

CHAPTER 8

A New Generation

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1970 – 1979

Edmonton gained much stature in the 1970s. The city successfully hosted an international sporting event – the Commonwealth Games – in 1978. The following year, it celebrated the 75th anniversary of its incorporation as a city. Much of its downtown core took on the form familiar to Edmontonians today, as many office towers took to the skies. And its electrical utility remained the largest municipally-owned generating operation in Canada.

The 1970s were not free of challenges, however. The energy crisis made a vital commodity both scarce and expensive. Motorists, manufacturers, and electrical utilities across North America experienced crises. Several strikes made operations at Edmonton’s utility difficult. Despite this, the utility continued to grow – and to generate returns for the city.

CLOVER BAR

Gold miner Henry Clover arrived in Edmonton in the summer of 1860. Clover had participated in the famous California Gold Rush of 1848. Now he wanted to seek his fortune in the waters of the North Saskatchewan River. Clover worked the sand and gravel bars near what is now known as Mill Creek, as well as a large bar further down river. This became known as “Clover’s Bar.”

The generating station built near Henry Clover’s claim inherited this name. By 1970, the first 165 MW unit was commissioned at Clover Bar. The fourth and final 165 MW unit at the Clover Bar Generating Station was commissioned in March 1979. This final installation brought the combined generating capacity of the Clover Bar and Rossdale generating stations to 1,050

MILESTONES

1970

The Electrical Distribution and Power Plant departments combine to form Edmonton Power.

Edmonton’s water plant separates from Edmonton Power and becomes Edmonton Water and Sanitation.

Calgary Power’s wartime debt to Edmonton Power is finally wiped out.

1971

Peter Lougheed becomes premier of Alberta.

Edmonton Power completes a city-wide switch from incandescent to more efficient mercury vapor street lights.

The Province of Alberta passes an act that stipulates that the Energy Resources Conservation Board must approve of all changes to Alberta’s electrical system.

1973

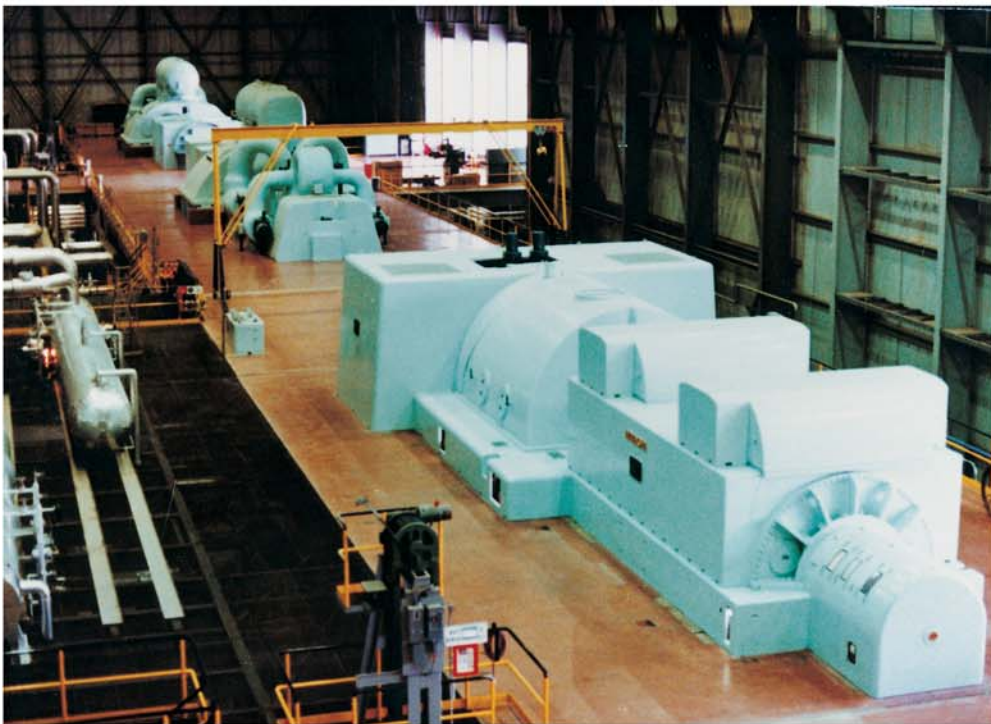
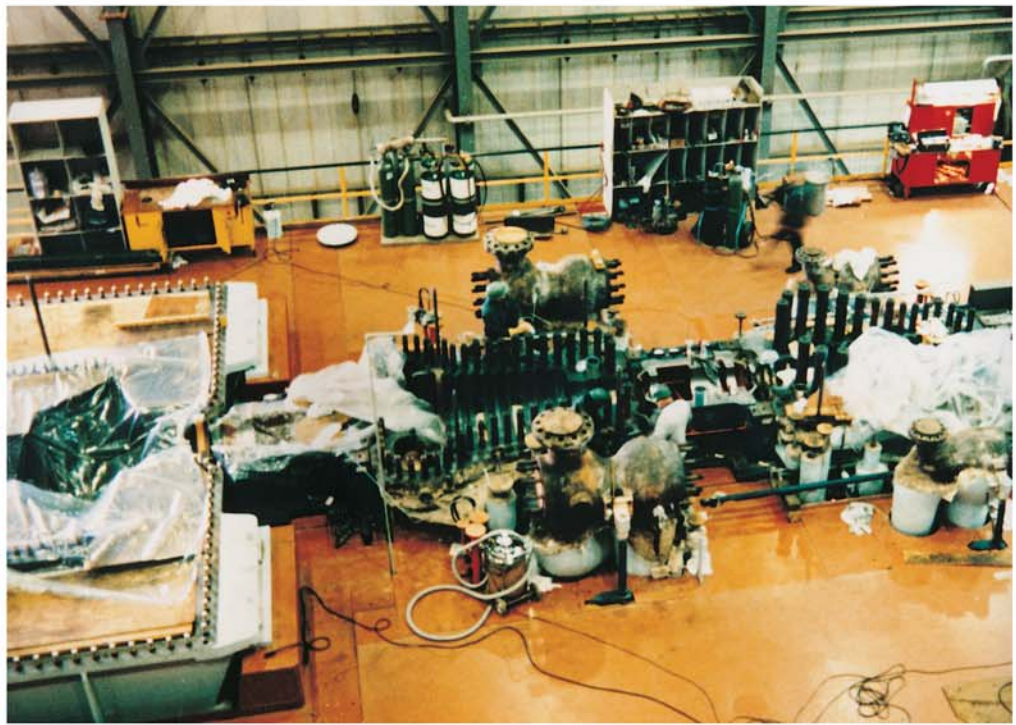
The oil-producing countries of the Middle East raise the price of oil.

