

## A BIOGRAPHY OF HENRY C. STOLZE

Henry C. Stolze, Jr. was born in Germany on December 8, 1859. He came to Manitowoc as a boy of nine years with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stolze, Sr. They settled on a farm on the north side of Manitowoc, apparently to the south of the railroad tracks going toward Two Rivers. In addition to the truck farm business he also packaged and sold seeds. In the obituary of Henry Stolze, Sr., who died on April 27, 1917, it stated that "Mr. Stolze, Sr., was a student and an avid reader who held some strong opinions on political matters." The article stated that he was involved in city politics as were his two sons, Henry C. and Andrew. Andrew served as a member of the city council for several terms, and Henry C. was Mayor of Manitowoc, as the article in this monograph will show. Two other brothers, Charles and Andrew, resided in Tacoma, Washington. They had four daughters.

Henry C. Stolze, Jr. was a man with somewhat of a mechanical bent. The U.S. Patent office in about 1899 gave him a patent on a Christmas tree light holder. Later in this monograph we shall try to reproduce a copy of the patent that was given Mr. Stolze. Mr. Stolze was the founder of the Stolze Manufacturing Company, a pioneer in the manufacture of Christmas tree ornaments and tinsel. For some years this was the only manufacturing company of its kind in the U.S.A.

It was in 1905 that Mr. Stolze became active in city politics and became a candidate for the office of mayor on the Socialist ticket. He campaigned on the platform that the water and electric light utilities should be under municipal ownership. Mr. Velicer in the feature article in this monograph tells the

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## MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP AND THE MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN SOCIALISTS. 1905-1917

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A small city of 13,000<sup>1</sup> people during the period, 1905 to 1917, Manitowoc was a highly industrialized center. Its location along the western shore of Lake Michigan 100 miles north of Milwaukee had aided a shipbuilding industry that was over fifty years old. The aluminum industry, as well as the vegetable canneries, were fixtures in Manitowoc's economy by this time. The railroads and car ferries had already teamed up to provide a more direct east-west freight route and enhance Manitowoc's stature as a transportation center. Amidst this all a population that included many German and Polish Americans looked with some optimism to the future growth and prosperity of Manitowoc.<sup>2</sup> Yet, it was the pressures of growth and the demand for greater services that made these first two decades of the twentieth century times of turmoil for local government in Manitowoc. The key issue was municipal versus private ownership of the water and electric utilities that served the city. And the major political force behind the drive for municipal ownership of these utilities was Henry Stolze and the Manitowoc Socialists.

That the Socialists were a potent political force in Milwaukee in the early twentieth century is indisputable; that Manitowoc was an outpost of Socialist activity during the same period is virtually unknown. Never in a commanding position like the Milwaukee Socialists of 1910, the comrades in Manitowoc did succeed in electing Henry Stolze, Jr. for mayor in 1905, 1911, 1913, and 1915. It is my chief purpose to examine the activities of the Manitowoc Socialists and the administrations of Mayor Stolze to determine why there was a significant Socialist following in Manitowoc, what was promised by the Socialist candidates, and what

the Manitowoc Socialists achieved while in office.

Before venturing further it might be of some use to look at an analysis of the Socialist phenomenon in Wisconsin made by Professor Robert F. Hoxie of the University of Chicago in 1912:

*There is first the clean-cut victory of a broad, liberal, opportunistic, moderate type of socialism, of comparatively slow and solid growth. This type appears mainly in the Middle West, especially in Wisconsin and the states grouped immediately around it. The communities in which it occurs are for the most part manufacturing cities and railroad centers both large and small. These cities generally have a strong foreign element in the population; and Germans especially, foster and guide the movement, which has a working-class basis and strong trade union support, but also a good deal of backing from the well-to-do and middle classes. This type of triumphant socialism appears to stand immediately for honest and efficient city administration, the equalizations of tax burdens, the curbing of corporations, direct popular control of legislation and officials, the improvement of labor conditions and of the housing, education, and amusements of the working people, and the greatest practical extension of municipal ownership and control.<sup>3</sup>*

We shall see how well Professor Hoxie's description of Wisconsin and Middle Western Socialism applies to the Manitowoc Socialists.

Though no major Socialist activity occurred until the Manitowoc mayoral election of April 1905, state and national Socialist candidates had been receiving a scattering of local support since 1900. Eugene Debs



received 24 votes in Manitowoc in the Presidential election of 1900. Four years later Debs received 334 votes. Neither total is very impressive when compared to a total vote cast in each election of close to 2,500.<sup>4</sup> What is impressive is the increase in the Debs vote from 24 to 334. Similar increases can be found for the Socialist gubernatorial candidates in this period. While Manitowoc voters gave Howard Tuttle 21 votes in 1900, Emil Seidel received 120 votes in 1902 and Louis Arnold 241 votes in 1904.<sup>5</sup> These totals for state and national offices would increase even more in the period under study, but never to the point where a Socialist candidate for state or national office could carry the city. Any electoral success the Manitowoc socialists were to achieve was to come at the municipal level.

Success in the Manitowoc municipal elections struck more quickly than expected with the election of Henry Stolze, Jr. as Manitowoc's mayor in April 1905. Stolze, a Socialist party member, was far from being a seething anarchist or even a member of the proletariat. Born in Germany in 1859, Stolze and his parents migrated to the United States in 1869 and settled in Manitowoc, where Stolze's father became a truck farmer. Young Henry, however, was not about to follow his father's choice of occupation. Embarking on his own road to fortune during the Gilded Age, Stolze began the manufacture of Christmas tree ornaments in his own factory in 1888.

Today known as the National Tinsel Company on Manitowoc's South Sixteenth Street, Stolze's operation was for many years the only factory of its kind in the country.<sup>6</sup>

A Big Bill Haywood would certainly frown, but a Victor Berger would find Stolze's background not at all incompatible with the socialism dominating the Milwaukee movement in 1905. Stolze also fits well into Robert Hoxie's description of Wisconsin Socialism mentioned above, particularly the German element and the "backing from the well-to-do and middle classes."

Stolze based his campaign for mayor on a platform calling for the municipal ownership of the water and electric utilities. Stolze's opponent, Dr. W. G. Kemper, was opposed to municipal ownership. The result was a 195 vote Stolze majority. Yet, only one of the seven aldermanic seats up for election was captured by a Socialist — Adolf Braxmeier from the Fifth Ward. It is important to note that Stolze swept six of the seven wards of the city.<sup>7</sup> The one ward Stolze didn't win, the Seventh, was predominantly populated by first and second generation Polish Americans who in the ensuing years voted heavily for the Socialist ticket. But, in 1905 the Seventh was known as a solidly Democratic ward.<sup>8</sup>

The ability of the new Socialist mayor to work with the city's fourteen aldermen seemed uncertain. Yet, a not exuberant *Manitowoc Daily Herald* felt Stolze could indeed get his program

through the city council:

*Politically the make-up of the board is seven republican [sic], six democrats and one socialist. It is declared that nine members of the board will support the socialist movement and that twelve will be in favor of municipal ownership.*<sup>9</sup>

The Socialists themselves were somewhat more cautious over their new mayor's effectiveness, as seen in the following analysis of the Manitowoc victory from the *Social Democratic Herald* of Milwaukee:

*There is a wonderful growth of Socialist sentiment here and now the comrades have elected a mayor of the city, Comrade Henry Stolze, and one alderman. While this is not enough to control the city it is enough to rattle the dry bones of capitalism in a way to startle the indifferent.*<sup>10</sup>

