lecture on Heads.*

An attempt was made, in 1831, to light the new theater in the Arena Building. The Records of the Columbia Historical Society state that the portable gas lamps failed to burn on the opening night, and the audience had to be dismissed. Perhaps the people

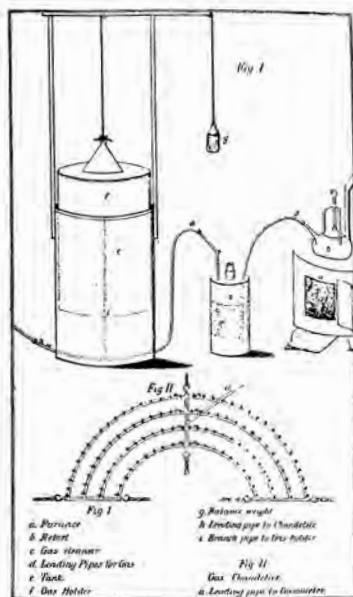
cared little about the success or failure of gas at that time, as the newspapers showed little interest in the new illuminant; or perhaps the theories of Kitty, the maid of the Ingle Family, prevailed throughout the city:

Gas, dat kind er blaze dat comes outen de wall was sent by de evil one, and was no means as good as de good ole time tallor tips, what you could make yerself and so knowed dey was good.

Despite the failure of these previous attempts to use gas, a successful experiment was made by Robert Grant in 1841. He built his apparatus in the new Treasury Building and successfully lighted a room with water-carburetted hydrogen gas, manufactured from the bark of the birch tree. Considering this display a great success, Robert Mills, Architect of the Capitol, presented to Congress a report on the birch-bark gas, and suggested that that honorable body install at once this new lighting method. A year prior to this event, Congress had considered the use of gas manufactured from coal.

The experiment at the Treasury Building was one of several successful gas projects in this city. Georgetown College had installed a gas plant on its property and lighted several buildings. Two other small gas plants were used at Brown's Indian Queen Hotel and at the National Hotel.

At that time Pennsylvania Avenue was called the Great National Broadway of the Metropolis, and had the distinction of being the only local street lighted at night with oil. The citizens became more impatient and dissatisfied with oil and candle lamps in their homes and on the streets, and since their neigh-



Drawing of Robert Grant's Gas Apparatus in Treasury Building.

bors, Baltimore and Philadelphia, had gas companies, they too, wanted a local company. Accordingly, they importuned Congress in 1842, 1843, and 1844 for the incorporation of a gas company. In 1846 the following memorial was presented to Congress:

To the Honorable, The Senate & House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled—The Prayer of your Memorialists humbly represents that most of the Cities of this great Republic are lighted with Gas—That the City of Washington, the Metropolis of the Union, is however, one of the few exceptions, and it must be obvious to your Honorable Bodies, that such lighting is indispensably necessary to the comfort of the Citizens and the numerous visitors who are assembled in this City at all seasons and particularly during the Sessions of Congress.

Your Memorialists, Citizens of Washington, therefore respectfully ask that an Act may be passed incorporating a Company for the purpose of lighting this City with "Carburetted Hydrogen Gas" on such terms and with such limitations as Congress in its wisdom may deem best. . . .

Among the signers were: W. A. Bradley, Samuel L. Coleman, Hudson Taylor, M. Delany, W. Adams, Tyler V. Birch, Th. L. Thruston, Frank Taylor, James G. Coombs, and George Templeman.

That year James Crutchett, a gas pioneer, arrived from Dayton, Ohio. Prior to his appearance in the Federal City, Crutchett had been interested and instrumental in demonstrating gas in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Wheeling, and other cities. After his arrival in Washington, Crutchett bought a house at North Capitol and C Streets, just north of the Capitol grounds, and called it Bethesda Cottage.

Not far away was the Capitol, surrounded by trees and lanes. The entire aspect of the neighborhood was pastoral, with woods, the Creek, and the Canal. Here it was that Crutchett experimented further with his gas inventions, and in a short time lighted his home and the property around it with solar gas made from rosin. He called it solar gas because it produced a light like the solar rays of the sun adapted to the human eye. The small gas plant on his property and the nine gas lamps around it attracted the attention of the entire city.

The solar gas was noticed not only by the residents but likewise by Congress. James Croggon, a contemporary newspaper writer, stated that Crutchett approached Congress and proposed to light the Capitol and grounds. Congress became skeptical when he promised to light up a mile or two of the city with a light on the



Crutchett's House—the first house in Washington lighted with gas.

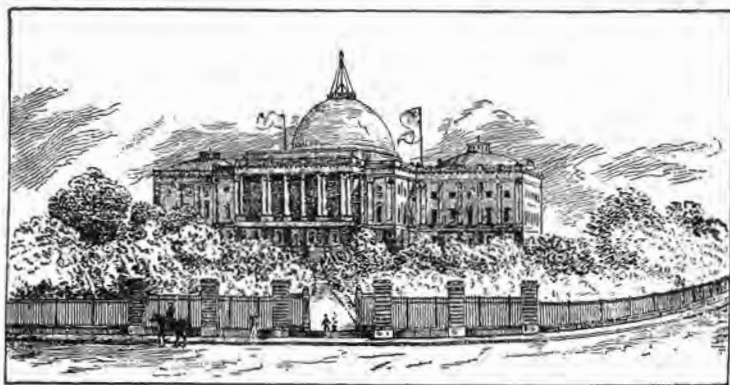
dome of the Capitol. However, he persuaded Congress to grant him a contract, and the Congressional Act of March 3, 1847 appropriated seventeen thousand, five hundred dollars to light the Capitol and grounds. Crutchett then supervised the construction of a gas plant and gas holder on the lower, northwest terrace of the Capitol grounds. He introduced gas into the building and placed on its wooden dome an eighty foot mast of white pine. On the mast was a lantern, six feet in diameter, made of iron and copper, beautifully gilded and enclosed with glass. Gas tubes ran through the heavy mast and were connected with the main gas

tubes from the gas holder at the bottom of the terrace. This huge gas lantern lighted the Capitol grounds and a part of the surrounding area, and the light was seen many miles down the Potomac.

An interesting observation regarding the famous light comes from the pen of Congressman John Fairfield, who wrote to his wife on December 4, 1847:

Crutchett's big light on the dome of the Capitol I don't think much of. It affords a tolerable light immediately about the Capitol, but the light is not extended as far as has been anticipated. The Senate Chamber was lighted up last evening with gas, and looked splendidly. The light proceeded from a sort of chandelier suspended in the center and quite up to the ceiling. This alone makes light enough to write by and read the finest print in any part of the chamber.

From various sources it is learned that Crutchett was somewhat careless in his business enterprises. In his annual report to Congress in 1848, Charles Douglas, Commissioner of Public



Gas light on top of Capitol.

Buildings, advised that arrangements to supply gas be made with some other group.

Entering the picture was Benjamin B. French, who was to play a major role in the formation of the Washington Gas Light Company. He was Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives, and from him Crutchett received the appropriations made by Congress.

From his personal correspondence in the Library of Congress, it is learned that French became president of several telegraph companies, and was closely associated with Samuel F. B. Morse.



BENJAMIN B. FRENCH

In later years French was secretary to his friend, President Franklin Pierce, and was one of the few personal friends of Abraham Lincoln in Washington. As a public speaker he was renowned, and at most of the major functions held in the city he acted as toastmaster, principal speaker, or historical poet. He laid the cornerstones of the Washington Monument and the Smithsonian Institution, and at the Gettysburg Dedication, he preceded Lincoln to the rostrum and read his own poem for the occasion.

Because of Crutchett's attitude, the necessity of organizing a gas company was evident. From a number of sources it is clear that French was largely instrumental in forming the Washington Gas Light Company, and the men who joined him in this undertaking were John F. Callan, Jacob Bigelow, William H. English, Michael P. Callan, William H. Harrover, and William A. Bradley. All of these were prominent, representative local men, neighbors, and business associates: John Callan was a druggist; his brother Michael, a clerk in the Post Office; Bradley, the city's mayor and postmaster; lawyer Bigelow; hardware merchant Harrover; and English, who rose from Treasury clerk to Congressman from Indiana, was later a Vice Presidential candidate. These were the personalities who formed the much-needed gas company, and started it on its long career of public service.

On April 12, 1848, a petition was sent to Congress requesting incorporation of the Washington Gas Light Company.

To the Hon Senate & House of Reps. a.s.

The Petition of the undersigned Citizens of Washington Respectfully
Represents - That for the purpose of supplying this City with
Solar Gas they have formed a joint stock Company & for the
purpose of carrying out the objects of their association
they ^{now} for an act to incorporate them & their associates
as a public & corporate body

John F. Callan
J. Bevelow.
Wm H. Conzlie
G. B. French
Mr. Callan
W. A. Harrover
W. A. Bevelow