1976

Edmonton’s power plant operators strike.

1977

Tall steel poles designed to support high-voltage transmission lines make their debut in Edmonton. These are the first poles of their kind installed in Alberta.



TOP LEFT: *Clover Bar in 1973.*

TOP RIGHT: *A disassembled turbine at Clover Bar.*

ABOVE LEFT: *Inside Clover Bar; turbine number 3 is in the foreground.*

ABOVE RIGHT: *George Mitchell worked three months past his 65th birthday so he could say that he had worked at Edmonton Power for 40 years.*



FIRST IN NORTH AMERICA

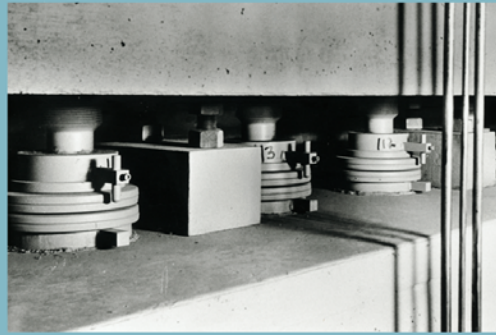
Many cutting-edge innovations went into the design of Edmonton's Clover Bar Generating Station. One example is the "spring mattress" foundation table that supports the station's turbine-generators; it is the first of its kind to be installed in North America.

Clover Bar's turbine-generator units each have a common shaft that turn at 3,600 RPM. Due to tiny errors in alignment and balance, each of these revolutions sends a shock through the unit's supporting structure. Until Clover Bar, North American plants required that the supporting structure – called the pedestal – be several times heavier than the turbine-generator units. The pedestals were then able to absorb the shocks without subjecting the generating units to vibration. However, the pedestals had to be extremely massive, and thus took up valuable space.

At Clover Bar, a decision was made to purchase turbines from Escher Wyss Oerlikon of Switzerland. This company had developed a much smaller pedestal that included spaces for ancillary equipment. This was a

desirable innovation.

This new pedestal uses springs to absorb shock. The turbine-generator units rest on a heavy concrete slab, called a "table." A pedestal consisting of concrete posts and beams supports



ABOVE: Detail from the "spring mattress."

this table. Between the table and the pedestal, however, is a set of 126 specially-designed springs. Thus, the pedestal, table and springs offer uniformly stiff support, and are sufficiently elastic to absorb vibrations from the machine.

Clover Bar's spring-mounted foundation has operated successfully for over 30 years. Similar installations have since been used in Canada and other countries.

Adapted from text by Henry Kasten

MW. The two plants served a population of roughly 478,066.

The Clover Bar Generating Station quickly became the jewel in Edmonton Power's generating network. The plant produced power more efficiently and with less pollution than any previous Edmonton Power installation. As one engineer wrote,

Edmonton Power's Clover Bar Generat-

ing Station, environmentally speaking, is among the cleanest thermal plants on the North American continent. Because we use sulphur-free natural gas as a boiler fuel, the problems associated with pollution from sulphur dioxide are non-existent.

Learning from its experience at Rosedale in the 1960s, Edmonton Power also ensured that the plant's two stacks

MILESTONES *(continued)*

1978

Edmonton hosts the Commonwealth Games. The symbol for the games, a blue and red maple leaf, is proudly emblazoned on the west side of the Rosedale Power Plant.

Edmonton Power field tests an automated meter reading system.

The Edmonton local of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers goes on strike in July and August.

1979

Construction commences on the South Service Centre. As the city's land area grew in the 1970s, the location of a major service facility on each side of the river became a necessity in order to operate efficiently.

