HOW INTELLIGENT AND PROGRESSIVE PUBLIC SERVICE PROMOTES CITY DEVELOPMENT

A SUBJECT OF INTEREST TO HOME BUILDERS

ADVANTAGES OF MINNEAPOLIS IN THE MATTER OF SUPPLY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES — THE DISTRIBUTION OF GAS AN EXAMPLE—SOME HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED FACTS AND FIGURES AND THEIR BEARING ON REAL ESTATE AND BUILDING INTERESTS.

The effects upon the development of a city of the quality of the public services rendered by the municipal government and corporations are very marked. This fact may not be very generally understood and, in considering the causes for the rapid progress of some cities and the slow development of others, the character of the public services may not always be given due weight. But it remains that the subject is one of great importance and one which should be carefully studied by all interested in real estate whether as buyers or sellers. The importance of these matters has increased under modern conditions. Twenty or thirty years ago people thought little about them. Water supply, for instance, was of comparatively little moment; for wells might be dug and cisterns constructed and the sanitarian had not arisen to warn the consumer that death lurked in both these time-honored sources of supply. Then when a large proportion of the people burned kerosene in lamps for illuminating purposes and gas as a fuel was hardly known, it mattered very little whether there were gas mains in the vicinity of the lot on which one proposed to build a home. And as for electricity, it was not considered at all. Those days were days of slow transportation. Many people kept their private conveyances and were content with the speed of the nag which drew the buggy or road wagon from home to business. If public conveyance was used the horse car or the 'bus was considered as serving every purpose which the ordinary man could expect. There was not such a feverish demand for quick transportation to and from home—a demand which now frets itself if the electric car is a minute late or loses a few seconds off the schedule on the way to the business center.

Modern standards of living have altered all this. The householder feels that he must have an ample supply of water; and not only water for a tap in the kitchen but for bath, laundry, a heating system, sprinkling the lawn and so pure that it may be drinkable. The dangers, odors and inconveniences of kerosene lamps have brought about a sentiment which forbids their use except for a few special purposes—unless it is absolutely impossible to secure a better light. Then gas cooking, that boon of the twentieth century housekeeper, has proved so eminently convenient and economical, that it is considered indispensable in thousands of households. Gas, like electricity, is a time saver in a social period when each day is full to the limit and no moments may be lost if one would live his life to the full reach and complete enjoyment of its pleasures as well as fulfill its workaday obligations. So the breakfast cooked on the gas stove is logically followed by the quick trip to business on the electric car; the lunch prepared under similar modern conditions is followed by the excursion of the mistress of the household on shopping quest or in the fulfillment of social obligations, in all of which the rapid transit of to-day is a very material aid.

So under modern ideas of living the supply of public necessities—now necessities in fact—has taken on a much larger importance and an interest is being taken in the quality of these services which could not be felt before. It is the purpose here to show what the intelligent and comprehending management of a public function may do for a city and the part it may play in the development of building operations and the stimulation of home-making. The gas supply of Minneapolis is, perhaps, the best for purposes of illustration, as it enters more intimately into the home life and enjoyments of the people than any other service; and it happens that in this city gas is supplied, not by the municipality, but by a corporation which carries on its operations on a business basis. This makes the work of the gas company entirely free from political influences, which otherwise might tend to make the use of the matter as an illustration quite unsatisfactory.

The most important point of contact between the gas supply and the real estate subject is, of course, distribution. It is here that the gas company has exercised its most direct and forcible influence upon the life of the city; for its liberal policy of extending its mains and making house connections has been the direct cause of innumerable building improvements. This includes not only individual houses but the development of whole districts. This is, of course, a matter of business with the company. It is not doing business for the advantage of real estate owners; but its officers realize that a liberal policy in extending mains into districts likely to become large consumers of gas will in the end prove profitable.

