



**GREATER CHICAGO
INSULATOR CLUB
NEWSLETTER**

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History of Fort Wayne Electric

At the upcoming Columbia City, IN show on May 6-7, 2022, there will be a reunion of Ft. Wayne Electric insulators and related items. The following material on the company is from the 1975 book by John Ankenbruck titled "Twentieth Century History of Fort Wayne," pages 169-170.

General Electric Co. in Fort Wayne had its beginnings in 1881. That was the year when James A. Jenney, inventor of an electric arc lamp and a small dynamo, and his son Charles came to the city seeking a place to manufacture the products. The Fort Wayne Jenney Electric Light Company was organized by Ronald T. McDonald. Officers of the firm included H. G. Olds, president; Perry A. Randall, vice-president; and McDonald, treasurer and general manager.

Jenney electric took quarters in an old boiler shop building of John H. Bass at the southwest corner of Calhoun and Superior Streets. In the first few years, the company also occupied buildings on Superior Street at the foot of Wells Street and on East Columbia Street. The firm enjoyed some renown in the Midwest in the furnishing of cities with street lighting. An example dated 1883 concerns a contract offered to the town of Kankakee, Ill., by the Jenney Electric Co. of Terre Haute. It said in part: "We agree to erect lamp posts . . . said light to be furnished from twilight till midnight on all nights when the moon does not give sufficient light." Jenny lighted the World's Fair grounds in 1884-85 in New Orleans.

The purchase of the old Gause Agricultural works and land along Broadway and the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad resulted in the permanent nucleus of the expanding firm from 1885 on. This was several years after the advantage of arc lighting had been demonstrated in exhibits for the public in Fort Wayne. It might be called the beginning of the end of the gas-light era. The first incandescent lamps were installed in the Home Billiard Parlor in 1881. That same year, a temporary lighting plant was installed in Library Hall, at the corner of Lewis and Calhoun Streets. It consisted of four lights driven by a traction engine.

In 1888 the Thomson-Houston Electric Co. purchased controlling interest in the Jenney Electric Company and the firm was subsequently renamed the Fort Wayne Electric Company. In 1888 the entire works was destroyed by fire. The rebuilt plant was in operation in July, 1889. The following year the company purchased a part interest in the Wood arc light system from Thomson-Houston. Accompanied by 100 employees from Brooklyn, N. Y., the young man for whom the system was named, James J. Wood, arrived in Fort Wayne Dec. 3, 1890. The words "Wood System" as well as "Fort Wayne Electric Co." could be seen on old brick factory walls as long as 80 years later at the Broadway works.

In 1892, General Electric Co. came into being with the merging of the Edison firm, Thomson-Houston and other interests. The financial panic of 1893 brought hard times to the Fort Wayne Electric Co. and it went into receivership in 1894. The Fort Wayne Electric Corp. was formed to purchase the assets. The officers were R. T. McDonald, president; Charles S. Knight, vice-president; Charles C. Miller, secretary-treasurer; James Wood, general superintendent; and

Fred Hunting, engineering head. This firm folded in 1899 and another company, called the Fort Wayne Electric Works, acquired control. Heading the operation were Henry C. Paul, President; S. D. Green, vice-president; M. F. Westover, secretary; Fred Hunting, treasurer; and James Wood, factory manager. To bring about the reorganization, General Electric Co. had purchased the assets from the receiver. Finally in 1911, the Fort Wayne Works were merged with the parent company and in 1916, the old identity disappeared. It was in the year of 1911 that the Pennsylvania Railroad elevation took place near the Broadway plant of G.E., and at Fairfield Avenue, Harrison, Lafayette, and Hanna Streets, opening the way for the great expansion of Fort Wayne's south side.