The fourth and final 165 MW unit at Edmonton's Clover Bar Generating Station is commissioned in March. This brings the utility's installed generating capacity to 1050 MW.

Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆) gas insulated switchgear is used in Edmonton substations for the first time.

Edmonton Power has 186,115 customers, up from 175,249 in 1978.

Edmonton's 240 kV transmission system is expanded in the southern and western parts of the city using two underground oil-filled pipe-type cables.

AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION

In times of stress, Edmonton Power employees used great creativity to solve dilemmas. They also witnessed incredible events. Willi Viehmann, a former shift engineer at the Rosssdale Power Plant, recalls an incident that occurred in March, 1973:

In the early 1970s, the City of Edmonton's electrical load requirements were increasing rapidly and supply was provided from the ten units at Rosssdale and the one unit at Clover Bar. At that time, turnover rates for employees were high. For that reason a great number of operating personnel within the two generating stations had limited service time and could not be considered fully experienced. In addition, generating units were operating continuously and some personnel had not experienced the shutdown and start-up of units.

Weekends were considered "easy shifts" because no maintenance personnel

were on site, and shift personnel were concerned only with operational duties and some training. Such was the case on Saturday March 17, 1973.

Routine operating duties were carried out until approximately 10:00 when the lights dimmed in the power plants. This was followed immediately by the total loss of all generating units. No one on shift at Rosssdale and perhaps at Clover Bar had ever experienced a total plant shutdown, so the entire city was without electrical power.

Operating personnel scrambled to cope with this unfamiliar situation. Back-up direct current power (provided by batteries) was insufficient to allow safe and proper shutdown of the generating units. Hydrogen from the generators escaped into the turbine hall, setting up a potentially explosive condition. Start-up power from Clover Bar was unavailable, as the only unit at Clover Bar had also tripped. Communication

with the distribution control operator confirmed that a fault had occurred at the Hardisty Substation which was severe enough to shut the system down.

Start-up power to the generating station was eventually provided by Calgary Power through a small tie transformer at Rosssdale. Electrical power was first provided to the city shortly after noon; however, total restoration for the entire city took place late in the day.

Good cooperation between the generating and distributions sections resulted in a relatively short [power outage] when considering the severity of the failure and the limited resources of personnel.

This was the last time in the twentieth century that all of Edmonton was without power.

*With notes prepared by
Lyn McCullough*

GOOD GOD, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

We were about to start up Clover Bar for the first time. A group of commissioning engineers from the generator's manufacturing company were in attendance. One of them had a parcel under his arm: he pulled out this big bottle of alcohol and put it on the governor pedestal. At this time, of course, prohibition reigned at Edmonton Power: no drinking allowed. So we said, hey, we can't have that alcohol on site. "Oh," they replied, "we need this for the com-

mission – we look at the meniscus to determine if the vibrations are okay on the turbine." Okay, we could accept that.

I've never ever had a turbine run up so smoothly in my life. They set it to Auto Run Up, they pressed the button, and the thing started. At different speeds, while the temperature equalized, it synchronized itself ... quite a feat. The engineers put a block load on the turbine, and it just sat there, because that was what it

was supposed to do. But I don't know if they paid any attention to the meniscus.

When it was all done, they looked at me: I grinned and gave a "two thumbs up" gesture. What was I signalling? Next thing I knew, the top came off the bottle. The thought came to me: "Good God, what are we going to do?" But it was too late. They had passed the bottle around and drained it, as quick as that.

Al Pettican

RIGHT: *Danny Poleszchuk lighting off burners on number 1 boiler at Rossdale.*

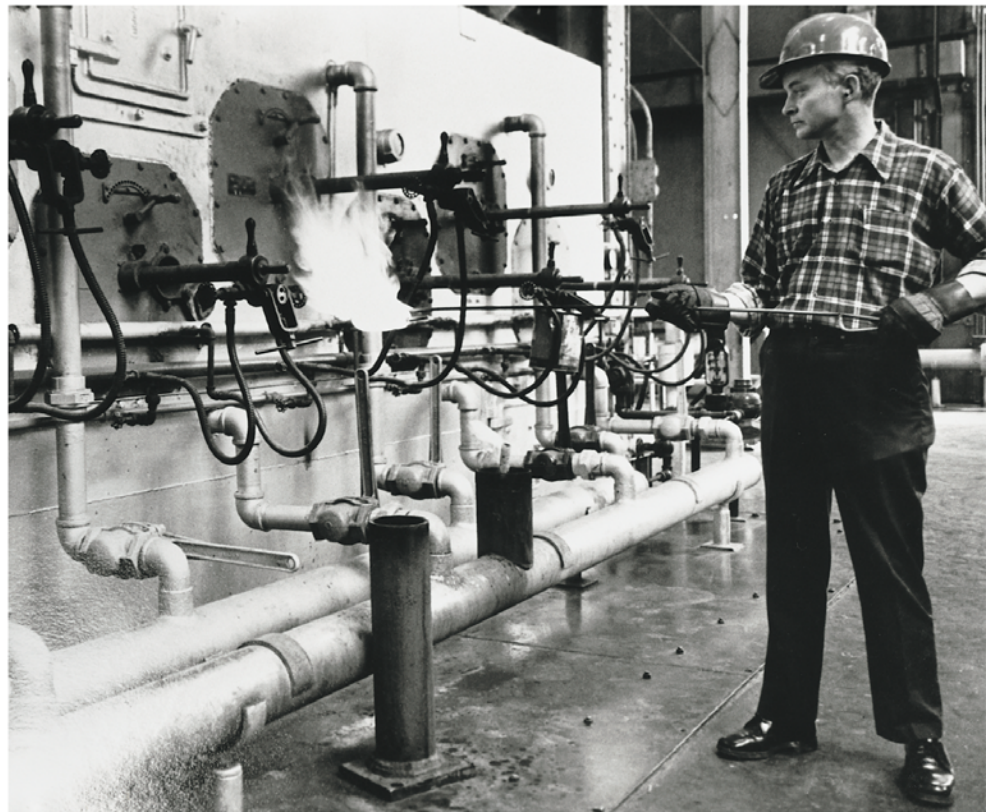
BELOW RIGHT: *Edmonton hosted the Commonwealth Games in 1978. Edmonton Power constructed the electrical infrastructure needed to make the event a success.*