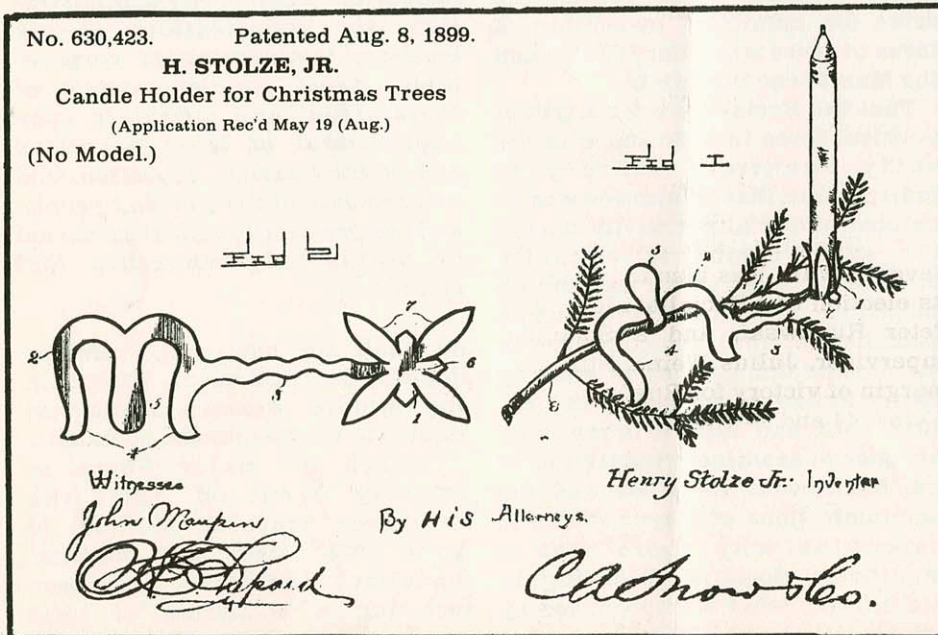
One of the Democratic alderman Mayor Stolze could certainly count on for support was Andrew Stolze, the mayor's brother and a supporter of municipal ownership.<sup>11</sup>

Stolze's emphasis on municipal ownership was clearly evident in his first address to the city council. Some of his recommendations to the council included calling for a special election to decide whether or not the city should build, own, and operate a water utility; build, own, and operate an electric utility; and issue bonds to pay for these projects.<sup>12</sup> Municipal ownership was also on the mayor's mind as he cautioned the city council on the issuance of a street franchise:

*As to the Street Railway franchise, I caution you and beg that you grant no franchise to any corporation, except to one you create and control, for the reason that the city ought to own at least the tracks and it can do so under our charter.*<sup>13</sup>

Mayor Stolze also called for such efficiency moves as the consolidation of all the city's school districts into one joint school district to end the unnecessary North-South rivalry and the added expense of maintaining more than one high school. At the same time Stolze stressed the need for such public improvement as public baths and bathing places.<sup>14</sup>

But Mayor Stolze's hopes for the municipal ownership of the water and electric utility were not to be realized during this first term. There was an effort made by the city





council to purchase the privately owned water utility in 1905, but no agreement on a purchase price could be reached. Nine months later the council was presented with an appraisal they considered to be more than the property was worth. Stolze now began to agitate for the erection of a new water utility in an effort to pressure the owners of the old plant into selling at a more favorable price. Considerable public opposition to such a proposed duplication of services, however, severely weakened the effectiveness of Stolze's ploy.<sup>15</sup> Two years had elapsed by this time, and Stolze had failed to secure municipal ownership of the water utility. It was again election time, with Mayor Stolze far from having fulfilled his 1905 election promises of municipal ownership.

The election of 1907 proved to be a vicious battle complete with mudslinging and name-calling. The incumbent mayor was the focal point of the wrath from the more conservative members of the business community who felt he had gone too far, even though Stolze had made little progress with his municipal ownership program. The following excerpt from a businessman's letter to the *Manitowoc Daily Herald* illustrates the rhetoric employed against Mayor Stolze:

*If the voters will dispassionately survey the events of the past two years, they will find little comfort to be drawn therefrom; much, however, to regret and condemn. The voice of calumny in its office, as the ribald interpreter of class hatred, had noisily gone up and down the street, decrying the men who risk their wordly possessions that their fellow men may labor. . . . The mayor, by his disturbing theories, by his theatrical administration, has given the city widespread but unenviable notoriety. His red flag policy has frightened Capital, so much so that during the past two years the industrial concerns of the city have receded, not advanced; real estate is at a standstill, and the population is decreasing. These are serious truths, the disagreeable aftermath of Socialistic folly. . . .*

*I appeal to every man of Christian instincts in the city to use his influence to blot out the disgrace which came to us two years ago by voting down the Tribune of Anarchy at the forthcoming election. I appeal*

*to every man who loves his home, who wishes work, who waits for prosperity, who is patriotic to the city, loyally to vote an April 2 to rid the community of an incubus, a nuisance and a disturber; this can be done by retiring Mr. Stolze to the region of "innocuous desuetude."*<sup>16</sup>

Stolze and the Socialists were not defenseless against the malicious attacks carried on in the city's traditional newspaper. Realizing the importance of the press in maintaining political power, the Manitowoc Socialists had organized their own publishing company following Stolze's 1905 victory and were publishing their own Socialist newspaper, the *Manitowoc Daily Tribune*. Under the editorship of Chester M. Wright, the *Tribune* provided Stolze with a forum from which to counter the charges printed in the two other Manitowoc dailies.<sup>17</sup>

The existence of a Socialist press, however, did not have as great an impact on the 1907 election as the existence of a coalition between Republicans and Democrats to stop Stolze. Charles A. Groffman, a businessman and Democrat, was openly endorsed by Manitowoc Republicans.<sup>18</sup> Such a coalition of the traditional parties in an effort to defeat an incumbent Socialist mayor would occur in Milwaukee five years later as the Republicans and Democrats banded together to defeat Mayor Seidel.<sup>19</sup> This party coalition netted Groffman a victory by a mere 43 out of 2,763 votes cast for mayor. Stolze received a majority of the votes in two of the city's seven wards — the Second and the Seventh. Of particular interest was the large vote given Stolze in the Polish Seventh Ward; the one ward Stolze was unable to win in 1905 gave him a plurality of 207 votes in his unsuccessful bid for reelection in 1907, the largest plurality given either candidate in any ward that year. Socialist strength in the Seventh Ward was also apparent in its election of a Socialist alderman, Peter Rugowski, and a Socialist supervisor, Julius Weina. Still, the margin of victory for Rugowski and Weina, 44 and 94 votes respectively, was far less than Stolze's 207 vote margin in the ward.<sup>20</sup>

The Seventh Ward's impressive support for Stolze in 1907 warrants a closer look at the ward's constituency. Located in the southwestern corner of the city, the

Seventh Ward was comprised of so many Polish Americans so as to be referred to as "Polish Hill." This Polish section was not even taken into the city until 1891, when it became the city's Seventh Ward. It was the poorest ward in the city where most people lived in "small, dingy homes, many sheltering families as large as ten and twelve." Employment in grain elevators, docks, lake steamers, certain unskilled positions in the shipyards, and especially with the railroads, comprised the economic base in the Seventh Ward.<sup>21</sup> Stolze's brand of municipal socialism undoubtedly appealed to these Polish workers by 1907.