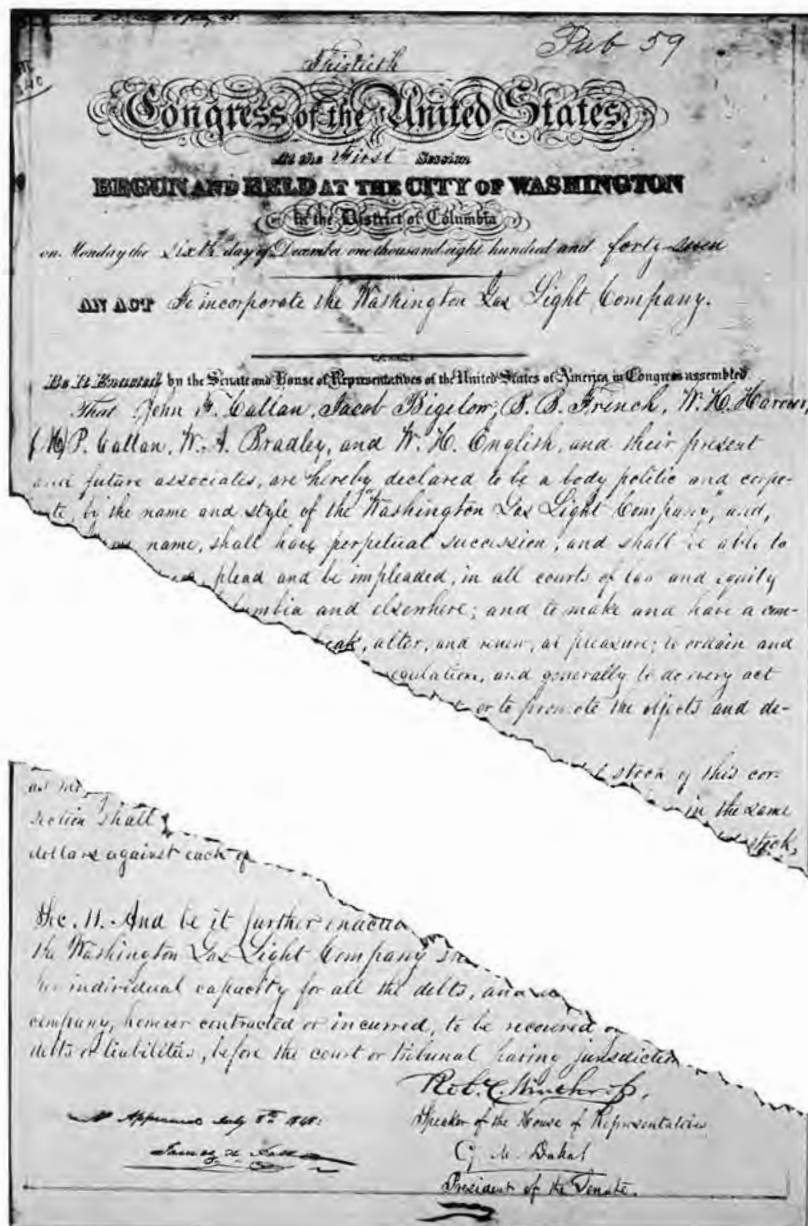
City of Washington
Jan 12. 1848.

Petition sent to Congress in 1848 requesting in-
corporation of the Washington Gas Light Company.

Another petition of interest was one of April 25, 1848 . . . a
resolution from the Board of Aldermen and Common Council of
the city, urging Congress to grant the gas company a charter.

The incorporators-to-be purchased from Crutchett his patent
rights, and in April began to supply gas to the Capitol and grounds,
using the plant at the Capitol.

Interesting it is that the first gas plant was on the Capitol
grounds, which at that time were enclosed by an iron fence.
Many stories have been written about lovers, visitors, and legis-
lators being locked in the Capitol grounds, which were closed when
the night watchman called "Ten o'clock, the gates will close!"



Act incorporating the Washington Gas Light Company.

During the first session of the Thirtieth Congress, the bill to incorporate the Washington Gas Light Company was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives, and on July 8, 1848, it received the signature of President James K. Polk. This Act also bears the signatures of Robert C. Winthrop, Speaker of the House, and Vice President George M. Dallas.

The Washington Gas Light Company was the first gas company in the United States chartered by Congress and, of course, preceded the formation of any of the city's other present-day utilities. It has the distinction of being the first public utility chartered by Congress in operation today. Since the signing of the original charter by President Polk, various amendments over the intervening years have been signed by Presidents Pierce, Lincoln, Grant, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.



PRESIDENT POLK
who signed Company Charter.



The seven incorporators were indeed enterprising in forming the Company, as the city was then in a deplorable condition. The citizens were unable to afford gas in their homes at the rate of eight dollars a thousand cubic feet, nor were many of them financially able to buy capital stock in the new Company.

At the first meeting of the Board of Directors John F. Callan was elected president, and Jacob Bigelow, secretary. Four days later an announcement appeared in the *National Intelligencer* that



JOHN F. CALLAN
1st President, 1848-1849
Successful druggist.
Active in civic affairs.

United States of America - To Washington Gas Light Co. Dr.
In lighting the Capitol grounds with solar gas including materials Labor &c
therefor for the month of April May June & July 1848

220 1/2 gallons Whale Oil @ 58 Cts	1005 75
4 Mo - 104 days Wages of Stephen Costin at \$2.25 p. day	229 --
" 4. Wages of John R. Tyler at \$25.	" 2 100 --
" 4. Do. of C. Keenan at \$35.	" 3 1140 --
" 4. Superintendence of Works at \$83.50	" 4 334 --
" By the Iron Bars at 50 cts	3 45
" Repairing gates in Capitol yard	" 4 5 00
" 4 Cylindrical Retorts at \$12.00	50 --
" 15 Tons of Coal at \$7.	" 5 105 --
" Altering Foundation on Senate.	100 19
" 3 Castings double backs & fronts	" 6 32 94
" 100 lbs 50 cts Pipe 25 Works at \$1.40 Percket 62.	2 91
" Repairing & lengthening burner in Office of Sec. of Arms H.R.	2 62
" 2 Cylinders Burners in Post Office of House Reps	3 00
" 2 do ditto Gallery of Senate & S. Ground Glass 50	3 50
" 1 do Post Office of Senate 1.00 11 Percket \$3.50	5 00
" 30 lbs of kerosene & Hawkeye \$3.75 2 Percket \$1.50	5 00
	<u>2127 36</u>

First Gas Bill rendered by Company.

capital stock in the Washington Gas Light Company could be purchased on July twentieth, at 4 P. M., at a meeting to be held on the corner of Seventh and E Streets. A complete record of Minute Books since the first meeting is in the Company's possession.

The first gas bill rendered by the Company was accompanied by this letter from President Callan:

Washington, July 29, 1848

The bill rendered for lighting the Capitol & grounds, labor, etc. from 1st April to 31st July, embraces the lighting of both Houses of Congress, their post offices, passages, stair ways, etc., etc., as well as the lamps upon the terraces, the lantern over the dome, etc., many of which burn without intermission and have had their Capacity increased.

The 2011½ Galls. includes 395 Galls. now on hand and is charged precisely at its average Cost with the expenses of freight, etc. Most of the oil was bot in this City where we pay 56 to 60 cents per gallon for it. We are obliged to pay more for oil because we cannot go to the cheapest market with Cash—there being no provision for that purpose.

It will be found, however, that the prices on the bill now rendered, vary little or none from those hitherto charged when freights, travelling, etc. are included.

The Cost of lighting the Capitol & grounds previous to the introduction of Gas was over ten thousand Dollars per annum. By the present plan of lighting, it cannot exceed six thousand Dollars per annum, making a saving of about \$4,000 a year & having a light of 4 times the brilliancy of Oil.

For the month of August there will be perhaps no oil wanted & we have plenty of Coal for a month to come; the alteration in the Chandelier of the Senate might also be paid out of the Contingent fund of the Senate, also the glasses and burners lately put in the passages, etc. During recess part only of the men will be required.

Respectfully,

J. F. CALLAN

Prest. Washington Gas Light Company

Later in the summer a lot on the corner of Tenth Street and Louisiana Avenue, at the Canal, was purchased from Eleazer Lindsley for the construction of a plant, a gasometer or gas

holder, and other necessary buildings. On this property, purchased for the sum of thirty-six hundred dollars, was built the new plant and the first small office. (The old foundations of this plant were uncovered in 1932 during excavation work for the Department of Justice Building.)

The neighborhood of the Tenth Street plant was not a very inviting section for residents because it was damp and marshy. The Washington Canal, generally unsanitary and unsightly, was advantageous for transporting materials to the various businesses. Tenth Street, resembling a country road, was gravelled and graded from Pennsylvania Avenue to F Street. Nearby, on Louisiana Avenue had been the famous Spa Pump, waters of which were supposed to possess medicinal properties. In the vicinity was a blacksmith shop, a tannery, a theater, some stores, and a few private homes.



*Louisiana Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets.
Close by was the Company's Tenth Street Plant.*

The lantern on the Capitol dome was soon removed. From a report to Congress by Commissioner Douglas, it is learned that the big lantern was too heavy, swayed in the wind despite its strong moorings, and the glass globe was often broken. Congress expended three hundred and twenty-three dollars for its removal,

and donated the mast to the Washington Monument Society, which used it as a boom derrick in the construction of the Monument.

By the end of 1848, the Company had mains laid, lamp posts and lanterns erected, and lighted the President's House with gas



President's House in 1848. An attractive gas lamp and post are shown in foreground.

on December 29, 1848 to the complete satisfaction of President Polk and the Commissioner of Public Buildings. In his annual report, Commissioner Douglas stated: "The iron lamp posts are cast in this city by skilled hands, and are much admired by persons of refined taste for their beauty and peculiar adaptability. . . ."

President Callan made trips to numerous cities to study the operating methods of other gas companies. The minute books reveal that Superintendent Bigelow received four dollars a day for his work—a high wage in those times, considering that laborers worked from dawn to dusk for a dollar and twenty-five cents.

The first year of the Company's existence was a difficult one; the only customer was the government, capital stock was for sale but there were few buyers, the treasury was practically empty,

and some of the directors suggested that the Company be sold to the City Corporation. The Company issued stock to purchase real estate, and to pay contractors and wages. The original stock certificates disprove assertions in other writings that the Company, at its beginning, was financed by interests outside the city, for these certificates show clearly that practically all stockholders were Washingtonians.



Stock Certificate issued in 1848.

Ulysses Ward became the second president of the Company in 1849, and Eleazer Lindsley, a director of the Patriotic Bank, replaced William A. Bradley as secretary.

Under Ward's supervision the Company grew, and its picture became a little brighter; however, the Company experienced difficulties in borrowing five thousand dollars. The directors attempted to sell the unissued shares of stock, but failed in this endeavor. Mr. Ward then bought the unsold stock, and was publicly thanked by one of the directors, who stated this act saved the Company from bankruptcy.

The Company survived the difficult period of infancy, and on December 5, 1849, just eighteen months after its formation, declared a dividend of three percent. The Company's depository



ULYSSES WARD
2nd President, 1849-1851
*Minister and editor,
lumber and coal merchant.*

was the Bank of Washington, one of the first banks established in the District. In 1850 the Company sold gas to the G. & T. Parker Store, the National, Brown, and Willard Hotels, and Gilman's Drug Store, the latter two still located at their original sites on Pennsylvania Avenue . . . these were among the Company's first commercial customers, except, of course, the Government. Gas rates were reduced from eight dollars per thousand cubic feet to six dollars and forty cents.

