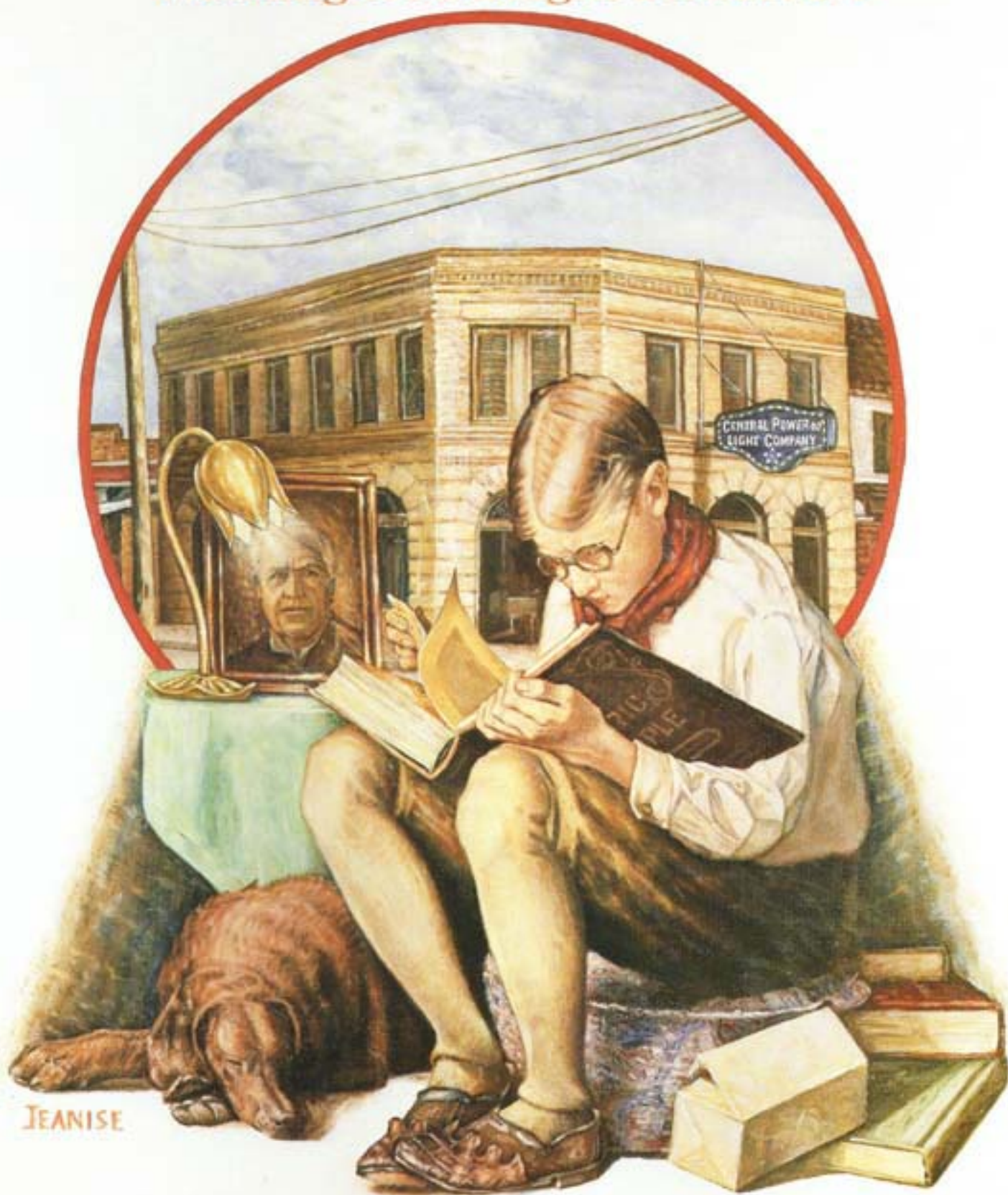


Working for a Bright Tomorrow



JEANISE

75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
CENTRAL POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY



had to be pumped by hand and hauled anywhere it was needed. Cooking and heating were done with wood or coal stoves, which meant that houses were always too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer, not to mention filthy from the soot and cinders.