It would take four more years before Stolze would again be elected mayor of Manitowoc. The Manitowoc Socialists were not idle or despondent during this time, but worked to increase the strength of the party. In election years the state party organization assisted the local in arousing local support for Socialist candidates, particularly for Eugene Debs' Presidential campaign in 1908. To facilitate a good turnout for Debs, the state organization hired an organizer for the Lakeshore and Fox River Valley District, which included the city of Manitowoc. This \$25 per month position was filled by Charles Sandburg, a young Socialist from Galesburg, Illinois who would later find greater fame as a poet and biographer of Lincoln.<sup>22</sup> Sandburg had visited Manitowoc, in October 1907, serving as a lecturer for a *Daily Tribune* benefit:

*Lecture at Manitowoc under auspices & for benefit of Daily Tribune there, a workingman's paper. It's a socialist town, you know, — the mayor and aldermen — & I expect to learn things there.*<sup>23</sup>

Much of Sandburg's time in Manitowoc in 1908 was spent in recruiting new members for the party locals and giving speeches on the street corners and at the opera house. Sandburg's role in the Manitowoc campaign is best described in the following press report:

*MANITOWOC — Comrade Sandburg addressed a rousing street meeting here last week. The mayor [Groffman] who had threatened to stop the Social-Democrats from using the streets, decided that*



caution was the better part of valor, and became as meek as a lamb. The comrades say that Sandburg improves every time he opens his face. We are going to give the plutes a run for their money in Manitowoc county this fall.<sup>24</sup>

1908 marked the beginning of a period of greater participation by Manitowoc Socialists in the state party organization. More delegates were sent to the state Socialist convention than had been the case in previous years — Chester M. Wright and Martin Georgenson from Manitowoc, while the neighboring communities of Two Rivers and Kiel also sent delegates.<sup>25</sup> Manitowoc Socialists were also running for state and national offices in 1908. Chester M. Wright, editor of the *Manitowoc Daily Tribune*, was the Socialist candidate for lieutenant governor.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile another Manitowoc Socialist, Martin Georgenson, was the party's candidate for Congress from the Eighth District.<sup>27</sup>

The crowning event of the 1908 campaign was the appearance of Eugend Debs' "Red Special" in Manitowoc on September 24, 1908. Though Sandburg's presence in Manitowoc might have drawn great attention ten or twenty years later, Debs was the Socialists' best-known celebrity of the time. A contemporary account captured the details of Debs' visit:

*From Appleton the Special went to Manitowoc. A concert was given by the band in the afternoon, followed by speeches by Comrade Stirton, candidate for governor of Michigan on the Socialist ticket, by Clarence Beecher Moore, candidate for governor of Minnesota on the Social-Democratic ticket, and W. A. Jacobs, candidate for congress in the First Congressional district of Wisconsin.*

*In the evening the Turner Opera House was packed with an enthusiastic audience to hear Comrade Debs' magnificent address. Special cars had been run to Manitowoc from Two Rivers, and Comrades had come to the meeting from as far South as Kiel, east across the lake from Ludington, and north as far as Mishicott [sic]<sup>28</sup>*

All of the Socialist agitation increased the talk about the Socialist candidates; yet, no national or state Socialist candidate carried Manitowoc. Debs polled 457 votes in

the city out of total vote of 2,717 for Presidential candidates.<sup>29</sup> The Seventh Ward, which had given Stolze a 207 vote margin for mayor the previous year, gave 212 votes to William Jennings Bryan and but 98 votes to Debs. Debs' 98 votes, however, still left him ahead of Taft, the Republican Presidential candidate, who received but 62 votes in the heavily working class Seventh Ward. On a city-wide basis, Taft beat Bryan by 56 votes, 1,144 to 1,088.<sup>30</sup> Compared with his 1904 total 334,<sup>31</sup> Debs had not done much better, especially considering the visit he had made to the city in September. Socialist candidates for state office and Congress experienced similar fates; even Martin Georgenson, the Manitowoc Socialist running for the Eighth District Congressional seat, was only able to poll 20 more votes in Manitowoc than Debs.<sup>32</sup> The Manitowoc Socialists had proven their ability to elect candidates at the municipal level; after 1908, they were still unable to rally city voters behind Socialist candidates in state and national elections. The people of Manitowoc had already placed their trust in Henry Stolze to run the city, but would they ever trust Eugene Debs to run the country?

The Socialist optimism and exuberance of the fall of 1908 would have to suffice for three years before any significant electoral success could reinforce the hopes of the Manitowoc Socialists. Henry Stolze again ran for mayor in 1909 and was again beaten. The Socialists did retain some of their aldermanic seats, particularly in the Seventh Ward where Peter Rugowski was becoming a fixture.<sup>33</sup> The Socialist press attempted to maintain an air of optimism amidst defeat, as seen in the following election report from the *Social-Democratic Herald*:

*MANITOWOC — Comrade Stolze and Comrade Mills addressed an enthusiastic meeting at the Opera House Saturday. The crowd cheered wildly . . . The comrades went into the election bound to make a good showing. Ward meetings were held and local speakers discussed the city issues. They are not discouraged even though they did not succeed in carrying the city.<sup>34</sup>*

Manitowoc Socialists continued to be represented at the state party level in 1910, sending five delegates to the Social-Democratic Party's state convention in Milwaukee in

May 1910.<sup>35</sup> Henry Bruins, a Socialist alderman from Manitowoc, was the party's 1910 candidate for lieutenant governor, while R. W. Burke ran for Congress and Martin Georgenson was the Socialist candidate for Manitowoc's State Assembly seat.<sup>36</sup> None of these Socialist sons of Manitowoc, however, was victorious.

The Socialist drought at the Manitowoc polls came to an end in spring 1911. Henry Stolze was again running for mayor; this time the public demand for municipal ownership was much more intense than in the previous two elections. The renewed interest in municipal ownership can be seen as early as the fall of 1910:

*The Manitowoc Daily News in one of its recent issues says that the next Mayor of Manitowoc must run as [sic] a municipal ownership platform [sic] Stolze was for municipal ownership . . . Now everyone sees that Stolze's position is right.<sup>37</sup>*

Stolze defeated his Democratic opponent, Isaac Craite, by 149 votes.<sup>38</sup>

More than Stolze's popularity was involved in the 1911 victory; the Republicans were instrumental in Stolze's success as well. Since the 1907 election the Republicans and Democrats had combined their political strength to defeat Stolze. The agreement, however, called for the alternating of the mayor's office between the two parties every four years. Accordingly, Manitowoc had a Democratic mayor from 1907 through 1911. At this the Democrats failed to live up to their agreement with the Republicans and refused to support the Republican candidate for mayor, Frazier. Thus many Republicans voted for Stolze in retaliation.<sup>39</sup> In this sense Henry Stolze's victory was not really a Socialist victory; yet it is proof of the lack of any perceived threat in the election of the Socialist like Stolze that the Republicans chose to continue their disagreement with the Democrats and vote for Stolze.

Mayor-elect Stolze was well aware that he had not attained a Socialist victory, as revealed by his post-election statement to the press: "I [Stolze] know my election is not a Socialist victory but it shows that the people of Manitowoc are losing their prejudices against the name of socialism."<sup>40</sup> Given the shakiness of



the victory, it would appear that Stolze's effectiveness would be doubtful. Still, his supporters were assured that municipal ownership of the waterworks, followed by the electric utility, would soon become reality.<sup>41</sup> After that, there was little mention of what Stolze would be able to push through the city council. Of the fourteen aldermen on the council, only Peter Rugowski from the Seventh Ward was a Socialist.<sup>42</sup> Yet, the municipal ownership issue, at least, would find support from more aldermen than just Rugowski.