were tall enough to disperse pollutants adequately and keep ground level concentrations low. Before construction began, tests were done to determine the existing levels of nitrogen oxides in the atmosphere. The results would later be compared with levels measured after the plant was fully functioning. Flue gas recirculation equipment was installed to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from the plant boilers.

FROM PROMOTION TO CONSERVATION

In 1973, the oil-producing countries of the Middle East raised the price of the oil they sold. It was the beginning of the “energy crisis.” Between 1974 and 1980, the average cost of natural gas purchased by Edmonton Power rose from \$0.195 cents per million BTUs to \$1.207 cents. In 1976, the department took steps to keep costs down. Twenty-two percent of Edmonton’s energy requirements were supplied through the Alberta Interconnected System (the provincial electricity grid); this electricity was cheaper than that generated using gas-fired units at Clover Bar or Rossdale.

No longer would Edmonton Power promote “living better electrically.” Now the utility began advocating energy efficiency. Educational materials were developed to show people how to lower their energy costs. Even City Council got into the act. They established an energy conservation committee and studied ways to reduce energy consumption in the



CREWS BATTLE POWER FAILURE

Edmonton Power's automatic supervisory control and telemetering system was fully operational by the 1970s. The system allowed one operator to control Edmonton's electrical distribution from a master console located near the municipal airport. Faults anywhere in the network could be identified from this console. The supply to the city could be switched on or off by simply pushing a few buttons. The new control system found itself tested on a busy night in August 1973:

It's 12:15 AM Sunday at the control centre of Edmonton Power's distribution system. Extra men called in during the evening's electrical storm are sitting around shooting the breeze. It appears the excitement for the night is over. But the flashes of lightning off to the northwest move closer. The thunder rumbles.

And at 12:35 the alarm bell on the huge console rings. "We've lost Clover Bar," shouts the operator. It rings again within seconds. "We've lost the [downtown] network." And once again. "We've lost a generator at Rosedale." And then almost the entire city is without power.

Alex Bowie, supervisor of the control centre, moves in front of the console, getting a comprehensive idea of the extent of the failure. "Take it easy boys," he says. Then he and his men gradually restore power to all areas of the city. By 1:10 the only area without power is a small segment of Delwood in northeast Edmonton

Source: The Edmonton Journal, 1973

buildings that City departments then occupied.

The provincial government scrambled to adjust to the new situation. It offered a rebate program to consumers who heated their homes with natural gas, but electricity consumers were offered only a partial rebate. The government announced that "the use of such a valuable fuel as natural gas for the generation of electricity is wasteful when other viable fuels are in plentiful supply."

Coal was back in vogue. In 1976, the provincial government introduced a policy that encouraged the use of coal as fuel. At this stage, the Clover Bar project was only partially complete. The City was committed to completing the project, however, because all the equipment had already been purchased.

BACK TO COAL

In the midst of the energy crisis, Edmonton Power's primary fuel source was gas. Generating costs were difficult to control. The utility turned to a plan it had considered several times in the past: a power plant on the coal fields of Genesee. With its own supply of fuel, the Genesee plant would be less subject to fluctuations in energy markets than its gas-fired siblings. And the Genesee Power Project would not just be a response to the energy crisis: Edmonton Power's managers had forecasted that demand for electricity would outstrip the supply from Rosedale and Clover Bar by 1981 or 1982.

With this forecast in hand, Edmonton City Council began exploring expansion options in the late 1970s. Edmonton Power could embark on expansion plans independently, or it could work cooperatively with such privately-owned utilities

VICTOR KONDROSKY

Vic Kondrosky was born and raised in Edmonton. He graduated from the University of Alberta with an engineering degree in 1960, and joined



the power plant shortly after. He moved up the ladder at the department until he became general manager of Edmonton Power upon the retirement of Bill Kirkland in May 1974.

Vic held this position until December 1976, when he moved on to another City department.

as Alberta Power or Calgary Power. The short-term advantages of cooperation were obvious; building the plant would involve a huge capital expenditure of at least \$1 billion.