When Mr. Ward resigned in 1851, Silas H. Hill was chosen to succeed him. Mr. Hill, later a candidate for city mayor, was defeated by thirty-two votes.

It was not until October of 1851 that the general public were invited to use gas. Previously, the government owned all gas mains in the city and had restricted their use. When the Company purchased these mains from the government, it was able to serve additional sections of the city.

President Hill instituted plans for building a new gas plant to meet the needs of the growing business. Accordingly, Battin, Dungan and Company of Philadelphia were employed to erect buildings and apparatus for the manufacture of coal gas. The new plant, completed in 1852,



SILAS H. HILL
3rd President, 1851-1856
Treasury clerk and lawyer.

WASHINGTON GAS-LIGHT COMPANY.

To the Citizens of Washington and the Public Generally.

It becomes necessary that this Company should make an exhibit of facts, in which the public, especially the citizens of Washington, are interested. First. The Company is now in successful operation and is able to supply an amount of light equal to 75,000 feet of coal gas, and can, in the course of two weeks, supply an amount equal to 105,000 feet of coal gas per day. Secondly. The Company manufactures the gas from oil, and can make it cheaper than it can be manufactured from coal in any place in the United States, and do now sell it cheaper, for the same amount of light, than any place, except the city of Pittsburg and part of the city of Philadelphia. The coal gas, when compared with the solar gas which this Company makes, will consume two and a half feet for the same amount of light that one foot of this will give. The Company sells at \$8 per thousand feet, which will of course make it cheaper than coal gas at \$3 50 cents. This shows that this Company furnishes for \$8 what would cost \$8 75 cents for coal gas at \$3 50 cents. Then the gas they manufacture is so much better an article as to entitle it to a preference besides its cheapness. The light produced by this gas is cheaper than any other light, save pine oil or camphine, and is as cheap as either of these, yet there is so little difference in the cost for the same amount of light, that no one should make a change from the camphine to the gas, who disregard the labor and risk attending the burning of camphine.

This Company has in contemplation an arrangement by which they will be able by the next winter, to reduce the price of the gas twenty or twenty-five per cent, and still afford to the Stockholders a reasonable profit, as they do not intend to exact enormous profits at any time—yet the public has no claim upon the Company for a reduction of prices, when the gas as above stated, is now sold lower than in any other place, or any other light and this light of a better quality. It will be the wish of the Company to confer a public benefit, while receiving a just and fair remuneration for their investment.

There may be persons who use this light and complain of the cost, but those persons are so pleased with it that they use it extravagantly. Could they be satisfied with the same amount of light they have been in the habit of using, they would bear the Company out in the statement here made that the gas is the most economical and pleasant, and this statement is made after careful examination, and defies successful contradiction.

In conclusion, the Company does not fear the result of any fair and honest test that may be made, nor do they fear the efforts that may be made by any competition. Their gas they feel assured will always be afforded according to the quality and price on such terms as will prevent the well informed from any attempt to rival it,—and will render the efforts of the uninformed abortive.

It is not the wish of this Company to persuade any one to use their gas, yet it is their great wish to be placed in their true position before the public, and not have them deceived by men who speak on this subject without the proper information to speak correctly. This is all the company claims and they feel assured if the truth is told, and fair dealing is had, that this Company and the gas they manufacture will grow in the public estimation and in public utility. They have no hesitancy in saying that if the patronage due to this Company by the Corporate authorities and the Congress of the United States be afforded, that in the course of the next summer and fall, they can throw a light over many of our streets, avenues, and public grounds, that will amply reward such patronage and give satisfaction to all who are well disposed.

By order of the Board,

E. LINDSLEY, Secretary.

[C] Attention is called to the following letters and certificates which will fully corroborate the above statement.

WASHINGTON, 16th January, 1850.
Mr. WARD—Sir: In answer to your note of yesterday, I state that the gas succeeds very well in Jackson Hall—fully as well as anticipated. The light at the last Assembly Hall, was better, I think, than was ever made in it with candles, and did not cost one-third as much as the candles have cost at an Assembly Hall. Respectfully,
JOHN C. RIVES.

WASHINGTON, January 15th, 1850.
Sir: I take pleasure in stating that I have used the gas manufactured by the Washington Gas-Light Company, during the exhibitions of my "Panorama of a Voyage to Europe," in the City of Washington, and consider it to be of excellent quality, and taking into view its superior brilliancy, find it quite as cheap, as the gas used by me in other cities.

WALTER McPHERSON BAYNE,
Painter and Proprietor of Panorama Voyage to Europe.

U. WARD, Esq., President Washington Gas-Light Company.

WASHINGTON, January 11th, 1850.
This is to certify, that I have burned Gas (for the past five weeks) of "the Washington Gas-Light Company," and I prefer it to any other light I have ever used. I believe it to be as cheap as Pine Oil, exclusive of lamps and glasses. I have burned four lights for four hours each night for six nights a week, and it has just cost me one dollar and seventy-six cents per week.
THOMAS PURSELL.

Z. D. & W. H. GILMAN, Druggists.
We have used the gas manufactured by the "Washington Gas-Light Co." for a year past, and consider it superior in point of brilliancy, to that of the Northern Cities and quite as cheap as Camphine or other oils.
January 17th, 1850.

JOHN MILLER, Confessioner.
I have been burning the Washington Solar Gas for nine months, and I do hereby certify that I believe it to be as cheap as the pine oil, not speaking of its very superior light. I burn five lights down stairs from half past four in winter, and until eleven—and in the summer from early lighting until eleven; I also burn in my parlor. The Gas does not cost me over sixteen dollars per month, whereas the pine oil cost me twelve dollars per month and not so good a light.
January 14th, 1850.

From an issue of the NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER in 1850.

was located on Maine and Maryland Avenues in Reservation C, about two blocks west of the Capitol. In his annual report Mr. Hill stated: "The new works have been completed and have been thoroughly tested, and are not only inviting to the eye but are believed to be unsurpassed by any similar works in the country."

Gth St between 13 & 14

Dr Sir

It is earnestly desired by many of the Residents and property holders on this St^h that Gas may be put through this street - I desire to burn it in my 3 houses My John Gordon is anxious to get it - and I don't say both the Churches as well as all the Private houses in the street would be glad to get and use it also - Please let me hear from you on this Subject

Respectfully
C. J. Gardner

23 Aug 1852

A request for gas service, 1852.



Washington in the 1850's. The Canal and unfinished Washington Monument are shown. The Maryland Avenue Gas Works and spherical holder appear in the left center.

Customers were required to pay their bills at the Maryland Avenue office. Because it was too far from the business section of the city, the Company then opened a small office on the corner of Eighth and Pennsylvania Avenue, over Riley's Store, just across from Center Market.



An early Brady photograph showing Pennsylvania Avenue at Eighth and Market Place. The Company's Office was located, for a few years in the Fifties, in the flag-draped building, to the right of which is the present location of Kann's Department Store.

The citizens of Georgetown were in the process of organizing a gas company in the early Fifties. Awaiting a charter from Congress, two of its founders, David English and F. W. Risque, petitioned the Washington company to supply gas to Georgetown. This request was granted, and a short time later a main was extended to that city via Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge, which supplied gas to Georgetown's streets and homes. In 1854 Congress granted a charter to The Georgetown Gaslight Company, which built its own plant on 29th Street at the Canal.



Gas bill rendered in 1852 to Brown's Hotel.

When Silas Hill resigned in 1856, the Washington company was growing rapidly; there were approximately seventeen hundred customers, more than thirty miles of gas mains, and about five hundred street lights. Mains had been laid as far east as the Navy Yard, and gas had been introduced into many Government buildings, including the Naval Observatory, then located at 24th and E Streets.

Many citizens installed gas lamps on the front of their homes because of the insufficient number of street lights. These lamps, beautifully decorated and bronzed, were placed in a prominent position just outside the front door.

Since those were the days of gas lights, the scenes in Robert Louis Stevenson's famous poem were enacted many times—



THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at tea time and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go around at night and light the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry by with ladder and with light;
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him tonight!

—STEVENSON

Chapter Three

THE CITY GROWS WITH GAS



*For I dipped into the future,
Far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world
And all the wonder that would be. . . .*

—ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

“WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE,
WITH CHARITY FOR ALL, WITH
FIRMNESS IN THE RIGHT AS GOD
GIVES US TO SEE THE RIGHT . . .”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Lincoln Memorial

© Horydeak



and Well Conditioned.

NEW YORK  THREE

Palatine Iron-working Co. and Mining Transportation Company

In Witness Whereof, The Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affixed to four Bills of Lading, of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated at Cumberland, N.H., 13th day of October, 1856

MARKS: _____ TONNAGE: _____ DWT: _____
 Washington Cash 105%
 R. S. M'Kinn
 Trsd:
 A. J. Brown

Test: *A. J. Rose*

The Swedish Nightingale, Jenny Lind, gave a memorable concert in the city in 1850. Among those present were composer John Howard Payne, Daniel Webster, and President Fillmore. As an encore number, Jenny sang *Home Sweet Home* looking directly at Payne. When she had finished, Daniel Webster rose,

bowed to her and then to the composer, making it a great moment in Payne's life.

The newspaper, *The Evening Star*, issued its first number in 1852, and a year later the construction of Cabin John Bridge was begun. When completed, the arch was a masterpiece, and it has been copied many times throughout the world.

One of the first gas cooking stoves in the city was introduced by E. D. Willard, proprietor of the National Hotel. A newspaper account of the event in 1856 states:

One of the most labor-saving and money-making expedients ever introduced, and especially valuable for persons of scanty means, is the cooking with gas. What a world of labor and trouble and time it saves. Mr. Willard brought one of his sheet-iron broilers to our office some days ago and, having attached a gutta percha tube to one of the gas pipes, cooked a couple of chops and a steak in a few minutes, the tenderest we ever tasted, and, what is peculiar to the process, free from the smoke and fumes which generally arise from broiling meat. Anybody can see the operation any day in the kitchen of the National Hotel.

George W. Riggs, a man of vision and a brilliant business executive, became president of the gas company in 1856. He and William W. Corcoran had previously established the Corcoran and Riggs bank.