It was at the Fort Wayne plant in 1912 that G.E. developed and began production of refrigeration equipment. In 1927 with the building of monitor-top refrigerators, the plant at Winter St. was obtained and the refrigerator production was moved that location. In the meantime, major new buildings for the production of motors, generators and transformers were built at the Broadway location in 1915 and 1917. A great expansion of plant space occurred in 1941 with the building of the supercharger plant on Taylor Street. Following World War II, G.E. purchased the facility from the government and converted it to a major center for small motor production and wire mill. By the 1950's, the G.E. operations in Fort Wayne had a payroll of more than 9,000. H. A. MacKinnon, G.E. vice-president and chief operating officer in Fort Wayne during the late 1950's and 1960's, commented that Fort Wayne's plant was tied to every-growing needs of everything from missiles, computers and milking machines to the endless products of factory and home use.

Wheaton Show Report

The only show in the world to offer a sizeable number of insulators and lightning rod collectables at the same show was held on Saturday, April 2, 2022 in Wheaton, Illinois. The show, officially named the Dupage Collectors Expo, was held in two adjoining buildings at the Dupage County Fairgrounds and hosted by Bob Stahr and Rick Soller. A total of 13,200 square feet of space was available for the show, more than the 8,901 square feet at this year's Gettysburg National. Besides insulators and lightning rod collectables, dealer wares included fruit jars, bottles, lineman's tools, railroad memorabilia, and a variety of tabletop antiques.

59 sales tables were occupied by dealers and 88 collectors walked through the door, making it the largest show of this type within a 300-mile radius (Springfield, OH is a little more than 300 miles away). Another 8 tables held auction lots. Altogether, the show featured dealers from 9 different states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin).

As collectors entered the building, a table filled with literature was available. Since the club is a member of the NIA, it receives a copy of the Drip Points, and these were offered for free to interested attendees. Flyers supporting upcoming shows, bottle publications, and the NIA were also provided. Quite a few of these went home with people.

A table of free insulators was full at the start of the show and refilled again early on Saturday. By the end of the show, only about 30 insulators were left and these were saved for next year. Several young collectors with their parents were seen picking pieces to add to their collection. Even some line posts disappeared from under the table although the new owner isn't known.

To encourage people to get a sales table, a dealers-only auction was held Friday evening, after dealers had a chance to set-up. 78 lots from 8 dealers were offered in the auction, resulting

in total sales of \$619. Sellers were charged 10% of the proceeds to help support show expenses. Lightning rod balls were offered first in the auction with one lot of 8 balls selling for \$66. On the other hand, several box lots of insulators sold for a price that averaged out to less than ten cents an insulator. A couple lots consisted of around two dozen fruit jars and the last 24 lots consisted of recently removed insulators, lightning arrestors, and brackets. Some of the unique pieces are pictured below. On the left is a plastic cable spacer from Preformed Line Products with the additional marking of P/N 5060150. Riley Armstrong bought a lot that had two of these in it, kept one and sold the other. Rick Soller bought the unlisted guy strain. It is 8-3/4" tall x 5-1/2" wide. There is a white marking on the end that looks like a triangle in a circle.



Several never-before-seen ceramic whimsies were offered at the show by Alex Hoffman of St. Louis, Missouri. These were incuse marked Roc & Shay Co., were well made, and came in a rainbow of glazes. Although they were pricey, I bought one for \$80 to have an example in my collection in case future collectors did not realize they were not real. The one shown on the next page had 8 teat rests, a 3/4" pinhole that had some kind of threading, creamy white glaze on top, dark blue on the edges of the umbrella and skirt, and brown glaze under the umbrella. The marking looked well-done but Alex said it was done by hand.



Left: (Incuse on the opposite side) No 111, has an inner skirt, 5" wide x 3.5" tall. Center: Same design with a flat brown glaze. Right: a whimsy that looks like a hi-top.

Some very nice insulators were brought to the show by the walk-in crowd and quite a few of them changed hands. An aqua, no name CD 731 found a new home. An olive yellow green

CD 126 Brookfield was shown around the two show halls before an acceptable offer was made. A unique wood bracket used in Milwaukee to conserve metal during the second world war made an appearance and went home with a collector from St. Louis. The last time I saw one of these for sale was in 2002.