However, City Council was persuaded by the long-term benefits of an independent venture. Aldermen supporting sole ownership argued that a joint-ownership agreement would destroy the City's autonomy in managing the utility. They also argued that the new plant would provide greater revenues if owned by the City than if it was operated jointly.

Genesee was on a much greater scale than Edmonton Power's earlier projects. The proposed plant site would cover 3,000 acres, half of which would be devoted to a cooling pond. The plant

STRIKE!

For some Edmonton Power employees, the summer of 1978 was filled with more than backyard barbecues and camping trips. In the heat of July and August, Local 1007 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) went on strike. For nearly two months, most of the electrical workers employed by the City of Edmonton walked the picket line. Two City departments were affected: Edmonton Power and Edmonton Telephones. Distribution and transmission workers, control operators, substation workers, truck drivers, and telephone linemen shouldered picket signs together.

According to Kelly Budge, then assistant business manager of the union, the main issue in the strike was wages. “The City was not prepared to pay an increase in wages equivalent to the cost of living,” says Budge. With over 1,300 members, the union felt that it was in a good position to force the City to respond to its demands.

The timing couldn’t have been better for a strike. In the summer of 1978, Edmonton was hosting the Commonwealth Games. Athletes and tourists from all over the world were flooding into the city to participate in and observe the events. And the games weren’t the only attractions in town. The annual Klondike Days celebration brought thousands of visitors to the city. Leaders at Local 1007 knew that many eyes would be on Edmonton. How would the city cope if there was a power outage and its electrical workers weren’t there to repower the city?

Ron Donaldson, then director of aerial distribution, was a member of the management negotiating team during the strike. Donaldson, like many Edmonton Power managers, had worked his way up in the department. A former power lineman, he had been “off the tools” for about ten years. Due to the strike, he and other managers had returned to the field, stringing power lines and laying cable.

“We worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off,” remembers Donaldson. “We had no breaks and no weekends off. If there was trouble, I was sometimes called in.” On one memorable occasion, Donaldson worked 48 hours straight, stopping only for a quick meal and a change of clothes. “We installed transformers, fixed cable failures, and even did some limited construction,” says Donaldson. With only a skeleton crew, Edmonton Power rescheduled any non-essential maintenance work for 1979.

Meanwhile, on the picket line, the strikers were coping with challenges of their own. “We had electrical workers who worked on the trolley buses,” says Budge. “And because transportation was important to the Commonwealth Games, we decided to picket the Westwood Bus Barns. On the first morning we were there, a guy from outside the city decided to drive his car straight at our picketers.” Fortunately no one was hurt in the incident. However, the demoralizing experience would set the tone for the rest of the strike.

As the weeks passed, it was hard to tell which group was going to “blink”

first – Edmonton Power or the striking electrical workers. However, what may have been the deciding factor in the strike was beyond the control of both groups. The weather in July and August was warm and sunny. There were few electrical storms or other weather hazards that could have thrown the department’s overtired and overworked managers into chaos. With no electrical crisis on the horizon, union leaders began to realize that Edmonton Power was not going to back down.

After seven weeks of picketing, members of Local 1007 held a vote to end the strike. The outcome reflected the ambivalent feelings of the workers. “There were only four or five votes more in favour of ending the strike,” recalls Kelly Budge. “In the end we settled for only 0.1 or 0.2 percent more than what we had been offered at the beginning of the strike.”

Although the workers lost the strike, Budge says that the experience was a powerful lesson for both union and management. “We learned that we had to find better ways to resolve problems,” says Budge. “Although it took time, the union eventually developed a better relationship with Edmonton Power and we developed new forms of negotiation.”

Those methods of negotiation must be working. The strike of 1978 remains the one and only strike by electrical workers in the history of Edmonton Power.

Source: Interview with Kelly Budge

would create more than 100 new jobs and generate millions of dollars of tax revenue for the County of Leduc. During the building of the proposed plant, 700 construction workers would also be employed.

OPPOSITION TO GENESEE

Progress on Genesee was halted a number of times as land owners, environmentalists, other power utilities, and the provincial government raised concerns about the new generating station.

Genesee-area farmers were among the first to protest the plant. Some of those whose farms would be purchased to make way for mining and plant construction wondered if they would receive fair prices for their land. Some long-term residents resisted moving – they didn't want to

leave the farms that they had worked so hard to establish. Those farmers who expected to continue farming in the area near the plant wanted to know if their air would still be clean, and if water quality would be affected by the plant.

Environmentalists also raised concerns. In one newspaper, they argued that existing coal-burning power plants were "raining down on central Alberta a soup of heavy metals and organic compounds which may cause cancer and birth defects." Scientists at the University of Alberta also raised concerns about sulphur dioxide and its impact on soil. Groups like Save Tomorrow Oppose Pollution (STOP) and the Sierra Club of Alberta also challenged Edmonton Power and the provincial government to advocate conservation rather than build

new power plants.

In 1978, the Genesee Agricultural Protection Society (GAPS) was formed. The group represented some of the people that would be affected by the proposed power plant. Group members lined the walls of Leduc County's council chambers and attended public meetings between Edmonton Power and local residents.

