

Edison counts 80 years of blessings

It's 1903. The population of southeastern Michigan is about 313,000.

Detroit is a leading producer of marine engines, wagons, carriage works and lumber. Henry Ford leaves his job as engineer for the Edison Illuminating Co. in Detroit and goes to work on a newfangled device called an automobile.

And the Detroit Edison Co. is incorporated — after absorbing the Edison Illuminating Co. and another small electric company — on Jan. 17, 1903.

AS DETROIT Edison observes its 80th anniversary, it finds the face of southeastern Michigan transformed.

The area is known worldwide as an industrial center, particularly automobile production. Detroit Edison's second president, Alex Dow, might be given some credit for that development, too. He introduced Ford to budding inventor Thomas Edison, and the rest is history.

The area's population has mushroomed to more than 4.5 million. And massive changes have occurred in the scope of Detroit Edison's operation: Its service area, the size of its customer base, and the amount of electricity that customers use.

Walter J. McCarthy Jr., company board chairman and chief executive officer, said, "Despite the current economic climate, we are here to stay. We are tied to the area and committed to it."

"A current and major effort of Detroit Edison is to help revive and diversify Michigan's economy. That's our corporate benefit, of course, but it also is to the benefit of all the people in all the communities we serve."

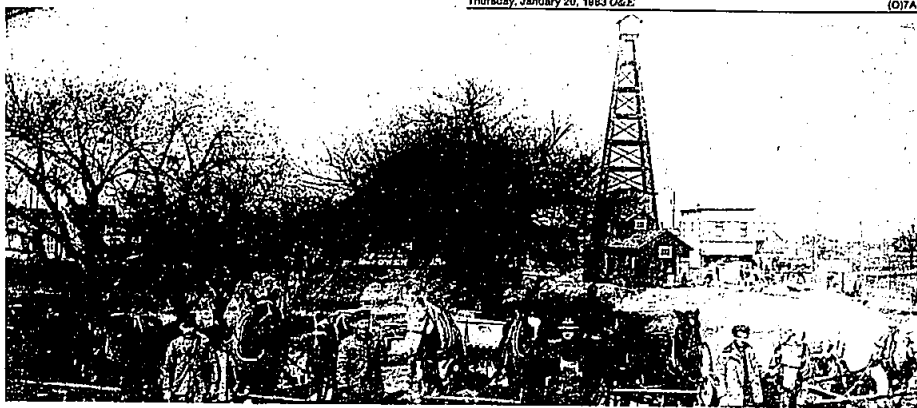
SOME COMPARISONS between electricity use at the turn of the century and at the turn of the '80s follow.

• The number of Detroit Edison customers has grown almost 400 times since 1903 — from about 4,600 to 1.7 million.

• Kilowattour (kWh) sales have increased 4,480 times in 80 years: from about 7,150,000 kWh in 1903 to 32,032,944,000 kWh for the 12 months ended in November.

• Annual kilowattour use for the average residential customer has increased from 348 in 1910 to 6,117 in 1982 — a factor of 17.5 times.

• The average annual bill paid by a residential customer has increased by a factor of 19 — from \$20.84 in 1910 to \$401.36 for the year ended November 1982.



Construction crews in 1903 began excavation near a Detroit salt mine for Detroit Edison Co.'s first large power plant, Delray. Construction diary notes say work started Feb. 12, and on Feb. 17 the men "worked nine hours only . . . very cold." The \$1.2 million plant was completed Aug. 1, 1904.

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