

vicinity, transforming the present appearance of the river at this point for miles up stream. The erection of the dam will create a great pool, caused by the back water and the view of the beautiful river from the Iowa and Illinois bluffs will be different from what it is now.

But the change will be one for the better and will add to the beauties of the stream, instead of detracting from them. An immense lake will be formed where now the river is a winding stream. There will be no current in this lake to amount to anything and it will extend some thirty miles in length or more, from Keokuk to beyond Fort Madison.

The present canal, built by the government at an outlay of about seven million dollars, will be flooded; drowned out completely and will disappear beneath the placid waters of the lake. The locks and dry dock will sink with the balance of the structure and the rise of the water will overflow considerable land on both sides of the river.

All of this has been provided for by Mr. Cooper. He secured permission from the government to build the dam and the government knows that its canal will be drowned out. It agrees to the destruction of its canal, because the building of the water power dam provides for a lock and dry dock, to take the place of that government work destroyed.

Instead of destroying government property, the water power project will improve it, for it calls for but one lock whereas there are now three, thus doing away with the expense of maintenance and creating a saving in the operating expense of the canal, which in time will soon amount to a high enough figure to pay for the property damaged.

The land owners, mostly, are satisfied with the prospects of their land along the river shores being flooded and made useless. They will be paid for this, the law providing for cases of this character where a work of great public benefit requires the taking of private property. At one time an attempt was made to secure options on all of the land subject to overflow, but this was not carried to an end and the courts will settle the question when it comes up, each land owner receiving a fair price for his land.

On the Iowa side runs the K-line railroad tracks and the plans for the dam show that the entire stretch of track from Keokuk to Fort Madison will

for twenty miles by raising them and running the right of way along the side of the bluff. The company saw the advantage it would derive from the water power and voluntarily made its survey without asking damages from the promoters of the water power project.

As the work of building the dam progresses, the work of changing the railway line will go forward.

The erection of the dam is not expected to make much, if any, change on the lower side of it.

**Immediate Benefit.** Keokuk and vicinity will derive immediate benefit from the water power, although the greatest gain will not come until after the dam has been completed and power is being furnished.

The building of an engineering project of this size will naturally create a stir, for the hundreds of workmen will require a large payroll and this will stimulate business in Keokuk.

Factories and other establishments will locate in this vicinity before the power is ready to be served, in order to be on hand when the benefits can best be derived. New life, new blood and new institutions will come to Keokuk and the vicinity to locate and the effect of the announcement that the dam is to be built will be noticeable within a very few days.

With a future before it, Keokuk has become a city which is well worth considering and manufacturing establishments and firms which are seeking a new location will be drawn in this direction.

Hamilton will receive the same benefit and so will Warsaw, Nauvoo, Carthage, Montrose and every city and town within fifty miles. The power can be transmitted just as easily to our neighboring cities as it can to Keokuk and the distance from the dam will be of little consequence in determining the location of a factory, but naturally, Keokuk being the largest city in the immediate vicinity, it will reap the greatest benefit.

It would be folly to make a prediction that Keokuk will become a great metropolis within a few months. The city will surely grow at a rapid rate and new institutions will be secured, but no one should expect any miracles to be performed or a sudden boom that will carry the place off its feet. It will grow and grow rapidly, but not in any extraordinary or abnormal manner.

**Let's Be Calm.** Keokuk has ever been a city

ing of the water power plant should have a reasonable effect upon real estate values and should make the price firm, but it is no practical excuse for the doubling or trebling of prices. In the boom days of 1856 Keokuk real estate doubled in value, but within a couple of years the bottom dropped out of the boom. An abnormal raise of price never works out satisfactory in the long run.

There is just cause for rejoicing over the glad news. It should not be taken as news of a boom, but as news of a great improvement to be made which will strengthen Keokuk in every way, build it up gradually and in time make it a large city. The change will not come in a night. It will take many months to double the size and population of the city and excitement will not do it.