South Texas homemakers began the week with flat irons. Monday was traditionally wash day, and Tuesday was for ironing. On Monday huge tin washtubs had to be filled with hot water, heated over a stove or an open fire. The clothes were washed in the tubs, scrubbed on washboards and rinsed in clean hot water. The next day, the clothes were sprinkled and huge flat irons would be sitting on the stove, heating up. The homemaker then had to iron clothes by grasping the wooden handle of the flat iron, assuming the wooden handle didn't conduct enough heat to blister unwary hands. And this all had to be accomplished week in and week out, whether it was 95 in the shade, or freezing cold.



In 1910, the Corpus Christi Ice & Electric Company sold block ice from a mule-drawn wagon.



*"When I arrived in San Benito late one dark night in August 1908, I was welcomed by the manager of the old San Benito Hotel, who was carrying a smoking lantern. There was not an electric light in the entire town."*

*Bert A. Epstein, manager, Harlingen Cold Storage, October 1941*

**Without utilities, it wasn't the good old days.**



*Without electricity or running water, Saturday night meant bath time for South Texans. And that meant hauling water from a well or cistern, heating it in kettles on a wood stove and soaping up and rinsing off in an uncomfortable wooden tub.*



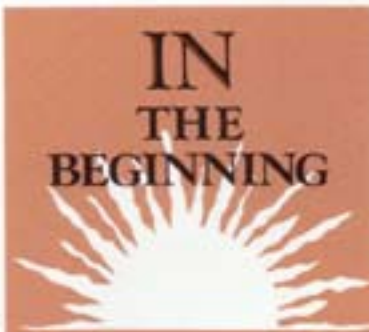
**1892** Edison founded General Electric.

**1901** Oil discovered at Beaumont, Texas.



**1904** The town of Alice was renamed for Alice King Kleberg of the King Ranch. That same year, the town of Kingsville, on the King Ranch, was established on the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexican Railroad.

# T HE FIVE SERVICES:



In 1941, Sam H. Walk, then CPL's Del Rio manager, recalled his start with the company a quarter century before. Walk had begun with what was then Morrison and McCall Company as a bookkeeper in Marfa in 1916.

Not long after he arrived in town, "an elaborate wedding was held. It was very noticeable the number of candleholders that were given as presents, ranging from the ordinary to the most expensive silver sets." Walk recalled with a chuckle that local residents at the time accused the company of operating "the dark town light plant," because of the frequent outages.

CPL's entry into the South Texas utility business in 1916 was spread across five services: electricity, electric street railway traction, gas, water and ice. In 1916, the year the U.S. Army chased Pancho Villa back and forth across the international boundary, those five services were primitive compared to what we enjoy today.

The electric service in Marfa was typical of the isolated systems that served South Texas at the time. All were small, most were unreliable, and electric costs to the consumer were frequently in excess of 20 cents a kilowatt-hour. The small, isolated light plants were so inherently unsafe that operators would shut them down and go home if there was a lightning storm in the vicinity.

In Columbus, the

original direct-current electric plant was changed over to alternating current at 133 cycles at the turn of the century. It wasn't synchronized to a standard, 60-cycle system until 1916. The first electric plant in San Benito consisted of an eight-horsepower Fairbanks Morse gasoline-powered engine in the rear of a

drugstore. The Morrison and McCall plant in Uvalde was coal-fired, burning lignite from the North Texas lignite fields. Since the plant was located three blocks from the railway depot, every pound of lignite had to be hauled to the plant in a horse-drawn wagon.

Electric street railways were isolated to the two largest cities in what would become the CPL service territory: Corpus Christi and Laredo. Both systems, however, were small and in a continuing struggle for financial survival.