During Riggs' tenure of office, a new plant, known as the West Station Works, was built at 26th and G Streets, North West.



GEORGE W. RIGGS

4th President, 1856-1864

Banker.

Mayor's Office
July 15. 1857.

Permission is given to the "Washington Gas Light Company" to Open the Street in front of the President's House from 15th to 17th Street, West. also, said 15th Street from Penn. Avenue to New York Avenue, for the purpose of laying down a new inch Street Main, taking up, the Old Six inch one, and Connecting the Dives to the new Main. The Said Company being responsible for any damage accruing by reason of Opening Said Trenches.

W. Magruder,
Mayor

Letter from Mayor Magruder in 1857 granting permission to replace gas main in front of the President's House.



A check sent to the Company in 1869. The Banking House of Messrs. Riggs & Co. was designated as the Company's depository in December, 1856.



An early view from the Washington Monument showing the West Station Gas Works. The original buildings were constructed in 1858. The Pan American Building occupies the site of the race track in the foreground.

In the early days of the new plant, large barges moved along the Potomac and unloaded their cargoes of coal at the wharves of West Station. At that time the Company's office was located at 514 Eleventh Street, just a few doors above Pennsylvania Avenue.

The City Corporation, in 1860, created the office of gas meter inspector and sealer; this was the forerunner of public utility regulation by local authorities.

Circular to Gas Consumers.

THE WASHINGTON GAS LIGHT COMPANY,

with the view of preventing the freezing of wet meters, respectfully suggest to their consumers, that, in order to secure a steady and uninterrupted light during the present winter, their meters and service pipes (when exposed) should be protected from the action of frost. The cheapest way to prevent the wet meter from freezing is to fill it with whiskey; and it is earnestly recommended that this should be done *at once* by every consumer. The service pipe, when exposed by crossing areas, &c., should be wrapped with old carpet, or other woolen material.

In any case where it may be desired, the Company will fill the meter *free of expense*, the gas consumer furnishing the whiskey.

The following table shows the quantity of common whiskey necessary for the *first filling*, to be replenished from time to time during the winter as evaporation may require:

For a 3 light meter*	1½ gallons.
" 5 do. do.	2 "
" 10 do. do.	4 "
" 20 do. do.	6 "
" 30 do. do.	10 "
" 45 do. do.	15 "
" 60 do. do.	20 "
" 100 do. do.	30 "

Office hours from 8 A. M. to 5 P. M.

J. F. BROWN,

Secretary in charge.

December* 1, 1858.

* The size of the meter is shown by the brass plate on its front. A large majority of the meters used in Washington are 3 and 6 light meters.

Circular issued by Company in 1858 to enlist the cooperation of customers to prevent gas meters from freezing.

District citizens had been little affected by the Panic of 1857, but with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the city and the entire country experienced disorder. The marching feet, the sounds of cannon and martial music . . . constantly reminded the citizens that war, with its horrors and grief, had invaded the peace-loving Capital. The city became the depot for thousands of troops as they passed through on their way to battle, and it barely escaped capture by the Confederates when General Early's forces were repulsed at Fort Stevens.

Just as the city and nation endured many difficulties, the Company was no exception. The cost of making gas increased one hundred and twenty-five percent, and another problem appeared when Congress reduced the gas rate seventeen percent. However,



Earliest photograph of East Room of Executive Mansion, showing gas-lighted chandeliers. Photo by Brady in Lincoln's time.

President Riggs wisely and skillfully guided the Company through the troubled years.

It is interesting to note that women made their debut in the business world during the war. A number of them were clerks in the gas-lighted Treasury Building; and a block away, at the Willard Hotel, Julia Ward Howe wrote the stirring *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

When George W. Riggs resigned as Company president in 1864, Barnabas H. Bartol of Philadelphia succeeded him, and served the Company nineteen years as president, and twenty-four years as director.

A severe coal shortage during the war forced the Company to procure that scarce item from England. To make matters worse, the transportation problem was most difficult, and it was almost impossible to have coal delivered to the city by rail or water. The Company officials then appealed to Secretary of War Stanton and President Lincoln. The latter, in order to avert a gas crisis in the Capital, wrote a letter to John Worth Garrett, president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

Lincoln had come to depend upon the Washington Gas Light Company for light, not only for the city, but for the Executive Mansion and the various government departments working day and night during the crisis. Needless to say, the Lincoln request, written three months prior to Lee's surrender at Appomattox, brought coal to the city and afforded the continuation of the necessary gas lighting.

The secretary of the Company, Joseph F. Brown, who had served in that capacity for sixteen years, resigned in 1866, and was succeeded by Charles B. Bailey. In those days the secretary practically managed the entire Company. He acted as treasurer,



B. H. BARTOL

5th President, 1864-1883

Manufacturer-financier.

Executive Mansion
Washington. Jan. 10, 1865

Mr. J. W. Garrett
My dear Sir.

It is feared we shall
soon all be in the dark
here, unless you can bring coal
to make gas. I suppose you
would do this, without my inter-
ference, if you could; and
only write now to say, it is very
important to us, and not to
say that you must stop sup-
plying the army to make room
to carry coal. Do all you
can for us in both matters.

Yours truly,
A. Lincoln

Mr. J. W. Garrett
My dear Sir:

It is said we shall soon all be in the dark here, unless you can bring coal
to make gas. I suppose you would do this, without my interference, if you
could; and I only write you to say, it is very important to us; and not to
say that you must stop supplying the army to make room to carry coal.
Do all you can for us in both matters.

Yours truly, A. Lincoln



*Pennsylvania Avenue at 15th Street in 1865.
Union troops in Grand Review.*

general manager, building superintendent, and chief clerk of meter reading and accounting. He opened the office in the early morning and was the last to leave at night. It is not surprising then, that the office of treasurer was created; Whitman C. Bestor was the first, and Charles C. Glover, one of Washington's foremost citizens, succeeded him.

The work of these progressive officers established for the Company the reputation of becoming one of the finest gas companies in the land, and the correspondence files show that companies from many states were making inquiries about methods and procedures.

A new office building was erected at 413 Tenth Street, North West, across from the office then located at 472 Tenth. This building, the site of the home of Peter Force, was begun in 1866 and used as the Company's main office for seventy-six years . . . a landmark well-known to Washingtonians.

Two years after President Grant's Inauguration in 1869, he signed the bill making the District of Columbia a Territorial Government, giving it a governor and council, a house of delegates

and a delegate to Congress. Norton P. Chipman was the first and only District Representative. At that time the city owed the company more than twenty-six thousand dollars for gas and lamps, and the twentieth and last Mayor, Matthew G. Emery, promised that the debt would be paid before his term expired.

The city lost its Territorial Form of Government in 1874 when Congress created the Commission Government, and four years later this Government was permanently established by Con-



Company's Tenth Street Building, a landmark to Washingtonians.



Washington, 1869.

gressional action. During those years, Alexander Graham Bell spent his time developing the telephone, and at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 he exhibited the first effective telephone. The next year Stilson Hutchins founded *The Washington Post*.

The government of the city was not the only local problem confronting Congress; before it were a number of applications for charters . . . for new gas companies. Many with capital to invest apparently felt that the gas industry had a good future. One such application was to charter the Atomic Steam Coal Gas Company of the District of Columbia.

The year 1878 ushered in the era of Thomas Edison, which brought forth the talking machine and the incandescent lamp. The last named invention, a temporary blow to the gas light industry, was nationally and locally a serious threat, as gas was primarily used for lighting homes and cities. The industry immediately instituted a research program to find other uses for its product, but many years of gas lighting yet remained.

Attempts were made by the newly established United States Electric Lighting Company of Washington to light Pennsylvania Avenue in 1881. Just as gas had experienced difficulties in its infancy, electricity was ineffective that year.

The construction of the Washington Monument, which had been at a standstill for some years, was re-commenced in the Seventies, and finished in 1884. Public donations had been solicited to aid this project, and the gas company contributed a gift for the world's tallest memorial.

George A. McIlhenny, the Company's engineer, was elected its president in 1883. Five years later the East Station Plant was built at Twelfth and N Streets, South East, fronting the Anacostia River.



Unfinished Washington Monument.

While East Station was under construction, a peculiar and amusing incident occurred. The construction gang had just finished building a stone foundation wall three hundred and fifty

feet long. On the following morning the workmen discovered that the entire wall had vanished. Upon investigation it was learned that the marshy ground had given way, and the masonry had disappeared into the river.

The Gay Nineties witnessed the introduction of Sousa's *Washington Post March*, and, a new method of paying gas bills. The West End National Bank and the National Capital Bank began to accept gas bills for payment, and shortly thereafter, the United States Express Company asked for and obtained permission to accept bills at its various offices.



GEORGE A. MCILHENNY

6th President, 1883-1892

Engineer-inventor.



East Station Gas Works. Original buildings were constructed in 1888.



Railroad train crossing Maryland Avenue at Sixth Street, about 1895.

The first Company president to die in office was George A. McIlhenny; his successor was John R. McLean. Under his guidance, the Company successfully weathered the Panic of 1893, and acquired a controlling interest in The Georgetown Gas-light Company.

Although the Welsbach gas mantle had been announced in Germany in the Eighties, it was not until 1895 that this Company obtained the patent rights for the District. The discovery of this new lighting process gave great impetus to the gas light industry. The new Welsbach mantles and lamps were not the only topics of conversation in the city, for the visit of Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii caused a fever of excitement, as did the War with Spain and the popularity of Edison's phono-



JOHN R. MCLEAN
7th President, 1892-1911
*Financier and owner
of several newspapers, includ-
ing THE WASHINGTON POST.*



Pennsylvania Avenue around the turn of the Century, showing parade of the National Jockey Club. Four gas lamps can be seen in front of the Globe Theatre.

graph . . . and an Ohio gas company offered six million dollars for the purchase of the Washington Gas Light Company . . . offer refused.

Two new inventions were brought to Washington in the late Nineties, each to have great bearing on the city's way of life: the horseless carriage, and the first movies at The Willard.