There are numerous examples of portions of the city which have received a decided stimulus thru the introduction of gas for light and fuel. One of these is Linden Hills, west of Lake Harriet, which the gas company entered at enormous expense for long mains thru unproductive or non-consuming territory. The Highland Park region in North Minneapolis is receiving remarkable benefit from the introduction of the gas mains. New houses are being built and values are advancing. Mains are to be laid this year on more streets in this district and a genuine boom may be looked for in that beautiful part of the city. Quite recently the New Boston region was supplied with gas for the first time; the results have been manifest. Another district which has been benefited by wholesale gas main laying is the Fair Grounds addition in South Minneapolis, and still another is the region from Tenth to Fifteenth avenues S in the vicinity of Franklin avenue. This year Prospect Park in Southeast Minneapolis will be invaded by the mains. This is a tip to buyers, for the usual results will follow. There is almost sure to be a decided increase in building operations and an advance in prices of property. The same thing has happened again and again in all parts of the city.

These are only specific cases of districts of some magnitude which have been supplied with gas by some general extension. Countless instances of smaller operations in every part of the city might be cited, if space permitted.

Most people do not realize the extent of the operations of the company in putting in new mains. Take the last ten years for instance—here is the new mileage laid each season:

Year—	Miles.	Year—	Miles.
1895	4	1900	8
1896	5	1901	14
1897	14	1902	17
1898	11	1903	21
1899	18	1904 (about)	25

It will be seen from the foregoing figures that the number of miles of new main has been quite steadily increasing during the past ten years—an evidence both of the constant and accelerating increase in population of the city and the development of a liberal policy on the part of the company. It is also noticeable that this year's extensions will be larger than ever before.

Minneapolis now has nearly double the miles of gas mains as in St. Paul, three times the mileage of Des Moines and five times the number of miles of mains in Sioux City. The mileage here is within 10 per cent of that of Milwaukee, which has 75,000 more population. Where Minneapolis has 1.11 miles of gas main for every thousand of population Chicago has but .933. These figures show the excellence of the system in Minneapolis.

Another matter which need not worry the intending house builder in Minneapolis is that of the price of gas as an illuminant or fuel. Unlike kerosene which Mr. Rockefeller can manipulate with the stroke of a pen, or anthracite over which Mr. Baer is believed to exercise a guiding hand notwithstanding his naive explanations, gas is sure to go down in price in proportion to increased consumption. Each new consumer of gas may feel assured that he is doing his mite to help reduce the cost to the whole city. For gas is essentially an article that falls in price with increased consumption.

During the past twenty-five years the price has fallen about 75 per cent in Minneapolis. This the following scale shows:

	Per 1,000 Feet.
Price in 1877	$4.00
Price Jan. 1, 1878	3.50
Price October, 1882	2.50
Price March, 1886	1.80
Price January, 1891	1.60
Price March, 1895	1.30
Price January, 1901	1.20
Price June 1, 1904	1.10

The latter price goes into effect tomorrow and like previous reductions in price is the voluntary action of the company on account of increased consumption, which reduced the proportionate operating and distributing expenses of the company. This price puts Minneapolis on a plane with other western cities of her size—in fact a little lower than some when the high candle power of Minneapolis gas is taken into consideration. The influence of this fact on homeseekers the drawing of Cruikshank about 1845 of building improvements has enormously increased since gas cooking became so popular. No well equipped house nowadays is without a gas range, while gas heaters for many purposes, instantaneous water heaters in the bathroom, iron heaters, laundry heaters, clothes dryers, laundry apparatus, and no end of other conveniences, are frequently found in the best houses. In apartments the gas range is as much a part of the equipment as the doors and windows.

People who have lived where gas is not used for cooking cannot well realize its utility and convenience. In the first place it is safe. The amusing cartoon reproduced on this page could find no duplicate in the present day. This cartoon is a reproduction from and intending builders can be but of advantage to the city.

The importance of low-priced gas and well distributed gas as an adjunct in which he portrays the popular feeling about the use of gas in London. The impossibility of such an event as Cruikshank portrays—the explosion of gas in a chemist's shop with the destruction of the store front and the injury of passing pedestrians is of course obvious. But sixty years ago people had such notions and gas had at first to fight such prejudices.

At the present day gas is the safest fuel known. It cannot set fire to a chimney like wood, or over-heat a stove or range like coal. Kerosene and gasolene are not to be compared with it for a moment. The recent action of the board of managers of the Minnesota State Fair in prohibiting the use of gasolene stoves on the fair grounds and the introduction of a system of gas mains at large expense, speaks eloquently of the estimation in which gasolene as a fuel and light is held by a body which has investigated the subject thoroly.