Perhaps it is a good thing that the water power development has been so many years coming to a head. It has given the people a chance to think the matter over and be prepared for it; to carefully lay plans for the future and make decisions after sober thought on the matter. If Keokuk is to grow into a larger, more bustling place, let us citizens who are here now and who have grown up with the city, do our part in seeing that no mistakes are made through a too excited view of the change which is coming. Let us not expect the town to grow into a Chicago within the next two weeks, but let us soberly and calmly congratulate ourselves and watch for and assist in the development of old Keokuk into the Newer and Greater Keokuk.

**Received No Reward.**

The men who were instrumental in securing the water power for Keokuk have so far received no reward for their long and faithful efforts. None of them received any salary for their work, outside of the small amounts received in exchange for their stock when Mr. Cooper was given the franchise and many of them spent much of their time and means in working for the good of Keokuk in the matter, making numerous trips and devoting many hours from their own business.

None of the directors or stockholders ever attempted to do any real estate speculating. It was possible for them, knowing in advance of the good news, to have withheld it for a few days and turn it to great personal advantage, but they did not.

They worked for Keokuk

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF KEOKUK WATER POWER

Giving the Most Important Events in the Ten Years' Determined Effort to Bring About the Harnessing of the Rapids of the Mississippi.

To properly write the water power history of Keokuk, would be an undertaking which would require several days of hard, careful research, the going over of the files of the Keokuk newspapers for years back, the looking up of river records and interviewing half of the present generation of the city. The proper start would be over fifty years ago when the first water power spark was kindled in the minds of the pioneer citizens who at that time were talking about the great energy in the Mississippi river which was going to waste.

In that early day, water power was no new thing, for nearly every little stream had its mill dam. Electricity was unheard of excepting as it appeared in the sky during the thunder storm, but the idea of making the

other promoters who spent considerable time here and in the end accomplished nothing?

How many citizens voted on May 29, 1895, at the special election at which the water power proposition carried by 751 majority?

Although it has been ten years since the Keokuk and Hamilton Water Power company was formed, it does not seem a great while since the first real practical effort was started to get the power.

This history is being written just exactly ten years after the evening when a small group of Keokuk men gathered together and started the ball rolling which has eventually proven successful. On the evening of July 6, 1905, the modest historian of this brief history, wrote the above, while on the same evening ten years ago,

which a number of people made addresses. The meeting adopted a resolution endorsing the plan. Speeches were made by S. M. Clark, Mayor Hughes, Judge E. Jaeger, Dr. Ehlinger, Orion Clemmens, J. H. Anderson, Frank LeBron, Wm. Ballinger, Judge H. H. Trimble, L. A. Fox and Dr. Geo. F. Jenkins.

For several days before this election The Gate City printed interviews with citizens, all of whom were in favor of the proposition for the company had almost guaranteed to build the plant right away if the city would only give them the contract for power. They were to build a plant with a capacity of not less than 15,000 horse power and the city was to take one thousand horse power for lighting.

The late C. F. Davis had a column article in The Gate City of May 23. On May 21, Major Meigs submitted to an interview in which he was asked whether or not the wing dam could not be built on the Iowa side of the river. In The Gate City of May 19 J. C. Hubinger was quoted and he did not look with much favor on the scheme, but asked that the people give him a chance to figure on the proposition himself. On May 17 interviews were published from J. M. Bisbee, S. E. Carey, John McNamara, Capt. A. H. Evans, John Angell, and A. J. Mathias, nearly all of whom are now dead. In the issue of May 16 are found the names of John P. Hornish, J. C. Parrott, Henry W. Huiskamp, W. B. Collins, Dr. George F. Jenkins, John E. Craig, Wm. Horn, Jr., and Orion Clemens, all in favor of the proposition.

The company promised to start the work by June but the month of roses came and passed and nothing was done.

After that, Captain Anthony drifted into the town and he also was going to build the water power. He is remembered as a man with a great growth of red whiskers and a habit of smoking his cigars down to the very shortest ends, sticking them on a tooth-peg when they got real short. He accomplished but little.

R. A. Campbell came here on April 3, 1897 and looked around, but failed to build the power. One of these, Captain Anthony, even got far enough along to get a franchise from the government for the building of a wing dam on the Illinois side, capable of developing 20,000 horse power. In order to hold his franchise, he had a few men throw several wagon loads of rock in the river near the mouth of Chaney creek and that was the nearest to actual construction ever started.