When the Twentieth Century dawned, the population of the District was more than three hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants . . . there were also a few automobiles. The town of mud and swamp had grown into a magnificent city. The Company had matched the great strides of the city, and its meters numbered more than fifty-four thousand.



JOSEPH LEITER
8th President, 1911-1914
Financier.

In 1907, just a year after *The Washington Herald* made its debut, the Company successfully passed through another national financial panic under the capable leadership of John R. McLean.

Joseph Leiter became the Company's eighth president in 1911. A sportsman, railroad president, and founder of a city in Illinois, Mr. Leiter came to Washington with a background of much experience.

The Company purchased Analostan Island in 1913 as a possible site for a gas manufacturing plant. Formerly called Mason's Island, it was noted for its social and storied significance.

The regulation of public utilities in the District of Columbia underwent an important change in 1913 with the creation of



HOWARD S. REESIDE
9th President, 1914-1924
Banker.



Analostan Island in the Potomac River. The old Aqueduct Bridge is shown in the foreground.

the Public Utilities Commission . . . for sixty-five years Congress had regulated the affairs of the gas company.

Howard S. Reeside, popular Washingtonian, banker, and businessman, succeeded Leiter in 1914. He successfully managed the Company during the trying period of the First World War.

Along with the rest of the nation, the Company faced difficult times with the shortage of coal, oil and manpower, the high prices, lightless nights, a flu epidemic, sugar and bread rationing . . . these problems spelled complexities for man, beast, and corporation. During the war, the Company purchased the Rosslyn Gas Company which served the near-by progressive counties of Virginia. Three years after the Armistice had been signed, the city's fourth popular newspaper made its appearance, *The Washington Daily News*.



ORD PRESTON
10th President, 1924-1930
Banker.

When Mr. Reeside became too ill to manage the Company in 1924, Ord Preston was chosen to direct its affairs. The Preston family had been stockholders for many years, and Mr. Preston had served as a director since 1910. He was an active and popular president, and keenly interested in every phase of the business.

In those years, radio and the dispatching of photographs by wireless, from London to New York, heralded a new era in the transmission of news. Local heroes were Walter Johnson and Bucky Harris, when the Washington Nationals won the World's Series in 1924, defeating the New York Giants.

At that time Robert D. Weaver was vice-president, William B. Orme, secretary (succeeded later by George M. Whitwell), Lawrence Townsend, treasurer, Sanford N. Whitwell, comptroller, and James S. McIlhenny, chief engineer.

The last years of Mr. Preston's administration were marked

by the era of holding companies . . . and many public utilities were purchased and absorbed by those groups. For a short time in the early Thirties, this Company was so controlled.

George A. G. Wood was Mr. Preston's successor. Mr. Wood came to Washington from Boston where he had been operating Vice President of the Massachusetts Gas Companies.

The Company sold Analostan Island to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Association, and the latter changed the name to Roosevelt Island. Another interesting parcel of real estate was sold



GEORGE A. G. WOOD
11th President, 1930-1932
Utility Executive.



Service and garage buildings of Company on 29th Street erected in 1928. Site of early plant of The Georgetown Gaslight Company.

. . . the site of the Maryland Avenue Plant which had been a possession since 1851.

During Mr. Wood's tenure of office, gas mains were extended to Rockville, Maryland, and natural gas was introduced into Washington. On January 31, 1931, at a telegraphic signal from President Hoover at the White House, District Commissioner Reichelderfer turned a giant valve at the East Station Plant which released the flow of natural gas into the District from Kentucky and West Virginia. Natural gas was then mixed with manufactured gas, and distributed to consumers for the first time. This marked the beginning of a New Era.



President Herbert Hoover, in the presence of Company officials, signalling the introduction of natural gas in 1931.

Chapter Four

A NEW ERA BEGINS



*ew times demand new measures and new men;
The world advances, and in time outgrows
The laws that in our fathers' day were best;
And, doubtless, after us, some purer scheme
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we.*

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

“INSTITUTIONS MUST
ADVANCE ALSO TO KEEP PACE
WITH THE TIMES.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON



© Horydezak

Thomas Jefferson Memorial.



THE atomic particle, known as the neutron, was discovered by Sir James Chadwick in 1932, and paved the way for the Atomic Age. This New Era, with its television, Four Freedoms, push buttons . . . will undoubtedly be known as one of the most progressive ages of mankind.

The nation chose Franklin Delano Roosevelt as its thirty-first president in 1932, and the Company directors elected Marcy L. Sperry as the twelfth president of the city's senior public utility. Mr. Sperry was born at Annapolis, Maryland, the son of Rear Admiral and Mrs. Charles S. Sperry. He attended schools at Charlottesville, Virginia, Washington, D. C., Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prior to his election as president of this Company, Mr. Sperry had been with Stone



MARCY L. SPERRY
12th President.

and Webster Service Corporation for thirty years, where he began as a cashier in the Boston Office. During these years he held various executive positions, operating and managing public utilities.

When Mr. Sperry assumed his duties, the nation was in the throes of the depression, and his problems were many. Everett J. Boothby and Robert C. Owers soon joined the organization as vice presidents, and the teamwork of these three officers, combining extensive experience in engineering, finance, and utility administration, heralded an era of great progress for the Company.

Washington witnessed, with the advent of Roosevelt's New Deal, the long-to-be-remembered Bank Holiday, the abolishment of the gold standard, the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act . . . and the Company directors resolved, with the nation, to cooperate with Roosevelt in creating employment for the thousands of unemployed.

Customers' gas bills were mailed for the first time in 1934, thus bringing to a close the eighty-six year old procedure of delivering bills by hand; and another old tradition was discontinued at the White House, the annual New Year's Reception.

In 1935 the sliding scale arrangement for the annual fixing



The Prince George's Gas Corporation was organized in 1933 to operate these gas storage holders at Chillum, Maryland. These holders are among the largest in the country.

of gas rates was adopted. During the following year, Congress passed a special act permitting the merger of the Company and The Georgetown Gaslight Company. This act, with the approval of the Public Utilities Commission, also permitted the issuance of additional shares of stock. This gave the ever-growing Company financial relief, for since 1896 it had not been permitted to increase its stock capitalization.

The New Deal with its many alphabetical bureaus and organizations centered in Washington, and resulted in a great expansion of population and business. The Company's development and

progress more than kept pace with the city's growth; plants were enlarged, and mains were extended in all directions. In 1939, two smaller companies, serving Hyattsville, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia, were added to the Company's system.

The visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England caused city-wide excitement, but the dark clouds of Hitler and Mussolini hovered over the continent of Europe. While the Company participated in the gas industry's exhibit at the renowned New York World's Fair, the Board of Directors held its one thousand and eightieth meeting. The Board consisted of Albert W. Atwood, Everett J. Boothby, Robert C. Owers, Christopher H. Pope, Marcy L. Sperry, Sidney F. Taliaferro, and Corcoran Thom . . . men experienced and prominent in the fields of banking, financial writing, business, and utility management.

The war in Europe made Washington the nation's busiest city. The population of the Metropolitan area increased from six hundred and sixty-three thousand to more than a million, and the resulting demand for gas service was traditionally and successfully met.

Because the Tenth Street office building was inadequate, the Company made plans for a larger building. It purchased land at Eleventh and H Streets, a former site of St. Paul's English Lutheran Church, which interestingly enough, had been built in 1848, the year of the Company's incorporation. On this site was built a modern twelve story office building, a beautiful and distinctive edifice, which typifies in many ways the progressive and forward-looking spirit of the organization.

A merger of the Rosslyn and Alexandria Gas Companies was



New Office Building, completed and occupied July 8, 1942, on the Company's 94th Anniversary.

effected in 1941 . . . the beginning of President Roosevelt's third term. Headlines included the signing of the Lend-Lease Bill, the introduction of night baseball at Griffith Stadium, and the completion of the National Gallery of Art and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war! Came the shortages of manpower and equipment, fuels and supplies; and the diversion of large quantities of gas to war industries . . . these and other complexities added to the problems of the directors, officers, and employees. It is needless to narrate the difficulties, the sacrifices, the restrictions which faced the country . . . but the spirit of sacrifice and service, which is America, prevailed here and throughout the nation. This organization and all connected with it did everything possible to aid in the war effort . . . and the following employees made the supreme sacrifice: Edmund J. Beaulac, Jr., Frank B. Blake, Jr., George G. Blake, Robert E. Burns, John J. Courtney, William R. Cox, Kenton B. Guthridge, Lawrence R. MacDonald, Henry J. Maenner, Carl E. Niswander, Lewis E. Nowlin, Stewart E. Prather, Charles D. Reeve, and John B. Schaefer.

The Company's annual report for 1944 noted that five hundred and fifty-seven employees had joined the armed forces, and that the war record of the men and women of the Company, both in military service and on the home front, was a source of pride. From the president and the directors came these words of appreciation:

The successful operation of the Company under wartime conditions, and the continued high standard of public service to this nerve center of the war effort, has been possible only through the intelligent and effective work of all of the members of the organization. Their loyal services to the Company and the community are acknowledged with sincere appreciation.

This was not the first time that presidents and directors had praised the employees for their spirit of loyalty and service. Since the inception of the Company its employees have been of the highest caliber, with a remarkable family and community spirit. In the Company's service are many sons whose fathers

and grandfathers preceded them as faithful employees throughout the years. Just as the Company has always been interested in the community it serves, so have its employees with their natural friendliness, sacrifices, and untiring efforts to serve the public.

With the cessation of hostilities, the Company prepared, with the nation, for the gradual transition to the new economy which evolved after the war. Two of its well-known landmarks disappeared from the picture during 1945 . . . the office building on Tenth Street and the one on Wisconsin Avenue. Across the river in Arlington, the new Shirley Service Building was erected to meet the growing needs of one of America's fastest growing communities.



Among the certificates awarded the Company.

1946 . . . a momentous year for the Company and the community . . . witnessed the advent of straight natural gas distribution in place of mixed gas. This important change in the general character of the business was but another step along the challenging path of progress, and also the solution for meeting the constantly rising demands for gas in this area. The Company was honored that year by the election of Everett J. Boothby as president of the American Gas Association.