But, aside from the question of safety, it may be said of gas that it is eminently cleanly, convenient, economical and expeditious. There is no soot or ashes connected with the operation of cooking with gas. There is no carrying in of fuel or disposing of the refuse. Once lighted, the fire needs no replenishing by the cook. There is no time lost in starting a fire or fuel consumed in bringing it to sufficient heat—it is just as hot in ten seconds as in half an hour. When the cooking is finished the gas is turned out with one motion and the consumption and expense cease instantly. In these days, when help is uncertain in quantity, quality and staying power, the housekeeper learns the real utility of the gas range.

In Minneapolis gas ranges are supplied at cost by the company and are set in position and connected with the pipes without expense to the consumer. A vast variety of ranges may be seen for selection. They include the most simple and inexpensive and the most elaborate manufactured. Intending users will find every opportunity for gaining information, and the various economies of operation will be pointed out and explained. It is a notable fact that there has been in Minneapolis recently a very large increase in consumers of gas for cooking from among the laboring classes and salaried workers, who are looking after the smaller economies of life closely and who have decided, after investigation, that it would be decidedly to their advantage to utilize gas in their homes.

As many people will build new houses in Minneapolis this year, and will desire to have gas connections, it will be of interest to them to know that there is no expense connected with bringing the gas directly into the cellar of a house. When it is desired to have premises connected with the gas mains, the owner of the property or his agent must make application in writing at the office of the Gas company. The Gas Light company taps the main, lays the pipe from thence into the building, puts in the necessary stop cock and supplies the meter and connections. As no charge is made for this, the pipes, etc., remain the property of the company and must not be disturbed, disconnected or removed without permission. When gas is desired to be used, the party who is to become responsible for the payment of the bills must make application in writing at the office of the company upon blanks provided for the purpose. The Gas Light company owns all meters and they are never sold, but loaned to consumers. When the gas meter is placed, no person other than an employee of the company is permitted to remove or detach it. All meters are thoroly inspected and their accuracy proved before being placed in use. Every meter is periodically examined and tested for accuracy. Consumers should learn to read their meters. They can then compare the readings with their gas bills as presented monthly. Full instructions for reading meters and the management of gas both for illumination and fuel, may be had at the office of the company. The company also keeps a large stock of gas ranges, heaters, lamps, burners and various accessories for the benefit of its patrons.

It is possible to pay for gas in advance and have the satisfaction of never having a gas bill. Prepayment meters are supplied to consumers by the Gas company when desired. The prepayment meter is the ordinary meter with a mechanical attachment so regulated that gas to the value of 25 cents or more may be purchased at one time. These meters are furnished by the company without extra cost to the consumer. To operate the meter, deposit a perfect 25-cent piece in the place provided for receiving the same (see left side of meter); this permits the turning of the handle or knob which opens a valve, permitting gas to pass to the value of the coin deposited. A dial or pointer on the front of the meter marks the amount of the purchase and indicates at all times the amount of gas paid for and unused. When all the gas paid for is nearly consumed, the supply gradually diminishes, the lights grow lesser, and warning is thus given in time to visit the meter and deposit more coins. The total amount of gas used from time to time is recorded upon the main index, as upon an ordinary meter, and consumers can keep the same supervision over the amount consumed. The gas is sold and delivered thru these meters at the net selling price and the monthly presentation of gas bills becomes unnecessary.

Possibly enough has been said to assure the intending investor or home builder that the management of the gas supply of Minneapolis is conducted on such lines as to be a direct benefit to the city and a positive influence on its development. It is such conduct of public functions— a conduct which is in hearty accord with public progress—that is the best argument against the public ownership of such utilities. In Minneapolis the gas company has further shown its interest in the city and its entire confidence in the future of the real estate interests by making extensive investments on its own account which not only show its faith in the city, but contribute in large measure to the general confidence.