Stolze wasted no time in initiating action on the city's purchase of the utility. Following an appraisal by the State Railway Commission of \$236,000.00, the city agreed to purchase the utility for \$247,500.00, the lowest price satisfactory to the Water Works Company.<sup>43</sup> The purchase was financed by a city bond issue of \$230,000.00, and the city took possession of the water utility on October 1, 1911.<sup>44</sup> This rapid takeover of the waterworks was expedited by Stolze's election in April, but was not completely the work of the new mayor. The purchase culminated six years of agitation for municipal ownership by Stolze and others. Moves in this direction were begun during Stolze's first term, 1905-1907, but were not pushed strongly by his successors. Finally, a special election on January 17, 1911 gave public approval for the city's purchase of the water utility, and the State Railway Commission had already been approached to conduct an appraisal of the waterworks property before the April 1911 election.<sup>45</sup> Thus Stolze was mayor during the initial movement for municipal ownership of the water utility, and again presided as mayor when that movement reached fruition six years later.

Were Manitowoc's citizens better off with a municipally owned water utility? In the first year of operation the city realized a profit of \$17,197.00 with the water rates of the private corporation still in force. After this the minimum yearly charge was reduced from \$5.00 to \$4.00, while charging 30 cents per 1,000 gallons in the largest quantities. At the same time the water utility employees received an increase in wages and had their hours decreased from 10 to 12 hours a day down to 8 hours.<sup>46</sup> The Manitowoc venture into municipal ownership of the water utility

seemed to be paying off in lower water rates, more service to the customers, and better wages and working conditions for the employees. If this was the first step along the road to socialism, few Manitowoc citizens complained!

Yet, it remained to be seen if Stolze's effectiveness as mayor would aid the Socialists in other elections in Manitowoc. The 1912 Presidential returns in the city were as uninspiring as ever. Wilson carried Manitowoc for the Democrats with 996 out of 2,297 votes cast. Taft came in second, while Debs placed third in front of Theodore Roosevelt. Debs' 457 votes in 1912 exactly matched the 457 votes he received in 1908, although 420 fewer votes were cast in 1912 than in 1908.<sup>47</sup> Socialist candidates for state offices did no better, and sometimes worse. A city moderately sympathetic to a Socialist mayor remained unenthusiastic toward state and national office seekers of the Socialists.

Stolze's strength in Manitowoc increased to the point where he was unopposed in his bid for another term as mayor in April 1913. As a Socialist newspaper in nearby Two Rivers pointed out in early March, "Stolze will win if he desires to run, for he is strong with the common people of Manitowoc."<sup>48</sup> Stolze now advocated building a new municipal center which would serve as a public meeting place, city hall, and municipal theater. While emphasizing the reduction in property taxes that had taken place under his administration, the mayor promised to reduce taxes even more in his next term and to place a more equal share of the tax burden on the large property holders.<sup>49</sup> None of these proposals seems very radical. Stolze's own statement on municipal ownership shows how he intended to utilize municipally owned services to make money for the city and thus cut taxes:

*With municipal ownership of the waterworks and [electric] lighting plants, it would be possible for the city to annex revenues that would offset the cost of improvements and help meet the expenses of running the city, and eventually, if municipal ownership could be carried out along the lines, as in Germany where public slaughter houses are even maintained, the tax burden would be nil.<sup>58</sup>*

Given a free hand, Mayor Stolze would involve the city in enterprises that had traditionally been the sacred preserve of America's private sector. Stolze was not able to push municipal ownership in Manitowoc to that extreme, though he did add the electric utility to the city's holdings during his next term, 1913-1915.

Along with Stolze's victory in 1913 came three Socialist aldermen, thus increasing support for the municipal ownership of the electric plant.<sup>51</sup> Securing the ownership of the electric utility also proved easier because of the precedent set in the water utility purchase and the public satisfaction with municipal operation of that utility. Thus, after a State Railway Commission appraisal of \$146,000.00, the city issued bonds to cover the purchase, and took over operation of the electric utility from John Schuette on January 1, 1914.<sup>52</sup>

Mayor Stolze, then, had accomplished the municipal ownership of both the water and the electric utility by 1914. He would push for more extensive municipal ownership, but the city never took over the remaining privately-owned utilities, such as the gas and telephone companies. How did the Republicans and Democrats on the city council view Stolze during this period of municipal purchase of private utilities? One view of Henry Stolze and his municipal ownership projects was expressed by Ralph G. Plumb, a Republican alderman during the Stolze administrations. Although Plumb's view is more of a recollection written in the late 1930's, it still sheds some light on what it was like to serve on the city council with Stolze as mayor:

*It was in the days of the dawn of municipal ownership and the voters were largely under the sway of a mayor who was pledged to the purchase of the waterworks, the electric light plant and the gas company. Henry Stolze was a member of the budding Socialist party and many of us who worked with him in the securing of the first two of the above projects were grouped by those who were opposed to the move into the same category. However I never believed he [Stolze] was more at heart than a municipal socialist, in other words a man who believed a community of the size of our town was happier and better*



satisfied when they owned and operated those utilities that were serving the people.<sup>53</sup>

Stolze was reelected for yet another term as mayor in 1915, but retired from office at the end of this fourth term in 1917. By this time Comrade Stolze had served longer as mayor of Manitowoc than anyone before him.<sup>54</sup> Having sold his Christmas ornament company in 1915, Stolze did not choose to spend his retirement years in the city he had governed for eight years. Stolze moved to Milwaukee soon after he retired from the mayor's office, and subsequently moved on to Los Angeles, California, where he died in 1925.<sup>55</sup> A Socialist alderman, Martin Georgenson, attempted to fill the position of mayor in the 1917 election, but was defeated by a Republican alderman, John H. Schroeder.<sup>56</sup> And so with Stolze's retirement and Georgenson's defeat, Socialist dominance of the mayor's office in Manitowoc came to a halt.

Socialist candidates for state and national office tended to fare even more poorly in the last two Stolze administrations than they had earlier. Allan Benson, the Socialist Presidential candidate in 1916, could gather in a scant 173 votes compared to Debs' 457 votes in Manitowoc in 1912. Benson, of course, was a much weaker candidate than Debs, generating little enthusiasm even among Socialist. President Wilson easily swept the city with 1,404 votes to Republican Charles E. Hughes' 1,047 votes.<sup>57</sup> Socialist gubernatorial candidates did as poorly as the Presidential candidate. While Carl D. Thompson, Socialist candidate for governor in 1912, garnered 408 votes in Manitowoc, Oscar Ameringer received 198 votes in 1914, and Rae Weaver could muster out but 159 votes as the Socialist gubernatorial candidate in 1916.<sup>58</sup> Obviously the Socialist millennium was a long way off when Stolze exited from the Manitowoc scene in 1917. A modest Socialist vote for state and national candidates in 1912 had been cut in half in the elections of 1914 and 1916.

Thus we find Mayor Henry Stolze and his handful of Socialist aldermen the lone Socialist victors in Manitowoc from 1905 to 1917. Stolze never was in a position to institute massive changes in the city; yet, he was successful in acquiring the water and electric utilities, both of which are still

owned by the city.<sup>59</sup> Undoubtedly the many workers in Manitowoc's aluminum, church furniture, and farm equipment factories, as well as the city's residents working in the shipyards and on the railroads,<sup>60</sup> were pleased with Stolze's performance and supported him for reelection. Support from the Polish working class in the Seventh Ward was particularly strong, and the city's large German population also facilitated Socialist victories at the local level. Stolze was a moderate Socialist who proposed programs that the citizens of Manitowoc were ready to accept. Offering honest, efficient administration under a socialist label, Stolze and his associates gave Manitowoc a viable alternative to the traditional political parties and made significant strides toward making Socialism respectable at the municipal level.