As the Company, in its ninety-ninth year, prepared for its



WASHINGTON, 1948

Centennial, the city and nation were guided through new economic channels. The year was noted for the billions of relief dollars to European countries, the debates in the United Nations, the cross-country tour of America's Freedom Train, the consolidation of the Army, Navy, and Air Forces, and . . . the period of high prices.

The most talked-about topic was the high cost of living which had soared to new and unprecedented heights. Although prices increased for practically every commodity, local gas rates remained at one of the lowest levels in the Company's existence.



Shirley Service Building in Arlington.

In the fall of 1947, the Company completed the huge task of adapting approximately three million gas burners of domestic and commercial appliances, so as to permit the use of straight natural gas. This phase of the change-over program required fourteen months, and in October all customers were being served with straight natural gas.

The manufacture of gas has now gone from the picture since the advent of straight natural gas into this area, except that the production department manufactures a high heating value gas, when necessary, to decrease the peak load demands upon the natural gas supply, and in case of emergency.

It is interesting to note that the Company has maintained an unbroken record of dividends since 1866. A study, made by the New York Stock Exchange of listed common stocks, stated that this Company ranked seventh in all listed companies in the matter of an unbroken dividend record, and first among gas companies.

Since the organization of the Company in 1848, dividends have been paid in each year except 1849, 1851, 1852, 1864, and 1865.

And Today . . . as the Company goes forward on its journey along the highway of progress, it briefly pauses, during its Centennial, to proudly acclaim its past achievements and its contributions to the city's development. From an obscure beginning one hundred years ago, with a small plant, a mere handful of employees and one customer, it has come to its present position of prestige . . . its twenty-two hundred employees now serve a population of more than a million with a vital and friendly service. These accomplishments have been possible because of the loyal and friendly cooperation of the people in this community, and to them the Company extends its grateful appreciation.

And Tomorrow? Predictions are that another city, built beside the present one, will be necessary, for the Nation's Capital is fast becoming the World's Capital. The plans of the Company are far-reaching, and the introduction of natural gas opens a wide field for development of the business in the rapidly growing area comprising the National Capital and its environs.

The Company, with its rich heritage of wisdom and experience, stands as an example of typical American enterprise. It is young in spirit, ever growing, with a loyal personnel and progressive leadership . . . eager for the era yet to come.



The Company's new display center at Hyattsville



U. S. SUPREME COURT

WASHINGTON MONUMENT



U. S. CAPITOL



TOMB OF UNKNOWN SOLDIER

CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY

Appendix

THE STORY OF GAS



"A UNIVERSITY FOR THE PEOPLE."



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D. C. Public Library.



ANY years ago a renowned physician of Brussels was experimenting in his home laboratory. As he was burning charcoal in a crucible or vessel, he observed that it gave forth a mysterious substance, and in his notes wrote:

"This spirit, hitherto unknown. . .
I call by the new name *Gas*. . . ."

This word, *Gas*, it is learned from the pen of him who named it, was derived from the Greek word *Xáos* because it was scarcely distinguishable from the chaos of the ancients. Thus it was that Joannes Baptista Van Helmont gave gas its name in 1609, the same year the English and French were making important discoveries in that new land, America.

Gas is definitely a mysterious element because it cannot be seen or touched under ordinary conditions, yet it can be detected by its odor. It is elastic, tends to expand indefinitely, and is characterized, in most cases, by great transparency. Gas, as it is commonly known, is divided into two classes: natural and manufactured. The former is found in



VAN HELMONT,
who named Gas.

nature beneath the earth's surface where it is imprisoned and from which it is liberated by drilling. The manufacture of gas is a process invented by man, and there are three main kinds in general use: coal gas, oil gas, and carbureted water gas.

Every industry has a founder, discoverer, or father. Gas, the oldest of the organized utilities, is an exception, for it was discovered not by one person but by many. Unlike the electric light and telephone industries, with their American inventors, Edison and Bell, the gas industry was begun, not in one place at a certain time, but in many lands and countries at various times.

The Chinese, noted for their inventive capacities, harnessed and utilized natural gas long before the time of Marco Polo and Van Helmont. They captured and conveyed it for considerable distances through bamboo pipes, using it as an illuminant and fuel.

On another side of the Globe, in Greece, gas was noticed and possibly used, because Aristotle, Pliny, and Plutarch wrote about the spirit which came from the ground. Natural gas was also found in Persia in the era before Christ, for the Zoroastrians

considered it the symbol of their god, and worshipped it at Baku on the Caspian Sea.



*The first house lighted
with gas—
the home of William Murdoch
in Cornwall.*

A number of scientists and would-be scientists experimented with gas in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. In England there were Sir James Lowther, George Dixon, Josiah Pemberton, and Thomas Shirley; the latter discovered, in 1659, a spring near Wigan in Lancashire . . . "the water of which burned like oyle." France had its Jean Tardin and Jean Minckelers, and in and around Germany were Johann Becher, Diller, and the Bishop of Llandaff. Many of

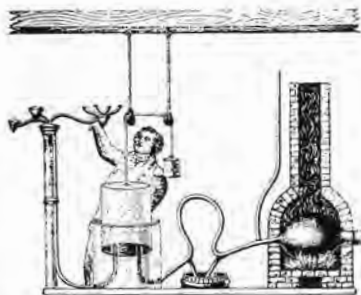
these men are unknown today, and their experiments won for them no niche in the halls of gas fame, yet each contributed his individual part toward the foundation of a great industry.

Four men who have been acclaimed for their experiments and work with gas were Reverend John Clayton of England, William Murdoch of Scotland, Philippe Lebon of France, and Albert Winsor of Moravia.

John Clayton, a pioneer of the gas industry, experimented around 1684 with coal gas. He had observed Shirley's spring at Wigan and began his search for a method of making gas. He found that gas and tar could be obtained by heating coal, that

gas would yield light, and could be collected and stored for future use. He filled calves' bladders with his newly made coal gas and entertained his friends with the light from these gas-filled bladders. John Clayton's experiments were made out of curiosity and only as a hobby.

To William Murdoch belongs the title *father of gas-lighting* for he demonstrated that gas lighting was practicable and useful on a large scale. In 1792 he distilled coal in an iron retort and conducted the gas through a seventy foot tunnel of iron and copper tubing, provided with openings at a number of points. He then lighted his home in Cornwall with this new apparatus . . . the first time a house was lighted with manufactured gas. Murdoch continued his experiments for a number of years but attempted nothing on a commercial scale.



Winsor's gas apparatus.

In 1807 Albert Winsor lighted with gas one side of Pall Mall, famous London Street, the first time public streets were so illuminated. That same year Winsor organized The National Light and Heat Company in Great Britain. He appealed to Parliament for a charter in 1809, and again in 1810, but was refused. Finally, on April 30, 1812, King George III granted him a charter under the name, The London and Westminster Gaslight and Coke Company. This date is important to the gas industry for it spelled the beginning of gas companies throughout the world.

Today, it is known that natural gas existed in many areas throughout America. It is reasonable to assume that prior to the coming of the White Man, the Indians observed or utilized natural gas because, near Titusville, Pennsylvania, there are some old gravel pits which show evidence of its early use. When the French Jesuits were exploring the Ohio Valley, they discovered fire columns in that region.

George Washington and his associate, General Andrew Lewis, were on an expedition in 1775 and observed two springs burning on the Great Kanawha, nine miles east of the present site of Charleston, West Virginia.

An Italian, M. Ambroise, experimented in 1796 with manufactured gas in a Philadelphia museum. In 1803, Benjamin Henfry, who had observed the beginning of the gas era in England, experimented in Richmond, Virginia, and in the following year at Washington, D. C. A few years later, David Melville lighted his house and street in Newport, Rhode Island.

The Patent Office records indicate that almost every city and town along the Atlantic Coast possessed its would-be inventors of gas processes and lights. Gas lights were interesting and fascinating, and many men spent time, energy, and money in their attempts to perfect and manufacture gas lamps.

The thread of chronology in any industry vividly tells its own story, and the following shows the step-by-step progress of gas:

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF GAS

B. C.

9th Century c.	Chinese utilized natural gas.
5th Century c.	Persians worshipped gas; considered it a god.
3rd Century c.	Plato, Aristotle, and others wrote about <i>Spiritus</i> or gas.

A. D.

1609	Brussels.	Gas named by Van Helmont, who discovered it accidentally while searching for the Philosopher's Stone.
1659	England.	A natural gas spring discovered by Thomas Shirley near Wigan, Lancashire.
1681	England.	Johann Becher obtained gas by distilling coal.
1684	England.	Experiments made with Shirley's spring of natural gas by Dr. John Clayton.

- 1733 England. Sir James Lowther found gas or damp air in his coal pits. Exhibited it at the Royal Society.
- 1745c. England. George Dixon amused his child with a tea kettle filled with coal; from which experiment came gas.
- 1767 England. Bishop of Llandaff purified gas made from coal. Obtained coke.
- 1774 England. Joseph Priestley experimented with gas.
- 1775 America. George Washington and General Andrew Lewis observed natural gas in West Virginia.
- 1783 France. The gas-filled balloons of the Montgolfier Brothers appeared.
- 1784 England. Diller, a German, produced fire-works with gas.
- 1785 France. At University of Louvain, Jean Minckelers distilled coal, and lighted his lecture room.
- 1792 England. William Murdoch manufactured gas in an iron retort, and lighted his home at Cornwall.
- 1796 America. M. Ambrose exhibited his manufactured gas at a museum in Philadelphia. This was the first public demonstration in America.
- 1801 France. Lebon improved his patented apparatus and called it Thermolampe.
- 1802 France. Napoleon ridiculed Lebon's gas illuminating display.
- 1803 England. Boulton and Watt's Foundry was lighted with gas by Murdoch to celebrate the Peace of Amiens.
- America. Richmond, Virginia, had gas exhibition by Benjamin Henfry.
- 1804 England. Winsor obtained the first English patent for a gas-making apparatus.
- America. Benjamin Henfry lighted with gas a house and street lamp in Washington, D. C.

