

Thursday Oct 9
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FOR PERMANENT RECORD
FILE IN
MEMBER FOLDER

Charles L. Clarke, former well known resident of Schenectady, oldest of the Edison Pioneers and last of the charter members of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, died at his home in Newton, Mass. today. He was in his 33th year but despite his age had been active until a few days ago when stricken with pneumonia.

Mr. Clarke was one of the few men present in 1882 when Thomas A. Edison opened the Pearl street station in New York, the world's first electric generating plant for supplying current for the operation of his electric lamps.

He was very close to the great inventor throughout that period, having been appointed by Edison chief engineer of the Edison Electric Light Company somewhat more than a year previously, and having charge of all the mechanical engineering involved in developing the Edison system.

He had worked shoulder to shoulder with Edison throughout the year and a half of preliminary work that preceded the opening of the Pearl street generating station. He had designed some of the equipment for that station, which was used as long as the station existed. He and Edison had re-

repeatedly, in the course of their daily work, traveled from headquarters of the Edison Company, at 65 Fifth avenue, downtown to the Edison Machine Works at 104 Coerck street (which in 1886 was moved to Schenectady), thence to the site of the Pearl street station, after that, perhaps, to the factory of Bergmann & Company, on Avenue A, or to the plant of the Edison Tube Company, on Washington street. In all these centers work for the Pearl street station was in progress. The days were the busiest of Clarke's long career, and the nights were busy as well. Edison often slept on a pile of cast-iron pipes in the deep basement of the Pearl street building. Clarke had living quarters on the upper floors of 65 Fifth avenue, directly over his office.

On the morning of September 4, 1882, Clarke went to the Pearl street station about 9 o'clock and found Edison already there, wearing a frock coat and a high-crowned derby hat. They looked over the machinery together, and Edison soon had his frock coat off, while his derby became smeared with machine grease as the day proceeded.

Clarke was there when, later in the morning, Edison denied himself to a band of newspaper reporters who had heard rumors that the substation was to begin operation that day and had come bounding up the stairs seeking information. Edison would not even allow them to enter the dynamo room but shooed them downstairs again and posted a guard at the street door. He was apprehensive that the gas companies would learn of his plans and in case of any failure of the apparatus the gas people, he thought, would exaggerate the difficulties and hurt his business.

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Edison wanted the actual opening of the system to be unspectacular and quiet. After that he was willing to talk--- if things went well. Consequently scarcely a dozen people were allowed to enter the building that afternoon when at 3 o'clock the "chief" ordered the switch closed and current to be sent into the system. Everyone present was a trusted Edison employee.

Clarke well remembers how Edison, after one more round of inspection, remarked: "I think we're ready, Clarke," and then aided to John W. Lieb, youthful electrician of the station. Lieb, standing on a box, pushed into place the handle of the big knife switch, and the circuit of the first Juobe dynamo was closed. Electric current, flowing through underground conductors, supplied incandescent lamps to fifty-nine customers scattered through a square mile of downtown Manhattan, including the financial district. The offices of Drexel, Morgan & Company, and particularly the private office of Pierpont Morgan, who had helped to finance Edison's company for incandescent lighting, were illuminated as well as two newspaper offices and several mercantile establishments.

The old Pearl street station, which became the nucleus of the present great New York Edison Company, was also the mother of the electric utility business as it exists today in the United States. Numerous local Edison companies sprang ^{eg} from the New York Company, the name of which was originally the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of New York. The convenience and general acceptability of the Incandescent lamp led to its wide usage and in time the local incandescent lamp lighting companies absorbed the arc-light companies

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in their own communities. Moreover the incandescent lamp was the reason for the wiring of dwellings and business places, as well as factories, so that later the stage was set for the great expansion of the electric industry which came in with the adoption of electric power and electric heat.

A few years ago when Henry Ford desired to have several replicas made of the old Edison bipolar generator built for his museum at Dearbon, Mr. Clarke not only redesigned the plans and specifications but directed the manufacture of the machines. He was the only man alive at the time who knew how the original generators were built.

Mr. Clarke was born in Portland, Maine, April 16, 1853. After graduation from the Portland high school he went to work for the Boston & Maine railroad. Later he entered Bowdoin College, graduating in 1877 and taught school at Cheltenham Academy, near Philadelphia. But as he once remarked he felt he was not cut out for a school teacher, so when an old college classmate, Francis Upton, who had become associated with Edison, wrote him in December, 1879, that "Edison will give you \$12. a week to work for him", he accepted the offer. When Edison moved his plant to Schenectady in 1886, Mr. Clarke came with him and continued to work for General Electric until retired on November 1, 1931. Soon after he moved to Newton, Mass., where he resided with his wife and one son at 109 Oakleigh road until the time of his death.

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News Bureau
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C. L. CLARKE, EDISON COWORKER, DIES

Charles Lorenzo Clarke, oldest of the Edison pioneers and last of seventy-one charter members of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, succumbed to pneumonia on October 9th at his home in Newton, Mass. He was eighty-eight years old.

Mr. Clarke worked with Thomas A. Edison from 1880 to 1884, first as research assistant and later as the great inventor's chief engineer. He supervised the mechanical engineering involved in the construction and operation of the Edison Company's central station at 257 Pearl Street, New York City, the world's first generating plant for incandescent lamp current. During this period he also designed the famous Jumbo dynamos and many electric generators.

Mr. Clarke was born in Portland, Me. on April 16, 1853. Upon graduating from high school he went to work for the Boston & Maine Railroad, later studying at Bowdoin College. He taught school for a while, but gave that up to join Edison and his workers at Menlo Park, N.J.

Leaving the Edison Company in 1884, Mr. Clarke became engineer for the Telemeter Company, New York, and later for the Gibson Electric Company, a concern interested in the development of storage batteries.

In 1889 Mr. Clarke became a consulting engineer, specializing in patent work. He served as engineer for the board of patent control of the General Electric Company and Westinghouse from 1901 to 1911, when he was appointed consulting engineer for General Electric. He remained with General Electric until his retirement ten years ago.

Mr. Clarke was a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the New York Electrical Society, and an honorary fellow of the American Electro-therapeutic Association. He held Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Civil Engineering degrees.

News Bureau
General Electric Company
Schenectady, New York

Please send me a glossy print (A-74308) of Charles L. Clarke, Edison co-worker and last of the A.I.E.E. charter members.

NAME

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