While some local residents were raising concerns about the proposed power plant at Genesee, other Alberta utilities were coming up with competing proposals. Alberta Power wanted the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) to approve construction of a 750 MW coal-fired power plant at Sheerness, near Hanna. The ERCB decided to hold back any approval until

DESCENT INTO THE VAULT

We meet the guys on 103 Street, just north of Jasper Avenue, west of the old Hudson's Bay store. The safety guy hands me a monkey suit, hard hat and safety glasses. Says there are no ifs, ands or buts – just put it all on. They all look at me like, well – seems like a woman in a vault is like a woman on a ship – bad luck ahead, no doubt about it.

I descend the steel ladder, thinking about all those old crypts I'd seen in European cathedrals. Dark, wet stones, but no bodies. Hopefully there are none in here.

Dale Grimoldby tells me that this 10 by 30-foot vault was built around '57, and originally may have had only two transformers in it. Today I see five transformers and a spidery maze of cables and tape. "So, what is all this

stuff?" Dale points out with great affection which buildings each transformer services, and where each and every cable goes to. How does this guy know all this? "Twenty-nine years working for this company," he says, "and I'm one of only three or four in the company who knows how to splice cable."

My eyes are finally adjusting to the gloom. "What's all the black on the roof?" I see soot and burnt concrete above my head and on the wall. "Blew up," says Dale. "Yup, in '72, or was it '74? Anyway, one transformer blew up completely, another caught fire. Took us four days working 24 hours to fix the whole thing and get it back up and running. We put in all new cables, and got the mess untangled from previous installations."

Looks good to my inexperienced eyes.

"Everything okay down there?" says a voice from above. "No problem," says Dale. "Just taking one last look and a few pictures."

I climb the ladder into the mid-morning light. No chivalry here – the guys just let me climb out myself, no hand up. I turn in the suit, shake hands, thank the guys for showing me around, and head back to my office. As far as I know the vault is still there, transformers humming away beneath the feet of passing pedestrians. Only one thing has changed as far as I know, and that's the way I look at those heavy steel grates in the sidewalks around town. I know what's down there.

Told by Heather Marshall

A CLEAN DESIGN

“It’s the best damn looking power plant in North America,” General Manager William Kirkland is reputed to have said about the Clover Bar plant. Like an industrial castle, the building has three five-storey towers. These towers house the plant’s four boilers. These are connected to the centre tower by two wings that accommodate the administration offices and act as corridors to the turbine hall. The turbine hall houses the four turbines. A central control room overlooks the giant turbines.

White insulated steel panels coated in permanent baked enamel curtain the steel girders that compose the building’s frame. Floodlights shine down from extended parapets on the rooftops, accentuating the gleaming white walls. “The overall result was a fine looking building that gave the

impression of very clean operation,” says Henry Kasten, a structural consultant for Edmonton Power during the design and building of Clover Bar.

*From notes prepared by
Henry Kasten*

BELOW: *The core construction team for units 3 and 4 at Clover Bar. Note the racks suspended from the ceiling: these held miles of cable.*

BOTTOM: *Clover Bar after completion.*



A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

When is a house not a home? When it's a substation! Substations are distribution centres where electricity is transformed to lower voltages for distribution. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, substations had a capacity of up to 1,000 kVA. Today the largest substation has a capacity of 200 MVA (200,000 kVA). The equipment that distributes this power is housed in small buildings scattered throughout Edmonton.

"Substation buildings are designed to blend in with their local surroundings," says Art Baird, formerly of Edmonton Power. "Special finishing techniques are used so that they resemble the neighbourhood they're in." Modern substations may be disguised as suburban bungalows, dignified brick offices, or high-tech industrial buildings. Early substations were solidly built of utilitarian red brick. However, even in these early industrial buildings, white brick was used to create decorative geometric patterns on the front facings of the buildings.

The Garneau substation is a particularly outstanding example of sensitive substation design. In 1979, expansion at the University of Alberta and a residential and commercial building boom in the Garneau area was increasing demands on the distribution system. A substation had to be built. However, it would need to fit in with the brick and cedar homes that were popular in the university area. Following consultation with local residents and the city's Real

Estate and Housing Department the substation's name, exterior design, and landscaping were selected.

Choice of appropriate switchgear was also part of the design considerations. Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆) gas-insulated switchgear was selected for the station because of its space-saving qualities. It required only 40 percent of the land needed by conventional switchgear and equipment was totally enclosed.

Today, few people passing the handsome building on 111 Street and 85

Avenue, which has been in service since 1982, even realize that it is an electrical substation. Its exterior blends in with the warm tones and materials used in many of the homes and apartments in the neighborhood. The spruce and mountain ash trees planted in the late 1970s have matured and are kept trimmed and neat. The EPCOR sign is the only clue that the building is home not to a family but to the equipment that provides electricity to neighborhood homes.

Source: Interview with Art Baird



TOP RIGHT: *An example of early substation design: 600 Substation on 124 Street.*

RIGHT: *The Garneau Substation.*

“WATT’S NEW” PERSONALITY OF OCTOBER 1970: ROSALIND HODSON

The success of Edmonton Power Generation’s Social Club can be directly attributed to such enthusiastic supporters as Mrs. Rosalind Hodson.

