

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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A.L. SWETT ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER CO. Part II "Light and Power"

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On May 23, 1898 A. L. Swett incorporated under the name of the A. L. Swett Electric Light and Power Co. with a capital stock of \$50,000 and did business solely in the Village of Medina. By December 31, 1898 there were thirty-four meters in service. During that same year Mr. Swett had purchased property where an old mill had burned on Oak Orchard Creek. He cleared away the debris and erected on the mill site a thoroughly modern electric plant making use of the water power. However, as time went on this facility became overtaxed since the company was fulfilling its contract to light the village streets as well as several private customers. To augment this power supply a steam plant was created to generate more electricity. By the year 1900 the plant located near Medina Falls was in full operation. The steam plant was used for only about four years until Mr. Swett was able to commence the grand plan and work of his life.

For twenty years he had been buying lands all along the course of Oak Orchard Creek extending a mile and a half north of the Village of Medina. To take care of growing business the capital stock was increased from \$50,000 to \$300,000. It was then in 1903 when work was commenced on building a storage dam about one mile north of Medina which would furnish power for years to come. This dam was built across the main channel of Oak Orchard Creek at a point where the banks are seventy-five feet high and only 600 feet apart. It was made of earth and concrete and is sixty feet high and thirty feet wide at the top. A spillway prevents water from overflowing. This enormous reservoir extends south to Medina Falls and forms a water surface area of 150 acres known as Glenwood Lake. The average depth is thirty-five feet extending to sixty feet in the deepest parts. In this original system which was completed in 1904 there were three separate stations, the upper one situated at Medina Falls; the lower one just up from the dam and a sub-station midway between the two. The upper power house, or Station No. 1, a two-story stone building 45 x 100 feet appears in the picture above. The total investment at power house No. 2 was \$297,000. The first transmission line built outside of Medina was started to Middleport in 1904 and finished in 1905 while a line to Shelby was also completed the same year.

In 1917 it was decided to build another power dam at Waterport using the same Oak Orchard Creek waters. A dam eighty-one feet high made of earth and concrete creates a reservoir extending upstream about four and one half miles. This body of water was named Lake Alice in honor of A.L. Swett's granddaughter.

There were many obstacles involved in the construction work of the Waterport project. Houses and stores had to be either moved or razed and roads abandoned with new ones made to take their place. A bridge was built on Main Street across the lake at Waterport which cost about \$70,000. The iron bridge at Kenyonville also had to be raised seven feet and new abutments placed under it. Before the construction was completed in August 1920 over fifty pieces of real estate were purchased to provide for the power reservoir. For Mr. Swett "there were no Alps". He accomplished whatever he undertook, letting no obstacles dismay his persistent nature.

The motto of the A.L. Swett Electric Light and Power Co. was "to serve the public promptly, efficiently and at reasonable rates." Here we will end with a poem which was used as an advertisement around 1915:

Read This to Hubby

The good old summer time is here,
Now don't be selfish, think of Dear,
Who stays at home and toils all day
Over a hot coal fire while you're away,
In your office, cooled with an electric fan,
Now get her an electric iron, be a man,
You'll save money and her disposition
And she will meet you with a smile.
Take our advice and do it now;
You'll find it's worth the while.
SWETT ELECTRIC COMPANY