- 1807 England. Winsor lighted Pall Mall with gas, and organized the first gas company.
- 1812 England. King George III granted charter to the first gas company in the world: The London and Westminster Gaslight and Coke Company.
- America. A house lighted with gas by David Melville in Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1815 England. The first gas meter invented by Samuel Clegg.
- 1816 England. The first practical gas holder used in London by Clegg.
- America. The first gas company incorporated in the United States at Baltimore, Maryland, by Rembrandt Peale and others.
- 1820 England. J. B. Nielson invented the fish-tail burner.
- 1821 America. Natural gas used publicly in Fredonia, New York. A few years later, General Lafayette visited Fredonia and was feted by the citizens. He was greatly interested in the magic fire or gas, which came from the ground.
- 1822 America. Boston Gas Light Company organized.
- 1824 America. New York Gas Light Company established.
- 1825 England. Hicks patented a method of heating water with gas; perhaps the first gas water heater.
- 1830c. England. James Sharpe demonstrated the use of gas for cooking.
- 1832 America. New Orleans welcomed its newly established gas company.
- 1833 England. Hutchinson patented the telescopic gas holder.
- England. Barnes patented his method of heating a current of air with gas for warming the interior of a building; probably the first gas heating furnace.
- 1836 America. Philadelphia Gas Light Company organized.
- 1840 America. Gas was introduced in Cincinnati.
- 1846 America. St. Louis Gas Company organized.

- 1847 England. *Gas Gazette and Monthly Advertiser* appeared in London, the first gas industry journal. It existed for one year.
- America. James Crutchett lighted United States Capitol building with gas.
- 1848 France. Gillard invented gas mantles made of platinum gauze.
- America. Gas Companies organized in:
 Washington, D. C.
 New Haven, Connecticut.
 Paterson, New Jersey.
 Providence, Rhode Island.
 Rochester, New York.
 Buffalo, New York.
 Hartford, Connecticut.
- White House lighted with gas by Washington Gas Light Company.
- 1849 England. *Journal of Gas Lighting* appeared; first permanent gas industry journal.
- 1855 Germany. Robert Wilhelm von Bunsen invented the noted Bunsen burner.
- 1859 America. Cooking with gas began on a small scale throughout America.
- American Gas Light Journal* appeared in New York.
- First gas association organized: The New York State Gas Light Association.
- 1872 The American Gas Light Association organized at Cleveland.
- 1874c. T. S. C. Lowe patented his carbureted water gas apparatus.
- 1875 American Gas Light Association Convention held in Washington, D. C.
- 1878 A survey indicated that some wooden pipes were still used to transmit gas.
- 1880 The Pintsch system, a method of lighting trains with gas, brought to this country.

1886c.	Germany.	Welsbach's gas mantle announced.
1887	America.	The first gas appliance store opened in Providence, Rhode Island.
1905		National Commercial Gas Association formed.
1906		American Gas Institute organized.
1915c.		Gas furnaces appeared for the first time.
1918		American Gas Association organized . . . a combination of the previous associations.
1926c.		Electrolux Gas Refrigerator first placed on the market.
1932		Gas air conditioning introduced.
1943		A vast Research and Promotional Plan instituted by American Gas Association.
1947		Straight natural gas distributed in Nation's Capital.
		Big and Little Big Inch pipe lines utilized for transmitting natural gas.
		Gas industry continued its unbroken record of expansion, and scored significant gains. It forged ahead with nearly twenty-two million customers.
		Dynamic growth of natural gas industry throughout the nation. American Gas Association reports pipe line network increased to 229,000 miles, practically the same mileage as trunk line railroad tracks in America.
1948		Far-reaching plans for the future made by the gas industry.

GAS IN WASHINGTON

Since 1848 the Washington Gas Light Company has used several methods of manufacturing gas. In its infancy it made rosin gas; later, coal gas, oil gas, and carbureted water gas. The Company used the latter process for many years prior to the introduction of natural gas. That method consisted of pass-

ing steam through incandescent hot coke or a mixture of coke and coal, and generating and adding oil gas to enrich or carburet the water gas thus produced.

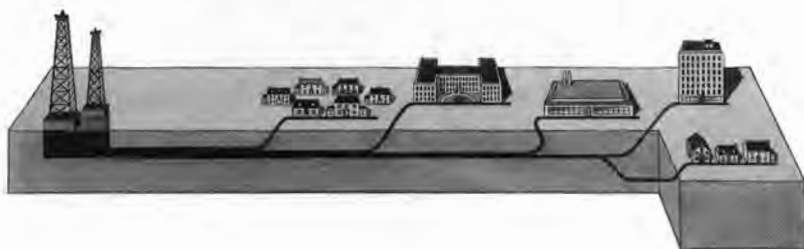
Beginning in 1931, natural gas, available in this area for the first time, was substituted by the Company for oil gas for the purpose of enriching the water gas, the finished product being a mixture of manufactured and natural gas. Today, straight natural gas is distributed.

NATURAL GAS

The United States is indeed fortunate to have such an abundant resource of natural gas, found in large underground fields in many parts of the country. Although these fields are remote from the Washington area, the scientific development of gas transmission, by enterprising pipe line companies, has made natural gas available to cities and towns hundreds of miles away.

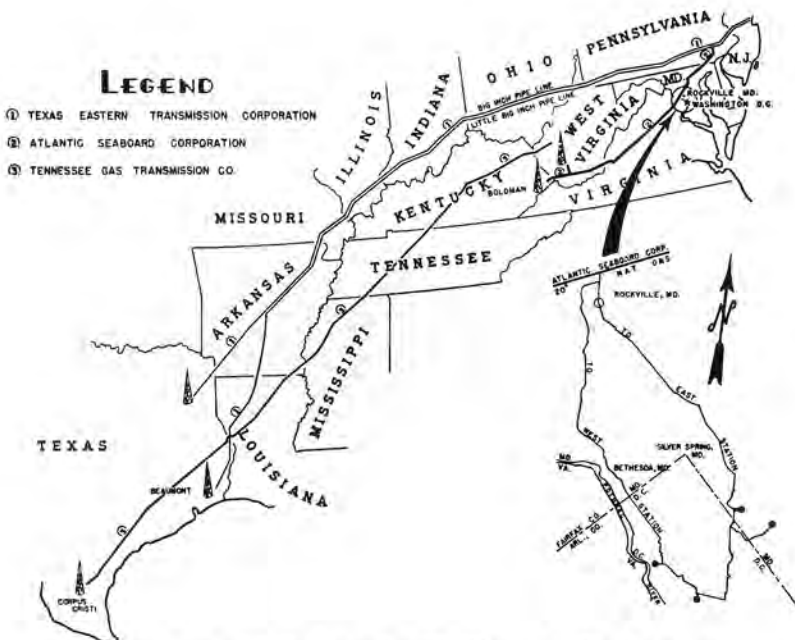
The Washington Gas Light Company, one of America's pioneering gas companies, undertook in 1946 and 1947 the gigantic task of adapting all of the gas appliances to permit the use, for the first time in this area, of the higher heating value natural gas. This was a major step forward and obviated the need of heavy expenditures for new production plants and the immediate necessity for substantial increases in the gas rate . . . at a time when practically every element in the cost of living had risen so sharply.

Originally, the Company relied for its supply of natural gas solely upon the Appalachian area. This situation was vastly



The transmission of natural gas, from deep in the earth to the home and business establishment, is an accomplishment which invokes universal admiration.

improved during the war, by the installation of a pipe line system to deliver Texas gas into the Appalachian area—and more recently by the acquisition, by private capital, of the well-known Big and Little Big Inch pipe lines, originally built by the Government for war-time emergency transportation of oil. These lines are now used for the delivery of natural gas. A direct connection has been installed between the Inch Lines and the northeastern terminus of the line supplying Washington.



Natural gas pipe lines serving Washington and other areas.

HOW OUR COMPANY OPERATES

The Washington Gas Light Company has been in existence longer than any of the city's other public utilities. It serves gas to the District of Columbia, and to nearby Maryland and Virginia through its subsidiaries, the Washington Gas Light Company of Maryland, Inc., and the Rosslyn Gas Company. The Prince George's Gas Corporation serves no customers but oper-

ates as a gas holder and compressor station at Chillum, Maryland. The approximate *numbers* of our business are interesting, and reflect our growth and progress:

Employees	2,200
Stockholders	8,200
Shares of Capital Stock	610,000
Customers' Meters	247,000
Gas Ranges	283,000
Gas Water Heaters	159,000
Gas Furnaces	47,000
Gas Refrigerators	49,000
Gas Lamps, in Montrose Park	17
Miles of Gas Mains	1,900
Gas Holders	10
Capacity of Holders (cubic feet)	35,740,600
Automobiles and Trucks	420
Annual Sales in Therms	132,500,000
Annual Gross Revenues	\$16,300,000
Investment in Property	\$51,000,000
Population of Area Served	1,250,000

Gone are the days of operating a public utility with a mere handful of employees in one or two departments. Many years ago one man read the meters, kept the records in the old-fashioned ledger, made and delivered the bills, and acted as cashier.