These early skirmishes, while they

what was to follow. They were probably necessary in the history of the work and bear just as important a part in the story as does the first time Columbus broached his project of discovering a new world. The water power history could not be told by starting out with yesterday's developments of those of a year ago, but it must go back to the very beginning for each step performed its important part in the work.

No one up to that time had made a practical investigation of the proposition. Whatever plans had been made, were drawn up without any surveys being made or any records looked up. The idea then was simply to build a wing dam with a power house on it, and no attention was paid to the stage of water, the depth of the river, the size of the dam, or anything else. The engineering feature was an ordinary affair compared to what the scheme finally developed into. Every new scheme was eagerly taken up by the citizens and all of the support necessary was extended and promised to those men who first figured on the plan. None of the plans, however got far enough along for the raising of money.

THE REAL START.

The late C. P. Birge, always one of the foremost citizens in anything tending toward the betterment of the city, conceived the idea of forming a local company to secure a franchise from the government for the building of the dam. His idea was not to form a company to build it, but to get the franchise and try and give it away to someone who would undertake the proposition. Mr. Birge was first president of the Keokuk and Hamilton Water Power Co. and his work toward the project will never be forgotten as long as his name shall be remembered. He was an enthusiast on any project he put his energy into and had been a younger man and been spared more years, no doubt would have been able to accomplish his intentions. Fortunately for Keokuk, other men of equaly as brilliant energy and civic patriotism, took up the work at his death, and have pushed it forward.

Of the seven directors of the company, but four are living. The company on July 6, 1899, organized by the election of officers and directors, as follows:

C. P. Birge, President.  
R. R. Wallace, Vice President.  
Edmund Jaeger, Secretary-Treasurer.

The above three and Wm. Logan, A. E. Johnstone, S. M. Clark and S. R. Parker were the directors.

THE COMPANY WAS INCORPORATED ON APRIL 25, 1900, AND HAD A CAPITAL STOCK OF BUT \$2,500. THERE WERE TWENTY-FIVE CITIZENS OF KEOKUK AND HAMILTON WHO COMPOSED THE COMPANY, THEY HAVING BEEN SELECTED BY MR. BIRGE AND CALLED INTO CONFERENCE WITH HIM IN NOVEMBER OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR, AT WHICH TIME THE COMPANY WAS FORMED, EACH MEMBER TAKING A SHARE OF STOCK AT \$100 EACH. THE TWENTY-FIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY WERE AS FOLLOWS:

C. P. Birge, of Keokuk, (deceased).  
R. R. Wallace, of Hamilton.  
Edmund Jaeger, of Keokuk, (deceased).  
William Logan, of Keokuk.

THE LATE C. P. BIRGE



The Keokuk and Hamilton Water Power Company was conceived and organized by Mr. Birge, who deserves special credit for putting the proposition on the right basis ten years ago. He was the first president of the company and had faith in the project all of the time.

force of water do the bidding of man, was commonplace. Fifty years ago there was talk of a dam in the Mississippi river at the foot of the rapids and a company was even formed to develop power from the rapids.

But like numerous other companies formed afterwards, nothing was ever done and the river rolled on unchecked, the roar of the rapids still singing the song it had for ages. The development of electrical power from the rapids is but of recent date, for electricity is only a modern servant. The majority of Keokuk's citizens can no doubt well remember when the electric street car system was installed in Keokuk. This was one of the earliest systems in the West and marked about the beginning of the popularity of electricity. Up to that time there had been no thought of harnessing the Mississippi river at this point for the development of electrical energy.

Twenty years ago there was no suggestion of water power from an electrical viewpoint, yet deriving power from the river is an old, old story. The present generation, however, may truthfully say that the Keokuk water power project was conceived, investigated, built and completed during their life time.

SOME EARLY FLURRIES.

The present water power project only dates back to July, 1899, when the late C. P. Birge formed the Keokuk and Hamilton Water Power company, which is responsible for the culmination of the great project.

