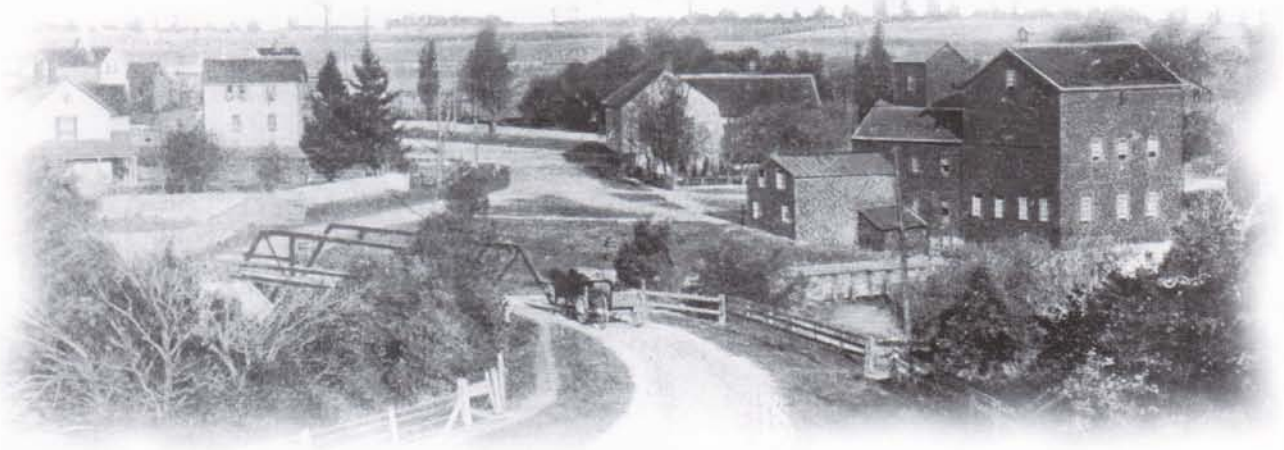


The People's Power



*Cedarburg Light and Water
The First 100 Years*

The Beginning



*Columbia Mills in the 1800's (corner of Highland Drive and Columbia Road)
before municipal power was brought to Cedarburg.*



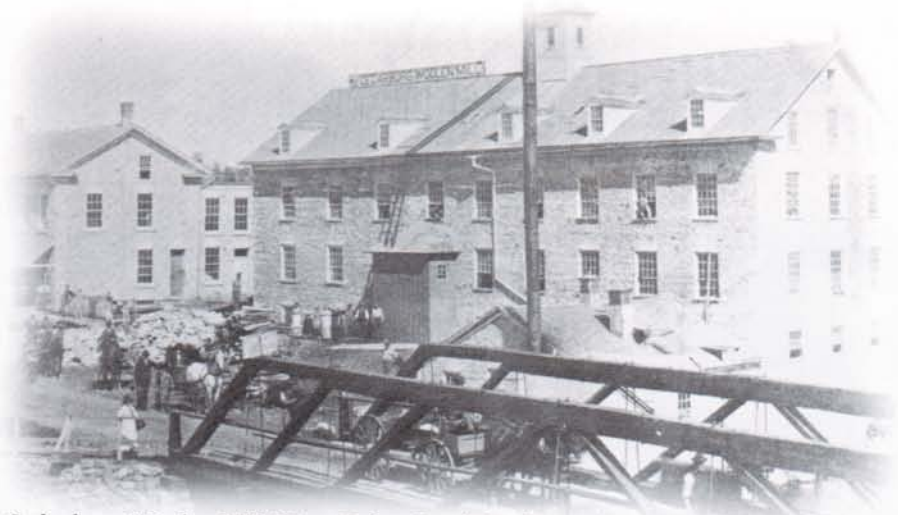
The animals found it first. The thick forests and winding creek beckoned deer and bushy tailed fox to its shoreline for cool refreshment. The Indians, hunting for food, followed the deer paths and found the glorious land that surrounded the rushing water. The creek served their needs well. Some stayed and called it home. Many passed through, following the deer path that became the Green Bay Trail from Milwaukee.

The trail brought the first white men to the scene in the early 1800's. Drawn to the area by the energy possibilities of swift currents and natural falls, German immigrants made their homes in the wilderness along the waters of what was to become Cedar Creek.

Energy from the creek was free for the taking and its potential was not lost on Cedarburg pioneers such as Ludwig Groth. It was 1844 when Groth sold parcels of land to Frederick Hilgen and his business partner William Schroeder. Together, they built a gristmill on the creek to grind grain for surrounding farms.

During the next 20 years, settlers streamed into the new community. Like many of the immigrants, who migrated to eastern Wisconsin in the middle decades of the 19th century, they found the soil fertile and a climate that reminded them of their European homes. As the people multiplied, so did the mills.

Natural waterpower had thrust tremendous growth on Cedarburg. But as the century came to an end, waterpower was getting ready to move out with the tides of change.