<sup>1</sup>Manitowoc's population was 11,786 in 1900, 13,027 in 1910, and 17,563 in 1920. *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1913, p. 74; *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1921, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup>For a description of Manitowoc in 1913 see "Manitowoc, Wis., Excels in the Building of Good Lake Boats," *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 April 1913.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Nathan Fine, *Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States: 1828-1928* (New York: Rand School of Social Science, 1928), p. 221; also see "Socialist Municipal Office Holders," *National Municipal Review* 1 (July 1912):500.

<sup>4</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1903, p. 362; *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1905, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1903, p. 416; *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1905, pp. 332-333.

<sup>6</sup>*Manitowoc Herald-News*, 12 February 1925; *Manitowoc County Historical Markers and Memorials* (Manitowoc, Wis.: Manitowoc County Historical Society, 1964), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>*Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 5 April 1905.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Social-Democratic Herald*, 15 April 1905.

<sup>11</sup>*Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 5 April 1905.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 11 April 1905

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Henry Stolze, Jr., "Municipal Ownership in Manitowoc," *Manitowoc Municipality* 15 (December 1915):227.

<sup>16</sup>William Rahr, "Two More Years of Stolze." *Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 29, March 1907.

<sup>17</sup>Manitowoc County Centennial Committee, *Story of a Century; Manitowoc County During Wisconsin's First Hundred Years, 1848-1948* (Manitowoc, Wis.: Manitowoc County Centennial Committee, 1948), p. 40; Donald E. Oehlerts, comp. *Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers, 1833-1957* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958), p. 144.

<sup>18</sup>*Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 3 April 1907.

<sup>19</sup>Frederick I. Olson, "The Milwaukee Socialists, 1897-1941" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1952), p. 238.

<sup>20</sup>*Manitowoc Daily Herald*, 3 April 1907.

<sup>21</sup>L. A. Murray, "A Historical Survey of the Political and Educational Development of the Polish Settlement of Manitowoc, Wisconsin," paper presented in Professor Schafer's Course in the History of the West, 111, University of Wisconsin, n.d. [late 1920's?], pp. 1-2, 5-6.

<sup>22</sup>*Two Rivers Reporter*, 19 September 1908.

<sup>23</sup>Charles Sandburg to Reuben W. Borough, 5 October 1907, Carl Sandburg, *The Letters of Carl Sandburg*, ed. Herbert Mitgang (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), p. 53.

<sup>24</sup>*Social-Democratic Herald*, 19 September 1908.

<sup>25</sup>"State convention, Social Democratic Party, June 13th and 14th 1908, Held at Freie-Gemeinde Hall, Milwaukee, Wis.," Social Democratic Party Collection, SPB 1, File 4, Milwaukee County Historical Society, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>*Social-Democratic Herald*, 12 September 1908.

<sup>27</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1909, p. 452.

<sup>28</sup>*Social-Democratic Herald*, 26 September 1908; "County Hotbed of Political Fights; Liberal Trends Always Evident," *Manitowoc Herald-Times*, 23 June 1936.

<sup>29</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1909, p. 298.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1905, p. 277.

<sup>32</sup>*Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1909, p. 448.

<sup>33</sup>*Social Democratic Herald*, 10 April 1909.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Manitowoc's delegates were Floyd Westgate, Martin Georgenson, R. W. Burke, Henry Bruins, and John Schneider, "Convention of the Social Democratic Party, State of Wisconsin, Held in Freie-Gemeinde Hall, Milwaukee, May 28 and 29 1910," Social Democratic Party Collection, SPB 1, File 4, Milwaukee County Historical Society, p. 6.



- <sup>36</sup>Two Rivers Reporter, 21 October 1910.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 27 September 1910.
- <sup>38</sup>Manitowoc Daily Herald, 5 April 1911.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., Social-Democratic Herald, 8 April 1911.
- <sup>40</sup>Manitowoc Daily Herald, 5 April 1911.
- <sup>41</sup>Social-Democratic Herald, 8 April 1911.
- <sup>42</sup>Manitowoc Daily Herald, 5 April 1911.
- <sup>43</sup>Stolze, p. 229; Two Rivers Reporter, 30 June 1911.
- <sup>44</sup>Stolze, 229.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 228.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-230.
- <sup>47</sup>Wisconsin Blue Book, 1913, p. 191; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1909, p. 298.
- <sup>48</sup>Two Rivers Reporter, 1 March 1913.
- <sup>49</sup>Social-Democratic Herald, 12 April 1913.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup>Stolze, pp. 230-231; Manitowoc Herald-Times, 23 June 1936.
- <sup>53</sup>Ralph G. Plumb, *Born in the Eighties* (Manitowoc, Wis.: Brandt Printing and Publishing Co., 1940), p. 97.
- <sup>54</sup>Manitowoc Herald-News, 28 October 1922; Manitowoc County Historical Markers and Memorials, p. 19.
- <sup>55</sup>Manitowoc Herald-News, 12 February 1925.

<sup>56</sup>Two Rivers Reporter, 6 April 1917.

<sup>57</sup>Wisconsin Blue Book, 1913, p. 191; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1917, p. 125.

<sup>58</sup>Wisconsin Blue Book, 1913, p. 236; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1915, p. 201; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1917, p. 260.

<sup>59</sup>Edward Ehlert, Secretary, Manitowoc County Historical Society, to author, 22 March 1977.

<sup>60</sup>Christian Science Monitor, 12 April 1913.

### A NOTE ON SOURCES

The foundation of this paper has been the Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and state Socialist newspapers published during the period under study. Of greatest value were the *Social-Democratic Herald* and the *Two Rivers Reporter*, for the Socialist viewpoint, while the *Manitowoc Daily Herald* proved useful for noting the activities of the opposition and verifying election results. Unfortunately, less than a year of Manitowoc's own Socialist newspaper, the *Manitowoc Daily Tribune*, published from 1905 to 1910, has survived.

Local Manitowoc sources were the next most helpful. Correspondence with Mr. Edward Ehlert, secretary of the Manitowoc County Historical Society, yielded an invaluable article on municipal ownership by

Mayor Henry Stolze. The Manitowoc Public Library's clipping file proved helpful in attaining key dates which made my meanderings through countless rolls of microfilm less random. The file also contained some useful pamphlets on the history of Manitowoc.

The Social Democratic Party Collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society was useful in ascertaining who attended the state conventions from Manitowoc. For detailed and handy source of election results of state and national races, the *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1903-1917, provided a breakdown by wards for most election years.

Though not directly evident in this paper, an interview with Gerald S. Zander, a Two Rivers-Manitowoc Socialist in the period under study, provided some useful insights into Manitowoc Socialism and the most rewarding experience of this project!

### A REQUEST FOR MATERIALS

The author is currently expanding his research on the Manitowoc Socialists and municipal ownership from 1905 to 1947. Anyone with written materials pertaining to the Manitowoc Socialists, and especially Henry Stolze, Jr., Martin Georgenson, and Gilbert Thompson — or a personal recollection of Socialist activities in Manitowoc and the surrounding area — may contact the author at the following address:

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## Public Owned Utility System Proves Worth Water and Light Plants In Use 25 Years; Debt Free

### Benefits of Municipal Ownership Best Typified By Comparative Figures: Centennial Year Marks Silver Anniversary of Public Plants

*Manitowoc Herald-Times*  
Centennial Issue 1936

While the city and county pauses to celebrate the Centennial (1936) municipal ownership in Manitowoc marks up its silver anniversary. It was in 1911 that the city took over the water works plant.