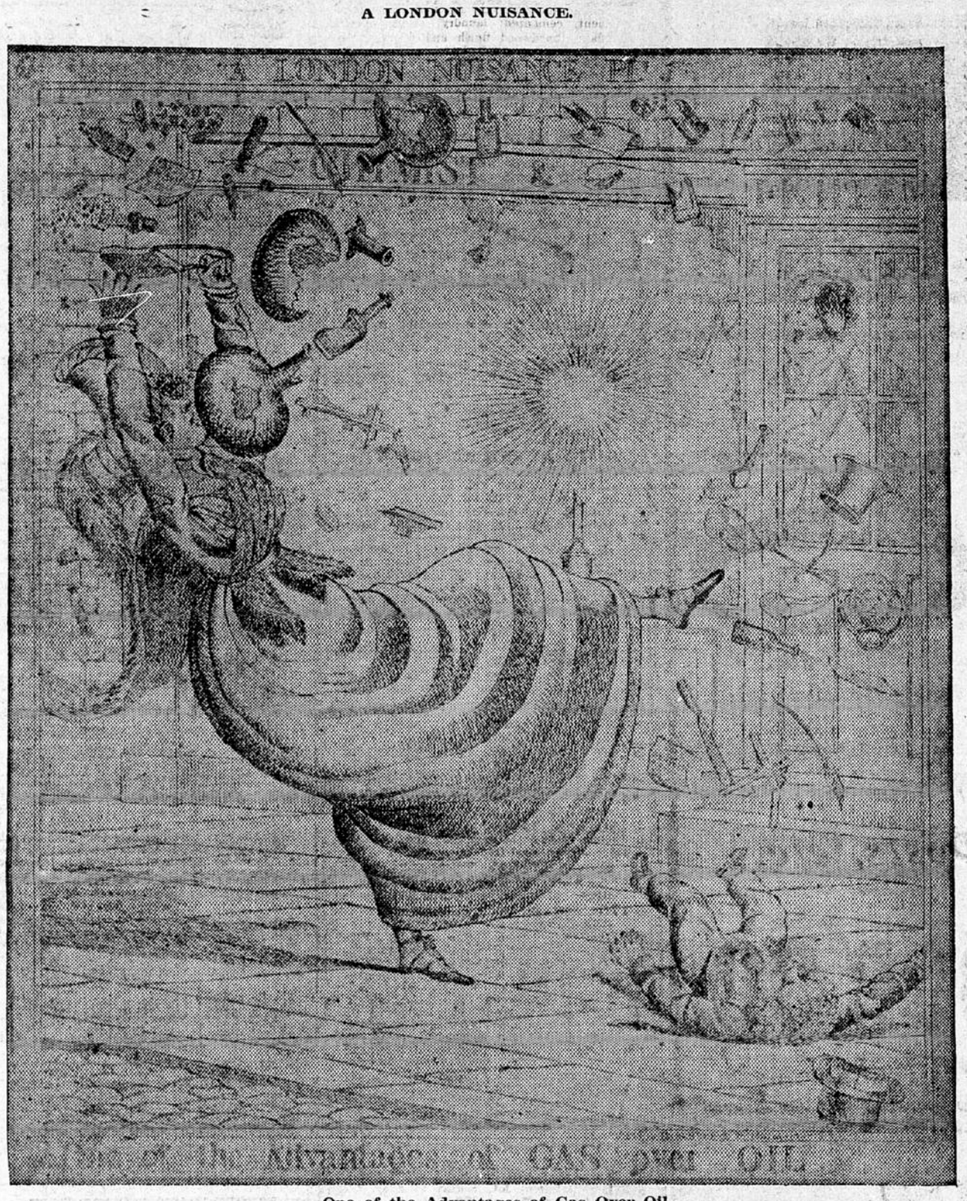
The most conspicuous of its investments is the handsome office building completed last year on Seventh street between Hennepin and Nicollet avenues. Previously the company had occupied rented quarters. The new building is one of the best of recent additions to the office buildings of the city. It is a fireproof structure of gray brick, distinctly classical in style, finished in every detail with fine artistic taste and in the most substantial manner possible. It is one of the thoroly good architectural contributions to the group of fine buildings in Minneapolis and has a distinctively educational effect in raising the taste of the public in such matters. Within, the building is a model of beauty and convenience. The main office is spacious as a banking-room and as handsomely fitted as any of the larger financial institutions' offices. Weathered oak, dull black iron and marble are the most conspicuous materials. On the main and two other floors are rooms devoted to the display and sale of gas ranges and other gas-burning apparatus, the storage of supplies, workrooms, a printing office, and many other departments. The whole building is a model of convenience and special adaptability to the purposes for which it was constructed.