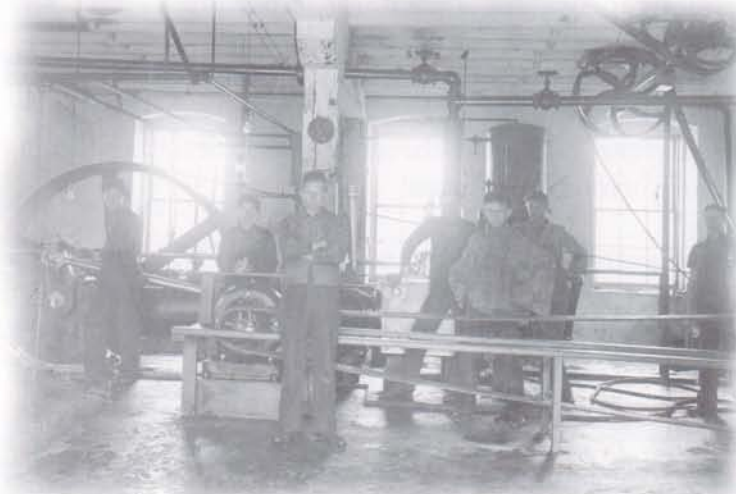


In 1864, the Cedarburg Woolen Mill (Now Cedar Creek Settlement) was erected on the banks of Cedar Creek. The Civil War was raging across America, and Cedarburg boys were fighting on far-flung fronts from Virginia to Georgia. The woolen mill, the only mill west of Philadelphia to make worsted yarns, made wool cloth for Union uniforms and blankets. By the 1890's, it was the largest woolen mill in the Midwest.

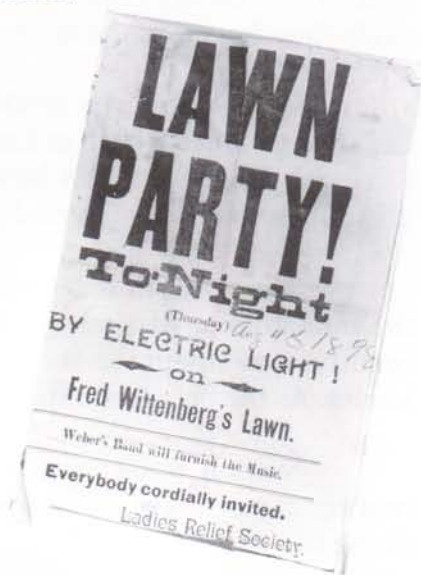
The Lights Go On In Cedarburg

The first mention of electric power in Cedarburg was in the late 1890's. Cedar Creek Grist Mill, the Wittenberg Woolen Mills and the Cedarburg Nail and Wire Factory installed small electric generators, called dynamos, to run their lights and machinery. The early dynamos were powered by water turbines or wood and coal fired boilers.

In 1897, a wire from the direct current generator at the Woolen Mill was connected to a home on the northwest corner of Bridge Street and Washington Avenue, owned by the Wittenbergs. With this done, Cedarburg officially had its first home with electric lights. The Wittenberg's threw a lawn party to celebrate.



Inside of Wittenberg Woolen Mill in the late 1800's.



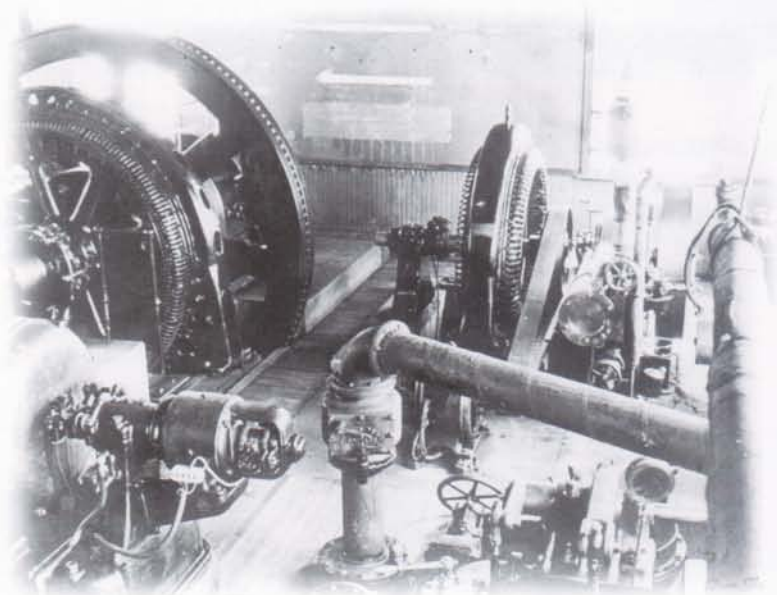
1901 - The Revolution Begins

Excerpt from
**CEDARBURG
NEWS**
March 27, 1901

Cost of Electric Lighting.
In the city of Jefferson, in this state, an electric light plant is now in operation which is run on the very same principle as our plant in this city will be operated. We hope that none of the taxpayers of this city will be bamboozled by people who opposed the building of such a plant, and who are attempting to throw sand in the eyes of the small taxpayers by telling him the scare crow tale that his taxes will be doubled next year. Be candid gentlemen, and when you attempt to circulate an election story, be sure that you can back it.

Along with the first streetlight came more monumental change. It began when city fathers entered into a franchise agreement with J.E. Bruss, operator of the steam generator at the Woolen Mill. Bruss agreed to build and run an electric light plant for the city. It was agreed the city would pay him rent until it could buy out his interests in the generating unit.

By fall, the plant was up and running with two 100hp Skinner steam engines connected to two 75 KW Fort Wayne generators.



Original steam generators in light plant on Mequon Avenue in the early 1900's.