Rosalind has served Edmonton Power Generation as Kardex clerk for 11-odd years. Since the amalgamation of Edmonton Power Distribution and Generation she has transferred to Edmonton Water.

It is not surprising to find out that Rosalind served on almost all social club committees and through her efforts the annual banquet, dance, and children’s Christmas party were always a success. She promoted the Klondike Dance and summer bar-

beque, which have become annual events.

The World Championship Sour-dough Raft Race became another challenge for Rosalind. Along with her good friend Gloria Storey, she designed her own raft and has entered the race for many years. It is said that the Chilcoat Chicks will be entered again next year: watch for them!

Being the mother of two young children, Rosalind has found time to lend active support to the Girl Guides and Brownies. As Den Mother, she has collected many items of interest to Brownies; most curiously, she had

Bob Murphy of Edmonton Power-Generation hunting for a dead mouse!

Besides being active in bowling, it is rumored that she is interested in scuba and sky diving. The staff at Edmonton Power Generation decided that she should take up the more sophisticated sport of golf; they presented her with a golf cart and bag upon her departure for Edmonton Water.

Good luck, Rosalind, and may your drive be long and straight and your putts few.

*From Watt’s New,
October 1970*

it debated the merits of Edmonton Power’s proposals.

In July 1978, in a noisy meeting room at the Grove Motor Inn in Spruce Grove, Edmonton Power representatives placed an eight-volume application before members of the ERCB. Despite its length, the proposal was essentially a simple one. Edmonton Power wanted to construct and operate a 750 MW coal-fired generating station near Genesee. The application proposed that plant construction begin in 1981 with two 375 MW units coming into service in 1985 and 1986. Edmonton Power responded to questions about these proposals by stressing that the Genesee Power Project would produce electricity at less cost than any other new Alberta power project proposed or under construction. It was also pointed out that, unlike Alberta Power’s proposed Sheerness plant, Genesee could be expanded into a four-unit station because of the extensive

coalfields in the area.

Despite Edmonton Power’s arguments, there was much to be said for Sheerness. Edmonton Power had run into community opposition to the project in Genesee, while Alberta Power seemed to be facing less opposition in the Hanna area. The County of Leduc had been swayed by local concerns to such an extent that they had denied Edmonton’s application for a development permit for the site. Premier Lougheed had also expressed interest and support for the Sheerness project.

Calgary Power was represented at the ERCB hearings. In its five-page submission to the board, the company made it clear that it wanted a stake in whichever project the ERCB approved. The company came out in favour of Alberta Power’s proposal as long as they could have extensive equity participation in Sheerness. They also argued that if the ERCB did approve Genesee, then

Genesee should be jointly owned.

For four of the seven days of the ERCB hearings, representatives of Edmonton Power were cross-examined about the social and environmental impact of its proposal, as well as technical and commercial matters. When the meeting was over, the ERCB decided to defer approval of the plant, although it did indicate that the Genesee project was satisfactory from a technical, conservation, environmental, cost-benefit, and social impact point of view. The City rescheduled Genesee, and the department made plans to continue lobbying to have Genesee approved. As an interim measure to meet expanding demand, Edmonton Power arranged to purchase coal-fired power from Alberta Power for five to seven years from its Battle River Unit 5.

Edmonton Power gained an unexpected advocate in August 1978, when one of its former opponents decided to back

from pre-concept ...

Bill Kirkland had been very supportive of the Genesee concept years before anyone had seriously thought about it. He wanted the City to buy coal leases in the Genesee area, to secure the resources for the City. But the City wouldn't approve his request. So Bill, forward-thinker that he was, bought the leases anyway, with his own money – \$20,000 – a huge amount of cash in those days. Eventually his hunch paid off; the City bought the coal leases from Bill ... for \$20,000!

Lyn McCullough

to planning ...

Al Pettican saw Genesee through from conception to completion; he was the architect of the thing. During his first years at Edmonton Power, his ambition was to finish Clover Bar and move on – he didn't see any future at the City for a generation guy like himself, because they weren't planning new plants beyond Clover Bar.

One day in 1977, though, he was clearing out an office he'd just inherited when he found drawings of coal deposits in a field near Genesee's present location. At the time, Vic Kondrosky was general manager; Al went to him to ask for a budget to do a little bit of research into the field. Vic said, "No, we aren't going to waste money on that." Al wouldn't take no for an answer. He started to look into Genesee on his own time and on his own dime. "Back then," Al says, "we weren't allowed outside city limits in any City vehicle, so we had to put in the work in our spare time and go out to Genesee in my car to cook up

GENESEEE FROM THE INSIDE

future plans."

Then Ed Kyte took over and things changed. Al's team had a budget then – \$60,000 – to do the initial study.

Al's group presented its findings to City Council. Council asked the group to jump through some hoops, but, in the end, Genesee was built. So Al's extra time and effort paid off in the end.

Lyn McCullough

to design ...

