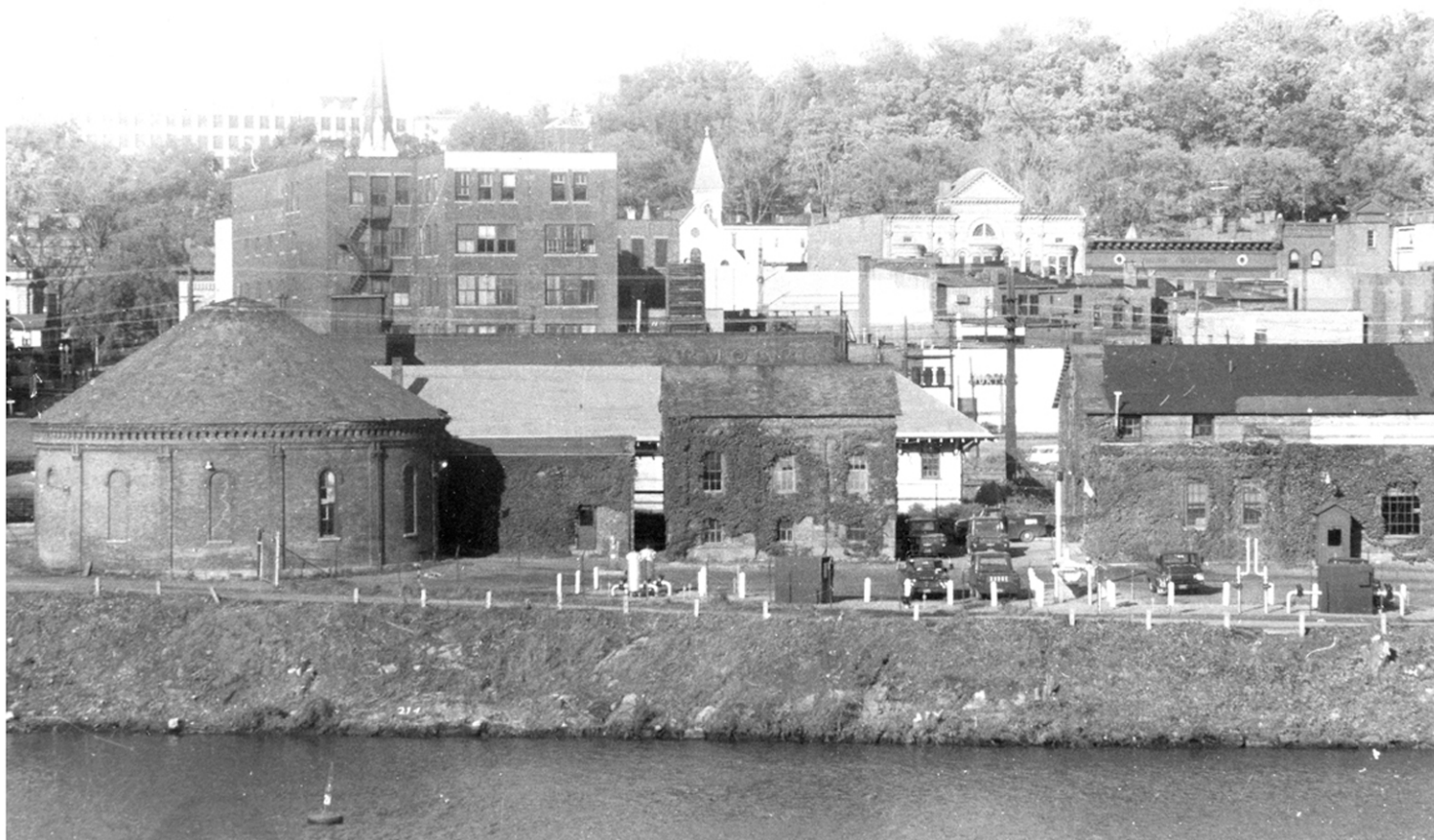


## *Arterial Scrapbook No. 52*



**CENTURY OLD GAS PLANT** - Removal of trees along the north bank of the Mohawk last week brings into better view buildings of the Chuctanunda Gas Light Company that for 100 years have been on the site to be abandoned in change of Amsterdam highway patterns. The No. 1 holder on the left, a unique circular brick building, has been in use as a garage. The next building was the old office, then the "purifying" plant set apart in the center. The original gas burners were in the building to the right while at the extreme right was another

purifying plant. Some of the largest holders, one of metal, were removed when natural gas was brought in, but the other old buildings have continued in use as storage space and offices for the gas and power sections of the utilities corporations. The service department will continue in a new structure along Route 5-S, and these buildings and others on the south side of the railroad tracks will be demolished in establishing "No Man's Land."