Results of the auction are provided below.

Lot	Seller	Description	Price	Buyer
1	Riley Armstrong	LRB	\$9	Bob Overfield
2	Rick Soller	8 LRBs	\$66	Josh Dondorf
3	Rick Soller	24 CD 102s	\$100	Cole King
4	Rick Soller	Misc. Painted insulator, commemorative, foreign	\$9	Dave Shaw
5	Rick Soller	15 misc. glass insulators	\$1	Cole King
6	Rick Soller	Box porcelain, strain	\$3	Riley Armstrong
7	Rick Soller	Box porcelain	\$75	Cole King
8	Rick Soller	Auction catalog, Memory book	\$1	Cole King
9	Rick Soller	Box bottles, stains, misc.	\$7	Riley Armstrong
10	Rick Soller	Box of glass (10)	\$1	Cole King
11	Rick Soller	20 ponies	\$1	Cole King
12	Rick Soller	Box porcelain, rubber, Macomb	\$1	Cole King
13	Rick Soller	Box porcelain	\$4	Riley Armstrong
14	Rick Soller	Box of glass	\$2	Cole King
15	Rick Soller	Box of glass	\$1	Cole King
16	Rick Soller	Box glass, pink	\$32	Dave Shaw
17	Rick Soller	Box ponies	\$6	Dennis Seltrecht
18	Rick Soller	Box of 7 glass: 168, H.G.CO.	\$15	Dave Shaw
19	Rick Soller	White porcelain	\$1	Cole King

20	Rick Soller	Clear Mickey, 252, BTC, 102, #2 cable	\$15	Cole King
21	Rick Soller	Signals, 145s, 9s	\$20	Dennis Seltrecht
22	Rick Soller	Ponies, 160s (9)	\$9	Dennis Seltrecht
23	Rick Soller	Box of glass	\$1	Les Christensen
24	Rick Soller	Box porc. Stovepipe, yellow, OB	\$1	Riley Armstrong
25	Rick Soller	Box of plates	\$1	Jean Nugent
26	Barrington	Fruit jar rack and jar holder	\$3	Jean Nugent
27	Barrington	19 Fruit jars	\$6	Jean Nugent
28	Barrington	20 fruit jars	\$7	Gene Hawkins
29	Barrington	Crate of 106s, 145s	\$5	Gene Hawkins
30	Barrington	Oil lamp, clear	\$1	Richard Case
31	Barrington	Red tin can, large	\$6	Jean Nugent
32	Barrington	Army green can, emergency water \$6ea	\$12	Jean Nugent
33	Rich Feeham	Suspension & box glass	\$1	Cole King
34	Rich Feeham	252 ambers, hemi	\$1	Cole King
35	Rich Feeham	Battery jar lids	\$12	Les Christensen
36	Rich Feeham	Box of jars	\$1	Les Christensen
37	Rich Feeham	Spools W/P bushings, 2 boxes	\$38	Jason Townsend
38	Rich Feeham	Casters w/p	\$5	Greg Delia
39	Rich Feeham	Brown Porcelain	.50	Greg Delia
40	Riley Armstrong	Pop crates	\$1	Cole King
41	Riley Armstrong	Suspension	\$1	Cole King
42	Josh Dondorf	Amber bottle	n.s.	
42	Josh Dondorf	Blue #9	\$28	Dennis Seltrecht
43	Josh Dondorf	Box of bottles	\$13	Greg Delia
44	Josh Dondorf	Box of bottles	\$1	Greg Delia
45	Josh Dondorf	Fruit jars and milk bottle	\$1	Greg Delia
46	Josh Dondorf	Soda bottles Coke crate	\$1	Greg Delia
47	Josh Dondorf	Bottles	\$1	Greg Delia
48	Dick Schroeder	Badges, time table, arrowheads	\$12	Cole King
49	Dick Schroeder	Marbles	\$19	Les Christensen
50	Dick Schroeder	162, salesmans sample WT paperweight on pedestal (clear), bell	\$70	Dennis Seltrecht
51	Dick Schroeder	Glasses (6)	.50	Cole King
52	Bob Stahr	WT, California	\$1	Dave Shaw
53	Bob Stahr	Maydwell (10)	\$9	Dave Shaw
54	Greg Delia	Basket of porcelain	\$1	Rick Soller
55	Greg Delia	Plastic insulator	\$2	Riley Armstrong
56	Greg Delia	Spool brackets	\$1	Richard Case
57	Greg Delia	Spool brackets	\$5	Jason Townsend
58	Greg Delia	Porcelain & brackets	\$1	Jason Townsend
59	Greg Delia	Porcelain, brackets, cutouts, arrestors	\$1	Riley Armstrong
60	Greg Delia	9 cutouts	\$1	Riley Armstrong
61	Greg Delia	Plastic insulator	\$2	Riley Armstrong
62	Greg Delia	Doors to something electrical	\$1	Jason Townsend