There was a person on City Council who had always thought that we shouldn't be doing our own design work. He thought that we should be going to a consultant ... not just any consultant, but one consultant in particular. He was always trying to show us up with negative comments. One day, I was presenting the procedures for a particular contract to Council, and the councilor kept on and on with his ridicule. So I said: "It's all very well to make all these comments, but why not come and have a look at the way we're set up. If you still think we're incapable of doing our design work, then by all means, say what you want, but at least give us a chance – come and see us."

So he comes in to the office. We had a whole floor – about 125 to 130 people, all on that one floor. He looks at it, sees all the lines of people working – it was open-concept with rows and rows of people. They all had their heads down over plans, working away. He walks around the outside, looking at all this. Then he says, "Wow, this looks very impressive. How many people you got working here?" And, of course, I'm thinking, he's an engineer, he's developed some sense of humor, so I say,

"Oh, about half of them." And that was it: from then on, every time I appeared in front of council, he made hay out of it. "Have you upped the average yet, from half those people working?" That went on for years. He went on to become a Liberal MLA!

Al Pettican

to contracting ...

I was in Chicago to meet with Sargent & Lundy, a firm we were considering to do engineering work on Genesee. We had the meeting in their offices, then went across the street to our hotel, the idea being that we were going to go in cars to a restaurant in the Hancock Tower for dinner.

A few of us got down to the lobby a bit early, so while we were waiting, Al Pettican and I stepped out onto the street just to look around, that sort of thing. One of the local engineers says, "Don't stand out there, it's not safe. You're in Chicago – don't take any chances, wait inside." Okay, fair enough. We waited inside and got ferried off to the restaurant, where we had a nice meal.

At the end of it all, one of the vice-presidents says, "How would you like to see a little bit more of the city?" We say, yes, of course. He took us to a "speakeasy" where we stayed 'till three or four in the morning. At that time, feeling none the worse for wear, we wandered down the street, back to our hotel, no fear, with nothing happening. We've laughed at this ever since – four o'clock in the morning is okay – six in the evening isn't!

Ken Warren

GENESEE FROM THE INSIDE

to public relations ...

The City had allocated a number of people to us to work in our public relations department during the Genesee planning stage. They were all very good PR people, too – for customers in the city, that is; they couldn't deal with the farm population. One fellow went to visit the farmers wearing tailored suits and shoes you could see your face in, which went over like a lead balloon. The farmers couldn't relate to the guy. He was more concerned with keeping his boots clean than he was about going into the houses and talking about cattle. The people out there had shut us off, even formed a group to oppose the project.

I was just starting, at that time, to build a house out in the Tofield area. I'd cut a little driveway into my property, and space just big enough to fit a tent trailer into and to get a little fire going. We'd been in there all of Saturday, my wife, the kids, and I, cutting down trees to make a bit more room, trying to decide where to build the house. At the end of the day, I was tired – I sat looking at the fire, feeling miserable because I'd been thinking about the Genesee issue. I needed dialogue with the people in the area, and they didn't want to talk. The kids knew I wasn't happy; they were tiptoeing around dad, keeping out of his way, not a happy bunch.

Then Tony Vilsak comes along in his truck, sees us, backs up, jumps out, chats with us for awhile, gets some willow trees, and shows the kids how to make whistles. In a while, he's got everybody organized, told us that his brother lives one lot down from us, and introduces us to them. He'd got us so comfortable

with him and things organized so fast that I figured he might be the ideal guy for rural public relations.

I asked him if he'd ever done any work like that. He says, "Yes, I ran my father-in-law's campaign when he ran for MLA in the BC government."

So, on Monday, I called him, had him up to my office, and offered him the job.

From there on, we had our work cut out for us but we were moving in the right direction. And, do you know how we got 'em on our side?

We were driving around one day, chatting with various farmers, when we came across Steve Lorincz, a local, in the field, lying under his tractor, trying to get it running. We were in Tony's truck, so we stopped and went over to have a look, saying, "What's the trouble, Steve?"

He said, "There's something wrong with the differential on this tractor – I can't move it to get it serviced."

Tony backed his truck in and opened the back – it was just like a mobile workshop, with trays of tools, jacks, and equipment, as anyone who knows Tony would expect. He pulls out a couple of pairs of overalls, we put them on, and spend eight hours working with this guy on his tractor. We released the differential, got it running, repacked it, put it together, and away he goes, cutting hay.

Within two weeks, Steve had formed an alternate Genesee association that all the farmers joined because they didn't like the fellow running the 'anti-Genesee' one. Within a few months, it became the dominant group in the area, and the other one – that was opposed to what we were doing – died out.

Al Pettican

the Genesee Power Plant Project. STOP announced at an August 6 meeting of the ERCB that it supported Edmonton Power's proposal. STOP president Paul McGaffey said that Edmonton Power was publicly owned and therefore accountable to the people it served. As a result, the City department would be more open to environmental concerns expressed by local citizens than might privately-owned companies.

Despite this support, the decade came to a close without a resolution to the Genesee debate; it would continue into the next decade.

Edmonton Power profited from the efforts it made in the 1970s, though much of what it had begun would not be completed until the 1980s. Besides building an efficient new generating station, Edmonton Power developed strategies for coping with fuel shortages, which proved valuable in coming decades.