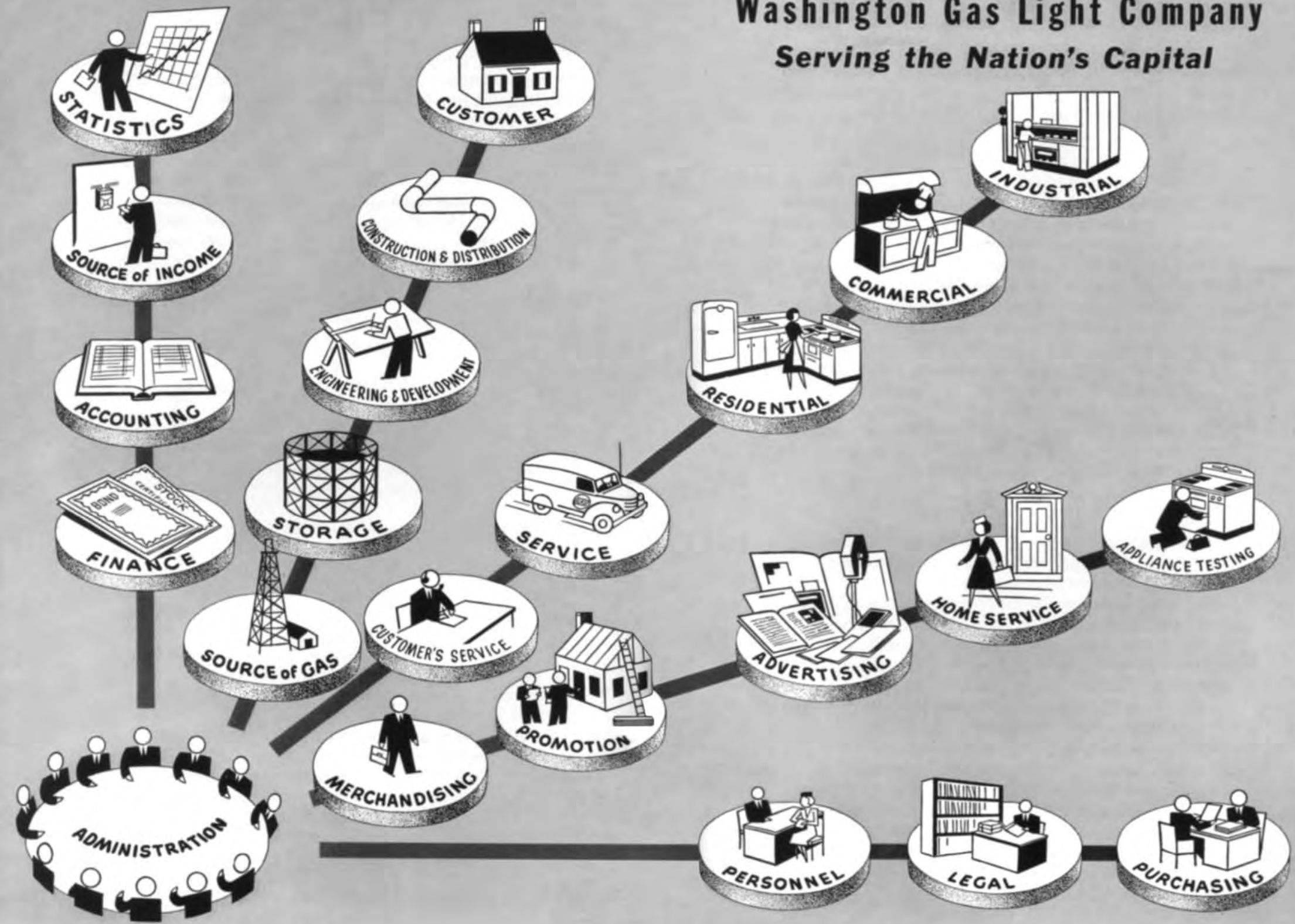
Today, in order to operate successfully and serviceably, the Company requires more than thirty departments. These groups have specific duties, each co-ordinating with and assisting the others, working toward one goal—serving well the public.

Ours is not a business which can close down each night or holiday. It is dedicated to service . . . not part of the time, but twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. Our record is one of continuous service for a Century.

The Company is engaged in production, transportation, distribution, service, sales, financing, and construction. In consequence, its staff is composed of experts in almost every phase of business . . . engineers, accountants, technicians, chemists, radio

Washington Gas Light Company

Serving the Nation's Capital



dispatchers, executives, lawyers, secretaries, clerks, salesmen, mechanics, draftsmen. . . . Truly, ours is a great business, ever growing, ever progressing, with Time and a Great City.

THE OWNERS OF THE COMPANY

An interesting phase of any business is the control and ownership of its capital stock. This Company has approximately eighty-two hundred owners, most of whom are neighbors living in Washington and nearby Maryland and Virginia. Eighty-one percent of the preferred stock and fifty-four percent of the common stock is owned by customers living in this area.

The owners of the Company include not only individuals, but also estates of deceased persons, firms, hospitals, churches, employees, and other groups. The largest amount of stock is held by one of the country's oldest universities, and no stockholder owns as much as two percent of the total shares. Women constitute the largest group of stockholders, holding forty percent, while men own twenty-nine percent. Twenty-two stockholders live in foreign countries, and the balance of the stock is distributed throughout the forty-eight States.

THE USES OF GAS

To the average American, the word gas is symbolized by five pictures: the gas range, water heater, refrigerator, gas furnace, and year-round air conditioning unit.

Gas has twenty-one thousand and more known uses, and affects almost every phase of one's life whether at home, work, or play. Practically every manufactured article that is used by man, woman, and child, is dependent, in some way or other, upon gas or its by-products. These articles, from Abrasives to Zippers, have been ingeniously treated with gas heat, directly or indirectly. Although some articles may not require gas in their manufacturing processes, nevertheless, gas has helped to make the machinery, tools, and other implements required in their manufacture.

The many uses of gas may be classified into three groups: the home, the commercial, and the industrial.

Home life is directly assisted by gas in cooking, water heating, refrigerating, house, room, and garage heating, air conditioning, refuse incinerating, clothes drying, ironing. . . . Indirectly, gas makes home life more pleasant because of its contributions toward the manufacturing and processing of such things as clothing and house furnishings.

Food preparation witnesses the use of gas in practically every phase. Gas bakes cakes, pies, pretzels, and crackers; it roasts coffee and peanuts; smokes meats and fish; ripens and dries fruits and herbs.

The second group, the commercial, utilizes gas and gas-fired equipment more than the average person realizes. The American way of living depends upon gas in such enterprises and establishments as restaurants, bakeries, hotels, beauty and barber shops, drug stores, laundries, hospitals, schools, churches, and clubs. All these and many more require gas in order to serve the public.

Everyone realizes the importance of the many industries throughout America. In most of these, gas heat plays an important role, because it can be perfectly controlled, is dependable and economical, convenient, clean, and efficient. Then too, gas requires no fuel storage space nor tied-up capital in fuel investment; and the elimination of smoke and ashes is another advantage that makes gas an indispensable fuel in industry and in the home.

The steel and metal industries and foundries employ gas for melting, hardening, and welding. Such industries as pottery, ceramics, plastics, chemical, rubber, and tobacco . . . likewise use gas-fired equipment. The daily newspapers use gas for melting the stereotype and linotype metals; even our money has been processed by gas-heated equipment.

Another interesting phase of gas is found in its by-products: coke, tar, lampblack, ammonia, light oils, naphthalene, butane, helium. . . . These by-products make road and roofing materials, delicate perfumes, saccharin, drugs, chemicals, paints, and crystals. A recent development, a result of experiments during World War II, is the manufacture of gasoline from natural gas.

The progressive gas industry has increased its stature as a vital factor in the American economy. With its large capital investment exceeding five billion dollars, it ranks among the nation's largest industries, and serves more than seventy-two million people.

The American Gas Association also plays an important role in the industry. It is constantly exploring new fields, with its intensive programs of research, to find new uses for gas and to improve existing procedure. This important work, carried on in conjunction with the engineering staffs of the individual companies and research laboratories, enables the industry to be alert and productive, and assures its future prosperity.

The American Family finds gas an indispensable service. It cooks and refrigerates their food, supplies their hot water, heats their homes in winter and cools them in summer. It bakes their bread, pasteurizes their milk, and presses their clothes. From candy factories to open hearth furnaces . . . gas has thousands of uses . . . it is truly, the *WONDER FLAME!*

Washington Gas Light Company

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120

80

40

20

10

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with a greater Washington

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GARRETT PARK

M

A

KENSINGTON

R

Y

L

A

N

SILVER SPRING

BETHESDA

CHEVY CHASE

TAKOMA PARK

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COLUMBIA

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ANACOSTIA RIVER

ALEXANDRIA

POTOMAC RIVER

CAPITOL HGTS

BOULEVARD HGTS

MILLIONS OF THERMS SOLD...
AND AREA SERVED BY
WASHINGTON GAS LIGHT COMPANY
AND AFFILIATED COMPANIES

1915

1920

1925

1930

1935

1940

1947

DIRECTORS SINCE 1848

John F. Callan
1848-1849

Jacob Bigelow
1848-1850

Benjamin B. French
1848-1850

William H. Harrover
1848-1850

Michael P. Callan
1848-1849

William A. Bradley
1848-1850

Ulysses Ward
1849-1850

Robert Latham
1850-1852

Silas H. Hill
1850-1856

Charles L. Colteman
1850-1851

Joseph F. Brown
1850-1851

Charles H. Rogers
1851-1885

Charles B. Dungan
1851-1858

John W. Maury
1852-1853

H. D. Steever
1852-1853

Beach Vanderpool
1853-1855

Henry S. Gaw
1854-1883

Col. Wm. G. Freeman
1855-1865

George W. Riggs
1856-1865

John W. Thompson
1858-1861

Fitzhugh Coyle
1861-1862

Hudson Taylor
1862-1866

Barnabas H. Bartol
1864-1888

John Bailey
1865-1883

William Orme
1866-1882

Wm. R. Riley
1882-1893

Wm. Benning Webb
1883-1896

George A. McIlhenny
1883-1892

James W. Orme
1885-1905

John C. Bullitt
1888-1902

John R. McLean
1892-1911

George T. Dunlop
1893-1908

Capt. John F. Rodgers
1896-1900

Richard W. Goldsborough
1900-1911

John McIlhenny
1902-1912

John C. Poor
1905-1905

Milton E. Ailes
1905-1911

Howard S. Reeside
1908-1924

Joseph Leiter
1910-1929

Ord Preston
1910-1930

James M. Green
1911-1930

Dr. Guy F. Whiting
1911-1927

John D. McIlhenny
1912-1925

Daniel Fraser
1912-1921

Robert D. Weaver
1921-1934

William King
1924-1929

Charles C. Glover
1925-1929

Edward J. Stellwagen
1928-1929

H. Prescott Gatley
1929-1930, 1936-1939

Dane A. Pearson
1929-1929

Wilton J. Lambert
1929-1935

Christopher H. Pope
1930-

George A. G. Wood
1930-1932

George B. Fraser
1930-1932

Corcoran Thom
1930-

Fred S. Burroughs
1930-1932

Col. A. E. Pierce
1931-1932

Marcy L. Sperry
1932-

Sidney F. Taliaferro
1932-

Cary T. Grayson
1933-1938

Everett J. Boothby
1935-

Albert W. Atwood
1939-

William J. Flather
1939-1939

Robert C. Owers
1939-

FINIS