Mayor Henry Stolze Jr., was head of the city government at the time the plant became municipally owned although the movement really was launched six years before. Manitowoc acquired the plant by the payment of close to \$250,000. Three years later the city purchased the electric light plant from John Schuette for \$147,000.

Both plants were merged at the lake front plant of the water utility a few years later and an expansion program launched which boosted the Manitowoc utility into the front ranks of municipally owned properties in Wisconsin.

The growth of municipal ownership here is best typified by comparative figures. The total original investment in the two plants was less than \$400,000. Report of the utilities commission at the end of 1935 indicated total assets of the two plants to be \$2,720,000.

### Plants Free of Debt

The utility is without bonds or funded debt. The two plants paid for themselves out of earnings and in addition hundreds of thousands of dollars of surplus earnings have been diverted into the city treasury to help reduce property taxes in Manitowoc.

A history of how the two plants were acquired in Manitowoc is a story of the rise of the socialist party in this city with a platform of municipal ownership. It was in 1905 that the first intimation of a switch in sentiment became apparent. In the spring election of that year Henry Stolze Jr., unknown in municipal politics, defeated Dr. W. G. Kemper, running for reelection as mayor.

No sooner did the new mayor take his chair than he launched on a plan to purchase the waterworks plant, operated by Eugene and T. W. Gray.

### Has Hostile Council

Mayor Stolze faced a hostile council, not in accord with his plans to acquire the water plant. Two years later he was defeated for reelection



by Charles Groffman. Socialists however, continued the fight. Among those who were active in the plan to have the city purchase the waterworks was Alderman Martin Georgenson, who later became mayor, and served for six terms in the executive's chair.

However, in the following four years sentiment turned toward purchase of the plant. Proceedings were instituted during the Groffmann administration to purchase the plant. Under the law then the citizens had to vote to purchase and were bound to take the plant at a figure to be reached by the state rate commission.

#### **Fix Price at \$247,000**

The voters decided for the purchase and then followed proceedings at Madison before the commission. Later in the second Groffman administration the figure of \$247,000 was reached and when Mayor Stolze was returned to office in the spring of 1911, steps moved forward to acquire the plant.

Real drama was written into the actual transfer of the plant from the owners to the municipality on October 3, 1911. Only \$80,000 of the bonds offered by the city had been sold over the counter and addition of two \$10,000 trust funds still left the purchase price over \$100,000 short. The law required that the complete tender of cash at the price fixed by the rate commission was necessary to make legal the transfer.

#### **Bonds Advance Cash**

Mayor Stolze was at his wit's end to make certain that nothing should halt taking over the plant by the city. One report said he pledged part of his personal fortune to make certain loan of funds. A final appeal was made to the two banks in the city.

The banks came to the assistance of the municipality, pledging the needed balance so that the tender of approximately \$250,000 could be made. The transfer was made at the bank by the Grays to Mayor Stolze, City Attorney Harry Kelley, City Clerk Arthur Reichert and the finance committee of the council.

In addition to T. W. and Eugene Gray, W. G. Maxcy was one of the principal stockholders of the old company.

#### **Trouble Over Commission**

Two days later the council met to select a three-member water commission to operate the plant. After electing John E. Plumb as one member, following proposal of his name by Mayor Stolze the council rejected, 6 to 5, the nomination of Martin Georgenson as the second member and adjourned without completing the commission.

At the next meeting the council united to urge Mayor Stolze to take a place on the commission.

It was finally decided to create a three-member commission elected by the council. John Plumb, Herman Schmitz and Mayor Stolze was named as the first commission.

The plant operation was in charge of Louis Meyer as superintendent. He has been in the employ of the old company when the city took over the plant.

#### **Utility Committee in Charge**

In later years the council vested operation of the water and light plant — the latter taken over in 1914 — in the utility committee of the council.

The city acquired the electric light plant of John Schuette with a minimum of controversy compared to the city's initial step into municipal ownership in 1911. Mr. Schuette readily consented to selling his holdings to the city. A price of \$147,000 was fixed and the city acquired it. Emil Schroeder, who was with the Schuette plant, remained after the city took it over, as superintendent. A few years later the two plants were consolidated and Mr. Schroeder was made manager of both. He has since held the position.

Early in the years of city ownership John Kelly became office manager of the electric utility and Carl Weseman of the water utility. In 1915, Walter C. Staeffler, now assistant secretary, became associated with the utility.

John Kelly was elected city clerk in 1915 and left the utility employ. Later when he resigned from city employ to become credit man at the Aluminum Goods Mfg. Co. he was chosen to a place on the utility commission.

After a few years of council control of the utilities the city vested operation in a special five-member commission, each member elected for a five year term. This plan has worked out satisfactorily and has completely divorced politics from the municipal properties.

#### **Eastman Is Head**

President J. Peter Eastman heads the commission. Harry Kelley is secretary. Emil Krug, Harvey Kono and Erwin Fanta are the three other members.

Manitowoc citizens have come to regard the water and light plants as institutions of the city but to many of the earlier pioneers they represent a period in Manitowoc's history fraught with excitement, strife and battle.

The Herald-Times, in the story that follows, reviews briefly, the development of the two plants.

#### **Take Over Waterworks in 1911**

It was 11 o'clock on the morning of



*Schuette Electric Plant on Quay street between 8th and 9th street.*



October 3, 1911 that Manitowoc embarked on municipal ownership of public utilities. At that hour, in the National Bank here, Eugene Gray, president, and T. W. Gray, secretary of the Manitowoc Waterworks company turned over the plant to the city.

The purchase price was approximately \$250,000. Now, 25 years later, the water utility has a book value of \$814,000 with no bonded or other indebtedness on the plant.

#### **Built In 1889**

The Grays established the waterworks plant here in 1889. Despite the fact that the plant was located close to the shore of the lake at the foot of Columbus street, the water supply was obtained from shallow wells in the gravel strata close to the plant.

In 1911 when the city took it over the water plant was serving 1811 consumers, 1322 of which were metered and 489 were served on a flat-rate charge basis. At the end of 1935 there were 4,960 metered consumers of which 4,394 were residential, 434 commercial, 87 industrial and 45 public services, such as schools, parks and boulevards. Each metered connection is considered a consumer in the utility records.

#### **Pumpage Doubled**

In the first year the city operated the water utility 433,000,000 gallons of water were pumped. The pumpage in 1935 was 835,000,000 gallons. Fire hydrants in 1911 numbered 211. At the close of last year the utility was prepared to furnish fire protection in Manitowoc through 423 hydrants — twice the installation 25 years ago.

The source of water supply, from shallow wells has been used ever since the plant was built, except during emergency periods. Occasionally it has been necessary to resort to Lake Michigan to augment well supply. The problem has been one of concern to city officials and even the former owners of the waterworks ever since the system was installed.

#### **Wells Are Sunk**

Various means and methods were resorted to in an effort to locate a satisfactory supply of water along the lake shore south of the water and electric plant. A number of wells were sunk at different locations, experimental filtering galleries installed and abandoned and almost

every conceivable means and method resorted to in order to provide an adequate supply.

Immediately after the purchase of the plant a contract was awarded by the city for the sinking of a brick well casing 25 feet deep and 20 feet in diameter. This was completed in 1912 and at first appeared to have tapped an unlimited water supply. The quality of the water was excellent and tests conducted with pumping equipment available indicated that the draw down of the water level when the well was pumped was very small.