Previous to that date there had been numerous water power flurries, most of which the citizens will recall and all of which went up into a thin wreath of blue smoke.

The names of almost every citizen of Keokuk can in some way or another be linked with these early efforts. How many can recall the effort made by H. C. Reiner to build a plant and of the canvass made by the Business Men's association to see how much power would be taken in Keokuk. How many remember Campbell and Anthony and Williams and the

late C. P. Birge and others met and elected officers and directors their little company which was organized for the purpose of securing a franchise from the government, to hold the same in order that schemers and irresponsible promoters could not step in and secure a franchise from the government for mercenary reasons only.

On May 29, 1895, there was a special election held in Keokuk at which the citizens voted on the proposition of the Des Moines Rapids Power company for the city to build an electric lighting plant and take power from the company at a cost of not to exceed \$30 per horse power per year.

This proposition was made by a company of which M. R. Williams was the president and H. S. Wells was the secretary. The special election was to be paid for by the company and Judge Felix T. Hughes was mayor at the time. The election resulted as follows:

Ward	Yes.	No.
First	194	29
Second	210	49
Third	205	46
Fourth	78	58
Fifth	147	38
Sixth	212	75
Totals	1046	295

NEVER WAS BUILT.

By a majority of 751 the city council was given the discretionary authority to build and own an electric lighting plant and buy the power of any responsible parties at a price not to exceed \$30 per horse power a year, 24 hour service.

At the council meeting of June 3 of that year, this company made formal application for a five year contract with the city for power as per the above vote.

During the agitation of this proposition which was brought up by the company which contemplated erecting a wing dam at a cost of a half million dollars, the citizens were very much enthused over the project and a mass meeting was held at the county court house on the evening of May 23 at

accomplished no immediate results, can really be pointed back to and given some credit for the financial culmination of the project, for each one of them created interest in the proposition and were forerunners of

A. E. Johnstone, of Keokuk.  
S. M. Clark, of Keokuk, (deceased).  
S. R. Parker, of Hamilton.  
C. P. Dabant, of Hamilton.  
Wm. Ballinger, of Keokuk.  
B. P. Taber, of Keokuk.

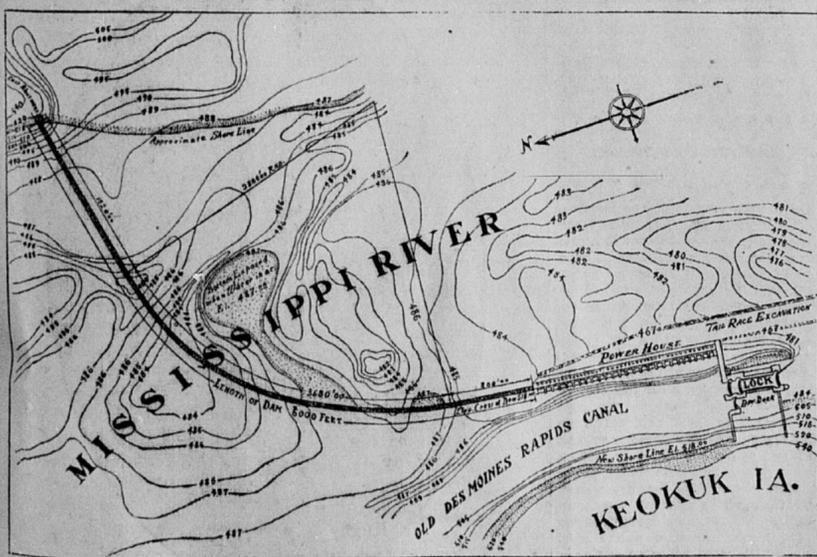


Diagram of the water power dam at an early stage when it was proposed to have the dam built in a curved shape.

be overflowed by the crest of the lake to be formed. This matter has also been provided for, the railroad officials having some time ago made surveys for changing the tracks

of conservative, level headed people and The Gate City believes that her citizens are not the kind who will go into a frenzied panic of expectations. The announcement of the build-

and not for themselves. If this same spirit can be inspired in all citizens, Keokuk is growing into a larger city and will become a much better one.