Arterial Scrapbook No. 52 (Donlon)



# Chuctanunda Gas Light Co.

## Formed in 1860 With \$15,000

By H. P. DONLON

A new lighting era for the Amsterdam area was ushered in at a meeting in 1860 when the Chuctanunda Gas Light Co. was organized. It was a cautious venture and Amsterdamians bought only 600 shares of stock at \$25 a share for an initial investment of \$15,000. Heading the new corporation were Directors William S. Shuler, Marquis Barnes, Daniel I. McMartin, Stephen Sanford, Adam W. Kline, John McDonnell and Joseph W. Sturtevant.

The site selected for the plant of the new illuminating company was on the north bank of the Mohawk River east of the mouth of the Chuctanunda Creek from which the utility derived its name. Two methods of making illuminating gas were being perfected at the time: One through use of coke baked in ovens, the other a "water gas" made by mixing steam and white-hot coke.

### First Plant Exploded

Gas making was a rather hazardous occupation for the various methods had not been perfected when the local start was made. Reminder of the industrial and economic uncertainties came in November of 1866 when the Chuctanunda Gas Co. plant exploded. The fire of 100 years ago did not shake determination of the backers of the venture, however.

In 1867, a fresh start was made and the second attempt was more successful. Additional gas mains were laid through the streets of the village, and a continually increasing number of gas customers warranted enlargement of the plant in 1876.

### And Gas for Cooking

Street lighting was a nucleus for the undertaking. More and more homes were being illuminated by gas as streets and

lawns were being dug up for piped connections with modernization that had been brought conveniently near the middle of the road. The old coal and wood stoves received both help and competition from the gas "plates" with cooking burners, readily connected with pliable hose, and sale of gas stoves increased.

Additional buildings appeared at the gas plant, including a new retort house erected by Contractor H. C. Grieme in July of 1897 and the original capital stock of \$15,000 had increased to \$200,000 in 1903. Expansion increased production capacity from 100,000 to 160,000 cubic feet of gas. Two supply holders had capacities of 250,000 and 42,000 cubic feet. By 1910, the Chuctanunda Gas Light Co. was operating 25 miles of mains over Amsterdam streets.

### Finally, Natural Gas

Twenty years passed, and so also did the company that had come into existence during Civil War times. The Chuctanunda Gas Light Co. was taken over by the New York Power & Light Corp. in 1930 and work was started on an interurban line from Schenectady to Amsterdam. Gas that originated in the Troy Coke plant was brought into this city from 1931, the year that ended local production.

Another 20 years and another big change that put the Troy plant out of business and outmoded the entire local facilities for production and storage.

Extensive modernization came with merger of a group of utilities of New York State under the corporate name of Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. in January of 1950. Natural gas was piped into Amsterdam in 1952.

### Continued in Use

In the major changes that followed, buildings went out of use

or were converted to other purposes for the service department of the utilities corporation.

The most picturesque, a round, brick structure that once held 100,000 cubic feet of gas was divested of its metal liner and became a garage. Other buildings, some of them dating from post-Civil War times, and originally used for manufacture of gas, purification and storage, have during recent years been changed over for offices and for equipment storage.

Largest of the gas storage facilities, located at the easterly end of the tract along the river, were a huge iron holder with capacity of 750,000 cubic feet, and a second brick holder with 250,000 cubic feet capacity. They were removed from the scene about 15 years ago when natural gas was piped into this part of the state.

### "No Man's Land"

The entire area of the original Chuctanunda Gas Light Co., east of the river bridge was condemned when engineers of the State Department of Public Works devised other traffic routes and decision was made to abandon the present Mohawk River bridge, the Bridge Street railroad overhead, the ramp leading to the gas company site, the New York Central Railroad station and express office — in fact, all buildings south of the railroad tracks.

Abandonment was necessitated because the only possible access to land between the railroad and the river would be via a grade crossing, a highly hazardous alternative. It was grade crossing elimination that brought about all the complex engineering work at the beginning of the century.