Another interesting structure, or group of structures, is found in the gas manufacturing plant at the foot of Fourteenth avenue S. These works are open to visitors at all times and permits may be secured at the main office on Seventh street. The works are a surprise to most of the people who visit them. There is nothing to offend the nostrils and so little dirt that a lady in summer white may visit all departments without danger of soiling her gown or in any way finding the experience disagreeable.

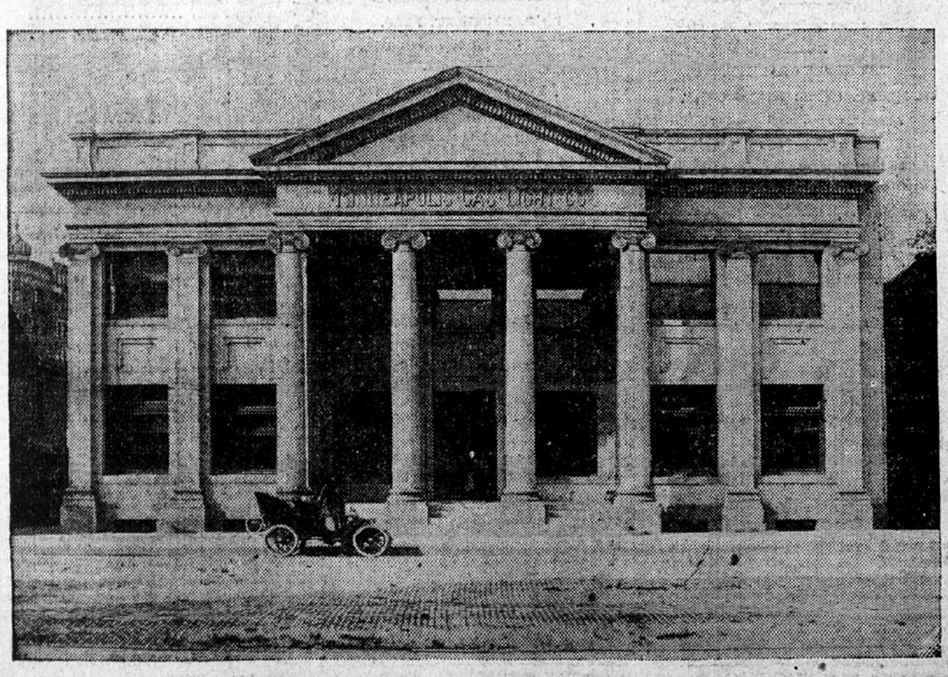
The company is one of the largest employers of labor in Minneapolis. The hands at the works, the force in the main office, and numerous outside workers, make up a force of several hundred employees—a force which is largely augmented in summer when street mains are being laid. There has never been any labor difficulty of any kind between the company and its workers.

The whole business, which is now an enormous one, is organized in a very systematic manner. In fact an interesting chapter among the popular articles on the organization of great business undertakings might be devoted to the Minneapolis Gas Light company. In this as in other classes of service the consumers sometimes think that red-tape predominates and that complications hedge about all operations until quick consideration of individual matters is impossible. This is not the case in the affairs and management of this company. The completeness of the business system used makes celerity in every transaction possible, fixes the responsibility for every operation and makes instant reference to all the business details of the company easy. It is a model of complete organization.

A LONDON NUISANCE.



One of the Advantages of Gas Over Oil.
A pen sketch by Cruikshank showing the prejudice against gas when first used in London.



BEAUTIFUL OFFICE BUILDING OF THE MINNEAPOLIS GAS LIGHT COMPANY.

INTERIOR OF MINNEAPOLIS GAS COMPANY'S OFFICE.