#### **Sink Four More Wells**

This single well produced all the requirements for about 10 years and when its supply was reduced, steps were immediately taken to provide an additional supply. A contract was let by the utility officials to a well drilling company on a "no water no pay" basis. A 3,000,000 gallon per day additional supply was contracted for on this basis and four wells with pumps were installed at various locations.

Two of these wells were located north of Lincoln Park on the north side, one at Silver Creek Park, south of the city, and one a short distance from the old well. Sinking of a well near the old "mother" well took away the supply from the latter because the new one was sunk to a greater depth, and was capable of providing almost twice the quantity of water available in the old well.

As has been the general experience all shallow gravel wall wells when continuously pumped to their capacity will gradually decrease in production. This was found to be true also, of the four wells sunk between 1925 and 1929.

#### **Let New Contract**

Early in 1933 a contract was awarded for another 3,000,000 gallon per day additional well water supply with a specified maximum hardness and iron content. The contractor has sunk two wells in Silver Creek Park from which he expects to secure this needed supply. Tests are now being made. One of the problems to be faced, should this supply meet specifications as to quantity, will be the treatment of the water to meet other specifications.

Because of the excellent quality of water from wells, citizens of Manitowoc have been reluctant to consider Lake Michigan as a source

of the future water supply. According to the recommendation of a consulting engineer, engaged by the utility commission two years ago, and who made a survey Manitowoc should install a modern filtration and treatment plant.

Such a plant, this expert held, would make possible use of lake water and an inexhaustible supply for all time to come. He predicted that eventually the municipality would be forced to go into the lake for water.

#### **Engage Another Engineer**

City officials with a different view than the one expressed by the expert counselled for still another survey to determine if there was a supply of ground water available for the municipal plant. A few months ago the services of W. G. Kirchoffer, Madison hydraulic engineer, were engaged. He was given a contract, after long sessions in which both the city council and the utility commission participated, to determine if the city should continue to develop ground water from wells for its source of supply.

The city is now faced with one contractor seeking to carry out an agreement to provide the city plant with an additional water supply and an engineer sinking test wells to determine the extent of this supply.

Upon the results of these moves may depend the future of the municipal water utility — whether the city will continue to secure water for local consumption from the wells, or be forced to build a filtration plant and resort to lake water.

#### **The Electric Utility**

When the late John Schuette ventured into the electric light business in Manitowoc in 1889 he probably never suspected that this enterprise would grow with such rapidity that in later years it would become the largest municipal electric utility in the state.

In addition to holding this distinction for years the Manitowoc plant also has the lowest residential rate in Wisconsin.

Mr. Schuette launched in the electric light field in a small building adjoining his flour and grist mill on Quay street. The first generators were of the old Edison bipolar type, belt connected to steam engines. Four of these units were originally installed with two 150 HP



Corliss-Allis steam engines. The steam for the engines was supplied from the boilers in the flour mill. From time to time additional direct current generators were installed.

### Switch Board Unique

These units in the Schuette plant were then the latest and most satisfactory available. The old switchboard was unique. It was made of matched boards similar to the beaded ceilings commonly used on porches. The wiring was on the face of the board and in some places fastened to insular knobs made of hard wood. Many modern instruments considered essential and necessary were all of the open knife blade type. Several choke coils dangled here and there and these served as protection against lightning.

Some of the old switchboard instruments at the Quay street plant, left on the board as valueless by the wrecking contractor, are part of an exhibit in the Ford Museum, at Dearborn, Mich. near Detroit.

### Small Force

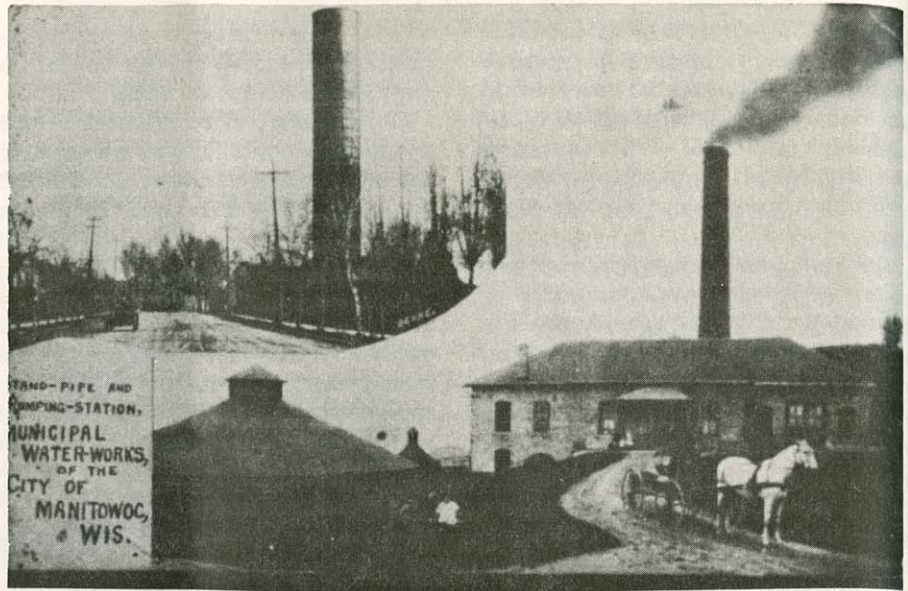
The original plant in Manitowoc was known as the Manitowoc Electric Light company. The first superintendent was Jacob Glass, a German. He was succeeded by Julius Buerstatte, now chief electrician at the Aluminum Goods Mfg. Co. plant here.

Mr. Buerstatte was succeeded by Emil Schroeder, the present manager of the combined utility plants. He continued as superintendent of the electric utility when the city took over the plant from Mr. Schuette.

### Short Hours

In the early years the plant was started when darkness set in and shut down at nine o'clock in the evening. The operating crew consisted of only six men — two firemen, two engineers, a wireman, and the superintendent. The men, who were not necessarily at the plant during the day, did house wiring, line building, meter reading, collecting, arc lamp trimming and anything else that came along until their help was required to start and operate the plant in the evening.

Sixteen and 32 candle power lamps only were available but a number of new customers were added and gradually new generating units were added and the distribution system expanded. One of the later



Waterworks building was located at Columbus street and south 8th, near the Lake Michigan shore. The "mother well" was located there — the source of the city's water supplies in the early 1900's.

The "Standpipe" was located at north 11th street near where the present Scheider Purath Funeral Home is located. The standpipe was a reservoir for water on the north side of the city.

units added was a gas engine purchased by Mr. Schuette at the St. Louis World's fair. The first steam turbine-generator was added in 1911 and this was also the first alternating current producing unit in Manitowoc.

Less than six years later the production of direct current was discontinued.

### Plant Sold To City

Soon after the city acquired the waterworks plant agitation started to add the electric plant to the city's municipal ownership holdings. When John Schuette, head of the company, learned of the public sentiment in favor of acquiring the electric plant he offered it to the city. The purchase was made on an appraisal of \$146,000 made by the state railroad commission.

Harry Kelley, member of the utility commission, was city attorney in 1914 when the city took over the Schuette plant.

General city obligation bonds to pay the purchase price were voted and issued. These bonds accrued serially over a 20 year period and the last one was retired in 1933.

Immediately after acquiring ownership of the electric plant, it became evident that there was little reserve capacity and that necessary expansion at the Quay Street location was limited. At this time agitation was brought about to discourage plant expansion and

purchase energy from the Clement C. Smith interests, who were then building a transmission line from Green Bay to Manitowoc. After operating the plant for a year, our then city officials headed by Mayor Henry Stolze, were firmly convinced of its possibilities and voted to combine the electric and water utilities at their present location. The first few years' earnings of both plants were reinvested in a new building, pump, three boilers and a 750 K. W. turbo-generator, costing a total of \$110,000. The only equipment moved to the new plant from the Quay Street location was the 300 K. W. unit purchased by Mr. Schuette in 1911.