63	Greg Delia	Pins	\$2	Riley Armstrong
64	Greg Delia	Suspension & spool	n.s.	
65	Greg Delia	4 arrestors	\$1	Richard Case
66	Greg Delia	Suspensions	\$1	Riley Armstrong
67	Greg Delia	PT	n.s.	
68	Greg Delia	Cutouts	\$1	Jason Townsend
69	Greg Delia	Bucket	\$20	Riley Armstrong
70	Greg Delia	Box, fault indicator, brackets	\$1	Riley Armstrong
71	Greg Delia	Spool brackets	\$1	Bob Stahr
72	Greg Delia	Suspensions	n.s.	
73	Greg Delia	Blue suspensions 2@\$6	\$12	Riley Armstrong
74	Greg Delia	Blue suspensions 6@\$5	30	Bob Stahr
75	Greg Delia	Fuse control	n.s.	
76	Greg Delia	Strains	\$5	Rick Soller
77	Greg Delia	Strains	\$5	Richard Case
78	Greg Delia	Strains	\$1	Rick Soller
78	Greg Delia	Strains	\$1	Rick Soller
		Total	\$619	

Upcoming Shows

Saturday, April 30, 2022

St. Louis Park, Minnesota

Spring is here in Minnesota and the North Western Insulator Club invites you to our 2022 Spring Meet. The new location this year will be at the headquarters of "MATTER" located at 7005 Oxford St, St Louis Park, MN. The event will be hosted by Joel Anderson and Bruce Konold. The meeting space is large and tables are free. Hours are 9 am to 3 pm. Lunch is pot luck with water and coffee provided. Contact the hosts with questions and to confirm your tables. They are joel@matter.ngo or 651-285-0483 or brucekonold@eaganhills.org or 652-470-4961. We have long time collectors-2 or 3 so far that are in process of downsizing so there will be deals galore!

Friday & Saturday, May 6-7, 2022

Columbia City, Indiana

The 2022 Columbia City, Indiana Collectibles Show is May 6 & 7 at the Whitley County 4H Center, 581 Squawbuck Rd., Columbia City, IN. This is one of the least expensive shows to attend or be a dealer. Show info, contact Gene Hawkins gene.hawkins@mchsi.com or Mike McLaughlin 574-377-5490 for other show info or for dealer tables. Friday dealer setup noon-2 PM Open to public at 2 PM Friday 5 PM Pizza. Friday 5:30 PM Show & Tell, where folks bring really cool stuff with special stories. Always interesting stuff comes off collector's shelves for discussion, things you won't see unless you visit them as it often isn't for sale, just special! PLEASE Bring something with a story to share with us! Saturday doors open for dealer set up at 6 AM, public at 7 AM. Saturday at 10 AM will be another auction, so clean out the closet & bring your clutter! Dealers can pack up whenever they need to do so.