Although gas came to mean natural gas in Texas, the gas sold by the predecessors of CPL was manufactured gas, used mainly for cooking in the first two decades of the century. Made by burning coal in retorts and injecting the bed of coals with oil and water, the resulting "coal gas" or "water gas" was low in Btus and hard to deliver to customers.

Water was an afterthought when Morrison and McCall purchased the Laredo property in 1916. They got a small ice and water plant



CPL icemakers flash froze a vase of flowers and a sampling of South Texas agricultural products in blocks of ice to demonstrate the icemaker's abilities about the time of World War I.

**1911** Willacy County organized from Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. Brooks and Jim Wells Counties were organized the following year, and Jim Hogg County was organized in 1913. Willacy County was reorganized in 1921, the same time as Kennedy County was organized.



**1916** Pancho Villa led raids across the U.S.-Mexican border.



# A Million Women Cook with Electricity

More on *Hotpoint* Than on Any Other



### Kitchen Time Saved

When you have the Hotpoint Electric Stove, you don't have to spend time at the stove. You can just put your cooking on the electric stove in the oven or on the electric burner and any other work, like washing dishes, can be done at the same time. The electric stove saves you time in the kitchen, saves the electricity and the gas. The electric stove is the most convenient, easiest to use and the most reliable. When you have the Hotpoint Electric Stove, you can be sure that the meal you are preparing will be just what you need. And if you are tired, the stove will do the work for you.

### Kitchen Comfort

The Hotpoint Electric Stove does not waste heat and makes the kitchen wonderfully comfortable. It is especially convenient to use in the winter. The electric stove is a wonderful convenience. It saves you time, saves the electricity and the gas, and is the most convenient, easiest to use and the most reliable.

### Silent Heat

With electric cooking there are no fumes or gas. Little hands can do no mischief. The stove will be found in the kitchen. The electric stove is a wonderful convenience. It saves you time, saves the electricity and the gas, and is the most convenient, easiest to use and the most reliable. The electric stove is a wonderful convenience. It saves you time, saves the electricity and the gas, and is the most convenient, easiest to use and the most reliable.

**Central Power & Light Co.**  
Phone No. 145  
UVALDE, TEXAS

Electricity in the home got a big boost during the 1920s when manufacturers like Hotpoint began the assembly line production of reliable, inexpensive electric stoves and ranges.

along with the electric plant, the street car system and gas plants. In later years, the company admitted that the operation of the water plant was "slipshod," with frequent breakdowns, and water was piped directly to the mains from the Rio Grande River without treatment. Still, in just a quarter century, CPL was serving 21,000 water customers in 24 communities.

Ice production was a natural outgrowth of electric service. Refrigeration equipment could be run in off-peak hours to produce ice for home and agricultural consumption. The ice was produced in 80- to 100-pound blocks and delivered by horse-drawn wagon. In 1917, CPL, which had been formed by Ralph Morrison and Warner McCall the year before, got into the ice business, purchasing small plants at Uvalde, Alice and Marfa. The business expanded dramatically, and by late 1922, the company owned 26 ice plants across Texas. That same year, CPL decided to go into the all-important Rio Grande Valley to make ice for the expanding winter vegetable business. By 1925, CPL's ice business had grown to 45 separate plants.

All of CPL's five services would expand dramatically during the first 10 years of the company's operations under the guidance of Morrison and McCall.

One of the first uses for electricity on South Texas farms in the 1920s was for pumping water. Note the wire leading into the insulator attached to the wooden plank.



CPL got into the water business with the purchase of the utility system at Laredo in 1916. By the time the McAllen water plant was replaced with a new facility in the late 1920s, the company was in an expansion mode that wouldn't halt until 1941, when CPL had 24 water systems and 21,000 water customers in South Texas.



In 1927, CPL delivered blocks of ice to its customers in Laredo and elsewhere in South Texas with electric trucks built by the San Antonio Body Company.

1917 Texas A&I University established at Kingsville.

1917 U.S. entered World War I.



1917 The Texas Railroad Commission took over the regulation of oil pipelines in the state.