The savings in operating a single battery of boilers at one location with one crew of operators and the efficiency gained with the new and more modern machinery, enabled Manitowoc to make the first electric rate reduction from 12 to 10¢ kilowatt hour to 8¢ and downward in 1917. Since then, four additional major reductions have taken place.

The production of direct current was discontinued in 1916 as well as all arc lamps. The establishment of attractive power rates converted many industrial plants to the use of electricity. In less than three years after the new plant was completed an additional boiler and generator were necessary and installed. Likewise new units were added in 1924 and 1929. All additions for plant



improvements have been paid for out of earnings, besides paying taxes to the city and interest on the purchase bonds.

During the past 25 years there has been a tremendous change in boiler practice. The advantages of high pressure and superheated steam for new boilers and generating units was given careful study and consideration in 1928 and when the addition was made during 1929 and 1930, 400 S. W. P. equipment was purchased and installed. This replaced all of the six boilers installed between 1916 and 1927. A saving of approximately 25% in operating cost was realized though the capital investment cost was somewhat greater. The new boiler recently contracted for, and now under construction in the shops will be capable of producing 3600 h. p., or over 120,000 pounds of steam in an hour. The steam is superheated to approximately 630 degrees F. Under these conditions it is almost a gas and moisture free.

The principal advantages obtained through the use of superheated steam are occasioned by the increased volume of steam delivered per pound of water evaporated and the prevention of condensation in steam pipes and turbines.

The plant burns eastern coal, mostly screenings. The coal is delivered on a siding in bottom dump cars, discharged into a track hopper and run through a crusher which automatically takes small samples. These samples are analyzed and tested for moisture, ash, carbon, volatile, and B. T. U. and if not up to contract specifications, a penalty deduction is made from the price.

From the crusher pit, the coal is taken up to an overhead bunker by a bucket elevator. From the bunker it is discharged into a weigh larry hopper which weighs the coal and records the weight before it enters the stoker hopper on each boiler. The exact amount of coal fired by each operator and used in each boiler is known at the end of the day as well as the amount of steam produced. Poor combustion or any irregularity in firing or operation is readily observed from the graphic instrument charts in front of each boiler. Approximately 10,000,000 gallons of condenser cooling water is pumped from Lake Michigan daily.

All water entering the boiler is put through a softening and treatment plant to avoid scaling, caustic imbrittlement, foaming and other undesirable conditions from taking place. Periodic samples are taken of boiler feed water and analyzed. Any correction found necessary by changing the formula proportions of lime, soda ash and phosphate are made. Thus far the plant has operated six years without a boiler tube replacement. Boilers are generally in service continuously from three to five months before taken out and inspected. The steam turbine generators are likewise insured and periodically inspected.

The plant is open to visitors at all times.

The management and operation of the municipally-owned utilities are in charge of five non-partisan, nonsalaried citizens, who are each elected by the city council for terms of five years. The present board consists of J. Peter Eastman, Harry F. Kelley, Emil Krug, Erwin K. Fanta and Harvey A. Kono. These men devote a lot of time to some problems without monetary remuneration. Two regular meetings and quite frequently two or more special meetings are held monthly. The Commission's duties and jurisdiction are circumscribed by the Wisconsin statutes. While the management, operation and maintenance is entirely in the board's hands, all additions to plant equipment or buildings must first have the approval and authorization of the city council before any money can be expended for additions.

The original investment in 1914 was \$146,000. On January 1st of this year it was \$1,381,673 and by the end of this year it will be over \$1,500,000, which is more than 10 times its original cost after scrapping and writing off off two generating and boiler plants in twenty years, and having paid for all improvements from time to time without borrowing or incurring any capital indebtedness. If the plant had not kept in step with recognized and improved modern practices, the results and periodic rate reductions would not have been possible. The progress in the electric utility business has been astonishing.

As compared to a dozen employees in 1914, the plant now has over 50. The payroll is around \$75,000 a year.

Since 1914 the electric plant has

earned a net of \$1,738,000, after paying all operating expenses, interest on bonds amounting to \$74,000, \$246,000, in taxes and deducting depreciation. Besides this \$596,794, has been paid into the general city fund as a reimbursement of the original purchase price which the city underwrote and obligated itself. This is \$450,000, more than the original purchase cost.

The commissioners have in the past followed the policy of first providing for funds with which to pay for new work and improvements A "pay-as-you-go" plan. There is no bonded, or other capital indebtedness at present.

The accounting is done entirely by the plant's own staff. Certified public accountants are engaged by the city council to examine and inspect the records and accounts each year. A uniform system and classification of accounting for electric utilities, prescribed by the state was adopted and put into effect when the plant was acquired. This standardized system, when followed, makes it possible to make comparisons with other utilities and brings to light any unusual operating costs. It enables a check with other municipal plants on production costs. The advantages of exchanging these reports is being recognized and becoming more popular. Besides the annual report the office makes up a "comparative monthly" report for the members of the board. This report enables comparison of the production, cost and net revenues from month to month with the preceding year.

The practice of giving or exchanging "free service" with other departments was discontinued years ago and anything that the plant gets is paid for. The utility pays \$3600 a year for office rent, \$600 for any services of the city attorney or engineer. The city treasurer's office receives all collections, gets \$1,600 for help, plus one-half of his office expense. An exact accounting for everything is being kept. This also applies to fixed capital additions. A perpetual inventory of a \$30,000 materials and supplies stock is maintained. This record shows the date, source of purchase and cost, when disbursed and the balance of each item in stock.

#### **Pays In \$60,000**

The electric utility has become the



city's biggest money maker. This year the utility contributed \$60,000 from its earnings to help reduce general property taxes. The payment was authorized by the public service commission at Madison on the theory that the city is entitled to a six per cent return on the investment.

*(. . . Henry C. Stolze  
Continued from cover page)*

story of how the campaign promises became reality. When success came in these ventures, Mr. Stolze retired from the office of mayor. In addition to his interest in bringing the utilities under municipal ownership and operation, he was interested in the consolidation of the schools of the community. For many years the

city had district schools which generally had ward lines as the boundaries of the districts. Mr. Stolze felt that a single school board should operate all the schools of the city. Although it took some years before this issue was resolved, it was not an issue which engendered the heat that the utilities issue engendered. It was in 1914 that the schools of the city were consolidated under one school board.

Shortly after Mr. Stolze retired from the office of mayor, he sold the Stolze Manufacturing plant, and then moved to Milwaukee. The last six years of his life were spent in Los Angeles where he had gone to live since two to his sons resided there. They were physicians. Mr. Stolze died on February 12, 1925 and was buried in that city. He was

survived by two brothers, Andrew and Charles of Tacoma, Washington and four sisters, Mrs. Charles Sel and Miss Dora Stolze, Manitowoc, Mrs. Mary Kolas of Milwaukee, and Mrs. Charles Kittleson of Minnesota.

The obituary article stated of Mr. Henry Stolze Jr., "He was a man of brilliant mind and a student. He was a formidable opponent in any cause to which he committed himself. When he did so he gave it all of his energy. He was known for his fighting qualities. He was of an extremely nervous temperament. These qualities basic to his nature made him the kind of person who could overcome opposition even when the obstacles seemed insurmountable. When he felt that a cause was right he would be satisfied only when there was victory."

## MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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